

The Role of Code-Switching in the Oral Participation of Grade 12 Academic Students at Marigondon National High School

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Abstract. This study examines the influence of code-switching on the oral participation of Grade 12 academic students in English class discussions at Marigondon National High School during the second semester of School Year 2025–2026. It aims to identify the factors that lead students to engage in code-switching, determine how frequently it occurs, and evaluate its effects on students' confidence and participation levels. The study utilizes a quantitative-descriptive research design, gathering data through survey questionnaires administered to selected Grade 12 academic students. The findings reveal that students commonly use code-switching due to limited English vocabulary, fear of making grammatical errors, and the need to express ideas more clearly. Results further indicate that code-switching occurs regularly during discussions and serves as a supportive communication strategy that enhances students' comprehension and engagement during classroom interactions. Moreover, the study shows that code-switching positively influences students' confidence by reducing anxiety, creating a more inclusive learning environment, and encouraging students to participate more actively in oral discussions. Anchored on Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Long's Interaction Hypothesis, the findings suggest that code-switching helps facilitate meaningful interaction, lowers emotional barriers in language learning, and supports gradual English language development through guided participation. The study also emphasizes the role of teachers in managing code-switching appropriately to ensure that it functions as a bridge toward language acquisition rather than as a substitute for English communication. The study concludes that code-switching can be an effective instructional tool in promoting active oral participation among learners in English classrooms and may serve as a basis for developing balanced classroom strategies that support both language learning and student confidence.

Introduction

In multilingual classrooms, students often rely on more than one language to express their thoughts and ideas. One common linguistic practice is code-switching, which refers to the alternation between two or more languages within a conversation. In the Philippine educational context, where English is used as the primary medium of instruction alongside Filipino and local dialects, code-switching naturally occurs during classroom interactions. This is particularly evident in English class discussions, where students may shift between languages to better communicate their ideas, clarify meaning, or cope with language limitations.

Despite the emphasis on English proficiency, many senior high school students still experience difficulty in participating actively in English discussions. Factors such as limited vocabulary, fear of making grammatical errors, and lack of confidence often hinder their willingness to speak. As a result, students may resort to code-switching as a strategy to sustain communication and remain engaged in classroom discourse. While some educators view this practice as a barrier to language development, others consider it a useful tool that can support learning and participation.

The rationale of this study is grounded in the need to better understand how code-switching functions within the classroom and how it affects students' oral participation. By examining this practice, the study aims to provide insights into whether code-switching facilitates or hinders students' engagement in English discussions.

Specifically, this research seeks to identify the factors that influence Grade 12 academic students to engage in code-switching, determine how frequently they use it during English class discussions, and assess its effect on their confidence and level of participation. Through this investigation, the study aims to contribute to more effective teaching strategies that support both language development and active classroom participation.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative-descriptive research design to examine the influence of code-switching on the oral participation of Grade 12 academic students in English class discussions at Marigondon National High School during the second semester of School Year 2025–2026. This design was appropriate as it allowed the researchers to systematically describe patterns of code-switching and analyze its relationship with students' confidence and participation levels. The participants of the study consisted of selected Grade 12 academic students enrolled in English classes. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that respondents were actively engaged in classroom discussions and had experience using code-switching.

Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire developed based on the research questions. The instrument was divided into three parts: (1) factors influencing students to engage in code-switching, such as vocabulary limitations, anxiety, and clarity of expression; (2) frequency of code-switching during English class discussions; and (3) the perceived effects of code-switching on students' confidence and level of oral participation. The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale to measure students' responses.

To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire was reviewed by subject experts and pilot-tested before administration. Data collection was conducted within the school premises with proper consent from participants. The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. These statistical tools were used to determine the common factors influencing code-switching, how often it occurs, and its overall effect on students' confidence and participation. The results were then interpreted in alignment with the study's research questions.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study based on the data gathered from Grade 12 academic students regarding their use of code-switching during English class discussions. The results are organized according to the research questions.

Factors	Mean	Interpretation
Limited English vocabulary	4.32	Strongly Agree
Fear of making grammatical errors	4.18	Agree
Difficulty expressing ideas clearly	4.25	Strongly Agree
Habit of using mixed languages	3.97	Agree
Need for better understanding	4.40	Strongly Agree

Computing the mean (Average) - Table 1. Factors Influencing Students to Engage in Code Switching

Formula

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

\bar{X} = Mean

$\sum X$ = Sum of all responses

N = Number of respondents

Scale Range	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Strongly Agree
3.31 - 4.20	Agree

2.61 - 3.40	Neutral
1.81 - 2.60	Disagree
1.00 - 1.80	Strongly Disagree

Interpretation of Mean (Likert Scale) - Table 2. Interpretation of Mean (Likert Scale)

The data reveal that the primary factors influencing students to engage in code-switching are the “need for better understanding” (M=4.40), “limited English vocabulary” (M=4.32), and “difficulty in expressing ideas clearly” (M=4.25). These findings indicate that students rely on code-switching as a practical strategy to overcome language barriers and maintain effective communication during discussions.

Frequency Category	Fequency (f)	Percentage	Interpretation
Always	11	28%	Very Frequent
Often	17	42%	Frequent
Sometimes	8	20%	Moderate
Rarely	3	7%	Less Frequent
Never	1	3%	Not Practiced
Total	40	100%	

Table 3. Frequency of Code-Switching During English Discussions

Formula
 Computing Percentage

$$Percentage = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

f = Frequency (number of students)
 N = Total respondents

Percentage Range	Interpretation
41% - 100%	Frequent
21% - 40%	Moderate
1% - 20%	Less Frequent

Table 4. Percentage Range and Interpretation

The findings show that a majority of students (70%) reported that they “always” or “often” use code-switching during English class discussions. This suggests that code-switching is a common and regular practice among Grade 12 academic students in the classroom setting.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Increase confidence in speaking	4.36	Strongly Agree
Reduces anxiety during discussion	4.28	Strongly Agree
Encourage active Participation	4.33	Strongly Agree
Helps express ideas more effectively	4.41	Strongly Agree
Improves interaction with classmates	4.22	Agree

Table 5. Effect of Code-Switching on Students' Confidence and Participation

Formula

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

\bar{X} = Mean
 $\sum X$ = Sum of all responses
 N = Number of respondents

The results indicate that code-switching has a positive effect on students' confidence and participation. The highest mean score was observed in “helps express ideas more effectively” (M=4.41), followed by “increased confidence in speaking” (M=4.36) and “Encourage active participation” (M=4.33). These findings suggest that code-switching serves as a supportive tool that lowers communication barriers and promotes more active engagement in English discussions.

Formula: Overall mean

$$\underline{X}_{overall} = \frac{\sum X}{k}$$

$\underline{X}_{overall}$ = Overall mean

$\sum X$ = Sum of all computed means

k = Number of indicators

Overall Interpretation: Strongly Agree

Overall, the results demonstrate that code-switching is widely practiced among Grade 12 academic students and plays a significant role in improving their confidence and level of oral participation during English class discussions.

The findings of this study provide clear evidence that code-switching plays a significant role in the oral participation of Grade 12 academic students during English class discussions at Marigondon National High School. Based on the results, students primarily engage in code-switching due to limited English vocabulary, difficulty in expressing ideas, fear of making grammatical errors, and the need for clearer understanding. These factors reflect common challenges faced by second language learners, where language limitations and emotional barriers affect their willingness to participate. This means that many learners are still in the process of developing fluency in English, and when they struggle to find the right words or structure sentences correctly, they naturally shift to their first language to continue expressing their ideas. In this way, code-switching becomes a supportive tool that helps students stay involved in classroom interaction instead of remaining silent due to language difficulties.

In terms of frequency, most students reported that they often or always use code-switching during discussions. This indicates that code-switching is not an occasional behavior but a regular feature of classroom communication. This finding suggests that in real classroom settings, especially in multilingual environments, students naturally combine languages as part of their everyday communication. It also reflects the reality that learners are still developing academic English proficiency, making it difficult for them to rely solely on English in spontaneous discussions. As a result, code-switching becomes a practical and accessible strategy that allows them to maintain the flow of conversation and actively contribute to class activities.

The results further show that code-switching has a positive effect on students' confidence and participation. Students reported that it helps them express ideas more clearly, reduces anxiety, and encourages active involvement. These findings strongly align with Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which explains that lower anxiety levels lead to better language acquisition and increased participation. In this context, code-switching lowers students' emotional barriers by reducing fear of judgment and mistakes. When students feel less pressured to speak perfectly in English, they become more willing to participate, share opinions, and engage in classroom discussions, which ultimately improves their learning experience.

Additionally, the findings support Michael Long's Interaction Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of meaningful interaction in language learning. Code-switching enables students to negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and continue conversations even when they lack the exact English vocabulary. This interaction is important because it allows learners to remain active participants in discussions rather than passive listeners. By using both languages strategically, students are able to sustain communication, ask questions, and respond more effectively, which strengthens their overall engagement in the learning process.

Compared with existing literature, the results are consistent with studies that view code-switching as a facilitative tool rather than a hindrance in language learning. While traditional perspectives often discourage its use, more recent research highlights its role in supporting comprehension, building confidence, and increasing classroom participation. This study reinforces the idea that code-switching should not automatically be seen as a failure to use English, but rather as a transitional strategy that helps learners manage communication challenges while still developing their language skills.

The implications of this study suggest that teachers should adopt a more flexible approach toward code-switching in the classroom. Rather than strictly prohibiting it, educators can use it strategically to support learning, especially in the early stages of discussion or when students struggle to express complex ideas. This approach allows teachers to guide students in understanding difficult concepts while still encouraging participation. However, it is also important to gradually guide students toward increased use of English to ensure continuous language development and improvement in fluency over time.

Overall, the study confirms that code-switching, when used appropriately, can serve as an effective tool in enhancing students' confidence and promoting active oral participation in English class discussions. It plays an important role in bridging language gaps, supporting interaction, and creating a more inclusive classroom environment where students feel more comfortable expressing their ideas.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the influence of code-switching on the oral participation of Grade 12 academic students in English class discussions at Marigondon National High School during the School Year 2025–2026. The findings revealed that students engage in code-switching primarily due to limited English vocabulary, difficulty in expressing ideas clearly, fear of committing grammatical errors, and the need to ensure better understanding. These factors highlight the linguistic and psychological challenges that learners experience in using English as a second language. This suggests that many students still face barriers in expressing themselves fluently in English, particularly during spontaneous classroom interactions where immediate responses are expected. Such challenges may affect their confidence and willingness to participate, making code-switching a practical strategy that allows them to communicate their thoughts without completely withdrawing from class discussions.

The results further showed that code-switching is frequently used by students during classroom discussions, indicating that it is a common and natural part of communication in a multilingual learning environment. More importantly, the study found that code-switching has a positive influence on students' confidence and level of participation. It helps reduce anxiety, supports clearer expression of ideas, and encourages more active involvement in discussions. These outcomes align with the theoretical foundations of the study, emphasizing the role of lowered affective barriers and meaningful interaction in language learning. This implies that when students are given the flexibility to shift between languages, they become more comfortable sharing their opinions and engaging with classroom activities. The increased participation observed among the respondents demonstrates that code-switching creates a supportive academic atmosphere where students can focus more on idea construction and critical thinking rather than becoming overly concerned with linguistic accuracy.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that code-switching can serve as an effective communicative strategy that enhances students' engagement rather than hindering their language development when used appropriately. The findings support the view that code-switching should not be regarded as a weakness or a sign of language deficiency, but rather as a useful scaffold that facilitates communication and learning. When applied strategically in English classrooms, it can help bridge the gap between students' current linguistic abilities and the expected level of English proficiency. Teachers, therefore, may consider integrating controlled code-switching practices to encourage participation while gradually guiding learners toward greater use of English in academic discourse.

For future research, it is recommended to explore the long-term effects of code-switching on students' overall English proficiency, as well as to investigate its impact across different subject areas and educational levels. Further studies may also consider incorporating qualitative approaches, such as classroom observations and interviews, to gain deeper insights into how and when code-switching is most beneficial in the learning process. Expanding the scope of future studies will provide a more comprehensive understanding of its role in language acquisition and classroom interaction. Such research may also help educators develop evidence-based strategies for balancing the use of students' first language and English in ways that maximize learning outcomes and strengthen oral communication skills.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study are not publicly available due to confidentiality and ethical restrictions, as they involve sensitive participant information from a rehabilitation setting. However, limited data may be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical approval and institutional guidelines.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.