



CODE-SWITCHING PRACTICES AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM CLASSES AMONG SECOND-YEAR EDUCATION STUDENTS OF LCC-BAIS CITY

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ABSTRACT

The study entitled Code-switching Practices and Student Engagement in English-medium Classes among Second Year Education Students at LCC-Bais, it aimed to examine the relationship between code-switching practices and students' improved engagement, addressing the prevalent usage of the practice yet limited local studies regarding the topic. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected through survey questionnaires and an adapted observation checklist. This study was able to come up with the following findings. It revealed that many of the participants have been exposed to diverse linguistic and educational experiences. Moreover, students and teachers frequently engaged in intra-sentential code-switching, primarily for situational purposes. Consequently, the students' level of engagement was observed to be high, and the relationship between code-switching and student engagement was found to be significant. However, the participants' level of engagement remained consistent across specialization. The findings indicate that code-switching can support the enhancement of student communication and engagement in the classroom and ultimately facilitate a productive and effective learning-teaching experience. Therefore, to utilize code-switching in a pedagogical and strategic manner, a "Code-Switching Classroom Strategy Guide for English-Medium Instruction" and a "Word of the Day Classroom Policy" are suggested.

Keywords: *Code-switching, English-medium, Student Engagement*

INTRODUCTION

The educational context of the 21st century has developed instructional strategies and approaches to promote effective and inclusive teaching-learning process. In multilingual settings, code-switching emerges as a communication strategy that bridges the gaps among speakers from different backgrounds. As a fact, a study conducted in India found that a single classroom comprised of students from different linguistic backgrounds (Tsimpli and Lightfoot, 2020). This suggests that code-switching does not only result from the linguistically diverse setting, but as a practical means of communication and learning.

A number of studies suggest that the practice of code-switching assist students' inability to convey the concepts fully in the target language, boosting their confidence in speaking up without fear of judgement (Nukuto, 2017; Alang and Idris 2018). Ahmetovic et al. (2021) and Balao et al. (2025) found that the frequency, variation, and level of code-switching depend according to the speaker's objective, social and context of the discourse. However, a study by Domede (2023) revealed that code-switching does not necessarily improve the student's language learning, suggesting inconsistency in the findings from several studies which require further investigation.

In the Philippine setting, code-switching is regarded to be correlated with student's better understanding and speaking skills (Candilas et al. 2023; Bathan et al., 2025). Consequently, Baricaua et al. (2018, as cited in Balilla et al., 2024) claimed that the phenomenon is practiced by teachers to cater to the individual learning needs of students, namely the slow, average, and advanced learners. Accordingly, this interchange of languages is linked to factors; first is language incompetency, which the speaker cannot maintain the discourse for one time and still needs to insert their first language; and language proficiency, where the speaker is competent enough to switch between languages (Bautista (1994) as cited by Roxas (2019).

In the classroom with learners of varying skills and intelligence, the educators are constantly improving the teaching strategies in order to ensure that every student is not left behind. This includes the linguistic ability of students, especially for those students who have limited linguistic proficiency with the language. On the other hand, some students are also good in the language, thus the teacher provides more advanced approach to meet the higher learning need. Therefore, the use of code-switching is a strategy used by both learners and educators to ensure an effective learning process.

The official implementation of code-switching into the schools, as a tool to improve the total learning environment for the students was supported by other researchers (Cabrera, 2022; Iñigo & Loquias, 2023). In addition, Balmeo & Flores (2021) and Tonio (2024) provided suggestions to DepEd, which would include developing clearer guidelines, in regards to how teachers are allowed to use code-switching in their classrooms. On the contrary, Espiña & Ibojo (2023); and Villarazo & Nemenzo (2025) stated that reliance on code-switching can lead to less linguistic effort in mastering the target language. Thus, a study done in Sibulan, Negros Oriental by Decipolo & Eliaga

(2024) postulated for workshops and seminars for teachers, as well as DepEd to review the Bilingual Education Policy to address the occurrence of the phenomenon.

As useful as code-switching is towards the improvement of educational learning, if not properly moderated and guided by teachers this may result to linguistically incompetent speakers. Its important to know that code-switching exist to bridge linguistic gaps and not an option for most of the time, especially in highly formal situations where the need to speak the medium is required. Therefore, careful guidance is required to ensure the rightful use of code-switching. However, there are still limited local research that focuses on the correlation of code-switching practices between the English and Cebuano languages and student engagement.

At La Consolacion College-Bais City, code-switching is evident in the classes. Despite its prevalence, little is known about whether code-switching is associated with students' improved engagement. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine code-switching practices and its relation to student engagement in English-medium classes among Second Year Education Students at La Consolacion-Bais City, aligning with UNESCO's Goal 4 of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to promote inclusive and quality education.

Research Questions

This study investigated the relationship between code-switching and student engagement inside the classroom. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. specialization;
 - 1.2. school background;
 - 1.3. parents' educational attainment?
2. To what extent does the students engage in code-switching in terms of:
 - 2.1. frequency;
 - 2.2. purpose;
 - 2.3. types?
3. To what extent do the teachers engage in code-switching in terms of:
 - 3.1. frequency;
 - 3.2. purpose;
 - 3.3. types?
4. What is the level of student's classroom engagement?
5. Is there a significant relationship between code-switching and students' level of classroom engagement?
6. Is there a significant difference in students' engagement when grouped according to specialization?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive, comparative and correlational methods of research. The descriptive research design was used to describe the switching practices of both the teacher and student in terms of the study variables, such as frequency, purpose, types, and level. The correlational research served as a tool to determine whether these code-switching variables were associated with student participation during class discussion and activities. In addition, a comparative component was employed to find out the differences in students' engagement across specializations.

Respondents, Population, and Sampling

The study took place in La Consolacion College, Bais City. The participants of this study were selected based on specific inclusion criteria relevant to the research objectives. Participants had to be currently enrolled at La Consolacion College-Bais City and admitted to the Teacher Education Program during the academic year 2025-2026. They had to be second-year students, pursuing either the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) or Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) Program, majoring in Filipino, English, and Social Studies. Additionally, only those who belonged to the English-medium classes were considered eligible to take part in the study.

The study employed a total population sampling, wherein all 24 students who met the inclusion criteria were included as participants, consisting of 12 students from the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) program and 12 students from the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) Program. Moreover, the 3 teachers handling the classes were included as subjects of the study. Participation was voluntary; they were free to decline and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequences. The researchers respected the decisions of each participant.

Research Instrument and Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers adapted the observational checklist developed by Nina Spada & Maria Frohlich (1995) called the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) model. The checklist was designed as a one-part matrix style to align with the objectives of the study and simplify the data recording from both the students and teachers, which lasted for one hour and thirty minutes. Each student's classroom participation was recorded, and the same goes for all three teachers handling different subjects but the same students. Two class observations were employed for every three classes to reduce the risk of the Hawthorne effect.

Frequency was measured by counting the number of times the speaker switched from English to Cebuano, or vice versa, one tally mark represented one occurrence in either a single sentence or continuous utterance. Multiple switches that occurred within a single utterance were counted separately. While the level of participation was counted as the verbal responses during classroom interaction, for the students it could be to answer, ask questions, or give comments. As for the teachers, it could be to explain a concept,

clarify instructions, or emphasize important ideas. Therefore, in one participation, it was possible to have more than one code-switch.

The recorded code-switching occurrences were then classified either as intra-sentential (within a sentence), inter-sentential (between sentences), or tag-switching (insertion of short expressions). Moreover, these language switches were identified based on what purpose they served: either situational code-switching, which occurred according to the contextual demands, such as for explanation and instructions; or metaphorical code-switching that referred to the language switch for emphasis, clarification, or expression. Finally, the level of participation was derived from the total frequency of classroom participation and was classified as low (0-2 occurrences), moderate (3-5 occurrences), or high (6 or more occurrences). The measured participation was then related to the total number of code-switching occurrences for correlational analysis.

In addition, the observational checklist that was used was validated by three subject matter experts in the fields of education and language. Following a thorough review of the statement of the problem, the research instrument, and the observational checklist by the validators, the researchers further improved the study.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

Specialization	Frequency	Percentage
English	5	20.80
Filipino	1	4.20
Social Studies	6	25.00
BEED	12	50.00
TOTAL	24	100.00%
School Background		
Public Rural School	7	29.30
Public Urban School	11	45.80
Private Urban School	6	25.00
TOTAL	24	100.00%
Father's Educational Attainment		
No Formal Schooling	2	8.30%
Elementary Level	6	25.00%
Elementary Graduate	1	4.20%
Junior High School Level	2	8.30%
Junior High School Graduate	2	8.30%
College Level	9	37.50%
College Graduate	2	8.30%
TOTAL	24	100.00%
Mother's Educational Attainment		

No Formal Schooling	2	8.30%
Elementary Level	4	16.70%
Elementary Graduate	4	16.70%
Junior High School Level	1	4.20%
Junior High School Graduate	3	12.50%
College Level	7	25.00%
College Graduate	3	12.50%
TOTAL	24	100.00%

The results in Table 1 show the demographic profile of the participants based on their specialization, their high school background, and the educational background of their parents/guardians. The majority of the participants who specialized in BEED (Bachelor of Elementary Education) had a frequency of 12 (or 50%) of all the participants. On the contrary, the minimum number of participants who specialized in the field of Filipino was at a frequency of 1 (or 4.2%). In terms of school background, the data indicate that approximately 45.8% or 11 (of total) of those surveyed graduated from an urban public school. Conversely, private urban schools have the smallest number of responses at a frequency of 6 (or 25%). The educational background of the parents showed that 9 fathers have an educational history of obtaining a degree in college, for a frequency rate of 37.5%, and 7 mothers had a degree in college with a frequency rate of 25%.

Table 2.1. Extent of Students' Code-switching in Terms of Frequency

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (0-2)	-	-
Moderate (3-5)	-	-
High (6 and above)	24	100%

The extent of students' code-switching frequency is presented in the table above. The results show that all 24, or 100% of the participants, demonstrated a high frequency level of code-switching inside the classroom.

Table 2.2. Extent of Students' Code-switching in Terms of Purpose

Purpose	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Situational Purpose	4.65	0.84	1
Metaphorical Purpose	1.80	0.15	2

Table 2.2 shows the purposes as to why students engage in code-switching. It can be gleaned from the table that the situational purpose ranked first with a mean of 4.65 and a standard deviation of 0.84. Meanwhile, ranked second is metaphorical purpose with a mean of 1.80 and a standard deviation of 0.15.

Table 2.3. Extent of Students' Code-switching in Terms of Types

Types	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Intra-sentential Code-switching	3.78	0.63	1
Inter-sentential Code-switching	2.73	0.45	2
Tag Code-switching	2.06	0.50	3

The results in Table 2.3 revealed the three types of code-switching practiced by the participants. Ranked first is intra-sentential code-switching with a mean of 3.78 and a standard deviation of 0.63. Ranked second and third are inter-sentential code-switching and tag-switching, respectively.

Table 3.1. Extent of Teachers' Code-switching in Terms of Frequency

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (0-2)	-	-
Moderate (3-5)	-	-
High (6 and above)	3	100%

Table 3.1 presents the extent of teachers' code-switching practices in terms of purpose. The findings indicate that all of the teachers have high frequency level of code-switching, representing 100% of the observed participants.

Table 3.2. Extent of Teachers' Code-switching in Terms of Purpose

Purpose	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Situational Purpose	14.50	5.77	1
Metaphorical Purpose	5.83	4.54	2

The code-switching type used by teachers are shown in the table above. situational purpose ranked first with a mean 14.50 Meanwhile, code-switching among teachers for metaphorical purpose ranked second with a mean of 5.83 and a standard deviation of 4.54.

Table 3.3. Extent of Teachers' Code-switching in Terms of Types

Types	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Intra-sentential Code-switching	10.20	5.01	1

Inter-sentential Code-switching	5.17	2.36	2
Tag Code-switching	3.33	1.04	3

The results presented in Table 3.3 revealed that intra-sentential code-switching had the highest rank out of the three forms of code-switching that were used by the teachers. Inter-sentential ranked second, while tag-switching had the lowest rank with a mean of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 1.04.

Table 4. Level of Students' Classroom Engagement

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (0-2)	-	-
Moderate (3-5)	-	-
High (6 and above)	24	100%

The students' level of engagement in code-switching is shown in Table 4. The result revealed that all 24 participants, representing 100% of the participants, manifested a high level of engagement while using code-switching during classroom discussions and activities.

Table 5. Significant Relationship Between Code-switching and Students' Engagement

Pearsons' r	Degree of (+) Relation	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
0.955	Very Strong Positive Relationship	.001	Significant	Reject Ho

A Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient (r) was utilized as means to establish whether or not there is a statistically significant association between code-switching and student classroom engagement. The Pearson's r value obtained in the analysis was 0.955, while the corresponding p-value was less than 0.001, indicating significant results.

Table 6. Significant Difference in Students' Engagement When Grouped According to Specializations

F-value	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
1.852	0.183	Not Significant	Accept Ho

Students level of classroom engagement was compared using ANOVA. The statistical test yielded an F-value of 1.852 with a corresponding p-value of 0.183. This has resulted in the non-rejection of the null hypothesis

DISCUSSION

The demographic profiles of the participants were taken into consideration in order to get a clearer picture of the educational and linguistic backgrounds of the students and how those backgrounds might relate to their code-switching practices, as well as the level of engagement they display in class. Since half of the participants are specialized in elementary education, they are exposed to a variety of subjects that use different mediums of instruction. Hence, they could be more likely to use code switching as one way of communicating while participating in discussions. However, the unequal distribution brought about by the small representation of Filipino majors signify potential differences in their degree of involvement in multilingualism within the context of classroom communication.

Urban public schools emerged as the most common educational background among the respondents. These schools generally serve students from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, creating opportunities for learners to interact with peers who use different languages, dialects, and communication styles. Such exposure can enhance students' ability to communicate effectively in diverse settings while fostering greater appreciation and understanding of linguistic and cultural differences.

College degree was the most common educational attainment among both fathers and mothers of the respondents. This suggests that many respondents were raised in households where parents had completed higher education, a factor often associated with greater access to educational resources, stronger academic support, and increased involvement in their children's learning.

In a study conducted by Balao et al. (2025), the amount of code-switching that occurs, its variations, and how much of it occurs can vary depending on what speakers are trying to achieve, what kind of social context they are in, and the context of their conversation. This includes how participants interact within their own multilingual environments (i.e. household) which includes what type of code switch is preferred. Therefore, such factors may be associated with the students' linguistic competence and engagement.

Code-switching appears to be a common practice among the students. In multilingual classrooms, it is only natural that students would switch languages when asking, answering, or giving comments. This reflects the learning needs of students that needs linguistic assistance with the use of code-switching. According to Rasman (2018), speakers tend to switch between languages to ensure that their ideas become easy to comprehend to compensate for their linguistic limitations. As the participants were not

native speakers of English, it is understandable that they may encounter difficulties in constructing a full English sentence and need to code-switch for better conveyance of the ideas. Therefore, frequent code-switching does not mean lack of language ability but rather as a strategic communication practice.

Students primarily practice code-switching depending on the classroom situation, such as code-switching in giving an example while explaining an idea, or shifting to mother tongue, when talking to a learner who struggles to understand English to provide assistance to the learning needs. This dominance of situational code-switching means that code-switching mainly functions as a tool for practical communication to match the classroom needs and communication demands within the classroom setting. As a matter of fact, students resort to code-switching to better convey the ideas and opinions, especially when they have limited vocabulary in the language used as the medium of instruction (Yusuf 2020). Therefore, code-switching functions as a practical means of facilitating comprehension and as a vehicle for effective communication.

Moreover, students also code-switched to better explain a concept or to emphasize a point. This was supported by Nurhamidah et al. (2018), who asserted that most bilingual speakers communicate effectively through the use of intra-sentential code-switching. This indicates that students utilize code-switching as a form of assistance when keeping a conversation in English as the medium of instruction, but still maintain the limited use of Cebuano as the mother tongue of the speaker. Therefore, participants did not entirely rely on code-switching when participating, but use it as a form of assistance to support the flow of ideas.

Teachers, on the other hand, utilize code-switching practices in facilitating the teaching and learning process. It has already become a natural part of the classroom dynamics, especially in ensuring that the lesson is comprehensible for each student in the class. Probyn (2019) revealed that in multilingual classrooms where students come from diverse linguistic and social backgrounds, teachers utilize code-switching to mediate the gap between the varied differences of the students. This may occur when a student struggles to comprehend an English word or phrase, the teacher will need to translate, give example, or expound on the word in the student's mother tongue to facilitate complete comprehension. Therefore, the frequency of code-switching goes beyond simple vocabulary limitations of the teacher, but serves as a bridge for effective learning.

Teachers mainly use code-switching to cater a specific classroom situation, such as code-switching in giving an example while explaining an idea or shifting to mother tongue when talking to a learner who struggles to understand English to provide assistance to the learning needs. This is consistent with the study of Ahmad and Jusoff (2019), wherein teachers switch languages to clarify an idea, deepen the explanation, simplify difficult concepts, and check student engagement. In a multilingual classroom with students of varied comprehension levels, teachers constantly adjust their teaching approach to ensure that every student keeps up with the discussion. One strategic way is to switch from English to Cebuano or vice versa so that each student will comprehend the lesson. Therefore, code-switching mainly functions as a tool for practical

communication strategy to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process and enhance the engagement level of the students.

The use of intra-sentential code-switching during class discussions enables teachers to discuss lessons simply while making sure that they are not relying on the mother tongue. They strategically insert Cebuano phrases or words to clarify certain unfamiliar concepts to ensure comprehension and check engagement of the students without interrupting the lesson flow. According to Creese et al. (2018) the learning environment can become more supportive and inclusive for students with diverse background when teachers include a language aside from the medium of instruction. This indicates that teachers actively employ code-switching in the classroom as parts of the educational effort of maintaining student engagement and comprehension.

The correlational analysis demonstrated a very strong, positive association between code-switching practices and students' levels of classroom engagement. Thus, as code-switching occurs with greater frequency so too does students' engagement. In the study of Ortiz (2021, as cited in Bathan et al., 2025), when educators provide instruction that aligns with the background of an individual student (i.e. language and/or social environment), it is likely that the number of engagement will increase in class discussions. For instance, instead of only speaking the medium of instruction, the teacher may give examples, translation, and explanations in the mother tongue of the learners for better comprehension. By utilizing multiple languages during instruction, students are provided a comfortable opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. Specifically, when students are having difficulties articulating the appropriate words within the medium of instruction, expressing themselves using the native language may make them feel more at ease.

The ANOVA results failed to prove significant differences in the students' level of classroom engagement when grouped according to specialization. This finding has found anchorage in the study of Redmond et al. (2018), which emphasized that teaching strategies, educational environment, and learning experiences are more likely to be related to student engagement. This may explain why different specializations demonstrated no significance in the levels of engagement. Furthermore, the absence suggests that code-switching is commonly practiced across different specializations. Since students came from diverse backgrounds and linguistic environments, it is highly possible that multilingual communication takes place in the classrooms. Regardless of the specialization, a student may use code-switching as a tool for communication and participation inside a classroom. Moreover, the findings imply that other factors aside from specialization may have a greater relation to students' engagement. These factors may include the teaching strategies, classroom environment, confidence of language use, or the students' competence level. When students understand the lessons and are given the opportunity to participate using the medium of instruction as the language with the strategic use of code-switching, they become more encouraged to willingly speak up. This means that classroom engagement may depend more on the effectiveness of interaction and communication rather than on the students' academic specialization.

Conclusions

The students reflected a diversity of language and educational backgrounds, which code-switching functions as a practical means of facilitating effective communication between the students and teachers alike, rather than an indication of a language deficit.

Students' repeated usage of intra-sentential switching for situational purposes demonstrated their desire to enhance communication and comprehension during classroom interaction. Instead of being an indicator of limited English proficiency, students' usage of intra-sentential code-switching is a linguistic resource used to clarify ideas, participate more confidently, and express themselves effectively in English medium classes.

Similarly, teachers' repeated usage of intra-sentential switching for situational purposes was a form of intentional instructional strategy to facilitate understanding while preserving meaningful classroom interactions. By strategically alternating between English and Cebuano, teachers provide language support to help their students understand lessons, while at the same time providing the benefits of maintaining the objectives of English medium instruction.

Code-switching creates a more inclusive learning environment where students feel more comfortable engaging with each other, conveying ideas, and interacting with teachers in English medium classes. This contributes to the learners' willingness to speak up, express opinions, and share ideas during discussions.

These strategic language alternations have a positive impact on participation and interaction within the classroom. Code-switching serves as a means of supporting both the instructional and communicative needs of the student population in terms of asking questions, answering questions, and giving comments.

Overall, the study sheds light on the potential of code-switching to positively support communication and engagement in the classroom environment. The combined evidence supports that code-switching is used by both teachers and students for various reasons, yet ultimately provides the means to facilitate an effective teaching-learning experience.

Recommendations

Based upon the conclusions derived from the study, the following recommendations were developed:

Teachers and school administrators should recognize that each student is different in his or her educational or linguistic background. This recommendation may be carried out through systematic profiling, utilizing several sources, including but not limited to: Registrar's Office files, student entrance exams, student records, etc., especially for new students. The information gathered from these profiles would allow teachers to create

and implement teaching strategies centered around each learner and language-supportive methods to improve the learners' language abilities, and to identify the various languages used by each learner based on their multilingual experiences.

In addition to creating opportunities for learners to grow linguistically, students have the opportunity to build their communicative skills in the medium of instruction, and utilize code-switching as a means of communication. Learners can participate in an English club, establish a student organization, join a debate society, or establish a reading circle both inside and outside the institution. Learners can also listen to English-language podcasts and speeches to develop their language competency.

In increasing students' vocabulary while maintaining student engagement with the lesson, teachers may adapt a Word-of-the-Day Classroom Policy during class discussions. The policy also serves as both an icebreaker and an interactive language activity. Therefore, code-switching is utilized pedagogically and supports learning objectives, while also functioning as a communication tool.

Similarly, school administrators and teachers must continue to develop classroom practices that encourage active participation, collaboration, and discussion. By developing a "Code-Switching Classroom Strategy Guide for English-Medium Instruction," teaching and learning become clearer and more effective for teachers and students alike. It is a method that scaffolds the linguistic development of the learners.

Training for teachers and a series of professional development opportunities should be offered to help educators understand how they can best use code-switching in their classrooms. These developments will enable teachers to manage class discussions effectively by including the communication practice as an integral component of classroom interaction.

Future researchers may choose to perform studies using larger samples of participants that have more diversity than those included in the present study. Future studies may also examine additional variables associated with code-switching such as English language proficiency, classroom anxiety, and motivation to learn.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The researchers ensured that all ethical standards were observed before, during, and after the data collection phase. Prior to the classroom observation, the researchers sought permission through a letter from the Dean of the Teacher Education department and the research instructor. The letter explaining the purpose of the study, procedures, and the roles of participants in the study was presented to the teachers handling the five classes involved in observations. This process ensured that the observation went through approval.

Although the participants were not formally informed of the purpose of the observation to avoid the risk of the Hawthorne effect, which would likely affect the

accuracy of observation results, a debriefing immediately followed after the data collection phase. This was done to avoid inflicting any emotional, psychological, or physical harm to all the participants. The data collected were then treated with confidentiality by not disclosing the identities of the participants and by using codes instead of the participants' actual names in data reporting. All data were kept under strict security and were only used for academic purposes.

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