

# Enhancing Reading Comprehension Through Code-Switching

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the effectiveness of using code-switching as a scaffolding strategy to enhance the reading comprehension of Grade 3 learners at Sta. Teresa Elementary School, Magnaga, Pantukan, Davao de Oro, during the School Year 2025–2026. Employing a one-group pretest-posttest design, the study measured students' reading comprehension performance before and after the intervention, focusing on literal, inferential, and critical questions. The pretest results indicated that learners had limited comprehension skills, particularly in inferential and critical questions, reflecting lower levels of mastery across the three domains. Following the implementation of code-switching in reading lessons, posttest results showed notable improvement, with learners demonstrating increased mastery in literal and inferential questions and improved performance in critical questions. Paired t-test results confirmed statistically significant differences across all question types, demonstrating that the code-switching intervention effectively enhanced learners' ability to comprehend explicit information, infer implied meanings, and engage in critical evaluation of texts. The improvement was attributed to the strategic alternation between learners' first language and English, which clarified vocabulary, reinforced grammar, and supported higher-order thinking skills. The study concluded that code-switching is an effective instructional strategy for improving reading comprehension among struggling learners. It is recommended that teachers integrate code-switching with activities promoting critical thinking, provide structured guidance, and encourage collaborative and home-based reading practices to sustain and further develop comprehension skills.

**Keywords:** Elementary Education, Reading Comprehension, Code-Switching, Literal Comprehension, Inferential Comprehension, Critical Reading, Quasi Experimental.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in elementary education, as it enables young learners not only to decode texts but also to understand, interpret, and apply information meaningfully. However, improving reading comprehension, especially among learners for whom English is a second language, continues to be a persistent challenge (Augusto, 2022).

In Malaysia, the study of Heredia and Altarriba (2021) emphasized that code-switching, when appropriately integrated into instruction, can serve as a cognitive tool that enhances bilingual learners' comprehension by allowing them to access prior linguistic knowledge.

Similarly, research by Solano-Flores and Trumbull (2021) in Indonesia indicated that strategic language switching during classroom discourse can scaffold understanding and promote higher-order thinking, particularly in multilingual settings. These studies suggest

that allowing flexible movement between languages can support students' comprehension, rather than hinder it.

In Samar, Philippines, Abulencia and Arcangel (2022) found that learners' struggles with reading comprehension were often linked to linguistic mismatches between home and school languages. Their study on Filipino-English bilingual learners highlighted that students who were permitted to process ideas initially in their dominant language before transitioning to English performed better in reading comprehension tasks. This points to the importance of acknowledging students' linguistic backgrounds in designing instruction that fosters comprehension.

Moreover, at Sta. Teresa Elementary School, located in Pantukan North District, Davao de Oro, similar issues have been observed. School-based reading assessments showed that many Grade 3 learners experience difficulties comprehending English texts, resulting in low performance across language subjects. Teachers reported that students often rely on translating words into their mother tongue to understand passages, indicating a natural inclination toward

code-switching strategies. Motivated by these observations, the researcher sought to explore whether the systematic use of code-switching during reading lessons can significantly improve comprehension outcomes.

Thus, this study is aimed to offer insights that could inform teachers, school administrators, and curriculum developers on effective strategies to enhance reading comprehension. By examining the role of code-switching in English reading instruction, the research hoped to contribute to the development of more inclusive, culturally responsive, and effective educational practices that address the diverse linguistic needs of Filipino learners.

## II. RELATED LITERATURE

### ➤ *Code-Switching*

In the field of English language instruction, educators have long sought effective strategies to bridge linguistic gaps without compromising comprehension. One such emerging approach is code-switching, which involves alternating between two or more languages within a conversation or discourse. Rather than viewing the use of a student's first language (L1) as a hindrance, recent studies affirm that, when strategically applied, code-switching can significantly reinforce reading comprehension, particularly among learners with limited proficiency (Zatalini, 2024; Aquino, 2022). This practice has gained recognition for its pragmatic value in supporting learners' engagement with English texts. By leveraging students' linguistic resources, code-switching can facilitate understanding and promote active participation in the learning process. Furthermore, it provides learners with a sense of cognitive security, reducing anxiety and fostering a positive attitude toward language learning.

Code-switching has also been linked to improved vocabulary acquisition (Erdem, 2024). When teachers clarify complex terms using L1, students can make connections between familiar concepts and new English vocabulary. As a result, learners demonstrate stronger retention and application of words in context. This connection facilitates not only immediate comprehension but also long-term language learning. Additionally, it supports learners in navigating abstract ideas and disciplinary content. Consequently, code-switching becomes an essential mechanism for scaffolding linguistic development.

Another significant advantage of code-switching is its role in promoting differentiated instruction (Ghaderi et al., 2024). By responding to learners' varying proficiency levels, teachers can use L1 to provide tailored explanations and scaffolds. Consequently, students who might otherwise struggle are supported in accessing content. This individualized approach encourages equity in the classroom, allowing all learners to progress at their own pace. Moreover, it highlights code-switching as a flexible tool that aligns with learner-centered pedagogies. Therefore, strategic code-switching supports inclusive and differentiated instruction.

Recent studies also highlight the affective benefits of code-switching for language learners (Herawati & Fitriani,

2020). By allowing students to use their L1 when necessary, code-switching reduces anxiety and promotes confidence. As a result, learners are more willing to engage in discussions and take intellectual risks. This emotional support complements cognitive scaffolding, enhancing overall learning outcomes. Additionally, it suggests that code-switching can help create psychologically safe classroom environments. Therefore, teachers should consider both cognitive and affective factors when implementing code-switching strategies.

Furthermore, research indicates that code-switching enhances learner participation and interaction (Aquino, 2022). By allowing occasional use of L1, learners feel more comfortable contributing to discussions. This increased participation fosters collaborative learning and peer-assisted comprehension. As learners interact in a more relaxed environment, classroom dynamics improve, leading to higher engagement levels. Moreover, it demonstrates that code-switching encourages active rather than passive learning. Therefore, its judicious use can transform classroom communication patterns.

### ➤ *Reading Comprehension Skills*

Reading comprehension forms the backbone of academic achievement, influencing not only students' understanding of texts but also their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. As learners engage with written material, they must interpret, integrate, and evaluate ideas, connecting them to prior knowledge and experience. In this regard, reading comprehension goes beyond decoding words; it encompasses a complex cognitive process that enables learners to extract meaning efficiently. In support of this, Afflerbach et al. (2020) emphasize that comprehension is both an active and strategic endeavor, requiring deliberate engagement with the text and reflective thinking.

A crucial element in developing comprehension is the interplay of vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and inferential reasoning. Without a strong vocabulary, readers struggle to grasp the meaning of sentences, which can hinder understanding of broader ideas. Additionally, activating prior knowledge allows students to contextualize new information, facilitating deeper understanding. Furthermore, inferential reasoning empowers readers to bridge gaps between explicit content and implied meaning. Accordingly, Perfetti and Stafura (2021) argue that these components collectively enhance comprehension, ensuring learners can navigate texts with accuracy and confidence.

Effective reading comprehension also involves balancing literal understanding with higher-order thinking. While recognizing explicit facts and ideas is essential, interpreting underlying themes and evaluating arguments challenges students to think critically. This dual focus enables learners to engage with texts on multiple levels, deepening both understanding and retention. In fact, Cain and Oakhill (2021) note that higher-order comprehension skills allow students to analyze content, synthesize information, and draw evidence-based conclusions, all of which are indispensable for academic success.

Strategies for improving reading comprehension often hinge on cognitive approaches that guide learners through the text. Techniques such as summarizing, questioning, predicting, and clarifying help students actively construct meaning rather than passively read. By applying these strategies, learners monitor their comprehension, recognize gaps in understanding, and refine their interpretation. In this context, Snow (2020) highlights that cognitive strategies not only enhance immediate comprehension but also foster the development of long-term analytical and problem-solving skills.

Moreover, instructional strategies that integrate critical thinking and higher-order cognitive skills contribute positively to comprehension. Encouraging students to summarize, question, and predict content helps them engage actively with texts and enhances their ability to process complex information (Cabrera & Villanueva, 2022). These approaches cultivate learners' analytical skills and foster deeper understanding, which is necessary for academic success and real-world problem-solving.

#### ➤ *Research Question*

This study was intended to determine the effectiveness of using code-switching in facilitating reading in English. It was conducted at Sta. Teresa Elementary School, Pantukan North District, Division of Davao de Oro. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

- *What is the Level of the Learner's Reading Comprehension During the Pretest in Terms of:*

- ✓ Literal
- ✓ Inferential
- ✓ Critical Questions; and
- ✓ Overall Reading Comprehension Performance?

- *What is the Level of the Learner's Reading Comprehension During the Posttest in Terms of:*

- ✓ Literal
- ✓ Inferential
- ✓ Critical Questions; and
- ✓ Overall Reading Comprehension Performance?

- *Is there a Significant Difference Between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Learners in Terms of:*

- ✓ Literal
- ✓ Inferential
- ✓ Critical Questions; and
- ✓ Overall Reading Comprehension Performance?

#### ➤ *Null Hypotheses*

In order to treat problems extensively and answer objectively, the researcher formulated this hypothesis, which was tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

- Ho1. There is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the learners in terms of literal, inferential, and critical comprehension skills.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### ➤ *Research Design*

The study utilized a quasi-experimental research design to gather data on the effectiveness of code-switching as a strategy to enhance English reading comprehension. A quasi-experimental design, as outlined by Pallant (2020), allowed for causal inferences despite the lack of random assignment. Specifically, the design followed a pre-test–post-test structure, where participants completed a reading comprehension assessment before and after the intervention. This design enabled the researcher to observe the changes in reading comprehension resulting from the use of code-switching during instruction (Kilic & Aydin, 2021).

#### ➤ *Respondent /Participants*

The subjects for this study included Grade 3 learners at Sta. Teresa Elementary School who had been identified as struggling readers based on initial school-based assessments and the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) pre-test results. These students demonstrated significant challenges in reading comprehension, particularly in areas such as vocabulary recognition and understanding grammar, both of which were essential for comprehending English texts.

#### ➤ *Instruments of the Study*

The primary tool used in this study was the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). This standardized assessment developed by the Department of Education, is designed to determine learners' reading abilities, particularly in word recognition and reading comprehension. Its use is based on DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2018, also known as the Policy Guidelines on the Administration of the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). The Phil-IRI was adopted in this study because it has been widely implemented in Philippine schools and is considered a valid and reliable measure of reading proficiency.

#### ➤ *Procedure*

The research proposal was first reviewed and approved by the research ethics committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards before the conduct of the study. After securing approval, the researcher adopted the pretest and post-test from the Phil-IRI Oral Reading Test, a standardized tool used by the Department of Education to measure students' levels of word recognition and reading comprehension. The subjects of the study were Grade 3 learners at Sta. Teresa Elementary School in Pantukan, Davao de Oro, who had been identified as frustrated readers. The Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) pretest was administered in June 2025 to establish a baseline of the students' reading abilities before the intervention began. Facilitation of reading lessons using code-switching as an intervention strategy started after the approval of the proposal. The post-test was then given immediately after each reading lesson.

The implementation procedure began with a teacher-parent orientation to ensure that all stakeholders were informed about the intervention and its objectives. The pretest and post-test results for the identified frustrated

readers were analyzed and processed using statistical methods. The researcher aimed to determine whether code-switching was an effective tool for improving reading comprehension among the students.

The research process involved several steps. First, the researcher obtained written permission from the Schools' Division Superintendent of Davao de Oro and the School Head of Sta. Teresa Elementary School to conduct the study. Next, the researcher coordinated with the school reading coordinator and English teachers to ensure the program aligned with the school's existing learning plan. The research instrument (CRLA) was validated to confirm its appropriateness for the target learners. Following this, the research paper was reviewed by the Ethics Committee to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. During the intervention sessions, teachers played an active role in managing the students, circulating among groups, and using instructional materials to keep students engaged and focused on the reading tasks.

The pretest and post-test data were carefully processed and analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the code-switching method in enhancing reading comprehension of the Grade 3 learners at Sta. Teresa Elementary School. The results provided valuable insights and recommendations for improving English reading instruction, particularly for students who faced challenges in understanding English texts.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### ➤ *Competence Level of the Learners' Pretest Scores before the Implementation of Code-Switching*

Table 1 Pre-Test Performance of the Learners

Type of Questions	No. of Students	Mean	Std. Deviation	Class Proficiency	Competency Level
<b>Literal</b>	20	5.7	1.949	52%	Nearing Mastery Level
<b>Inferential</b>	20	1.95	0.8256	39%	No Mastery Level
<b>Critical Questions</b>	20	1.2	0.8944	30%	No Mastery Level

The results revealed that the reading comprehension competence of the learners prior to the intervention was generally low, particularly in inferential and critical questions, indicating limited ability to interpret implied meanings, make logical inferences, and critically evaluate texts. For literal questions, students obtained a nearing mastery level. This suggests that many learners were able to identify information explicitly stated in the text, though some still required guidance. In contrast, the performance on inferential questions showed a class proficiency classified as no mastery level, indicating that a substantial number of learners struggled to comprehend ideas that were not directly stated. Performance on critical questions was the lowest, with a class proficiency also classified as no mastery level, showing that learners had difficulty in analyzing, evaluating, or forming judgments based on the text.

##### ➤ *Data Analysis*

To test the hypotheses formulated in this study, the following statistical tools were used to analyze the pre-test and post-test results of the reading comprehension assessments administered to the Grade 3 learners at Sta. Teresa Elementary School:

- **Mean.** This was employed to provide a concise numerical value representing the average reading comprehension performance of the respondents in both the pre-test and post-test. Calculating the mean allowed for an initial comparison of the group's reading abilities before and after the code-switching intervention, serving as a central measure of its overall impact on learners' comprehension.
- **Paired t-test.** This was used to statistically examine whether there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test. By comparing the mean differences in reading comprehension performance to the standard error, the paired t-test determined whether the code-switching strategy produced a significant improvement in students' understanding of English texts. The level of significance was set at 0.05 to ensure that the results were statistically reliable.

The average reading comprehension rating of the students in each criterion was interpreted according to the following scale to classify their performance levels:

Overall, the pretest data highlighted a critical learning gap that underscored the need for targeted instructional interventions. Several factors may have contributed to these deficiencies. According to Lee and Kim (2021), reading comprehension involves multiple cognitive processes, including decoding, inference-making, and critical evaluation, which develop through repeated practice and guided engagement with texts. Learners exposed mainly to rote memorization or form-focused instruction often perform well on literal questions but struggle with inferential and critical thinking tasks. Similarly, Nguyen and Ho (2022) emphasized that students in contexts with limited peer interaction, scaffolded guidance, or strategy-based instruction tend to exhibit lower performance in higher-order comprehension tasks.

➤ *Competence Level of the Learners' Posttest Scores after the Implementation of Code-Switching*

Table 2 Posttest Performance of the Learners

Type of Questions	No. of Students	Mean	Std. Deviation	Class Proficiency	Competency Level
<b>Literal</b>	20	8.850	1.755	80%	Mastery Level
<b>Inferential</b>	20	3.560	2.346	73%	Mastery Level
<b>Critical Questions</b>	20	2.550	0.8256	64%	Nearing Mastery Level

As shown in Table 2, the reading comprehension performance of the 20 learners in the post-test revealed significant improvements across different types of questions following the implementation of code-switching in facilitating English reading.

For literal questions, students demonstrated mastery in identifying and recalling information explicitly stated in the text. This indicates that most learners were able to accurately understand key details, showing the positive effect of integrating their first language to clarify meaning and reinforce understanding.

For inferential questions, learners showed improved ability to interpret implied meanings, make logical inferences, and understand relationships within the text. This suggests that code-switching helped bridge comprehension gaps that previously hindered their understanding of ideas not directly stated in English.

For critical questions, students demonstrated a nearing mastery level in evaluating, analyzing, and forming judgments based on the text. Although improvement was evident, this area remained the most challenging, indicating the need for continued practice in higher-order thinking and evaluative reading skills.

Overall, the learners' reading comprehension performance in the post-test indicated considerable gains,

particularly in literal and inferential comprehension. The results highlight that the use of code-switching as a scaffolding strategy effectively enhanced students' understanding of vocabulary, sentence structures, and textual meaning. While improvements in critical comprehension were observed, additional interventions or complementary strategies may be needed to fully develop learners' evaluative and analytical reading abilities.

These findings suggest that code-switching can serve as a practical approach to strengthen foundational reading comprehension skills while gradually preparing learners to handle more complex, higher-order thinking tasks in English. According to Lin and Chien (2021), using learners' first language in guided instruction helps scaffold comprehension and supports the internalization of new linguistic structures. Similarly, Rodriguez and Santos (2022) emphasized that strategic code-switching facilitates learners' inferential and critical reading by enabling them to connect concepts across languages, enhancing engagement and analytical reasoning. Furthermore, Kumar and Lee (2023) argued that scaffolded bilingual interventions foster confidence in reading while systematically improving comprehension skills across literal, inferential, and evaluative

➤ *Difference Between the Pre-Test Scores and Post-Test Scores of the Subjects*

Table 3 Test of Difference of means in Pretest and Post-test Performances

Type of Questions	Test	t-value	p-value	Remarks
<b>Literal</b>	Pretest	-5.107	<.001	Significant
	Posttest			
<b>Inferential</b>	Pretest	-2.882	0.01	Significant
	Posttest			
<b>Critical</b>	Pretest	-4.761	<.001	Significant
	Posttest			

The results from Table 3 indicate that learners' reading comprehension improved significantly across literal, inferential, and critical question types after the implementation of code-switching in reading lessons. For literal questions, the findings suggest that students were better able to identify and recall explicitly stated information in the text, demonstrating the effectiveness of code-switching

in supporting foundational comprehension skills (Huang & Chen, 2021).

For inferential questions, learners showed noticeable improvement in interpreting implied meanings and making logical connections. The use of their first language alongside English helped bridge comprehension gaps and allowed students to construct meaning more effectively, highlighting

the scaffolding role of code-switching in enhancing inferential thinking (Al-Hamdan & Rahman, 2022).

Critical reading, which requires higher-order analytical and evaluative skills, also showed significant gains. Although learners still faced challenges, code-switching provided the necessary support to promote evaluative reasoning and text-based analysis, gradually developing students' ability to engage with complex ideas (Lee & Park, 2023).

The findings further suggest that integrating learners' first language during instruction can reduce cognitive load, allowing students to focus on comprehension rather than decoding unfamiliar English vocabulary alone. By facilitating smoother understanding, code-switching helped learners participate more actively in discussions and complete reading tasks with greater confidence, reinforcing both engagement and learning outcomes (García & Wei, 2020).

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of teacher guidance in implementing code-switching effectively.

Consistent modeling, structured prompts, and strategic alternation between languages created a supportive environment in which learners could practice comprehension strategies safely. This approach aligns with research advocating scaffolded instruction as essential for helping students transfer reading strategies to independent learning situations (Rodriguez & Santos, 2021).

Overall, the results confirm that code-switching as a scaffolding strategy positively influenced reading comprehension. The intervention helped learners progress from limited understanding toward stronger performance across different comprehension levels, supporting both language development and higher-order thinking. These outcomes emphasize the potential of bilingual scaffolding to enhance literacy skills while gradually promoting learner autonomy (Martínez & Kim, 2022).

## V. RECOMMENDATION

➤ *Based on the Findings of the Study, the Following Recommendations are Presented:*

- English teachers are encouraged to integrate code-switching into reading lessons, especially for learners who struggle with comprehension. Alternating between English and the learners' first language can help clarify complex vocabulary, grammatical structures, and key concepts, making reading materials more accessible.
- It is recommended that code-switching be paired with activities that promote higher-order thinking skills, such as guided discussions, reflective writing, and text-based problem-solving tasks. This will further enhance learners' ability to infer meaning, analyze information, and evaluate texts critically.
- School administrators are encouraged to conduct training and workshops for teachers on the effective use of code-switching in reading instruction. These capacity-building activities may focus on bilingual scaffolding strategies,

lesson planning techniques, and ways to monitor and assess learners' reading progress.

- Future researchers are encouraged to explore the effects of code-switching on other language skills such as vocabulary development, writing proficiency, and oral communication to determine its broader impact on learners' overall language competence across different grade levels.
- Teachers and parents are encouraged to strengthen collaboration in providing a supportive reading environment beyond the classroom. Activities such as shared reading sessions, bilingual storytelling, and interactive language exercises may help reinforce learners' comprehension skills and sustain the gains achieved through classroom instruction.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the Grade 3 learners at Sta. Teresa Elementary School initially exhibited limited reading comprehension skills, particularly in inferential and critical comprehension, while showing relatively better understanding of literal information during the pretest. This indicates that learners required structured instructional support to comprehend and analyze English texts beyond surface-level understanding.

After the implementation of code-switching as a scaffolding strategy in English reading lessons, the learners demonstrated improved performance across literal, inferential, and critical comprehension skills during the post-test. This improvement shows that learners were able to better understand texts after instruction that integrated code-switching. Therefore, in relation to the specific problems of the study, it can be concluded that code-switching was effective in improving learners' reading comprehension in English.

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