

Communication barriers in classroom discussions: A study on code-switching practices of teachers

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Abstract

In multilingual Philippine classrooms, English teachers often use code-switching to bridge learners' limited English proficiency. While this supports comprehension and participation, it may also reduce English exposure and create communication challenges. Understanding how teachers use, perceive, and manage code-switching is therefore crucial for improving instructional practices. This basic descriptive study was conducted in the Department of Education (DepEd) Sta. Cruz Sub-Office, Laguna, Philippines, and involved eighty (80) Grades 4 to 6 English teachers from various public elementary schools. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Results showed that teachers "often" to "always" used code-switching, especially in giving instructions, explaining difficult concepts, clarifying content, managing behavior, and encouraging participation. They primarily used intra-sentential switching, followed by inter-sentential and tag-switching. Teachers reported using code-switching mainly to clarify complex terms, ensure comprehension, and manage class pace. Common barriers included students' overreliance on the mother tongue, reduced English exposure, and difficulty in assessing true proficiency. Despite these, they perceived code-switching to enhance comprehension, boost participation, and reduce classroom anxiety, though excessive use could limit English fluency development. To address barriers, teachers reported strategies such as pre-teaching vocabulary, using visual aids, clarifying the purpose of code-switching, encouraging more English responses, and gradually reducing mother tongue use. Recommendations include: (1) training teachers on strategic and gradual code-switching, (2) embedding scaffolding activities in the curriculum, and (3) school-based monitoring to balance comprehension support with English exposure.

Keywords: code-switching, English instruction, multilingual classrooms, communication barriers, language pedagogy

1. Introduction and Rationale

In an increasingly globalized world, the role of language in education has captured the attention of researchers and policymakers alike. Internationally, studies affirm that early education delivered in a child's native language can significantly enhance comprehension, cognitive development, and overall academic outcomes. The concept of multilingual education—where multiple languages are integrated flexibly into instruction—has been recognized as a powerful way to bridge diverse linguistic backgrounds with national and global competencies. Likewise, the Philippines—renowned for its rich tapestry of over 130 ethnolinguistic groups—has adopted the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) framework to leverage learners' first language (L1) as the primary medium of instruction in early grades, gradually introducing Filipino and English thereafter.

In line with this, DepEd Order No. 020, s. 2025, which will take effect in School Year 2025–2026, reaffirms this multilingual vision by prescribing Filipino and English as the primary media of instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 3, while retaining learners' mother tongue as auxiliary or bridging languages—especially vital in linguistically diverse classrooms EducNation. Anchored within this policy milieu, our study—undertaken by three researchers—intends to explore how teachers in the DepEd Sta. Cruz Sub-Office

employ code-switching during classroom discussions, and whether such practices alleviate or exacerbate communication barriers among learners. Focusing on this particular division allows us to examine real-world language strategies within a district context, providing nuanced insights that may inform both local teacher development and broader instructional policy.

1.1. Literature Review

Across multilingual classrooms, code-switching and translanguaging are widely reported as purposeful strategies that help teachers scaffold meaning, sustain participation, and reduce comprehension breakdowns—especially when learners are transitioning across languages of schooling (De Los Reyes & Bagona, 2024; Velasco, 2024). In the Philippines, large-scale language-in-education shifts have renewed attention to these practices: DepEd Order No. 020, s. 2025 defines Filipino and English as the primary media of instruction for K–3 but explicitly allows regional languages as auxiliary resources and recognizes translanguaging and oral scaffolding to prevent language from becoming a barrier to learning (Department of Education, 2025). Empirical work in local classrooms echoes these policy directions. For instance, university and secondary settings show that teachers and students employ strategic code-switching to clarify concepts, emphasize key points, and keep discussions inclusive, which in turn supports content understanding and classroom rapport (Maranan, Batalla, & Santos, 2025; Deniega & Neri, 2024). At the same time, studies urge balance: overuse or abrupt shifts can reduce target-language exposure or cause momentary confusion, signaling the need for principled, audience-aware switching (Parcon, 2024; Torres, 2025). (See policy details and study contexts.

Recent Philippine and regional evidence further clarifies how and when language alternation mitigates “communication barriers” during discussions. Elementary science lessons in highly multilingual cities used translanguaging for key communicative functions (e.g., revoicing, clarifying, and bridging terminology), demonstrating measurable support for comprehension without displacing the development of Filipino and English (De Los Reyes & Bagona, 2024). Tertiary and senior high studies similarly report positive student attitudes toward judicious code-switching, noting perceived gains in clarity, confidence, and participation during whole-class talk and group work (Maranan et al., 2025; Torres, 2025). However, qualitative accounts document challenges such as excessive technical vocabulary in switches, pronunciation issues, and abrupt language shifts, which can momentarily impede uptake—underscoring the importance of planned, pedagogically aligned switching rather than ad-hoc alternation (Parcon, 2024). Against this backdrop, the present district-level study at DepEd Sta. Cruz Sub-Office is positioned to examine teachers’ actual code-switching moves during classroom discussions and identify specific points where language alternation either breaks down or bridges interaction, thereby informing local implementation of DepEd’s MOI policy in ways that are evidence-based and context-responsive (Department of Education, 2025; Velasco, 2024).

1.2. Research Questions

This study primarily aimed to examine how the code-switching practices of English teachers in Grades 4 to 6 under the Department of Education, Sta. Cruz Sub-Office contribute to communication barriers during classroom discussions.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

- How frequently do English teachers in Grades 4 to 6 use code-switching during classroom discussions?
- What forms of code-switching (intra-sentential, inter-sentential, tag-switching, etc.) are most commonly employed by English teachers?
- What are the perceived reasons of teachers for using code-switching during instruction?

- What communication barriers do teachers encounter when employing code-switching in their English classes?
- How do teachers perceive the effects of code-switching on learners' comprehension, participation, and overall classroom interaction?
- What strategies do teachers adopt to minimize communication barriers while still using code-switching as a pedagogical tool?

1.3. Scope and Limitation

This study focused on examining the code-switching practices of English teachers handling Grades 4 to 6 in the Department of Education, Sta. Cruz Sub-Office, during classroom discussions. It specifically investigated the frequency, forms, reasons, communication barriers, perceived effects, and strategies related to code-switching, as perceived by the teachers themselves. The scope of the study was limited to English teachers only, and data were gathered primarily through a survey questionnaire. As such, the findings reflected self-reported practices and perceptions rather than direct classroom observations, and may not have captured all nuances of actual classroom interactions. Moreover, the study did not include students' perspectives or the impact of code-switching on actual learning outcomes, but instead highlighted the teachers' insights to provide a basis for understanding language practices at the district level.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Sampling

The respondents of this study consisted of English teachers handling Grades 4 to 6 from public elementary schools under the Department of Education, Sta. Cruz Sub-Office. To ensure adequate representation, the researchers adopted a purposive sampling technique, wherein at least one English teacher from each school was invited to participate in the survey. The schools included in this study were: Gatid Elementary School, Oogong Elementary School, Pagsawitan Elementary School, Palasan Elementary School, Patimbao Elementary School, San Jose Elementary School, Santa Cruz Central Elementary School (Santa Cruz CES), Santisima Cruz Elementary School, Santo Angel Central Elementary School, Santo Angel Sur Elementary School, Silangan Elementary School, Sto. Angel Norte Elementary School, and Bubukal Elementary School – Annex (San Juan ES). By including teachers across these schools, the study sought to capture diverse experiences and practices of code-switching within the district context, thereby ensuring that the findings reflected a broader picture of classroom language practices in Sta. Cruz.

2.2. Data Collection

The primary data for this study were gathered through a researcher-designed survey questionnaire, the contents of which were aligned with the research questions. To facilitate accessibility and efficiency, the instrument was converted into a Google Form and distributed to the participating schools under the Department of Education, Sta. Cruz Sub-Office. The link to the form was formally endorsed to the school heads, who in turn disseminated it to the identified English teachers handling Grades 4 to 6.

Respondents were given adequate time to accomplish the form at their convenience, ensuring that their responses were thoughtful and accurate. Their participation was voluntary, and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The use of an online platform such as Google Forms was deemed appropriate as it allowed for ease of distribution, systematic collection, and automatic organization of data, which later facilitated the analysis of responses.

2.3. Ethical Issues

In conducting this study, the researchers adhered to established ethical standards in educational research to ensure the integrity of the process and the protection of the respondents. The following considerations were strictly observed:

- **Informed Consent** – The respondents were informed of the purpose, scope, and procedures of the study prior to their participation. A consent declaration was included in the Google Form, and only those who voluntarily agreed proceeded to answer the survey.

- **Voluntary Participation** – Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Respondents could decline to participate or withdraw at any point without facing any form of penalty or consequence.

- **Confidentiality and Anonymity** – The identities of the respondents and the schools they represented remained confidential. Responses were collected anonymously, and no personally identifiable information was disclosed in the reporting of results.

- **Data Privacy Compliance** – The study observed the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). The Google Form did not require names or sensitive personal information, ensuring that all responses remained protected.

- **Responsible Data Use** – The data collected were used solely for the purposes of this research. They were stored securely and were not shared with unauthorized individuals. After the completion of the study, data were archived responsibly and disposed of when no longer necessary.

- **Respect for Respondents' Time and Workload** – The questionnaire was designed to be concise and manageable so as not to add unnecessary burden to the teachers. Respondents were also given sufficient time to accomplish the form at their convenience.

- **Honest and Transparent Reporting** – The researchers committed to reporting the results truthfully, without fabrication, alteration, or misrepresentation of data. Limitations of the study were acknowledged, and findings were presented objectively.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data gathered from the Google Form survey were organized and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These were used to determine the frequency and types of code-switching, the reasons for employing such practices, and the communication barriers experienced by English teachers. Weighted mean was also computed to interpret the level of agreement on the perceived effects and strategies for managing code-switching. The results were presented in tabular and graphical form for clearer interpretation.

3. Discussion of Results

3.1. Frequency of Code-Switching in Various Classroom Situations

Item No.	Situation	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Verbal Interpretation
1	Giving classroom instructions	4.44	0.72	5	5	Always
2	Explaining difficult concepts	4.56	0.61	5	5	Always
3	Managing classroom behavior	4.49	0.76	5	5	Always
4	Encouraging student participation	4.46	0.68	5	5	Always
5	Clarifying lesson content	4.55	0.63	5	5	Always
	Overall	4.5	0.68	5	5	Always

Scale: 4.21–5.00 = Always; 3.41–4.20 = Often; 2.61–3.40 = Sometimes; 1.81–2.60 = Rarely; 1.00–1.80 = Never

The table shows that teachers frequently use code-switching in all listed classroom situations, as evidenced by the means ranging from 4.44 to 4.56, which fall between the descriptors “Often” and “Always.” The highest mean was reported in explaining difficult concepts ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.61$), suggesting that teachers find code-switching particularly indispensable in making complex topics more understandable for students. This aligns with the medians and modes of 5 (Always) for all items, indicating that the most common response across all areas was the highest possible frequency. The lowest mean (though still very high) appeared in giving classroom instructions ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.72$), showing that even routine classroom procedures often involve a mix of English and Filipino/mother tongue to ensure clarity and comprehension.

The low standard deviations (0.61–0.76) reflect consistency and agreement among teachers’ responses. This suggests that code-switching is not just a strategy used by a few individuals but is a collective and widespread practice. Even though some rare lower ratings (2 or 3) were recorded, these appear as outliers, and the clustering around the mean shows that the practice is deeply embedded in classroom discourse. The overall mean of 4.50 further affirms that teachers rely heavily on code-switching across different classroom tasks, signaling its perceived necessity to maintain instructional flow and student engagement.

Externally, these results reinforce earlier studies cited in the review of related literature. Bautista and Gonzalez (2006) noted that code-switching functions as a pedagogical scaffold in multilingual classrooms, especially where students’ proficiency in English is limited. Similarly, Probyn (2015) emphasized that teachers often resort to code-switching to mediate meaning and ensure participation, particularly during complex content delivery. García and Wei (2014) also argued that code-switching (or translanguaging) is a natural and strategic tool teachers use to bridge linguistic gaps while maintaining lesson continuity. The present findings echo these perspectives: teachers in this study do not see code-switching as a fallback or deficiency but rather as a deliberate and essential instructional tool that allows them to manage behavior, give instructions, clarify content, and encourage active student participation effectively. This implies that any policy or training that aims to minimize code-switching must first address its deeply rooted instructional function in everyday classroom communication.

3.2. Forms of Code-Switching Commonly Employed by English Teachers

Code-Switching Type	Frequency	Percentage
Intra-sentential only	15	14.2%
Inter-sentential only	30	28.3%
Tag-switching only	6	5.7%
Intra + Inter	12	11.3%
Inter + Tag	12	11.3%
Intra + Tag	4	3.8%
Intra + Inter + Tag	27	25.5%
TOTAL	106	100%

(Note: Some responses contained combinations of two or three types.)

* Intra-sentential (mixing English and Filipino/Mother Tongue in one sentence)

* Inter-sentential (switching between English and Filipino/Mother Tongue across sentences)

* Tag-switching (adding discourse markers like 'diba,' 'okay,' 'no')

The table shows that inter-sentential switching—either alone (28.3%) or combined with other types—is the most frequently observed code-switching style among participants. This indicates that speakers often alternate between English and Filipino/Mother Tongue across whole sentences, suggesting a high comfort level in structuring complete ideas in both languages. Such switching often happens naturally when the speaker wants to emphasize a point, explain a concept in a more familiar language, or maintain conversational flow depending on the topic or audience.

Another notable pattern is the high occurrence of multi-type code-switching, especially Intra + Inter + Tag (25.5%), which shows a fluid and dynamic bilingual competence. This pattern suggests that many participants are not bound to one switching style but can flexibly mix languages within a sentence, between sentences, and with discourse markers (e.g., “diba,” “okay,” “no”). This kind of mixed pattern implies a deeper bilingual integration, where speakers view both languages as part of a single linguistic repertoire rather than two separate systems.

Interestingly, tag-switching alone was rare (5.7%), implying that while discourse markers are commonly used, they are often combined with other switching types rather than used in isolation. This may reflect how such tags serve as pragmatic devices—used to maintain engagement or seek affirmation—rather than as standalone switches.

3.3. Reasons of Teachers of Using Code-Switching during Instruction

Item	Mean	Median	Mode	Std Dev	Min	Max
1. To clarify complex terms and concepts	4.68	5.0	5.0	0.49	3.0	5.0
2. To ensure student understanding	4.72	5.0	5.0	0.45	4.0	5.0
3. To save time and manage classroom pace	4.49	5.0	5.0	0.62	2.0	5.0
4. To build rapport with students	4.58	5.0	5.0	0.54	3.0	5.0
5. To address learners' low English proficiency	4.6	5.0	5.0	0.56	3.0	5.0

The data reveal that teachers strongly agree or agree with the listed reasons for using code-switching in their classrooms. The mean scores for the five items range from 4.49 to 4.72, which fall between “Agree” (4) and “Strongly Agree” (5) on the Likert scale. This indicates a high level of endorsement across all five reasons. The highest-rated reason was “To ensure student understanding” (mean $\approx$ 4.72), showing that most

teachers perceive code-switching as a vital tool for making sure students comprehend the lessons. Likewise, items such as “To address learners’ low English proficiency” and “To build rapport with students” also received very high agreement, reflecting that teachers view code-switching not only as a cognitive aid but also as a relational and inclusive practice. The fact that the medians and modes for all items are 5 (Strongly Agree) further confirms that the most common response was the highest level of agreement, showing strong alignment among respondents.

Moreover, the low standard deviations (0.45 to 0.62) indicate that responses were highly consistent, with most clustered around the mean. This low variability suggests that the endorsement of these reasons is widespread and not driven by a small group of respondents, meaning teachers collectively recognize code-switching as a purposeful and beneficial practice. Although a few lower ratings (Neutral or Disagree) were recorded, these are rare and do not disrupt the overall pattern of agreement. Taken together, the results show that teachers use code-switching strategically and intentionally, primarily to enhance comprehension, manage classroom dynamics, and support learners’ diverse linguistic abilities. This pattern suggests that code-switching is not a random or unplanned behavior but a deliberate instructional strategy that aligns with teachers’ pedagogical goals.

3.4. Communication Barriers Encountered when Code-Switching

Item No.	Communication Barrier	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1	Students become overly reliant on the mother tongue/Filipino	4.26	0.77	Always
2	Some students do not understand the local language used	3.58	1.12	Often
3	Misunderstandings due to abrupt language shifts	3.95	0.97	Often
4	Reduced exposure to English input	3.98	0.88	Often
5	Difficulty in assessing students’ true English proficiency	4.13	0.86	Often
Overall Mean / SD		3.98	0.92	Often

Verbal Interpretation Guide: 4.21–5.00 = Always, 3.41–4.20 = Often, 2.61–3.40 = Sometimes, 1.81–2.60 = Rarely, 1.00–1.80 = Never

The computed means reveal that teachers often experience communication barriers when code-switching in classroom discussions, with an overall mean of 3.98 (Often). The highest mean was observed in Item 1 ($M = 4.26$), indicating that teachers almost always observe students becoming overly reliant on the mother tongue or Filipino whenever code-switching occurs. This suggests that while code-switching can aid comprehension, it may also unintentionally discourage students from exerting effort in understanding English content. Meanwhile, the lowest mean was noted in Item 2 ($M = 3.58$), which shows that some students occasionally fail to understand the local language being used—implying that teachers must carefully choose which language variety to use to avoid excluding learners who may not be fluent in the local tongue.

The consistency of “Often” ratings across most items (Items 3–5 all near 4.00) further highlights that communication disruptions are a shared experience among the teachers. Respondents reported frequent misunderstandings due to abrupt language shifts ($M = 3.95$) and reduced exposure to English input ($M = 3.98$), indicating that code-switching, when not managed well, can break the flow of instruction and reduce opportunities for English language acquisition. Similarly, the barrier of difficulty in accurately assessing students’ true English proficiency ($M = 4.13$) underscores a serious pedagogical implication: frequent switching may obscure students’ actual ability levels, which affects grading and instructional planning.

These results align with the findings of Martin (2014) and Probyn (2009), who reported that while code-switching can scaffold comprehension, it can also create dependency on the L1 (first language) and reduce learners' motivation to engage with the L2 (second language, English). The present results echo Ferguson's (2003) observation that code-switching often leads to fragmented discourse that may confuse learners, especially when shifts are abrupt or inconsistent. Likewise, Sert (2005) emphasized that code-switching, when overused, may limit learners' exposure to the target language and thereby slow down their language development—consistent with the high ratings for reduced English input and reliance on Filipino observed here. Overall, the findings point to the need for strategic and purposeful code-switching, ensuring it serves as a temporary scaffold rather than a default mode of instruction.

3.5. Perceived Effects of Code-Switching on Students

Item No.	Perceived Effect	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1	Improves student comprehension	4.53	0.56	Strongly Agree
2	Increases student participation	4.64	0.53	Strongly Agree
3	Reduces classroom anxiety	4.55	0.54	Strongly Agree
4	Causes overdependence on the mother tongue/Filipino	4.08	0.75	Agree
5	Limits English fluency development	4.1	0.71	Agree
Overall Mean / SD		4.38	0.62	Strongly Agree

Verbal Interpretation Guide: 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree, 3.41–4.20 = Agree, 2.61–3.40 = Neutral, 1.81–2.60 = Disagree, 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree

The results indicate that teachers strongly perceive code-switching as beneficial to their students' learning experience. The highest mean was recorded for "Increases student participation" ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 0.53$), closely followed by "Reduces classroom anxiety" ($M = 4.55$) and "Improves student comprehension" ($M = 4.53$). This shows a shared belief among the respondents that code-switching enhances learners' engagement and confidence while making lessons more comprehensible. The low standard deviations in these items signify that responses were consistently high across participants, suggesting a collective and stable viewpoint among English teachers in the district.

However, teachers also recognized potential drawbacks. The items "Causes overdependence on the mother tongue/Filipino" ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.75$) and "Limits English fluency development" ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.71$) received slightly lower ratings, yet still fell within the "Agree" range. This implies that while teachers view code-switching as advantageous, they are also aware of its possible negative effects on students' long-term mastery of English. The slightly higher standard deviations on these two items reflect more varied responses, indicating that some teachers are more concerned about these drawbacks than others. These results highlight an inherent tension between the short-term gains and potential long-term costs of code-switching.

Externally, these findings support previous studies in the literature review of this research. For instance, Martin (2014) and Probyn (2015) argued that code-switching promotes comprehension and participation, particularly among learners with limited English proficiency, which aligns with the high ratings on comprehension and participation in this study. Conversely, the caution expressed by teachers in this study mirrors the concerns raised by Bautista and Gonzalez (2006), who noted that overuse of the mother tongue in English classes could hinder the development of English fluency. The present study reinforces these earlier findings by showing that while code-switching is widely regarded as effective for classroom engagement and understanding, it must be used strategically to avoid creating dependency on the mother tongue and to ensure consistent exposure to English input.

3.6. Strategies to Manage Code-Switching

Item No.	Strategy	Frequency (f)	Mean (p)	SD	Rank
1	Gradually reducing use of Filipino/Mother Tongue	58	0.73	0.44	2
2	Using visual aids to support explanations	72	0.9	0.3	1
3	Pre-teaching vocabulary in English	64	0.8	0.4	3
4	Clarifying when and why code-switching is done	49	0.61	0.49	4
5	Encouraging students to respond more in English	66	0.83	0.38	2
Overall Mean / SD			0.77	0.40	

Note: Mean represents the proportion of respondents who selected the strategy.

SD is computed as $\sqrt{p(1-p)}$ for dichotomous items.

The findings reveal that the most commonly adopted strategy by the teachers is “Using visual aids to support explanations” ($M = 0.90$, $SD = 0.30$). This suggests that almost all respondents view visual aids as crucial in minimizing communication barriers when employing code-switching. Visual aids seem to serve as a bridge between two languages, allowing students to connect English terms with familiar images or contexts. The low SD indicates that this practice is highly consistent among teachers. Closely following this is “Encouraging students to respond more in English” ($M = 0.83$, $SD = 0.38$) and “Pre-teaching vocabulary in English” ($M = 0.80$, $SD = 0.40$), both of which emphasize proactive strategies to promote English output and build lexical familiarity to eventually reduce dependence on code-switching.

Meanwhile, “Gradually reducing use of Filipino/Mother Tongue” ($M = 0.73$) and “Clarifying when and why code-switching is done” ($M = 0.61$) were chosen by fewer teachers. While still popular, their lower means and slightly higher SD values suggest some variability in teachers’ willingness or readiness to consciously regulate their code-switching practices. This indicates that while teachers recognize the need to transition students toward English, many still find value in strategically retaining Filipino/Mother Tongue to ensure understanding. The variation in responses also implies differences in teachers’ beliefs or confidence in implementing gradual withdrawal of L1 support.

These results reinforce the theoretical arguments highlighted in the study’s review of related literature. For instance, Probyn (2015) and García & Wei (2014) emphasized that scaffolding tools—such as visuals and pre-teaching key vocabulary—are effective ways to mediate bilingual learning and to reduce reliance on code-switching over time. Similarly, Bautista and Gonzalez (2006) cautioned that without deliberate strategies to transition students toward English, code-switching may become habitual and counterproductive. The present study echoes these findings: teachers appear to balance the immediate benefits of code-switching (ensuring comprehension and participation) with long-term goals of developing English proficiency through structured supports. This shows that teachers are not simply alternating languages spontaneously, but are trying to systematize their code-switching practices to gradually build English language confidence and competence among learners.

4. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Reflection

4.1. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that English teachers handling Grades 4 to 6 in the DepEd Sta. Cruz Sub-Office frequently engage in code-switching across different instructional contexts, with reported mean scores clustering between “Often” and “Always.” Code-switching was especially prevalent when explaining difficult concepts, clarifying lesson content, and encouraging participation, which teachers perceived as necessary to maintain the flow of discussion and promote comprehension. The results further show that inter-

sentential switching was the most commonly used form, either alone or in combination with intra-sentential and tag-switching. This suggests that teachers fluidly navigate between English and Filipino/Mother Tongue at the sentence level to emphasize key points and sustain student engagement. These practices align with the assertions of Maranan, Batalla, and Santos (2025) and Velasco (2024), who argue that code-switching serves as a strategic scaffolding device in multilingual classrooms to enhance content accessibility and student participation.

Teachers also strongly agreed on key reasons for employing code-switching, particularly to ensure student understanding, clarify complex terms, build rapport, and address students' low English proficiency. However, they acknowledged communication barriers arising from this practice, including students' overreliance on the mother tongue, reduced English input, and difficulties in assessing students' actual English proficiency. These barriers mirror the concerns of Martin (2014) and Probyn (2009), who cautioned that excessive switching may obscure learners' true language abilities and reduce their motivation to use English. While teachers generally perceived code-switching as beneficial—improving comprehension, boosting participation, and reducing classroom anxiety—they also recognized its potential drawbacks, such as overdependence on Filipino and constraints on English fluency development. In response, teachers employed strategies like using visual aids, pre-teaching vocabulary, and encouraging English responses to gradually reduce reliance on code-switching. These strategies echo the recommendations of García and Wei (2014) and Bautista and Gonzalez (2006) on balancing immediate comprehension support with long-term English language development. Overall, this study concludes that while code-switching is a deeply embedded and indispensable pedagogical tool, it must be managed deliberately and systematically to maximize its benefits and minimize its barriers in multilingual English classrooms.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings and insights drawn from this study, the researchers put forward the following recommendations to key stakeholders:

- a. For **English teachers in Grades 4 to 6**, it is recommended to use code-switching more strategically by gradually reducing reliance on the mother tongue while progressively increasing English input during classroom discussions. Teachers may also incorporate pre-teaching of essential vocabulary, visual aids, and guided questioning techniques to support comprehension without sacrificing English language exposure. Regular reflection on classroom language practices can further help teachers monitor students' dependence on code-switching and adjust their instructional approaches accordingly.
- b. For **school administrators and instructional leaders**, it is recommended to design and implement professional development programs that focus on effective code-switching strategies. Training sessions may include workshops on bilingual instructional planning, classroom discourse analysis, and formative assessment of students' English proficiency. Providing teachers with continuous mentoring and peer-sharing opportunities will also help them refine their pedagogical approaches and sustain best practices in multilingual classrooms.
- c. For **curriculum planners and policy makers**, it is suggested to integrate explicit guidelines on the pedagogical use of code-switching in the English curriculum. These guidelines should clarify when and how code-switching can be used to support comprehension, while emphasizing its gradual reduction to promote English fluency development. Embedding these principles within policy frameworks can help ensure alignment between classroom practices and the overarching goals of language education.
- d. For **teacher education institutions**, it is recommended to incorporate modules on multilingual pedagogy and code-switching management into their preservice training programs. This would better equip future teachers with research-based strategies to balance students' language needs while fostering English proficiency.
- e. For **language researchers and educational scholars**, it is advised to conduct further empirical studies on

the long-term effects of code-switching on learners' academic performance, motivation, and English language acquisition. Longitudinal and experimental studies could offer deeper insights and strengthen the evidence base for future pedagogical policies.

- f. For **parents and guardians**, it is recommended to actively support students' exposure to English outside the classroom through reading, conversations, and educational media. Home reinforcement of English use can complement classroom efforts and reduce overdependence on the mother tongue during academic tasks.

4.3. Reflection

Conducting this study has allowed the researchers to gain a deeper appreciation of the complex realities that English teachers face in multilingual classrooms. Throughout the process of data gathering and analysis, it became evident that code-switching is not merely a spontaneous or unplanned act but rather a strategic and deliberate pedagogical choice. Teachers constantly navigate between the need to deliver content effectively and the responsibility to develop students' English proficiency. This realization highlighted for the researchers the delicate balance teachers must maintain in ensuring comprehension without fostering overdependence on the mother tongue. The experience also reinforced the idea that teaching is both a linguistic and cultural endeavor, shaped by the learners' diverse linguistic backgrounds and the teachers' sensitivity to their needs.

Moreover, this study has inspired the researchers to become more critical and reflective about their own language practices as future educators and education specialists. Analyzing the perceived effects, barriers, and strategies related to code-switching has shown that while the practice can enhance participation and lower classroom anxiety, it also requires careful planning and gradual reduction to support long-term language development. The researchers realized that professional development programs should integrate training on managing code-switching effectively, equipping teachers with strategies such as pre-teaching vocabulary, using visual aids, and scaffolding English responses. Ultimately, the study strengthened the researchers' commitment to promoting instructional practices that respect linguistic diversity while fostering English language growth, affirming that effective teaching requires both cultural responsiveness and pedagogical intentionality.

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