



Short Paper

Corpus-Based Analysis of Code-Switching in the Teaching of Tertiary-Level English Courses

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Abstract

This study researches the frequency, form, and function of code-switching in the context of university-level instruction of English language specialization courses. By collecting a corpus from eight (8) English language teachers in a State University, instances of code-switching were analyzed using Poplack and Sankoff's Typology for frequency and forms of code-switching, and Borlongan's typology for its functions. The results indicate that even as teachers have the requisite English language proficiency and educational requirements for handling University-level instruction, code-switching is practiced in varying degrees, for different functions by the teachers. For frequency, most of the code-switching done by teachers is from English to Filipino, with several instances of Filipino to either Pangasinan or Ilocano. Smooth code-switching, on the other hand, is the most dominant form, accounting for more than three-fourths of the instances, and voluntary code-switching for stylistically-driven formulation is the most dominant function utilized. The findings underscore the need for pedagogical frameworks that utilize code-switching to ensure optimal learning outcomes while maintaining the linguistic integrity of instructional delivery. This study contributes to discussions on bilingual education, offering insights for curriculum design and teacher training programs aimed at maximizing multilingual communication strategies in higher education.



INTRODUCTION

Bilingual education in the Philippines is a hallmark of its educational system, reflecting the nation's rich linguistic and cultural diversity. From early schooling, students are immersed in an environment where both the national language—Filipino—and English are employed as mediums of instruction. This dual-language policy not only strengthens communication skills but also cultivates cognitive flexibility, laying a strong foundation for learning additional foreign languages (Espiritu, n.d.). The historical and sociopolitical context of the Philippines, marked by centuries of colonial influence and a mosaic of indigenous cultures, has further enriched its bilingual framework, enabling students to navigate multiple linguistic landscapes with relative ease.

English language, along with Filipino, is enshrined in the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines as the official language of instruction. Additionally, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has pushed for this bilingual approach to instruction in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), as stipulated in CHED Memorandum Order Number 59, series of 1996. This is further stressed in Executive Order. 210 issued by then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in May 2013 where “English is to be used as the primary medium of instruction in secondary education” while “HEIs are encouraged to adopt English as the primary medium of instruction”. This bilingual approach to higher learning resulted in most technical/specialization courses being taught in English, unless otherwise necessary.

The notion, however, that instruction at a higher level should be delivered in straight English does not reflect the reality on the ground. Even with the English Proficiency Index (EPI) of 578, falling under "high proficiency", most local studies on the implementation of English as a medium of instruction reveal that code-switching is still a salient point, not only at the Secondary level but also in the Tertiary-level (Borlongan, 2020; Mangila, 2018; Villanueva & Gamiao, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code-Switching

Code-switching has long been a linguistic feature common in most bilingual and multilingual communities. Klavan (1985), in one of the earliest investigations, initially proposed that code-switching is constrained by structural relations between languages, particularly for the languages she investigated, Spanish and English.

This is further built upon by Belazi, et.al (1994) with the inclusion of language choice in the factors considered during code-switching, after observing code-switching instances of bilinguals (Tunisian Arabic-French and Spanish English). MacSwan (1999) then proposes restricting code-switching in certain conditions between monolingual features, effectively proposing a minimalist approach for intrasentential code-switching.

While these approaches to code-switching tend to exist between varying languages, it is important to note that languages in certain contexts do not share a symmetrical role, owing to sociolinguistic factors such as language imperialism and language ideologies.

More language-specific studies like that of Mangila (2018) zeroes in on the language practices, particularly instances of code-switching, by two bilingual Filipino teachers in their respective English classrooms. Through sentential analysis, he concludes that teachers coded-switched mainly for instructional or content acquisition purposes.

Villanueva & Gamiao (2023), on the other hand, study the online classes of nine teachers, ultimately identifying three patterns of code-switching (Ilokolish, Taglish, Ilocotaglish) unique to the context of the study locale (Ilocos Norte). They also noted that these code-switching patterns occur for both teachers and students. Lazarte (2021), meanwhile analyzed how Filipino teachers code-switch to English and the reasons for said code-switching. She identified several factors including comprehension issues, lack of vocabulary depth, inadvertent or involuntary speaking, boredom from speaking in pure Filipino, and adherence to the multilingual instructional approach.

With the introduction of the more recent field of corpus linguistics, code-switching can now be better contextualized; with its varying contexts better studied and understood. Bautista (1998a) studies the forms of code-switching that occur in written contexts in the Philippines using Poplack and Sankoff's (1988) typology. This is then developed further by Borlongan (2020), utilizing the same typology but applying it in a corpus collected from spoken interactions of six public elementary schools. After identifying the frequency of code-switching, classifying its forms according to Poplack and Sankoff's typology, and functions of code-switching in teachers using Mattsson and Burenhult-Mattsson (1999, as cited in Sert, 2005), he ultimately proposes his Typology for Classifying code-switching specific to English-Tagalog in English Language classes, namely Involuntary (divided between Processing-Driven and Proficiency-Driven) and Intentional (divided into Topic (Re)orientation, Stylistically-Driven Formulation, Discourse Management, and Nonce Borrowing).

METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative research study that first involved the selection of teachers to be included, then the collection and compilation of a corpus, and eventually, the processing of the said data to identify the frequency of code-switching, the forms, and

the functions, particularly within the context of tertiary-level teachers for English language classes.

Research Design

This corpus-based quantitative inquiry on the frequency, form, and function of code-switching in the context of tertiary-level teachers is descriptive in nature. By employing the principles of corpus linguistics to provide insight into how a specific group utilizes language (Hunston, 2006). Furthermore, with the transcription data of real-world language use, it is hoped that the recurring patterns, particularly those relating to the frequency, forms, and function of code-switching, are uncovered.

Inclusion Criteria for Corpus Collection

As the study investigated how code-switching naturally occurs in the classroom, the primary inclusion criteria were set to be teachers employed in the University for at least three (3) years, and currently handling major subjects for the AB English Language and Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major in English programs. These programs were chosen as they mainly specialize in language courses where the language of instruction is English. After these considerations, eight (8) teachers were selected and duly agreed to take part in the study.

Corpus Collection and Compilation

Before the recording, the eight (8) participating teachers were first briefed about the particulars of the study. They were given assurance that their anonymity would be safeguarded at all times, and should they choose to withdraw from the study, all data collected from them will be duly disposed of.

The overall recording for the corpus lasted three (3) months, mainly due to some scheduling conflicts. All recorded classes were also on full face-to-face modality. Once the schedule had been set, two smartphones were set up in the classroom of the teachers; one for audio recording placed at the teacher's table, and one at the back of the class for video recording.

Transcription

The recordings were then transcribed, with the transcription of each class being saved in a separate .docx file. The following conventions were also observed during the transcription process.

1. No names were used in the transcriptions. Teachers were instead given the number one (1) to properly identify them, with the students being given succeeding numbers.

2. Pauses and sudden stops were properly marked and labeled. These are enclosed in <>.
3. For certain instances where it becomes impossible to fully transcribe the recorded conversation due to overlapping voices or intense background noise, these are duly noted and also enclosed in <>.
4. The video recording served as the basis for transcribing motions, gestures, and hand and bodily movements of both the teachers and students and is also enclosed in <>.
5. In order to ensure accuracy as much as possible, the transcription underwent a secondary pass.

Additionally, as classes in the University where the corpus was collected/compiled from vary in length, the length of the recording for each class ranged from 42 minutes to 1 hour and 32 minutes.

RESULTS

Frequency of Code-Switching

As can be seen from Table 1, of the total 4,571 sentences recorded and transcribed lines of the teachers, 76.592% are in straight English, leaving a total of 23.408% sentences with instances of either code-switching to Filipino, local languages (like Pangasinan and Ilocano), or with an assortment of verbal fillers.

Table 1. Frequency of Code-Switching

	Total # of Sentences	Sentences in Pure English		Sentences with Code-Switching to Filipino		Sentences with Code-Switching to Local Languages		Sentences with Verbal Fillers	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	564	530	93.971	8	1.418	0	0.000	26	4.610
2	581	522	89.845	35	6.024	4	0.688	20	3.442
3	387	354	91.472	16	4.134	1	0.258	16	4.134
4	771	686	88.975	23	2.983	0	0.000	62	8.042
5	639	152	23.787	419	65.571	13	2.034	55	8.607
6	716	566	79.050	126	17.598	5	0.698	19	2.654
7	611	400	65.466	166	27.169	0	0.000	45	7.365
8	302	291	96.357	1	0.331	0	0.000	10	3.311
Total	4571	3501	76.592	794	17.370	23	0.503	253	5.535
Ave	571.375	437.625	78.616	99.25	15.654	2.875	0.46	31.625	5.271

Interestingly, teacher #5 recorded the highest percentage of code-switching, with a total of 76.212% of sentences with instances of code-switching or inclusion of verbal fillers. Teacher #8, with only 3.642% having instances of code-switching or verbal fillers. Finally, it can also be noted that the teachers code-switch to Filipino considerably much more often, as opposed to local languages like Pangasinan and Ilocano.

Forms of Code-Switching

From the instances of code-switching in Table 1, Table 2 presents the different forms of code-switching. As can be seen, of the 794 recorded instances of code-switching across all teachers, smooth code-switching is the most frequent, accounting for 79.849% of the total. This is followed by constituent code-switching at 20.529%, nonce borrowing at 3.149%, and finally, non-smooth code-switching at 1.008%. It can also be seen from the table that only teachers #1, #5, #6, & #7 have recorded instances of non-smooth code-switching, while teachers #3 and #8 recorded no instances of both Non-smooth code-switching and nonce borrowing.

Table 2. Forms of Code-Switching

	Total # of Code-Switching	Smooth		Constituent		Non-Smooth		Nonce Borrowing	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	8	7	87.500	3	37.500	1	12.500	1	12.500
2	39	27	77.143	9	25.714	-	0.000	2	5.714
3	17	12	75.000	7	43.750	-	0.000	-	0.000
4	23	17	73.913	7	30.435	-	0.000	1	4.348
5	432	327	78.043	87	20.764	4	0.955	3	0.716
6	131	111	88.095	22	17.460	2	1.587	2	1.587
7	166	132	79.518	28	16.867	1	0.602	16	9.639
8	1	1	100.000	-	0.000	-	0.000	-	0.000
Total	794	634	79.849	163	20.529	8	1.008	25	3.149
Ave	99.25	79.250	82.402	23.286	24.061	1.143	1.956	3.571	4.313

Functions of Code-Switching

Table 3 presents the functions of the recorded instances of code-switching. Borlongan's (2020) typology largely classifies code-switching into either Involuntary or Voluntary, and as can be noted, only 13.350% are considered involuntary, particularly processing-driven switches as there were no recorded instances of proficiency-driven switches. The remainder, accounting for 86.65% are all instances of voluntary code-switching, with a stylistically-driven formulation with the highest share at 59.572%, followed by Topic (re)orientation at 14.610%, and discourse management at 9.320%. Nonce

borrowing, appearing in both Bautista's (1998) and Borlongan's (2020) typology, accounted for 3.149% of code-switching functions.

Table 3a. Functions of Code-Switching – Involuntary Code-Switching

	Total Code-Switching	Involuntary Code-Switching			
		Processing-Driven Switch		Proficiency-Driven Switch	
		f	%	f	%
1	8	1	12.500	0	0.000
2	39	10	28.571	0	0.000
3	17	3	18.750	0	0.000
4	23	2	8.696	0	0.000
5	432	6	1.432	0	0.000
6	131	19	15.079	0	0.000
7	166	65	39.157	0	0.000
8	1	0	0.000	0	0.000
Total	794	106	13.350	0	0.000
Ave	99.25	13.250	15.523	0.000	0.000

Table 3b. Functions of Code-Switching – Voluntary Code-Switching

		Voluntary Code-Switching							
		Topic (Re)Orientation		Stylistically-Driven Formulation		Discourse Management		Nonce Borrowing	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	8	4	50.000	2	25.000	0	0.000	1	12.500
2	39	6	17.143	15	42.857	2	5.714	2	5.714
3	17	4	25.000	6	37.500	3	18.750	0	0.000
4	23	10	43.478	6	26.087	4	17.391	1	4.348
5	432	67	15.990	298	71.122	45	10.740	3	0.716
6	131	22	17.460	73	57.937	10	7.937	2	1.587
7	166	3	1.807	73	43.976	9	5.422	16	9.639
8	1	0	0.000	0	0.000	1	100.000	0	0.000
Total	794	116	14.610	473	59.572	74	9.320	25	3.149
Ave	99.25	14.500	21.360	59.125	38.060	9.25	20.744	3.125	4.313

DISCUSSION

Frequency of Code-Switching

The eight teachers included in the analyzed corpus reveal that teachers on average have 571.375 sentences per class, ranging from 302-771. The wide range can be attributed to several factors like class length (some classes are an hour long, while others are an hour and a half), teaching style, and type of class.

Data also reveals that most teachers code-switch from English to Filipino, at 794 instances or 7.37% of the total sentences uttered, as opposed to code-switching to local

languages like Pangasinan and Ilocano at 23 instances, or 0.503%. On average, teachers spoke in straight English for 78.616%, 15.654% with varying forms code-switching to Filipino, 0.46% with code-switching to local languages, and 5.271% with various forms of verbal fillers. In general, English-Filipino code-switching can be seen as a mechanism for teachers to facilitate discussion rather than a problem with language proficiency. Bautista (2004) affirms this in her analysis of code-switching functions that it, in fact, is an important linguistic resource.

Additionally, the context in this investigation is that of university-level instruction in courses that specialize in the English language (AB English Language and Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major in English), the proficiency level of the teachers is assumed to be sufficient, given that all applicants to any teaching position in the University are required to pass a language proficiency exam, and should possess at least a relevant Master's Degree (CSC MC No. 22, s. 2016).

The instances of code-switching to local languages, on the other hand, can be attributed to the rich language tapestry of the locality of the study. According to the latest census data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, the majority of the population in the province of Pangasinan speaks Pangasinan, followed by Ilocano, then by Tagalog, followed by other languages like Bolinao and Sambal (PSA, 2010). In spite of this, due to the context of the investigation being University-level instruction, code-switching instances to local languages (Pangasinan and Ilocano) are kept at a minimum.

Forms of Code-Switching

Smooth code-switching, or code-switching involving change at the syntactic level, accounts for 79.849% of all code-switching. In particular, this form of code-switching, according to Bautista (2010) is regularly observed as it involves the structures of two languages (in this case English and either Filipino or other local languages) converging and switching at equivalence points. Examples of this are shown below.

Example A

Professor: Coordinating conjunctions simply because they're there to link grammatical items of equal importance, of equal importance, okay. ***Naiintindihan po ba 'yon? (Did you understand that?)*** Yes?

Example B

Professor: Okay, thank you, Darren. Uhm, do we have some more? ***Wala na? (No more?)***

Constituent code-switching, or the insertion of Filipino grammatical constituents in an otherwise straight English sentence, comes next at 20.529%. Following the typology used by Bautista (2010), this form of code-switching was also observed multiple times.

Example A

Professor: Very good, it's just that, asking to have a two-piece chicken again, chicken McDonalds. We just had that chicken last night, **diba? (Right)**

Example B

Professor: Let's have, **ito, (this)** there are two—what are bound morphemes again?

This is followed by nonce borrowing, or code-switching to Filipino due to the target not having a close or direct semantic English equivalent at 3.149%

Example

Professor: Did you know that we also have an infix? In Filipino, we are rich in what we call **panlapi (affixes)** in Filipino. We have **unlapi, (affixes at the start) gitlapi (affixes in the middle), hulapi (affixes at the end), kabilaan (affixes found at both the start and the end),** and **laguhan (affixes found at the start, middle, and end),** right?

Finally, non-smooth or instances of code-switching marked with pauses, hesitation, or other means of drawing attention to the code-switching, at 1.008%

Example A

Professor: Okay. And then the channel, you have here. The senses, through what? Remember the definition given by Paz. And then, the receiver same as the sender. Okay. Let's have another element. We have the basic five. Let's talk about it. The sender. **Ay, mali. Nasaan yung eraser? (Wrong. Where is the eraser?)** Sender.

Example B

Professor: Okay. You can adopt the culture. How about communication? Is there an interaction? **Pero (but),** can you expect or will you undergo the process of decoding and, you have the receiver and you have the feedback?

Functions of Code-Switching

As the determination of code-switching functions is psychological in nature, the researchers relied on the context cues derived from the audio and video recordings to determine the context of the code-switching instances.

Involuntary code-switching accounted for 13.350% of all code-switching instances, with all falling under Processing-driven switch, or teachers recalling or retrieving the concept in Filipino first before in English.

No instance of a Proficiency-Driven switch, or code-switch that occurs due to the target item not existing in the speaker's English lexicon, was recorded. This is mainly to the fact that all teachers handling specialization subjects are expected to exhibit high English

language proficiency, with it being a minimum requirement for employment in the University along with the possession of a Master's degree.

Voluntary code-switching, on the other hand, accounted for 86.650%. Of this, the largest share falls under Stylistically-driven formulation at 59.572%. These are code-switches done by the speaker to achieve a stylistic effect of the utterance. Such code-switching is expected of Tertiary-level instruction where specialization subjects require much contextualization. This much-needed contextualization in turn takes the form of various cues that are largely stylistic in nature (Panhwar & Buriro, 2020). Some examples are provided below.

Examples

Professor: Okay, thin, thinner, thinnest. Okay, very good! What about Zandra? You are Zandra with the Z. Okay, who else would like to try? Yes, or **Mr. Pogi?**

Professor: Okay. I invoke my right against self-incrimination, right? Hmm, okay. So that's also a very good example. Alice Gou, "**lumaki po ako sa farm**". Okay. I don't recall... just like when during class, whenever you have your quiz or examination, for example, okay? Did you cheat?

Topic (re)orientation comes next at 14.610%. These code-switches are typically done to introduce a shift from one topic to another, or to move from topic to activity, or vice-versa. Examples are shown below.

Examples

Professor: What does that mean? Someone asked, "Why did you stop drinking alcohol?" **Sige po**. Let's have, Mark Lester.

Professor: "Her brother is a great musician". It presupposes that she has a brother, right? Otherwise, you would not say "Her brother is a great musician". "I hate his brother", pre-supposes that she has a brother. "Her brother bought a car", for example. It presupposes that he has a brother, right? **Nakukuha?**

Discourse Management, or code-switches done to manage the ongoing discourse, accounts for 9.320%. As discourse management is considered an integral part of classroom management, teachers regularly utilize code-switching to various effects (to elucidate on a certain topic, to better explain the topic at hand, to elicit questions and discussions, etc.). Zhang (2008), in fact, equates better discourse management in the classroom to quality student learning.

Examples

Professor: Okay. Next one, we call this a persuasive editorial, okay. Persuasive editorials, okay, as the name implies, you have a piece statement of an argument.

Ibig sabihin yung kaluluwa nung piece of writing na ito ay mayroon kang pananaw na gusto mong kumbinsihin lahat ng Pilipino na ito ang dapat ninyong isipin.

Professor: The next example is, ***ano ba ang i-example natin...***let's have these three examples.

Nonce-borrowing, or code-switching to Filipino due to the target item's non-existence in the English lexicon or reserved for cultural items, accounts for 3.149%. These code-switching instances can be seen as unavoidable due to the absence of an equitable translation of the target word or expression. Baklanova (2017) remarks that the prevalence of nonce borrowing can, in fact, be attributed to the widespread bilingualism in the country, and thus can be found in the speech of Filipinos across the majority, if not all, of available language contexts. Some of these are shown below.

Examples

Professor: Who was that? Clave, Angelo. What about the rest? Let's have example number 3. Your turn, ***Kulot***, Dela Vega

Professor: Remember our seminar last, ***Buwan ng Wika***? Remember sir Paeng?

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With all the data collected, analyzed, and presented, it becomes apparent that code-switching regularly happens in tertiary-level classes and is not due to the low English language proficiency of teachers, but rather a tool that teachers utilize to facilitate discussion and improve comprehension in students.

As a state university that caters to students from all walks of life, teachers regularly code-switch not just to Filipino, but even to local languages (like Pangasinan and Ilocano) to further improve comprehension of the subject matter, even more so for specialized courses. While most Filipinos are bilingual, some students can even speak more than two languages (with Pangasinan and Ilocano as additional L1), thereby accounting for instances of code-switching to local languages.

Finally, as tertiary-level lectures are aimed at developing students to become professionals in their respective fields, teachers are expected to utilize more specific, localized, or specialized discussions and examples, accounting for higher instances of stylistically driven code-switching. While the current investigation accounts for several dimensions of code-switching (frequency, form, and function), and utilizes real-word corpus, further studies should be conducted on a wider scale to supplement the findings in order to serve as a basis for institutional reforms for the betterment of instructional delivery.

IMPLICATIONS

Even with the existing legal basis of English being utilized as the primary medium of instruction in secondary schools, tertiary-level instructors are encouraged to practice "academic freedom" in instructional delivery. This should include code-switching being utilized as a tool for improved instructional delivery.

On the other hand, English-only policies, while effective in certain aspects and contexts, should not be the be-all, end-all in terms of improving the English Proficiency Index. The medium of instruction should not only be the primary consideration in instructional delivery but rather the quality by which lessons are properly internalized and understood by the students.

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This study did not receive any funding from any person or organization.

DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there has been no conflict of interest in the conduct of the study.

Informed Consent

All participants of the study were duly informed of the details of the study, and have duly signed a consent form. All participants were also assured of their anonymity, that the recordings of their classes are to be handled with utmost confidentiality, and that they may withdraw at any time during the conduct of the study.

Ethics Approval

This study has secured all necessary Ethics Approvals as prescribed in the University where the researchers conducted the study.

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