

Decoding the Switch: The Functions of Codeswitching in the Classroom

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Abstract

The study identified the functions of codeswitching in the interactions of a fourth year class in a private girls' school. The non-participant observation method was used to document classes and break periods. Gathering of perceptions regarding codeswitching was done by conducting a survey among students and by interviewing teachers. The functions of codeswitching utterances were identified by analyzing the conversational context in which they occur. The results showed that codeswitching functions spanned pedagogical, communicative, social, and psychological aspects. Forty-four percent of the 34 student respondents viewed codeswitching as natural and acceptable, while 50 percent did not; four out of five teachers did not favor codeswitching, and three allowed its conditional use in the classroom. The pedagogical and communicative functions of classroom codeswitching justify its use in teaching and learning contexts, but it is recommended that codeswitching be restricted to informal classroom activities.

Keywords: bilingualism, codeswitching, semilingualism

The Bilingual Education Policy (BEP) emphasizes the value of Filipino and English competence. However, despite the noble goals of the policy, some Filipino learners still become *semilinguals*, speakers who have inadequate command of two languages. Sibayan (in Abad, 2005) identified today's semilinguals as young citizens who indulge in codeswitching.

Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (in Inductivo, 1994) defined **codeswitching** as:

an active, creative process of incorporating materials into communicative activities; it involves the rapid and momentary shiftings from one language to another, which may occur several times within a single conversation and frequently within a single sentence. (pp. 114-115)

Abad (2005) claimed that, Taglish, a codeswitching variety that refers to the combination of Tagalog and English, is used by “a whole generation of youngsters,” some of whom were ‘elite’ private school students “who (had) not been spared from becoming semilinguals themselves” (p. 36). The term *Taglish* is a misnomer because in truth, it refers to the combination of Filipino and English and not **Tagalog** and **English** from which the term was derived. It is technically correct to say that *Taglish* borrows from both English and Filipino.

Generally, codeswitching in informal contexts is not contested, but research is divided on the matter of allowing codeswitching in the classroom. On the local front, Inductivo (1994) cites the studies of Menil (1980), Braganza (1988), Tito (1984), and Abad (2005) as supportive of classroom codeswitching. Similarly, international studies of Rivers (1984), Cabarteja (1991), Faersch and Kasper (1983), Corson (1988), Lin (2001), and Edham (1997) maintain that classroom codeswitching should be allowed. This is due to the supposed advantages that codeswitching gives to learning.

Various studies had shown that codeswitching benefited students and teachers. *Taglish* was the preferred language for discussion of a majority of students and teachers for a science class (Menil, 1980) and this was also true for a study on a Biology class (Braganza, 1988) where codeswitching rather than Filipino was perceived to be used better for explanations. Codeswitching was also known to improve class participation (Tito, 1984) by inducing a relaxed class atmosphere that allows students to recite more often. Abad (2005) noted that codeswitching managed to lower the affective filter, and this consequently established rapport and created an atmosphere of informality. Lee (2006) likewise contends that the discourse in a math classroom should not be so different from the discourse used by students outside the classroom. The similarity in the discourses will allow students to contribute in classroom discussions and bridge any social and cultural gap.

On the other hand, research that presents the disadvantages of codeswitching also abound. A study of Payawal-Gabriel and Reyes-Otero (2006) shows that the codeswitching of mathematics teachers was said to negatively affect learning. Their analysis reveals that teachers’ codeswitching confused students and consequently affected their lesson comprehension. In short, students whose teachers discussed and explained with less disruption like code mixing, codeswitching, and marked definitions had higher achievement. However, a related study on how codeswitching as a medium of instruction affects students’ attitude and achievement in a science class (Inductivo, 1994) displayed that codeswitching did not help nor impede pupil achievement. Despite this finding, Inductivo (1994) recommended that provisions be created for codeswitching in classroom interactions.

Reasons for classroom codeswitching

Classroom codeswitching is perceived as a natural and expected practice of students and teachers who share a common first language (Krashen & Terrell in Abad, 2005). The

fact that they belong to multilingual societies is a contributing factor to this. Speakers mix codes due to several reasons (Pandit in Jacobson, 1990).

Pandit (in Jacobson, 1990) explains that **socio-psychological factors** play a significant role in codeswitching. The context is a significant factor that influences what codes will be combined and even the manner with which the codes will be mixed. Context may also demand for the use of codeswitching because it is deemed the most appropriate and most acceptable to use in a particular situation. The use of codeswitching, therefore, is a conscious choice, especially because speakers are aware of the social consequences of this particular action (Scotton & Ury in Romaine, 1989). For example, speakers have been known to shift to another language to allow everyone to use a particular language comfortably (Pascasio in Marasigan, 1983).

Another use of codeswitching is the discourse mode or **communicative** function that allows speakers to express themselves and present pragmatic meaning (Gumperz in Romaine, 1989). In this case, codeswitching acts like a we-code that also serves as the minority language for informal in-group activities. As such, codeswitching establishes group camaraderie as opposed to the they-code which is more frequently used by the outgroup for formal activities. This is clearly reflected by how codeswitching usually marks the different types of discourse or genres such as lectures or discussions (Gumperz in Romaine, 1989). In a study by Blom and Gumperz (in Romaine, 1989), teachers were reported to use official standard Norwegian for formal lectures, but they shifted to regional Norwegian dialect to encourage discussion among students. The communicative function also fosters a positive learning ambience. Codeswitching can easily transform the tenor of the classroom from formal to informal (Bautista, 1986). Hence, it is an option that a teacher can take if he or she wants the class to be more relaxed and to ask questions during the lecture. Poor language competence is another factor associated with the communicative function. Codeswitching is identified as one of the simplification strategies that students with poor English and Filipino proficiency have been observed to use (Gonzalez & Sibayan in Bautista, 1994).

Codeswitching fulfills a **pedagogical function** when it makes challenging subject matter comprehensible to students. In this particular situation, codeswitching is lesson-driven and not language-motivated. Teachers tasked to implement the Dwibahasa bilingual policy in Brunei said that switching to Malay was necessary especially in explaining abstract concepts which have no real object counterpart that could help define difficult terms (McLellan & Chua-Wong, 2002). In another study (Martin in McLellan & Chua-Wong, 2002), interviewed teachers revealed that they had no alternative but to codeswitch in order for pupils to understand lesson content.

To summarize, supporters argue that codeswitching should not be equated with an imperfect grammar system. Codeswitching may possibly be motivated by a speaker's failure to express himself in another code (Marasigan, 1983). However, this act is not viewed as so grave to be regarded as an error. Poplack (1980) maintains that switches are mere adjustments that even competent bilinguals make. It is simply a way for learners to bridge a communication gap. Hence, this supports the contention that codeswitching

should be accepted because it is natural and logical. It is fair and reasonable, therefore, to give a certain degree of allowance to language learners who codeswitch.

Nevertheless, negative views on codeswitching continue to give teachers, administrators, and even parents a cause for concern. Abad (2005) explained that parents are worried about their children's language development. On a more technical level, educators and linguists argue on whether codeswitching facilitates or impedes learning. Conflicting findings make the issue more controversial. However, some linguists like Weinreich (in Satuito, 1974) maintain that switching should not be totally prohibited. The ideal bilingual has the facility to switch from one language to another depending on appropriate changes in the speech situation but not within the same speech situation and within a single sentence (in Satuito, 1974). Abad (2005) stressed that codeswitching is beneficial to learning situations and it should be allowed in content area subjects to help students understand difficult concepts explained in English; however, she maintained that language arts courses should continue to use the assigned medium of instruction.

In light of all the conflicting findings of studies regarding the role of codeswitching in the classroom, teachers are confused on whether they should or should not allow their students to codeswitch in the classroom. This paper looks into the different functions of classroom codeswitching and the perceptions about it of participating students and teachers. As the main participants in learning, their codeswitching interactions and perspectives should play a significant role in determining whether codeswitching should be allowed in learning contexts.

Objectives

The study aimed to answer the following:

1. What functions are performed by observed instances of classroom codeswitching?
2. What are students' and teachers' perceptions about codeswitching?
3. Should codeswitching be allowed in the classroom?

Significance of the study

The study results can guide language and content area teachers in modifying existing language policies or developing new ones concerning the role of codeswitching in the classroom. The perspectives of students and teachers on codeswitching can serve as bases to ensure that classroom language policies are relevant and sensitive to their needs.

Methodology

Research design

This study has both a quantitative and qualitative design. The qualitative aspect employed the recording of codeswitching data and the conducting of interviews and a survey among teachers and students respectively. Gathering codeswitching instances in

context was needed to determine the functions it performs, while the survey and interview gathered data regarding perceptions on the codeswitching of both students and teachers. The survey responses make up the quantitative design of the study.

Sample

The study sample was composed of five teachers and one random-sampling-identified fourth year class of thirty-four (34) female adolescents in an exclusive urban school. The post-observation survey showed that the students were 17-18 years old, and fifty-six percent (56 %) of them belonged to families with an annual earning of Php 500,001 and above. In terms of language preference, fifty percent (50 %) of the students considered English as the language they use best, whereas forty-seven percent (47 %) considered Taglish as the language they use best. Sixty-eight percent (68 %) of the class preferred to speak Taglish rather than English or Filipino with friends, and thirty-eight percent (38 %) preferred to use Taglish with their families. Seventy-four percent (74 %) preferred to use English with teachers.

Instruments

The documentation of codeswitching involved audio and video recording. An open-ended interview composed of six questions about language policies and codeswitching perceptions was separately conducted with the teachers whose classes were observed. The questions inquired about the medium of instruction in class and the teachers' attitude towards codeswitching. A three-part survey inquired on the students' socioeconomic status, language competence and preferences, and codeswitching perceptions.

Data collection

Classroom recording ran for one week, with one to two hours of recorded classroom time of the subjects : English, Filipino, physics, science laboratory, and mathematics. The sample was not informed of the real objective of the class observation to avoid influencing their language choice. Once video recording was completed, students answered survey questionnaires. The responses from which were tallied and summarized. The post-observation interviews with the five teachers were recorded and conducted separately.

Results and discussion

Codeswitching functions

The class maintained the use of the assigned medium of instruction in different subjects all the time, except for rare instances when the teacher occasionally codeswitched during a formal discussion. Instances of codeswitching by students or by teachers occurred in informal small group activities. The recorded classroom codeswitching was observed to fulfill pedagogical, communicative, and social functions.

Pedagogical function

English was used for formal class discussions, but codeswitching was used during all group activities which usually required students to brainstorm in order to arrive at an answer to a given problem or to fulfill a particular task. Students always used English-Filipino codeswitching in these groupings, except for one instance where one group spoke in pure English. It was likewise observed that the math teacher occasionally codeswitched when she explained concepts in small groups, but it was observed that she spoke in pure English for all formal discussions.

Below are extracts from classroom observation transcripts where Taglish performs a pedagogical function in a group work in a math class and in a physics class.

Transcript A: Math Class (A student teaches her group mates how to compute for t [time]. The student refers to a drawing she made on paper.)

Student 1: Tapos nagging paganun ng ganun, so paganun, nagswe-sway. Tapos, ano, Jane, then di ba nagsta-stopwatch si Jane? Then, yung t is from here to here. Just when he's on ano, on the land, tapos, why is this to this (refers to two points) when he's on the water na? Did you get that? Jane finds that t is equal to two. Two seconds 'to.

Transcript B: Math Class (A student teaches her classmate how to solve a math problem.)

Student 1: How do you know it's ten? Bakit siya ten?

Student 2: Because it's the period, di ba? Twelve minus two. Di ba ang sabi one cycle ka at ten? Ten seconds. One revolution, that's your period, so it's two pi over ten. So that pi over five, pi over five, okay?

Transcript C: Physics Class (A student explains the difference between horizontal and vertical motion during a graded recitation.)

Student: Ahm, ahm horizontal motion is constant whereas vertical motion is accelerating, so habang pataas na yun, the cart is already moving away, so by the time na babalik siya, wala na yung cart.

It was noticeable that the students almost unconsciously used Filipino-English codeswitching in their group work activities and English for teacher-led formal discussions in class. It would seem that they have unconsciously assigned the two languages to specific class activities. The survey responses of students mentioned that codeswitching “made explanations easy to understand” and group work instances is one of the settings that allowed codeswitching to achieve so. Codeswitching during group work activities could be due to several reasons. One factor could be the time constraint involved in group activities. For example, math group activities asked students to solve for a problem under time pressure, and this naturally required a language that facilitated fast

communication. Second, group activities gave students a chance to work more closely with their classmates, and “Taglish,” as shown in the profile of the students, was the language they preferred to use with their peers. Third, the ambience in groups during such activities was relatively more informal than the class discussions led by the teacher. Such informal instances invited students to choose a corresponding informal language for communicating. Codeswitching was also encouraged by the absence of the constant monitoring of a teacher, who often went from one group to another on such occasions. This meant that students could choose to codeswitch instead of speak in pure English.

It was observed that the students preferred to use English terms for math and science concepts (e.g., acceleration) in their codeswitched discussions. This could be due to their unfamiliarity with existing Filipino counterparts for some of these terms. Hence, a smooth flow of discussion was achieved by using English for math and physics terms. Aside from using English terms for physics and math, students also preferred to use English for common concepts that appeared in math or physics problems (i.e., land, water, cart, etc.). These words have more familiar Filipino counterparts in contrast with the possibly lesser known Filipino scientific and mathematical terms, but convenience may be the reason for the students’ use of the English words rather than the Filipino counterparts.

In the post-observation interview, the mathematics teacher said that she found codeswitching helpful in instances when her students had difficulty in understanding some technical terms. She added that students usually asked for an explanation or a term that was culture-based. This observation supports the idea that sociolinguistic or cultural gaps should be bridged in math classes (Lee, 2006). Instances like these allow codeswitching to indirectly aid students in understanding concepts that could otherwise be vague or foreign to them. The transcript below shows how a student’s codeswitching allowed her to draw from her own experience in order to better understand her teacher’s explanation.

Transcript D : Math Class (The math teacher explains a concept for problem solving.)

Teacher: The surface of the water. Meaning from the rim, this is the rim, (the teacher points to the drawing she made on the board) up to the surface of the water, we have one foot remaining. What do you mean by that? What is the remaining one foot that we know from the center up to the rim is seven feet, what is that one foot?

Student: Here (points to the drawing on the board). The water.

Teacher: What is that? Yes, Juts.

Student: Baha. Mababaw. Below.

Teacher: It’s below the surface of the water. (The teacher affirms the answer of the student.)

It is interesting to note that the student used a Filipino word (*baha*) to express the concept explained by the teacher. This opens many doors for interpretation. The student was perhaps *thinking in Filipino* as the teacher was explaining. Hence, she also replied in Filipino when she understood the explanation. It may be possible too that the student

associated the math concept with floods because these could be observed in her Filipino environment.

Some instances showed that some words or terms mentioned in the problem were unfamiliar to students and they codeswitched in seeking clarification. The transcript below shows an instance where a student had a grasp of the concept but was unfamiliar with its English term. The student codeswitched in asking her teacher about what she thought was an unfamiliar concept.

Transcript E : Physics Graded Recitation: (A student reads a question she picked.)

Student: When a rifle...when a rifle is being fired at a distant target, ano ba, (addresses a classmate who was distracting her) why is it the barrel lined up so that it points exactly at the target? So like....(The student seems confused and then looks at the teacher.) Miss, ano yung "barrel"? (The teacher points to the place where the barrel is in an imaginary rifle.) Ahh.

Reciting students spoke in English in the formal discussions of classes where English was the medium of instruction. The exception to this is the codeswitching that occurred in a physics graded recitation despite its being a part of formal class discussion. It was also observed that even the physics teacher, who spoke in pure English in class discussions, codeswitched during the graded recitation. This activity, however, is unlike conventional graded recitation activities because cheering and clapping for reciting students were allowed by the teacher. Transcripts F and G below show an extract from the physics graded recitation class, while Transcript H provides a sample of the fluent English spoken by the physics teacher during ordinary formal class discussions.

Transcript F: Physics Class (A student reads a question and then codeswitches in answering it.)

Student: "Which requires less fuel, ahm, launching a rocket from the moon? From the moon or from the earth? Defend your answer." Ahh, from the moon...
 Teacher: Requires less fuel. From the moon? Why?
 Student: Ay teka, wait. No, wait. The moon. Wait lang. Because of the gravity.
 Teacher: What about the gravity?
 Student: Kasi the moon doesn't have...
 Teacher: Doesn't have gravity?
 Student: Ay no, joke! Wait! Hindi. I'm lost now, Miss.

Transcript G : Physics Class (A student codeswitches in answering a graded recitation question.)

Teacher: Why is it? Bakit nga? Why?
 Student: Miss, I don't know.

Teacher: The key question nga is why? Why? Why is it elevated when you shoot? Why not horizontally straight? Why? Why? Why do you shoot this way, not this way? (The teacher demonstrated two different ways of shooting.)

Student: Miss, kasi, eventually the bullet, if it goes up, it will go down...so it goes up and then it goes down...What? I don't know what I'm saying. (Laughter ensues.) (The student demonstrates a way of shooting.) So if it goes up and it goes down, malay mo, bale, di ba, di ba gaganun siya, eh may distance siya.

Teacher: What distance, horizontal or vertical?

Student: Horizontal, and then gaganun siya, so may projectile. Pag gumanun siya, eh ito yung target niya. O, di ba?

Teacher: What happens if it is straight?

Student: If it's straight? Bababa lalo. Miss, gaganun siya? Hindi. Gravity. So like that.

Transcript H : Physics Class (The physics teacher facilitates the discussion using pure English.)

Teacher: There is no force acting horizontally. Right? Because we said it's constant velocity. No acceleration but vertically, is there a force?

Students (in chorus): Yes.

Teacher: What's that force?

Student 1: Gravity.

Teacher: Thea.

Student 2: Gravity.

Teacher: Okay, the acceleration due to gravity. Clear? Once the ball is up in the air, what are the forces acting on the ball?

Student 2: Air resistance.

Teacher: Okay, what concept? Air resistance and acceleration due to gravity. Once the ball is up in the air, there is no force pushing it. Clear? When you throw it, the force of your hand will stay on the ball. Clear? Only the force of gravity acts on the ball. Downwards, then air resistance. If we neglect air resistance, then the force left acting on the ball will be? What force?

Student 2: Gravity.

Teacher: Clear?

Students (in chorus): Yes...No

Teacher: What's not clear?

Student 3: It's clear. Just kidding.

Interestingly, the pedagogical function that codeswitching fulfilled in the physics graded recitation did not just involve teaching and learning but also the modification of classroom ambience. The observed classroom situation showed that both teacher and pupils codeswitched in motivating a reciting student. It can be assumed that codeswitching somehow helped by virtue of its being the students' we-code with friends. Thus, codeswitching during graded recitation induced the comfortable or casual state that students feel when around peers. It likewise lightened up the mood in the class; hence, tension was eased.

Communicative function

Fifty percent (50 %) of students who said that they codeswitched in class claimed they did so for easier self-expression. They said that codeswitching helped them solve the problem of thinking of an idea's equivalent term in the other language. This vocabulary problem is very much felt in math and science classes where technical terms abound. Bautista (1994) cites a study by Gonzalez & Sibayan (1989) which shows that teachers would aid students who could not give the Filipino equivalent at "the tip of their tongue." It could also be noted that pedagogical and communicative functions often overlap in classroom codeswitching. Students codeswitched in teaching and learning situations because Filipino-English codeswitching allowed them to communicate in a more effective way.

The following extract shows how codeswitching fulfilled the communicative and pedagogical function in a math group work.

Transcript I : Math Class: (A group of three students solves a mathematics problem.)

Student 1: Pi ba? And then for one, wait, meron pa pala, two pi over three is five.

And two pi, ang layo ng two pi natin. Pi over twelve one. Goodness gracious!

Pi over twelve ten. Pi over twelve, one din.

Student 2: Insane! It's weird.

Student 3: Eto pwede pa eh. Pero eto kasi wala tayong asymptote here.

Student 2: Dude, oo nga. Eh, di we have to put ano. Ano ba yung asymptote na puwede pa? Ah, oo nga. Ano pa asymptotes na puwede pa?

Student 1: One, one.

Student 2: Wait, ano ba ang distance nito? Pi over two minus pi over two?

Student 3: Yeah. Three degrees na lang.

Student 1: Pwedeng asymptotes.

Student 2: Wait lang. This is weird, ha. We have two here. Wait! So it's two pi, three pi over two, four pi over two, five pi over two...five and seven, five pi over six yung nasa axis. Make it sik-sik. Ahh, wait. Put. We really need one eh. This one ha. Itong dalawa tapos pi over three.

Student 3: Pi over three? Di ko gets.

The participants' limited Filipino vocabulary is another factor in their codeswitching. The difficulty in thinking of equivalent terms in another language hampered the students' interpretation of a Filipino short story. The following extracts from a Filipino group activity give an idea of the students' insufficient Filipino vocabulary and how it necessitated codeswitching.

Transcript J : Filipino Class Two students were assigned to discuss the difficult words (i.e., *pelus*, *simbuyo*) in a Filipino short story. They used a dictionary in looking for the definition of the words.

Student 1: *Pelus* is "petal," I guess.

Student 2: A fabric. Ahmm.

Student 1: Like velvet.

Student 2: "Ng rosas. Na rosas." So I guess *rosas* is the color. (The student looks for the word in a dictionary.) It's a soft fabric. "Malambot na tela." Tela.

Student 1: *Simbuyo*.

Student 2: (The student reads from a book.) "Wag kang palilinlang sa *simbuyo* ng iyong kalooban."

Student 1: Hold on, I have to find it.

Student 2: I think *simbuyo* is like what your heart says.

Transcript K: Filipino Class (Students were asked to quietly read a short story. Seatmates asked one another about words they were unfamiliar with.)

Student 1: What's *bilugan*? "Circular"?

Student 2: What's *malapit*? What's *kabughawan*? Oh no! Ang labo. Malabo.

Student 1: *Lagda* is "date," right? "Date." *Lagda*? "Date"?

Student 2: "*Lagda*" is "signature." "Signature." Joke.

Student 1: What's "*matiwasay*"? Miss, what's "*matiwasay*"? (The student asks the teacher but she fails to hear her.)

Student 2: I don't know all these words.

Student 1: What's *yaon*? *Yaon*.

Student 2: I'm not sure.

Student 3: Ano yung "miss" sa Tagalog? "Nami-miss. Nami-miss kita."

Due to their limited Filipino vocabulary, students often produced sentences that were almost in straight Filipino except for a few English words.

"Kasi di ba yung parang nauhaw sa **smile** ng mom niya, di ba parang patak? Parang **rare**. Parang kailangan, parang kailangan niya yung **warmth** na yun."

However, difficulty with vocabulary is not always the reason for codeswitching. A student shared in the survey that she codeswitched because some words "sounded" better in Filipino and vice versa. This could pertain literally to Filipino's distinct phonological features. It's possible that the lexical feature that the student described as "sounding better" is actually the semantic load that a Filipino word has, a semantic essence that is lost in translation.

Social function

Survey results show that 9 % of students acknowledged that friends and other people influenced them to codeswitch. One student explained that her friends got her "infected" with codeswitching, while another said that she codeswitched to "make the person she (was) speaking (to) more comfortable and for him to better understand" her. These instances could pertain to outreach activities that required students to interact with *baranggay* residents who spoke more Filipino and Taglish than English. For such activities, the students had been instructed to speak in Filipino in order to communicate easily with community members. Speaking in Filipino or Taglish established a sense of

community with these people and discouraged them from thinking that the students were more superior to them. However, students ended up codeswitching because speaking in straight Filipino was difficult for them.

In the classroom context, one teacher shared that codeswitching depended on the comfort level between students and teacher. She explained that codeswitching would likely occur if there was a high comfort level among them. The transcript below features an extract from a normalization period, a considered break in the class schedule, where it was observed that teachers and students had a chance to discuss other things unrelated to the lesson.

Transcript L : Normalization Period (A student sells pearl earrings during normalization time.)

Teacher: Kinukuwento ni Gng Ms. Espada.

Student 1: You like? Akin na iyung isang pair ha.

Teacher 1: There are two pairs in a box?

Teacher: No, one pair.

Student 1: Kasi iyung isa real pearl. Iyung isa fresh water pearl.

Teacher: Are you selling?

Student 1: Yeah.

Teacher: You ha.

Student 2: Which one?

Student 1: Unless papaorder kayo po.

Teacher : Quiet ka lang. baka si nikki eh maano. You returned na mia ?

Student : Mia, what did Miss tell you?

Teacher: Mahal kasi fresh water yun. Where are the others? Whatever you see there, don't touch ha.

Codeswitching as an indicator of emotions

Use of codeswitching may also be an indicator of what one feels at the time of speaking. Interview responses show that the physics teachers believed that students codeswitched because of nervousness. The laboratory teacher believed that students in his class codeswitched because they were unprepared to answer a question. They, however, could not specify how often this took place, but they qualified that this was the “usual” case. The following extract from a physics graded recitation shows how one nervous student codeswitched.

Transcript M : Physics class (A student reads a question, then answers it.)

Student: Ahmm...(The student reads the question.) "Does a dieting person more accurately lose mass or lose weight? Explain." Ahmmm. Miss, I think it's mass.

Teacher: Why mass?

Student: Because, ahm...because ahm, ahm, ahm, because like when, when, when.

Teacher: When what?

Student: Ah, ok, kasi Miss, kasi Miss.

Teacher: Yung more accurate...

Student: Kasi, Miss, yung weight pwede siya mag-change kung kunwari nasa moon ka, so 1/6 lang yung weight mo. Pag andito ka, ah, iba yung weight mo. Ganun.

Teacher: But we're talking about going on a diet.

Student: Actually, Miss, weight. It's ano.

Teacher: Like it's what?

Student: It's, it's, it's dependent sa mass.

Teacher: And?

Student: Go to a higher place.

Teacher: Why go to a higher place?

Student: Kasi, Miss, mas ano, mas malayo dun sa...

Teacher: Farther from the?

Student: Center.

Teacher: So?

Student: So you weigh less and the pull of gravity is less.

Teacher: Okay, very good....

Teachers' and students' perceptions about codeswitching

Four out of the five teachers did not favor classroom codeswitching, and three decided to allow its conditional use during informal classroom discussions or activities where it should be regulated to discourage indiscriminate use. Students generally had a favorable view of codeswitching, and proof of this was the higher percentage (21- 44 %) received by positive impressions or connotations about it.

In general, roughly half of the class (44 %) viewed codeswitching as natural and acceptable. Various reasons were given to support this. For example, it was believed to facilitate communication (41 %), and make learning fast and easy (41 %). Thirty-eight percent (38 %) of the class regarded codeswitching as an activity that builds camaraderie among speakers. Thirty-two percent (32 %) was apathetic towards it, while twenty-nine percent (29 %) of the students regarded it as irritating, and twenty-six percent (26 %) thought that it was a language weakness. Twenty-four percent (24 %) viewed it as a "corrupted" form of the languages involved; nine percent (9 %) viewed people who codeswitch as "uneducated," while six percent (6 %) considered it as a reflection that a speaker was "maarte."

Four out of the five teachers did not favor the use of classroom codeswitching because it elicited a wide range of negative reactions (i.e., irritation, frustration, sadness, etc). Three teachers mentioned that their frustration stemmed from their high expectations of students whom they believed had the "right" environment, school training, language background, and language proficiency to provide them with fluency in English and Filipino.

Table 1
Summary of the Respondents' Impressions or Connotations for Codeswitching

Impressions / Connotations on Codeswitching	Number of Responses	Corresponding Percentage
I am apathetic towards codeswitching. I don't care if anyone uses it or not.	11	32
It manifests poor language performance in the (two) languages involved.	9	26
It shows that the speaker is "uneducated."	3	9
It is irritating.	10	29
It is a corrupt form of the involved languages.	8	24
It shows that the speaker is "maarte."	2	6
It is natural. It should be accepted.	15	44
It helps facilitate communication.	14	41
It makes learning fast and easy.	14	41
It builds camaraderie among speakers.	13	38
It manifests skill in the (two) languages involved.	7	21

When asked about their views on classroom codeswitching, fifty percent (50 %) of the students maintained that codeswitching should not be used in class as opposed to the forty-four percent (44 %) who disagreed. These students preferred the use of the assigned medium of instruction (English or Filipino) for classroom communication. Survey responses showed that students favored the limited use of codeswitching in "informal discussions." Eighty-eight (88 %) percent of the class preferred the use of English in the content-area subjects; "Taglish" was preferred by six to twelve percent (6 % - 12 %), while none chose Filipino at all.

Six out of the fifteen students who favored classroom codeswitching did so mainly because it made learning "easy" and "comfortable." They believed that codeswitching aided in expressing themselves comfortably and in making their explanations easier to understand. One student favored codeswitching because she saw nothing wrong about it. One student acknowledged that not all members of the class could speak English and Filipino "properly"; thus, she reasoned that the language in the classroom should be a mix of the two to give all students a better chance of joining discussions.

Of the 50 % of students who did not approve of codeswitching, 9 % did so because they believed that it prevented the achievement of fluency in both or either of the involved languages. These students thought that preventing codeswitching in the classroom was a "good way of training to speak in a certain language." One student did not favor codeswitching because of its informal quality which she considered inappropriate for the classroom.

Two teachers gave a strict 'No' to the use of codeswitching in the classroom while three said that it could be allowed under set conditions. As a whole, the teachers believed that there should be no codeswitching in content area classes and in other classes where

English was the medium of instruction. One teacher explained that she did not favor codeswitching because it adulterates the language. Adding to the opposition to codeswitching is the common observation of teachers that it “doesn’t sound nice and good.” The English teacher further explained that the fact that a speaker knew two languages was not diminished by codeswitching, but at the same time one should not “exploit” the opportunity given by codeswitching to showcase his knowledge of two languages. Hence, she maintained that codeswitching should not be allowed in the classroom because it took away precious training to speak in straight English or Filipino, a skill which she believed can be imbibed only if ample practice or training was provided to students. Furthermore, codeswitching during recitation was viewed by the laboratory and physics teachers as a manifestation of a student’s failure to understand a concept and a hesitation to answer. However, the researcher believes that forming such an assumption is tricky and problematic, for it may be possible for a student to give a correct explanation of concepts despite some language weaknesses. This will be accompanied by some difficulties, but it can be done. Similarly, it is also possible for a student who understands the lesson to fail in explaining it well due to his poor English skills. In short, a student’s unsatisfactory explanation should be correctly traced to non-comprehension of the lesson or poor language skills before making a direct association between codeswitching and the non-comprehension of a lesson. Hence, the use of codeswitching as a fool-proof gauge of a student’s mastery of the lesson is unreliable and unfair. These are the very situations which require the teacher to analyze whether her students’ codeswitching is lesson-driven or language-motivated.

Codeswitching in class group work received a “conditional yes” from three teachers who allowed classroom codeswitching. However, they clarified that the English medium of instruction should be maintained in formal class activities (e.g., class discussions, reports, graded recitations, etc.). These teachers reiterated that codeswitching in group activities should be governed by strict regulations to keep it to a minimum.

All the interviewed teachers agreed that codeswitching played a pedagogical function *to a certain degree*. They themselves codeswitched in some instances and they allowed students to do so under certain conditions. Teachers who allowed codeswitching monitored it by reminding students to use the medium of instruction or by rephrasing a student’s codeswitched utterances in pure English or Filipino. According to them, these gave the students the cue to start using the medium of instruction.

The laboratory teacher said that codeswitching did help in making the flow of discussions smooth because the codeswitching lexicon was used in students’ cliques. However, he noted that codeswitching did not benefit students in explaining concepts. He said that confusing explanations were given in cases where students codeswitched. This is consistent with the observation of the physics teacher that codeswitching did not improve the quality of students’ answers. These responses, however, conflict with the math teacher’s view that codeswitching facilitated learning by functioning as a medium to explain cultural concepts. The point of view of the laboratory and physics teachers likewise conflicts with the views of students who believed that codeswitching facilitated

easier learning and expression. Future studies can look into this disparity in perspectives and explain where these could be coming from.

Conclusions

An analysis of the gathered data (i.e., codeswitching utterances and the context within which they occurred, survey responses and interview responses) showed that classroom codeswitching performed pedagogical, communicative, and social functions. Among these, the pedagogical and communicative functions show that codeswitching does provide both students and teachers with *some* benefits in the teaching and learning process. The pedagogical function was very much evident in students' small group activities where codeswitching dominated all but one of the discussions. These informal activities provided the venue for students to act as both teacher and pupil as they brainstormed and argued to arrive at an answer to a given problem. The use of codeswitching in this context is believed to have contributed to the fast pace of the discussion and the informal manner with which it was conducted. These elements are very important to the held group activities because of their time constraint factor. Hence, the pressure to finish within the given time was balanced by the informality infused by the use of codeswitching, a language students admit to use with their cliques. The teachers themselves were likewise observed to codeswitch in teaching students in small groups. In the interviews, the math teacher and physics teacher respectively shared that they codeswitched in explaining difficult subject matter and in changing the classroom ambiance (lowering the affective filter).

With regard to perceptions, students and teachers were discovered to be ambivalent about codeswitching. The survey showed that forty-four percent (44 %) of the students favored its use in the classroom, fifty percent (50 %) did not, while six percent (6 %) did not give an answer. On the mentors' side, the English and laboratory teachers disapproved of codeswitching, while the math, physics, and Filipino teachers agreed to its conditional use. In their separate interviews, all five teachers said that codeswitching facilitated learning "to a certain degree/extent." They also said that they had relied on codeswitching or allowed its use at one time or another, but its help was always limited to a "certain degree" only. This qualifier was explained by the three teachers as the use of codeswitching to a minimal extent, that is, limiting its use only to the most expedient situation.

As a whole, it should be realized that the pedagogical and communicative functions of codeswitching justify the use of pure English or Filipino. In some contexts, speakers should be allowed to codeswitch and not speak in pure English or pure Filipino in order to address a particular social or communicative function. Instances like this should not be viewed as manifestations of poor language competence or the failure of implemented steps to curb classroom codeswitching.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- (1) English as medium of instruction should remain as the language for formal class discussions. The conducted classroom observation showed that teachers and students were able to communicate and understand one another during formal discussions through the assigned medium of instruction for a specific subject. Hence, codeswitching, whether by the students or by the teachers, was not the convention in formal discussions. Exceptional uses of such were supported by valid reasons that the situation clearly demanded. An example is the physics teacher's codeswitching during the graded recitation activity in order to foster a relaxed atmosphere in class. In addition, maintaining the medium of instruction in formal discussions serves as part of the training that the language teachers demanded and, at the same time, it is also one way of regulating codeswitching use. However, codeswitching can serve as a teacher's last resort in explaining difficult concepts in class. There are times when codeswitching is the best choice especially when one has to make a cultural connection to help students understand a lesson or a concept.
- (2) The use of codeswitching should be allowed only during informal class activities like group work. In such contexts it is better to use a language which the students are more comfortable to use – Filipino-English codeswitching. The survey results likewise show that codeswitching was regarded as a tool for easy self-expression. Also, the time pressure in group activities may not be as big a problem through the help of codeswitching.
- (3) The use of codeswitching should still be regulated to discourage indiscriminate use. Although there has been no categorical proof yet on the actual disadvantageous effects of codeswitching on a bilingual's language competence, it is better to take precautionary measures and ensure that no harm can take place by limiting its use in the classroom to the most important and appropriate contexts only. Hence, even codeswitching in small or informal group activities should be monitored by the teacher and regulated by clearly set rules.

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