

CODE-SWITCHING IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN A FILIPINO CLASSROOM

by:

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English became the medium of instruction in the Philippines from the time the was under United States' sovereignty between 1898 and 1946. Thompson (2003) asserted that it was born out of convenience because of widespread illiteracy of Filipino people at that era. Illiteracy had long since supplanted indigenous literacy. As a result, English is the primary language of instruction in formal education to this day. In fact, when the Philippines gained national independence, the English language was in the process of stability. As a result, Philippine independence ushered in a completely new language landscape.

Americans introduced the new education system in which the medium of their instruction in teaching their vernacular, the English. From then on, it was used in the country in every aspect of its processes. May it be on laws, economic, or it even became the medium of instruction to major subjects that are being taught in formal education or classes. However, although the country has been colonized by America for about 48 years, it is undeniably true that there are still lots of Filipinos who can't either speak English but can understand the language or cannot understand English at all unless translated to the vernacular which is Filipino. Filipinos try to converse in the target language and incorporate Filipino words or phrases in our day-to-day living. This is the process of so-called code switching.

Gross (2006) defines code-switching as a complicated, skillful language approach employed by bilingual speakers to express essential social meanings beyond the referential content of an utterance.

Moreover, a colloquial term for code-switching between Filipino and English is popularly known as Taglish. This is a hybrid of Tagalog and English used in spoken languages by Filipinos. If we look closely to its origin, that the initial name of the indigenous official language was Tagalog which was later renamed to Filipino- the formal term to describe the language of Filipino people.

However, Bautista (2004) asserted that Tagalog and Filipino are treated as the same, thus the coining of Taglish as the codeswitching variety of Filipino and English. The term most often is also used as a generic term for switching between any Philippine language variant (not only Tagalog) and English. He further claimed that, because code-switching is the lingua franca of metropolitan areas throughout the Philippines, Taglish is an improper term to employ when referring to code-switching between Filipino language variations and English because Tagalog is only one of the 110 languages spoken in the country.

Furthermore, several studies shows that there is a declining manner of the level of English proficiency among students in the country which should be remediated and find possible solution to address the issue and find out how to tackle the problems and come with better teaching techniques and to help student better learn and understand their second language. As a result, teachers, consequently, have been employing code switching in their classroom as a means of providing students with the opportunities to communicate and enhancing students' understanding in relation to subject matter being thought. Furthermore, code switching helps to facilitate the flow of classroom discussion since the teachers are more focused on the subject matter to taught and not being conscious of the language being spoken.

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