English Language Learning: Code-switching, Strategies, and Exposure

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Abstract— This study aimed to find out the students' English language learning with regard to their perception on the use of code switching as a medium of instruction, learning strategies, and language exposure. The first set of data were gathered using a questionnaire on the use of code-switching as a medium of instruction from the first set of respondents composed of fifty (50) Junior AB-English Language (AB-EL) students. Results showed that majority of the respondents preferred the use of code-switching in different classroom situations and interactions, and they agreed on its appropriateness especially in English classes. Although they agreed on the affirmative effects of code-switching in the teaching-learning process, results showed no significant relationship between the respondents' perception on the use of code-switching as a medium of instruction and their academic performance. The second set of data were gathered from fifty-five (55) AB-EL students selected at random from across year levels. They were given a language exposure questionnaire adopted from Magno et al. (2009), and a survey questionnaire on language learning strategies adopted from Oxford (1990). Results showed that the respondents have the most (92%) language exposure when they are inside the classroom or in the school premises. Moreover, results also revealed that majority (76%) of the respondents have "high" language exposure. Findings further revealed that most of the students frequently applied the Metacognitive strategies while the least frequently applied strategies were the Compensation strategies. Using the Spearman's Rho correlation analysis, the results find a significant relationship between language exposure and Memory strategies (p-value of .046) and Metacognitive strategies (p-value of .045). Results simply imply that if students have high language exposure and exhibit a very good level of Memory and Metacognitive language learning strategies, they can better enhance their language learning process. Research also found out that it is also essential that the learners select strategies in accordance with the task at hand. This study recommends that teachers provide with strategy instruction for the students to be more aware on how they go about with their learning strategies that they tend to employ in learning the target language.

Keywords— Language learning, code-switching, academic performance, medium of instruction, learning strategies, language exposure.

I. INTRODUCTION

Code-switching is a phenomenon that exists in bilingual societies where people have the opportunity to use two or more languages to commnunicate (Janshidi and Bavehebraim, 2013). Being able to speak more than one language, bilinguals can code switch and use their languages as resources to find better ways to convey meaning. Code-switching can also be defined as: "the alternations of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent". It involves the use of multiple languages, where speakers of additional languages incorporate alternate linguistic elements into their source language (Chan et al, 2009). As such, two or more languages may be spoken alternately during a conversation. In other words, code-switching is the intra-sentential switching of two different languages in a spoken utterance. Language is a very important tool in the development of any human being and also a crucial one in learning and teaching (Zabrodskaja, 2007). Throughout history, many scholars have reflected on the importance of language. When a student lacks the proficiency in the language of information, it gives a harmful effect on the ability to deal with content-area texts, lectures, and word problems. In many instances, when learners fail to communicate through the medium of instruction, code-switching has demonstrated to be an effective teaching and learning technique in schools that used second language as medium of instruction. This implies that well developed language of instruction skills from a learner is equally important in the success of his or her academic performance as his or her understanding in the subjects' field. Manganye

(2007) states that the student's ability to participate in content subjects such as mathematics and science is dependent of their language ability in the four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Additionally, code-switching is considered to be an extremely important aspect in both cognitive development and social communication (Mishra an Yadav, 2013). Classroom code-switching is a natural and expected practice of students and teachers who share a common first language (Aljoundi, 2013). In other words, the language that comes between and during when the code-switching is performed is the native language of the students, and the foreign language that students are expected to gain competence in. Code-switching works hand in hand with multi-competence and has general effect for teaching practice. An implication is that if an atmosphere is created in which the first language competence of individual is recognized and valued, then this might potentially have an important affective and motivational impact on their approach to learning a second language or learning in a second language. When learning a language, it is important not only to learn isolated areas of a second language (L2) but to be able to use those areas simultaneously when talking, reading, or listening in one's second language (Johansson, 2013). For that reason, code-switching as a medium of instruction helps bridge the gaps between understanding and clarification inside the learning environment. In relation to this, Probyn (2010) noticed that the most notable strategy that teachers used was code-switching to achieve a number of communicative ends. This is because code-switching helps to facilitate the flow of classroom instruction since the teachers do not have to spend so much

time trying to explain to the learners or searching for the simplest words to help the students' understanding become clearer. When code-switching imposes greatly on the conduciveness of learning, it affects the academic performance of the learners. This study understood the conduciveness of the use of code-switching as a medium of instruction especially when it comes to learning the English language. The researchers' aim was to study whether code-switching can relate to one's academic performance.

This study also dealt with language exposure and language learning strategies. It should be emphasized that exposure can directly improve one's learning a target language so that language proficiency may be a result of social interaction with speakers of the target language (Perogoy, and Boyle, 2005). Moreover, there will be no learning that takes place if there will be no exposure at all. The study conducted by Riyaz et al. (2017) revealed that there is a strong connection between exposure and proficiency. When a lerarner is exposed to target language in his or her home environment, his/her learning would be enhanced. Language learning strategies (LSS) are also one way of acquiring and developing the language. Various studies have also been conducted in relation to LLS. Magogwe and Oliver (2007) revealed in their study that there is a dynamic relationship between use of LLS and proficiency. The English language learning matters on the language learning strategies, exposure and code-switching as a medium of instruction. For this reason, the researchers desired to find out the English language learning with regard to learning strategies, exposure and code-switching as a medium of instruction among the respondents who are studying the English language.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the correlation between the learners' perception on the use of code-switching as a medium of instruction and their academic performance. Moreover it also investigated their English language learning with regard to learning strategies and exposure to the English language. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- Determine the learner's preference on the use of code-switching as a medium of instruction;
- Identify the academic performance of the learners;
- Determine the relationship between the learners' perception on the use of code-switching as a medium of instruction and their academic performance;
- Determine the language exposure of the learners as well as their language learning strategies; and
- Determine the relationship between the learners' language exposure and their language learning strategies.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the first set of respondents composed of fifty (50) Junior AB-EL students, the researchers used a questionnaire from Johansson's (2013) study on "Code-Switching in the English Classroom". For the respondents' academic performance, their GPA (Grade Point Average) during the previous semester was taken from the Office of the Registrar. For the second set of respondents composed of 55 AB-EL students selected at random across all year levels, the researchers provided questionnaires for language exposure adopted from Magno et al. (2009) and language learning strategies adopted from Oxford (1990). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The Spearman's Rho correlation was employed for the correlation analyses.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To determine the students' preferred use by the instructors on discussing the lessons, the respondents were made to choose from the following: English, vernacular, and a combination of both. None of them preferred their instructors to use the vernacular during discussions. This shows that the students preferred code-switching mostly during discussions in class. Furthermore, to determine the preferred language by the students in an English class as what would the instructor want, they were made to choose from the following: Make me speak more in vernacular; Make me speak more in English; and Allow me to code-switch. None of the population preferred to speak straight in vernacular. This implies that majority preferred the allowance of code-switching to be used in English classes. However, results indicated that there is no significant relationship between the learners' perception on the use of code-switching as a medium of instruction and their academic performance. This implies that code-switching is a negligible factor in improving or developing one's academic performance. With regard to the respondents' language exposure, results showed that they are most exposed when they are inside the classroom or in the school premises. This is understandable since basically the medium of instruction in college subjects is English. The "School" domain is followed by "Media" since nowadays, students prefer listening and reading in English when it comes to mass media. Third in rank is the "Friends" domain followed closely by the "Home" domain. This implies that the first language of the respondents is used most especially when they talk with their friends and family friends. Thus, school provided language exposures from their English teachers and their class activities as well as when they exposed themselves in media. Moreover, out of fifty-five (55) respondents, 76% have "high language exposure" and 24% of them have "moderate language exposure". This implies that students are very much exposed to the target language which is English. On the respondents' language learning strategies, results showed that Metacognitive strategies rank first as the preferred strategy used by AB-EL students. This signifies that learners control their own cognition, that is, to coordinate their learning process by planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Affective strategies serve as the second most used of learning strategies. This signifies that learners regulate their motivations, attitudes, and emotions as they try to learn their target language. Social strategies follow closely as the third quiet frequently used language learning strategies. This implies that learners find time to facilitate themselves when learning new words through interaction with others. Cognitive strategies serve as the fourth preferred language learning strategies. This emphasizes that learners tend to summarize or reason out deductively as well as comprehend and produce new terms or

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vocabulary by different means. Memory strategies come as fifth. Results imply that the respondents are not so particular in storing knowledge and retrieving new information as well as guessing intelligently while learning a language. Compensation strategies serve as the least frequently used strategies. This implies that respondents are not so keen in using the language gaps in linguistic knowledge. Results are supported by Gerami and Baighlou's study (2011) which revealed that Metacognitive strategies ranked first and that the successful students showed a high level use of this strategy than the unsuccessful students. Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) also revealed in their study that students in the intermediate level were found to use learning strategies more frequently than those in the beginner and advanced levels and that these students preferred to use Metacognigtive strategies. Using the Spearman's Rho correlation analyses, there is a significant relationship between language exposure with Memory strategies (p-value .046) and Metacognitive strategies (p-.045). With the results revealed in the study, it signifies that when students have high exposure to the target language which in English, they employ Memory and Metacognitive strategies. Demirel (2012) found that as the level of language learning strategy use increased, students achievement increased as well. Another study by Sharifi and Salahshour (2012) revealed that proficient learners showed significantly more strategy use, as well as more use of Metacognitive and Social strategies.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study discovered that learners often agreed to the idea of the use of code-switching in classroom interactions and communications as well as the affirmative perception of the learners on the idea of the use of code-switching as a medium of instruction. This study also suggests that the learners' perception on the use of code-switching does not affect their academic performance and it does not have negative effects on their learning and the conduciveness of the learning environment. For the students, this study will help them discern well the use of code-switching around the university when communicating in a daily basis. This study recommends for the students to decipher the use of code-switching to minimize language barrier especially when used as a medium of instruction. For the teachers, this study will trouble-shoot the frowned upon usage of code-switching and its notion of heaving negative effects on language learning of the students. For the society, this study accommodates the notion that code-switching is a much accepted way of communication to bridge the gap of language barrier. Code-switching as a medium of instruction holds no negative effects on language learning, thus be accepted in communication. Pertaining to the learners' language exposure and language learning strategies, it can be concluded that if the students are exposed to the language, the more they have become familiar with it as they acquire and learn its nuances and culture. In that sense, students will become competent and effective communicative speakers. On the other hand, language learning strategy instruction deserves attention as well because teachers are the ones who provide input to the students inside the classroom. Since there is a significant relationship between language exposure and

language learning strategies (Memory and Metacognitive), students are encouraged to expose themselves more in an English speaking community or setting for them to develop and employ more effective language learning strategies. It is also recommended that researchers conduct a study on the relationship between exposure and language learning strategies in relation to language proficiency for a more profound study on English language learning.

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