

# CODE SWITCHING AS A LEARNING STRATEGY IN POLYTECHNIC ESL CLASSROOM: EXPLORING PERCEIVED FUNCTIONS AND LECTURERS-STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

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**Abstract:** *Code switching has been a debatable language approach in ESL and EFL classrooms and due to conflicting findings, has become a controversial issue to date. The need for competencies in communicative English is expected for an average educated Malaysian. Given this, code switching is regarded as the common communicative phenomenon where teachers-learners utilize the approach to accommodate for linguistic needs as well as to increase understandings and accuracies in classroom lessons and instructions. Despite its notable advantages, code switching is perceived negatively in many previous studies. Therefore, this study attempts to explore lecturers' and students' attitudes towards code switching. It also aims to investigate the reasons lecturers and students practice code switching and perceived functions of the approach. The data of this study were collected from a survey distributed to lecturers and student respondents from Polytechnic. Our findings suggest that code switching is viewed positively and should be allowed in ESL classrooms.*

**Keywords:** *Code Switching, Bilingual Education, ESL Classroom, Language Choice, Communication*

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## Introduction

The mastery of English language is regarded with high importance in Malaysia and English is taught as a compulsory subject, both in schools and at tertiary level. Besides being a compulsory subject, many tertiary education institutions in Malaysia have started using English language as the medium of instruction. Despite the importance of English, many students find the language difficult. As English becomes a medium of instructions in most tertiary level education classrooms, students are found to have experience difficulty in using English (Ariffin & Husin, 2011). One the other hand, educators who are teaching at tertiary institutions especially at the institutions where English is medium of instruction feel it is challenging to teach students whom their mother tongue is not English. This has forced them to use code-switching in the teaching and learning process as a mean to assist both themselves and the

students in achieving their education goals. Despite the fact that the code-switching occurs in real practice, in general, it has been a common perception in Malaysia where when an English teacher or lecturer uses Malay or native language in ESL classes, they are seen as incompetent and could hinder students from acquiring English language. The practice of using other languages are not encouraged by the administrators of school or higher education institution and stress that only English language should be used. This has created conflicts and tensions not only to educators and students but to policy makers and administrators of the institutions.

Therefore, an understanding of this issue is crucial to establish common grounds for either the prospects or shortcomings of utilizing code switching in classroom. It is even more necessary for this study to be conducted given the inconclusive results for code switching, despite extensive research have been done. Along similar lines, according to Lee (2010), there aren't many attempts have been made to study about the importance of code-switching in Malaysian tertiary ESL classes. Keeping in view of this situation, more research need to be done especially in Malaysian tertiary institutions to investigate the effect of this practice. Hence, this study is an initiative to contribute to the body of the study.

This research explores perceptions and attitudes of both teachers and students towards code switching. It also looks at usages and functions as well as how the approach is adopted as the strategy to assist in the process of teaching and learning. Despite the controversial position of code switching in formal ESL classrooms, this study is particularly interested to explore uses and attitudes for alternating between languages to achieve teaching and learning goals. The motivation behind this study is in its potential to contribute objective, in depth understanding over the debatable practice of code switching. Moreover, code-switching phenomenon in the learning of a second language among Malaysian tertiary students is still largely under researched.

The result of the study is hoped to provide valuable information for the policy makers, curriculum designers, educators and all the other stockholders to gain some deeper insights of the issue and enable them to scrutinize every possibility of whether encouraging code switching may improve or hinder the process of language learning. Thus, this research is obligatory to bridge the gaps of this issue. While this study attempts to lead more future research in code switching, findings of this study are expected to contribute in the perpetual pursuit of language instructors and educators to improve English language proficiency among Malaysian students particularly at tertiary level.

### **Literature Review**

Speakers of more than one language have the ability to code-switch between languages in a single communication action (Mahootian, 2006). They have the tendency to use more than one language alternatively. This is a common phenomenon that happens naturally and effortlessly among bilingual and multilingual speakers (Bullock & Toribio, 2009). In a multilingual society, each language complement one another by uniquely fulfils certain role in the complex communication demands (Sridhar, 1996).

Code switching, as defined by Weinreich (1953) and Grosjean (1982) is a practice of alternating two languages in the same utterance or conversation. Specifically, Gumperz (1982) described that code-switching as two different grammatical systems or subsystems that are juxtaposed in a single speech exchange between interlocutors. It is common for bilingual speakers to code switch and substitute a word or a phrase from another language to achieve the communication

intention. Code-switching occurrences among bilinguals can be either conscious or unintentional (Mahootian, 2006). In the recent years, this phenomenon has gained the attention of sociolinguists and other researchers since most modern world is becoming multilingual in nature. The phenomenon of internationalization of societies and the widening of contacts both within own communities and different countries have contributed greatly to code-switching (Brown, 2006).

In the recent years, this phenomenon has gained the attention of sociolinguists and other researchers since most modern world are becoming multilingual in nature. The phenomenon of internationalization of societies and the widening of contacts both within own communities and different countries have contributed greatly to code-switching (Brown, 2006). In the education setting, where English as second language (ESL) is concern, although, teachers try to maintain the target language as the language of instruction, the students' first language (L1) is sometimes used to facilitate the students to understand and learn the target language (García, 1993).

### ***Theoretical Framework***

Communicative Competence is the foundational concept underpinning code switching. Introduced by David Hymes (1972), the concept advocates for competence in communication where speakers have the knowledge of when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. Canale and Swain (1972) as well as Widdowson (1978), stress on the aspect of ability for communicative competence, where it is about "the ability to function in a truly communicative setting- that is in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors" (Savignon, 1972, p.8). In essence, communicative competence is dynamic and not static, it is more interpersonal than intrapersonal. It involves both the aspect of competence and performance. Savignon (1972) and Pillar (2011) simplify that the speaker's ability will determine his or her competence, and this competence will be manifested in their performance. In the case of mutual intelligibility and comprehensibility, code switching is seen as a communicative strategy to maintain understandings between speakers.

In this regard, one theory significant to ensure mutual intelligibility is achieved between speakers is Speech Accommodation Theory proposed by Giles, et. al (1987). The theory, later refined by Giles and Coupland (1991) is known as Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). It stresses that the cognitive reasons speakers code switch is because they attempt to enhance or reduce social differences between themselves and the interlocutors. Essentially, the theory informs that speakers occasionally accommodate their speech and language patterns when interacting with others either through the concept of convergence or divergence. Convergence is a strategy where speakers modify communicative behaviours such as word choice, prosodic, non-vocal features and so forth. Meanwhile, divergence is understood as the way in which speakers accentuate speech and nonverbal differences by using linguistic features characteristic of their own group, to emphasise their social distance, as well as to maintain their social identity. Here, speakers can be seen to match or differentiate their pattern of language to accommodate for differences within situations. In this context of analysis, it can be said that code switching is part of accommodation process in which this approach is regarded as a form of communication strategy where speakers adjust their language patterns and word choice to enhance comprehensibility and intelligibility.

### ***Usefulness, Drawbacks and Attitudes towards Code Switching***

Despite code switching helps in facilitating lessons and instructions, the usefulness of code-switching in language classrooms is still an undecided issue. Thornbury (1999) argued that code switching practices hinder second language acquisition as it takes away the amount of second language (L2) experiences for students. Students are also seen to depend heavily on the practice (Skiba, 1997) and could potentially lose their fluency if the use of L2 is not maximized (Sert, 2005).

On the contrary, other studies highlighted the usefulness of code switching in facilitating lessons where students see monolingual instructions as barriers (Jingxia, 2010; Lee, 2010; Then & Ting, 2009). The advantage of code switching has also been proved by Horasan (2014) where the researcher found that not only students' language proficiency increases, but their attention in class is also maintained as they code switch. With regards to interactions, code switching has been found to be useful to encourage interactions between teachers and students (Bista, 2010; Magid & Mugaddam, 2013).

In another aspect, code switching is perceived as having lower status, in which it is regarded as a communicative strategy utilised by less competent and low proficiency speakers to compensate for their linguistic deficiency (Lin, 1996; Shahnaz, 2015). The approach is also seen with scepticism and stigmatism because it is perceived to bring detrimental effect on second language acquisition and is seen as an avoidance strategy (Faersh & Kasper, 1983; Thompson & Harrison, 2014). Contrarily, code switching is received with more positive attitudes as it is seen as a 'legitimate strategy' (Cook, 2001, p.105) that provide language opportunity. Scholars see code switching as a characteristic of eloquent speakers who display competent use of language. Switching back and forth also demonstrates a smoother flow of conversation and lexical retrieval in L2 (Arnfast & Jorgensen, 2003). The ability to switch from one language to another, according to Cook (2001) is highly advantageous to achieve a number of communicative and metalinguistic ends.

### ***Reasons for and functions of Code Switching***

As it is common practice for bilingual speakers to code switch between languages, question arises as to what may have triggered the speakers' tendency to alternate between languages. The motivations for code switching according to scholars are due to several factors. Holmes (2006) suggests that bilingual speaker code switch to show solidarity or to reflect social status. From the perspective of ESL classroom and education, Bista (2010) in examining university students outlined nine reasons that trigger code switching. They are, among others due to lack of linguistic competencies with regard to vocabularies and suitable similar words, to fill the gap in speaking, easier to speak in own language, to avoid misunderstanding, to convey intimacy, so others would not understand (privacy), to add emphasis and other reasons.

In addition to the reasons that trigger code switching, the phenomenon becomes habitual due to the positive functions it serves. In this respect, code switching as found by Rose and Dulm (2006) to serve several functions in gaining agreement, assisting explanations and better understanding as well as replacing temporarily inaccessible words. The approach is also useful to serve affective functions with regard to emotional expressiveness, socializing, identity markings, displaying anger and humour responses (Rose & Dulm, 2006) and requesting help, self-correction, grammar translation and for making unofficial interactions (Barandagh, Zoghi, & Amini, 2013). In other studies, apart from injecting humour (Momenian & Samar, 2011) and

establishing intimacy (Mujiono, Poedjosoedarmo, Subroto, & Wiratno, 2013) code switching is also found to be functional among students in easing tension, emphasizing particular points, avoiding embarrassment and shortening social distance (Low & Lu, 2008). Teachers' priority in using code switching however is merely to serve the purpose of displaying communicative competence and to assist in instances where there was no direct translation of a certain word.

While most of these previous studies were conducted in ESL classrooms, studies that examine code switching in tertiary level education are limited, especially within the context of education in Malaysia. Above all, exploration of code switching attitudes and practices are scarce in tertiary level education specializing in technical and vocational education (TVET). It is interesting to examine views of students learning English for technical and specific purposes, in terms of their perceptions toward code switching and their negotiation of L2 in ESL classrooms. Likewise, the study is necessary given the plurality of social structure, cultural backgrounds and language spoken. The Chinese community speaks several dialects that linguists consider different languages including Hokkien, Hakka, Hainanese, Cantonese, Kwongsai, Hokchiu, Henghua and others while the Malay as the largest ethnic group speak Malay. The Indians, similarly speak at least nine different languages including Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Benggali, Gujerati, Oriya, Marathi, Punjabi and Sinhalese (Hassan, 2004).

Given the multi-ethnic population in Malaysia, with variety of languages and dialects are used and maintained, it is interesting to explore code switching in this setting as the mixing between languages become common. Even so, the debatable status of code switching in formal ESL classrooms has caused the approach to be viewed negatively, despite positive values and advantages found in previous studies. As such, this study accounts for the limited examination for code switching in ESL classroom in Malaysia polytechnic setting. More specifically, it intends to uncover lecturers' and students' perceptions towards the approach, what motivates them to code switch and what function does the approach serve educationally and socially.

In conclusion, methodological differences used in previous studies influence the result and further make it hard to generalize. Given that identifying functions of code-switching plays an important role in understanding the phenomenon in ESL classrooms and also to find ways to help both teachers and learners in achieving their goals, conducting a research in an attempt to shed more light on this issue seems justifiable.

Three specific research questions are as follows:

- 1) What are the attitudes of the lecturers and students towards code-switching practice?
- 2) How frequently do lecturers and students code switch?
- 3) What are the reasons for which the lecturers and students to code switch in ESL classroom?

### **Methodology**

This quantitative study adopts a descriptive research design. A survey of perceptions and attitudes towards code switching was distributed to 13 English language teachers and 153 semester 4 diploma students. Questions for the survey were adapted from Horasan (2014), Rose and Dulm (2006), Barandagh et al. (2013) and Momenian and Samar (2011) studies. Two different sets of questionnaires were given to lecturers and students. The questionnaires were structured into 2 sections. Section 'A' entailed information relating to the demographic data of the respondents. While, section 'B' of the questionnaire dealt with items relating to lecturers and students views on the code-switching practice and reasons behind the phenomenon in ESL classrooms at PTSB.

The participants of this study were selected based on several factors. All 13 English language teachers selected in this study have had at least five years of teaching experience. This criterion is set to reduce the likelihood of ineffective use of code-switching as a communication strategy as a result of lack of teaching experience and expertise. Meanwhile, the students who participated in this study were semester four students from various academic departments. They received three hours English lesson per week and were selected as participants through simple random sampling technique. The students were multilingual, from various ethnic backgrounds. They received formal English language lessons in their primary and secondary school and were able to converse in Malay language effectively. To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality, names of the participants were not used in final report and were not be disclose to third party. The participants were kept informed about the aim of the research and any changes made as well as their rights to withdraw or comment on the results.

## Results

### *Lecturers' Attitude toward Code Switching*

**Table 1: Lecturers' attitude towards code-switching**

No.	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Code-switching should be used in the English language classroom.	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	5 (38%) )	6 (46%) )	1 (8%)
2.	Code-switching helps students to learn English language.	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%) )	8 (62%) )	1 (8%)
3.	Code-switching is a strategy for teaching and learning process.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%) )	9 (69%) )	1 (8%)
4.	Code-switching makes students feel comfortable and secure (non- threatening) when in English language classroom.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%) )	10 (77%) )	3 (23%) )
5.	Students are able to follow my lesson better when I code-switch.	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%) )	7 (54%) )	2 (15%) )

It is clearly evident from Table 1 that for all of the items listed there were more respondents chose to agree (strongly agree and agree combined) than the number of respondents who disagree (strongly disagree and disagree combined). The overall responses show that the lecturers seemed to have positive attitude towards code-switching. Only one lecturer believed that code-switching should not be used as opposed to 7 lecturers (54%) who believed that it would bring benefits. However, of the 13 respondents, 5 teachers (38%) chose to refrain from neither agreeing nor disagreeing. In responses to the idea that code-switching could help the students to learn English language, unlike the first item, more lecturers (9, 70%) agreed as to compare to those who disagree (1, 8%). It is interesting to note the number of respondents who indicated a neutral stand was fewer when asked if code-switching would benefit the students, although, there were more for the first item.

Even though, 3 (23%) respondents were neutral and 1 (8%) disagreed about the opinion that students are able to follow the lesson better when code-switching is practiced in the class, all of them were consensus that students feel comfortable and secure (non-threatening) when code-switching is used in the English language classroom. In fact, among the five items in Table I, this is the only statement that has highest number of respondents (3, 23%) strongly agree. Similarly, there were no respondents disagree when responding to the third item in the table. 10 (77%) respondents stated that they agree that code-switching is a form of strategy in teaching and learning language, while, the rest (3, 23%) were undecided.

### *Lecturers' Reasons for Practicing Code Switching in ESL Classroom*

**Table 2: Lecturers' reasons for code-switching in English language classroom**

No.	Items	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	I code-switch because I want to give the procedural instructions.	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
2.	I code-switch because I want to manage or control the class.	5 (38%)	5 (38%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)
3.	I code-switch because I want to teach new vocabulary.	1 (8%)	6 (46%)	3 (23%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)
4.	I code-switch because I want to teach new grammatical item.	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
5.	I code-switch because I want to clarify something.	1 (8%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	5 (38%)
6.	I code-switch because there is no direct translation of a word in English language.	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	5 (38%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)
7.	I code-switch because I want to check students' understanding.	2 (15%)	4 (31%)	5 (38%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
8.	I code-switch because I want to rephrase English language utterance in Malay language.	2 (15%)	4 (31%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)
9.	I code-switch because I want to put emphasis on the utterance.	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	0 (0%)
10.	I code-switch when moving from one activity to another.	8 (62%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)
11.	I code-switch when explaining differences between first and second language.	1 (8%)	6 (46%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)
12.	I code-switch when I need to explain something quickly.	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)
13.	I code-switch because I want to ease tension and inject humour.	0 (0%)	5 (38%)	3 (23%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)
14.	I code-switch when socialising with the students.	0 (0%)	9 (69%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)

Based on the findings in Table 2, majority of the teachers code switch on occasional basis, with highest percentage of lecturers code switch when socializing with students (9, 69%) and to teach new vocabulary (6, 46%). It is also found that a significant number of teachers code switch to explain meaning differences between first and second language (6, 46%). Based on the table too, it is found that 62% of the respondents never code switch when moving lesson's activity to another whereas 35% of the respondents never practice code switching in their

classroom management and control. Also, from the table, above it can be seen that only two functions of code-switching were used by all the respondents in their English language classroom. They were to ease tension and inject humour as well as to socialize with the students.

However, these were not frequently used as the teachers responded to occasionally more than the other choices. Of the 13 teachers, 9 (69%) indicated that they used code-switching occasionally for easing tension and inject humour, while, 5 (38%) others used the approach for socializing with students on the occasional basis. A comparison of these two functions reveals that the teachers use code-switching for easing tension and inject humour more frequent than socializing with the students. Overall even though all the reasons for code-switching were practiced by the majority of the lecturers, the usage is relatively leans towards the lower frequency.

### ***Students' Attitude towards Code Switching***

From Table 3, it seemed obvious that the result is almost similar to the findings of lecturers' attitude towards code switching practice. The majority of the respondents felt that code-switching brings benefit and should be allowed in the English language classroom. Hence, the overall responses to practice of alternating languages were positive (both agree and strongly agree combined). Only less than 10% of the respondents felt otherwise for every item listed in the table. The highest number (14, 9%) of respondents disagree (1 strongly disagree and 13 disagree) was when they were asked to response to the idea of allowing code-switching during lessons. None of the respondents "strongly disagree" that code-switching helps to learn English language. The item with the lowest number (5, 4%) of disagreements (1 strongly disagree and 4 disagree) was on the view that code-switching is a strategy in the process of teaching and learning.

**Table 3: Students' attitude towards code-switching**

No.	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Code-switching should be allowed in the English language classroom.	1 (1%)	13 (8%)	23 (15%)	65 (42%)	51 (33%)
2.	Code-switching helps me to learn English language.	0 (0%)	8 (5%)	26 (17%)	70 (46%)	49 (32%)
3.	Code-switching is a strategy for teaching and learning process.	1 (1%)	4 (3%)	23 (15%)	67 (44%)	58 (38%)
4.	Code-switching makes me feel comfortable and secure (non-threatening) when in English language classroom.	1 (1%)	8 (5%)	19 (12%)	65 (42%)	60 (39%)
5.	I'm able to follow the lesson better when I code-switch.	4 (3%)	6 (4%)	21 (14%)	61 (40%)	61 (40%)

### ***Students' Reasons for Practicing Code Switching in ESL Classroom***

For all the reasons in Table 4, "sometimes" scored the highest except for one function which is the code-switching as a tool to maintain the flow of a conversation. The option "often" was the highest (57, 37%) score for this item. The function with the highest number (31, 20%) of



respondents who chose “never” was to attract attention and to have the floor. This is followed by 11 (7%) respondents who have never used code-switching to inject humour. When total up the option “occasionally” and “never” none of the functions in the table scored more than 20% except using code-switching for attract attention and have the floor.

On contrary, when add up the “often” and “always” responses, the most (99, 65%) frequently used function for code-switching was to help to maintain the flow of a conversation. The second highest (82, 54%) frequently used function when “often” and “always” combined were shared by not knowing the English language equivalent word, when asking help from the teacher, socializing with lecturer, to explain and rephrasing English language utterance in another language. When similar options were added for the attracting attention and to have the floor function it scored the lowest (40, 26%). When done the same, the second lowest (59, 39%) was using code-switching for the purpose of injecting humour in utterance.

**Table 4: Students’ reasons for code-switching in English language classroom**

No.	Items	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	I code-switch because I do not know the English language equivalent, so I use a Malay or Tamil word.	2 (1%)	5 (3%)	64 (42%)	39 (25%)	43 (28%)
2.	I code-switch because there is no direct translation of a word in English language.	9 (6%)	15 (10%)	68 (44%)	38 (25%)	23 (15%)
3.	I code-switch because I am not proficient in English language.	6 (4%)	17 (11%)	52 (34%)	45 (29%)	33 (22%)
4.	I code-switch when I need help from lecturers or friends.	3 (2%)	6 (4%)	61 (40%)	44 (29%)	39 (25%)
5.	I code-switch to socialise with teacher and friends.	4 (3%)	11 (7%)	56 (37%)	51 (33%)	31 (20%)
6.	I code-switch because I do not want to get embarrassed.	9 (6%)	18 (12%)	53 (35%)	51 (33%)	22 (14%)
7.	I code-switch to inject humour in my utterance.	11 (7%)	15 (10%)	68 (44%)	33 (22%)	26 (17%)
8.	I code-switch when explaining.	7 (5%)	14 (9%)	49 (32%)	45 (29%)	38 (25%)
9.	I code-switch to rephrase English language utterance in Malay language.	2 (1%)	8 (5%)	61 (40%)	48 (31%)	34 (22%)
10.	I code-switch to attract attention and to have the floor.	31 (20%)	28 (18%)	54 (35%)	33 (22%)	7 (5%)
11.	I code-switch to put emphasis on the utterance.	9 (6%)	11 (7%)	67 (44%)	37 (24%)	29 (19%)
12.	I code-switch to help me to maintain the flow of a conversation.	3 (2%)	7 (5%)	44 (29%)	57 (37%)	42 (27%)

## Discussion

With regard to the lecturers’ attitude towards code-switching, it is safe to say that majority are in favour of using the method as part of their teaching pedagogy in classroom. They feel that code switching helps facilitate the learning of English language better (62% agreed) and as such a good strategy to assist in the teaching and learning of second language acquisition (69% agreed). Findings concurred with Magid and Mugaddam (2013), Jingxia (2010) and Greer (2007) where they found that code switching is a valuable and powerful communication

strategy in EFL and ESL classroom if the usage of code switching is at 50-50 ratio. Students will benefit a lot too if the teachers are conscious of the alternation between languages and is used only to achieve a specific learning objective without interrupting the teaching content. He argues that if languages are separated and restricted, it could lead to quandaries.

Majority of lecturers (77%) agreed that code switching makes students feel comfortable and secure in their learning of L2. While previous studies have recorded that code-switching affects students' understanding, clarifications and accuracy (Catone, 2007; David & Lim, 2009; Mingfa, 2011), within their social development and informal environment, the use of code switching has positively reduced learners' fear and anxiety in using L2. Studies in favour of code switching acknowledge the advantage of the process in reducing the amount of time needed in giving instructions. Code switching, when used alternately is effective in facilitating the flow of classroom instruction as it reduces the amount of time needed for a teacher to explain or sourcing for the simplest vocabulary to explain the meaning. Often time, code switching is helpful in situations such as topic switch where teacher code switch to teach a certain topic. For instance, in the teaching of grammar where teacher code switch to present a similar realization to the learners' first language (Modupeola, 2013). In terms of social aspects, 69% lecturers responded that they occasionally code switch while communicating with students, while 23% use the technique often and only 8% utilize it always.

Our findings also show that despite the perceived advantage of code switching, a significant number of language lecturers in polytechnic do not always use it. This may be due to the negative views towards the approach in which many have taught that it might worsen students' language acquisition, or students are already in their mastery level of English proficiency thus they require less code switches. As affirmed by Boztepe (2003), code switching does not indicate deficiency in either of the two-language involved during the process as it is simply a characteristic that bilinguals acquired. In fact, it showcases their competencies in using the language. Butzkamm (1998) and Gulzar (2010) explicate in their studies that code switching improves language proficiency and communication competence as it increases learners' level of confidence when they code switch.

As for students' attitude towards code switching, majority of the respondents are in favour of the approach. They agreed that code switching should be allowed in classroom and that the method helps they learn English effectively. They feel that when they code switch, they are able to follow the lesson better. As for reasons for code switching among students, findings recorded that majority of students tend to code switch when they socialize with lecturer and friends. Our finding is parallel with studies conducted by Barandagh et al. (2013), Moore (2002) and Greer (2007) where they found that students tend to code switch in informal communication with their teachers and peers. Not only does the findings indicate students' competencies in code alternation but shows that the process is conscious, and it takes high linguistic competencies and awareness to alternate between L1 and L2 smoothly. Also, the majority of students responded that they code switch to help maintain the flow of a conversation. This also concurs results found in Sert (2005) and Jingxia (2010) studies where language users code switch in order to keep the conversation going or as a tool to express ideas and thoughts in a language that they are most comfortable with.

### **Limitation**

Despite the contribution of our findings, this study is not without its limitation. It examined only semester four students within one polytechnic institution. More profound understanding

could be generated if participants were increased and other polytechnic institutions were added, so findings can be generalized. Given the exploratory nature of the present study, future studies could observe the practices and occurrences of code switching in real classroom setting for linguistics and social purposes.

Another potential uncertainty when dealing with questionnaires as data collection approach is the accuracy of answers given by respondents. Since participants were required to self-evaluate and recall the use of code switching when filling the questionnaires, aspects such as reliability and adequacy could be risked. As such, further research should consider complementing questionnaires with semi structure group interview for concrete responses to answer the research questions.

### **Conclusion**

Code switching is influenced by linguistic, psycholinguistic and social situational aspects. Although external factors that lead to code switching could vary. It has been proven to reduce L2 learners' anxiety as it provides a familiar environment and flexibility for students to use their first language. Code switching is important to draw learners' interest and motivation in learning L2 but must be reduced with the increase of learners' mastery. While teachers' use of code switching is constantly being subject to controversy, the strategy should not be viewed negatively as it enhances understanding and communication competencies.

The use of code switching plays a key role in influencing language use among bilingual students, either for better or for worse. It should be understood that the approach does not necessarily affect learners negatively if it is not used as the only learning strategy. While code switching should be minimized in ESL classroom, it is also important to remember that students should not be harshly punished if they occasionally resort to switching as their natural accommodation strategy to learning L2. Learners are generally aware of their linguistics lacking and limitations and throughout positive reinforcement and encouragement, they will usually improve in time.

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