

EXPLORING CODE-SWITCHING PRACTICES AMONG EFL STUDENTS IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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Abstract - This study aimed to explore student-initiated code-switching practices during EFL classroom interaction at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Selangor, Malaysia. A descriptive qualitative design was employed with 30 undergraduate students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observation, interaction recordings, field notes, and semi-structured interviews with 10 students. The data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings revealed three forms of code-switching: intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag switching. Students used code-switching to clarify meaning, facilitate comprehension, compensate for limited vocabulary, express opinions and emotions, maintain interaction, and negotiate meaning. Interview findings indicated that students perceived Malay as a supportive communicative resource that helped them maintain interaction in English. Therefore, code-switching should not be viewed solely as an indication of limited English proficiency but also as a strategic communicative resource in multilingual EFL classrooms. The findings suggest that purposeful code-switching may support students' participation and facilitate classroom communication while English remains the primary language of interaction.

Keywords: code-switching, EFL, classroom interaction, students, multilingualism.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is learned and used within increasingly multilingual educational environments in which students routinely draw on more than one linguistic resource to participate in classroom communication. In multilingual English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) settings, classroom interaction therefore does not necessarily occur exclusively through English. Learners may mobilize their first language, national language, English, and other familiar linguistic resources according to their immediate communicative needs. Such practices are particularly visible in Asian educational contexts, including Indonesia and Malaysia, where multilingualism forms part of students' everyday linguistic experience (Liando et al., 2023; Mohd Khaja et al., 2022; Yolandana et al., 2024). In Malaysian higher education specifically, English and Malay may be used interchangeably during classroom interaction even when English is established as the expected medium of instruction (Ahmad Powzi & Zainal, 2025). Consequently, classroom language use needs to be understood not only in terms of students' target-language production but also in relation to the wider linguistic repertoires they mobilize to communicate, negotiate meaning, and participate in learning.

One of the most visible manifestations of multilingual language use is code-switching, broadly understood as alternation between two or more languages or linguistic varieties within an interaction. From a structural perspective, code-switching may occur between sentences, within a sentence, or through the insertion of tags and short expressions, commonly categorized as inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching. From an interactional perspective, however, switching languages can perform functions that extend beyond linguistic structure, such as reiterating messages, marking interpersonal relationships,

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contextualizing discourse, and facilitating communication (Gumperz, 1982). These structural and interactional perspectives remain relevant to contemporary EFL classroom research because they enable researchers to examine not only how students switch languages but also why particular switches emerge during naturally occurring communication.

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that code-switching is a recurring feature of EFL classroom discourse. Munawaroh et al. (2022), for example, found that both teachers and students engaged in code-switching during Indonesian online EFL classroom interaction, drawing on Indonesian, English, and local linguistic resources. Darong and Guna (2023) similarly identified inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching and showed that language alternation performed several communicative functions during classroom interaction. Research on university students has further demonstrated that the same three major forms of switching can emerge when students interact with their peers during classroom activities (Gendroyono et al., 2023; Haq et al., 2025). More recent classroom discourse research has continued to identify code-switching as an integral part of multilingual EFL interaction rather than an isolated linguistic occurrence (Junaid et al., 2025; Barus, 2026; Nurshadrina et al., 2026).

The communicative significance of code-switching becomes particularly important when attention is directed toward students rather than teachers alone. A considerable proportion of classroom code-switching research has concentrated on teachers' language choices and the pedagogical functions of switching. Teachers have been reported to switch languages to explain difficult concepts, clarify instructions, manage classroom activities, emphasize important information, check comprehension, and establish interpersonal relationships with students (Murtiningsih et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2022; Darong & Guna, 2023; Ramadhani & Trisanti, 2026; Luthfiyati et al., 2025). Such studies have provided important evidence regarding the pedagogical value of strategic language alternation. However, focusing predominantly on teacher discourse may obscure the fact that students themselves actively make linguistic choices while participating in classroom interaction.

Students may initiate code-switching for communicative purposes that are not identical to teachers' pedagogical motivations. During peer interaction, discussions, question-and-answer activities, and group work, learners may switch languages when they experience difficulty retrieving an English word, need to clarify an idea, attempt to maintain the conversational floor, express emotions, establish solidarity, or negotiate meaning with interlocutors. Gendroyono et al. (2023), for instance, found that university EFL students switched languages during group discussions because they felt more comfortable using their first language, experienced limitations in target-language proficiency, and needed to maintain their conversational turns. Similarly, Haq et al. (2025) reported that undergraduate EFL students used code-switching to enhance mutual understanding, communicate effectively, express emotions and opinions, negotiate linguistic identities, and demonstrate solidarity and respect. Evidence from other EFL settings also suggests that both students and teachers employ code-switching purposefully to accomplish educational and discourse-related functions (Atas & Sağın Şimşek, 2021).

These findings indicate that student-initiated code-switching should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of linguistic deficiency. Although switching may sometimes result from limited vocabulary or difficulties producing an appropriate English expression, it can simultaneously function as an interactional resource through which students maintain communication and accomplish immediate social or academic goals. Contemporary

multilingual perspectives have increasingly challenged strict monolingual assumptions about language learning by recognizing that multilingual speakers may strategically mobilize resources from across their linguistic repertoires (Liando et al., 2023; Yolandana et al., 2024; Nurhamidah & Sukma, 2026). This perspective shifts attention away from asking whether students use only the target language toward examining how their available linguistic resources contribute to meaning-making and participation.

Research on translanguaging provides further support for this perspective. In Indonesian EFL settings, Liando et al. (2023) demonstrated that English, Indonesian, and local languages could be strategically combined to support explanation, interaction, and comprehension. Yolandana et al. (2024) similarly highlighted the potential of translanguaging to contribute to learners' perceptions of linguistic competence, academic engagement, and inclusive classroom interaction. More recent research in Indonesian higher education has indicated that university students use translanguaging for different learning purposes according to their linguistic repertoires and educational backgrounds (Nurhamidah & Sukma, 2026). Other classroom-based studies have likewise documented the use of Indonesian, English, and regional languages as interconnected resources in multilingual English learning environments (Putri et al., 2026; Budiharto et al., 2026). Although translanguaging and code-switching arise from different theoretical traditions and should not be treated as interchangeable concepts, both bodies of scholarship underscore the importance of examining learners' multilingual resources as meaningful components of classroom communication.

The Malaysian context provides an especially relevant setting for such investigation. English occupies an important role in Malaysian higher education, while Malay and other languages remain strongly present in students' everyday linguistic repertoires. Research conducted in Malaysian educational institutions has demonstrated that switching between English and Malay occurs during teaching and learning activities and may support comprehension and classroom interaction (Zamri, 2016; Mohd Khaja et al., 2022; Ahmad Powzi & Zainal, 2025). Mohd Khaja et al. (2022), for example, documented English–Malay code-switching through classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires involving lecturers and students in Malaysian polytechnics. Ahmad Powzi and Zainal (2025) likewise reported the use of Malay alongside English in a Malaysian public university despite English being the expected medium of classroom interaction. Such evidence suggests that Malaysian higher education provides a particularly relevant multilingual environment for investigating how students themselves manage language choice during English classroom communication.

Nevertheless, several gaps remain in the literature. First, much classroom code-switching research has focused primarily on teacher-initiated switching, particularly its instructional and pedagogical functions (Murtiningsih et al., 2022; Darong & Guna, 2023; Solihin et al., 2025; Luthfiyati et al., 2025; Ramadhani & Trisanti, 2026). Second, studies examining both teachers and students sometimes analyze their language choices together, making it difficult to isolate the forms and communicative motivations specifically associated with student-initiated switches (Munawaroh et al., 2022; Junaid et al., 2025). Third, an increasing body of research has approached multilingual classroom interaction through the broader framework of translanguaging (Liando et al., 2023; Yolandana et al., 2024), leaving room for a more focused examination of identifiable switches between English and Malay during naturally occurring student interaction. Finally, although research in Malaysian settings has established the presence and perceived usefulness of English–Malay code-switching (Mohd Khaja et al., 2022; Ahmad Powzi & Zainal, 2025), closer qualitative examination of student-initiated switches during actual undergraduate EFL classroom interaction remains valuable.

Addressing this gap requires attention to both the structural forms and communicative purposes of students' language alternation. Identifying whether students employ inter-sentential, intra-sentential, or tag switching provides information about the linguistic organization of multilingual classroom discourse. Examining the communicative purposes underlying these switches provides a complementary account of why learners draw on Malay or other familiar languages at particular moments. Combining these perspectives can reveal whether switching is associated with clarifying meaning, compensating for lexical limitations, maintaining interaction, expressing emotions and opinions, negotiating meaning, establishing solidarity, or accomplishing other interactional goals. Such an approach positions students as active participants who strategically manage their linguistic resources rather than as passive recipients of teachers' language choices.

Understanding these practices also has pedagogical significance. Classroom interaction is not merely a setting in which learners demonstrate their command of English; it is a social and communicative environment in which students negotiate meaning, construct interpersonal relationships, respond to communicative demands, and develop identities as language users. Student-initiated code-switching can therefore provide evidence of the points at which learners require additional linguistic resources and the interactional purposes for which those resources are mobilized. A better understanding of these patterns may enable EFL educators to distinguish between strategic multilingual practices that facilitate communication and patterns that may indicate areas where students require further English-language support. It may also contribute to more context-sensitive language practices in multilingual higher education rather than relying exclusively on either strict English-only expectations or unrestricted first-language use.

Against this background, the present study explores student-initiated code-switching during EFL classroom interaction among undergraduate students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Specifically, the study seeks to identify the forms of code-switching produced by students and examine the communicative purposes underlying their language alternation. By drawing on naturally occurring classroom interaction alongside students' accounts of their language choices, the study aims to provide a more detailed understanding of how undergraduate EFL learners mobilize English, Malay, and other available linguistic resources during classroom communication. The study is guided by two research questions: (1) What forms of code-switching are produced by EFL students during classroom interaction? and (2) What communicative purposes underlie students' use of code-switching during classroom interaction? In doing so, the study contributes to research on multilingualism, classroom discourse, and EFL pedagogy by foregrounding students as active agents in the construction and negotiation of multilingual classroom interaction.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore student-initiated code-switching during EFL classroom interaction. The study was conducted at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Selangor, Malaysia, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants were 30 undergraduate students enrolled in an English language course. They were selected through purposive sampling because they actively participated in classroom interaction and demonstrated the use of English alongside Malay or other familiar languages. A qualitative design was considered appropriate for identifying naturally occurring forms of code-switching and understanding the communicative purposes underlying students' language choices (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Tahang et al., 2022; Haq et al., 2025).

Data were collected through classroom observation, audio recording, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. Classroom interactions were observed and recorded during six English language sessions, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. The recordings focused on student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions during discussions, question-and-answer activities, pair work, and group activities. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, and utterances involving language alternation were identified. In addition, 10 students were selected for semi-structured interviews to obtain further information about their reasons for switching between English and Malay. The interview questions focused on students' language preferences, difficulties in expressing ideas in English, reasons for using Malay, and perceptions of code-switching. Similar observation, recording, and interview procedures have been applied in recent studies of EFL classroom code-switching (Munawaroh et al., 2022; Gendroyono & Baharun, 2023; Haq et al., 2025).

The data were analyzed using the qualitative analysis procedures proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. First, the classroom recordings were transcribed and reviewed to identify student-initiated code-switching. The identified utterances were classified into inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching. Second, the researchers examined the communicative functions of each occurrence, including clarifying meaning, facilitating comprehension, compensating for limited vocabulary, expressing emotions or opinions, maintaining interaction, and negotiating meaning (Tahang et al., 2022; Haq et al., 2025). Interview transcripts were thematically coded and compared with classroom observations to determine whether students' reported reasons corresponded with their actual language practices.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was conducted by comparing classroom recordings, observation notes, and interview responses. Member checking was also conducted by asking selected participants to confirm the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations of their interview responses. In addition, peer discussion was undertaken to review the coding and interpretation of selected classroom excerpts. Ethical procedures were followed throughout the study. Participants provided informed consent before data collection, and their identities were protected through pseudonyms or participant codes. The data were used solely for research purposes.

The study was guided by two research questions: (1) What forms of code-switching are produced by EFL students during classroom interaction? and (2) What communicative purposes underlie students' use of code-switching during classroom interaction?

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of six classroom sessions revealed that student-initiated code-switching occurred regularly during English classroom interaction. A total of 126 code-switching occurrences were identified from the classroom recordings. The occurrences were classified into three forms: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag switching. Intra-sentential switching was the most frequently observed form, followed by inter-sentential and tag switching.

Table 1. Forms of Code-Switching Identified in EFL Classroom Interaction

Form of Code-Switching	Frequency	Percentage
Intra-sentential switching	61	48.4%
Inter-sentential switching	43	34.1%
Tag switching	22	17.5%
Total	126	100%

The findings indicate that students most frequently inserted Malay words or phrases into English utterances rather than completely changing from one language to another. For example, students used expressions such as *“I think this issue is very important sebab masyarakat sekarang...”* and *“We need to explain the main point dulu.”* Such patterns occurred particularly during group discussions and when students attempted to explain abstract or unfamiliar ideas. Inter-sentential switching was commonly found when students started an utterance in English and continued or completed the idea in Malay. Tag switching generally involved short expressions such as *“kan,” “lah,” “okay,”* and *“right?”* that were inserted into English utterances. The analysis also identified six major communicative purposes of student-initiated code-switching. As presented in Table 2, clarifying meaning was the most common purpose, followed by facilitating comprehension and compensating for limited vocabulary.

Communicative Purpose	Frequency	Percentage
Clarifying meaning	29	23.0%
Facilitating comprehension	25	19.8%
Compensating for limited vocabulary	23	18.3%
Expressing emotions/opinions	18	14.3%
Maintaining interaction	17	13.5%
Negotiating meaning	14	11.1%
Total	126	100%

Clarifying Meaning

The most frequent function was clarifying meaning. Students switched to Malay when they believed that an English explanation might not sufficiently convey the intended meaning. This was particularly evident when students discussed abstract concepts or academic topics. One student explained during the interview:

“Kadang-kadang saya guna Bahasa Melayu sebab saya nak pastikan kawan saya betul-betul faham apa yang saya maksudkan. (Sometimes I use Malay because I want to make sure that my friends really understand what I mean.)” - Participant 3

Another participant explained that switching languages helped them explain an idea more precisely:

“Kalau saya tahu perkataan dalam English tetapi susah nak explain, saya akan cakap dalam Melayu dulu, kemudian sambung balik dalam English. (If I know the word in English but find it difficult to explain, I will say it in Malay first and then continue in English.)” - Participant 7

These responses indicate that code-switching functioned as a communicative resource rather than simply an avoidance of English.

Facilitating Comprehension

The second most frequent function was facilitating comprehension. Students often switched to Malay when explaining instructions, concepts, or discussion topics to their peers. During one group discussion, for example, a student explained an English concept and then added a Malay explanation to ensure that group members understood the idea.

Participant 5 described this practice as follows:

“Bila saya nampak kawan macam tak faham, saya akan explain dalam Melayu. Lepas dia faham, kita sambung discussion dalam English. (When I see that my friend does not understand, I explain it in Malay. Once they understand, we continue the discussion in English.)”

This finding suggests that code-switching supported peer-to-peer communication and helped students maintain the flow of classroom interaction.

Compensating for Limited Vocabulary

Students also switched languages when they could not immediately retrieve an appropriate English word. This function was particularly noticeable during spontaneous speaking activities. Rather than stopping the interaction, students used a Malay equivalent and continued speaking.

Participant 2 stated:

“Kadang-kadang saya tahu maksud perkataan itu, tapi saya tak ingat English dia. Jadi saya sebut Melayu dulu supaya conversation tak berhenti. (Sometimes I know the meaning of the word, but I cannot remember the English word. So, I say it in Malay first so that the conversation does not stop.)”

Similarly, Participant 9 explained:

“Saya rasa lebih senang guna perkataan Melayu kalau saya terlupa vocabulary English. Kalau tunggu terlalu lama, saya akan hilang idea. (I find it easier to use a Malay word when I forget the English vocabulary. If I wait too long, I lose my idea.)”

The classroom recordings supported these statements, as several instances of code-switching occurred immediately after students paused or hesitated while searching for an English expression.

Expressing Emotions and Opinions

Code-switching was also used to express personal opinions, reactions, and emotions. Students sometimes shifted to Malay when expressing surprise, agreement, disagreement, humour, or personal evaluation.

Participant 1 commented:

“Kalau bercakap tentang pendapat atau benda yang lebih personal, saya lebih selesa guna Melayu sebab rasa lebih natural. (When talking about opinions or something more personal, I feel more comfortable using Malay because it feels more natural.)”

This finding suggests that students associated Malay with greater emotional and interpersonal immediacy, particularly during informal classroom exchanges.

Maintaining Interaction

Seventeen occurrences were categorized as serving the function of maintaining interaction. Students used short Malay expressions or switched briefly to Malay to respond quickly, show agreement, or prevent conversational breakdown. Expressions such as “*betul*,” “*ya*,” “*macam tu*,” and “*tak apa*” were occasionally inserted into otherwise English conversations.

Participant 6 explained:

“Kadang-kadang saya guna perkataan Melayu yang pendek sebab lebih cepat. Lepas tu saya teruskan bercakap dalam English. (Sometimes I use short Malay expressions because they are quicker. Then I continue speaking in English.)

Thus, code-switching appeared to help students maintain conversational continuity without abandoning English completely.

Negotiating Meaning

The least frequent function was negotiating meaning. This occurred when students worked together to determine the meaning of a word, concept, or statement. Students sometimes used Malay to compare meanings, ask for clarification, or confirm their understanding before returning to English.

Participant 8 stated:

“Kami kadang-kadang bincang dalam Melayu dulu untuk faham konsep, kemudian baru jawab dalam English. (Sometimes we discuss in Malay first to understand the concept, and then answer in English.)

The classroom data showed that this practice was particularly common during group activities involving complex questions or problem-solving tasks.

Discussion

The findings indicate that student-initiated code-switching was a meaningful communicative practice in EFL classroom interaction at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Rather than using Malay only when they failed to use English, students strategically shifted between English and Malay to support communication, clarify meaning, and maintain interaction. This finding is consistent with Tahang et al. (2022), who found that students used code-switching to clarify messages and continue speaking when they experienced difficulty expressing themselves in English. It also supports Haq et al. (2025), whose study of undergraduate EFL students identified mutual understanding, effective communication, emotional expression, and solidarity as important reasons for code-switching.

The occurrence of intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag switching demonstrates that students used different forms of language alternation depending on their immediate communicative needs. Intra-sentential switching was particularly visible when students

inserted Malay words or phrases into English utterances. This pattern may indicate that students did not necessarily abandon English when experiencing linguistic difficulty; instead, they temporarily employed Malay to complete their intended message. Similar patterns have been documented in previous EFL research, where these three forms were identified among students during classroom interaction (Tahang et al., 2022; Haq et al., 2025).

The findings concerning clarification and comprehension are particularly important. Students reported switching to Malay when they wanted their peers to understand an idea more clearly. In this context, Malay functioned as a communicative bridge that allowed students to explain difficult concepts before returning to English. This finding corresponds with Munawaroh et al. (2022), who reported that code-switching in EFL classroom interaction supported the delivery of meaning, negotiation, and classroom participation. More recent research similarly indicates that code-switching can support mutual understanding and effective communication among undergraduate EFL students.

Another important finding was the use of code-switching to compensate for limited English vocabulary. Students explained that they sometimes used Malay when they could not immediately retrieve an appropriate English word. This practice enabled them to maintain their speaking turn instead of stopping the interaction. Gendroyono and Baharun (2023) similarly found that university EFL students used code-switching during group discussions when they experienced limitations in their target-language resources. Thus, code-switching can be interpreted as a resource for maintaining communicative continuity rather than simply as evidence of inadequate English proficiency.

The findings also demonstrate that code-switching served interpersonal and affective functions. Students switched to Malay when expressing personal opinions, emotions, agreement, or informal responses. This finding is consistent with Haq et al. (2025), who reported that students used code-switching to express emotions and opinions and to demonstrate respect and solidarity. The use of short Malay expressions such as “*kan*,” “*lah*,” and “*betul*” may therefore reflect not only linguistic choice but also students’ attempts to create a more natural and socially comfortable interaction.

The finding that students often returned to English after switching to Malay is also noteworthy. It suggests that code-switching did not function as a complete replacement for the target language. Instead, students appeared to use Malay temporarily to resolve communicative difficulties and then continue their interaction in English. This interpretation is supported by Taufiq et al. (2022), who found that code-switching could provide students with greater opportunities to participate and interact effectively in EFL classrooms. Recent classroom discourse research has likewise reported that code-switching can contribute to student engagement and verbal participation.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that strictly enforcing English-only interaction may not always be the most effective approach in multilingual EFL classrooms. Students may need access to their other linguistic resources to clarify meaning, negotiate ideas, and sustain participation. A recent Malaysian review of translanguaging research similarly reports that multilingual practices can support cognitive engagement and learning, although tensions may remain between multilingual practices and monolingual language policies. Therefore, teachers may consider allowing limited and purposeful code-switching while still maintaining English as the principal language of classroom communication.

Overall, the findings reinforce the view that student code-switching should not automatically be interpreted as a weakness in English proficiency. Instead, it can be understood as a strategic interactional resource through which multilingual students manage meaning, vocabulary, interpersonal relationships, and participation. The findings are particularly consistent with recent undergraduate EFL research showing that student-initiated code-switching has communicative, emotional, and interpersonal functions. For Malaysian higher education, this perspective is relevant because students operate within a multilingual environment in which English and Malay can coexist as resources for academic and social communication.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored student-initiated code-switching during EFL classroom interaction at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Selangor, Malaysia. The findings revealed three main forms of code-switching: intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag switching. Among these, intra-sentential switching appeared most frequently, particularly when students experienced difficulty expressing particular ideas in English.

The findings further showed that students used code-switching for several communicative purposes, including clarifying meaning, facilitating comprehension, compensating for limited vocabulary, expressing opinions and emotions, maintaining interaction, and negotiating meaning. The interview findings indicated that students generally viewed Malay as a supportive linguistic resource that helped them maintain communication rather than as a replacement for English. Students commonly returned to English after using Malay to resolve a communicative difficulty.

These findings suggest that code-switching can function as a strategic interactional resource in multilingual EFL classrooms. Therefore, teachers may consider allowing purposeful and contextually appropriate code-switching while maintaining English as the primary language of instruction and communication. Such an approach may create a more supportive classroom environment and encourage students to participate actively in English-mediated interaction.

However, this study was limited to a small group of undergraduate students in one university context. Future research could involve students from different Malaysian universities, proficiency levels, and educational settings to provide a broader understanding of code-switching practices in multilingual EFL classrooms. Further studies could also examine how teachers' attitudes toward code-switching influence students' participation and language learning.

Ethical considerations

Prior to data collection, the researchers coordinated with the relevant academic authorities at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) to obtain permission to conduct the study. Ethical principles were maintained throughout the research process. All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and provided informed consent prior to classroom observation, audio recording, and interviews. Participation was voluntary, and participants' identities were protected through pseudonyms or participant codes. All collected data were kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to assist with language refinement and proofreading during manuscript preparation. AI was not used for data collection, data analysis, coding, interpretation of the findings, or generation of research data. All AI-assisted content was carefully reviewed and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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