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TEACHER CODE-SWITCHING IN THE GRADE 5 CLASSROOM: DECISION-MAKING, AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Rhobina T. Razalan, Christopher L. Infante

Institute of Graduate and Professional Studies,Lyceum-Northwestern University, Dagupan City, Pangasinan, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study examined teacher code-switching in the Grade 5 classroom, focusing on teachers' decision-making and the development of intervention strategies at Caranglaan Elementary School during the School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, it investigated the reasons teachers engage in code-switching, the factors influencing their decisions regarding permissible code-switching practices, and the situations in which code-switching occurs during classroom instruction. The study employed a descriptive survey research design using an adapted questionnaire developed by Gulzar, which utilized a five-point Likert scale to assess teachers' code-switching practices. Descriptive statistical analysis, particularly percentage, was used to analyze and interpret the collected data. The findings revealed that teachers use code-switching for various instructional purposes, including clarifying concepts, improving learners' comprehension, translating unfamiliar terms, emphasizing key ideas, checking students' understanding, and fostering a supportive classroom environment. The results further indicated that teachers' code-switching practices are guided primarily by instructional needs and effective classroom communication. Based on the findings, intervention strategies were proposed to promote the purposeful and balanced use of code-switching in language instruction. The study concludes that strategic code-switching is an effective pedagogical practice that enhances classroom interaction, facilitates learner comprehension, and supports students' language development.

Keywords: *Code-switching, Classroom discourse, Teacher decision-making, Language instruction, Student comprehension, Intervention strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Code-switching, defined as the alternation between two or more languages or language varieties within a single conversation or utterance, is a common linguistic practice in multilingual communities (Cunningham-Andersson & Andersson, 2009). In bilingual educational settings, teachers frequently switch between languages to facilitate communication, clarify concepts, enhance learner comprehension, and support classroom interaction. Rather than indicating linguistic deficiency, code-switching is widely recognized as a natural communicative strategy that reflects bilingual competence and enables speakers to achieve specific instructional and social purposes (Wardhaugh, 2006; Myers-Scotton, 1995; Saunders, 1988).

The use of code-switching has received considerable attention in language education because of its potential to improve teaching and learning. Studies have shown that teachers employ code-switching to explain unfamiliar concepts, provide translations, emphasize important ideas, verify learners' understanding, and create a more inclusive learning environment (Cook, 2001; Brice, 2000; Turnbull, 2001; Zabrodskaja, 2007). Although some educators advocate exclusive use of the target language, increasing evidence suggests that strategic and purposeful code-switching can facilitate language learning when applied appropriately.

In the Philippine context, bilingualism plays a significant role in classroom communication due to the coexistence of Filipino, English, and various regional languages. The country's language policy recognizes the importance of learners' first language during the early years of education while gradually introducing English and Filipino as languages of instruction in the intermediate grades. Consequently, code-switching has become a common instructional practice, particularly in multilingual classrooms where teachers seek to balance language development with effective content delivery.

Several theories provide insights into teachers' code-switching behavior. Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model explains language choice as a strategic decision influenced by social and communicative expectations, while Communication Accommodation Theory suggests that speakers adjust their language to improve interaction and mutual understanding. Likewise, conversation analysis emphasizes that code-switching is shaped by the sequential flow of classroom discourse rather than by language choice alone. Collectively, these perspectives support the view that teachers' language choices are purposeful responses to instructional and communicative demands.

Despite the recognized value of code-switching, previous studies have primarily examined its linguistic characteristics and classroom functions. Limited attention has been given to how teachers determine when code-switching is appropriate, the factors influencing their instructional decisions, and the intervention strategies that may guide its effective use in elementary classrooms. Addressing these concerns is essential for promoting balanced language instruction while supporting learners' comprehension and participation.

This study was conducted to examine teacher code-switching in the Grade 5 classroom at Caranglaan Elementary School during the School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, it investigated the reasons teachers engage in code-switching, the factors influencing their decisions regarding permissible code-switching practices, the situations in which code-switching occurs during instruction, and the intervention strategies that may be proposed based on the findings. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the improvement of classroom language practices and provide practical insights for teachers, school administrators, and curriculum planners in multilingual educational settings.

Research Questions

This study aimed to examine teacher code-switching in the Grade 5 classroom at Caranglaan Elementary School during the School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the reasons teachers engaging in code-switching in the Grade 5 classroom?
2. How do teachers determine which code-switching practices are appropriate and permissible during classroom instruction?
3. In what classroom situations do teachers use code-switching?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what intervention strategies may be proposed to promote the effective and appropriate use of code-switching in classroom instruction?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine teacher code-switching in Grade 5 classroom discourse at Caranglaan Elementary School during the School Year 2024–2025. The respondents consisted of seven (7) Grade 5 teachers, who were selected through total enumeration because all teachers assigned to the grade level participated in the study. All respondents were bilingual speakers of Pangasinense and Tagalog, with English serving as their second language in classroom instruction. Data were collected using an adapted questionnaire developed by Gulzar (2020), which consisted of eleven indicators measuring the reasons and functions of teacher code-switching through a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. Prior to data collection, permission was secured from the school authorities, after which the questionnaires were administered to the respondents, retrieved upon completion, checked for completeness, and organized for analysis while ensuring the confidentiality of all participants. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts and percentages, to determine the reasons teachers engage in code-switching, the permissibility of code-switching practices, and the classroom situations in which code-switching occurs. The study was limited to the perceptions and classroom practices of the seven Grade 5 teachers at Caranglaan

Elementary School during the School Year 2024–2025; therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other grade levels, schools, or educational settings.

RESULTS

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This section of this research work presents an in-depths presentation of the data and information collected by the researcher. The latter likewise provides the proper analysis and interpretation of the data gathered during the course of the study.

The data, facts and information furnished by the respondents are wisely maximize and treated statistically. The data gathered are kept confidential to preserve the authenticity of the information adduced to the researcher.

Distribution of the Code-Switching Reasons in Grade 5 Classes

The table presented herein constructively discussed the reasons of code switching manifested in the classroom. The respondents were the six grade four teachers of Caranglaan Elementary School during the school year 2025-2026.

The respondents actively participated in the study and provided information which are deem necessary for the success of this written work.

The information is enumerated in table I of this section.

General Objectives:

The purpose of this research was to explore and investigate the awareness of code-switching related to classroom. Code switching occurs when a speaker alternates between two or more languages, or language varieties, in the context of a single conversation. Multilingual, speakers of more than one language, sometimes use elements of multiple languages when conversing with each other. Thus, code-switching is the use of more than one linguistic variety in a manner consistent with the syntax and phonology of each variety (Abbasian & Khajavi, 2011).

It is stated that the ability of people who are able to enjoy two languages perfectly to choose between the languages in their linguistics abilities is called as code switching (Gulzar, 2010).

Code switching is also enjoyed in almost all classes to state the points but it is important to know the reasons of code switching by teachers, therefore, to know its reasons can be studied and it is considered to have some information on reasons for the code switching by the teachers.

Specific Objectives:

This section specifically aims to explore and investigate the awareness of code-switching related to classroom discourse. There are different reasons that every classroom enjoys code switching. The use of mother tongue and foreign language in classes has been studied for many years in different studies. There are different reasons why a teacher switches his codes in language because the goals and purposes of the teachers to enjoy code switching in classes are different, for example, they may enjoy code switching to translate, to clarify the points (Gulzar, 2010) and some other reasons.

Table II
Distribution of the Code-Switching Reasons in Grade 5 Classes
N=7

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(1) Clarification	Strongly Agree	**4**	**57.14**
	Agree	**3**	**42.86**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**0**	**0**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**7**	**100**

The results displayed through the checklist are listed below to clarify the possible reasons for code switching in classroom: The first reason of the checklist considers the clarification. Table one in this study shows that 57.14 percent of the teachers were positive toward code switching for clarifying ideas and opinions. 42.6 percent of the teachers agreed with this item and 0 percent of the participants were not sure, disagree, nor strongly disagree on this item. Looking at the data gathered on the first reasons, it can be said that code switching sometimes enjoyed by the participants because the learner may have problems understanding the points in the target language. Therefore, in this study most of the participants agreed with this reason.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(2) Giving instructions effectively	Strongly Agree	**4**	**57.14**
	Agree	**2**	**28.57**
	Uncertain	**1**	**1.29**
	Disagree	**0**	**0**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**67**	**100**

The second reason deals with giving instructions effectively. As the table shows, about 57.14 percent of the participants in this study strongly agreed and 28.57 agree. To state the points and instruction in the classroom can be important for teachers who participated in this study.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(3) Translation	Strongly Agree	**0**	**0**
	Agree	**7**	**100**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**0**	**0**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**7**	**100**

On question number 3, states that code switching is enjoyed in order to translate the key points in the lesson. It is found that 100 percent of the teachers who participated in this study strongly agreed. The data gathered in this reason showed that all of the participants agreed with this reason and they believed that code switching can be enjoyed to translate and elaborate the points and ideas in the lesson.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(4) Socializing	Strongly Agree	**4**	**57.14**
	Agree	**3**	**42.86**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**0**	**0**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**7**	**100**

The fourth possible reason stated in the questionnaire is for socializing. To answer this reason,57.14percent of the participants strongly agreed and 42.86 percent agreed with this item. As depicted in the table above, this reason was enjoyed to consider the code switching for socializing. They switch to target language to the native language to express feelings of pleasure and displeasure.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(5) Linguistic competence	Strongly Agree	**0**	**0**
	Agree	**7**	**100**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**0**	**0**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**7**	**100**

One hundred (100) percent of the participants agreed on the fifth reason which is linguistic competence. The result showed that participants believed that code switching can be enjoyed to have linguistic competence. As they alternately used target language and native language to show skills and knowledge.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(6) Topic Shift	Strongly Agree	**0**	**0**
	Agree	**6**	**85.71**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**1**	**14.29**

	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**7**	**100**

On the reason of topic shift in item number 7, 14.29 percent of the participants in this study disagreed and 85.71 percent of the teacher participants agreed. The topics of the lessons is a challenging consideration based on the ideas of the participants in this study as depicted in the table nearly most of the teachers agreed or disagreed with this reason. In this, phenomenon in the classroom as instructions is usually carried out in the learners' mother tongue.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(7) Ease of expression	Strongly Agree	**2**	**28.57**
	Agree	**5**	**71.43**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**0**	**0**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**7**	**100**

The results showed that 28.57 percent of the participants who took part in this study strongly agreed on seventh item which is ease of expression Thus, percentage of teachers who agreed on this item was 71.43. This result confirms that when sometimes the teachers enjoyed code switching, the main reason is they state their expression easily for the learners understanding.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(8) Emphasis	Strongly Agree	**2**	**28.57**
	Agree	**5**	**71.43**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**0**	**0**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**7**	**100**

The eight possible reason stated in the questionnaire said that a teacher may enjoy code switching to emphasize the lesson key points. This reason of code switching manifested that most of the participants in this study enjoyed code switching to emphasize and highlight the lesson key points for the learners in the class. The participants state their attitudes toward this reason as follows: 33.33 percent of them strongly agreed and 66.67 percent agreed.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(9) Checking understanding	Strongly Agree	**3**	**42.6**
	Agree	**4**	**57.14**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**0**	**0**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**7**	**100**

It is always challenging to know whether a learner understands the lesson or not which means a learner never stated ideas in the class and teachers may have problem to check the understanding of the learners. The percentage of the participants stating this was as follows: Item number 9 deals with checking understanding for which about 33.33 percent of the participants strongly agreed and 57.14 percent agreed on this reason. The table depicted that code switching can be a safe way to able learners to speak.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(10) Repetitive Functions	Strongly Agree	**0**	**0**
	Agree	**5**	**71.43**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**2**	**28.57**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**67**	**100**

When it came to tenth reason about whether participants enjoy code- switching for repetitive function, 71.43 percent agreed whereas. 28.57 percent disagreed. Repetition is important in every lesson as it provides practice that every learners need to master.

Variable	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
(11) Create sense of belonging	Strongly Agree	**2**	**2.57**
	Agree	**4**	**66.67**
	Uncertain	**0**	**0**
	Disagree	**0**	**0**
	Strongly Disagree	**0**	**0**
TOTAL		**6**	**100**

In reply to the last reason, creating a sense of belonging, some participants with a percentage of 28.57 believed in this item and stated that they strongly agreed. While about 66.67 percent of the participants agreed. The result showed that teachers should create an atmosphere in the class that the learners have a sense of belonging. Classrooms should be built on the philosophy that everyone is equal and everyone belongs. This includes caring for one another, implementing safe behaviour and actions toward one another, supporting one another, helping one another, and tolerating one another. By encouraging learners to treat others the way they would like to be treated, the classroom can be transformed into a cooperative and honest environment, suitable for learning. By creating an inclusive classroom that fosters great morals and a sense of belonging, learners can find confidence in themselves and, in turn, have a healthier learning experience.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that Grade 5 teachers at Caranglaan Elementary School recognize code-switching as an essential instructional strategy that supports effective classroom communication and facilitates learners' understanding of lesson content. The high level of agreement across the identified reasons—including

clarification, giving instructions effectively, translation, socializing, linguistic competence, topic shifts, ease of expression, emphasis, checking learners' understanding, repetitive functions, and creating a sense of belonging—suggests that teachers intentionally use code-switching to respond to the diverse linguistic needs of their learners. These findings demonstrate that teachers' language choices are influenced primarily by instructional objectives and the need to ensure meaningful classroom interaction rather than by limitations in language proficiency.

Among the identified reasons, translation and linguistic competence received unanimous agreement from all seven respondents, indicating that teachers consider code-switching particularly valuable when explaining unfamiliar vocabulary, presenting complex concepts, and reinforcing lesson content. This finding suggests that teachers view the learners' first language as a supportive instructional resource that bridges the gap between prior knowledge and new learning. Similarly, the high levels of agreement for clarification, giving effective instructions, and checking learners' understanding reflect teachers' commitment to ensuring that classroom instructions and lesson objectives are fully understood before learners proceed with classroom activities. These findings are consistent with Cook (2001), who emphasized that the judicious use of learners' first language can facilitate comprehension and improve second-language learning, and with Gulzar (2010), who identified translation and clarification as among the most common pedagogical functions of teacher code-switching.

The findings also reveal that teachers use code-switching to establish positive classroom relationships through socializing, ease of expression, emphasis, and creating a sense of belonging. These functions highlight the role of code-switching in creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment where learners feel comfortable participating in discussions and expressing their ideas. Such findings support the Communication Accommodation Theory, which explains that speakers adjust their language to enhance communication and reduce social distance between themselves and their listeners. Likewise, Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model suggests that bilingual speakers deliberately select language according to the communicative demands of a particular situation. In the context of this study, teachers' code-switching decisions appear to be purposeful responses to learners' academic and social needs rather than spontaneous or arbitrary language choices.

Although the respondents generally viewed code-switching positively, the findings also suggest the importance of maintaining a balanced approach to its use. While code-switching promotes comprehension and classroom participation, excessive dependence on the learners' first language may reduce opportunities for meaningful exposure to English, particularly during language instruction. Therefore, teachers should continue to exercise professional judgment in determining when code-switching is pedagogically appropriate to maximize learner understanding while gradually strengthening English language proficiency.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teacher code-switching is a purposeful instructional practice that supports effective teaching, learner engagement, and

classroom communication in the Grade 5 classroom. The study further highlights that teachers' decisions to code-switch are driven by the immediate instructional demands of the classroom, providing a basis for the development of intervention strategies that encourage the appropriate, balanced, and effective use of code-switching in elementary education.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Teachers use code-switching in the Grade 5 classroom for various instructional purposes, including clarification, giving effective instructions, translation, socialization, linguistic competence, topic shifts, ease of expression, emphasis, checking learners' understanding, repetitive functions, and creating a sense of belonging. These functions demonstrate that code-switching serves as an effective instructional strategy that supports classroom communication and facilitates the teaching and learning process.
2. Teachers' decisions regarding the use of code-switching are guided by instructional objectives and learners' communication needs. Whether used consciously or unconsciously, code-switching enables teachers to clarify lesson content, reinforce important concepts, and improve learners' comprehension during classroom instruction.
3. Teachers employ code-switching at different stages of classroom instruction, particularly when explaining difficult concepts, translating unfamiliar terms, providing directions, checking learners' understanding, and fostering classroom interaction. Its strategic use contributes to a more supportive and engaging learning environment.
4. The findings support the development of intervention strategies that promote the appropriate and purposeful use of code-switching in classroom instruction. When applied in a balanced manner, code-switching can enhance learners' comprehension and participation while encouraging the gradual development of proficiency in the target language.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Teachers are encouraged to use code-switching strategically and purposefully to clarify complex concepts, provide effective classroom instructions, reinforce key ideas, and improve learners' comprehension while avoiding excessive reliance on the learners' first language to promote continued development of English language proficiency.
2. School administrators and instructional leaders may develop and implement professional development programs, seminars, or workshops that equip teachers

with effective strategies for the appropriate and balanced use of code-switching in multilingual classrooms.

3. The proposed intervention strategies developed in this study may be adopted and evaluated by schools as a guide for promoting effective classroom communication and improving language instruction among Grade 5 learners.
4. Curriculum planners and educational policymakers may consider integrating evidence-based guidelines on the pedagogical use of code-switching into language instruction policies and teacher support programs to strengthen bilingual and multilingual education.
5. Future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using larger and more diverse samples, different grade levels, and varied educational settings. Further studies employing qualitative or mixed-methods approaches are also recommended to gain deeper insights into teachers' decision-making processes and the long-term effects of code-switching on learners' language proficiency and academic performance.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The researcher conducted this study in accordance with accepted ethical research principles. Prior to the conduct of the study, permission was obtained from the appropriate school authorities, and informed consent was secured from all participants before the administration of the survey questionnaire. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and the respondents were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. The identities of the respondents were kept anonymous, and all information collected was treated with the utmost confidentiality in compliance with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). The well-being, privacy, and rights of the participants were safeguarded throughout the research process. The researcher declares that no conflict of interest existed in the conduct of the study, that all sources of information were properly acknowledged to avoid plagiarism, and that the data were analyzed and interpreted objectively without bias. The findings were used solely for academic and research purposes. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used only to assist in improving the grammar, language clarity, and organization of the manuscript, while all research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, and final academic decisions remained the sole responsibility of the researcher.

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Corresponding author: *naja102101@gmail.com*