Code Switching and Its Implications for ESL Learning

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Abstract: **With the advent of globalization, English teachers in the Philippine Educational System have been required to teach their subjects using the English language as the medium of instruction. By doing so, students are expected to graduate or finish language subjects with greater competency in the use of English. Moreover, in the newly approved K- 12 program of the Philippines, one of the competencies that is supposed to be acquired by Filipino students is an effective communication skill which they will be using in the future, given the fact that communicative competence will indeed be a necessity for 21st century learners. Filipino students of today, however, though exposed every day to English via the internet; do not put much effort to learning and understanding the English language. Moreover, not all Filipino learners are capable of learning English through an English-only-policy (EOP) mode of instruction due to the huge linguistic differences between the English language and the Philippine national language (*Filipino*) as well as other native Philippine languages which are the students' mother tongues. Thus, there is a big gap between a Filipino student's mother tongue and the English language which is a foreign language to Filipino students. To address this huge linguistic gap between English and the mother tongue or native language, Teachers in the Philippines have resorted to a Code Switching Strategy in teaching their subjects so as to enable students to easily grasp both the foreign and mother-tongue language. In this strategy, the teacher utilizes English together with some mother-tongue words as exemplars and for clarification of ideas for the sake of in-depth understanding. This study is an attempt to find out if a classroom that uses the Code Switching Strategy as the medium of instruction achieved higher learning levels compared to EOP teaching. Furthermore, this study also tried to determine if the Code Switching Strategy can contribute to better language learning through the use of the mother tongue as a foundation and a bridge for acquiring second language.**

Keywords: **Code Switching, Medium of Instruction, Code Switching Strategy, Mother Tongue, English as a Second Language, ESL, English Only Policy, DepEd, Philippine K-12Teaching, learning.**

I.   INTRODUCTION

In its aim of attaining global competitiveness, competence of its citizens in the English language is one of the most important competencies needed by the Philippines to reach its goal of being able to compete effectively with other countries. In the recently approved K-12 curriculum, the English language as a subject is included in the curriculum starting in the first grade to be taught simultaneously with the Mother-Tongue subject and the Filipino subject. At a young age, the learner is supposed to be acquiring multiple languages. In the classroom, a teacher uses various techniques and methods to effectively teach the second language. One of the techniques used by teachers is code switching. Code-switching is the way of interchanging between languages in different settings, ideas, and statements. In education, code-switching is the process in which teachers switch between the first language and the second language for learners to learn the second language.

Preview:

Section 2 of this paper presents a Statement of the Research Problem, followed by an explanation of the **Objective of the Study** in **Section 3,** while Section 4 gives the **Significance of the Study**. **Section 5 gives a Review of the Literature, while Section 6 explains the Methods used in the Study. The Results and Discussion are then given in Section 7, while the Conclusion is presented in Section 8** and the **Recommendations are presented in Section 9. The next section, Section 10 contains the Acknowledgement** and finally, the last section, **Section 11, lists the References.**

Statement of the Problem:

The problem that this research sought to address was why teachers use code switching or CS in teaching, whether there is a need to apply code switching to language teaching, and whether CS is effective in the teaching of the language to second language learners.

Objective of the Study:

This study was conducted for the purpose of finding out if a classroom that uses Code Switching Strategy as a medium of instruction is effective in meeting the learning goals of second language learners.. Also, this research tried to find out if the Code Switching Strategy can contribute to better language learning through the use of mother-tongue as a foundation and bridge for acquiring a second language. Furthermore, it aimed to find out if there is a need to apply code switching (CS) to language teaching,.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is important to countries like the Philippines with many native languages which are trying to develop global competence in English as a second language (ESL) for it tries to determine whether ESL can be mastered more effectively through an English-only mode of teaching or through a Code-Switching strategy that combines the use of English and the national language or native languages.

3. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In a study titled *Code-Switching, Bilingualism, Biliteracy: A Case Study* by Huerta-Macias and Quintero (1992), the findings indicated that code-switching, in both oral and written form, allowed for effective communication between the parents, the children and the instructor in a way that was natural and comfortable for all involved. The authors proposed that code-switching be viewed as part of a whole-language approach in bilingual contexts.

In relation to this study, Metila (2009) stated that the code--switching functions spanned pedagogical, communicative, social, and psychological aspects. Forty-four percent of the 34 student respondents viewed code switching as natural and acceptable, while 50 percent did not; four out of five teachers did not favor code switching, and three allowed its conditional use in the classroom. The pedagogical and communicative functions of classroom code switching justified its use in teaching and learning contexts, but it was recommended that code switching be restricted to informal classroom activities.

In Gulzar (2014, *Teachers' Code-Switching in a Content-Focused English as a Second Language (ESL) Classroom: Patterns and Functions*, it was stated that "as Pakistan is a multilingual country where educational institutions are inevitably bilingual and cannot sustain freeing themselves from the influence of bilinguality, both the teachers and the students have to switch from English to Urdu or Urdu to English during the learning process as both belong to bilingual or multilingual backgrounds. These factors along with other issues have been analyzed on the hypotheses of students' and teachers' attitudes towards code switching, functions and patterns of switching, and the effect of code switching in the classroom. The research was a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses in which relation between the uses of code switching and learning success was explored. The results of the study show that code switching plays an important role in a second language classroom. Both the participants, teachers and students, did not want to eliminate this strategy and favor it as a supportive tool in learning English.

To add to these research findings, Wheeler and Swords (2010), *Code Switching Lessons: Grammar Strategies for Linguistically DiverseWriters implied th*at code-switching lessons offer a targeted, successful response to teach standard literacy. Code switching lessons offer a research-based solution: contrastive analysis and code-switching. In contrastive analysis, the teacher draws upon the linguistic insights that all language is patterned and that dialects systematically contrast with each other. Accordingly, she leads students to contrast the grammatical patterns of home speech to the grammatical patterns of school speech. Code switching lessons apply strategies of critical thinking (analysis and synthesis) to grammar discovery. Indeed teachers use the scientific to lead grammar discovery. Also, code switching allows the students to choose their language to fit the setting as a child then learns to code-switch between the language of the home and the language of the school; teachers add another linguistic code, Standard English, to the child's linguistic toolbox.

In addition to these aforementioned references, some linguistic studies have focused on the use of CS in the learning process. Nordin, Ali, Zubir, and Sadjirind (2013) gathered forty-five diploma students who were randomly selected as the respondents. A survey questionnaire which focused on the students' attitudes, usage and opinion towards code switching in the classroom was utilised in the study. It was found that most of the ESL learners have positive attitudes towards code switching. The ESL learners were also reported to believe that code switching facilitates their understanding of the target language. The findings suggest that the use of code switching is necessary when the situation requires the use of first language in the classroom to enable the learners to become more confident in mastering English.

Also, in another study, Azlan and Narasuman (2013), *The Role of Code-Switching as a Communicative Tool in an ESL Teacher Education Classroom*, the findings revealed that three types of code-switching known as tag-switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching were predominant in classroom communication between students and between students and the instructor. The study also found that English was the dominant language of communication while code- switching was used to convey ideas in specific situations and to enhance solidarity in the first language.

Moreover, Lin (1996) *Bilingualism Or Linguistic Segregation? Symbolic Domination, Resistance and Code Switching in Hong Kong Schools* found that classroom code-switching is the teachers' and students' local pragmatic response to the symbolic domination of English in Hong Kong, where many students with limited English capital struggle to acquire an English-medium education because of its socioeconomic value. Also, the article concludes with a cost-benefit analysis of the English-dominated educational system in Hong Kong. Furthermore, Camilleri (19960a) in a study in another second-language user country, Malta, titled, *Language Values And Identities: Code Switching In Secondary Classrooms In Malta,* shows that they use English in two ways. First, Maltese is used to convey friendliness and warmth and to reduce the social distance between the teacher and the learners although English remains the language of the textbook, and its use increases the social distance between the participants. Secondly, because exclusive use of Maltese is associated with linguistic purism in the Maltese context and exclusive use of English is associated with snobbism, code switching constitutes a means of avoiding being dubbed as either purist or snob. Code switching by the Maltese teachers in the classroom contexts considered here needs to be seen not only as a communicative resource for accomplishing lessons but also as a means of constructing specific professional identities: using enough English to appear "educated" but, at the same time, espousing a Maltese identity.

In a culture-centered country like Japan, a study*, Code-Switching In Japanese Language Classrooms: An Exploratory Investigation Of Native Vs. Non-Native Speaker Teacher Practice* (Hobbs, Matsuo, 2010) was also conducted which revealed that that language teachers' code-switching practices can and often do differ substantially, influenced by the teacher's culture of learning. Incorporating examples from data in the form of classroom observation field notes and semi-structured interviews, this study added to the discussion surrounding the importance of language teacher education programs which prioritize investigation of teachers' background and teaching context in course content.

Lastly, Eldin (2014), *Socio Linguistic Study of Code Switching of the Arabic Language Speakers on Social Networking,* indicated that code- switching occurs in online interaction to serve addressee specification, reiteration, message qualification, clarification, emphasis, checking, indicating emotions, availability, principle of economy and free switching functions. This study provided insights on the code-switching phenomenon in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC).
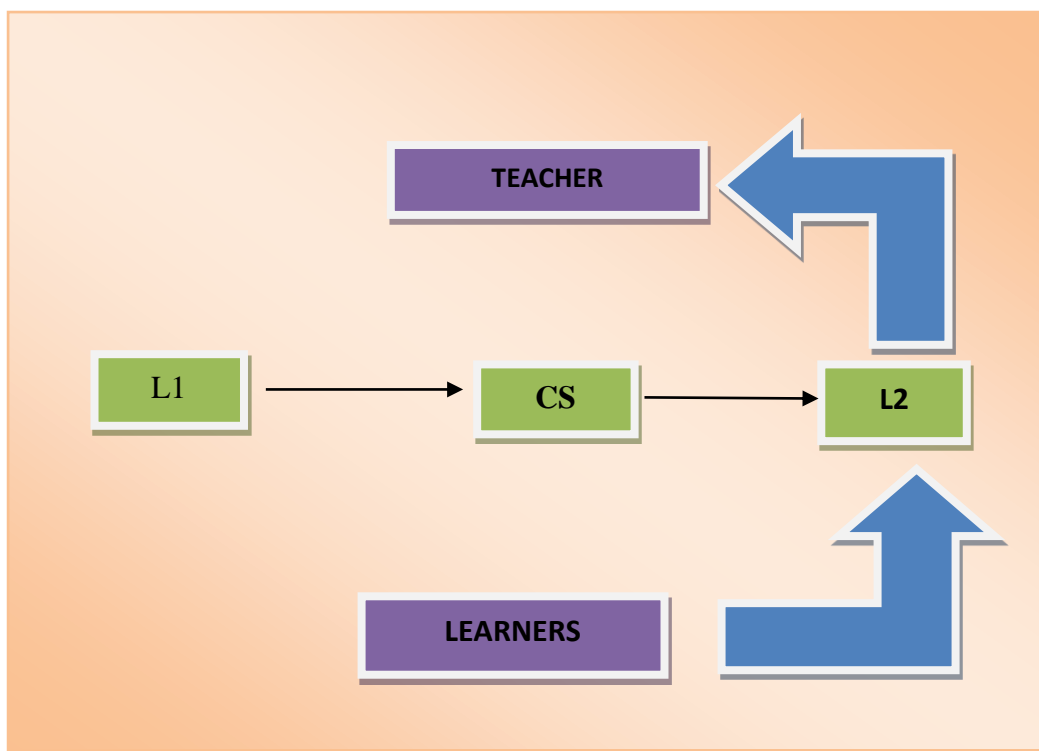
4. METHODS

Figure 1. The use of Code Switching Strategy proposed by this study

This research was a qualitative research making use of two research methods, the first method being the descriptive-observational method and the second being the descriptive-survey method. Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience's range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. It uses in-depth studies of small groups of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive. A descriptive study is one in which information is collected without changing the environment (i.e., nothing is manipulated). Sometimes these are referred to as "correlational" or "observational" studies. Descriptive studies, in which the researcher interacts with the participant, may involve surveys or interviews to collect the necessary information. These types of studies in which the researcher does not interact with the participant include observational studies of people in an environment and studies involving data collection using existing records (e.g., medical record review).

Using the first method, the researchers observed English classes of two Grade 6 sections in Sunny Brooke Elementary School at General Trias, Cavite. One of these sections used the code- switching technique and the other section employed the English Only Policy. Through this process, the researchers attempted to observe and find out how the teachers used code- switching and how the learners responded to the code-switching technique. The results verified if there were implications for the use of-code-switching to ESL learners.

Using the second method, the researchers conducted a survey through a questionnaire. The questionnaires were in a form of *Diagnostic Tests* that were given to the students. There were 84 students surveyed in total consisting of 45 students from Grade 6 Rizal and 39 students from Grade 6 Ricarte. Their answers to the diagnostic test became the determining factor of the effectiveness of the use of code-switching in teaching ESL. One-on-one interview with a grade 6 English teacher was also carried out. The interview provided information as to why the teachers used Code Switching and how necessary this teaching technique was to second language learning.

The test was composed of four parts namely: (1) Vocabulary (synonyms); (2) Grammar (Correct Usage); (3) Grammar (Identifying Errors) and (4) Reading Comprehension. The tables below (**Table 1** and **Table 2**) show the results of the said diagnostic tests.

5. RESULTS

Table 1. Grade 6 Ricarte's Diagnostic Test Results

Test Parts	No. of students who passed the test	Percentage
Synonyms	1 out of 45	2.22 %
Correct Usage	1 out of 45	2.22 %
Identifying Errors	4 out of 45	8.89 %
Reading Comprehension	31 out of 45	68.89 %

Table 2. Grade 6 Rizal's Diagnostic Test Result

Test Parts	No. of students who passed the test	Percentage
Synonyms	4 out of 39	10.26 %
Correct Usage	8 out of 39	20.5 %
Identifying Errors	7 out of 39	17.95 %
Reading Comprehension	22 out of 39	56.41 %

Observation:

The researchers used their observation rubrics to observe the teacher and their students during their lesson where the teacher used Code-Switching Technique for Grade 6 Ricarte and English Only Policy for Grade 6 Rizal. The tables below show the results of the observation.

Table 3. Rubric used to observe the English teacher who used CS technique to Grade 6 Ricarte

Expected outcomes	4 (evident)	3(fairly evident)	2 (poorly evident)	1(never seen)
1. Uses both Filipino and English as a medium of instruction.	X			
2. Balances the use of two languages with inclination to English but with translation to Filipino in some periods.	X			
3. Asked comprehension questions and answers inquiries using CS technique	X			
4. Demonstrates skills in the use of CS technique with confidence and ease.	X			

Table 4. Rubric used to observe students from Grade 6 Ricarte when their teacher used CS technique

Expected outcomes	4 (evident)	3 (fairly evident)	2 (poorly evident)	1 (never seen)
1. Answer teacher's question in pure English effectively and correctly.			X	
2. Gives opinions and inquiries in prescribe medium.		X		
3. Understands and follow written and oral instructions given by the teacher regardless of medium.	X			
4. Students engaged with willingness.	X			
5. Converses with other students with English during collaborative activities with comfortability and ease.		X		

Table 5. Rubric used to observe the English teacher who used EOP technique to Grade 6 Rizal

Expected outcomes	4 (evident)	3 (fairly Evident)	2 (poorly Evident)	1 (never seen)
1. Uses English as a medium in conversing with students	X			
2. Engages and encourages students to participate in class discussion.	X			
3. Uses instructional materials written and modified in English language.	X			
4. Asks comprehension questions and X answers student's inquiries in English.				
5. Gives directions and instructions to students in English.	X			
6. Demonstrates skills in the use of English language with confidence and ease.	X			

Table 6. Rubric used to observe students from Grade 6 Rizal when their teacher used EOP

Expected outcomes	4 (evident)	3 (fairly evident)	2 (poorly evident)	1 (never seen)
1. Answer teacher's question in pure English effectively and correctly.	X			
2. Gives opinions and inquiries in prescribe medium.		X		
3. Understands and follow written and oral instructions given by the teacher regardless of medium.		X		
4. Students engaged with willingness.			X	
5. Converses with other students with English during collaborative activities with comfortability and ease.		X		

Interview:

QUESTION: For you, what technique is more effective to use in teaching English as a Second Language? Code-Switching technique? English Only Policy?

The teacher answered.

"*So far, kasi ngayon ang mga bata, mahinaang kanilang comprehension.'Yon yung kahinaan ng mga bata. Kung mag-eenglish ng tuloy-tuloy ang teacher ang tendency nakanganga sila. Hindi sila nagpaparticipate kase wala nga silang comprehension sa mga simpleng vocabulary. Pero may mga situation na halimbawa sa mga estudyante yung rizal, star section siya ang ginagamit namin EOP. 'Yun yung daredaretsoang pag-eenglish.Nakakapagparticipate sila ang problem instruction palang hindi na nila kayang intindihin yung instruction by itself. Kapag ang teacher ang nagbabasa at tinatranslate or tinagalog ko siya, naiitindihan nila.*"

[.. So far, the students tend to have a poor comprehension. That is the weakness of the children. If the teacher will speak in English fluently, the students will not able to follow. The students cannot participate because they have poor comprehension even in simple vocabulary. There are situations like for example the students from Rizal, they are the star section so we use EOP. They can participate but the problem is they cannot understand instructions by themselves. When the teacher reads and translates it in Filipino then that is the time that they can understand.]

6. DISCUSSION

The diagnostic test results show that in the first part of the test (Synonyms), 10.26 % of the students from Grade 6 Rizal passed but from Grade 6 Ricarte only 2.22% passed. In the second part of the test (Correct Usage), 20.5 % of the students from Grade 6 Rizal passed while only 2.22 % of students from Grade 6 Ricarte passed the second part. In the third part of the test (Identifying Errors), 17.95% of Grade 6 Rizal passed while 8.89 % only of Grade 6 Ricarte passed. Findings reveal that students from Grade 6 Rizal are more advanced in vocabulary and grammar. Whereas, in the fourth part of the test (Reading Comprehension), where the researchers used Code-Switching Technique in telling the story in Grade 6 Ricarte and EOP in grade 6 Rizal, former got a higher passing rate of 68.89 % while 56.41 % of the latter passed. This means that CS as a technique is also an effective approach.

The observation shows the difference between the two classes. In Grade 6 Ricarte, the class became more active in participating in the class discussion because they were able to express themselves with the language they are using. On the other hand, in Grade 6 Rizal, the researchers observed that the students were hesitant to express their answers because the English language became a barrier. They were not able to grasp proper words that would fit to what they wanted to say. Further, in the code switching class, the information is clear and understandable because the students knew the equivalent of some unfamiliar English words in Filipino.

According to the teacher, she preferred to use the Code Switching Technique in teaching English as a Second Language especially when the students lack comprehension. For instance, in the Grade 6 Ricarte of Sunny Brooke Elementary School, the students understood the discussion better when the teacher used the CS technique. In Grade 6 Rizal, as the teacher said, the students from this section coped even when the teacher employed the EOP technique. This means that the technique to be used will still depend on the ability of the students.

7. CONCLUSION

The Philippine Government's Department of Education (DepEd) has ordered the implementation of the English-Only Policy with the goal of developing students to be globally competent in English but what if the students cannot express language? This research has proven that the development of English as a second language can be facilitated in students through code switching, in which teachers used code switch techniques while students were obliged to participate using pure English communication. This allowed students to maximize the use of the second language and avoid imitation on the part of students. In this way the students developed competency in the second language as measured by the researchers using a diagnostic test aligned with the Philippine National Achievement Test (NAT) format and by the researchers' actual observations using a rubric of their own design.

This study therefore concludes that there is a need to apply the CS technique in view of the fact that there are students who cannot readily speak in the classroom discussions because they are hesitant about speaking in the second language. Moreover, there are also students who cannot understand the words in English because they do not know its equivalent or translation in their native language. On the other hand, if the CS technique is applied, the students will tend to have a more developed English vocabulary and comprehension skills before they reach the Junior High school years because the technique allots more time for the students to encounter foreign words while these are being translated into the Filipino language. This study also concludes that the teachers must have the freedom in choosing the technique that they want to use, whether CS or EOP technique, because they are the ones who best know what is best for their students for they know their capabilities, strengths and weaknesses and know the appropriate method needed to meet the learning objectives. This research therefore challenges the English Only Policy being implemented by the Department of Education.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the, information, and personal observations and experiences gathered from this study, the researchers recommend the following :

1. English teachers must be retrained in diagnosing a student's skills in English grammar and vocabulary so that students can effectively apply this knowledge to future use.

2. English teachers must be able to know what strategy to use with respect to the comprehension level of the students.

3. DepEd should its English Only Policy and consider the use of CS techniques in which the teacher is allowed to use CS techniques in explaining difficult words while the students are obliged to use English only as a medium of instruction.

4. The old curriculum where the elementary pupils have separate subjects in reading and in language should be implemented again.

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