

## Exploring Thoughts on the Use of Code-switching in Teaching English among Junior High School English Language Teachers

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### Abstract

Code-switching, or the use of two or more languages within a single conversation, is a common phenomenon among multilingual individuals. This study provides an abstract of a research project that explored the thoughts of the Tinago National Junior High School English language teachers regarding the use of code-switching in teaching the English language. This study was conducted using purposive sampling, having the three English language teachers in the said school, who were invited for an interview to share the necessary data. These three English language teachers were the teachers handling English subjects in the entire junior high school. A thematic analysis was utilized in interpreting the data shared by the respondents. Results revealed and provided insights that the use of code-switching in teaching the English language gives a beneficial impact in such ways that the lesson becomes simpler and easier to grasp. Moreover, students are able to speak up and share their ideas with no hesitation as they can freely express themselves by using the English language and mix it up with their first language or other preferred languages based on their comfort and convenience. This study provides thoughts and ideas to readers about the use of code-switching in teaching the English language.

**Keywords** :Code-switching, English language teaching, English language, first language

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### 1. Introduction

Code-switching is a linguistic phenomenon that has been observed in classrooms all around the world, and it is becoming more noticeable in English language instruction. The process of switching between two or more languages in a single statement or conversation is known as code-switching. It is most commonly used in bilingual or multilingual environments, but it may also be employed in monolingual classrooms. Code-switching has a positive effect on increasing and boosting learners' confidence and engagement during English classes and the teacher also plays a great part in boosting the learners' motivation to participate and engage themselves in discussions.

Villanueva and Gamiao's (2022) study discovered that code-switching helps students to better understand directions, eradicates language barrier for clearer instruction, promotes better understanding by students, helps them in generating a better choice,

ensures semantic understanding among students, and aids the students to investigate further, to clarify, to verify, or to confirm an earlier knowledge; where all of these are directed towards achieving a better performance of the teachers and students. Similarly, the study by Oliveria (2021) revealed that code-switching has a positive effect on increasing and boosting learner's confidence and engagement during English classes and the teacher also plays a great part in boosting the learners' motivation to participate and engage themselves in discussions. It also indicates that the more they are permitted to speak and utilize the vernacular, the more likely they are to communicate with their peers, especially during group activities. Another study by Thao (2021) revealed that code-switching (CS) might create a chance for learners to develop their language as CS makes it possible to clearly transfer messages from the speakers to the hearers. In addition, it helps learners feel more comfortable in language classroom, which helps them become more active in English speaking activities and make their learning process become more effective. Additionally, Liwanag and Labor (2016) claimed in their study that the "English Only" policy for content-based instruction seems impractical and ineffective in countries where English is the second or foreign language. The findings in such a study offered strong indications that code-switching by teachers and students are not to be deduced as incompetence in teaching and ineffectiveness to understand because code-switching in content subjects is a bilingual speaker's communicative skill. Moreover, Simasiku, et.al. (2015) concluded in their study that code-switching could be used to help master content subjects and aid teaching and learning. They emphasized that if teachers believe that they are doing the right thing by code-switching and are viewed as linguistically competent, their use of code-switching may accomplish what it is intended for, namely: enhancing teaching, learning, and concept clarification. Teachers are to decide also when the first language (L1) should be used and when the second language (L2) is appropriate for comprehension and meaningful involvement of the learners, which ultimately leads to enhancing academic achievement.

Code-switching also refers to two or more languages being utilized in the same discourse. Linguists have been studying this phenomenon for decades, and there has recently been a surge of interest in code-switching research. Nonetheless, there is still a gap in the literature on the subject due to a lack of study and data accessible for analysis. This gap in the literature is particularly noticeable in the field of code-switching studies, where there is a dearth of empirical data and studies on the subject. This is because code-switching is a relatively recent phenomenon, and there is still much to learn about it. Furthermore, much research on code-switching has been confined to specific circumstances and language pairs, making it difficult to generalize the findings across diverse contexts. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of studies conducted on code-switching. Much of this research has focused on the language dynamics of code-switching and how it is used in different contexts. The studies of Villanueva and Gamiao (2022), and Thao (2021) demonstrate that code-switching is an important phenomenon that requires further exploration. Despite the fact that there is currently a deficit in the literature on code-switching research, the rising number of studies being undertaken shows that code-switching is an essential topic of study. Linguists will be able to better grasp the numerous settings in which code-switching is utilized and the varied roles it serves as more data becomes available.

Based on the researcher's experience of his four years in teaching English to Junior High School students in his work station, the largest national high school in the District of Inopacan, many students manifested fear of speaking straight in English during their English classes. In some cases, they were not able to grasp what the teacher discussed and

share with them. Eventually, they declined to pay attention to the teacher's discussion. This condition had an impact on their graded academic performances, which were unsatisfactory. Because English was not their first language, it was more difficult for the teachers, not only English teachers even, to teach them without the aid of code-switching. Code-switching became then common practice for teachers. As some teachers feel comfortable and believe that the use of code-switching in English class really matters in making students easily grasp certain concepts of the lesson, for a better understanding of the underlying truth behind the use of code-switching, this research was conducted to explore on the thoughts of the English language teachers regarding the use of code-switching in English classes in a qualitative approach.

## **2. Research Objectives**

This research focused on exploring insights on the use of code-switching in teaching English among Tinago National Junior High School English teachers. Specifically, it aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- 2.1 To explore the ideas or thoughts of the teachers on the use of code-switching in English classes
- 2.2 To understand English language teachers' beliefs regarding the effectiveness of utilizing code-switching in their English classes
- 2.3 To discover particular cases English language teachers utilize code-switching
- 2.4 To describe how frequently English language teachers utilize code-switching in their English classes.

## **3. Research Questions**

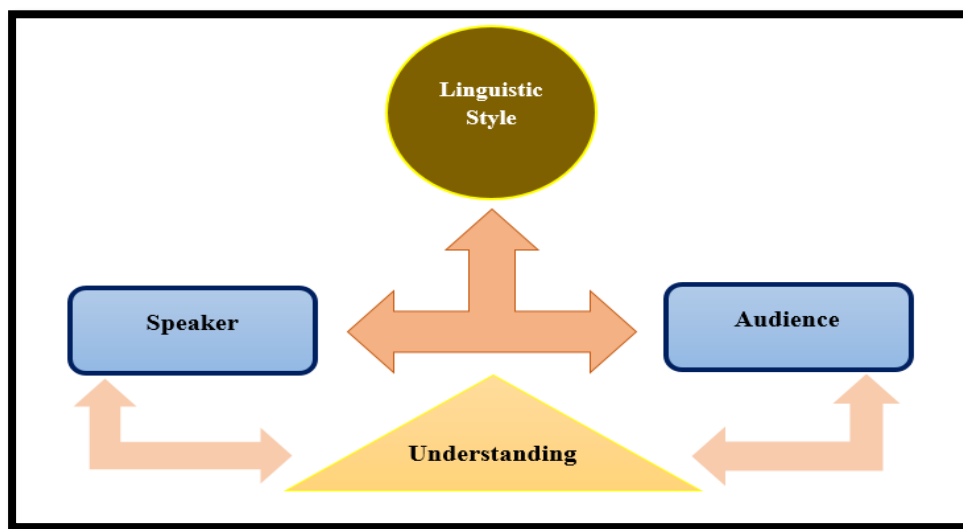
Students of a second language basically do not learn as fast as they do in their first language, hence the utilization of code-switching becomes a technique for some teachers in making their lessons easier to understand. In the actual teaching of English, the use of code-switching becomes a crucial process in which the audience who are the students must be considered to be at the center-stage for its success, otherwise, it would be a general challenge. To better understand the use of code-switching in teaching English, this study was conducted to explore on the insights of the Tinago National Junior High School English language teachers regarding the use of code-switching in teaching the English language and specifically tried to answer the following specific questions.

- 3.1 What do English language teachers think about code-switching in English classes?
- 3.2 Do English language teachers believe that the use of code-switching in English classes is effective?
- 3.3 In what particular cases or situations do English language teachers utilize code-switching?
- 3.4 How frequently do teachers utilize code-switching?

#### 4. Theoretical Framework of the Study

This research lodges the Audience Design model which is a sociolinguistic model outlined by Allan Bell (1984) which proposes that linguistic style-shifting happens usually in reaction to a speaker's audience. In this model, the audio system regulates their speech in the main direction to their target market to express team spirit or intimacy with them, or far from their audience's speech to express distance.

Figure 1 presents the Theoretical Framework of the Study.



**Figure 1.** Schematic Presentation of Theoretical Framework

The figure above shows the significance of achieving mutual understanding as a prime goal in the context of communication where there are some kinds of adjustments such as language shifts that are necessary. In this study, as this is focused on the context of teaching English, the teacher and the students as both speaker and audience consider shifting from one language to another in order to meet understanding, particularly the lesson in English class that is being tackled. This is how the theory of Allan Bell's Audience design model relates to the context of teaching the English language, in which language shift is an integral component in the process of communication or exchange of thoughts, ideas, and feelings.

#### 5. Research Methodology

##### 5.1 Research Design

This study was based on a qualitative approach to research. It utilized interviews to explore the thoughts of the Tinago National Junior High School English language teachers regarding the use of code-switching in teaching the English language. The three Junior High School English language teachers were the teachers handling English subjects in the said school and it is believed that their qualifications and statuses warrant providing the

necessary data for this study. These three English language teachers were all full-pledge master's degree holders and were all assuming their duty as English language teachers for more than ten years in the workplace.

## **5.2 Description of the Study**

The study was conducted at Tinago National High School, particularly, among the Junior High School English language teachers due to the following reasons: 1.) The School was offering English subjects, following to the set standards in the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum, 2.) The school was where the researcher assumed his duty as a regular permanent teacher, hence, it was very accessible and convenient for him to conduct his study, and 3.) It would be nearly perfect to meet the accuracy of data if all target informants who were Junior High School English language teachers were involved, considering them as the right persons to give information relevant to the focus of this study. In addition, this study sharply focused on the Tinago National Junior High School English language teachers' thoughts on the use of code-switching in teaching the English language.

## **5.3 Data Collection**

The researcher conducted an interview with the respondents to explore their thoughts regarding the utilization of code-switching in English classes. The researcher set a conducive place for the conduct of the interview with the respondents for them to provide their answers without any interrupted chance to express their genuine opinions or ideas. A spacious and distraction-free classroom was utilized and the conduct of the interview was set not during class hours. The interview schedule was agreed upon with the respective interviewees based on their comfort and availability. Proper lighting and ventilation and snacks were provided for them. Interview questions used for the interview were checked and validated by an expert who was a Doctor's Degree holder in the language teaching field.

## **5.4 Data Analysis**

The thematic analysis of Braun and Clark (2006) was utilized in presenting and analyzing the data where the focus unleashes the ideas per significant lines shared by each informant. Caulfield (2019) defines thematic analysis as a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is generally implemented along with an interview or transcripts. The researcher intently examines the information to perceive not unusual place themes – topics, ideas, and styles of which may arise repeatedly. In this study, this method of analyzing data shows subthemes per respondent's answer in each item and leads the researcher to develop a general theme or concept of understanding the respondents' insights based on their given data or information that were coded accordingly.

After the interview, the researcher repetitively listened to the recordings of the interview and transcribed the significant lines shared by the informants or interviewees.

He coded and categorizes the key points shared by the informants and developed a theme out from it. The developed themes led then to the answers of the research questions in this study.

### **5.5 Ethical Considerations**

This study disclosed only the information consented by the respondents with due respect to their rights and properties and according to ethics in research. Before the collection of data, the researcher sent a communication letter to the school head of the Tinago National High School in Tinago, Inopacan, Leyte, duly requesting their permission for himself to conduct his research in the said respective schools as the locale of his study. Likewise, the researcher sent the respondents a letter of intent to conduct an interview with them in separate schedules. The researcher assured to observe the ethical standards of research upon the conduct of his study.

## **6. Results and Discussion**

### **6.1 Teachers' Insights or Thoughts about Code-switching in English Classes**

*“Code-switching, as far as I understand, it’s a process of translating or changing strategies, the concept of lesson in a way it is easier to grasp by the students. It is also a strategic process in which teachers would have to utilize simpler ideas in order to make the English lesson suitable to the needs, interest and mental capability of the learners in learning language.”*

**-informant 1**

*“For me, code-switching in English classes is normal because we are not first users of the language, so enable to explain well the lesson to the students. The teachers need to use their own language like Filipino or Cebuano, especially if there are words that are new to them and very unfamiliar. Also, code-switching during classes can help students to express freely their ideas and opinions. What the teacher needs to do is to guide the students to come up with the answers using English language completely.”*

**-informant 2**

*It is shifting of language spoken in the process of teaching. It enables the teacher to facilitate the teaching of the day’s lesson.*

**-informant 3**

The responses of the respondents thematically expressed that code-switching is a strategic shift of language used in teaching to simplify lessons based on the learners’ needs, interests, and capacity to learn the language especially since the learners are non-native speakers users of the English language. It was emphasized by the first respondent

that code-switching is changing language or translating as a way of teaching strategy by the teacher to make the lesson easier for the students to understand. It is also a way of simplifying the lesson based on students' needs, interests, and capacity to learn the language. The second respondent shared that code-switching is a normal occurrence inside the classroom, especially in non-native speakers of English classrooms, and is necessary for unlocking unfamiliar words during discussions and for an easier way of expressing ideas and opinions. In addition, it was also elucidated by the third respondent that CS is of shifting language as a way to facilitate the teaching of the day's lesson. Overall, it is a strategic means for teachers to use two languages, especially the first language, to simplify the lessons and make them easier to understand and learn.

## **6.2 Language Teachers' Beliefs about Code-switching whether it is Effective or Not in Teaching the English Language**

*"Yes, I do believe that using this code-switching in English classes is effective. It is effective in a way that the language teacher has to strategize his/her lesson, make some modification and adjustment of his/ her instruction that would lead to a better understanding of the lesson."*

***-informant 1***

*"Yes, I believe that using code-switching in English classes is effective because it can help the learners develop their communication and language skills. Through code-switching, learners able to clearly understand the rules of grammar in English language and of their own language by relating the English language to their own language."*

***-informant 2***

*Yes. It helps the learners grasp ideas easily by translating the language into dialect or vernacular.*

***-informant 3***

It was found that the respondents shared similar beliefs on the effectiveness of utilizing code-switching in teaching the English language. Specifically, the first respondent claimed that CS is effective in the way that lessons are being strategically modified for better understanding, while the second respondent emphasized that CS helps learners develop and enhance their language and communication skills more, and the third respondent elucidated the positive impact of CS in deepening the learners' understanding on grammatical rules in both English and their vernacular.

In summary, collective insights from the respondents' responses showed that code-switching becomes effective in some specific ways:

1) Lessons are strategically modified for better understanding and it enables learners easily grasp ideas in the lesson.

2) Code-switching helps learners' communication and language skills and deepens their understanding of grammatical rules in both English and their vernacular.

### **6.3 The use of code-switching among the English language teachers**

*"If I teach literature or literary appreciation especially poem. I really have to cite some scenarios that would fit to the understanding and experience of my learners relative to the poem."*

***-informant 1***

*"There are many cases during classes that I use code-switching like explaining the directions, when giving to them activities and quizzes, when there are difficult or unfamiliar words while discussing to them the lesson, when reading stories so that they can fully understand the message of the story, and when relating some words or topics to their own language."*

***-informant 2***

*"It happens during the post reading and post presentation of the selection or grammar."*

***-informant 3***

It is commonly expressed in the respondents' responses that code-switching is applied in many circumstances such as when teaching literature, particularly, in the post-reading and post-presentation of the story, during grammar lessons, and in giving activities and assessments.

The first respondent shared that CS usually happened during his literature classes and that he would cite certain scenarios that are relatable to the learners especially when they have experiences relevant to the message conveyed in a particular literary piece that they are discussing.

Relevant to the first respondent's case, the second respondent also utilizes CS when reading and discussing stories. CS is purposefully utilized for students to fully understand the message of the story. It is additionally shared that CS is also used when giving instructions or explaining during activities and quizzes or other forms of learning assessments.

Similar to the first and the second respondents, the third respondent clearly emphasized that the use of CS occurs during the post-reading and post-presentation of the selection and in grammar lessons.

Among the three respondents' responses, it can be concluded that the use of code-switching occurs in many particular proceedings or activities in the class. It becomes a common practice among language teachers to use CS to achieve particular curricular purposes.



#### **6.4 Frequency of Utilizing Code-switching in Teaching the English Language**

*“As the need arises, and it depends of the difficulty of my lesson.”*

**-informant 1**

*“I always use code-switching in my English classes because I consider the situation of most students that they are more interested to listen if the teacher uses code-switching while discussing or explaining to them the lesson. And they are more willing to participate when you allow them to speak in English language and their own language.”*

**-informant 2**

*“It happens most of the time because the learners need further clarification in areas or topics that are hard to understand.”*

**-informant 3**

Respondents expressed similarity among their thoughts on the frequency of utilizing code-switching in teaching the English language.

The first respondent contended that the frequency of the use of CS is based on the necessity as expressed in the actual scenario of English class. The second respondent then claimed that CS is used all the time as her students were observed to be more interested to listen and participate in class recitation when she use CS and allow these students too to use CS when they want to participate. Similarly, the third respondent shared that she always use CS as she observed the necessity to do it for clarifying difficult topics.

Over all, CS is utilized most of the time especially when the necessity arises and it is observed that students become more interested to listen and participate when code-switching is allowed.

#### **7. Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study concluded that the use of code-switching in teaching the English language has beneficial effects in that the lesson becomes simpler and easier to grasp. Students are able to speak up and share their ideas without hesitation because they can freely express themselves using the English language and mixing it up with their vernacular or other preferred languages based on their comfort and convenience. Furthermore, code-switching builds students' confidence while broadening their communication abilities and linguistic knowledge. It is also advantageous for English teachers at Tinago National High School, Junior High School Division, to be allowed to use code-switching because it allows them to emphasize key points of their lessons, which are easily understood by the students, and thus the teaching-learning process of the English subject becomes smooth-sailing and successful.

It is therefore recommended that the use of code-switching in teaching the English language be permitted to improve learner engagement. It is also suggested that teachers go

above and beyond to research the benefits and other potential contributions of code-switching not only in the specific field of teaching the English language as a subject but to encourage other teachers to do the same in all other learning areas, all for the benefit of the learners.

## 8. The Author

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