

Code Switching in Reading “My Cat” and “My Dog” among Cebuano-English Bilinguals

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Abstract

This descriptive study examines the role and limitations of code-switching in reading comprehension among Cebuano-English bilingual pre-schoolers. While code-switching is commonly seen as a helpful strategy that supports comprehension by bridging linguistic gaps, but it also has its potential drawbacks. The findings indicate that an overdependence on code-switching may impede the development of full English proficiency, leading to a fragmented grasp of the language. Another limitation identified in the study was that code-switching did not significantly improve participants' reading skills. These insights emphasize the importance of a balanced approach in bilingual education, where code-switching is used thoughtfully without hindering the acquisition of English as a Second Language.

Keywords: code-switching, descriptive study, pre-schoolers, reading comprehension, engagement.

Introduction

In today's world, multilingualism is evidently on the rise, with the majority of the global population estimated to speak more than one language (Grosjean, 2010). Labitigan (2013) observed that in the Philippines, English is widely spoken, especially among higher socioeconomic groups, playing a central role in government, business, technology, and mass media. Bautista (2004) noted that the alternation between Filipino and English in informal discourse is a characteristic feature of the linguistic repertoire of educated, middle- and upper-class Filipinos. Additionally, Sibayan (1999) highlighted that English is a predominant global language and will continue to be one of the Philippines' official languages.

Characterizing bilingual language development is crucial for refining existing models of acquisition and informing educational policy and clinical practice (e.g., Greene, Peña & Bedore, 2013). Code-switching is a common pattern of bilingual expression that begins early in language acquisition (e.g., Ribot & Hoff, 2014). The term "code-switching" was first used by sociolinguists such as Gumperz in the 1960s (Albarrillo, 2018). "Code" refers to languages, dialects, and styles of speech, while "switch" denotes the alternation or change between these varieties (Gardener-Chloros, 2009). Generally, code-switching involves shifts in spoken language both across and within sentence boundaries (Blom and Gumperz, 1972). It typically occurs in bilingual settings where speakers alternate between two languages at the sentence or phrase level (Mabule, 2015). Nilep (2006) further defined it as the selection or alteration of language elements to match the interaction's context, incorporating linguistic and extra-linguistic elements such as identity, norms, and culture.

Addressing the gap in language acquisition and comprehension, the use of code-switching is significant in language development. It engages students more effectively with the text. This paper aims to outline and analyze various perspectives on code-switching, assessing its effects on second language development and its implications for language learning and teaching. The study seeks to identify and compare the impact of code-switching on ESL learning among toddlers. Primary data has been collected, analyzed, and compared with related research to draw comparative conclusions about these factors.

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Related Literature

The utilization of code-switching is beneficial in the classroom setting. According to the study conducted by Patmasari, et al (2022) indicated that teachers used CS in order to achieve a worthwhile classroom teaching and learning experience. It was also stated that students find it a lot easier to understand complex ideas when explain using CS. The result of their study showed that using code-switching have a positive impact to the students' learning, it can be used as a method in improving their English proficiency and the students think that their

teachers should utilize CS to maintain good communication between each other. This was agreed upon by Teklesellassie' and Boersma's (2018) research where they discovered that teachers have a positive attitude towards the use of CS with their students.

In other study conducted by Novianti and Said (2021) discussed multiple reasons why they use CS in the classroom. Teachers use CS to enhance teaching-learning process and to catch the attention of the students which will result to students understanding the lesson more clearly, make the class more inclusive. Thus, this study is relevant for this study for it showed the effect if CS is utilized efficiently inside the classroom.

Similar to the study done by Mauliddiyah, et al (2020) which stated that in the classroom where students can freely use CS develop bravery in participating, they can understand the lesson more, and for easier communication during class. In summary of their study, students are able to showcase their thoughts and ideas without any limitations as they use CS and they could establish a smoother communication inside the classroom. The researchers' pictures this as a step to boost the toddlers' active participation during the teaching-learning process of ESL learning. Furthermore, this alleviates the gap of the researchers and the toddlers during the conduct of the study.

Furthermore, according to Shafi, et al (2020) emphasized that the majority of the teachers prefer bridging the gap by using L1 to pave the way to learning L2. In their study, they concluded that it is a must for the teachers to use CS when it is suitable for students' L2 and oral language development. They have also noted the various reasons as such that the presence of CS in the classroom smoothens the flow of the learning instruction, it can clarify and simplify complex ideas that may arise confusion in the part of the students. In conclusion, Shafi, et al stated that both the teacher and the student can be aided with the use of CS.

Moreover, to the study conducted by Nhi and Nhung (2020), they emphasized it is a challenge for teacher to teach young learners. In relation to this, teacher use L1 and L2 simultaneously to help students transition from their school break to the start of the classes. Teachers employ CS establish inclusivity and in assurance that students can comprehend the lesson with more ease. Hence, the researchers foresee that with CS, an engaging and active environment inside the classroom is given.

At the same time, according to Ezah, et al (2022) revealed that CS and CM imparts confidence amongst students wherein they can show their language inadequacies, they are freer to learn and foster more their target language. Based on the result of their study, the vitality of CS doesn't stop with the cognitive domain of the students but also in their affective and psycho-motor domains as well. Therefore, the researchers took into account the necessity of using CS but with limitation in creating a conducive learning experience, making hints from their first language and in promoting shared understanding between the teachers and the learners.

According to May May and Aziz (2020) code-switching has been exercise by the teachers as a tool that help them facilitate the learning progress of the learners, specifically the low proficiency learners. They admit that classroom instructions are delivered more smoothly and inputs become more comprehensible with result to the lessen of students' affective filters. to which the researchers see CS as a positive scaffolding tool in learning and developing reading comprehension.

However, in another research conducted by Kumar, et al (2021) revealed that students employ CS as their communicative approach due to their lack of English vocabulary. Despite the efficiency of CS in developing a comfortable and more confident student it still indicates that students utilized code switching for the sole reason that they have limited English vocabulary.

Kambey and Vuzo (2022) stated that CS is applied as a pedagogical tool in providing clarifications, repetition, and summarizing which facilitate the teaching-learning process on the foreign language. Although CS has its perks, it also has its drawbacks for it limits students correct and appropriate exposure to the English language.

In conclusion, these studies affirm that code-switching is a useful tool in the classroom as it enriches teaching and learning processes. Studies like Patmasari and others (2022) and Teklesellassie and Boersma (2018) confirm that CS enhances understanding of concepts, increases students' interest, and helps them organize their thinking—facts that are in line with the study. This study also aligns with the findings of Novianti & Said (2021) and Mauliddiyah et al. (2020) that show how CS enhances engagement and participation of students or learners, especially those learning at different proficiency levels. However, the study also recognises certain limitations as highlighted by Kumar et al. (2021) and Kambey & Vuzo (2022) that CS might reduce students' contact with the target language. Thus, while CS brings significant benefits to the method, the study indicates that they must be used sufficiently and thoughtfully to encourage extensive use of the target language while ensuring adequate CS practice.

Research Gap

Code-switching is prevalent in motivating learners in the acquisition of English as a second language. However, the determination of whether it is effect in toddlers' motivation in acquisition is insufficient. Thus, this study seeks to identify the role and limitations of code-switching in reading among pre-schoolers to bridge the gap between language and comprehension.

Research Aims

What is the significance of using code-switching in developing Cebuano - English young bilinguals' reading comprehension?

Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals-Quality Education

Code-switching bridges the language gaps by makes it possible for the learners who may be still in the learning process of the particular language used in classroom teaching and learning process to be more involved in the classroom teaching instructional process. Therefore, by accepting and respecting the languages that students speak, bring forth an environment that enhances learning to multilingual learners. Furthermore, it incorporates students cultural and linguistic difference in support of their learning, rather than reinforcing the perception that cultural difference is a hindrance to learning.

SDG 4: Quality Education

This study supports the utilization of code-switching of their native language and the target language, English at the early development of pre-schoolers' reading and comprehension skill. It can also bridge the learning needs and preferences of the pre-schoolers which guarantee the efficiency of employing teaching methods for diverse linguistic backgrounds.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

This study ensure that code-switching can assist in being understood and appreciated in places they talk and learn and thus, assist in enhancing gender equity and can be empowered with negotiating all the social and career arenas based on a code-switching endowment.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

This study displays the importance of using both languages for it aids in overcoming the barriers and limitations that are occasioned when attempting to deliver a message from one person to another where two are from different language group. For these objectives, the proper identification and management of code-switching can enable these communities to achieve the democratisation of their languages in social and formal fronts so as to remove the social and economic disparities.

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, a descriptive approach is used to explore the function of code switching in reading comprehension among preschoolers. This method involves careful observation and assessment of the participants' comprehension and engagement with the activity, allowing for a detailed analysis of how code-switching influences their understanding of the text (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By focusing on the natural occurrences of code-switching during reading sessions, the research aims to provide insights into the role it plays in facilitating or hindering comprehension (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The findings will contribute to the broader understanding of bilingual education and the practical implications of code-switching in early literacy development.

Research Environment

The research environment is situated in Sipaway, Luray II, within Toledo City, which is the area where the participants reside.

Research Participants

The research participants are A and B. Participant A is 4 years old and Participant B 5 years old.

Research Instruments

The research instruments used in the study are careful observations, assessment of the participants' comprehension and interview.

Research Procedure

Gathering of Data.

Data will be gathered through assessments, observations and interviews. Initially, the subjects will be asked formally through a letter to participate in the study. Participants will be given 2 passages to read titled "My Cat" and "My Dog". They will read the stories and answer the follow up comprehension tests. The researchers will utilize code switching in facilitating participants reading comprehension. Additionally, an interview with an elementary teacher will be followed to provide further insights into participants responses and engagement with the activity. This data will be used to analyse the role and limitations of code switching in pre-schoolers' reading comprehension.

Treatment of Data.

The data taken from the reading of "My Cat" and "My Dog" activity will be analyzed and presented systematically through the use of tabular format. Organizing the result by "words taken from the passage", "how participates read it", and "the correct pronunciation".

Furthermore, the data from the interview of the Elementary teacher will be analyzed using descriptive method. Wherein this method will show the validity of the data taken from the reading activity with the pre-schoolers. Thus, unveiling and explaining the significance of the role and limitations of code-switching in reading comprehension among Cebuano-English bilingual pre-schoolers.

Findings And Discussion

The study reveals pre-schoolers' difficulties with English pronunciation and comprehension, especially with monosyllabic words and multiple characters. Lonigan and Shanahan (2008) highlight the role of phonological awareness and vocabulary in early literacy. While code-switching doesn't significantly improve reading skills, it aids engagement and comprehension, as noted by Murray (2000). This underscores the benefits of simplified narratives and bilingual strategies in early reading development.

Table 1.1.1: Mispronounced Words in the Passages of Participant A

The table below displays the mispronounced words by participants A with his correct pronunciations in American English transcription.

Words taken from the Passage Participant A	How participants read it	Correct pronunciation
Is	Es - /ɛs/	/Iz/
Sit	Sot - /sɑ:t/	/sit/
On	Pon - /pɑ:n/	/ɒn/
Her	Here - /hɪr/	/hɜ:r/
She	Shep - /ʃɛp/	/ʃi:/
Will	What - /wɑ:t/	/wɪl/
Take	Til - /tɪl/	/teɪk/
Nap	Naap - /næp/	/næp/
Her	Rat - /ræt/	/hɜ:r/
Cat	Care - /ker/	/kæt/
Good	Jay - /dʒet/	/gʊd/
The	Et - /et/	/ðə/
Dog	Oso - /'ousou/	/dɒg/
Jump	junk - /dʒʌŋk/	/dʒʌmp/

Table 1.1.1: Mispronounced Words in the Passages of Participant B

The table below displays the mispronounced words by participant B along with his correct pronunciations in American English transcription.

Words taken from the Passage Participant B	How participants read it	Correct pronunciation
Take	Tak - /tæk/	/teɪk/
Hop	Hoop - /hu:p/	[hɒp] [hɑ:p]
Log	Jag - /dʒæg/	/lɒg/
Jog	God - /gɑ:d/	[dʒɒg] [dʒɑ:g]
Hot	Hoot - /hu:t/	/hɒt/ /hɑ:t/
Saw	Sow - /sau/	[sɒ] [sɑ]

In the second column from the table above, it presents the mispronunciations of the word by both participants in passage 1 and passage 2. Meanwhile, in the first column are the actual words the participants read. Hence, based on the table, it shows that the participants are not fluent in reading English words at their young age and have difficulty in pronouncing the words correctly.

According to Lonigan, C. J., & Shanahan, T. (2008), early literacy development is influenced by several key factors, including phonological awareness (the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in language), vocabulary development, and early print knowledge (such as recognizing letters and words). These factors are essential for pre-schoolers starting to learn to read, and any delays or issues in these areas can create obstacles to achieving reading fluency.

The participants were given 2 passages to read, the table presented the mispronounced words of the participants. It indicates that they struggled with reading monosyllabic words particularly in associating the vowel sound "o" with its correct pronunciation in English. Words were opted to be pronounced such as "o" as "a," instances like "hop" as "hap." Students read it /hoop/ instead of [hɒp] [hɑ:p].

The tendency for participants to mispronounce monosyllabic words is likely influenced by factors such as word frequency and phonetic difficulty, which have been shown to correlate with pronunciation accuracy in similar studies. In this context, the mispronunciation, of words like "hop" highlights the impact of phonetic complexities that can hinder pronunciation learning, as evidenced by the pronounced difficulties associated with infrequent words and those rated high in phonetic difficulty encountered by language learners. (Biersner, 1983)

The observed patterns of mispronunciation, where participants read "hop" as "hap" and "hoop" instead of the intended (hap) or (ha.p), suggests that the participants struggled to accurately recognize the relationship

between the written form of the vowel sound "o" and its corresponding pronunciation in English often substituting it with alternative sounds such as "a" or pronouncing it as diphthong (u). This difficulty aligns with the finding that low frontal and middle back vowels, like the "o" sound, are particularly challenging for language learners to master, as they may not directly to the phonological.

The other thing that also came out clearly was that participants got confused when invoked multiple characters in a story. The results of their comprehension of the passages were also higher when there was only one character in the first passage. On the second passage they both scored lower because apart from being longer there were two characters, and this created confusion as to which character was hopping and which was running. In a similar study, Smith (2019) researched the influence of the characters' elaboration on early childhood reading comprehension. The study was done with pre-schoolers, and it was established that those subjects had a better understanding of the stories with a single character in the text. The realization for this is that one character is less challenging to the child's working memory given that young children are still in the process of developing them. Since there is only one figure for the child to identify with, pre-schoolers are also less likely to be confused by what is happening in the plot since they do not have too many characters, their actions, or quotes to concentrate on. The work indicates that it is easier to comprehend and remember only if the tale to passage is simple and has only one character as opposed to rudiments of parallel stories, the former are ideal for the developmental stage of pre-schoolers. Smith, A. B. (2019). The effect of two degrees of character dimensionality on early readers' story understanding. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 245-260, 19 (3).

Jones, L., & Wilson, P. (2020) observed that young children, particularly pre-schoolers, better understand and recall stories with one character, as it allows them to follow the plot more easily without getting confused by multiple characters.

During the reading activity, the participants appeared more at ease and engaged with the text, particularly when code-switching was used. They were also more willing to ask about the meaning of certain words in the text.

Murray (2000) explores the perceptions that both teachers and students harbour towards this inferiority complex by asserting that, where code-switching is used as a fluid and dynamic form of communication, the environment within and through which learning occurs is enhanced. Such positive attitude towards code-switching makes students more eager and willing to participate, besides, they feel free to ask questions.

These citations show the supposedly favourable views of individuals toward code-switching in education with attention to efforts for assertiveness of learner satisfaction.

Table 1.2: Teachers' Insights on Pre-schoolers' Reading Skills and Comprehension

Below is a summary of the interview with an elementary teacher. The table presents the questions and the teacher's responses regarding how they handle pre-schoolers and the challenges they face.

Questions	Answers
How was your experience as an elementary teacher?	Okay. . . my experience as an elementary teacher is very demanding and challenging considering that our learners now a days so. . . .ahmm. . . or should I say, ahmm. . . we have really a problem in terms of ah. . reading. Reading has been a perennial problem now a days simply because ahmm. . . many of our students have a lack of appreciation in terms of reading awareness then factors that would also affect ah. . their reading skills. Like in their families, their economic statues, ahmm. . .parental support and guidance.
How did you cope with those difficulties mentioned?	Ahm. . . as a teacher it is our obligation that we have to expose our students more on reading aspects considering that this is ah. . . the problem in the system now. Ahm. . . Then expose students on various ah. . . reading materials that is age appropriate for them to realize the importance of reading.
Have you encountered children who have difficulty reading and end up guessing the words?	Okay so. . as I have said. . . since reading is one of ah. . . the perennial problem in our system so there's a lot of. . . I think majority of our students have gone through that kind of approach. . . guessing. . . okay reading then they're going guess simply because ahm. . . we have to consider the idea that these students have undergone ah. . two-years experiences of not exposing themselves personally in school due to. . . due to. . due to the pandemic. So when. . . we lift the ah. . . face to face. . . or at that time. . .so many of these students have a hard time to cope up ahh. . .so that's way it became ahh. . an issue. Okay, so how I cope up with it. . ahmm. . . allow the students on immerse them on the importance of reading so for them to ahh. . rejuvenate or to resurrect their ohm. . ah. . ah. . reading at ah. . ah no. . for them to be motivated about the importance of reading.
Did you use code-switching in your class to address the reading problems, or difficulties, or challenges?	So, if the students cannot understand a particular narrative, so as a teacher. . .ahmm. . we really have to convey the message according to the most specific and comfortable language that the reader can understand. So, there for code-switching is very important because

	not all the time that you really have to speak in English simply because you would want to. So, if the reader can't understand it in the language that you are using specifically English. It is okay to go down to the level of the reader for him or for her to understand the narrative. So, it is okay for the code-switching. Because ah. . .the most important ah. . . objective of reading is for the reader to understand what you are trying to convey. Especially the content of the story that you are telling to them. . .the narrative.
Aside from the guessing problem and the use of code-switching in the class, does having multiple character in the story cause confusion for children and result in poor comprehension?	Okay. . . ahm. . .ah. . . using a narrative or story with multiple characters is ahm . . . should I say quite difficult for a reader who is not expose or who has not yet develop ah. . . reading awareness so that particular idea would be very demanding on the part of the teacher. So, using a multiple character in a story, we have to consider the type of a reader. So you would. . . you would not want to expose a reader who is not capable of reading. So it goes back to the idea that we have to look for a story that would be appropriate for that particular reader. So it is okay to use multiple ah. . . characters in a story but we also have to consider the level of reading awareness of the student.

The interview highlighted the significant challenges in teaching reading and comprehension, particularly due to the student's lack of reading exposure, and external factors such as family background, economic status, and absence of parental support (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008). Many students end up guessing words because of their poor reading skills, which have hindered students' ability to read and understand texts effectively (Murray, 2000). Stories with multiple characters can be challenging for readers who are not yet proficient in reading (Goswami & Bryant, 2007). Code-switching helps students understand stories better when they struggle with English. Teachers should use it to make sure students grasp the material and its meaning (Baker, 2006).

Conclusions and Recommendation

In conclusion, while code-switching does not substantially improve reading skills, it significantly boosts preschoolers' engagement and comprehension by making texts more accessible and relatable. This approach helps preschoolers connect more effectively with the main ideas and overall message of the passages, thereby enhancing their understanding of the content. Teachers should use code-switching strategically to boost engagement and comprehension, while also being mindful of its limitations. To optimize its effectiveness, teachers should balance code-switching with other instructional methods that promote direct language skills development. Additionally, simplifying text content—such as using passages with fewer characters and straightforward narratives—can support better comprehension.

After taking all the considerations into account, the researchers recommend the future researchers firstly, to conduct a study with adequate respondents to foresee undiscovered variables in utilizing code-switching. Additionally, they can also employ the three code-switching types namely: inter-sentential, intra sentential, and tag switching to young bilingual learners. Lastly, the future researchers can conduct an experimental study where one group is exposed to pure English while others utilize code-switching to truly measure the efficiency and effectivity of code switching as a tool in teaching English as a second language. half of the respondents are controlled group that are exposed to pure English while the other half are the experimental group is integrated with code-switching. By combining these strategies, researchers can provide educators a chance to create a more balanced and supportive learning environment that addresses both engagement and skill development, while mitigating the potential drawbacks of code-switching.

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