

# CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING IN A GEOGRAPHY CLASS

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## Abstract

*This paper aimed to show that the language used in the classroom is an important factor to help students learn and participate actively in the discussion and determine the students' language attitude towards code switching and mixing. The study used a descriptive-qualitative method and analyzed using the 4 likert scale and mean score. Results revealed that in teaching basic geography, students prefer to use switching and mixing of both English and Filipino languages as media of instruction. The students strongly agreed that code switching and code mixing in the discussion helped them convey concepts and expressed ideas clearly. Therefore, in teaching basic geography, students preferred to use switching and mixing of both English and Filipino languages as media of instruction because they can participate actively in the class discussion.*

*Keyword: language attitude, code-switching, code –mixing, phenomenon*

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## 1.0 Introduction

Language is a powerful tool in teaching and learning process. In the classroom, the use of code-mixing and code-switching become a phenomenon. Nevertheless this phenomenon is due to the varied lingua franca used by the people in the Philippines. Filipino people are known for having varied dialects which allow them (both the teacher and the learner) to communicate freely in their thoughts, feelings and ideas. In the classroom the use of both English and Filipino as media of instruction becomes a real scenario in order to attain meaningful learning. The mixing and switching of the language in the classroom discussion have innermost impact to students learning, hence; this study proved that the language used in the classroom discussion is an important factor to help students learn and participate actively inside the classroom and determine the students' language attitude towards code switching and mixing. Specifically this study sought to: (1) determine the attitude of the students toward using monolingual or code switching/mixing in teaching, (2) know the effects of code-switching and code-mixing in teaching geography, (3) identify the students' language preference in teaching geography.

Myers-Scotton (2001), as cited by Jakobsson (2010) defines code-switching as the alternation between two or more languages or varieties of a language in the same utterance or dialogue. Code switching is a phenomenon that happens on a daily basis both in schools and outside of the school setting. In bilingual classrooms worldwide, code switching and mixing is a frequent practice. In the Philippines for example, the Bilingual Policy was misunderstood as code switching and mixing in most classrooms. In the past, there had been extensive researches which carried out using code switching and mixing in the classroom as a contextualization cue. Martin-Jones (2000) as cited by Alenezi (2010) pointed out that such contextualization cue range from phonological, lexical and syntactic choices to different types of code switching and style shifting. The study found out that code switching (CS) occurrence in teaching and learning has

positive and negative educational effect. Alenezi (2010) added that the selection of the language of instruction is a vital decision for academic institutes and learners as well. Thereby the impact of learners' academic performance in all subjects is affected by the language policy or language used in the classroom.

In most Filipino classrooms, the use of English and Filipino is commonly practiced. A teacher or a student code switch and code mix from English to Filipino language or the vice versa in expressing his/her ideas during lectures and discussion in the class. In the past there are many studies on code-switching and code-mixing in the many language classrooms. But in this study, it focuses on the use of the code-switching and code-mixing in a basic Geography class. This study moved the idea that code-switching and code-mixing is more meaningful practice in a geography class, since both English and Filipino codes can be used in expressing their ideas. Sociolinguistic theory was used in this study. Sociolinguistics is concerned with language in social and cultural context, especially how people with different social identities (e.g. gender, age, race, ethnicity, class) speak and how their speech changes in different situations. They added that sociolinguistics has something to do with the study of how people use language in their everyday lives.

This study can be beneficial to both learners and teachers specifically those who really believed that code-switching and code-mixing is quite effective based on their experience. Teaching students whose first language is not English nor Filipino but has its own variety of language which is commonly called lingua franca is totally a difficult task. The idea of MTBLE or Mother Tongue Based Language Education can be at the right track, believing that the best medium for teaching is the medium of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding (UNESCO, 1953). This goes to support that a child can easily learn the lessons once he/she understands the language used by the teacher for instruction, thereby a child can easily communicate

and convey his/her ideas in discussion. Along this line code switching and code mixing can be very meaningful to the learners, because most Filipino learners used to switch and code mix in expressing their ideas on issues discussed in the classroom.

## 2.0 Research Methodology

The study used descriptive-qualitative method. It describes the way things are based on the questionnaire adapted from the work of Alenezi (2010) entitled "Students' Languages Attitude Towards Using Code-Switching as a Medium of Instruction in the College of Health Sciences: An Exploratory Study". This study was anchored to the theory of sociolinguistics by Hudson (1996) as cited by Wardhaugh (2006). This is 'the study of language in relation to society, whereas; the sociology of language is 'the study of society in relation to language.' In other words, in sociolinguistics language and society are shared in order to find out as much as one can about what kind of thing language is, and in the sociology of language one can reverse the direction of his interest.

The study utilized that students from the, College of Teacher Education of Surigao del Sur State University, Tandag City who were attending the basic geography class last summer 2012- 2013. There were 56 students who voluntarily participated in the study. The data were analyzed using the 4 likert scale and mean score to measure the students' languages attitude towards code-switching and code mixing in the geography classroom.

## 3.0 Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the attitude of students toward using monolingual or code switching teaching.

Table 1. Attitudes toward using monolingual or code-switching teaching

Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Switching of English and Filipino weakened my English.	2.34	Disagree
Switching of English and Filipino weakened my Filipino.	2.29	Disagree
Switching of English and Filipino strengthened my English	2.98	Agree
Switching of English and Filipino strengthened my Filipino	2.91	Agree

The table tells that students agreed that switching the language from one to another (English to Filipino and vice versa) strengthened both English and Filipino languages in them. It appeared that using both languages in the classroom do not weaken the proficiency of one's

language. The result implies that students prefer to use code-switching in class discussion to be able to express their ideas properly. This result is in accordance with the study of Jingxia (2010) that most of the teachers and students hold a positive attitude towards code-switching to Chinese.

Table 2 is on code-mixing and its effects on language used both English and Filipino.

Table 2. Code-mixing and its effects on English and Filipino

Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Mixing of English and Filipino weakened my English	2.38	Disagree
Mixing of English and Filipino weakened my Filipino	2.32	Disagree
Mixing of English and Filipino strengthened my English	3.00	Agree
Mixing of English and Filipino strengthened my Filipino	3.05	Agree

The table above shows that mixing English and Filipino language do not weaken their English and Filipino language. However, mixing the two languages lead the students to strengthen their used of English and Filipino in the class. This implies that using code-mixing in a classroom allows the learner to explore a better performance in their geography class because they easily understand concepts whereby they can express their ideas clearly. The result conformed in the study of Alenezi (2010) that when the teaching is delivered in Arabic/English code switching that the students' language attitude toward code switching in teaching has a great impact on their academic performances as it is seen as

Table 3. Students' language preference in teaching

Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
I prefer the use of both English and Filipino in teaching the subject basic Geography (code-switching/ code-mixing).	3.64	Strongly Agree
I prefer the use of English only in teaching Basic Geography	3.07	Agree
I prefer the use of Filipino only in teaching Basic Geography	2.86	Agree
I prefer the use of English as medium of instruction for English Language Disciplines	3.64	Strongly Agree

an influential teaching tool to facilitate learning and therefore helps increase student involvement.

Table 3 shows the students' language preference in teaching. As depicted in table 3 students strongly agree or prefer on the use code switching and code-mixing in both English and Filipino languages in teaching geography. But with respect to the use of English in a language classroom nor Filipino language in a Filipino subject it is highly noted that students do respect the use of both languages in specific disciplines. It is also suggested in the table above that students prefer on the use of both languages in the discussion of concepts in the subject basic geography rather than the use of monolingual-English nor monolingual- Filipino in the discussion of concepts in basic geography subject. This confirmed the previous research which says that learners use their native language to communicate between one another and by doing so they get an understandable response if the other learners have the same or another perception of the received information. All of this is done so that the learners in a simplified way can negotiate meaning and help their own learning process (Simon 2001) as cited by Jakobsson and Ryden (2010). They added that switching back to the native language provides the learner a natural opportunity to retreat to a secure zone of language use and that the functions of code-switching have a close connection to the speech situations and interpersonal relationships that affect them Halmari (2004).

#### 4.0 Conclusion

Language is a great factor in the teaching and learning process inside the classroom. In teaching basic geography students prefer the use the switching and mixing of both English and Filipino languages as media of instruction. The students strongly agree that in the use of code switching and code mixing in the discussion, it helps them convey concepts and expresses ideas clearly and through this they can participate actively in the class discussion. The students appreciate the use of code-switching and mixing in expressing their ideas and opinions; whereby it implies further that they are comfortable in using these languages in the class of basic geography. Therefore students' preferred code switching and code mixing than using monolingual medium of instruction. The students recognize code switching and code mixing as means of strengthening their comprehension in the subject wherein they are able to express their ideas clearly.

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