

**CODE-SWITCHING: A BOON OR BANE IN BILINGUAL SPEAKERS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper reviews several concepts associating codeswitching and bilingualism. Codeswitching is a consequence of becoming bilingual. It is suggested codeswitching has adverse effects on the speaking ability of language learners. This paper seeks synthesize the positive outcomes of codeswitching to language learning and make it parallel towards arguments on the negative effect of codeswitching to language learning. Language teachers must strike a balance between the two arguments and identify a common ground to help improve students in successful language learning.

**KEYWORDS:** codeswitching, bilingualism, language learning

**INTRODUCTION**

Human language is a concept that is complex, versatile and universal. Proof of these qualities of language have been documented. Language has been described by Nelson (2011) as complex. This was also given light by Kauffman (1995) who stated that complex systems are composed of agents that interact and adapt with one another, as these agents continue to evolve and self-organize without any conscious element of control. Language has also been described as versatile by Pham (2016) because of its beauty. Furthermore, Universality of language was given a historical perspective by Cooreman and Goyvaert (1980). Despite these attempts in providing explanations of language. There are still several issues on language. One of the many issues is on Bilingualism particularly on codeswitching and its effect on the acquisition of another language.

Bilingualism is defined as the use of at least two languages by an individual. (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA], 2004) However the mastery of the second language may depend on the opportunity and exposure of the language. The concern on the mastery of the second language is directly attributed to literacy. Language and Literacy are interconnected (Roth, Paul, & Pierotti, 2006). The danger arises when code switching was perceived as widely negative. In the academe, studies by Arrifin and Husin (2011) uncovered that learners with higher linguistic ability often see code-switching as an obstacle in acquiring the second language. This was also a similar finding in the study of Bista (2010) which found that code-switching not only had a negative impact on the linguistic learning ability of students, but also highlighted lack of ability in the second language as a primary cause of code-switching. Accordingly, the practice has been considered as a sign of linguistic deficiency (Li, 2008). These arguments stirred the writer to gather contrasting arguments supporting the positive effects of code switching.

## OBJECTIVES

This paper seeks to provide an understanding of the following objectives.

1. Gather pertinent data on bilingualism and its association to code switching.
2. Provide an avenue for code switching and its utilization in language acquisition
3. Create a synthesis that is directed on the positive effects of code switching on the acquisition of another language.

## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

With the intention of gathering data for code-switching and its association to bilingualism as well as the utilization of code switching in language acquisition, it is essential to understand what is meant by code-switching, language acquisition and bilingualism.

Code-switching is the ability to “alternate between languages in an unchanged setting, often within the same utterance” (Schendl and Wright, 2011). Code switching is a common linguistic behavior in bilingual and other culturally and linguistically diverse communities (Novak, 2000). Zentella (1990) proposed that bilingual speakers were more likely to code switch when narrating. This same proposition was supported by Pavlenko(2003).

In support to the argument that code switching develops language acquisition. Baker (2001) presented that the concepts of additive bilingualism as an essential concept to the kind of second language desired by particular learners. Laubeova (2000) describes additive bilingualism as follows: “...when students’ first language is valued and recognized, the development of the second language is more effective. Additive bilingualism, whether in any language, is seen as an academic boon.

### **Code Switching and Bilingualism.**

Various researches have dealt with bilingualism in terms of the ‘code-switching paradigm,’ in an attempt to identify when, and under which circumstances, and by what kind of devices speakers choose to communicate. There is an existing general perception of code-switching; either as language proficiency transfer or systematical communicative performance. Sociolinguistic research results have revealed that fluent bilinguals have the capacity to switch from one language to another. Furthermore, a bilingual’s degree of second language proficiency, and the communicative setting are vital for the degree of code switching (Rodriguez-Fornells, Van der Lugt, Rotte, Britti, Henze, & Munte, 2005).

A study conducted by Valdés- Fallis (1978), revealed that the speech of Mexican- American bilingual women tend to use more sequential switches when speaking to males than when speaking to other females. They also tend to associate more noticeably to the Code Switching style of male interlocutors than they do to that of female interlocutors.

Code switching is a change by a speaker of a language or language variety to another. It occurs in various situations, for instance when a speaker asks for queries in one language while the other person answers in a different language (Clyne,1987). It can even happen between sentences or sometimes in the same sentence: (Valdés-Fallis,1976). Therefore, in educational context, code-switching is defined as the practice of switching between a first language and a secondary language. This is regarded as “the fastest, easiest, most effective way of saying something.” (Bautista, 1999)

### **Code Switching utilized in language acquisition.**

The teachers use of code switching is subconscious; which means that the teacher is not aware of the functions and outcomes of the code-switching process. Therefore, there are cases it may be an automatic and unconscious behaviour. Regardless if it is either conscious or not, it serves as a basis that will contribute to the success in language learning environments. These are highlighted in topic switch, affective functions, and repetitive functions by Mattson and Burenhult (1999).

In topic switch cases, the teacher changes his/her language which is suitable to the topic. This occurs commonly in the teaching of grammar. In these cases, the students’ attention is focused to the language input by utilizing code switching. It is suggested that the mother tongue bridges the learning of the second language. Cole (1998) mentions that teachers can exploit students’ previous L1 learning experience to increase their understanding of L2”. The said concept can be attributed to positive transfer (Garcia, 2009).

Cook (2002) presented the application of code switching in classes may cause problems if the students do not share the same native language. It is suggested that the students should share the same native language, if code switching will be applied in instruction. Furthermore, Eldridge (1996) suggested that learners have no guarantee that their audience will share knowledge of their mother tongue. The idea of excluding the first language lies behind the pedagogical approach of the direct method. This method argues that the first language may interfere in the second language learning process (Lasagabaster, 2013). However, in years that have transpired this monolingual approach has been questioned. Furthermore, there is evidence that strongly suggests that the target language exclusivity can result in language being overly simplified (McMillan and Turnbull, 2009) This issue stirred researches to embrace the role of the first language in Second Language Acquisition. For instance, the use of the first language has been linked to issues of language acquisition, identity and the acceptance of the bilingual speaker rather than the monolingual one as the norm. (Liebscher and Dailey O’Canin, 2005). Therefore, if the language classroom is reasonably similar to a bilingual community, bilingualism should be accepted in the form of code-switching, which is a natural phenomenon in multilingual societies (Ariffin and Misyana 2011, Lasagabaster 2013)

This eventually resulted to the studies embracing code switching used in language acquisition. Skiba (1997) presented a contrasting opinion regarding the code switching and its use in the language acquisition. In circumstances where code switching is utilized for reasons of an inability of expression,

it serves for continuity in speech instead of posing as a problem. In this regard, code switching supports communication in social interaction; thus, intended for communicative purposes. Burden (2001) reveals that code-switching is effective in teaching a foreign language. Students become interested in learning a foreign language which becomes comfortable. This same reasoning was also discovered in other Studies. Such as the study of Malik (2014) which revealed that code-switching is a useful teaching strategy particularly for teaching language learners belonging to the rural areas of Pakistan. A study conducted by Greggio and Gil (2007) discovered that code-switching stands in good stead in foreign language teaching. Another study done by study of Abad (2010); shows the positive effect of code switching in teaching Mathematics.

## CONCLUSION

Code-switching is regarded as a widespread phenomenon in language settings. This paper disclosed the connection of code switching and language acquisition. Despite the empirical evidences directed against code switching. There is also a rich exploration of code switching and its positive effect on language acquisition. Studies done by Burden(2002), Malik(2014), Greggio and Gil(2007) has provided a glimmer of hope for those who perceive code switching as a boon in language. Although there is no direct answer regarding the effects of code switching on the language acquisition, perhaps there is a need to explore further research that would finally provide an answer to this ongoing argument. There will be those who would argue against it and there will those who will be in favor of it. This rich diversity of literature further widens the diversity of language and its continuous growth.

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