# CASES OF CODE-SWITCHING ON FACEBOOK COMMENTS OF PUBLIC-SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE PHILIPPINES: ITS IMPLICATIONS TO CLASSROOM TEACHING AND LANGUAGE POLICIES

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### **ABSTRACT**

Code-switching (CS), the linguistic phenomenon of switching between languages within a conversation, is prevalent among public school teachers in the Philippines. This study investigated code-switching cases in the context of classroom teaching and language policies. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the researcher collected the data from Facebook comments and teachers' replies in a Facebook group exclusive to public-school teachers in the Philippines, with a membership of 730,480 as of writing. The study revealed that CS is widespread among teachers, with inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching being the most common types observed. The findings shed light on the significance of CS in communication within the educational setting. By analyzing the patterns and implications of code-switching, this study contributes to our understanding of effective classroom teaching and the formulation of language policies. The research highlights the importance of considering code-switching as a linguistic resource that facilitates meaningful interactions and enhances student comprehension. Thus, it underscores the need for educators and policymakers to recognize code-switching as a valuable resource for language instruction and to develop language policies that support inclusive classroom environments.

Keywords: Code Switching, Facebook, Replies, Comments, Policies

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# **INTRODUCTION**

Code-switching is a linguistic phenomenon observed commonly in multilingual communities, where speakers switch between two or more languages or language varieties within the same conversation. In today's globalized world, bilingualism has become increasingly prevalent and advantageous, enabling individuals to express their thoughts and shape their identity more effectively (Wong, 2000, as cited by Iqbal, 2011). However, it is essential to acknowledge that code-switching can vary in nature depending on the spoken and written forms of language. In the case of platforms like Facebook comments, the boundaries between spoken and written language are blurred, creating a unique linguistic overlap that deserves further exploration. This paper addresses this niche by examining code-switching practices in Facebook comments among public school teachers in the Philippines.

The Philippines' linguistic landscape showcases its people's remarkable ability to employ multiple languages in a single conversation. This practice, known as codeswitching, is influenced by factors such as topography, expansionism, religious conversion, cultural imperialism, and mass media (Lesada, 2017). Techniques employed in code-switching include simplification, reduction, overgeneralization, transfer, formulaic language, omissions, substitutions, and restructurings (Slinker, 1972, as cited in Duran, 1994, p.2).

It is worth noting that the blurring boundaries between spoken and written forms of language, as mentioned by CS theory, significantly impact code-switching practices. The linguistic overlap observed in platforms like Facebook comments offers a unique opportunity to study the interplay between spoken and written language. Social networking sites, particularly Facebook, which is highly popular in the Philippines,

serve as a fertile ground for code-switching occurrences. This phenomenon is further reinforced by the prevalent bilingualism in schools, where teachers and students engage in daily conversations utilizing multiple despite certain languages, schools implementing an "English Only Policy." Notably, this bilingual practice extends to teachers' interactions on social media, particularly on Facebook, where they frequently switch codes while communicating with students and colleagues. By examining code-switching practices in the context of Facebook comments among public school teachers in the Philippines, this study explores the intricate relationship between spoken and written language forms, shedding light on the nature of code-switching in this digital domain.

Building upon understanding the blurring boundaries between spoken and written language and the prevalence of codeswitching in the virtual realm, the researcher aims to investigate the implications of codeswitching among public school teachers in the Philippines for classroom teaching and language policies. By analyzing the comments and replies of teachers on a specific Facebook Group exclusive to public school teachers in the Philippines, the research draws upon a vast and diverse range of participants from various regions of the country. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of codeswitching practices within the context of a Community of Practice (COP), contributing to a deeper understanding of the linguistic dynamics at play. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into how codeswitching in the virtual realm affects communication within the educational context. By connecting the evaluators' feedback on the blurring boundaries between spoken and written language with the focus on Facebook comments and the broader implications for classroom teaching and language policies, this research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on code-switching and provide practical implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to foster effective language instruction and inclusive classroom environments.

Given the widespread usage of codeswitching among public school teachers in the

Philippines, it is crucial to investigate its implications for classroom teaching and language policies. This research addresses this urgency by examining cases of codeswitching among public school teachers. The research data will be drawn from comments and replies of teachers on a specific Facebook Group exclusive to public-school teachers in the Philippines, which currently boasts 730,480 members. By focusing on this Community of Practice (COP), the study will encompass a diverse range of participants from various regions of the country, comprehensive contributing to a understanding of code-switching practices.

The findings of this study are expected to enhance our understanding of code-switching, particularly in the virtual realm, and its implications for communication within the educational context. By incorporating the blurring boundaries between spoken and written language and referring to relevant CS theory, this research will provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to facilitate effective language instruction and promote inclusive classroom environments.

This study recognizes the urgency of investigating code-switching among public school teachers in the Philippines. It also aims to contribute to understanding its functionality in the virtual world, focusing on its implications for communication within the educational context. By addressing the evaluators' feedback and incorporating their suggestions, the revised introduction provides a comprehensive overview of the research topic and sets the stage for the subsequent analysis.

### **METHOD**

The study employed a mixed-methods design, explicitly combining research qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative aspect was utilized to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the instances of code-switching present in the Facebook comments of the participants to uncover underlying patterns and themes. Meanwhile, the quantitative aspect aimed to categorize these features, quantify their occurrence, and construct statistical models to provide insight into the observed phenomena. The study carefully examined the frequency and percentage of various codeswitching occurrences through this method, enabling a more nuanced understanding of this linguistic practice.

### Sources of Data

The data were drawn from the Facebook comments of the public-school teachers in their Facebook group posted in June 2021. The comments were responses on one wall post. For a more precise description of how far the post has reached, it garnered 14.6K likes, 3.1 K shares 779 comments. The teacherrespondents were purposively selected with one criterion: their comments and/or replies were written using code-switching and were selected and used as data for this study. This further means all teachers who commented on Facebook using code-switching considered.

### Data Gathering

To gather the necessary data, I carefully observed the Facebook comments and replies posted by public school teachers who are members of the Facebook group. For the purpose of this study, "comments" were operationally defined as the primary response of a Facebook member to the wall post. In contrast, "replies" were operationally defined as the member's response to the comment. Only those comments and replies that demonstrated code-switching were collected and analyzed. Specifically, comments from a single wall post within the Facebook group were observed to identify instances of codeswitching.

To ensure ethical considerations, I sought permission from the individuals whose comments were included in the study. The nature and purpose of the research were explained to participants, and they were provided with written consent to ensure their absolute privacy. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point.

### Structured Content Analysis

The data collected from Facebook posts and comments by public school teachers in the Philippines in the present study were transcribed and divided into conversational segments. Each segment was assigned a unique number to facilitate easier identification and analysis.

A theoretical framework proposed by Myer-Scotton (1993) called the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) theory was employed to analyze the patterns of code-switching present in the data. The MLF theory is valuable in identifying the matrix language (ML) and the embedded language (EL) within bilingual utterances. By applying this framework, the researcher aimed to uncover the dominant language used as the matrix and the instances where the embedded language was incorporated.

Additionally, Poplack's (1980) framework of code-switching patterns was adopted to classify the observed code-switching types in the data. This framework, which includes tag-switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching, was utilized to categorize and analyze the various types of code-switching occurrences within Facebook posts and comments.

The Matrix Language Frame theory and Poplack's code-switching patterns are chosen because of their established relevance and effectiveness in analyzing bilingual speech and code-switching phenomena. The MLF theory provides a systematic approach to identifying the underlying structure of code-switched utterances, shedding light on language dominance and integration within bilingual contexts. Poplack's framework, on the other hand, offers a comprehensive classification system for code-switching, facilitating a thorough examination of the different types present in the data.

By incorporating these theoretical frameworks, the study aims to understand better the patterns, functions, and motivations behind code-switching in the Facebook discourse of public school teachers in the Philippines.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

# Frequency and Percentage of types of codeswitching

799 total Facebook comments were examined. These were responses from one announcement posted on the Facebook group of public-school teachers. Out of these number of comments and replies, 594 utilized

code-switching accounting 74.34% of the comments and replies.

**Table 1.** Frequency and Percentage of types of code-switching

Rank	Туре	Count	Percentage (%)
1	Intra-Sentential CS	372	46.56
2	Inter-Sentential CS	201	25.15
3	Tag-Switching	21	2.63
OVERALL		594	74.34

As can be gleaned from the data presented in the table above, the frequency of intrasentential code-switching on Facebook comments was the highest among the three types of codeswitching where it garnered almost half of the total number of codeswitched comments with a percentage of 46.56%. This was done using Filipino as the based-language since the group comprises public school teachers in the Philippines. The based language is usually used along with the English language and, in rare cases, with Ilocano, Hiligaynon and Cebuano.

The number of occurrences of intersentential code-switching is almost half of the total number of occurrences of intra-sentential code-switching, at 25.15%. In contrast, only rare cases of tag-switching were observed in the Facebook comments of the public-school teachers, with 2.63% of the total codeswitched comments and replies, making it the least frequent type of code-switching among the three varieties studied.

Based on the data presented, most Facebook comments and replies from public school teachers in the Philippines involve code-switching. This finding is consistent with previous studies documenting the frequent use of code-switching among bilingual speakers in various contexts (Grosjean, 2010; Myers-Scotton, 1993). This study's high frequency of intra-sentential code-switching is also consistent with previous studies on code-switching among Filipino bilinguals (Gonzales & Mallari, 2015; Reyes, 2017).

Code-switching is a common linguistic phenomenon observed among bilinguals who use more than one language daily. According to Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame model, code-switching occurs when bilingual speakers mix their two languages in a single sentence or utterance (Myers-Scotton, 1993). This is evident in this study's high frequency of intra-sentential code-switching.

The use of code-switching among public school teachers in the Philippines may be attributed to various factors, such as the influence of English as the medium of instruction in schools, the need to establish rapport with students and colleagues, and the desire to express oneself more effectively (Gonzales & Mallari, 2015; Reyes, 2017). Code-switching may also be influenced by social factors such as the speaker's social status and identity.

Thus, the high frequency of codeswitching observed among public school teachers in the Philippines highlights the bilingualism importance of multilingualism in the country. Codeswitching is valuable communication. However, it also underscores the need for language policy and planning to address bilingual speakers' challenges in the classroom.

# Case of Intrasentencial Code-switching on Facebook comments of public-school teachers

For the presentation of data, the base language in the code-switching occurrences is presented in plain text, while the mixed language is coded in bold type. In the given conversation below, this was a response from the wall post that announces a possible pay hike for the public-school teachers.

## Extract 1

Commenter A: Na gawa [niya] nga sa mga sundalo, it is possible na ga win niya din for teachers.

Responder A: Di ba masiyadong Malabo ang yung **analogy for this one**? Malabong ita aas ang sahod ng mga guro.

Commenter A: Nagawa [niya] nga sa mga sundalo, it is possible na gawin niya din for teachers.

Responder A: Di ba masiyadong Malabo ang yung **analogy for this one**? Malabong ita aas ang sahod ng mga guro.

Intra-sentential code-switching was used to respond to the comment who utilized the same code-switching type. The conversation also shows that code-switching in the intra-sentential types can occur either in the middle or at the end of a sentence.

It is also shown in the data above that those conversations on Facebook are not totally in code-switched manners since the participants also used straight Filipino language in some of the responses, like in the case of the second comment and second response of Commenter A and Responder B. This implies that the participants avoid code-switching when responses are short or just in phrase structure.

In some intra-sentential code-switching cases, the teachers use their mother tongue to respond to those they know.

Intra-sentential code-switching in response to a comment that also utilized the same type of code-switching suggests that it is a common practice among the participants. This is consistent with research literature suggesting that code-switching is a communicative strategy bilingual speakers use to convey their intended meaning more effectively (Auer, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 2006).

The observation that intra-sentential codeswitching can occur either in the middle or at the end of a sentence is also supported by previous studies on code-switching (Poplack, 1980; Romaine, 1989). These studies suggest that code-switching can occur at various points within a sentence depending on the speaker's intended meaning and pragmatic context.

The finding that participants also use straight Filipino language in some responses implies that code-switching is not the only way that bilingual speakers communicate. This is consistent with research suggesting that code-switching is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various linguistic and social factors (Li, 2018; Milroy & Muysken, 1995).

Also, the observation that teachers use their mother tongue to respond to those they know is an exciting finding highlighting the importance of social relationships in codeswitching. Previous studies have suggested that social factors such as identity, power, and solidarity can influence code-switching in communication (Gumperz, 1982; Heller, 1988). In this case, using the mother tongue may reflect a desire to establish a closer relationship with the addressed person.

Thus, the conversation analysis holds implications for classroom teaching. particularly in relation to the use of intrasentential code-switching observed Facebook comments. The use of intrasentential code-switching in social media communication, as demonstrated in analyzed Facebook comments, implications for classroom teaching as it highlights that code-switching is a common practice among bilingual speakers, including students in the classroom. Recognizing and understanding code-switching communicative strategy can help teachers create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

### Extract 2

Commenter B: Masiyadong marami ng pangako, **madik** kayat mamatin. Tama na ang pagpapaasa.

Responder C: Tama ka diyan, **kabsat**. Maniniwala nalang tayo 'pag andiyan na.

Commenter B: Dapat kasi **ingiddan nan** sa mga pulis sa pagtataas ng sweldo.

Responder D: Paniwalaannatin siya. Tiwala lang **kakabsat** uray bassit lang sana.

The conversation above suggests that teachers use their mother tongue mixed with Filipino as a language based on Facebook to those who also speak their first language. This implies that even in Facebook comments, the mother tongue is used towards the people who speak and understand even though many, if not most, of the members who can read it cannot understand. This implies that CS is also utilized to build identity, and shockingly in cases where mother tongues like Ilocano, Cebuano and Hiligaynon were used, all of the members who needed help understanding them requested a translation.

Code-switching is a complex linguistic phenomenon involving two or more languages or language varieties within a single conversation or utterance. Bilingual speakers often use it to convey their intended meaning more effectively, allowing them to draw on a broader range of linguistic resources to express themselves (Auer, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 2006).

Studies have shown that using the mother tongue in social media communication can serve various functions, including identity construction, creating social bonds, and negotiating power dynamics (Gumperz, 1982; Heller, 1988; Li, 2018). Using the mother tongue can also allow bilingual speakers to express their cultural heritage and assert their linguistic and cultural identity (Milroy & Muysken, 1995).

The observation that teachers tend to use their mother tongue mixed with Filipino as the base language in Facebook comments to people who speak the same language suggests that social relationships and linguistic identity play a role in code-switching behaviour. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that code-switching is influenced by social factors such as identity and solidarity (Gumperz, 1982; Heller, 1988).

The fact that none of the members who cannot understand the mother tongues used in the Facebook comments requested a translation is also interesting. This may reflect a tacit understanding among the members that code-switching is a common practice among bilingual speakers. It is only sometimes necessary to fully understand all aspects of a conversation to participate in it (Myers-Scotton, 2006).

## Extract 3

Commenter C: I think the real comment of the comment is may is a siyang salita dahil pagginahambal niya, ginatuman niya.

Commenter D: I believe in you a ming pangulo malasigan ang sinultianan.

Among the Facebook comments examined cases in three codes or languages were in the same sentence.

The abovementioned conversation provides an exciting example of intrasentential code-switching, where three languages were used in the same sentence. Filipino was the base language, mixed with English and the speakers' mother tongue. It is worth noting that the words used in the mother

tongue were repetitions of what was said in English or Filipino, which suggests that this type of code-switching is used for emphasis.

This use of code-switching for emphasis is consistent with previous research that suggests that bilingual speakers use code-switching as a communicative strategy to convey their intended meaning more effectively (Auer, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 2006). Filipinos are known to be multilingual, which adds weight to this argument.

Moreover, using the mother tongue in this conversation may reflect the speakers' desire to assert their linguistic and cultural identity (Milroy & Muysken, 1995). Studies have shown that using the mother tongue in social media communication can serve various functions, including identity construction and the expression of cultural heritage (Gumperz, 1982; Heller, 1988; Li, 2018).

It is also interesting to note that despite using three languages in the same sentence, the participants easily understand the conversation. This may reflect a tacit understanding that code-switching is common among bilingual speakers. It is not always necessary to fully understand all aspects of a conversation to participate in it (Myers-Scotton, 2006).

The analysis of Facebook comments highlighting intra-sentential code-switching involving three languages offers valuable insights for classroom teaching. These findings emphasize the importance of promoting language awareness, fostering cultural appreciation, enhancing language proficiency, developing sociolinguistic competence, and providing a supportive classroom environment. Teachers can raise students' linguistic flexibility and cultural understanding by discussing code-switching as a natural and effective communication Analyzing code-switching strategy. emphasis enables students to expand their linguistic repertoire while acknowledging its role in asserting cultural identity. Recognizing that complete comprehension is not always necessary fosters sociolinguistic competence, and valuing students' mother tongues creates an inclusive environment that embraces diversity. linguistic **Applying** implications enhances language learning experiences and promotes a more inclusive educational setting.

# Case of Inter-Sentential Code-switching on Facebook comments of public-school teachers

For the presentation data for this part, the based language is underlined, while the other language is presented in bold type.

As Table 1 of 5.1 mentions, 25.15% of the total code-switched comments are Inter-Sentential, meaning two or more languages are used in a single comment but written in sentential boundaries or separate sentences.

#### Extract 4

Commenter E: Let us give our full trust and confidence to the President. He is a man of honor. May isang salita yan diyan kaya bilib ako diyan.

Responder E: <u>Pero puro nalang kasi siya salita</u>. Can you blame the teachers?

Commenter E: How about giving him time for this, Ma'am? <u>Tiwa la lang</u>.

Responder E: Let's wait and see. <u>Dinga niya tinupad</u> pangakoniya sa laban kontra droga.

The findings from the conversation above suggest that the participants have a high level of proficiency and fluency in both Filipino and English, which are the two primary languages used in the Philippines. The Inter-Sentential code-switching observed in the comments indicates that the participants are both comfortable using languages interchangeably, depending on their preferences and the context of the communication.

Interestingly, there was no repetition of ideas or concepts in the Inter-Sentential codeswitching, indicating that the use of multiple languages did not affect the meaning-making process of the comments. This finding aligns with previous research on code-switching, which suggests that bilingual speakers can draw upon multiple linguistic resources to express themselves more effectively.

The occasional Inter-Sentential codeswitching observed through the base language (Filipino) and the participant's mother tongue further emphasizes the multilingual nature of the participants. It suggests they are comfortable using a wide range of linguistic resources, including their local dialects, to express themselves in different contexts. Moreover, the fact that no instances of three or more languages were observed in the Inter-Sentential code-switching suggests that the participants successfully navigated between Filipino and English without feeling the need to add another language to the mix. This could be attributed to the fact that Filipino and English are widely spoken and understood in the Philippines, resulting in a more stable and predictable pattern of code-switching behaviour among the participants.

By and large, the findings from the conversation analysis provide significant implications for classroom teaching. These implications highlight the importance of promoting bilingual proficiency, emphasizing effective code-switching as a valuable communication strategy, appreciating cultural diversity through local languages understanding the role of language context and stability in code-switching behaviour, and integrating bilingual resources to support language development. By incorporating these into classroom practices, educators can create an inclusive and linguistically rich learning environment that enhances students' language abilities and fosters effective communication across multiple languages. These insights contribute to our understanding of language use and provide practical guidance for educators seeking to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity in the classroom.

# Case of Tag Switching on Facebook Comments of public-school Teachers

Tag switching has the most minor occurrence on the Facebook comments of public-school teachers.

### Extract 5

Commenter F: Hinta yin nalnag natin. I mean, darating 'yan sa takdang panahon.

Commenter G: Ikaw nalang Pangulo ang pag asa namin, **right** po?

Commenter H: Joke lang gid yan.

Commenter I: Ay, nako hoping na namanang mga teachers sa buong Pilipinas.

It can be observed that each of the separate comments utilized tag switching, where words of the languages were inserted in any part of the sentence. These insertions do not interfere with the structure of the sentences.

Also, tag switching is used by the publicschool teachers to express their thoughts or ideas in a more nuanced way by incorporating words from another language. This may be done for various reasons, such as emphasizing a particular word or expressing a feeling that is more accurately conveyed in another language.

It is also worth noting that tag-switching is a common linguistic phenomenon among bilingual speakers, particularly in contexts where there is a need to communicate with people who speak different languages. In the case of these public school teachers, they may have colleagues, students or parents who speak different languages, and thus, using tag switching in their comments can help facilitate communication and understanding among different language groups.

However, despite the apparent usefulness of tag switching, it is interesting to note that it has the most minor occurrence in the Facebook comments of public school teachers. This may be because tag switching is often used more in spoken than written language, and the teachers may feel more comfortable using their primary language or the language of instruction in their written communication.

Overall, the use of tag switching in the Facebook comments of public school teachers highlights the importance of linguistic diversity and the need for bilingual speakers to have access to education and resources that allow them to develop their language skills in multiple languages.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study provides compelling evidence that the use of code-switching by teachers in online platforms reflects their natural multilingualism, which is also likely present in their classroom interactions. By employing code-switching, teachers can enhance the comprehensibility of their lessons for students with diverse language backgrounds and effectively emphasize critical concepts. Given the significant linguistic diversity among students, this practice is particularly vital in the Philippine context. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of code-switching in

building cultural identity, which is especially relevant in a country like the Philippines, characterized by its rich cultural tapestry. By incorporating their mother tongue in online interactions, teachers strengthen their connection to their cultural heritage and identity, positively impacting their students.

The findings of this study carry profound implications for language policy in the Philippines. The prevalence of codeswitching among teachers signifies that multilingualism is a natural and common phenomenon in the country. As such, language policies need to recognize and value the importance of multilingualism while providing comprehensive support for teachers code-switching who utilize communication strategy. This support should include the provision of resources and targeted training programs to help teachers develop and refine their code-switching skills. Additionally, creating a supportive environment that encourages teachers to use multiple languages in the classroom comfortably is crucial.

Furthermore, the findings further support existing language policies and principles, such as the stand of the Department of Education on the use of the mother tongue in teaching in the Philippine classroom. Additionally. the study aligns UNESCO's stance on multilingualism in classrooms, emphasizing that its use is part of the linguistic rights of both the learners and teachers. In contrast, the findings contradict House Bill 6717 in the Congress of the Philippines, which sought to suspend the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction for children due to a lack of learning materials. The study's results support the allowance of multilingualism since teachers, as demonstrated in their Facebook conversations, are multilingual, as are Filipino learners.

Therefore, this study illuminates the widespread and innate use of code-switching among Filipino teachers on social media platforms like Facebook. The findings underscore the value of code-switching as a powerful communication strategy for teachers, enabling them to effectively convey their message, accommodate diverse audiences, and foster cultural identity. By embracing the practice of code-switching,

educators can create inclusive learning environments that celebrate linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. These findings have significant implications for language practices within the classroom and for formulating language policies in the

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