

Original Article

Language Learning Style, Attitudes toward Code-Switching and Second Language Acquisition of Grade 11 Senior High School Students in Davao Oriental

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Abstract

Second language acquisition in multilingual settings depends on how learners process input and how they position themselves toward the languages used in class. This study examined the associations among language learning style, attitudes toward code switching, and second language acquisition among 283 Grade 11 students from three public senior high schools in Davao Oriental, Philippines, using a descriptive correlational design. Learners completed standardized scales on Kolb-based learning styles, attitudes toward teacher and student code switching, and internal and external factors that support English acquisition. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and multiple regression. Reflector style emerged as the most preferred learning style and overall language learning style was high, while attitudes toward code switching were also high. Both language learning style and attitudes toward code switching correlated positively with second language acquisition, yet only language learning style uniquely predicted second language acquisition in the regression model. The findings highlight the central role of learning style preferences in English development and point to a more nuanced, context-sensitive use of code switching in Philippine senior high school classrooms.

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1. Introduction

In many multilingual societies, English functions as a medium of instruction and a gatekeeper for academic and economic opportunities. In such contexts, learners must acquire English as a second or additional language while navigating local languages, school expectations, and their own preferences for how they learn. Second language acquisition research shows that individual differences such as learning style and motivation interact with contextual variables, including classroom language practices, to shape outcomes (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Oxford, 1990).

Kolb's experiential learning theory conceptualizes learning as a cyclical process that involves concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Learners tend to favor particular patterns in this cycle, commonly described as activist, reflector, theorist, and pragmatist styles. When instruction aligns with these preferences, learners process input more deeply and are more willing to engage with challenging tasks (McLeod, 2017; Oxford, 1990). In second language classrooms, learning styles have been linked to strategy use, skill development, and achievement in the target language (Ali et al., 2012; Magulod, 2019).

At the same time, bilingual classroom practices such as code switching shape how learners perceive and use English. Code switching refers to the alternating use of two or more languages within a single interaction or lesson (Yim & Clément, 2021). In many English as a second language and English as a foreign language classrooms, teachers strategically shift between English and the learners' first language to explain complex concepts, manage discipline, and build rapport (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009; Magid & Mugaddam, 2013). Research increasingly indicates that well-managed code switching can support comprehension and participation, although some educators worry that frequent switching may limit exposure to English or be seen as a sign of low proficiency (Gallagher, 2020; Hussein, 2020).

In the Philippine context, English has long held an official role in education, yet recent indicators suggest a decline in proficiency and persistent inequalities in access to high-quality instruction. Senior high school students, who are expected to handle academic English across content areas, often study in classrooms where teachers and peers mix English with Filipino or local languages, especially in rural divisions. Learners' attitudes toward these bilingual practices may influence how they respond to instruction and how much English they ultimately acquire (Cabigon, 2015; Cruz, 2018).

International research has examined language learning styles, attitudes toward code switching, and second language acquisition separately, but few studies have modelled how these constructs operate together in a single framework, particularly in Philippine senior high schools. Most existing work either focuses on university students or treats code switching only as a teaching strategy without examining learners' affective responses (Al-Qaysi, 2016; Binmahboob, 2018).

The present study addressed this gap by investigating the relationships among language learning style, attitudes toward code switching, and second language acquisition among Grade 11 students in Davao Oriental. Specifically, it sought to describe the levels of language learning styles and attitudes toward code switching, to determine the level of second language acquisition in terms of internal and external factors, to test the bivariate relationships between the independent variables and second language acquisition, and to examine whether language learning style and attitudes toward code switching jointly predict second language acquisition.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study used a quantitative descriptive correlational design. This approach allowed the researcher to describe existing levels of language learning style, attitudes toward code switching, and second language acquisition and to examine their interrelationships without manipulating any variables (Apuke, 2017; Cantrell, 2011).

2.2 Research Locale and Participants

The research was conducted in three public senior high schools in Davao Oriental, a province in the Davao Region of the southern Philippines. The schools all implement the K to 12 curriculum and offer academic strands with English as a core subject.

Using stratified random sampling, 283 Grade 11 students enrolled in school year 2020–2021 were selected. Strata were formed by school and strand to ensure representation. Inclusion criteria were current enrolment in Grade 11, attendance in English classes during the school year, and consent to participate. Students who were not enrolled or not taking English at the time of data collection were excluded. The sample included learners from both academic and technical-vocational strands and reflected the gender distribution of the participating schools.

2.3 Instruments

Three standardized questionnaires were used and adapted to the local context. Language learning styles were measured using an instrument based on Kolb's experiential learning model as operationalized through the activist, reflector, theorist, and pragmatist categories (Honey & Mumford, 1992; Kolb, 1984). The adapted scale comprised 20 items for each style, rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (never true of me) to 5 (always true of me). Higher scores indicated stronger preference for a given style. Pilot testing in a comparable group of students yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .82 to .88 across subscales. In the present sample, internal consistency was similarly high ($\alpha = .84$ to $.89$).

Attitudes toward code switching were assessed using a nine-item scale adapted from Teklesellassie and Boersmawas (2018), which focuses on perceptions of teachers' and students' use of the first language in English classes. Items captured perceptions of usefulness, clarity, classroom climate, and identity. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores reflected more positive attitudes toward code switching. Cronbach's alpha in this study was .87.

Second language acquisition was measured through an instrument adapted from Evans (n.d.), which conceptualizes acquisition in terms of internal and external factors. The internal factor subscale (five items) covered motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. The external factor subscale (six items) assessed exposure to English at home and in the community, teacher support, and access to English media. Items were rated from 1 (never true) to 5 (always true). Higher scores indicated stronger conditions for second language acquisition. Internal consistency coefficients were .88 for internal factors, .85 for external factors, and .90 for the total SLA scale.

All instruments underwent content validation by experts in English language teaching and educational measurement. Minor wording adjustments were made to suit Grade 11 learners and the multilingual context.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

After securing approval from the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee and permissions from the Division Office and school administrators, the researcher coordinated with English teachers to schedule data collection. Informed consent letters were sent to parents or guardians and assent was obtained from students.

Questionnaires were administered in paper-and-pencil format during regular class time, following health protocols. The researcher explained the purpose of the study, assured participants of confidentiality and voluntary participation, and guided them through the response scales. Completion took about 30 minutes. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness, coded, and entered into statistical software for analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, specifically weighted means and standard deviations, were computed to describe levels of learning styles, attitudes toward code switching, and second language acquisition. Mean scores were interpreted using the following ranges: 4.20 to 5.00 very high, 3.40 to 4.19 high, 2.60 to 3.39 moderate, 1.80 to 2.59 low, and 1.00 to 1.79 very low.

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationships between language learning styles, attitudes toward code switching, and second language acquisition. Multiple regression analysis determined the extent to which

language learning style and attitudes toward code switching jointly predicted second language acquisition while controlling for their shared variance. Assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were checked and met. Significance was set at $p < .05$.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study complied with ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Ethical clearance was granted by the university's research ethics committee. Participation was voluntary and students could withdraw at any time without penalty. Identifiers were removed from datasets and results were reported only in aggregate form. Data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes.

3. Results

Overall, students reported high levels of language learning styles, with mean scores above 3.40 for all four styles (Table 1). Reflector style obtained the highest mean, followed closely by theorist style.

Table 1. Mean levels of language learning styles, attitudes toward code switching, and second language acquisition (N = 283)

Construct	M	SD	Descriptive level
Activist learning style	3.32	0.52	High
Reflector learning style	3.65	0.82	High
Theorist learning style	3.47	1.19	High
Pragmatist learning style	3.46	0.39	High
Attitudes toward code switching	3.41	0.53	High
Second language acquisition: Internal	3.38	0.67	Moderate
Second language acquisition: External	3.40	0.66	High
Second language acquisition: Overall	3.39	0.61	Moderate

Reflector style's high mean indicates that students tend to prefer observing, thinking, and processing experiences before acting, while the high pragmatist and activist scores suggest that learners also value trying out ideas in practice. Theorist style remained within the high range, pointing to a balanced profile in which students combine reflection, conceptualization, and application.

The overall mean for attitudes toward code switching was in the high range. Students generally agreed that occasional code switching could clarify complex concepts and reduce anxiety, yet responses suggested ambivalence about relying too heavily on the first language during English lessons. Some items that referred to extensive use of the first language attracted lower agreement, indicating a desire for substantial exposure to English.

Students reported moderate overall levels of second language acquisition conditions. Internal factors such as motivation to learn English, confidence in using the language, and willingness to practice received particularly moderate ratings. External factors, including opportunities to hear and use English outside the classroom and perceived teacher support, were also high but more variable, reflecting differences in home and community environments.

Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between the composite language learning style score and overall second language acquisition ($r = .48, p < .001$), and between attitudes toward code switching and second language acquisition ($r = .33, p < .001$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Pearson correlations among main study variables.

Variable	1	2	3
1. Language learning style (overall)	—		
2. Attitudes toward code switching	.43*	—	
3. Second language acquisition	.48*	.33*	—

Note: $p < .001$

Students with stronger preferences for one or more learning styles reported more favorable conditions for acquiring English. More positive attitudes toward code switching were also associated with higher second language acquisition scores, although the correlation was smaller in magnitude.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted with second language acquisition as the dependent variable and language learning style and attitudes toward code switching as predictors (Table 3). The model was significant, $F(2, 280) = 70.33, p < .001$, and accounted for 39 percent of the variance in second language acquisition ($R^2 = .39$).

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis.

Second Language Acquisition (Predictors)	Standardized Coefficient	T	p-value	Remarks
Language Learning Style	0.54	8.39	0.000	Significant
Students Attitude Towards Code-Switching	0.12	1.82	0.069	Not significant

Language learning style emerged as a significant predictor (standardized $\beta = .54, p < .001$), whereas attitudes toward code switching did not contribute significantly when both variables were entered together ($\beta = .12, p = .069$). This pattern indicates that while both variables are related to second language acquisition at the bivariate level, the unique contribution of learning style is more substantial.

4. Discussion

This study set out to examine how language learning styles and attitudes toward code switching relate to second language acquisition among Grade 11 students in Davao Oriental. The results confirm the central role of learning styles in English development and provide a nuanced picture of how students perceive code switching in the classroom.

The high scores across all four learning styles suggest that learners draw on multiple modes of processing experience, with a marked preference for reflector style. This aligns with Kolb's view that effective learning involves a flexible movement around the experiential cycle and supports research showing that many Asian learners favor reflective observation and structured analysis while also appreciating opportunities for practical application (Ali et al., 2012; Kolb, 1984; McLeod, 2017). The finding also resonates with studies in health and language education where reflector and pragmatist styles are common and associated with deep engagement in tasks (Shaik et al., 2017; Magulod, 2019).

The moderate level of internal and high level of external factors supporting second language acquisition show that many of the respondents are motivated to learn English and perceive their environment as reasonably conducive. These results echo previous work that emphasizes the importance of motivation, confidence, and rich input in successful language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Krashen, 1982; Hashim & Yunus, 2018). In particular, the internal factor scores suggest that many students see English as valuable for future education and employment, consistent with the instrumental orientation documented among Filipino learners (Candilas, 2016; Guzmán, 2017).

Attitudes toward code switching were high, indicating that learners in this study appear to view code switching as useful when it clarifies meaning, builds rapport, or reduces anxiety, but they also recognize the need for sustained exposure to English. This balanced stance mirrors recent research that frames code switching as a pedagogical resource rather than a deficiency, provided it is used purposefully (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009; Azlan & Narasuman, 2013; Hussein, 2020). Studies in multilingual classrooms have shown that judicious code switching can scaffold complex content, support participation, and affirm learners' identities while still promoting the target language (Gallagher, 2020; Yamat et al., 2011).

The significant positive correlations between both language learning style and attitudes toward code switching with second language acquisition align with theoretical expectations. Learners whose style preferences are activated in class are more likely to engage in meaningful practice, adopt effective strategies, and persist when challenges arise (Oxford, 1990; Ali et al., 2012). Likewise, students who hold more positive views of code switching may experience less anxiety, feel more connected to their teachers, and treat bilingual discourse as a bridge rather than a barrier to English, which can enhance acquisition (Lee, 2016; Al-Qaysi, 2016; Magid & Mugaddam, 2013).

However, the regression results show that when both predictors are considered simultaneously, only language learning style remains a significant predictor of second language acquisition. This suggests that learning styles capture a broader and more stable set of individual differences in how students process linguistic input and manage their learning, while attitudes toward code switching may exert a more limited or indirect effect. It is possible that the influence of code switching is mediated by factors such as classroom interaction patterns, teacher proficiency, and the actual frequency and functions of switching, which were not directly measured in this study (Gallagher, 2020; Binmahboob, 2018).

For classroom practice, the findings underscore the importance of designing English lessons that appeal to diverse learning styles. Teachers can include experiential tasks for activists, reflective discussions and journals for reflectors, explicit input and conceptual explanations for theorists, and problem-solving projects for pragmatists. Strategy training that helps students understand their own learning profiles and expand their repertoire of approaches may further strengthen second language acquisition (Oxford, 1990; Hsieh et al., 2011).

The results also suggest that code switching should be used selectively rather than avoided or overused. Teachers might draw on the first language to explain complex concepts, signal important instructions, and connect content to learners' experiences, while maintaining English as the primary medium for practice and interaction. Such an approach is consistent with research that conceptualizes the classroom as a bilingual space where English and local languages can coexist in supportive ways (Hall & Cook, 2012; Hussein, 2020).

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The study relied on self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by social desirability and recall bias. The cross-sectional design does not allow causal inferences about the direction of effects. Moreover, the data were drawn from three public schools in one province, so caution is needed in generalizing to other regions or school types. Future research could incorporate observational data on actual code switching practices, longitudinal tracking of English proficiency, and qualitative interviews that probe learners' and teachers' experiences more deeply.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Grade 11 students in Davao Oriental display high levels of language learning styles and generally favorable conditions for acquiring English as a second language. Reflector style is particularly prominent, indicating a preference for thoughtful observation and processing of experience. Attitudes toward code switching are high, reflecting recognition of its benefits. Language learning style and attitudes toward code switching both correlate positively with second language acquisition, yet learning style exerts the stronger and only unique predictive effect when both variables are considered together. These findings highlight the need for English teachers to align instruction with diverse learning styles and to incorporate

flexible, learner-centered strategies. At the same time, they support a principled, context-sensitive use of code switching as part of a broader repertoire of bilingual pedagogies in Philippine senior high schools.

Future studies should investigate how specific instructional practices, including differentiated activities and strategic code switching, interact with learner characteristics over time to shape measurable gains in English proficiency. Insights from such work can inform professional development programs and policy initiatives aimed at strengthening second language education in multilingual settings.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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