

Exploring Codeswitching Occurrences in an Online English Language Learning in a State College, Philippines

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the code-switching in online English Language Learning (ELL) in Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges. The researchers formulated two main questions in this study: (1) What types of code-switching are used by students in Online English Language Learning (ELL)? (2) What are the effects of code-switching on language learning in an Online ELL setting? To answer the research questions, the researchers utilized a qualitative research design. The researchers observed and recorded the Zoom classes in the five sections of the Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies of the said College for the data collection. Research ethics was adequately observed in the process of data gathering. Additionally, the researchers interviewed students from each class to triangulate the study results. Moreover, the researchers used content and thematic analyses to analyze the collected data from the transcribed audio and interviews. Furthermore, the findings showed that among the three types of code-switching that Poplack (1980) has categorized. The most prevalent type of switching that English Language Studies students mostly use is tag switching; Second, intra-sentential code-switching; Then, the inter-sentential code-switching. The results also explained the various perceptions of English Language students about the employment of code-switching in their classes. The paper also presents code-switching's positive and negative effects on students' language learning.

Keywords: Codeswitching, Language Education, Online English Language Learning

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1 INTRODUCTION

Being a culturally and linguistically diverse country, it has been commonplace in the Philippines to have a society full of bilingual and multilingual individuals. The Philippines has various dialects being spoken in different regions; thus, code-switching in the Philippines is rampantly perceived daily. When Filipinos socialize, they are exposed to various situations and cultures. As a result, when conversing with others, they prefer to code-switch from one language to another depending on the situation and their needs

Some Filipinos speak three languages: their native tongue, Filipino, and English. Since the American colonization took place in the Philippines, English has been one of the languages spoken by some Filipinos. Using English and dialect in combination is a typical linguistic occurrence among Filipinos. On the other hand, most Filipinos continue to speak their native tongue rather than the national language. Thus, code-switching is a common natural linguistic phenomenon

when a native speaker combines either his dialect or English language in single utterances in the same situation.

Due to American influence, the English language has been ingrained in our culture and way of life. Despite the prominence of English in the Philippines, there are still challenges with English language learning. One of the issues in the country is that the English language gradually becomes vernacularized (Spoken English associated with the local dialect or tongue). Since our first Filipino English teachers had to endure the former educational system, they had no choice but to substitute vernacular patterns for Standard English (and all other languages in the Philippines). Due to the lack of native-speaking models, they also vernacularized in terms of sound, sentence structure, intonation, and even vocabulary.

Another issue in English Language Learning (ELL) is that the English language system in the Philippines has deteriorated. According to Andre Gonzales, the essential aspect of our language situation in the Philippines that has altered, particularly during the war, is sociolinguistics (the study of cultural norms and language context). Gonzales stated three reasons: (1) the shortage of books and study resources, which were limited or often unavailable, (2) low pay scales and harsh working circumstances, which all contributed to a progressive drop in quality and (3) the absence of native speakers as language models.

Regrettably, the Philippines' reputation as an English-speaking nation erodes as specific individuals fail to achieve acceptable standards. The worst aspect of all the concerns is a negative attitude toward learning the language. According to Phebe S. Pena, the Philippines' current state of English Language Learning (ELL) is a continuum of basilect, mesolect, and acrolect. She explains that most learners and administrators are basilectal, which means they have already fossilized and incorrect forms. Some students or professionals have fossilized English language skills. When a person stops learning, they can become fossilized in their language, which cannot be remedied by additional training. So, the lack of a native speaker model is insufficient to avoid being acrolect (near-native-speaking-like); the mindset counts.

Accordingly, many studies have been conducted about code-switching in various aspects. Some research dealt with code-switching in social media or Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Some studies dealt with the ideological perspectives of code-switching in the business aspect. Additionally, most studies in related literature dealt with the emergence of code-switching in language learning in a classroom. The researchers believe that distinguishing the types and effects of code-switching in online English Language Learning (ELL) in the Philippine context may benefit learners, English language teachers, and language scholars.

In the educational aspect, code-switching is commonly perceived. Some studies have found that code-switching has been a habitual practice for teachers and students, especially when conversing in an actual classroom setting. But apparently, the Philippines has presently applied and implemented online classes in the curriculum due to the societal crisis, which is the pandemic. As a result, maintaining a decent interchange of ideas, particularly in synchronous courses, has become difficult for students and teachers. Accordingly, code-switching has become inevitable in the online classroom.

Generally, code-switching is not a significant issue in informal settings, but scholars continue to investigate and prove whether code-switching is permitted in the classroom, particularly in English classrooms. Although some studies emphasize the factors and reasons and the functions and types of code-switching, a thorough analysis should be studied, especially among the learners attending online classes in the Philippine context. This motivates the researchers to conduct a study that will deal with exploring code-switching in online English Language Learning (ELL).

Additionally, this study aimed to identify the effects of code-switching toward online English Language Learning (ELL); thus, the researchers believed that utilizing the Conversational Function Theory by Gumperz (1989) would help strengthen the study. According to this view, code-switching is a discourse style of communicative function that allows speakers to express and communicate pragmatic meaning. Gumperz believes that people code-switch for five reasons: speaker skill, interlocutor perception, peculiarities of the specific discourse, qualities of spoken

language, and more profound reasons. An excellent example is the Filipino's linguistic and cultural phenomenon called "Conyo talk," where they convey and express themselves through combinations of Filipino and English terms. As time passed, Filipinos began to use both languages simultaneously, resulting in code-switching. According to Bautista (2009), foreigners who visit the country, especially in urban areas, are struck by hearing the English language differently. This is known as Taglish, the combination of Tagalog and English words and clauses in a sentence. However, English teachers who force their language learners to communicate in the target language are concerned about this problem. English speakers may misunderstand students who express themselves in this manner. Furthermore, to support Gumperz's theory, Thompson (2004) states that code-switching allows a person to understand and convey thoughts.

The theories mentioned above, according to the researchers, are applicable in this study because they provide many "lenses" through which to view the study's problem and the linguistic phenomena involved, allowing them to focus their attention on different parts of the data and providing a framework within which to conduct their analysis. Accordingly, the theories mentioned above helped the researchers in the types and effects of code-switching in online English Language Learning (ELL).

In conclusion, conducting this kind of study is crucial, especially in this trying time when the country's educational system has undergone many changes. One of the results is working in an online class to continue learning and teaching. Students learning, particularly those who focus on this study, who are English majors, can be seen as complex. Although English has become the second language of most Filipinos, code-switching is unavoidable in most situations.

This study has two main objectives: 1. To identify the types of code-switching students use in Online English Language Learning; 2. To comprehend the effects of code-switching on language learning in an online English language learning setting.

2 METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a qualitative research design. According to Meleong (2006), qualitative research is a study that aims to understand the phenomenon of what the research subject has experienced holistically, such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and so on, using descriptive methods such as words and language, in a natural specific context, and some natural ways. The human investigator is the principal tool for acquiring and interpreting data in qualitative studies. Instead of dealing with numbers and statistics, a qualitative inquirer deals with facts in the form of words. The research data is presented here in words rather than numbers.

The study was conducted in one of the state colleges of Camarines Sur, known as Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges. Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges is a known State Colleges in Camarines Sur, Bicol Region. It has six (6) colleges, namely the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering, College of Business and Management, College of Computer Studies, and College of Technological and Developmental Education.

The researchers utilized class participants in this study. The class was under the Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies program at Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges. The researchers used five (5) classes, sections 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, and 3A, as the participants of this study. Each class should have major courses aligned to the said program, and at least one of the courses is conducting a synchronous class. The classes mentioned above were the data source needed to accomplish this study's goal.

The researchers used content analysis. It was utilized to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The researchers also used this analysis method to identify code-switching committed by the students during their synchronous class. The researchers thoroughly analyzed it in spoken discourse (audio recordings). This was done by asking permission to get the audio. After the data were collected, the researchers put them down in written form through these steps: The researchers listened carefully to the recorded audio; The researchers manually transcribed all the recorded data as accurate as possible and arranged them as a series of learning processes;

The researchers classified the data which contained code-switching was used as the data of investigation. This research method is valuable for producing a reliable and accurate inference from data concerning their context (Krippendorff, 1980).

For the first research objective, the researchers determined the types of code-switching students use in Online ELL. The content analysis was utilized to determine the presence of code-switching in the class and to answer the first question. In this question, the researchers looked into Poplack's (1980) three types of code-switching: tag-switching (exclamations, tags, discourse markers, adverbials, terms of address, and so on), inter-sentential switching (insertion of a phrase or a clause between sentences), and intra-sentential switching (insertion of a phrase or a clause between sentences) (insertion of words, phrases or clauses in the middle of a sentence). Appel and Muysken (1987) and Hoffman (1991) functions of code-switching were also employed to subjectively examine the code-switching utterances made by the students during their synchronous lesson.

Moreover, the second objective, in which the researchers understand the effects of code-switching on English language learning in an online classroom, was also explored. The researchers interviewed five (5) students from each class to respond to this question. Thematic analysis was used to subjectively study the impact of code-switching on language learning in online English language learning. Researchers used thematic analysis to explore the qualitative data in this question. It usually refers to a collection of texts, such as interviews or transcripts. The researcher combed the data for repeating themes, such as subjects, concepts, and meaning patterns. The researchers explored this by analyzing the audio recordings and transcriptions of the class.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Types of Code-Switching

Table 1 shows the summary of code-switching utilized by the students from five sections of the AB ELS program. The types of code-switching were ranked according to their use.

Table 1. Summary of Code-Switching

Types of Code-Switching	Frequency	Rank
Tag Switching	107	1
Intra-sentential	40	2
Intersentential	5	3

The table showed that among the three types of code-switching categorized by Poplack, the most prevalent kind of switching used mainly by AB ELS students is tag switching. The constant use of the tags or interjections like "po," "ano," and "yung" is commonly observed in the speech of students. For instance, before the students shared their ideas regarding the topic, they usually uttered "Good afternoon po. Am I audible po Ma'am?" as a sign of respect. As seen in the utterance of the first sentence, the greeting ended with the Filipino word "po." The Filipinos use this word as a sign of respect for other people. In the case of the students, they used the word to end their greeting with respect. Moreover, in the second sentence of the utterance, the students also used "po" while asking their instructor about audibility.

Another instance that tag switching was perceived in students' utterances was when sharing their ideas about what was discussed in the class. "So I would like to share lang po my ano, my misconception about..." in this statement, the student also used the word "po" in between the utterance. The students also used the Filipino word "ano," and its English translation is "what." In this case, the student used the word "ano" to replace the term still being processed by their mind. After uttering the word "ano," the researchers can perceive in the statement that it was followed by "my conception," which was the replacement of the Filipino word "ano." The statements can be categorized as tag switching because the students inserted Filipino words such as "po" and "ano" in English utterances.

The second most prevalent type of code-switching that the findings have revealed is intra-sentential code-switching. Frequently, the students employ this method when they are aiming to connect both languages (Filipino and English) to convey their intent in online classroom communication. Most of the utterances categorized as intra-sentential switching usually start in English and have insertions of some Filipino words or phrases. An utterance that describes this type of switching was the statement, "Sir, I did not know Kasi po di po ako naka-attend last meeting po." As you can see in this utterance, the student inserted a Filipino phrase within the sentence, which explains this type of switching characteristic.

And lastly, the minor type of code-switching observed in the online ELL classroom is inter-sentential code-switching. The findings showed that this specific method was used mainly by students to convey their ideas and intentions comprehensively. In the statement, "And lastly the Sanskrit alphabet is the most systematically, logically arranged alphabet than we have today. Yun lang po.", the student ended the utterance with a Filipino sentence "Yun lang po." and its English translation is "That's all.". The statement's first sentence is in English; however, the second of the utterance is in Filipino. As code-switching is perceived between sentences, code-switching can be classified as inter-sentential.

The Philippines is a Southeast Asian country with over 170 languages spoken by its population, with the majority speaking three or more. This linguistic environment is conducive to bilingualism and multilingualism, and most Filipinos are said to be bilingual or multilingual. People in monolingual societies may believe that code-switching is unnatural. However, it is unavoidable that people frequently switch languages in bilingual and multilingual communities.

English is one of the dominant languages in Philippine society, and it is considered functionally native by the educated class. However, it has been noticed that code-switching is frequent among those who speak English in the country. According to Thompson (2003), this practice was widely observed in television ads, public appearances, radio broadcasts, the basketball commentary, and other media sources, prompting the word "Taglish" to be established to describe the ubiquitous use of Tagalog and English code-switching. This preponderance of "Taglish" in Manila and surrounding provinces, according to Bolton (2003), makes code-switching "the unmarked code of choice."

In Philippine classroom discourse, code-switching, also known as pedagogic code-switching or classroom code-switching, has become a complex issue. As defined by Lin (2008), classroom code-switching occurs when classroom participants, such as teachers, students, teacher aides, and others, alternately use multiple linguistic codes in the classroom. Classroom code-switching was observed because this study focused on code-switching in an online classroom.

3.2 Effects of Code-Switching

The researchers also focused on the collective perceptions of AB ELS students about the effects of code-switching in their classes. These perceptions are categorized into three sub-themes: improvement of critical thinking skills, scale-up class involvement, and gradual development of English language learning. Code-switching positively affects the students' necessary thinking skills as it nurtures students' critical thinking skills by expressing their ideas appropriately. Additionally, code-switching is helpful in uplifting students' involvement in the class because it increases the students' participation in every lesson. However, code-switching was not beneficial when it came to the gradual development of ELL students. The students found code-switching to a detriment, negatively affecting their English proficiency.

Theme 1: Improvement of Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking is a skill that allows students or people, in general, you to make the best possible logical and intelligent judgments. This skill is the intellectually disciplined act of consciously and carefully conceiving, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, or evaluating knowledge gained or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to belief and behavior.

Code-switching allows the students to utilize their critical thinking skills before they speak. In their metacognitive process, students can evaluate their ideas and plan how they would express their thoughts on specific topics. According to one participant, "code-switching has a great help when it comes to an understanding the discussion. Code-switching helped students to comprehend tough portions of the lessons." Another participant also indicated that "when we code-switch, we will understand more of the lesson. When code-switching is present, it improves understanding."

Moreover, the researchers perceived effective communication in the participants' statements during the interview through critical thinking skills. According to one participant, "Code-switching is extremely beneficial when it comes to conveying or relaying information and being able to express our ideas fully." The student also stated that "code-switching allows us to easily express our ideas clearly and comprehensively during an open discussion between students and teachers."

However, the researchers also found the negative side of code-switching to students' critical thinking skills and English Language Learning. A student participant asserted that "code-switching confuses, switching a language within an utterance. As I express my ideas by changing my language from time to time, it creates confusion and affects my English language learning." This method becomes a challenge to the student in mastering the English language. Through the participants' statements, the researchers implicate that code-switching is an essential strategy for utilizing and nurturing the student's critical thinking skills because it helps them express their ideas adequately. Although one participant regarded code-switching as detrimental to English language learning, most participants believed it was an effective strategy.

In some studies, the language alternation between the English language and L1 is prevalent in a classroom as a helpful tool for aiding comprehension of any teachings provided, primarily to clarify complex ideas in more understandable language. Students actively code-switch to assess the situation's requirements (time, place, audience, and communicative purpose) and select the appropriate language style. Learners code-switch because they can't explain specific phrases in their original tongue in the target language, according to Sert (2005). Because code-switching forces students to consider their language in formal and informal contexts, it promotes metacognitive flexibility, which is crucial for successful literacy development.

Theme 2: Scale-up Class Involvement

The importance of class involvement in student learning cannot be overstated. Students learn to communicate their ideas so that others can comprehend when they speak up in class. Students learn to collect information to improve their comprehension of a topic by asking questions.

Code-switching is an excellent way to increase class participation in the classroom. According to one participant, "code-switching allows us to easily express our ideas clearly and comprehensively during an open discussion between students and teachers." This statement is supported by another participant who manifested that "code-switching is one of the reasons why it becomes easy for us to participate during the discussion, especially when it is an open discussion between the students and teacher." This implication is similar to Taha's claim (2008) that code-switching is a helpful classroom technique to scale class participation.

Furthermore, a participant also explained how code-switching increases class involvement: "code-switching is a great method to comprehensively understand the discussion in an English classroom. When the teacher is discussing complex topics, code-switching helps students further understand the discussion's key points." The researchers implicate that a code-switching is a good tool for scaling up the students' involvement. Code-switching helps the learners to express their ideas freely. Thus it leads them to be more interactive during an open discussion.

The occurrence of code-switching is a well-known phenomenon that serves various purposes, including scaling up class involvement, simplifying the understanding of complicated ideas, and fostering camaraderie. In some studies, students' participation will improve if code-switching is permitted in the classroom. Learners will actively participate only if what is taught is understandable and if involvement is encouraged; code-switching is critical. According to Poplack (2001), code-switching should not be stigmatized but instead recognized as a resource.

Theme 3: Gradual Development of English Language Learning

Students who cannot communicate or study successfully in English, often from non-English-speaking households and backgrounds, and who require specialized or adapted education in both the English language and their academic disciplines, are served by English Language Learning. In the Philippines, students can be classified as English Language Learners because English is not every Filipino native student's first language, and each learner has a unique cultural context in which their mother tongue is spoken.

In the case of code-switching prevalent in a Philippine classroom, it gradually affects the students' English language learning development. Because of code-switching, students are confused about what specific language to use when speaking in class. Mainly, the participants of this study are students in an English Language Studies program, and their English proficiency is at risk whenever they code-switch. One participant supported these implications by stating that "being contented and overly reliant on code-switching can negatively impact my learning, thereby resulting in slower language learning progress and a high probability of having low language proficiency." Additionally, to support the implications of the researchers, another participant asserted that "as I encounter code-switching, learning new information about English is a challenge which resulted to a blockage of new information." Thus, through the participants' statements, the researchers also implicate that code-switching challenges learners' English Language Learning, specifically regarding their English proficiency.

In some of the studies, language scholars found out that although code-switching can be used in a classroom, it has some consequences for language learning and mastery of the students and the creation of new and harmful languages. Though there is a predominance of code-switching, it is perceived unfavorably. It is an impediment to learning and mastering the target language. On a larger scale, code-switching can result in the emergence of unhealthy languages that threaten the dominant languages in the future.

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The researchers found that students still incorporate their norms when speaking regardless of the language used in English. There is a Filipino culture wherein every time a person speaks English, respectful words are used and inserted like "po" and "opo." Culturally, the students in the class always used and inserted po and opo in their utterances. The students in the Philippines still incorporate their culture into the English language. In the Philippines, using po and opo is widespread even when talking to foreigners, especially with strangers. Additionally, our native language is too complex to be translated simply into English, so code-switching has become the solution.

Also, based on the data gathered, there are positive and negative effects on the use of code-switching. Positive results are considered dominant because the students improve their critical thinking skills through the help of code-switching. The students can express their thoughts and ideas confidently using code-switching. In addition, the students become more participative in the class discussion when they are comfortable with their language. However, for those English-major students, code-switching is not helpful because it affects their English language proficiency and is a detriment.

The recommendations of this study are inclined to the findings of this research. Thus this study aims to enlighten all the stakeholders, such as the academic staff, directors, teachers, student leaders, and learners if incorporating code-switching in online ELL is a valuable tool in improving the learners' English language speaking skills. As these stakeholders become aware of the effects of code-switching in ELL classes, they will be able to give suggestions to the curriculum designers on what actions should be implemented regarding the application of code-switching in ELL classes.

Therefore, the curriculum designers shall put the following recommendations into action. First, policies that will create opportunities for the learners to have access to learn how to speak English fluently shall be implemented. The prevalent "Speak English Only Policy" should be administered

in ELL classrooms to immerse learners in an English-speaking environment. This policy will lead the learners to develop their language skills effectively, eventually achieving high English language proficiency.

Additionally, English language speech monitoring exclusively for English language majors at the end of every semester shall be materialized. It will enable learners to improve their language speaking abilities leading them to be fluent in speaking the language and be equipped with the adequate knowledge that will make them competent enough to incorporate the English language into their future professions after they graduate.

Moreover, Teachers who facilitate learning shall be trained to execute these policies to establish a classroom where fluent English speaking is perceivable. The faculty member should engage in interactive seminars or any related language education conferences, which will give them sufficient knowledge to implement those policies strategically.

Additionally, a student organization that will cater to the needs and allows every language student to enrich their language speaking skills shall be established. This organization shall carry out activities promoting English language fluency for the students. Collaborative activities such as training, seminars, workshops, or other language fluency-related activities that will help learners improve their critical thinking skills and professionally develop their English communication skills shall be materialized. It will make learners to be motivated to participate in such activities.

To make these activities more valuable, the learners who actively participate should be recognized by giving them a certificate of participation. Speech-linked programs and events such as oration, spontaneous speech, storytelling, or any related activities that allow learners to showcase and enhance their English language fluency shall also happen. Student officers of the said organization shall hand certificates or any tokens to the winners of the said events. Implementing these actions is necessary to help and direct language students to achieve high English language proficiency when they graduate.

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