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Nguyen Thi Thu Phuc

Hanoi University of Mining and Geology, Vietnam

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF ENGLISH - VIETNAMESE CODE-SWITCHING IN CONVERSATIONS OF VIETNAMESE ENGINEERS

Abstract

Code-switching is a common phenomenon in bilingual communication that has attracted the attention of many scholars, including Gumperz (1972), Poplack (1980), Grosjean (1982), Malik (1994), Auer (1995), Appel & Muysken (2006), Ho-Dac-Tuc (2003), and Kim (2006). This study investigates attitudes toward English-Vietnamese code-switching in workplace conversations among a group of engineers. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining questionnaires and analysis of recorded conversations, based on the theoretical frameworks of Eagley & Chaiken (1993), Myers-Scotton (1993), and Hidalgo (1998).

The findings reveal generally open and positive attitudes: most participants understood, felt comfortable with, and preferred code-switched conversations. Factors such as age, occupation, English proficiency, and frequency of use had limited influence overall, though specific aspects like work experience, field of expertise, and English ability did play a role. While code-switching may slightly affect the purity of Vietnamese, its positive impact on English acquisition—especially vocabulary and technical terms—is undeniable. Therefore, code-switching should be encouraged in English teaching and learning, particularly in specialized contexts.

Key word:

code-switching, attitudes to code-switching of engineers in a company, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

Code-switching, a sociolinguistic phenomenon common in bilingual communities, occurs when speakers alternate between their native language (L1) and a second language (L2) across different domains (Kim, 2006). With English becoming a global language (Crystal, 2003), English expressions have become widespread in online platforms and daily speech, particularly among youth—for example: “*ok nhé*,” “*hello bạn*,” “*lướt web*,” “*search mạng*,” “*check lại*,” etc. This practice is generally accepted in society.

Code-switching has drawn significant scholarly attention (Poplack, 1980; Grosjean, 1982; Malik, 1994; Appel & Muysken, 2006; Ho, 2003; Kim, 2006). In Vietnam, many professionals, especially engineers, frequently use English-Vietnamese code-switching at work despite living in a predominantly Vietnamese-speaking environment.

This study examines the **attitudes toward code-switching** among engineers at an oil and gas company in southern Vietnam. Although they are not linguists or English teachers, most of them are proficient in English. The main research question is:

1. *What are the attitudes toward English-Vietnamese code-switching in workplace conversations among Vietnamese engineers?*