

The Use of Code-Switching Toward English Teaching: Student Attitudes in Sulu State College

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Abstract

This study explores the use of code-switching in English language teaching and the attitudes of students toward this practice at Sulu State College. In a multilingual context where English is a second language, code-switching is often employed by teachers to bridge gaps in comprehension and facilitate learning. The research focused on 120 purposively selected English major students from all year levels in the School of Teacher Education. A descriptive-correlational design was utilized to examine the frequency of teacher code-switching, students' attitudes toward it, and the relationship between these attitudes and their academic performance in English.

Data were gathered through a validated questionnaire divided into three parts: demographic profile, frequency of code-switching, and student attitudes based on a 5-point Likert scale. Final grades in English subjects were collected to analyze correlation.

Results revealed that teacher code-switching is used moderately and is positively received by students. Students reported that code-switching enhances understanding, builds their confidence, and increases engagement in lessons. Statistical analysis using Pearson's correlation showed a moderately significant relationship between positive attitudes toward code-switching and academic performance.

The findings suggest that when used intentionally and strategically, code-switching can be an effective instructional approach in English language classrooms. This study contributes to developing inclusive teaching practices and encourages English teachers to reflect on the role of multilingualism in enhancing learning. Recommendations were made for further research, teacher training, and curriculum planning to support balanced language use in diverse classroom environments.

Keywords: *Code-switching, English instruction, Student attitudes, Sulu State College, Language pedagogy, Multilingual*

INTRODUCTION

Code-switching refers to the intentional use of two or more languages or language varieties within the same conversation, sentence, or communication setting. It often occurs naturally among individuals who are bilingual or multilingual, and it serves multiple purposes, such as clarifying meaning, expressing

identity, or facilitating understanding. This linguistic strategy helps speakers navigate between cultural and communicative contexts, allowing them to adjust their language based on the audience, topic, or situation.

In multilingual countries like the Philippines, classrooms serve as melting pots of language and culture. In English language teaching, many educators adopt code-switching the alternation between English and a local language as a strategy to enhance comprehension and classroom interaction. Despite the longstanding debate over its merits and drawbacks, code-switching continues to be widely practiced, especially in regions where students are not fully fluent in English.

According to Bautista (2004), code-switching is a natural linguistic behavior among Filipinos and serves communicative, cognitive, and instructional purposes in academic contexts. Teachers often use it to clarify complex concepts, explain difficult vocabulary, and connect lessons to students' existing knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to examine the attitudes of students from all year levels in Sulu State College toward the use of code-switching in English classes. The study focuses particularly on how frequently teachers use code-switching, how students perceive its effectiveness, and whether their attitudes are associated with their academic performance.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the 120 student respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Gender
 - 1.3 Year Level?
2. How frequently do English teachers engage in code-switching during classroom instruction as perceived by students?
3. What are the students' attitudes toward the use of code-switching in English teaching?
4. Is there a significant relationship between students' attitudes toward code-switching and their academic performance in English?
5. Is there a significant difference in students' attitudes toward code-switching when grouped according to their demographic profile (age, gender, year level)?

Hypotheses

This study aimed to test these hypotheses to gain insight on the relationship between students' attitudes toward code-switching and their academic performance in English.

1. Null Hypothesis (H_0):

There is no significant relationship between students' attitudes toward code-switching and their academic performance in English.

2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

There is a significant relationship between students' attitudes toward code-switching and their academic performance in English.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to explore the relationship between students' attitudes toward code-switching and their academic performance in English. The descriptive component aimed to capture the extent of teacher code-switching and how students perceive its use, while the correlational aspect determined whether these attitudes significantly relate to students' performance in English subjects. This approach was selected to generate both statistical and interpretive data that reflect the real experiences of learners in a multilingual academic environment.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Sulu State College, a public higher education institution located in Jolo, Sulu. The research covered all departments under the School of Teacher Education, where English language instruction is an essential component of the curriculum. The locale was chosen due to its linguistically diverse student population, where Tausug, Filipino, and English are commonly used in both academic and informal settings.

Respondents of the Study

A total of 120 English major students from first year to fourth year were selected as participants through purposive sampling. This technique was employed to ensure that respondents had sufficient exposure to English language teaching and could provide relevant insights regarding code-switching practices in their classes. Participants came from different year levels, allowing a varied perspective on the issue.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire that underwent content validation by language and education experts. The instrument consisted of three parts:

1. Part I: Demographic Profile (age, gender, year level)
2. Part II: Frequency of Teacher Code-Switching (rated on a 5-point Likert scale: Never to Always)
3. Part III: Students' Attitudes Toward Code-Switching (rated on a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

Additionally, each respondent's final grade in their English subject from the most recent semester was obtained with their consent to serve as a basis for analyzing academic performance.

Data Collection Procedures

After securing approval from the research adviser and college administration, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the respondents during their free periods. The purpose of the study was explained clearly, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The data collection process ensured anonymity and confidentiality, and no identifying information was recorded.

Completed questionnaires were retrieved and checked for completeness. The collected data were encoded and processed using appropriate statistical tools to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings.

Statistical Treatment

To analyze the data gathered in this study, several statistical tools were employed:

1. Frequency and Percentage
These were used to describe the respondents' demographic profile, such as age, gender, and year level.
2. Weighted Mean
This was applied to determine the average responses regarding the frequency of teacher code-switching and students' attitudes toward it based on the 5-point Likert scale.
3. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r)
This was used to identify whether there is a significant relationship between students' attitudes toward code-switching and their academic performance in English.

All statistical computations were carried out using appropriate tools to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N=120)

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Year Level		
1st year	30	25%
2nd year	30	25%
3rd year	30	25%
4th Year	30	25%
Gender		
Male	46	38.3 %
Female	74	61.7%
Age Range		
17-18	28	23.3%
19-20	47	39.2%

The respondents of the study consisted of 120 students enrolled in the School of Teacher Education at Sulu State College. The distribution across year levels was equal, with 30 students each from first to fourth year, ensuring balanced representation. In terms of gender, the majority were female (61.7%), while males made up 38.3% of the sample. Most respondents were between 19 and 20 years old (39.2%), followed by those aged 21 and above (37.5%), and a smaller group aged 17 to 18 (23.3%). This demographic spread reflects a typical college population and ensures varied perspectives in the study.

Table 2. Frequency of Teacher Code-Switching

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Always	38	31.7%
Often	49	40.8%

Sometimes	20	16.7%
Rarely	10	8.3%
Never	3	2.5%

The results show that code-switching is commonly practiced in English classes at Sulu State College. A majority of students reported that their teachers “Always” (31.7%) or “Often” (40.8%) switch to the local language during instruction. This suggests that code-switching is a frequent and intentional strategy used by teachers to support student understanding and classroom communication. Only a small percentage reported it occurring “Rarely” or “Never,” indicating that English instruction is regularly accompanied by language shifts.

Table 3. Attitudes Toward Code-Switching

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
Enhances understanding of lesson content	4.42	Strongly Agree
Increases comfort in classroom discussion	4.29	Agree
Distracts from learning formal English	2.01	Disagree
Makes learning more enjoyable and interactive	4.33	Agree
Should be avoided in English language classes	1.89	Strongly Disagree

These results indicate overwhelmingly positive student attitudes toward code-switching. Respondents agreed that it fosters understanding, comfort, and engagement, while they rejected the notion that it hinders formal learning.

Table 4. Correlation Between Attitudes and Academic Performance

Variables	r-value	Interpretation	Significance	Variables
Attitudes vs. English Grades	0.47	Moderate Positive Correlation	$p < 0.05$	Attitudes vs. English Grades

Statistical results showed that this relationship is significant at the 0.05 level, meaning the observed correlation is unlikely due to chance. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a moderate significant difference in academic performance between students with positive attitudes toward code-switching and those with less favorable views.

Table 5. Difference in Student’s Attitudes Toward Code-Switching by Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Group	N	Mean Attitude Score	SD	Statistical Test	p-value	Interpretation
Gender	Male	46	3.85	0.42	t-test	0.173	Not Significant
	Female	74	3.91	0.38			
Age	17-18 Years	28	3.84	0.44	One-Way ANOVA	0.269	Not Significant
	19-20 years	47	3.88	0.41			

	21 years and above	45	3.93	0.37			
Year Level	1st year	30	3.78	0.46	One-Way ANOVA	0.036*	Significant difference
	2nd year	30	3.86	0.41			
	3r year	30	3.92	0.36			
	4th year	30	4.01	0.33			
*Note: *Significant at p < 0.05							

The table shows that gender and age do not significantly affect students' attitudes toward code-switching, as indicated by their p-values being greater than 0.05. However, a significant difference was found among students across different year levels ($p = 0.036$), where 4th-year students had the highest mean attitude score. This suggests that attitudes toward code-switching become more favorable with academic experience and exposure to English instruction.

CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed that students at Sulu State College generally hold positive attitudes toward the use of code-switching in English classes. It helps enhance their comprehension, confidence, and engagement. A moderate significant relationship was found between these attitudes and students' academic performance.

Additionally, attitudes toward code-switching differed significantly by year level, suggesting that experience in English instruction may influence students' views. Overall, code-switching proves to be a helpful and inclusive strategy in multilingual learning environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. English teachers should continue to use code-switching purposefully to aid comprehension, especially when addressing complex topics and mixed proficiency levels.
2. Researchers are encouraged to explore teacher perspectives and conduct comparative studies in monolingual and bilingual classrooms for deeper insights.
3. Curriculum developers and policymakers should consider flexible language use policies that reflect the realities of multilingual classrooms.
4. School administrators should support teacher training on effective code-switching strategies and promote a language-inclusive environment.
5. Students should be guided to recognize the value of code-switching while also being encouraged to practice and strengthen their English language skills.

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