ETERNAL Volume 9 Number 2 (2023)
P-ISSN 2477-4766; E-ISSN 2580-5347
DOI: https://doi.org/10.24252/Eternal.V92.2023.A3

Polar Influence of Code-Switching on Oral Communication Skills: The Case of Philippine Cebuano-Visayan Bilinguals

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ABSTRACT Linguists are explicitly divided on code switching's (CS hereinafter) effect on the oral communication skills of English language learners. Some studies asserted that CS is beneficial (positive) while others criticized its negative impact on the target language (TL hereinafter) proficiency in communication skills. This study examined the influence of CS strategy on the oral communication skills of bilingual Cebuano-Visayan Senior High School students of the University of Cebu-Banilad, Cebu City, Philippines. This bridges the ongoing debate and as a recent contributing perspective on the CS phenomenon, especially the English and Cebuano-Visayan language pair not yet explored in a conversational analysis in a new dialectal context (locale). Employing a case study design with 9 participants for data saturation, real-life conversations of students and teachers in English classrooms were audio-recorded for one month and triangulated with interviews and observations. The thematic and conversational analysis then ensued, which yielded the finding that CS adversely affects the students' oral communication skills in morphology, phonology, and syntax but positively facilitates the strategic competence of bilingual oral communicators. CS, therefore, has a polar influence (both positive and negative) on the student's oral communication skills.

Keywords: code mixing; code switching; bilingualism; oral communication skills; strategic competence

A. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of globalization, proficiency in oral communication skills has been called for graduates to function effectively in the professional and academic environment (Rahman, 2010). Furthermore, professionals believe that communication skills (e.g., interpersonal, writing, and speaking) are invaluable for career success (Lin et al., 2013).

Worldwide, the Philippines just placed in the 20th spot among countries with the best non-native English speakers or communicators in terms of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) with 60.4 (Education First, 2020). Looking at the 2016 EPI of the country which is 13th the world over (Education First, 2017), this entails that the Filipinos' English proficiency has sharply declined. As a matter of fact, Domingo (2018) has reported that the Philippines' college seniors' English proficiency is only equivalent to Thailand's and Vietnam's high school students' levels. Since English language proficiency is the ability to utilize the English language in the production and conveyance of meaning in both contexts of speaking and writing (University of Queensland, 2016), the situations can be construed that the Philippine students' oral communication skills have also regressed.

There are various situations in which students' oral communication skills have been displayed in an actual conversation. For instance, in English language classrooms, diverse learners have been observed to practice code-switching (CS hereafter) and code-mixing (CM). CS is the rapid alternation or mixing of several languages in a single speech event (Muysken et al., 2000). According to Metila et al. (2016), CS is commonly practiced in the Philippines, and utilized by teachers during formal lessons to accommodate learners whose mother tongue is different from the medium of instruction to make comprehension for students easier. Apart from the teacher, dela Rosa (2016) found out that students resort to CS during classroom presentations due to limited English. At the University of Cebu – Banilad (UC-B), it was observed that student code-switchers are perceived as having difficulty in orally communicating their ideas fluently in the classroom. Moreover, their discourses exhibited confusing admixtures of the two languages' elements which appears to affect the clarity, quality, and accuracy of their utterances in the oral communication subjects.

This practice (CS) has been commended and criticized by different researchers due to the conflicting findings on its effect on the oral communication skills of English language learners. Some studies found it beneficial (positive, while others criticize its negative impact on TL proficiency (Fareed et al., 2016), thus this case study is conducted to examine the influence of CS on the oral communication skills of bilingual Senior high school students of University of Cebu – Banilad (UC-B) campus, Cebu City, Philippines, of the school year 2019-2020.

This study clarifies and bridges the unending conflict among the study's findings. Additionally, it conversationally analyzes English and Philippine Cebuano-Visayan (CV hereafter) dialect (English) language pair CS discourses absent in the preceding studies; thus, it provides additional in-depth insight into the phenomenon. Furthermore, previous researchers did not employ this case study design blending thematic and conversation analysis to study this CS variety (CV and English language pair). Thus, this supplies valuable perspective in the literature through unobtrusive observations, students' and teachers' vantage points through their experiences, and exhaustive analysis of real-life interactions in the actual classroom context.

B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. Types of CS

Code-switching (CS) is the language alternation at or above the clause level. One of the most influential studies on the linguistic aspect of CS is Poplack's (1980) proposal of *free morpheme constraint,* which posited the idea that any constituent of a code may be switched

provided that it is not a bound morpheme and *equivalence constraint*, which advances the notion that switches of code occur at a discourse point where the mixing of L1 and L2 elements does not violate the syntactic rules of either language. Poplack also categorizes the types of CS as *tag-switching* (ready-made expression inserted in sentences that are entirely in another language*), inter-sentential* (CS that occurs after the utterance of one or more sentences from one sentence to the other language), *intra-sentential* or *code-mixing* (CS that occurs within the same sentence or phrase), and recently *intraword code-switching or ICS (*a combination of elements such as an affix and a root from different languages [see Juvrianto, 2018; Stefanich et al., 2019]). There are three types of code mixing*: insertion*, *alternation*, and *congruent lexicalization (*see Muysken, 1997).

2. CS Motivations, Reasons, and Functions

CS's purposes fall under two broad categories: social and lexical uses (see Baker, 2011; Henkin, 2016). Additionally, there are varied motivations, reasons, and functions why interlocutors employ CS in a communicative activity (see Murad, 2013; Rusli et al., 2018; Nur, 2016). These studies underscore that CS is essential in a second language learners' classroom since it serves different reasons/functions for successful communication to transpire.

3. Negative Effects of CS on Oral Communication Skills in L2

The use of CS is a sign of low proficiency in the TL or L2 (Caballero & Celaya, 2019; Martínez-Adrián et al., 2019; Jumal et al., 2019) and can lead to a classroom environment where English language learning can be affected negatively (Shahnaz, 2015). Continuous practice and exposure are required to maintain or increase oral proficiency in any language acquisition process; Task repetition positively affects EFL speaking ability acquisition in terms of fluency and accuracy (Parkhurst, 2007; Lambert et al., 2017). Knell (2010) found out that students who are immersed early in the English language significantly performed at a higher level than the control group in terms of oral language proficiency and reading comprehension. At home, Byers-Heinlien's (2013) findings revealed that exposure to language mixing might obscure cues that facilitate young bilingual children's separation of their languages and early growth of their vocabularies. These studies point out that language exposure and repetitive practice result in proficiency, fluency, and accuracy in the TL. However, not only are the repetition of tasks important, but the quality of learners' participation (i.e., accuracy, complexity, and fluency) also plays a vital role since they are positively correlated with TL ability (Delaney, 2012).

In the school, the teacher's oral language input specifically syntactically complex utterance, positively influences English language learner's academic oral language proficiency growth (Gamez, 2009). In the study of Samani and Narafshan (2016), students believed that teachers' CS was more useful in teaching grammar and writing skills as compared with teaching speaking

skills, while Ospanova (2017) found that students negatively perceived the use of CS as a hindrance to English language proficiency. Finally, Magno (2017) revealed that phonological, lexical, and syntactic negative transfer[i] was evident in the oral discourse of Cebuano bilinguals who speak both Filipino and English languages which means that L1 hinders the acquisition of proficiency and oral communication skill in L2. CS, therefore, facilitates the acquisition of knowledge (subject content) but negatively affects the acquisition of proficiency in English and is one of the factors that account for the lack of fluency in the English language among Botswanian students (Mokgwathi, 2011). Especially, since the frequent use of code-switching can worsen L2 learning difficulties (Aparece & Bacasmot, 2023)

Generally, the studies cited above advance the notion that the use of CS is detrimental to the development of the student's English oral communication skills in L2 since it exposes the students to their mother tongue and enables them to use their L1, which violates the premise of constant practice and exposure.

4. Positive Effects of CS on Oral Communication Skills

The bilingual students' growth and learning efficacy may be enhanced by the purposeful use of code-mixing (a sort of CS) of the students' L1 and L2 in instruction (Jiang et al., 2014) because CS is a marker of linguistic competence (Yow et al., 2017) and communicative skill (Gort, 2019). As Almansour (2016) puts it, CS is a useful metalanguage medium to improve the learner's understanding of TL in the EFL classroom. Besides, CS generally helped learners improve their learning of the various English components and skills (Alzahrani, 2023).

Saeidi and Farshchi (2015) postulated that teaching communication strategies (e.g., CS) positively contributes to the students' amount of oral production. Additionally, findings revealed that students have positive reception towards interaction strategies (e.g., CS) as they were eager to participate when given questions and opportunities to speak (Rido et al., 2015). Teaching students explicit communication strategies such as CS is proven effective in boosting the students' oral performance, specifically in complexity, accuracy, and fluency areas (Tavakoli et al., 2011). It was reported that communication strategies and oral communication skill is correlated with each other. For instance, Mistar and Umamah (2014) claimed that "compensation strategy" (e.g., CS) greatly contributes to speaking proficiency". Moreover, Rosas Maldonado (2016) advances the association between the learners' oral proficiency level and usage of communication strategies. The learner's linguistic competence is not only correlated with the use of communication strategies but the type of strategy the learner also

used. As a whole, the studies cited in this sub-section implied that CS is beneficial, closely related, and a clear manifestation of competence in oral communication skills.

The studies reviewed talk about the nature and types of CS, the reasons, motivations, and functions of using CS, and the potential effect of CS on the oral communication skills of the students in the TL, but it is glaringly evident that major confusion still exists. Some studies claimed that CS's use in the classroom, either by the students or teachers, is helpful in the acquisition and maintenance of TL's oral communication skill development. However, some studies also explicitly affirmed that CS is detrimental to the promotion of oral communication skills development and proficiency in L2 since it violates the law of practice. Generally, the gap in understanding the influence of CS on English or L2 oral communication skills remains confounding because of the conflict posed by the findings of empirical studies conducted on the topic.

C. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to answer the research question (RQ) "What is the influence of CS on the language students' oral communication skills in English (L2)?". This RQ dictates the comprehensive methodology followed in this section since CS is a context-bounded phenomenon, and the researcher has no control over its occurrence. Further, this section discusses the various components which are appropriately designed to illuminate and answer the question posed.

Design

This research used a case study design. The case's unit of analysis in this study pertained to how CS and CM influenced the student's oral communication skills in the formal parts of the lessons in English subjects, specifically 3 classes under the track of Technical-Vocational which are heavy code switchers. The study was only bounded to the Oral Communication (English 1) classes in the UC-B senior high school department.

Environment

The study was conducted at the University of Cebu-Banilad Campus (UC-B), specifically in the Senior High School Department. UC-B is one of the campuses of the University of Cebu, the largest privately-owned university in the Philippines. The majority of students here are observed to be heavy code switchers.

Participants

There were 9 participants purposefully selected through various inclusion and exclusion criteria relevant to the purpose of the study and 3 classes (with four hours a week meetings) were observed for classroom interaction recording. Specifically, it involved 3 teachers and 6

students who were directly under the supervision of the teachers who participated in this study. These participants sufficed to attain data saturation since 8 participants are the minimum number for a case study (Wa-Mbaleka & Gladstone, 2018), and" code saturation" could be reached at nine interviews when researchers "heard it all" (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018).

Participants were purposefully selected through various criteria. For instance, the inclusion criteria for teachers were that they must be Oral Communications (English 1) instructors and they must have used or experienced CS in the formal instruction of the mentioned course. They were chosen because they have observed their English classes as heavy code switchers and can readily impart helpful insights on the phenomenon. Participating students were included because they were above 18 years old, volunteered to participate, were heavy users of CS, and fell under the direct instruction of the teacher participants. Beyond these parameters, teachers and students were appropriately excluded. Participating teachers' and students' classes were observed during the formal instruction process. They were also interviewed on their experiences about the phenomenon to gain insights and answers for the RQ posed.

Instrument

The problem was primarily discerned through the stance and observations of the researcher. A validated interview guide was used. Moreover, a notebook for field notes was utilized during the observation of the researcher in the participating classes. Lastly, an audio recorder and camera were used to capture the image-based and audio data during the interview and observation to ensure accuracy and that no essential information was overlooked.

Procedure

A transmittal letter was sent to the principal for approval to conduct the study in the said locale. Consent forms were also distributed to the participants which stipulated the provisions of voluntary participation. When all documents were signed and formalities adhered to, the researcher proceeded with the conversation recording phase.

Audio recordings of the natural conversations that happened inside the English classes (identified as the unit of analysis) among the students and teachers were secured to capture the actual flow of interactions that provided valuable data and insights for this study. Audio recorders were planted in the classrooms, and participating teachers were also asked to record their learning proceedings in the oral communications classes for one month. Additionally, an interview was held to ensure that ample data were collected and data saturation was reached. Lastly, periodic observations were done to capture holistically information and insights that would shed light on the CS phenomenon being investigated.

Data Analysis

The data was transcribed using Microsoft Word, and the insert comment feature was used for efficient labeling. The transcribed data comprised 38 pages. During the coding process, a constant comparison analysis technique was used to identify emerging codes grounded in the data. Right after coding, Braun and Clarke's (2006) seven stages of thematic analysis method was utilized. En vivo codes were then interweaved for overarching themes, dissected for analysis, and interpreted to make sense of emerging notions and nuances. Also, Ten Have's (2007) Conversation analysis (CA) was conducted on the audio recordings that were retrieved from the classrooms. It commenced through detailed transcriptions using the conventions and symbols adapted from Silverman (2015). These transcripts were then scrutinized to reveal whether actual conversations of the participants using CS manifest clues on their influence on oral communication skills in English.

Quality Control

To establish trustworthiness and rigor in this CS research, the following strategies and techniques were followed: *Source triangulation,* where teachers, students, and audio recordings as sources of data were secured to ensure that multiple perspectives obtained would shed light on the research question posed; *Thick description* through the use of descriptions and extracts of quotations taken directly from the participants/key informants discourses/answers; *Member checking* was done to ensure fidelity on participants experiences; and finally, an *audit trail* was kept, detailing how the study was conducted, the pieces of evidence and documents used to enable replicability of the research.

Ethical Considerations

A waiver for exemption of ethical review was secured from the graduate school's Ethical Review Committee (ERC). Since qualitative research is more intrusive to the participants' experiences about the CS phenomenon, this study strictly followed, when applicable, ethical principles stipulated by Polit and Beck (2008) such as respecting the authority and human dignity, human subjects' protection, rights to privacy, etc.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CS seems to interfere in all areas of communication skills of bilingual speakers except in the strategic communication domain. Specifically, it creates an adverse effect in the areas of syntax, phonology, morphology, and semantics but appears to contribute positively to the students' strategic competence as revealed through the nuances and themes that emerged from the analysis presented as follows:

1. Morphemic Structure of Intraword Code Switching

In the actual conversation recorded, an intraword code-switching or ICS occurred. ICS is the combination of CV and English - within a single word (see Stefanich et al., 2019). These ICS words, in this case, follow rigidly a structure that is irreversible, as shown below:

Cebuano-Visayan Inflectional Morpheme + English Root/Stem/Free Morpheme= ICS Word

Table 1. Sample collection of ICS words

Inflectional Visayan morpheme (Indicative active verb) (Pesirla, 2012)	English free morpheme	ICS word	Equivalent English translation
mag- (future tense)	add	mag-add	will add
nag- (present tense)	wheelchair	nagwheelchair	using a wheelchair
ga- (progressive)	discuss	gadiscuss	discussing
gi- (past tense)	bully	gibully	bullied
ka- (past tense)	pass	kapass	can pass
mu- (future tense)	pass	mupass	will pass
ni- (past tense)	post	nipost	posted

Note. The data in this table are "representative" ICS morphemes taken from across transcribed conversations.

In the table presented, it is notable that the ICS words produced are only formed from a bound morpheme (inflection) of the CV language, such as gi-, i-, mag-, nag, ga-, ka-, mu, ni, etc. while the main word (root/stem) is always an unbound morpheme from the English language. It is glaringly odd that no Visayan free morpheme was used to form the ICS words, nor were any bound morphemes from English attached to a CV free morpheme. Moreover, the CV bound morphemes function to emphasize the tenses of the verb but not change the category of the words.

These ICS words are proof that CS may be detrimental to oral communication accuracy in English. It validated the fact that the code switchers violated the English word structure rules in the process of their formation. It deviates from the word structure rules of English concatenative morphology because according to Haspelmath and Sims (2013), a word form can only be added with an inflectional suffix (i.e. stem [+ inflectional suffix]), or a root word may be added with a derivational prefix followed by the root word and may be added with a derivational suffix(i.e. [deriv. prefix +] root [+ deriv. suffix]) or a word stem can only be added with another word stem (i.e. stem + stem). These suggest that CS (e.g., ICS) contradicts the

English system of word formation and thus may adversely affect accuracy in oral communication skills in English (Shahnaz, 2015).

2. Syntactic Juxtaposition of Constituency Rules Between Cebuano-Visayan and English Grammar

Code switchers appear to intermix the grammar system of the two languages which causes juxtaposition of the rules between the two codes' different elements (e.g., words, phrases, and clauses). For instance, the English syntax has been disregarded, and an extreme disparity in grammar conventions between L1 and L2 is glaringly evident, as exemplified in extract 1:

Extract 1: ((Simulated Job Interview: The teacher, on the final interview question, asks the student the compensation or salary he is expecting if he will be hired.))

53 T: How much salary do you expect Mr._____?=

54 S: =***Gustu naku*** **((V-S))** (..) uhm (0.2)

<=I like> < ((S-V))>

55 **I will expect** ((**S-V**)) the (.) sala(.) high salary for (0.2) my job(.)

56 ***Kanang*** **worthy** ***kaayu*** ((**Adj.+Adv**.)) for (.) my job sir:

< Uhm worthy very >< ((Adj.+Adv.)) >

Note. Statements enclosed in angle brackets < >directly below the italicized words/phrases are equivalent English translations of L1 hereinafter.

The extract exposes a confusing juxtaposition of the grammar conventions of the English language and that of the L1 (Cebuano-Visayan). The student's L1 sentence pattern (e.g. V-S, V-S-O, etc.) is directly opposite to the English language. For example, English sentences consistently/strictly adhere to patterns in which the subject always precedes the verb (Line 3) that may be followed by an object/s, for example, *S-V, S-V-DO, S-V-IO-DO, S-V-DO-OC,* etc. (Fowler et al., 2007) but in the code switched sentences, the verb always appear before the subject (Line 2) and other unusual sequences (e.g., V-S, Adj.+ Adv.) which are not aligned with the English languages' syntactical and constituency rules. For example, the phrase *worthy kaayo (adjective + adverb*) in Line 4 violates the constituency rules specified by Yuka (n.d.) which stipulates that an adjective follows an adverb (i.e. *adverb + adjective*). This demonstrates that CS may create syntagmatic interference on the bilinguals' grammatical competence in the L2 since syntactical conventions of the two languages inevitably overlap within clauses in the bilingual discourses. This would mean that the accuracy of the TL will be compromised since the quality of students' participation (i.e., accuracy) in oral discourse is positively correlated with TL ability

(Delaney, 2012). Several scholars found that L1-L2 disparity influences the rate and route of second language morphosyntactic processing and development (McManus & Marsden, 2019). Furthermore, too much CS would lead to the learner's lexical and grammatical system shaping into incorrect form (fossilization), which arrests TL approaching process (Cui & Xie, 2015).

3. Phonological Speech Errors in CS Interplays

Code switchers are usually prone to commit speech errors in the phonemic levels, as they juggle seamlessly in the alternation of utterances from one language to another. Upon detailed analysis of the transcripts, the students' use of CS and insertion of ICS words in the utterances inevitably leads to erroneous pronunciation, as shown in the table extracted from the conversations across the different recorded discourses as follows:

Table 2. Types of phonological errors uttered by code switchers

Words error	Proper pronunciation	Actual enunciation	Type of speech
there	/ðɛr/	(dɛr)	substitution
that	/ðæt/	(dɑt)	substitution
stupid	/ˈstupəd/	(ˈstupid)	substitution
because	/bɪˈkɔz/	(bɪkɑs)	substitution
best	/bɛst/	(bɪst)	substitution
feel	/fil/	(pil)	substitution
same	/seɪm/	(sim)	substitution
survive substitution	/sərˈvaɪv/	(sɑrbaɪb)	
facts	/fækts/	(pɑks)	deletion
post	/poʊst/	(pʌs)	deletion
interrupt	/ɪntərʌpt/	(IntIrɑp)	deletion

Note. The data reflected are based on representative actual mispronounced words of the participants

In the speaker's orality, some of the L2 phonemes were substituted with an equivalent L1 (e.g., /f/ to /p/;/v/ to /b/; /ɛ/ to /ɪ/) phonemes called paraphasia. It is important to bear in mind that the students' L1 has no / f/, /v/, /ɛ/, etc. in their L1 phonemic system which means that equivalent L1 sounds were used in place of L2 during the oral CS production. Moreover, some phonemes have been omitted in the rapid transition of CV and English word strings called a deletion. These errors in oral production appear to be influenced by the conversants' L1 as

they shift their utterance to L2. The code switchers' L1 alphabet (Philippine Alphabet) and CV phonemic system deviate from the English language (Pesirla, 2012). It appeared that the phonological system of students' L1 has been unconsciously causing negative interference/influence during the transmission of the message (Magno, 2017). These errors in students' pronunciation in English (TL) must be addressed early because, according to Tlazalo Tejeda and Basurto Santos (2014), learners who have serious pronunciation errors which are not treated from the onset will face intelligibility problems. Several language scholars argued that CS might cause confusion, fossilization, and internalization of errors in learners, and the habitual use of CS might influence how students communicate in L2 later (Nordin et al., 2013)

Learners, in this case, aim to become proficient in the target language (English). Because code-switched sentences are not considered Standard English, it is therefore not readily accepted for international communication. Considering all of the evidence presented so far in this section, it appears that the use of CS poses a negative influence on the oral communication skills of L2 learners. In terms of its morphological and syntactical formation, it directly violates the rules of the English language (TL). This situation will hamper L2 proficiency since continuous practice is required to maintain proficiency in any language acquisition process (Rahayu, 2018; Parkhurst, 2007). Moreover, because of the difference between their L1 and L2 phonological systems, students unconsciously delete or substitute L2 phonemes with an L1 equivalent proving that negative interference during the oral discourse transpired. These speech errors support Landi's (2008) statement that "errors" in speech must be based on already learned phonology. These findings have implications on the language classrooms to limit the use of CS especially when the target competencies are accuracy and quality of L2 acquisition and use. However, despite CS's adverse effects, it also has a positive influence on English language learners' oral communication, as attested by the evidence which follows:

4. Strategical Repair in Bilinguals' Communication Breakdown

Bilinguals in this case exhibit strategical competence in terms of bridging and repairing obstacles in an authentic communication breakdown. For example, CS is used to rescue impending disintegration of interaction (Gort, 2019) as supported by the categories which emerged in the analysis below:

4.1. Lexical Bandwidth as Determinant of Word-Gap-induced Switching

Speakers have a predisposition to shift language due to an absence or gap of certain words in their vocabulary bank, termed lexical/word gaps. This is exemplified by the speaker, who,

for lack of vocabulary in L2, relapses to L1 to supply equivalent words needed to complete the message. This phenomenon is manifested in the extract below:

Extract 3: *((Context: Simulated job application interview and the interviewer (teacher) asks the interviewee (student) how he sees himself 10 years from now, to which the student uses vague and evasive answers, displaying the uncertainty of his capacity to deliver his expected obligations.))*

751 T: We need people who are really(suited) to their capabilities and they are competent enough

752 so are you sure you want to try your best? Or give us the assurance ( )

754 S: I'll try my best sir (0.7) I'll do it sir that every year I'll move up (.) move up and (.)

756 like to improve sir like: ( ) ***asinsu*** sir ***ba***

< to progress >

757 T: (0.2) Huh?

758 S: (0.3) ***Muasinsu bitaw*** sir (.) ***unsay*** English ***anang asinsu*** sir? (.)

< **To "progress"** sir **what's** the English term **for** **"progress**" sir?>

759 I want to experience more sir even [if:::))

760 T: [So you want our company to nurse you like a kid (.) like a baby? (0.5)

761 But we expect you to (.) **MANEUVER** not to be **nursed** (0.7) (How is it gonna be), Mr.___?

762 S: ((Silent)) (0.8) ***Wa ku kasabut*** sir ((laughs)) .hhh ***galibug naku sa pangutana*** ((nervously laughs))

<I do not understand > <I'm confused about the question>

In the extract, it is interesting to note that all of the student's utterances consist of high-frequency words, and "asenso" (progress) in Line 2 belongs to the medium frequency bandwidth[ii]. It confirms that a lexical gap occurred since the student explicitly asked the teacher to translate the inserted L1 word into English because he does not know its equivalent L2 word. Remarkably, when the teacher uses a word that is lower-level frequency, such as " maneuver", "nursed" etc. in line 5, the student completely lost the conversational sequence and totally switched to L1 in line 6 and admits that his understanding of the teacher's utterances has expired and was confused about the preceding questions. This reveals that the student's level of vocabulary frequency is predominantly comprised of high-frequency words. When a lower bandwidth of vocabulary appears in the discourse, he switches to L1 due to the absence and

scarcity of words stacked in his L2 vocabulary bank, a strategy he resorted to filling in the word gap. This is further attested by the participants as quoted:

> ***S3*** *"I was tasked by my English teacher to summarize a story spontaneously…my brain has run out of English words to say because some words became redundant like I kept on repeating it, so I resorted to switching to CV language…"*
>
> ***S4*** *"Sometimes there are English terms that are difficult, especially those we are not familiar with, so we resort to speaking vernacular"*

Aside from rescuing the speakers from the verge of communication breakdown, the alternation of codes commences in a manner such that the speaker organizes ideas in L1 and encodes it in L2 during transmission. But, when a lexeme is absent in L2, an L1 word is used in place, to address the lexical gap. It is inevitable to experience lexical gap when we try to translate one language to another (Sankaravelayuthan, n.d.) especially because word retrieval in a sentence compels the speaker to overcome paradigmatic (substitution) and syntagmatic (positioning) interference (Dell et al., 2008).

4.2. Switching For Understanding

The practice of CS seems to be an overt manifestation of the speakers' strategical competence and it is apparent that the behavior of switching code serves an important function in repairing communication disintegration such as in instances of oral language comprehension gap:

Extract 4: ((Context: Job Application Simulation))

381 T: Why should we not hire Mr._____?

382 S: Because I'm (0.4) I'm (0.5) I'm ***kuan*** sir I'm hardworking in (0.2) my job.

<*uhm*>

383 T: = Why should we NOT:::: ((Perplexed voice; Exasperated)) GIVE us reasons to reject your application…hhh

384 S: ((Silent for 43 seconds; Thinking))

385 T: Okay(.) ***Usbun nalang naku*** hhh ((resigned)) Why should we (.) ***ana nalang***( )

< I'll just change it**>** < that's it**>**

In the extract, the teacher switches from English to CV because the student's answer is irrelevant to the question (i.e., lacking topical coherence). The scenario manifests an absence of oral language comprehension. When faced with this dilemma, the majority of participants code switch for a clear understanding of the meaning (i.e., comprehension) as quoted:

S2 *"If ever sir I can't explain thoroughly my prior knowledge, at least others can understand in terms of CS, what I want them to understand"*

T3 *"It helps speakers to let their audience understand the message they are going to deliver"*

Speakers code switch to ensure that the idea they intended to transmit is understood by the receiver without any alteration of meaning. As second language learners, the students are compelled to speak the TL (English) in their Oral Communication (English 1) courses, especially during the formal teaching-learning process. Due to their limited competence in L2 command, there is a tendency that the intended message will be distorted if they use straight English especially because they are inept on the L2's complexities in terms of vocabulary and grammar conventions. As Zacks and Faerstl (2016) claimed: to comprehend discourse, an individual must integrate words and sequence of sentences into a meaningful structure.

Together, the categories (i.e., lexical bandwidth as a determinant of word-gap-induced switching & switching for understanding) bespeak the strategic competence (ability to overcome /compensate for any problems in communication that might transpire) of the speakers. They employ CS as a strategy to fix potential breakdowns of conversational acts and to fulfill social, discourse-pragmatic, and communicative functions (Henkin, 2016; Murad, 2013; Baker, 2011). It indicates that CS can be a potential teaching strategy that L2 teachers may employ in the classroom to promote participation quantity since it rescues the speakers from communication breakdowns, such as lexical gaps, which may cause communication paralysis. Moreover, in terms of the conveyance of important concepts and ideas in L2 classes, CS is an important resort to bridge the comprehension gap in communication, as supported by the data.

E. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the data gathered and analyzed, CS has a polar (both negative and positive) influence on the student's oral communication skills. Specifically, it creates negative interference on the acquisition of TL's accuracy, mastery, and fluency since the two different languages (Cebuano-Visayan and English) have distinct conventions adhered to in the domains of morphology, phonology, and syntax. On the other hand, it helps the students improve their strategic competence in communication.

The conclusion bridges the debate on the influence of CS on oral communication skills since it postulates that it is simultaneously positive and negative (polar). The findings and conclusion have implications on the pedagogy of teaching L2 to some of the language classrooms to minimize the use of CS especially if the two languages have different conventions followed to avoid confusion on the learners' acquisition of accuracy and quality of orally

communicating in the TL. On the other hand, when the purpose of instruction focuses on the quantity of participation and mastery of concepts, CS might be an important strategy for consideration. It helps the students overcome lexical gaps during learning interactions and comprehension gaps during the teaching-learning process especially when the medium of instruction is English or L2.

However, this study cannot be generalized as it is only limited to CV bilinguals or the case investigated as described in this paper; however, the findings and conclusion may be transferable to some CS language pairs whose grammatical systems and rules are distinct from each other and or situations/contexts similar to this case. Future researchers are suggested to further the study through :1. examining the status of English (as the prestige language of the educated elite) in the non-academic CV community and how it may influence CS strategies in everyday communication; 2. mapping a structural description (e.g., lexical, phrasal, and syntactic structures/forms/patterns) that emerge on Cebuano-Visayan and English (Engvish) CS and code-mixing communications in the school or community and; 3. conducting a correlational study between the level of lexical frequency and CS in oral communication.

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APPENDIX

Table 4. Simplified transcription symbols

Symbol	Meaning
[	The point in which speakers' talk overlaps.
=	Indicates no gap/pause between two lines.
(.3)	Indicates elapsed time in silence in tenths of a second.
(.)	Tiny gap/pause.
_____	An underscore means a type of stress, via pitch.
::	Prolongation of preceded sound. The row of colons indicates the length of
GIVE	prolongation.
.hhh	Capitalizations means especially loud sounds in relation to surrounding talk.
	Dot followed by h's means an in-breath; without dot, an outbreath. The number of
( )	h's indicates the lenght of in- or out- breaths.
(Yes)	Empty parenthesis indicates that the transcriber cannot hear what was said.
(( ))	Words in parenthesis are possible hearings of the transcriber.
	Double parenthesis contains descriptions of author instead of transcriptions.

Adapted from Silverman (2015)