Research Article

LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM: AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' CODE-SWITCHING IN THE NEW NORMAL

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on examining the implications of code-switching on the communicative abilities of Junior High School students. Ten teachers who teach Filipino at Kidapawan City National High School, School Year 2023-2024, participated in this study. The research utilized a qualitative method through a phenomenological approach. The study revealed that students often code-switch during discussions or conversations to express their ideas and opinions more comfortably on the topic being discussed. Adjectives and verbs were found to be the common parts of speech that students frequently switch, and they tend to struggle when providing elaborative responses, leading them to resort to code-switching. It was also discovered that students use code-switching more frequently due to the influence of modern technology, making communication and opinion-sharing easier for them. On the other hand, teachers correct and encourage students to translate the words to develop their communicative skills in the Filipino language. Additionally, code-switching was identified as a factor contributing to students' weak vocabulary in Filipino. Nevertheless, students find it easier to articulate their ideas, points, and thoughts when they are using code-switching. The results of this study support Giles' Accommodation Theory, which explains why people switch languages in communication for various reasons.

Keywords: Classroom Language, code-switching, new normal, Filipino.

INTRODUCTION

In a society with multiple languages, such as the Philippines, the simultaneous use of two or more languages like English and any of the Philippine languages is not a random choice. Instead, the selection of a specific language for a particular situation is intentional and governed by a set of cultural rules. This means that the use of a language in each situation is culturally appropriate, and another language may be suitable in a different situation (Liwanag and Labor, 2016). However, studies have revealed that there are multiple factors influencing teachers' use of the native language in a language learning situation. One problem is the lack of proficiency and knowledge in the language being studied, which leads students to code-switch. Additionally, difficulties with grammar rules and guidelines also pose challenges for students, as well as struggles in learning vocabulary in the target language (Yildiz and Su-Bergil, 2021). Excessive code-switching can make a student's speaking or writing less clear. It might lead to confusion and affect their ability to be proficient in each language they use. Over time, if students keep switching between languages too often, they might end up more comfortable with just moving between languages rather than truly improving their skills and fluency in each one.

With the return to face-to-face classes after the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, also known as the new normal, code-switching among students has become more prevalent in speaking, conversation, and even in responding to teachers' questions related to the subject. This has posed a challenge for Filipino language teachers in teaching and developing the communicative skills of students in the Filipino language. Students often resort to code-switching using English or their native language.

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The alternation between two or more languages is referred to by sociologists as code-switching. According to Alaiyed (2020), code-switching depends on the significant connection of what speakers need to process as strings formed according to the internal syntactic rules of the two distinct systems. In addition, Mangila (2018) stated that the switch from one language to another is not necessarily due to a lack of proficiency, and the choices speakers make are not always incidental. Instead, like the societal interests chosen from different types of language, the choices within language boundaries are filled with social meaning.

In Abad's study, as noted by Vargas (2015), frequent code-switching can confuse students and make it hard for them to understand complex ideas and terms that don't have direct equivalents in their first language. Sometimes, words from a foreign language don't have an equivalent in the first language, and translating statements might change their original meaning. This can be a major reason why code-switching happens in teaching. According to Vargas (2015), code-switching can be considered an effective tool in learning, especially in language studies. Code-switching can also help students more easily express or explain a concept. It is said that students with high levels of proficiency prefer not to use code-switching, but it cannot be denied that they still use it within the school (Horasan, 2014).

Moreover, in the study of Vega (2015) revealed that half of the class (44%) said that code-switching is natural and acceptable. They say that they communicate better this way and find their learning easier. However, four out of five teachers do not agree with its use in the classroom because it may result in negative reactions and requires proficiency in using the language, whether Filipino or English. Many language researchers and educators claim that code-switching has negative effects on language learning, while others see it as a step in learning a new language (Castillo, 2014). However, studies are still

lacking on how students' proficiency affects their perception of using code-switching as a medium in teaching.

According to Horasan (2014), both students and teachers frequently use code-switching in the classroom. Code-switching is said to be a tool to enrich knowledge, especially for beginners, and is used to make the class enjoyable and capture attention but should be set aside as proficiency levels increase. The primary objective of this study is to analyze the implications of code-switching on the communicative abilities of Junior High School students as perceived by the teachers. This study also aimed to achieve the specific objective which is to investigate the instances of code-switching among students.

This study is anchored in Howard Giles' Accommodation Theory that explains some cognitive reasons why a person may switch languages in their speech. Additionally, it also outlines why an individual makes or makes changes in their speech, either to emphasize or to minimize social differences between the speaker and their interlocutor.

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative study through a phenomenological approach. This study was conducted in Kidapawan City, the capital of the Province of Cotabato, specifically at Kidapawan City National High School. The participants in this study were 10 teachers who teach Filipino for the academic year 2023 - 2024, meeting the criteria set for this research.

The participants include teachers who have been teaching Filipino in Junior High School for three years at Kidapawan City National High School, as well as those who have taught Filipino for more than three years teaching in other schools from their previous job.

In this study, the researcher utilized a self-made questionnaire, which was reviewed by a panel of experts to ensure its relevance and validity for the study. This questionnaire served as a guide for the In-depth Interviews (IDI) conducted. Using the guide questions, participants provided their responses regarding code-switching among students in the classroom under the new normal. The researcher recorded and transcribed the participants' responses with their consent. These transcriptions were analyzed to explore the code-switching phenomena occurring within the classroom in the context of the new normal.

DISCUSSION

Code-Switching Among Students

The face of code-switching has evolved into a new characteristic. The study revealed that the primary reason for code-switching among students is the desire to express or share during discussions. This is followed by the fact that students are accustomed to and more comfortable using code-switching in conversations, making communication easier for them.

From the participants' perspective, the students were comfortable to explain further their ideas when they code-switched. As observed by the participants, adjectives and verbs were found to be the common parts of speech that students frequently switch, and they tend to struggle when providing elaborative responses, leading them to resort to code-switching. It was also discovered that students use code-switching more frequently due to the influence of modern technology, making communication and opinion-sharing easier for them.

On the other hand, teachers correct and encourage students to translate the words to develop their communicative skills in the Filipino language. Though the participants accepted the students view when they code switched but as teachers, they tried to assist to translate it to the Filipino language specially that the subject is Filipino. In this way, students will then be encouraged to speak Filipino and trying to shift from a code switched in communicating to a straight Filipino dialect.

According to Arceo *et al.,* (2013), being bilingual facilitates the switching between two languages during conversations or discussions. It is common for bilingual Filipinos to naturally alternate between English and Filipino, regardless of their level of proficiency in both languages. Code-switching often occurs when a speaker feels more comfortable using one language over another based on the topic being discussed. There are areas of life and knowledge where expressing oneself in Filipino is preferable to using English.

On the other hand, in the study of Alcalde and García (2021) supported the results on technology, making communication and opinion-sharing easier for them because their study reveals that during the pandemic when it comes to language learning, their focus was not on oral communication skills. In this case, students were free to use any language when expressing ideas orally in the screen of their gadgets. The results of this study support Vargas's (2015) assertion that code-switching is an effective tool in learning, especially in language studies. Code-switching can also help students better express or explain a concept. In addition, Johansson (2013) noted that in a bilingual society, code-switching is a frequent occurrence because individuals could use two or more languages to interact and communicate. It is an important tool and method for fostering understanding and communication between people who speak different languages. Finally, Horasan (2014) emphasized that it is undeniable that students use code-switching within the school setting.

CONCLUSION

Teachers and students should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of using code-switching in the classroom. It is a beneficial strategy that can facilitate the learning process rather than being seen as a barrier to language learning. It can be used as a strategy to develop students' communicative skills, especially in interpersonal interactions. Despite its benefits, code-switching might not be appropriate for all language classes and classrooms.
Another important implication of the current findings is the need for moderation in code-switching in the classroom. The current analysis shows that participants frequently use code-switching during formal oral presentations in class. If this is not corrected or managed, it may become a norm and lead to neglecting the use of Filipino, affecting the development of students' grammatical skills and improving their national language vocabulary.

While there are weaknesses in using this strategy in certain classroom situations, the study also shows that it can help students facilitate communication and boost their confidence in conveying their messages, opinions, and ideas in a way that is understood by their audience or listeners. Moreover, code-switching can be useful for students who have low proficiency in the language being studied or used. However, teachers and students need to exercise control and should not allow code-switching to become the primary medium of communication, especially in formal presentations, as it may become a habit that is difficult to avoid.

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