

Code-Switching Practices Among English Pre-Service Teachers: Realities and Reflections

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Abstract — This study examines the code-switching practices of third-year pre-service English teachers in multilingual classrooms at a government-funded university in Cebu City, focusing on its frequency and potential impact on students' Grade Point Average (GPA). Using a mixed-method explanatory sequential design, quantitative data were collected through frequency tally sheets and GPA records, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with pre-service teachers and professors. The findings indicate that code-switching is frequently used to aid comprehension, reduce anxiety, and increase engagement, but there is no significant relationship between the frequency of code-switching and students' GPA. The study concludes that while code-switching is beneficial for communication, it does not directly influence academic performance, and recommends that teacher education programs incorporate balanced bilingual strategies to support language proficiency alongside effective teaching practices.

Keywords — code-switching, pre-service teachers, English proficiency, teaching practices, Grade Point Average, teacher education.

I. INTRODUCTION

The English language functions as a global bridge across language boundaries, facilitating communication in multilingual contexts. English proficiency, defined as the ability to understand and communicate effectively in spoken and written forms, is essential for its effective use [36]. In the Philippines, a multilingual setting where English coexists with local languages—code-switching (alternating between two or more languages within conversation, sentence, or utterance) is common [10][14]. In classrooms, pre-service teachers often use code-switching to clarify difficult ideas and aid comprehension.

This study examines how English pre-service teachers in the Philippines use code-switching during oral recitations and everyday classroom interactions. Teacher training programs where future educators gain practical experience are ideal settings to observe how code-switching influences teaching strategies and communication [24]. Studies show code-switching can enhance learner confidence, class participation, and motivation in English classes [30]. In bilingual settings, deliberate code-switching by teachers helps create a supportive learning environment and encourages spontaneous student responses [24]. However, critics caution that overuse may hinder English proficiency and foster dependency on the native language [11][40].

In the Philippines, English frequently alternates with Filipino or Sinugbuanon Binisaya, using forms like inter-sentential (between sentences), intra-sentential (within sentences), and tag-switching (tag insertion) [32][39]. Such forms help students communicate more authentically and comfortably, although excessive use may weaken English communicative competence [10][14]. Intersentential code-switching occurs when a speaker switches languages between sentences, as in: “Speaking English in our class is highly encouraged especially during oral recitations. *Pero dili tamo pugson mosturya ug English if dili ninyu kaya*” (I won’t force you to speak in English if you can’t). In intrasentential code-switching, the switch happens within a sentence, as shown in: “*Ganahan man ko mo-answer Ma’am pero ma-scared lang ko*” (I want to answer Ma’am but I’m scared). The third type, tag-switching, inserts a tag from one language into another, like: “*It’s a good story, ‘di ba?*” (It’s a good story, right?).

Factors influencing code-switching among pre-service teachers include limited English fluency, vocabulary gaps, anxiety over errors, and the need to clarify content [8][12][29]. For example, in oral participation studies at ABC College in Mindanao, students reported switching codes when they struggled with English terms or felt anxious about grammar, using their first language to express ideas more fully [15].

Cognitively, code-switching can aid students by reducing anxiety and facilitating expressiveness, especially in low-proficiency classrooms [42][44]. It allows learners to lower their affective filter and participate more freely [30]. Pedagogically, pre-service teachers use code-switching strategically for explanation, affective support, and classroom management [17][21][23]. Balancing English use with occasional code-switching appears beneficial, though moderation is necessary to avoid undermining language development.

This study aims to fill gaps in understanding how often pre-service English teachers use code-switching during recitations and classroom talk, and what contextual factors influence usage. Using mixed methods, observations and interviews; the research seeks to inform teacher training practices aligned with Sustainable Development Goals or SDG 4 by promoting inclusive and equitable education in multilingual environments.

II. METHODS

This study employed an explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design to investigate the relationship between code-switching, linguistic competence, and pedagogical practices among third-year English pre-service teachers at a government-funded university in Cebu City. The research was carried out in two phases. First, during the quantitative phase, the researchers conducted two weeks of classroom observations, recording instances of code-switching during oral recitations, class participation, and group discussions. Furthermore, students’ GPA from the “Structures of English” course was gathered to assess their English proficiency and examine its relationship with code-switching tendencies. Next, the qualitative phase involved semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with selected students and professors to explore their experiences and perceptions regarding the use of

code-switching in academic contexts. To ensure efficiency and consistency, cluster sampling was employed, targeting a specific bloc of students who shared similar academic backgrounds and course schedules. Data were collected through various instruments: a frequency tally sheet for observation, GPA records for quantitative analysis, and an interview guide with open-ended questions for qualitative insight. Observations took place during regular class sessions, while interviews were held in private classrooms to ensure confidentiality and minimize distractions. In terms of data analysis, the researchers utilized Pearson's r , Spearman's ρ , and Kendall's tau-B to assess correlations between code-switching frequency and GPA. Additionally, descriptive statistics and scatter plots were used to illustrate trends in the data. Finally, thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, was applied to the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns. Throughout the study, ethical standards were carefully observed, participants provided informed consent, were assigned code names, and their identities were kept confidential ensuring the integrity, transparency, and credibility of the research process.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This comprises a detailed presentation and discussion of data analysis and the results of the study, in which data is organized logically and sequentially to accommodate study and interpretation.

Sub-problem 1: Frequency of Code-Switching (CS)

Table 1. The Frequency of Code-Switching

	Mode	Median	Mean	95% Confidence Interval Mean		Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
				Upper	Lower			
				Code Switching	0.00			

Table 1 summarizes code-switching frequency. The mode is 0.00, indicating the absence of code-switching is most common. The median is 4.00, with half of participants below and half above this value. The mean is 6.44, with a standard deviation of 10.15, showing substantial variability and some outliers.

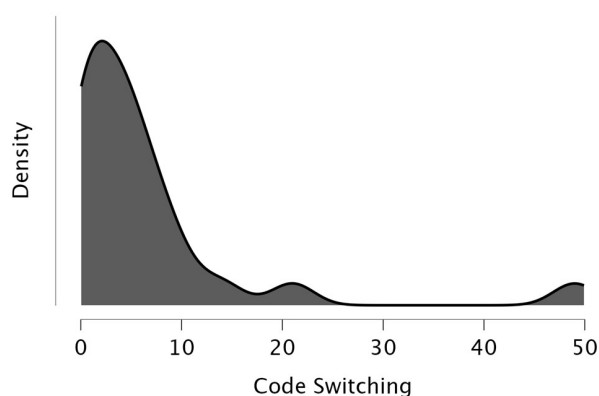


Figure 1. The Frequency of Code-Switching

Sub-problem 2: Grade Point Average (GPA) in English Class

Student Number	GPA	Student Number	GPA
S1	1.9	S14	1.7
S2	2.1	S15	2.2
S3	2.2	S16	2.5
S4	2.3	S17	1.8
S5	2.1	S18	1.8
S6	2	S19	2.2
S7	2	S20	2
S8	2.3	S21	2.1
S9	1.9	S22	2
S10	2.3	S23	1.3
S11	1.9	S24	2.5
S12	2	S25	2.1
S13	1.9		

Table 2. The Grade Point Average (GPA) in English

	Mode	Median	Mean	95% Confidence Interval Mean		Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
				Upper	Lower			
GPA	2.00	2.00	2.04	2.15	1.94	0.26	1.30	2.50

Table 2 shows the Grade Point Average (GPA) in English, with the mode and median GPA both at 2.00. The mean GPA is 2.04, with a 95% confidence interval between 1.94 and 2.15. The standard deviation is 0.26, indicating minimal variability and consistent academic performance.

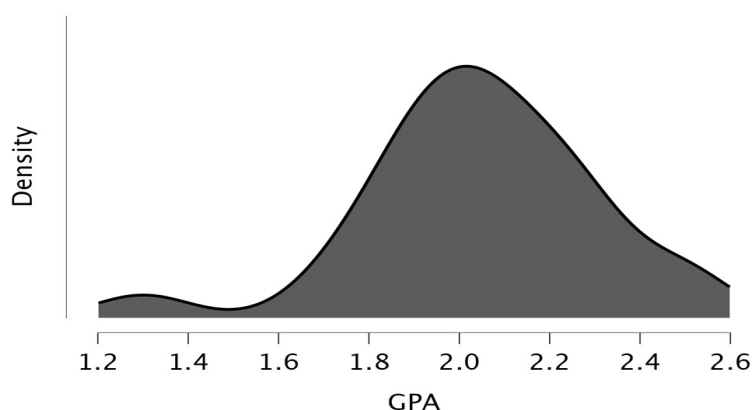


Figure 2. The Grade Point Average (GPA) in English

Sub-problem 3: Significant Relationship Between Frequency of CS and GPA

Table 3. The Correlation Analysis between Frequency of Code-Switching and Grade Point Average (GPA) in English

	Pearson		Spearman		Kendall	
	<i>r</i>	p-value	rho	p-value	tau B	p-value
Code Switching vs GPA	-0.248	0.233	-0.238	0.251	-0.201	0.190

Table 3 shows a weak negative correlation between code-switching frequency and GPA, with Pearson, Spearman, and Kendall coefficients of -0.248, -0.238, and -0.201, respectively. The p-values (0.233, 0.251, 0.190) are all above 0.05, indicating no statistically significant relationship between code-switching and GPA in English.

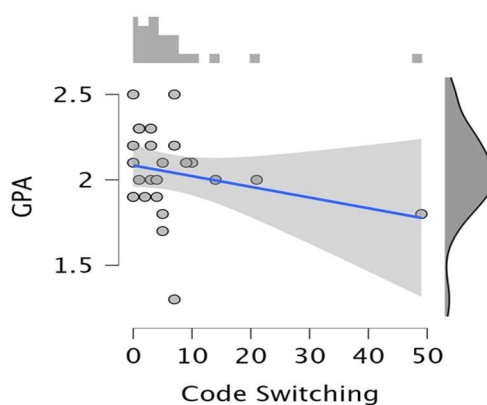


Figure 3. The Scatter Plot

Sub-problem 4: Teachers and Students' Regards on CS during Class

Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with pre-service teachers and professors revealed both benefits and drawbacks of code-switching in the classroom. Participants shared that code-switching aids clarification, reduces nervousness,

increases engagement and humor, and improves comprehension, especially for complex topics. However, concerns included potential over-reliance on the native language, difficulty in translating concepts directly to English, and reduced student motivation to understand English. One participant noted using the local language to ensure understanding, echoing Canagarajah's (2017) insights on multilingual classrooms. Ultimately, while code-switching enhances learning, it should be used selectively to maintain English proficiency.

	Themes	
	Positive Impacts of Code-switching	Negative Impacts of Code-switching
Codes	clarification and emphasis not their first language no direct English translation eases nervousness increases engagement and humor for better understanding and/or explanation	lacking competence in L2 lowered English proficiency perceived lack of professionalism lack of vocabulary

Sub-problem 5: Implications

The finding that code-switching has no significant relationship with students' GPA suggests that, while it may enhance classroom interaction and comprehension, it does not directly affect academic performance. This may be due to individual learning styles, existing English proficiency among pre-service teachers, or a greater focus on content mastery over language development. GPA also reflects broader factors like study habits, motivation, and support systems, which can mask the effects of code-switching. Therefore, code-switching should be viewed as a complementary strategy that temporarily aids understanding, rather than a key factor in improving academic outcomes.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study explored code-switching among English pre-service teachers, focusing on its frequency, its impact on language development, and its role in classroom interaction. Using a mixed-method approach, the findings revealed that code-switching is used to varying degrees among pre-service teachers and that there is no significant correlation between code-switching and academic performance, as measured by GPA. The results further indicate that while code-switching can be beneficial in aiding comprehension, reducing anxiety, and encouraging participation, excessive reliance on it may hinder the development of communicative competence in English. Therefore, a balanced and purposeful use of code-switching is recommended. Pre-service teachers are encouraged to use code-switching strategically to support student learning while avoiding overdependence on it. Professors, on the other hand, should undergo relevant training to effectively guide pre-service teachers in the appropriate use of code-switching in the classroom. Institutions are also advised to provide workshops, mentorship programs, and language immersion opportunities to strengthen English proficiency while still supporting bilingual teaching practices. Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to explore the long-term effects of code-switching across different educational contexts to further deepen understanding of its role in language learning and teaching.

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