

## Article

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### **Effects of Code Switching Among College Instructors and Students in a Philippine Classroom Setting**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the effects of code-switching among Filipino college instructors and students and identified some implications of the effects of code-switching in Philippine college classrooms. Using descriptive-qualitative analysis and in-depth interview (IDI), the researchers examined the effects of code-switching among Filipino college instructors and students. This approach seeks to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. The following effects to teaching and learning were inferred: code switching helps students to better understand directions, eradicates language barrier for a 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. All of these are directed towards achieving a better performance of the teachers and students. This study implicates that the use of code switching can facilitate teaching and learning in Philippine college classrooms.

**KEYWORDS:** code switching, Philippine classrooms, Social Interactionist Theory, classroom discourses, bilingualism

## Introduction

Learning a second language takes time and involves a number of factors. During the learning process, the learner tends to stick to the rules of the L1 and may have difficulty in applying the rules of L2. Hence, there is a tendency of mixing languages in an utterance. The term *code* refers to speech varieties or dialects in a language or even languages. This is widely used in the field of linguistics, and it is studied always in a social context. Further, it is a signal used by the speaker to convey some message. The term *code switching* means shifting from one language variety to another when the situation demands (Richards, et al, 1985).

Similarly, Skiba (1997) defined code-switching as the alternation between two codes (languages and/or dialects), between people who share those particular codes. Choices about how code-switching manifests itself are determined by a number of social and linguistic factors. It is quite typical in multicultural and immigrant populations. Code switching can take on several forms including alteration of sentences, phrases from both languages, and switching in a long narrative. In normal conversations between two bilinguals, code-switching consists of eighty-four percent single word switches, ten percent phrase switches, and six percent clause switching.

According to Gumperz (1982), code switching is the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. Simply put, code-switching can be defined as the alternation of languages.

However, not all cases of alternation of languages are cases of code switching. Several sociolinguists distinguish between code switching and code mixing. For example, in several studies, code switching and code mixing refer to intersentential and intrasentential language alternation, respectively. In other words, code mixing can be understood as the switching of languages that occurs within sentences, usually at the level of words or idiomatic expressions. However, code mixing must also be distinguished from borrowing in that borrowings are used to fill lexical gaps by monolinguals, while code mixing is employed at every level of lexical and syntactic structure by bilinguals. Moreover, borrowings are completely assimilated to the borrowing language, whereas mixed elements often retain features of the donor language (Gibbons, 1987).

Though many authors have dealt with the processes of code switching, code mixing and borrowing, not all of them have provided clear-cut distinctions for such phenomena. Code switching and borrowing are explained as a continuum in progression in which code switching precedes borrowing in time and is more restricted in its use (individual vs. societal). In Pahta's (2004) words:

*The distinction between the two may seem straightforward in theory: switching involves the use of two languages in one utterance, whereas the term 'borrowing' is used of embedded elements that have been integrated into the host language.*

Moreover, code switching can be both situational and metaphorical. Situational code switching occurs when the codes are used depending upon the situations. Situational code switching does not involve any topic change. When a situation of speaker changes, the codes used also change. Here, a change of topic requires a change of language. The process of changing the codes has connections with the social value and status of speakers. Since, they are deciding the codes to be selected.

On the other hand, code mixing occurs when the speakers use two or more languages together and mix them in a single utterance or in their communicative act. For example, a person speaking to an educated person or to an honored person in the society, he uses a standard variety. At the same time, when he speaks to the person who is socially lower in status' he uses a low variety. But, when he speaks with his family friends or other related persons, he mixes both the high and low varieties of the languages. In a casual conversational situation, there will be a mixture of both the codes.

Sometimes, a person who knows more than one dialect uses different codes. A person who belongs to one particular dialect may use a standard code in formal situation or with his friends. At the same time, he may change from one code to another assuming that the hearer also knows the change in the code. In a bilingual situation also code switching occurs. A person who knows two languages may know the cultural background of both the languages, and sometimes becomes proficient in both the languages and thereby he adopts code switching during language use.

Code switching is also possible in a multilingual situation; when a speaker uses more than two languages, he often switches over from one to another and ends up mixing all the codes. This is common in multilingual communities and classes like Ilokano classrooms in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, the Philippines.

## Literature Review

There are various perspectives on code switching. The practice of code switching itself does not indicate a deficiency of language knowledge; rather, it seems to serve a communicative function in conversation. Code switching as a conversational resource has been studied by several sociolinguists. Blom and Gumperz (1972) distinguished two types of code switching, situational code switching and metaphorical code switching. Situational code switching is related to a change in situation, for instance, when a new participant joins the activity, or a change in the conversation topic or setting. On the other hand, metaphorical code-switching is often used as a conversational strategy to enhance or mitigate conversational acts such as requests, denials, topic shifts, elaborations or clarifications. Gumperz (1982) later re-labeled metaphorical code switching as conversational code switching.

Code switching can be used by teachers by integrating it into the activities used to teach a second language. By having students get in pairs and switch languages at pre-determined points in conversation, it helps them to learn each other's language. Teachers can also begin

a lesson in one language, then switch to another language, forcing the children to listen carefully and comprehend both languages (Skiba, 1997).

Some effects of code switching are also worth noting in this section. The possible effect(s) the switching can have on the acquisition of the English language can be summarized thus, a) the switching enables students to discuss freely with their friends, teachers and parents at home and other settings; b) it helps them to understand new concepts better if explained in L1 which means that there are some subjects more effectively explained when switching languages; c) it is because they do not know the word for it in the other language and that the word is readily recalled in the switched language; and d) it serves as a status symbol. Switching here serves as a directive function wherein it involves the hearer directly.

The interest in studying code switching functions is not new as it goes back to as far as 1975 as Lance investigated whether code switching had any syntactic restrictions, but he concluded that there were none.

An important work on code mixing is Gibbons' (1979) study on U-Gay-Wa. In his work, Gibbons examined the nature of the language mixture of the students at the University of Hong Kong. U-Gay-Wa was predominantly Cantonese with a less significant English element and some interesting autonomous elements. He found some of the code-mixed sentences difficult to analyze because the structure of the mixture agreed with neither language system. He proposed that in syntax, there was a small autonomous U-Gay-Wa element. He concluded that the students had complete competence in neither Cantonese nor English. They developed an independent system – a fused competence – to cope with every facet of their daily life, this competence of necessity involving the mixing of elements from the sources of Cantonese and English.

The most comprehensive work on syntactic constraints on code switching comes from Poplack (1980), and Poplack and Sankoff (1988). They suggested two major constraints in code-switching, namely: the Equivalence Constraint and the Free Morpheme Constraint. After surveying the structural integrity of the component languages in code-switching, they argued for a separate grammar of code switching in addition to the two monolingual grammars. Ten major switch types were found in their studies.

Another vital contribution to the existing literature in the field of code switching is by the anthropological linguist Ana Celia Zentella who studied Puerto Rican children residing in New York (1997). This research was conducted through an observation as well as audio and video recording over a span of 14 years. Zentella followed the lives of five Puerto Rican girls from childhood to adulthood to determine the reasons for the use of multiple language varieties found in their complex speech community. The code switching styles of the five subjects were described along with the factors that trigger them. In addition to performing cultural work, Zentella discovered that code switching performs important conversational work as evidenced by her discovery of the use of code switching to accomplish 22 conversational strategies which she classified under three major categories.

Despite the significant findings of the foregoing studies abroad, a more specific review is imperative to contextualize this present study; thus, this section presents some studies on code switching done in the Philippines.

In 1978, Pascasio studied the functions of code switching in business domains among Filipino bilinguals. She identified six sociocultural functions which cause code switches: the role relationship of the interlocutor (status, position), age, sex, topics, speech functions and domains. Apart from factors that affect the code switches, she also identified the function it plays. These code switches were found to be used for quotation, interjection, repetition, message qualification, addressee specification, inquiring and giving information, personalization versus objectivization, and to express politeness.

Corollary to this, Bautista (2004) claimed the alternation of Tagalog and English in informal discourse is a feature of the linguistic repertoire of educated, middle and upper-class Filipinos. Her paper described the linguistic structure and sociolinguistic functions of Tagalog-English code switching (Taglish) as provided by various researchers through the years. The analysis of Taglish began with a linguistic focus, segmenting individual utterances into sentences and studying the switch points within the sentence. It was found out that Taglish has been viewed as a mode of discourse and a linguistic resource in the bilingual's repertoire. New theoreticians working within a Critical Discourse Analysis framework are seeing Taglish as a reaction to the hegemonizing tendencies of Philippine society and modern life.

## **Method**

This research employs a quantitative approach to obtain data concerning MTs' attitude towards FA and their practise.

### *Participants*

The population of the study is a group of English teachers who were appointed as MTs for FA under the English Language Education Reform 2015-2025 initiative. Purposive sampling was employed by emailing 60 of these MTs to invite them to join the study where 40 of them agreed. Mohd Majid Konting (2009) mentioned that 40 samples is enough for any research to be carried out and to run inferential statistic if the data collected abide to normality assumptions (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). 12 of the respondents are male and 28 are female. 45% of them are secondary school teachers while the rest are from primary schools.

### *The Instrument*

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from Neesom (2000), Yan and Cheng (2015), and Young and Jackman (2014) for the first construct which aimed to measure MTs' attitude towards FA. Meanwhile the second construct was adapted from O'Leary, Lysaght, dan Ludlow (2017). This construct is to measure MTs' FA level of practice. 9 new items were developed for the first construct and thirteen for the second one based on Teacher Handbook of Formative

Principles and Practices (Cambridge Assessment, 2018). This handbook was distributed to all schools in Malaysia for English teachers' perusal.

The first construct "Attitude Towards FA" consists of seventeen items. 5 points Likert Scale was employed for this construct with labels: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Agree (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5). The second construct "FA Practice" consists of 21 items and uses 5 points scale with different labels which are Never (1), Sporadic (2), Emerging (3), Established (4) and Embedded (5).

All items in the questionnaire had undergone face validity and content validity process using Content Validity Ratio (Lawshe, 1975). This procedure involved ten panel of experts which included lecturers from public universities, lecturers from ELTC and SISC+. Items which did not achieved experts' agreement ratio were dropped and the remaining items were further rectified based on panel of experts' opinion.

The questionnaire was then administered to 30 MTs as a pilot study to identify its internal consistency. These 30 MTs were not from the sample pool. Johnson and Christenen (2014) and Muijs (2012) stated a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 is accepted as an indicator of a good internal consistency. Analysis of pilot study showed the Cronbach's Alpha for construct one and two are 0.874 and 0.890. This proved that all items are fit to be used in the real study.

The data was collected via an online questionnaire (Google Form), which was emailed to every MT who agreed to participate in the study. A brief introduction of the study was provided so the MTs were aware of its purpose and objectives. Administering the questionnaire online increased accessibility as these MTs are all over the country making logistics difficult.

All MTs were given two weeks to respond to the questionnaire and to return it to the researcher via email. Throughout that period, assistance and clarification were given if required. After two weeks, data obtained was statistically analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 23.

## Results

### *Master Trainers' Attitude Towards Formative Assessment*

To interpret the min score of the first construct, the study referred to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) interpretation of min score as detailed in Table 1.

*Table 1. Min Score Interpretation*

| Min Score   | Interpretation |
|-------------|----------------|
| 4.01 – 5.00 | High           |
| 3.01 – 4.00 | Medium High    |
| 2.01 – 3.00 | Medium Low     |
| 1.00 – 2.00 | Low            |

Overall, MTs' attitude towards FA is at a medium high level with construct min score 3.91 (SD = 0.50). MTs' individual score is then grouped into five categories according to their score range. It shows that more than half of the MTs have positive attitude towards the assessment. This grouping is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. MTs Attitude towards Formative Assessment

| Construct | Completely Negative | Partially Negative | Somewhat Positive | Positive | Completely Positive |
|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Attitude  | 0%                  | 2.5%               | 25%               | 65%      | 7.5%                |

Analysis on agreement rate for every item has shown that not all MTs possess good attitude towards several formative assessment strategies. Items related to feedback received discouraging rate which reflected MTs less favourable attitude towards the strategy. Table 3 details this finding.

Table 3. MTs Agreement Rate on Certain Items

| Statements  | Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Summary (mean, sd) |
|---|----------------|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| I do not believe plenary activities could help my pupils consolidate their learning | 47.5           | 22.5  | 17.5           | 12.5     | 0.0               | 4.05<br>1.085      |
| I find the concept of deliberate practice is difficult to apply                     | 25.0           | 35.0  | 22.5           | 15.0     | 2.5               | 3.65<br>1.099      |
| Identifying ways to help my pupils move forward in their learning is tedious        | 22.5           | 17.5  | 42.5           | 15.0     | 2.5               | 3.43<br>1.083      |
| Individualised non-graded feedback is impossible to do                              | 10.0           | 40.0  | 35.0           | 10.0     | 5.0               | 3.40<br>0.982      |
| I do not have enough time to check on my pupils' action towards feed forward        | 2.5            | 17.5  | 50.0           | 22.5     | 7.5               | 2.85<br>0.893      |

### *Master Trainers' Practice of Formative Assessment*

Lysaght, O'Leary and Ludlow (2017) have divided respondents in their questionnaire into four categories based on their score range which are detailed in Table 4. The analysis has shown that 37 MTs fall under the Established category while 3 of them are under the Embedded category.

Table 4. Interpretation for MTs Practice

| Score Range  | Interpretation |
|--------------|----------------|
| 78 and above | Embedded       |
| 61 - 77      | Established    |
| 44 - 60      | Emerging       |
| 0 - 43       | Sporadic       |

Teachers under the Established category are described as someone with high FA skills and they are using practices which are relatively hard to embed. FA is a growing feature of pedagogy and as such it is an approach in which the teacher and pupils are beginning to engage more fully. They used a fuller range of techniques including all aspects related to sharing learning objectives and success criteria. Teachers in the category also practise aspects related to effective feedback, sharing questioning role with their pupils and starting to introduce one or two aspects of self- and peer-assessment.

Meanwhile, teachers under the Embedded category are described as someone with very high FA skills and are using practices which are very hard to embed. Formative assessment is likely to be a customary or firmly established feature of pedagogy and occurs routinely in day-to-day teaching and learning. Teachers in this category employ the full range of practices and their practice is distinguished by their incorporation of four additional techniques associated with self- and peer-assessment.

The analysis on the level of practise for every item has shown that there are some FA strategies which are not widely practised by these MTs. These strategies are related to differentiated learning, effective feedback and peer- and self-assessment. Table 5 provides details of each strategy.

Table 5. Relationship between Attitude and Practice of Formative Assessment

| Strategy  | Never | Sporadic | Emerging | Established | Embedded | Summary (mean,sd) |
|---|-------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|-------------------|
| Success criteria related to learning objectives are differentiated and shared with pupils | 2.5   | 12.5     | 30.0     | 42.5        | 12.5     | 4.50<br>0.961     |
| Feedback to pupils is focussed on the original learning objective and success criteria    | 2.5   | 7.5      | 37.5     | 40.0        | 12.5     | 4.53<br>0.905     |
| Feedback is turned into targets for pupils to work on autonomously                        | 2.5   | 12.5     | 30.0     | 45.0        | 10.0     | 4.48<br>0.933     |
| Feedback is specially catered to individual   | 0     | 15.0     | 40.0     | 35.0        | 10.0     | 4.40<br>0.871     |
| Pupils are encouraged to use a range of assessment techniques                             | 7.5   | 7.5      | 47.5     | 32.5        | 5.0      | 4.20<br>0.939     |



|   |      |      |      |      |     |               |
|---|------|------|------|------|-----|---------------|
| to review their friends' work   |      |      |      |      |     |               |
| A visual record of pupils' progress is maintained to celebrate pupils' learning and show areas of/for development | 10   | 22.5 | 35.0 | 30.0 | 2.5 | 3.93<br>1.023 |
| Pupils are encouraged to review their own learning approach as one way to achieve their learning target           | 0    | 22.5 | 50.0 | 25.0 | 2.5 | 4.08<br>0.764 |
| Pupils are welcomed to prepare their own short test to assess their friends' learning                             | 22.5 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 12.5 | 5.0 | 3.48<br>1.132 |

Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between attitude towards FA and the practice of it in MTs daily teaching. Finding shows that there is a positive linear correlation with  $r$  value = 0.576,  $n = 40$  and  $p < 0.001$ . The  $r$  value is interpreted as strong by Field (2018) which means the more positive the attitude towards FA, the more likely these MTs will practise it. Nonetheless, analysis done on covariance shows only 33.2% of attitude score contributes directly to the practice of FA. This means there are other factors which were not measured in this study that contributes to the practice of FA in MTs' classroom.

## Discussion

The findings of this study are important to the build-up of FA literature in Malaysia taking into account that fact that these MTs were the first group of English teachers in the country exposed to the theories and principles of FA. Overall, MTs attitude towards FA is at medium towards high level based on the min score. 72.5% of them are in the positive categories. Nevertheless, there are MTs in the somewhat positive and partially negative categories which is a concern. This shows that even though they received a direct and in-depth exposure to FA, it did not totally guarantee a positive attitude. Given that this study did not explore factors behind MTs' attitude, no concrete explanation could be provided. In support of this finding, Volante and Beckett (2011) have suggested that teachers may develop negative attitude towards FA due to certain blocks related to strategies such as peer- and self-assessment. This is reflected in this study findings as items related to these two strategies were found to receive the lowest agreement rate from respondents. Apart from peer- and self-assessment, items reflecting effective feedback and deliberate practice also received low agreement rate.

Based on MTs' attitude score, it is expected that their practice to be at a high level and this is reflected through this study's findings. For the majority of these MTs, FA happens 75% of the

time while some MTs practise it 90% of the time. However, there are strategies such as differentiated learning, addressing learning gap, effective feedback and peer- and self-assessment which were not practised enough by the respondents. These strategies have been identified as difficult and may be one of the reasons behind the lack of use of FA (Johnson et al., 2019; Lysaght & O'Leary, 2013; Pastore et al., 2019). This difficulty causes teachers to view FA as an added burden instead of seeing it as one of important elements in their teaching (Coffey, Hammer, Levin, & Grant, 2011). Young dan Jackman (2014) suggested that when teachers see that practising FA strategies requires extra effort in terms of time and resources, they will avoid those specific strategies even if they think it will be worthwhile.

This study also found a strong, positive correlation between attitude towards FA and its practice. However, as reported earlier, the influence is not huge. This indicate that there may be some factors that could affect FA practice. Parr and Timperley (2008) linked these factors to school organisational culture, teachers' readiness and limited sources. Volante, Beckett, Reid, and Drake (2010) on the other hand, listed lack of training, resistance from parents and pupils, and lack of instructional leadership as factors influencing FA practice. They concluded that these factors will definitely impact teachers' practise of FA despite their good level of knowledge, perception and attitude towards the assessment.

The findings of this study proved that professional training regarding FA yielded positive attitude. Positive attitude which then translated to its application in the classroom. However, the findings also showed that this attitude did not apply to all FA strategies. This shows that one-off training like the one provided by MOE is not adequate. It is clear that teachers need continuous in-service training and support in order for them to be adept in implementing FA effectively (Desimone, 2009; Furtak et al., 2016; C. C. Johnson et al., 2019; Yan & Cheng, 2015). Therefore, authorities need to take the appropriate initiative to ensure the newly introduced assessment will not get drowned by teachers' confusion. This is also to make sure the investment made by MOE will not go to waste as the training involved foreign consultants from Cambridge Assessment.

### **Limitation of The Study**

The findings of this study are limited to its respondents and they cannot be generalised to English teachers' population due to the difference in training received by the two. Other than that, there is the concern about the reliability of self-reported data as there are chances that respondents are not truthful especially when reporting their practice (Lysaght & O'Leary, 2013). This may due to concerns about people's perception towards them as an MT. Hence, triangulation via observation is recommended to support respondents' responses. Nonetheless, information gained through this study still provides a foundation to explore FA in Malaysia.

### **Conclusion**

FA is introduced to English teachers in Malaysia with the aim to enhance the quality of teaching and learning across all levels. To guarantee that this could be achieved, teachers must be given ample knowledge so that they have positive attitude towards the assessment. However, as discussed above, knowledge and attitude alone are not enough. Teachers are bound to meet hiccups along the way as they implement the assessment especially when it comes to certain specific

strategies. Hence, support in terms of workshop, professional learning community or support group must be provided so teachers can direct their questions or problems related to the assessment. With enough support, it is without a doubt that teachers will continue to use FA in their teaching and ultimately move away from the traditional practice of teaching for examination.

For further study of FA in Malaysia, the scope of this study could be widened to include English teachers from both secondary and primary school to see the difference in attitude and practice between teachers and MTs. This is to see whether level of training has any effect on the two variables. Plus, there is also a need to better understand external factors affecting the implementation of FA in English classroom nationwide.

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