

Code-switching in Teaching English Literature: The Case of Teachers in Candon City, Ilocos Sur

Mary Grace Padilla Ramos

Humanities, Social Sciences, and Communications North Luzon Philippines State College

Abstract- This study was designed to explore the case of English teachers in teaching literature. Specifically, this study focused on: a) finding the reasons why teachers codeswitch when teaching English literature; b) the effect of codeswitch in learning a new lesson and in the practice of the English language. It made use of qualitative research and applied the case study approach with Colaizzi as a method of analysis. Three (3) teachers were interviewed and observed, and eight (8) students were used for the focus group discussion (FGD). The study revealed that teachers codeswitch to facilitate understanding among learners. The study also uncovered that codeswitching affects learners by igniting their interest and hindering their fluency in the English language. Hence, code-switching should be used sparingly to help learners improve their English language communication skills. Since there are limitations of the study, it is therefore recommended that the next researchers should have an in-depth exploration of a certain case, consider the wider scope of the study, and conduct more readings related to the study.

Keywords: Codeswitching, English Literature, English Language, English Teachers, Colaizzi, Teaching

Correspondence to: letpi72@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

English language instruction and literature instruction are embedded processes. As Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) affirmed, in the process, teachers need to be creative in order to facilitate learning among learners. In such instances, teachers employ various ways to deliver and execute lessons effectively. One of the ways that teachers employ is codeswitching. Nonetheless, it is a useful pedagogical tool.

In addition, Esen (2022) presented three (3) kinds of code-switching: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and extra-sentential or tag-switching. Inter-sentential code-switching is prevalent in fluent bilingual speakers and the switch occurs at the beginning or end of a sentence, particularly in words and phrases. Intra-sentential code-switching is an unconscious shifting in the middle of a sentence with no hesitations, interruptions, and pauses to signal a shift within the clause or word

level. Extra-sentential which is otherwise known as Tag Switching occurs of either a single word or a tag phrase or it can be wherein insertion of a tag from one language to another.

Furthermore, codeswitching is a prevalent phenomenon especially seen in multilingual and multicultural communities (Sert, 2005). For that reason, linguists around the world consider codeswitching as an inevitable phenomenon in multilingual and bilingual communities (Othman, 2015). One of the multilingual societies where codeswitching could be used is the Philippines.

In the Philippines, codeswitching has been frequent, especially, in the year 2012 when a republic act was signed supporting the contextualization of materials and the use of the native language in teaching. Republic Act 10533, an act enhancing the Philippine education system an act enhancing the Philippine basic education system by strengthening its curriculum and increasing the number of years for basic education, appropriating funds therefor and for other purposes, section 4, Enhanced Basic Education Program states: Basic education shall be delivered in languages understood by the learners as the language plays a strategic role in shaping the formative years of learners (OG, 2013). Thus, the instruction, teaching materials, and assessments of the kindergarten and grades level 1, 2, and 3 shall be in the regional or native language of the learners. And from grades level 4, and 6, Filipino and English are gradually introduced using a mother tongue language transition program until the two languages are the primary medium of instruction at the secondary level.

According to Gonzales, 1998 as cited by Esquivel, 2018 Philippines has been a realm of colonizers. Filipino is the national language and English is considered the second language. In addition, Filipinos use English in academic and business contexts and Filipino for local communication.

Meanwhile, the significance of codeswitching in the teaching and learning process has given birth to various studies. These studies focused on its nature, attitude, or perception towards it, and its application to various contexts. Though conducted in various contexts, these studies highlighted various implications that cannot be undermined.

Gauci and Camilleri Grima (2013) conducted a study about codeswitching as a tool in Malta. The results of the study showed that the use of the L1 (Maltese) facilitated the pedagogical endeavors of both the teachers and the learners, especially the weaker and younger ones.

Bailey (2011) assessed students' perceptions of and attitudes toward codeswitching by both teachers and students in foreign language classes at a Midwestern American University since he had seen that the perception of teachers and students was not yet put under study. He used the recording and survey questionnaire. The result is that language anxiety and perceived language competence play a significant role in impacting students' perceptions of and attitudes toward code-switching in the foreign language classroom.

Ibrahim et al. (2013) looked into teachers' attitudes towards code-switching in teaching English as a foreign language to Malay students at one of the local universities in Malaysia. They followed the triangulation method—observation, questionnaires, and interviews. They observed each teacher and their language was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using the functions by Grumperz. The result is that teachers unconsciously do code-switch in the language classroom of a pedagogical purpose.

On the other hand, literature is an area in English courses where teachers use various literary texts as a springboard to teaching language. Since literature comes from a diverse culture, some works are translated to reach other cultures. English as the lingua franca of the world is used to translate these works. Carefully chosen, some works are included in the curriculum of English classes. However, usually, low proficient students of English consider these literary texts as fruitless because to them, learning a new language is complicated (Muhammad Malek, 2015).

Moreover, it was observed that there is in teaching literature to the students. Learners have difficulty in understanding the literary pieces which leads to the inevitable loss of students' interest and appreciation of literary pieces. This also yields unsatisfactory results of their comprehension assessments on literary pieces and it makes students non-participative in class. And the worse scenario to the part of the teacher is that learners find literature boring. And this boredom results in sleepiness inside the classroom and creates noise as well when the students talk to their seatmates about things that are not related to the lesson. These situations prompt the teacher to codeswitch as a classroom strategy. However, the practice of the English language was somehow affected. In Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and In-Service Training (InSET) for teachers, English teachers often share the same observation. Teachers observed that students cannot fully comprehend literary texts in English. Students know how to read the piece but they do not understand it. Some words are not even familiar to them. There are students who would appeal to the teachers to translate what the teacher discusses. And if called to answer

comprehension questions they would ask if they are allowed to speak the dialect, Filipino, and *Taglish*¹.

With the deteriorating performance of students in English classes and disinterested students in literature lessons, the researcher was compelled to probe the case of code-switching of English teachers in their classes.

Moreover, previously conducted studies did not focus on literature and mother tongue in teaching in an English class. Thus, this study discovers why teachers and students in English classes codeswitch as they teach and learn literature and its effect on content acquisition and in the practice of the English language

METHODS

The study utilized a qualitative case study approach to identify and examine the reasons why English teachers codeswitch as they teach literature, the effects of codeswitching in learning new lessons and its effect on the practice of the English language.

Williams (2007), defines a case study as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection." Creswell recommends a case study as a methodology if the problem to be studied "relates to developing an in-depth understanding of a 'case' or bounded system" and if the purpose is to understand "an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals."

This study is particularly suitable for the case study as it uncovers the reasons why teachers codeswitch, its effect on content acquisition and in the practice of the English language. The result of the in-depth exploration gives an understanding and explanation of why teachers have to codeswitch as they teach literature, and what effects in content acquisition and practice of the English language were observed as they codeswitch.

Setting and Participants of the Study

This study was conducted at Candon National High School (CNHS), Candon City, Ilocos Sur. The participants of the study were chosen using the criterion sample with these criteria: a) they must be handling English classes for five years or more; b) they can speak Filipino, Iloco, and English; c) they are holders of a permanent position; d) they must be willing to be interviewed and observed.

The researcher sought for the approval of the Division of Candon City, Department of Education before each qualified participant was interviewed and observed. The Schools Division Superintendent granted the request of the researcher. Upon the approval of the request the

¹ Taglish or Englog is code-switching and/or code-mixing in the use of Tagalog and English, the most common languages of the Philippines.

Division Superintendent, the researcher wrote a letter addressed to the head teacher of the English Department of CNHS. With the above-mentioned criteria, three participants qualified for the conduct of the study. The three participants teach grade 7 English and literature. Each of them was willing to be interviewed and observed.

Each qualified participant was interviewed and observed in their respective literature classes. The participants were all observed in their 7th-grade class with the topic, “The Parable of the Rainbow Colors.” The only parable was discussed because it is the topic scheduled for the fourth quarter in the curriculum guide for Grade 7.

In verifying the answers of the participants, eight (8) willing learners coming from different sections and grade levels were used in the study.

Data Gathering Instrument and Procedure

Since the purpose of case study research is to provide an in-depth exploration of the person, program, or process under study, intensive data are needed. These intensive data can be acquired through interviews, class observation, and Focus Group Data (FGD).

The researcher used a semi-structured interview with the use of an aide-memoire which was used to summarize key the findings and important information about the participant. The interview was supported by classroom observations in literature classes. A focus group discussion was also held with the voluntary participation of eight (8) various students from different sections and year levels.

The research sought permission from the following authorities before the data gathering: the head teacher of the English Department, Assistant Principal II of the junior high school, and the school principal through a communication letter. After these authorities approved the researcher’s request, the interview started. The interview was conducted in the English faculty room after class hours. The interview for each participant ranges between 30-45 minutes depending upon the given data. The longest so far is 45 minutes. After the interview, the researcher transcribed the interview and was verified by the participants. The transcript which was in Ilokano was also translated.

The data from transcripts were treated using the Collaizi’s methodology which involves two phases—the cool and warm analysis. And from the analysis, themes were created.

The gathered data in the interview and created theme were verified through classroom observations in their literature class where the parable (The Parable of the Rainbow Colors) was discussed. A focus group discussion (FGD) was also conducted to further verify the result of the

interview. Eight (8) students were willing to undergo the FGD. The FGD lasted for only 30 minutes.

Treatment of Data

The data gathered from the three teachers were analyzed using the Colaizzi's Methodology. Colaizzi's method of data analysis is an approach to interpreting qualitative research data to identify meaningful information and organize it into themes or categories (Colaizzi, 1978). The approach follows seven data analysis steps.

The first step was to transcribe all the interviews from each participant. In this section of the analysis process, the narratives are transcribed from the recorded interviews held with each individual. After transcribing, the statements which were in Filipino and Ilokano were translated to English. Second, significant statements were extracted. A third was the creation of formulated meanings. In this stage of analysis, the researcher formulated general meanings for each significant statement. The fourth was the combination of formulated meanings into clusters and themes. These clusters were created according to the problems under the case study. Fifth was the development of comprehensive description of the experiences of the participants. The sixth step is the interpretative analysis of the symbolic representations of the participants during the interview. This includes hand gestures, and facial expressions to affirm and negate statements. The last step is the summary of the essence of the experiential case as revealed through the interpretations and explanations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extracted data from the transcripts were subjected to cool and warm analyses as the primary mode of analysis of this study. The results of the analyses yielded three (3) themes: a) facilitate understanding, b) ignite learners' interest, and c) hinders fluency in the English language. The first theme summarizes the reasons of teachers in codeswitching while the second and third themes encapsulate how codeswitching affects the learners in learning new lessons and in practicing English language. themes were emerged as a result of the experiences of English language teachers in teaching literature through codeswitching as a teaching strategy. Nevertheless, they present the simultaneous phenomena which occur one after the other as a response to the diversity among learners.

Theme 1-Facilitate Understanding. One of the fulfillments of teachers is to see that the learners are really learning. Learning is communicated through the manifestations students show as a response to the stimuli given by the teacher. These manifestations come in various and diverse forms. It can be through mere facial expressions, recitation, and active participation in class

discussions. In order to achieve learning in the classroom, different strategies are being used by teachers. One of which they claim as a teaching strategy is codeswitching.

English teachers, being the participants of the study, were asked about their reasons for codeswitching in teaching literature in their classes. All of them answered that their main reason is to facilitate the understanding of the literary pieces. As verbalized:

“If you are a sensitive teacher, you can already observe that when you speak continuously in English, you can see on your students’ faces if they can follow or not. If not, that’s the time that you codeswitch.” The teacher also supplemented enumerating observable attitude when they do not understand the lesson anymore namely: 1) they are not listening; 2) they talk to their seatmates; 3) they do things which are not related to the lesson; 4) they are non-participative; 5) they sleep in class. (Teacher 1: 38-year-old male)

*“Students cannot understand, you see that the class is boring, and they are not participative.”
(Teacher 2: 29-year-old, Male)*

“First, for better understanding; second, though they can recognize the words but they do not understand it. It’s not only the words but also the sentences—the piece as a whole though they can read, they cannot comprehend. So, they easily comprehend when the dialect is used or Filipino.” She complemented her answer with manifestations that signal that students do not understand the lesson, “Upon seeing their facial expressions, you can see...second, they vocally ask questions, and they would say, “Ma’am can you translate in Iloko?” And if they answer, they ask “Can I answer in Iloko ma’am?” (Teacher 3: 32-year-old female)

Students verified that when teachers speak consistently in English as they teach literature, they find it difficult to understand, they even exclaimed, “Makapaturog ma’am!” (It makes us sleepy ma’am.) During classroom observation, as the teacher explained the lesson, some students were no longer paying attention. Some laid their head on their desks, a few students were doing their assignments in other subjects, and others were talking to their seatmates.

In the class of Teacher 2 (29-year-old, Male) nobody raises a hand to recite whenever the teacher asks questions to check their understanding of the parable discussed. Some do not sit properly in their sit. There are those who are doing other things like writing signatures in their notebooks or drawing anime. During the FGD, a student answered that they do not recite or even bother to raise their hand because they do not understand the lesson being discussed. “We are seated as if we are listening but other things are in our minds.” It has also been observed during the class observation that students can readily answer comprehension questions when the teacher explains the question using the mother tongue. Let’s say for instance in the class of Teacher 2 (29-year-old, Male) in Grade 7 Orchid:

Teacher: Aside from the literal scenario nga nu malpas kanu nga agtudo ket makakitaka ti rainbow. Anong ibig sabihin kapag there’s a rainbow after the rain. (Aside from the literal scenario that after the rain, you’ll see a rainbow, what does this mean: there’s a rainbow after the rain?)

Student 1(13-year-old female): Babangon sir. (To get back up sir.)
Teacher: Very good! Ano ba and sinisymbolize ng rain? (What does rain symbolize?)
Student 2 (13-year-old female): Sadness sir.

Teacher 3 (32-year-old female) elucidated that she codeswitches in teaching literature for two reasons—for better understanding and easier comprehension of the literary text. Since the class that she handles is Grade 7, there is much need to codeswitch since the learners are the first batch of the K-12 Curriculum. In the class observation, the students are honest with their situation that they do not understand. Some students boldly ask the teacher to translate some words. The students said that they better understand the parable if it is explained using the mother tongue which they were used to be taught in grade school.

This theme corroborates to the pedagogic intent of codeswitching as identified in the study conducted by Fennema-Bloom (2010). There were four (4) categories which were coded namely: 1) instruction for content acquisition; 2) reformulation; 3) instruction for language acquisition; 4) facilitation. Category 4 which is facilitation supports the theme for the reasons why teachers codeswitch which is ‘facilitate understanding.’

The theory of Gumperz, 2012, the Interactional Model, also supports this theme. It states that language is used by an addressee to interpret contextualizing cues—strategic activities such as choice of code, prosodic phenomena, dialect, speakers’ behavior, and opening and closing in conversations. In connection with this theory, codeswitching was used as a strategic activity same with the dialect, Ilokano. Through codeswitching the speaker—the teacher—gave a signal to the listeners about its communicative intent which is to facilitate understanding.

Codeswitching is widely utilized as a strategy in teaching literature due to its efficiency in making the lesson easier, simplifying comprehension, and killing boredom and monotony inside the classroom. This theme implies that teachers should not hesitate to codeswitch when the need arises—that is, when it is observed that learners no longer interact with the teacher switch to the native language instead to aid students' understanding of the text.

For optimal ease in understanding literature, the learners may appeal to the teacher to at least translate the significant terms or points being discussed. In this way, gray areas in the lesson will be cleared. To courageously admit that one needs help is a step higher than mere curiosity. Teachers would not address a need properly if no one asks for it.

An interactive teaching-learning process does not solely depend on one participant. It always involves the joint effort of both the learner and the teacher. This implies that for the learners to interact in class the teacher must reach out to their level through codeswitching during a class

discussion on literature. Therefore, teachers need to be sensitive to noticing students' actions which either signal understanding or confusion.

Theme 2-Ignite Learners' Interest. With codeswitching, students' interest is heightened as they learn about life lessons in literature. According to the participants, their focus in teaching literature is on value formation. One of them remarked, "Literature is more on life—meaning is the target not form." In continuation, she added, "With interest also comes the participation of students because they are more eager to listen unlike teaching literature with pure English and with the realization comes appreciation." As verbalized:

"Students listen. They speak. They speak connected to the listen not speaking to their classmates anymore because they now understand." He supplemented, "They are more participative. The atmosphere is lighter because you can already see through their participation that they understand unlike when you use pure English...nothing good happens. They sleep, they talk to their seatmates, they do not listen." (Teacher 1: 38-year-old male)

"Learners easily grasp the new lesson by nodding and making hand gestures. They become more interested. They listen. They become participative." He further emphasized, "They are willing to answer; they raise their hand; you can see in their lips that they want to speak; you can see in their eyes that they already want to recite." (Teacher 2: 29-year-old, Male)

"When you teach the learner in the language that they are familiar with, they are more engaged. You can see their interest. They answer questions easily. They express themselves. They listen. Engaging now because they are now participating in class discussions. Everybody wants to recite."

When teachers codeswitch in teaching literature, students become more participative in class. They answer comprehension questions and the class' atmosphere becomes lighter brought about by the participation of the students. During the FGD, the students confirmed that it is true that they become more interested when the literature is discussed in the language that they understand. The classroom that contains passive students become interactive after the teacher had codeswitched to teach the lesson. Many students were interested to answer the questions and share experiences connected to the literary text.

There is a positive acquisition of the lesson when students are interested to participate. Learners manifest physical gestures like nodding and making hand gestures that signify that they understand the lesson. The learners confirmed that there is a more positive acquisition of the lesson which leads to interest when codeswitching is used to explain the literary text. Classroom observation also proves that codeswitching truly makes a class amazingly interactive as students create noise that comes from positive class discussion.

When the lesson is discussed using the language that students are familiar with they become more engaged. They untangled the fear that resides deep within them. They confidently answered the questions and shared their experiences. The students said that what makes them more engaged is their confidence that they can express their answers using the dialect though not always but in some instances they have to. During the observation, it has been seen and observed that the class is alive because everybody wants to recite.

This theme corroborates with Gordon Wells's Interaction Theory. According to Wells, language is collaborative in nature. Thus, collaborative activity in the classroom provides multiple avenues of proximal development because language is concerned with the communication of meaning, it is essentially cooperative in nature. He maintains the peer-reinforced language development is one of the strongest motivators for language development. Moodley and Kamwangamalu (2004) cited that the fact that literary texts are open to multiple interpretation. This means that rarely two readers have identical interpretation of the texts. This gap between individual's interpretations can be bridged through genuine interaction. This study proves that genuine interaction can be achieved through natural and normal conversation and class interaction using the native language.

Teachers desire to achieve an interactive class where learners freely share their ideas. That kind of class does not always exist. It is only achieved in a class where students are allowed to speak and to share using codeswitching. This implies that in order to achieve a class with a brighter atmosphere where students are not afraid to speak, teachers do not have to be afraid to codeswitch when it is necessary for them to bring out full participation in class. This is anchored on Fennema-Bloom (2010) second category on pedagogic intent which is reformulation. It shows that the primary pedagogic function of reformulation is to sustain full participation in the comprehension of difficult concepts or textual information so that the teacher could proceed with instruction.

A healthy teaching-learning environment should not have fear as well. Codeswitching breaks the walls that separate the teacher and the learner. It breaks the old norm that the teacher is the sole provider of information, instead, the teacher becomes a guide by the side—facilitating learning. Nothing beats a class where students are comfortable to speak. This is similar to one of the findings in the study of Sert (2005), he pointed out, “code switching is used by the teacher in order to build solidarity and intimate relations with the students. In this sense, one may speak of the contribution of code-switching for creating a supportive language environment in the classroom.”

In what way has codeswitching affected the learners in the practice of the English language?

Theme 3-Codeswitching hinders fluency in the English language. The three participants claimed that codeswitching affects students' fluency in using the English language. However, they said that, "It's a factor but not the sole factor." They pointed out that the responsibility of learning the English language is not dependent in school. "It's still on the part of the student," the participants added. They reiterated that "codeswitching is just a strategy for them to understand. It's still on the part of the student or the learner. So, the student/learner should take some effort in understanding, practicing, and in using the English language." In addition, one participant claimed that "Codeswitching, in reality, is of big help to the students. It actually leads them to learn the L2 which is English." As verbalized:

"Well, undeniably...they cannot speak the language anymore fluently. They can no longer express their ideas using the English language because they are more comfortable of using the dialect.

Codeswitching is just a strategy for them to understand. It's still on the part of the student or the learner. So, the student/learner should take some effort in understanding, practicing, and in using the English language. Supposedly, codeswitching should be a tool for them to practice the language in a way it could be a help for them also. That's why maybe MTB-MLE was implemented." (T1)

"Their grammar skills did not improve. They're always mixing languages. I cannot blame the school. I cannot blame the teachers why students cannot practice the English language because it's not only the school where students can learn English. My point is, the school is doing its part. It's still on the part of the student." (Teacher 2: 29-year-old Male)

"It affects their proficiency and comprehension. They became complacent not to learn the language anymore because we tolerate. In our part as teachers, our goal in codeswitching is to help them understand the lesson. But for them, 'it's just okay to speak in the dialect or Filipino, there's no need to learn the English language.'

When you are teaching language, that's the time maybe but when you are teaching literature, you are teaching mainly about life. It's more on life. It's more on life (with emphasis). And when it comes to life, there are no rules. You encourage your students to share about life without setting any limitations but if your focus is to focus on language the time is not to codeswitch but since it's literature we codeswitch.

We teach literature not to deviate from the purpose of teaching because literature is about life. But if we teach grammar, we should not codeswitch most of the time. When you teach a language, it should be taught in the language you are teaching for them to learn the language. Codeswitching may be a factor but not the sole factor. It's more on the exposure. It's more on the environment." (Teacher 3: 32-year-old, Female)

Teacher 1 claims that codeswitching negatively affects the fluency of the learners in the English language. They had become more comfortable in speaking the dialect. On the other hand, two of the learners who participated in the FGD, elicited a different answer. One of them said, “Codeswitching made me practice the use of the English language easier. Since my teacher uses codeswitching with Filipino and English, it has helped me understand and pick up messages with straight English, expand my vocabulary, and speak or write fluently and confidently in English.” The other one answered, “Codeswitching has positively affected my practice of the English language because it served as a scaffolding to improve my English speaking skills.” In the classroom observations, it has been observed that few could express their ideas in English fluently, but some could not. Since there is a debatable point, the teacher added that codeswitching is just a strategy. He pointed out that codeswitching should be a tool for the learners to practice the L2. The second point of the teacher coincides with the two learners that codeswitching made their practice of the English language easier and made them more fluent.

Teacher 2 (29-year-old male) observed that the grammar skills of students did not improve; however, he claimed that school is not the only place where students can learn and practice the English language. In the FGD, some of them admittedly say that their grammar skills did not improve but school is not the reading. They said that they are just fond of reading stories and novels in “taglish” like those found in watsapp². Accordingly, it has been also a trend in social media that people post in “taglish”. The students take full responsibility for their inability to improve their grammar skills. They even said that, “more is expected from us as we advance to the next level each year.”

Teacher 3 (32-year-old female) observed that codeswitching affected learners’ fluency in English as well as their comprehension because learners had become complacent in the dialect or in Filipino. However, she supported her answer with a justification that in a literature class, language is not the focus but on meaning and lessons because it talks about life. Learners subjected to FGD said that their inability to be fluent in speaking English is not solely because of codeswitching. They admitted that they had not been exposed to the language at home and they do not give much effort to learn the language because they find it difficult.

This theme hinders fluency in the English language and corroborates four studies that were previously conducted but it negates the theories on bilingualism. The studies of Kim (2006), Gauci and Camilleri Grima (2013), Mokgwathi and Webb (2013), and Moodley and Kamwangamalu (2004) all point out to the negative effect of codeswitching. Kim (2006) in his study identified codeswitching as a sign of incompetence. Gauci and Camilleri Grima (2013) found out in their

² Watsapp is an online literature platform intended for users to read and write original stories. <https://www.watsapp.com/>

study that “a dependence on codeswitching would have counterproductive effects as both teachers and students would regard it as a shortcut, thus decreasing time which would be spent exchanging real communicative acts in the target language.

The theories of bilingualism by Cummins—Common Underlying Theory and Threshold Theory provide justification for why students are not fluent in the English language as codeswitching is used in teaching literature. The main idea behind Common Underlying Theory is that when students acquire a new language, they gain skills and metalinguistic knowledge which can help them in learning new languages.

In the codeswitching process, the students used all that they have acquired in the first language and second language. This is to note that the grade 7 learners who are taught by the participants are the first batch of k-12 Curriculum learners who had undergone the enhanced basic education wherein their kindergarten and first three (3) years of elementary education, instruction, teaching materials and assessment were in the regional or native language of the learners. Then DepEd had formulated a language transition program from Grade 4-6 wherein Filipino and English were gradually introduced until such time that Filipino and English languages became the primary languages of instruction at the secondary level. Therefore, their first year in secondary school is the transition phase where the learners are still acquiring base support for both languages. That is the reason behind their lack of fluency in the English language.

Threshold Theory still by Cummins, makes students in both languages and benefits them by bringing balanced bilinguals. It implies that the more developed the first language, the easier it will be to develop the second language. It has two thresholds. The first threshold provides the minimum age before the learner accumulates the negative effects of bilingualism. The second threshold provides the age-appropriate level of competency with positive cognitive effects. This is another justification for why students are not still fluent in the English language. This gives a strong argument why codeswitching is not the reason for students' lack of fluency in the English language. It only means that the learners, especially the Grade 7 students who are taught by the respondents are still under the transition phase wherein they are still fewer bilinguals because they are in the transition phase.

“Codeswitching may have been a factor but not the sole factor.” This theme, corroboration, and justification imply that codeswitching as a strategy shall be used wisely as Gauci and Camilleri Grima (2013) concluded, “A dependence on codeswitching would have counterproductive effects as both teachers and students would regard it as a shortcut, thus decreasing time would be spent exchanging real communicative acts in the target language.” Furthermore, “Codeswitching is a

double-edged sword which should be used wisely and not abused of.” In the teaching-learning process, codeswitching can be both an aid and a hindrance (Gauci & Camilleri Grima, 2013), so it shall be used only when needed or sparingly.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Using Collaizi’s method, three themes emerged in this study namely: Codeswitching 1) facilitates understanding; 2) ignites learners’ interest; and 3) hinders fluency in the English language. Codeswitching addresses the need for teachers to facilitate understanding in literature classes. This suggests that teachers may use this as a strategy to help students in the content acquisition. Literature classes become more meaningful and significant to the part of learners if they understand the lesson from the literary piece. Codeswitching ignites learners’ interest. This would break the old norm that the teacher is the sole source of knowledge, with codeswitching as a strategy, literature content acquisition would be facilitated. With the facilitation comes the ignition of learners’ interest which brings out the active interaction between the teacher and learner. In this phase of learning, teachers no longer stand as the sole source of knowledge but can already be the guide by the side or the class facilitator. With interest as they say comes, realization, and realization brings out appreciation. However, it was found in this research that codeswitching hinders fluency in the English language. But with the help of the theories on bilingualism by Cummins—Common Underlying Theory and Threshold Theory, it was justified that codeswitching is not the main reason why students are not fluent in the English language—it is more on the age-appropriation level of the competency. It means that the learners, the grade 7, are still less bilingual since they are still in the transition phase of the mother tongue and the acquisition of English and Filipino as the primary languages at the secondary level.

Data (and Software) Availability

All data underlying the results are available as part of the article and no additional sources of data are required.

Competing interests

No competing interests are declared by the author.

Ethical statement

The researcher sought the approval of the Division of Candon City, Department of Education before each qualified participant was interviewed and observed. The Schools Division Superintendent granted the request of the researcher. The researcher conducted a face-to-face interview with the participants. During the interview, the researcher asked the participants to record the interview.

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