



# Students' and Teachers' Attitude and Reasons for Code Switching, and its Role in Learning and Second Language Acquisition

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**Abstract**

This paper synthesizes the role of code-switching on academic performance and second language acquisition. Specifically, it aims to map relevant literature on codeswitching's attitude, reasons, and effects. Code-switching is using two or more languages- either alternate or combination- in a conversation. This paper collected and analyzed papers from different databases, considering recency, relevance, and the nature of the papers to identify general concepts of the topic. Reviewed papers are a combination of research designs to map general ideas quantitatively and qualitatively. The majority of the participating teachers and students perceive L2 classroom codeswitching positively. This paper identified pedagogic, affective, and personal-communicative as reasons for codeswitching and identifies positive and adverse effects of the process. The analysis concludes that the use of codeswitching in the classroom as a communicative purpose is a beneficial but not a pedagogical purpose for L2 acquisition. Thus, this paper recommends using codeswitching for affective function and English in L2 classrooms to promote conceptual and linguistic development.

**Keywords:** second language, second language acquisition, bilingual, educational policy

**1. Background**

With an increasing number of English language speakers around the globe for different purposes, expansion of English variations and language mixing also follows. This phenomenon in which bilingual or multilingual individuals use English with other languages makes the world a global village and makes communication more understandable, especially if one of the languages has no translations of some words. English language learners have become more proficient in using and incorporating the language into their daily use as English teaching and learning are more contextual and more communicative. Learning the English language can lead to a more understandable conversation. This process of alternate use of two languages or more within an exchange is called code-switching (Yow, Tan & Flynn, 2016; Muslim, Sukiyah & Rahman, 2018; Valerio, 2015; Liwanag & Labor, 2016; Roxas, 2019; Zainil & Arsyad, 2021). The word code-switching is being used interchangeably with the word language switching (Grenander, 2019) and code-switching. The latter is used when two languages are convergent regarding the sentence's words, affixes, phrases, and clauses (Catabay, 2016).

Code-switching exists in English language classrooms in different countries. Malaysian undergraduate students view English as an essential language in learning concepts and developing communication skills despite not being competent in class (Eshghinejad, 2016). In Namibia, teachers in the Zambezi region and Caprivi reported that students' use of their mother tongue in English classes did not limit learning; instead, it encouraged their class participation (Simasiku, 2016).

Developed learners' English language communication skills, both casual and instructional, enhance teaching and learning of English in general (Simasiku, Kasanda & Smit, 2016). In Saudi Arabia, code-switching between English and Arabic occurs when teachers want to assess students' understanding. The students favored teachers' practice of code-switching (Al-Adnani & Elyas, 2016). In Spain, most teachers have a positive attitude to code-switching as a pedagogical tool in their classrooms (Balam & Perez, 2017). In the Philippines, code-switching positively boosts students' confidence, motivation, and engagement in English classes (Olivera, 2021). This process is observable in many countries where most learners speak English as their second language.

English language, which is also the co-official language of the Philippines, is highly regarded by the Filipinos. Since the English language introduction, eminent formal systems have used the language, such as in academic settings. In 1970s, the Department of Education implemented a policy in bilingual education which allowed the use of Taglish in all disciplines. In 2006, an educational policy implemented English as the sole medium of instruction inside an English language and other English language-based subjects such as Science and Mathematics classes in Philippine education. Although there is an existing policy, Filipinos still tend to use vernacular even in these English-based subjects' classes. Moreover, in 2009, another language-related educational policy considered using mother tongue and multi-language education adequate for literacy and instructions in preschool and the alternative learning system.

In this paper, underlying reasons teachers and learners use code-switching will be presented. These emerged concepts are deemed beneficial in understanding the teachers' and learners' attitudes, needs, and preferences in learning. Supporting and opposing studies on the use of code-switching inside the English as a secondary and foreign language classroom will be presented to identify code-switching implications on the learning and teaching process. Moreover, the effects of code-switching on teaching and learning and the second language will be provided. The 20 reviewed papers are the basis of all the presented ideas in this scoping review, limited to studies related to code-switching and its role in learning and English language acquisition. These are essential references to consider in addressing the concerns relating to educational language policies, content learning, students' language needs and preferences, and second language acquisition.

**2. Teachers' and Learners' Attitude towards Code-Switching**

This paper presents supporting and opposing ideas about code-switching. In some literature, students have a favorable view of code-switching as a medium of teaching (Catabay, 2016) and as an instructional strategy of learning (Tandoc, 2016). They respect and prefer teachers who use codeswitching for comprehension, comfort, clarity of expression, and easiness purposes (Garcines & Alvarez, 2017).



Teachers and students perceived two languages as valuable for bridging communication gaps throughout the teaching and learning process. (Nurhamidah, Fauziati & Supriyadi, 2018).

However, in some studies, such as Gustavsson and Karakitsos (2019), respondents who do not have multilingual backgrounds viewed it negatively. Although bilingual respondents view it as natural, several express fear of relying too much on it as their only communication strategy (Gustavsson & Karakitsos, 2019) and think of it as a mistake or a negative occurrence (Grenander, 2019). Furthermore, in a study by Torvaldsdotter (2020), it was found out that teachers have limited knowledge about code-switching and believe that a large amount of second language use in an English classroom is favorable.

Though some of the reviewed papers supported English as a second language, students continue to use code-switching in their English classes because they belong to multilingual backgrounds (Tabassum, Rafique, Akram & Khan 2020; Valerio, 2015; Mangila, 2018). Many teachers are still unsure about the benefits of using code-changing in the classroom when teaching a foreign language (Tandoc, 216); however, practice and let native language or mother tongue among students in English classrooms. Participants use codeswitching intentionally and unintentionally for various purposes (Torvaldsdotter, 2020). This paper will discuss the reasons for code-switching across the reviewed documents; however, one is the teachers' tolerance of the learners' code-switching (Mareva, 2016). Teachers and students used three types of code-switching: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. Muslim, Sukiyah and Rahman (2018) found that inter-sentential switching is the commonly used type of code-switching in both EFL classrooms.

Interestingly, two studies found a more prominent use of one of the languages than the other during the process of codeswitching. Although this paper defines code-switching as the alternate or combined use of two or more languages in a context, the participants' dominant language is evident. In Catabay's (2016) study, the respondents' most frequent code switch pattern is Engalog- more English, less Tagalog. On the other hand, Garcines and Alvarez (2017) observed that the participating teachers code-switch to their mother tongue, and the English language is less used.

### 3. Reasons for Code-Switching

Code-switching serves as a strategy for several pedagogic, affective, and personal-communicative purposes. Based on reviewed papers, teachers use code-switching in the classroom in order to assess the pedagogic-functional level; generally, the instructional content acquisition is concluded. Several concepts emerged from the reviewed papers about the reasons teachers and students on code-switching to wit, to explain complex topics, to clarify instructions, to build rapport, to avoid misunderstanding, to fill the gaps in conversation, and to suffice language incompetency.

#### 3.1 To explain complex topics

Many language teachers shift to students' mother tongue to impart challenging English language lessons (Bravo-Sotelo, 2020), such as grammar (Zainul & Arsyad, 2021; Muslim, Sukiyah & Rahman, 2018). Code-switching can be practical as long as its use is brief. Attending a grammar class explained in a native language will not motivate students to speak using the target language. Aside from the explanation of challenging topics, teachers also use it to explain lesson goals and annotate, explain, and exemplify the second language materials (Grenander, 2019). Explanation using the native language bridges students' language competence (Mangila, 2018). It sometimes overcomes their own weak English language skills (Tabassum, Rafique, Akram & Khan, 2020).

#### 3.2 To clarify instructions

One of the challenges of teachers is the time limit per class. As teachers, we want to be sure that students clearly understand the instructions during their learning experiences. Switching to students' native language is taken into account to accomplish this, as it saves time. (Hussein, Saed & Haider, 2020). Garcines and Alvarez (2017) observed that teachers code-switched in asking and responding to students to ensure understanding and clarifications on instructions. In a study by Hussein, Saed and Haider (2020), teachers code switch to give instructions, emphasize lessons, translations, and classroom management. Interestingly, teachers' delivery of instruction using code-switching affects them significantly; students tend to internalize and follow instructions more when communicated using the native language. For example, Muslim, Sukiyah and Rahman (2018) showed that when teachers employ code-switching for admonition or warning a particular behavior, students obey appropriately. However, this use of code-switching deserves the most caution, as it can make students lazy about their use of the target language. However, teachers should be careful with this application of code-switching, as it can make students discourage the using the target language.

#### 3.3 To build rapport

Another reason for codeswitching identified in this paper is for affective purposes. Teaching with the use of code-switching to build rapport with pupils. Students learn better in a conducive classroom, especially with challenging subjects like foreign languages. Gustavsson and Karakitsos (2019) indicate that students pay attention to language in teaching, and code-switching is a way to express their identity. Students feel more at ease when addressed in their native language rather than a second language, making it easier to build relationships. Aside from communication effectiveness, Torvaldsdotter (2020) also listed relational purposes and convenience as the intentional use of code-switching. Native language is also used in giving feedback (Zainul & Arsyad, 2021), providing relative ease and a natural process; thus, students appreciate teachers' intent for feedbacking and promoting improvement. Furthermore, code-switching overcomes linguistic insecurity (Hussein, Saed & Haider, 2020). It is clear that code-switching serves non-linguistic purposes and is concerned with affective issues such as building rapport, social relationships, and communication inside a classroom.

#### 3.4 To avoid misunderstanding

Second language learners may lack confidence that they have adequately expressed their message in the target language. Students assert they code-switch when they express their thoughts and opinions in the class (Roxas, 2019). Students repeat or add to a response using their native language to ensure that they are understood. Code-switching occurs in the classroom when pupils do not understand the content or need help from the teacher or another peer (Grenander, 2019). The reviewed literature shows that other functions of code-switching employed by the students involve students clearing misunderstandings (Muslim, Sukiyah & Rahman, 2018) and avoiding conflicts (Hussein, Saed & Haider, 2020), maintaining rapport and interpersonal relationships.

#### 3.5 To fill gaps in conversations

It is natural to feel awkward when there are gaps in conversations, which is inevitable in foreign language communication. Muslim, Sukiyah and Rahman (2018) stated that students' reasons for code-switching involve students' self-repair. Tabassum, Rafique, Akram and Khan (2020) identified specific activities in which most students on their study employ code-switching, which is for reiteration, equivalence, and floor holding. Students usually mix their native language to fill the silence, in case there are native language words without translation into the second language, or due to their low cognitive processing associated with vocabulary to avoid the utterance of offensive words. Code-switching allows them to express their thoughts entirely (Yow, Tan & Flynn, 2016; Memory, Nkengbeza & Liswanis, 2018).



### 3.6 To suffice language incompetency

If teachers use English the entire classroom period, some concerns would be students' capacity to understand the lesson using the English language and teachers' English language proficiency and lecture delivery. Roxas (2019) stated that students could not find the appropriate words to express themselves. In his study, 'loss of words' is considered the most dominant reason for students' code-switching. However, in several studies, one of the reasons why teachers tend to use the non-target language has been identified as teachers' poor English proficiency. Unproficiency was observed either by the teachers themselves as research participants or monitored by the researchers using a checklist on the studies of Bravo-Sotelo (2020), Hussein, Saed and Haider (2020), and Zainul and Arsyad (2021). These observations describe teachers' language proficiency as someone who has limited language capabilities to express their idea fluently and use English in a more complex academic discourse, as someone with inadequate command or mastery of the target language, and as someone who uses the target language problematic. In a study by Torvaldsdotter (2020), teachers' unintentional code-switching is due to forgetting the target language. English teachers must serve as role models in the practice of the target language. Still, in these studies, inefficient use of the target language results in codeswitching. Although code-switching is not detrimental, it may indicate a lack of proficiency in one or both of the languages in use.

## 4. Effects of Code- Switching

### 4.1 Code-switching as Pedagogical Tool

Code-switching has many roles in helping teachers and students inside a classroom. Bravo-Sotelo (2020) concluded that codeswitching is beneficial for instruction while one of the languages only throughout the discussion has limitations. A teacher can code-switch for emphasis and explanation of complex concepts (Tandoc, 2016), for translation, comprehension, clarification, directions, classroom management (Nurhamidah, Fauziati & Supriyadi, 2018), and for access to content for students with low target language proficiency (Torvaldsdotter, 2020). Furthermore, teachers use code-switching as a communicative strategy to enhance discourse and as a scaffolding device to effectively facilitate students' learning (Mangila, 2018). Teachers code-switch for explaining and discussing content knowledge on content-based subjects such as Mathematics and Science. These are easier to understand when equations and jargon are written or uttered in English and elaborated in Tagalog than both discussed in English (Bravo-Sotelo, 2020). Code-switching can be used to investigate problems, understand logical connections, and evaluate information since language use is not an issue in this context. Furthermore, teachers can use code-switching to manage English language classrooms (Memory, Nkengbeza & Liswanis, 2018; Muslim, Sukiyah & Rahman, 2018; Nurhamidah, Fauziati & Supriyadi, 2018; Tabassum, Rafique, Akram & Khan, 2020).

### 4.2 Code-switching and Concepts Learning

Switching to the vernacular is sometimes needed during the use of English in learning; for example, the students gain a certain degree of understanding (Muslim, Sukiyah & Rahman, 2018; Tandoc, 2016; Olivera, 2021). It supports students' intelligibility towards challenging aspects of the lesson (Memory, Nkengbeza, and Liswanis, 2018). Students believe that using code-switching makes lessons more interesting and understandable. It is a means of reinforcing students' comprehension (Catabay, 2016), enhancing their ability to convey the message quickly and efficiently (Liwanag & Labor, 2016), and it helps gain mastery of content (Roxas, 2019). Students tend to have basic English language proficiency. Using English instructions only challenges students; thus, using both languages assist students to understand lessons better. It aids in the delivery of lectures by reducing the cognitive burden of students in attempting to comprehend both language and the content at the same time (Bravo-Sotelo, 2020).

### 4.3 Code-Switching and Engagement

Code-switching positively boosts learners' confidence and engagement during English classes (Muslim, Sukiyah & Rahman, 2018; Roxas, 2019). When teachers explain what was said in their mother tongue (Memory, Nkengbeza & Liswanis, 2018), they can speak the vernacular and engage in group activities (Olivera, 2021), especially those with English learning difficulties. Tandoc (2016) pointed out that code-switching allows clear communication between students and the instructor naturally and comfortably. Zainil and Arsyad (2021) recommended the integration of codeswitching in classrooms courses in language teaching education as a component of classroom interactional competence as code-switching is considered one of the strategies that facilitate interaction among students and teachers using the target language.

### 4.4 Code-Switching and Self-Expressions

Code-switching aids the development of learners' languages, especially the second language. Bilingual students may use both languages fully and accurately at a young age yet. Thus, the role of cod-switching in this period allows them to express their thoughts (Yow, Tan & Flynn, 2016; Memory, Nkengbeza & Liswanis, 2018) in giving answers (Tandoc, 2016), exploring both languages while ensuring the meaning of the context to be communicated. The students dominantly used the expressive function, among other tasks of code-switching (Ramos & Ramos, 2016). Students are more explicit as they participate in English classes. This function of code-switching does not only help the students to properly bring out their ideas but also allows them to express themselves not just as a learner but as a friend to their classmates, which leads to their social development.

### 4.5 Code-switching and Confidence

Code-switching boosts self-confidence and self-esteem (Mareva, 2016; Muslim, Sukiyah & Rahman, 2018). Therefore, teachers should arouse students' motivations, build their self-esteem and lower their anxiety. High motivation, low anxiety and self-confidence, and good self-image are the main features of the low effective filter, together with the use of codeswitching. It will be helpful to build a low affective filter for the learners to promote and aim for better understanding (Olivera, 2021).

### 4.6 Adverse Effects of Code-switching

Teachers and learners practice code-switching even though they are aware of the possible negative impacts of its use in learning and teaching. Since teachers switch most of the time, their English fluency is greatly affected. Students' overexposure to their mother tongue risks their English learning (Garcines & Alvarez, 2017). It was mentioned in the study of Grenander (2019) that if someone practices code-switching, they might get used to it. Moreover, in a survey by Simasiku, Kasanda and Smit (2016), code-switching was not an indicator of the development of students' academic performances. Learning the target language in the first language would deter learners from learning the target language, challenging them to become self-sufficient learners, and the lack of exposure to the English language would prevent learners from listening to other people around the world (Tabassum, Rafique, Akram & Khan, 2020). Students' lack of confidence in using English in the classroom is a concern because of their inadequate language exposure or limited vocabulary (Bravo-Sotelo, 2020). Random code-switching must not use because it might compromise the learner's mastery of the target language (Mareva, 2016). It confuses the students in terms of understanding the content of the message (Muslim, Sukiyah & Rahman, 2018). This idea is in line with the communicative approach, which holds that the best way to learn a language is to use the target language in authentic settings.

## 5. Role of Code-Switching in Second Language Acquisition

The majority of the reviewed papers perceive the use of code-switching positively in terms of education in general. However, this paper generally aims to identify the role of code-switching in second language acquisition, which is the English language. The results of the reviewed studies provide divided views on the use of native language on second language acquisition.

Some studies support the use of the native language in an English language classroom. Yow, Tan and Flynn (2016) stated that code-switching among bilingual students does not indicate linguistic incompetency; instead, it has a good connection with language competency. Simasiku, Kasanda and Smit (2016) supported this as code-switching improves the way learners answer questions and enhances learning and teaching English. Memory, Nkengbeza and Liswanis (2018) concluded that code-switching positively affects English language learning. It assists learners in quickly understanding challenging lessons and following teachers' instructions. When teachers explain in the vernacular, it encourages students to participate, especially those who struggle with English. In addition, it allows them to express themselves if they don't know how to say something in English.

Moreover, teachers can use code-switching teachers in managing their classrooms. Liwanag and Labor (2016) encourages code-switching so students' linguistic proficiency can be developed in both languages. They claimed that code-switching is a practical means of improving their learners' comprehension of the English language discourses. However, although it is beneficial as it supports the first and second language development, the use of code-switching is not recommended because overexposure would risk their English learning (Tabassum, Rafique, Akram & Khan, 2020; Memory, Nkengbeza & Liswanis, 2018; Garcines & Alvarez, 2017; Tandoc, 2016).

Nevertheless, most of the papers oppose code-switching as it does not affect students' second language, and worse, it risks its proficiency and acquisition. Although students adhere to codeswitching, Valerio (2015) found no significant relationship between students' attitudes toward code-switching and their academic performance in English and Filipino courses. Teachers' code-switching is a communicative strategy, but not as a tool to facilitate actual language learning (Gustavsson & Karakitsos, 2019).

Notably, none of the participating teachers seem to use code-switching as a strategy for promoting students' language acquisition (Mangila, 2018). Teachers rarely code-switch for non-linguistic functions. The function of code-switching focuses only on affective aspects such as building rapport, social relationships, and communication inside a classroom (Hussein, Saed & Haider, 2020) but never on English language development. Although recommended in preschool for communicative strategy, code-switching should drastically reduce as learners progress (Memory, Nkengbeza & Liswanis, 2018). This recommendation reflects the Philippines educational policy, in which it implements multilingual education in preschool. Then during fourth grade, English as the sole medium of instruction in inter-discipline learning areas starts. Code-switching should not be overused or misused. Overexposure would deteriorate one's English language proficiency and English learning (Tabassum, Rafique, Akram & Khan, 2020; Memory, Nkengbeza & Liswanis, 2018; Garcines & Alvarez, 2017; Tandoc, 2016). In a study of Muslim, Sukiyah and Rahman (2018), participants exposed to the practice of the target languages tend to be fluent bilinguals than participants in a regular class. This observation suggests that the primary language during an English lesson must be English. (Hussein, Saed & Haider, 2020; Gustavsson & Karakitsos, 2019; Grenander, 2019; Catabay, 2016). Tabassum, Rafique, Akram and Khan (2020) indicated that students must put a lot of time and effort into reading and listening to second language materials to guide themselves towards English language learning.

## 6. Implications to Teaching and Learning Process

Based on empirical evidence supported by this paper, codeswitching provides positive and negative output in education and second language acquisition. Nevertheless, code-switching can become another helpful tool on teachers' or learners' repertoire if appropriately used. Based on the analysis of the reviewed academic texts, code-switching inside a classroom can be positively implemented by teachers by setting rules on classroom codeswitching, allowing students to express themselves, supporting an environment conducive to learning, and practicing the use of the target language.

Students must be familiar with when and when not to switch. Setting guidelines for code-switching will make it easier for both teachers and students to use it effectively and prevent confusion on the intelligibility of contents and instructions among students. Based on the emerged ideas on reviewed papers that recommend restrictions on the use of the first language in second language classrooms, code-switching must only use for affective and communication functions. It is recommended inside an English classroom to use native language only when interacting for social purposes or casual conversations only, specifically when it comes to self-expression, building rapport, or relationships among the students. On the other hand, the students must still use the target language, especially during English language classes.

Let students code-switch when they struggle to keep a dialogue going in the target language. Allow the use of native language to bridge between familiar and unfamiliar words. It helps students to continue conversations, be more comfortable using the target language, and promote communication confidence overall. During the communicative process, teachers also assist students in supplying the 'loss of words' by providing synonyms or related words or ideas. This process might help students continue the speech without using the native language.

Use code-switching to make students feel encouraged. Consider students' preferences and needs to create an educational environment conducive to learning. Students feel comfortable with familiar things, thus providing a friendly environment for them to learn. Suppose teachers use their native language on feedbacking and providing guidance and support. In that case, students can feel genuine because students are more familiar with the native language than the target language. Switching to a native language can also make them feel they belong and the teacher cares about them, thus making them more motivated towards learning.

Code-switching is not always bad. However, as with anything, it should be done in moderation. Teachers must remember that codeswitching may assist in motivating learners but not directly acquiring a concept. Still, utilization of the target language is effective language development.

## 7. Conclusion

Exposure to a language allows learners to adopt the language. If exposed to code-switching, learners will not acquire the target language as they will be used to filling gaps from two or more languages. On the other hand, the practice of the target language promotes learning and acquisition. Based on the frequency of the general findings of the reviewed papers, seven reviewed materials positive use of code-switching in L2 acquisition, and thirteen articles view code-switching as a hindrance of English language learning, thus supporting English as the sole medium of communication and instructions in English classrooms. This review paper asserts that English in second language classrooms develops students' English language proficiency. However, this paper also supports code-switching strictly for communication and affective purposes only. As teachers, we must serve as role models in using English as our second language inside and outside the classroom to establish and expose students to an authentic and friendly English environment; simultaneously, we also have to provide a space for self-expression, build relations, and genuine conversations by considering guided codeswitching in ESL or EFL classes. Furthermore, this scoping review is in line with the Philippines' current educational policy, which promotes multilingual education in preschool. It promotes English as the medium of instruction in general education settings as considered adequate for language literacy.



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