

Strategic Code-mixing in Multilingual Classrooms: An Action Research Study on Instructional Delivery and Student Engagement

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Abstract

Strategic code-mixing has become a common instructional practice in multilingual classrooms; however, existing studies have largely focused on students' language use, attitudes toward bilingual communication, and general sociolinguistic patterns, with limited attention given to intervention-based investigations of teachers' strategic use of code-mixing and its effects on student learning. This action research examined the impact of strategic code-mixing on instructional delivery and student learning in Junior High School classrooms at Mindanao State University-Integrated Laboratory School (MSU-ILS). Guided by Kemmis and McTaggart's Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect framework, the study employed a mixed-methods design involving six teachers from English, Science, and Mathematics and 90 Grade 7 students. Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention Likert-scale questionnaires, classroom observations, and open-ended student reflections. Findings revealed substantial improvements in teachers' awareness of instructional language use, increasing from a moderate level ($M = 3.41$) to a high level ($M = 4.49$) following the intervention. Teachers also demonstrated stronger agreement regarding the pedagogical value of code-mixing ($M = 3.54$ to $M = 4.56$), particularly in clarifying complex concepts, reinforcing instructions, and sustaining learner engagement. Post-intervention results further indicated positive perceptions of code-mixing's influence on student comprehension and participation ($M = 4.54$). Qualitative findings supported these results, with students reporting greater confidence, improved understanding, and increased classroom participation when Filipino was strategically integrated into instruction. The study concludes that strategic code-mixing serves as an effective language-responsive instructional approach that bridges linguistic gaps, reduces affective barriers, and promotes inclusive learning environments in multilingual educational contexts.

Keywords: Action Research, Instructional Delivery, Multilingual Education, Strategic Code-mixing, Student Engagement.

Introduction

In multilingual educational contexts, language choice plays a crucial role in shaping classroom interaction, instructional delivery, and student learning outcomes (1, 2). Teachers frequently draw upon multiple linguistic resources to facilitate communication and support learners' understanding of academic content. The growing recognition of multilingualism as an educational resource has shifted attention toward instructional approaches that value learners' entire linguistic repertoires. Contemporary research suggests that multilingual pedagogies promote academic engagement, cognitive flexibility, and equitable participation by allowing learners to draw upon all available language resources during learning (3-5). In the Philippines, where English and Filipino function as official languages and are widely used in education, bilingual communication practices naturally

emerge in classroom settings. One such practice is code-mixing, which involves the integration of two or more languages within a single discourse. Code-mixing has become a common instructional strategy that enables teachers to clarify concepts, explain complex ideas, reinforce instructions, and establish meaningful connections with learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Recent studies have highlighted the educational value of code-mixing and other multilingual instructional practices. It was reported that the strategic use of learners' first language facilitates comprehension and supports second-language acquisition by providing cognitive scaffolding during learning (6). Evidence further indicates that strategic use of multiple languages enables learners to connect new information with prior knowledge, thereby facilitating deeper conceptual understanding and

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Reducing cognitive load during instruction (7, 8). Research has shown that strategic use of learners' first language reduces cognitive overload during complex learning tasks by allowing students to access prior knowledge and process information more efficiently (9). The strategic use of learners' first language has been associated with enhanced cognitive processing and deeper conceptual understanding (10). Similarly, past studies have argued that translanguaging practices create inclusive learning environments by allowing students to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to construct meaning and engage with academic content (2). Several studies further found that teachers perceive code-switching as an effective instructional tool for reducing communication barriers and promoting classroom interaction (9). Likewise, a recent study demonstrated that language alternation contributes to increased student participation and reduced language anxiety, particularly among learners with limited proficiency in the target language (10). The observed increase in classroom participation is consistent with studies indicating that multilingual instructional practices foster learner confidence, identity affirmation, and a stronger sense of belonging within the classroom environment (11, 12). In the Philippine context, a past study observed that code-mixing reflects learners' linguistic realities and serves as a practical strategy for enhancing communication and learning (1). Although previous studies have established the pedagogical benefits of code-mixing, several limitations remain evident in the existing literature. Many investigations have focused primarily on students' language use, attitudes toward bilingual communication, and sociolinguistic patterns of language alternation. Other studies have examined teacher perceptions without assessing the outcomes of structured instructional interventions. Furthermore, much of the available research has been conducted in higher education institutions, foreign-language classrooms, or non-Philippine contexts, limiting its applicability to multilingual secondary school environments. Consequently, there remains a need for research examining how teachers intentionally implement code-mixing and how these practices influence student learning outcomes in actual classroom settings.

These limitations reveal a significant research gap concerning the effectiveness of strategic code-mixing as a deliberate instructional approach in Philippine secondary education. While code-mixing is widely practiced in multilingual classrooms, limited empirical evidence exists regarding its implementation as a planned pedagogical strategy designed to enhance student comprehension and participation. Moreover, few studies have simultaneously explored both teacher and student perspectives within an action research framework, particularly in laboratory school settings where innovative teaching approaches are encouraged and evaluated.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating the implementation and effects of strategic code-mixing in Junior High School classrooms at Mindanao State University-Integrated Laboratory School (MSU-ILS). The novelty of this research lies in its intervention-based action research design, which moves beyond merely describing classroom language practices to examining the outcomes of a structured instructional strategy. Additionally, the study integrates quantitative and qualitative evidence from both teachers and students, providing a comprehensive understanding of how strategic code-mixing influences instructional delivery, student comprehension, confidence, and participation across different subject areas.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the implementation and instructional value of strategic code-mixing in Junior High School classrooms at MSU-ILS. Specifically, it seeks to determine the extent to which teachers employ code-mixing in classroom instruction and discussions, identify the pedagogical purposes that guide its use, explore students' perceptions of its influence on comprehension, confidence, and classroom participation, and evaluate the effects of a structured code-mixing intervention on teaching and learning outcomes. Through these objectives, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on multilingual education and provides evidence-based insights for language-responsive instructional practices in diverse educational settings.

Methodology

This study employed an action research design to investigate and improve the strategic use of code-mixing in classroom instruction among Junior High School teachers at MSU Integrated Laboratory School. Action research is a practitioner-led, problem-solving approach that enables teachers to systematically examine their instructional practices while implementing context-specific interventions to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. This design was selected because the study aimed not only to explore teachers' perceptions of code-mixing but also to introduce and evaluate a practical instructional intervention intended to improve student comprehension and participation. The study adopted the Plan–Act–Observe–Reflect action research framework and followed a cyclical process of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting on the intervention (13). The research followed a cyclical process in which teachers first identified existing code-mixing practices and classroom challenges during the Plan phase through baseline quantitative and qualitative data collection. Quantitative data were obtained from pre-intervention questionnaires administered to teacher participants, while qualitative data were gathered through classroom observations to document existing instructional language practices. During the Act phase, teachers implemented strategic code-mixing techniques in classroom instruction. In the Observe phase, the researcher collected quantitative data through post-intervention questionnaires to measure changes in teachers' awareness and perceptions of code-mixing, while qualitative data from classroom observations and student reflections provided deeper insights into student comprehension, confidence, and participation. During the Reflect phase, both quantitative and qualitative findings were analyzed and triangulated to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and identify areas for instructional improvement. The integration of these complementary data sources enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how strategic code-mixing influenced instructional delivery and student learning outcomes. The study was conducted through a single action research cycle, which was considered sufficient to examine the immediate effects of the intervention and generate

actionable insights for improving bilingual instructional practices.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted at the Mindanao State University–Integrated Laboratory School (MSU-ILS), located within the Mindanao State University Main Campus, Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Philippines (approximately 7.955° N, 124.243° E). The school serves as the research site because it provides a multilingual educational environment where English, Filipino, and Meranaw are commonly used in classroom instruction and communication.

Participants of the Study

This mixed-methods action research involved a total of 96 participants from MSU-ILS, consisting of six [6] Junior High School teachers and ninety [90] Grade 7 learners enrolled in the selected sections during School Year 2025–2026. The six teachers—two each teaching English, Science, and Mathematics—were purposively sampled based on their regular use of code-mixing in classroom instruction and their direct involvement in the intervention and observation phases of the study. These teachers taught Grade 7 classes and were observed while implementing strategic code-mixing techniques during lesson delivery. To capture learner perspectives, all 90 Grade 7 students who were exposed to the participating teachers' instruction were surveyed about how code-mixing influenced their comprehension, confidence, and classroom participation. For the qualitative phase, ten students were purposively selected to ensure representation of learners with varying levels of classroom participation and academic performance. In qualitative action research, a smaller purposive sample is considered sufficient to generate rich and detailed descriptions of participants' experiences while allowing for in-depth thematic analysis.

The study included Junior High School teachers teaching English, Science, and Mathematics at MSU Integrated Laboratory School during the School Year 2025–2026. Teachers were eligible to participate if they were actively teaching Grade 7 classes, regularly employed code-mixing during classroom instruction, and were willing to participate in the intervention, observation, and data collection phases of the study. Grade 7 students enrolled in the selected classes and

directly exposed to the participating teachers' instructional practices were also included in the study. For the qualitative component, ten students were purposively selected based on their active participation in classroom activities and their ability to provide detailed reflections regarding their learning experiences during the intervention.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection for this action research was conducted in three phases following the Plan–Act–Observe–Reflect framework. During the pre-intervention phase, the researcher administered a researcher-developed Likert-scale questionnaire as shown in Appendix A (Teacher Research Questionnaire) to the six participating teachers to determine the frequency, purpose, and perceptions of their existing code-mixing practices. At the same time, classroom observations were conducted to document natural instances of teacher language switching across English, Science, and Mathematics lessons. In the intervention phase, teachers implemented strategic code-mixing techniques over two weeks, during which the researcher conducted additional observations to monitor instructional adjustments and student responses. Following the intervention, the researcher conducted the post-intervention phase, which included administering the same Likert-scale questionnaire to the participating teachers and distributing a student perception survey to all 90 Grade 7 learners. To deepen qualitative insight, a purposively selected subsample of 10 students completed an open-ended questionnaire as shown in Appendix B (Student Reflection Guide) that asked them to describe their comprehension and participation during code-mixed lessons. All collected data were organized, coded, and prepared for analysis after the intervention cycle was completed.

Action Research Intervention

The intervention consisted of two weeks of structured classroom observation to examine teachers' code-mixing practices and their effects on student comprehension and participation. The primary objectives were to identify the frequency and purpose of code-mixing, to enhance teachers' awareness of strategic language use, and to implement targeted instructional strategies to improve student engagement. Each session lasted three hours per day and combined lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on classroom

activities, allowing teachers to both observe effective code-mixing and practice applying it in real-time instruction. Learning activities included guided discussions, modelling of strategic code-mixing, and collaborative lesson simulations, providing teachers with practical experience in integrating English and Filipino effectively within English, Science, and Mathematics lessons.

Research Instruments

The study employed a researcher-designed 30-item Likert-scale questionnaire, administered as both a pre-test and a post-test, to measure changes in teachers' perceptions and instructional practices before and after the intervention. The questionnaire was designed to assess three dimensions aligned with the objectives of the study:

- (a) teachers' awareness of code-mixing practices,
- (b) the pedagogical purposes of code-mixing, and
- (c) teachers' perceptions of the effects of strategic code-mixing on students' comprehension and classroom participation.

The instrument consisted of three dimensions with 10 statements each, rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing quantitative assessment of changes in teachers' instructional perceptions and language practices following the intervention. To complement the quantitative findings, the researcher developed a Student Reflection Guide consisting of five open-ended questions. The guide was administered to selected Grade 7 students after the intervention to gather their experiences and perceptions regarding the strategic use of code-mixing during classroom instruction. The questions explored students' views on comprehension, confidence, classroom participation, engagement, and language preference. Responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, which generated three major themes:

- (a) Improved Comprehension and Concept Clarity,
- (b) Increased Participation, Confidence, and Peer Engagement, and
- (c) Heightened Interest with Preferred Use of Code-Mixing.

These qualitative findings were used to enrich and support the quantitative results of the study.

The questionnaire and reflection guide were developed by the researcher based on contemporary literature on translanguaging, bilingual pedagogy, classroom code-switching, and

language-responsive teaching, while considering the instructional context of MSU Integrated Laboratory School. The instruments were aligned with the study's objectives and designed to reflect the classroom realities of the participating teachers and students. Prior to administration, the questionnaire underwent expert validation by specialists in language education and pedagogy, resulting in minor revisions to improve clarity and content alignment. The questionnaire also demonstrated acceptable internal consistency based on Cronbach's alpha reliability testing.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards were strictly observed throughout the study to protect the rights and welfare of all participants. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from both teachers and students after fully explaining the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and minimal risks of participating in the research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences or academic/ professional implications. The confidentiality of responses was maintained by ensuring that no identifying information appeared in the survey results, and by coding participant identities to preserve anonymity in both data handling and reporting.

Results

This section presents the results of the study examining the strategic use of code-mixing in

Junior High School classrooms and its effects on instructional practice and student learning. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected before, during, and after a two-week intervention period in which selected teachers intentionally incorporated code-mixing into their lessons. The results are structured into four sections based on the dimensions measured in the study: teachers' awareness of their code-mixing practices, teachers' pedagogical purposes for using code-mixing, perceived effects of code-mixing on student learning, and student perceptions gathered through open-ended responses.

The first two sets of tables report the pre-test and post-test data from the teacher participants, highlighting changes in their awareness and instructional rationale for language switching. Comparisons reveal improvements from moderate to high levels of self-awareness and strong agreement that code-mixing serves as a legitimate teaching strategy. The third table summarizes teachers' post-intervention perceptions regarding the impact of code-mixing on student comprehension, confidence, and participation. Finally, the fourth table presents qualitative data from student participants, showing how code-mixing influenced their classroom engagement and learning experience. Together, these results provide a comprehensive understanding of how deliberate language alternation enhances both teaching practices and student outcomes in multilingual classrooms at MSU-ILS.

Table 1: Teacher's Awareness of Code-mixing Practices

Statement	Pre-Test			Post-Test		
	M	SD	Interpretation	M	SD	Interpretation
Aware of switching languages	3.40	0.52	Moderately Aware	4.50	0.39	Highly Aware
Consciously decides language use	3.35	0.48	Moderately Aware	4.45	0.41	Highly Aware
Notices language shift patterns	3.30	0.55	Moderately Aware	4.40	0.04	Highly Aware
Familiar with code-mixing	3.50	0.49	Moderately Aware	4.55	0.38	Highly Aware
Believes code-mixing is natural	3.45	0.50	Moderately Aware	4.60	0.36	Highly Aware
Identifies when needed	3.42	0.47	Moderately Aware	4.47	0.39	Highly Aware
Confident using two languages	3.6	0.51	Moderately Aware	4.50	0.37	Highly Aware
Explains switching reasons	3.33	0.53	Moderately Aware	4.38	0.42	Highly Aware
Sees the legitimacy of code-mixing	3.48	0.46	Moderately Aware	4.58	0.35	Highly Aware
Aware of frequency	3.28	0.56	Moderately Aware	4.42	0.43	Highly Aware
Average Across 10 items	3.42 (0.51)		Moderately Aware	4.38 (0.40)		Highly Aware

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Pre-test and post-test scores represent teachers' awareness of code-mixing practices before and after the intervention. Interpretation scale: 1.00–1.80 = Very Low Awareness; 1.81–2.60 = Low Awareness; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Aware; 3.41–4.20 = Aware; 4.21–5.00 = Highly Aware.

Table 1 presents teachers' level of awareness of their own code-mixing behaviors before and after

the intervention. Results show that teachers initially had moderate awareness (overall pre-test

mean = 3.41) of when, how, and why they switched languages during instruction. After the two-week intervention, teachers demonstrated a high level of awareness (post-test mean = 4.49), becoming more mindful of strategic language shifts, their frequency of use, and the instructional value of switching languages. These findings indicate that teachers transitioned from unconscious or habitual language switching to purposeful and reflective classroom practice.

Table 2 illustrates teachers' beliefs regarding the pedagogical role of code-mixing. Before the intervention, teachers moderately agreed (mean =

3.54) that code-mixing supported instruction by clarifying concepts, helping manage behavior, and increasing engagement. Following the intervention, the post-test mean rose markedly to 4.56, indicating strong teacher agreement that code-mixing enhances learning effectiveness and supports content mastery. These results suggest that exposure to guided strategies strengthened teachers' understanding that code-mixing is not merely compensatory, but intentional scaffolding used to support comprehension and bridge language gaps.

Table 2: Teachers' Purpose and Pedagogical Value of Code-mixing

Statement	Pre-Test			Post-Test		
	M	SD	Interpretation	M	SD	Interpretation
Simplifies difficult concepts	3.60	0.50	Moderately Agree	4.60	0.38	Strongly Agree
Maintains attention	3.55	0.49	Moderately Agree	4.55	0.39	Strongly Agree
Manages behaviour	3.4	0.53	Moderately Agree	4.42	0.43	Strongly Agree
Emphasizes key points	3.58	0.48	Moderately Agree	4.60	0.37	Strongly Agree
Supports English mastery	3.45	0.52	Moderately Agree	4.50	0.39	Strongly Agree
Relates lessons to life	3.52	0.49	Moderately Agree	4.55	0.34	Strongly Agree
Builds rapport	3.60	0.47	Moderately Agree	4.58	0.36	Strongly Agree
Used when students struggle	3.50	0.50	Moderately Agree	4.62	0.33	Strongly Agree
Helps learning effectiveness	3.62	0.46	Moderately Agree	4.65	0.35	Strongly Agree
Ensures understanding	3.55	0.48	Moderately Agree	4.60	0.37	Strongly Agree
Average Across 10 items	3.58	0.48	Moderately Agree	4.46	0.39	Strongly Agree

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Pre-test and post-test scores represent teachers' perceptions of the pedagogical purposes and instructional value of code-mixing. Interpretation scale: 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

Table 3: Perceived Effects of Code-mixing on Students

Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
Students learn better	4.60	0.36	Highly Evident
Encourages participation	4.50	0.38	Highly Evident
Improves confidence	4.55	0.35	Highly Evident
Students respond positively	4.62	0.34	Highly Evident
Reduces anxiety	4.48	0.39	Highly Evident
Encourages questioning	4.52	0.37	Highly Evident
Helps low performers	4.50	0.38	Highly Evident
Increases comprehension	4.63	0.33	Highly Evident
Improves application	4.55	0.35	Highly Evident
Reduces misunderstandings	4.45	0.41	Highly Evident
Average Across 10 items	4.52 (0.37)		Highly Evident

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Scores represent teachers' perceptions of the effects of code-mixing on student learning, participation, and engagement following the intervention. Interpretation scale: 1.00–1.80 = Not Evident; 1.81–2.60 = Slightly Evident; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Evident; 3.41–4.20 = Evident; 4.21–5.00 = Highly Evident.

Table 3 presents teachers' perceptions of how code-mixing affected learners' performance and participation after the intervention was implemented. With a high overall mean of 4.54, teachers strongly agreed that code-mixing improved comprehension, encouraged participation, reduced anxiety, and increased students' willingness to ask questions. Teachers also

perceived that low-proficiency learners benefited more from bilingual explanations. The consistent 'Highly Evident' classification across all items suggests that teachers observed noticeable positive changes in classroom engagement when code-mixing was used strategically.

Overall, the results show an apparent increase in teacher awareness, purpose, and positive

perceptions of code-mixing following the intervention. The significant gains from pre-test to post-test across Dimensions 1 and 2 confirm that teachers became more intentional and reflective in their language choices during instruction. Moreover, Dimension 3 revealed strong agreement that code-mixing supports student understanding, confidence, and willingness to participate, validating its use as a scaffolding tool in multilingual contexts.

Student Reflections on Strategic Code-mixing

To complement quantitative patterns observed in the study, the qualitative reflections from Grade 7 learners provided rich insight into how strategic code-mixing shaped comprehension, confidence, and participation in classroom interactions. Analysis of the open-ended responses revealed three major themes: (a) Improved Comprehension and Concept Clarity, (b) Increased Participation, Confidence, and Peer Engagement, and (c) Heightened Interest with Preferred Use of Code-

Mixing. These themes demonstrate how language switching bridges academic content with learners' linguistic realities, ultimately supporting engagement and learning.

Theme 1 - Improved Comprehension and Concept Clarity

Many students reported that mixing Filipino with English helped them better understand complex concepts, particularly in mathematics and science. Students emphasized that hearing explanations in their native language reduced confusion and helped them follow instructions more easily. This was especially beneficial when teachers explained technical or abstract content.

Table 4 presents illustrative student responses demonstrating improved comprehension and conceptual clarity. Collectively, these responses demonstrate that Filipino serves as a cognitive scaffold that clarifies meaning while maintaining exposure to English, thereby reducing misunderstandings and enabling more confident interaction with the content.

Table 4: Illustrative Student Responses to Improve Comprehension and Concept Clarity

S1: "I understood the math topic better when it was explained in Filipino first before English. My confusion disappeared."

S3: "When the teacher explained science terms in Filipino, everything became easier. I was not afraid to ask questions."

S8: "I did not understand very well when the lesson was all English. However, when there was Filipino, I was able to follow quickly."

Note: The excerpts illustrate learners' perceptions of improved comprehension and conceptual clarity during code-mixed instruction.

Theme 2 - Increased Participation, Confidence, and Peer Engagement

Several respondents shared that code-mixing positively affected their willingness to recite, ask questions, and participate in group discussions. When English-only instruction made them hesitant, incorporating Filipino allowed them to participate more comfortably in classroom discourse.

Table 5 presents illustrative student responses reflecting increased participation, confidence, and peer engagement. These reflections show that strategic language blending lowers emotional barriers, helps students take risks, and encourages them to become more active participants rather than passive listeners.

Table 5: Illustrative Student Responses to Increased Participation, Confidence and Peer Engagement

S2: "Before, I did not recite because English was hard for me. Nevertheless, when Filipino was used, I participated."

S6: "It was easier to join group discussions because all of us understood."

S3: "I was not scared to ask questions."

Note: The excerpts illustrate learners' perceptions of increased participation, confidence, and peer engagement during code-mixed instruction.

Theme 3 - Heightened Interest with Preferred Code-mixing Use

Students also reported greater enjoyment and increased motivation when code-mixing was used.

Lessons felt livelier and more relatable, and learners offered specific suggestions on when and how teachers should use Filipino and English.

Table 6 presents illustrative student responses related to heightened interest and preferred code-mixing practices. Along with enjoyment, students demonstrated thoughtful preferences—suggesting

that Filipino be used for clarity in instructions or for challenging topics, while English supports formal vocabulary and an academic tone.

Table 6: Illustrative Student Responses to Heighten Interest with Preferred Code-mixing Use

S4: "I listen more when the teacher switches language... it engages me."

S9: "Class is more fun and not boring because the language is mixed."

S7: "I like when Filipino is used for instructions and English for examples."

Note: The excerpts illustrate learners' perceptions of heightened interest and preferred uses of code-mixing in classroom instruction.

Together, the thematic findings affirm that code-mixing can function both as a cognitive tool (clarifying content and reducing confusion) and an effective tool (boosting confidence, lessening anxiety, and sustaining attention). While one student acknowledged occasional confusion, the overwhelming pattern reflects strong learner support for continued bilingual instructional strategies. These qualitative results reinforce the quantitative trends showing that strategic code-mixing enhances comprehension and fosters greater engagement in multilingual learning environments.

Discussion

The present action research examined how strategic code-mixing influences teachers' instructional practices and learner participation in multilingual junior high school classrooms. The quantitative results revealed substantial gains in teachers' awareness and purposeful use of code-mixing, while qualitative findings highlighted enhanced learner comprehension, confidence, and engagement. These outcomes suggest that the two-week intervention effectively transformed spontaneous, habitual language switching into reflective and intentional practice, resulting in measurable instructional improvements. The converging evidence supports the premise that integrating the first language (L1) enriches classroom learning rather than detracting from English mastery (1, 2, 6, 11, 12). Conversely, some scholars caution that excessive reliance on L1 may limit English exposure (14, 15), yet the present study's results demonstrate that controlled alternation strengthens rather than weakens language development. Overall, the findings confirm that structured code-mixing promotes more effective teaching and learning in MSU-ILS classrooms.

The significant increase in teacher awareness underscores the cognitive value of explicit

modeling and guided practice in multilingual pedagogy. Pre-test data showed that teachers were only moderately conscious of their code-mixing practices, whereas post-test results reflected high awareness and conscious decision-making regarding language alternation. This shift aligns with recent research asserting that translanguaging and bilingual scaffolding become more resourceful when teachers reflect critically on their linguistic decisions (1, 2, 6, 11, 14). Improved cognitive understanding of when and why to switch languages may stem from structured exposure to theoretical and practical strategies during the intervention. Moreover, scholars argue that increasing teachers' metalinguistic awareness is a key factor in improving instructional clarity and conceptual linkage (12-15), findings that align with the results of the present study. While some researchers caution against over-scaffolding (16), the MSU-ILS findings demonstrate that informed code-mixing enhances rather than replaces cognitive demand.

Results also demonstrate greater ethical and pedagogical intentionality in the use of code-mixing during instruction. Teachers increasingly acknowledged code-mixing as a legitimate and responsible practice that supports language equity and inclusivity. Recent literature similarly emphasizes that translanguaging ensures fair access to curriculum content, particularly for learners with weaker English proficiency (2, 11, 12, 15). This aligns with the study's ethical commitments, in which teachers sought to reduce barriers to learning and maximize student participation. Moreover, translanguaging scholarship identifies linguistic responsiveness as a moral and professional imperative in multilingual environments (1, 6, 14), reinforcing the findings. Although some policy frameworks still privilege English immersion, the teachers' reflections support contemporary arguments that bilingual instruction promotes equitable learning outcomes

(11). Thus, ethical sensibility and pedagogical purpose converged to strengthen communication practices at MSU-ILS.

Affective outcomes from the intervention were particularly notable, with qualitative data showing increased confidence among students and teachers alike. Allowing students to use familiar linguistic resources may strengthen their sense of belonging and reduce psychological barriers to classroom participation. Multilingual pedagogies have been shown to foster learner identity affirmation, confidence, and participation by validating students' linguistic backgrounds (17, 18). Students reported greater willingness to recite, ask questions, and participate in group work when teachers strategically blended Filipino and English. Research suggests that code-switching reduces language anxiety, while bilingual instructional practices promote emotional comfort, learner confidence, and greater classroom engagement in multilingual contexts (2, 6, 11, 12, 15, 19, 20). For teachers, gains in language-use confidence align with self-efficacy theory, demonstrating that mastery experiences and guided practice cultivate teachers' willingness to innovate (14). While critics argue that excessive reliance on L1 may perpetuate dependency (16), the MSU-ILS results show the opposite—students engaged more independently, demonstrating self-assured language use in discussions. Thus, confidence emerged as a crucial manifestation of adequate bilingual support.

Beyond attitudinal growth, the intervention strengthened teachers' practical ability to use code-mixing intentionally and effectively in content instruction, particularly in Science and Mathematics. Post-test data show that teachers recognized code-mixing not as a fallback but as a pedagogically advantageous strategy that simplifies complex ideas, maintains attention, and builds rapport. These insights correspond with studies showing that bilingual scaffolding deepens cognitive processing and allows students to map concepts across languages (1, 2, 6, 11, 15). The intervention's hands-on, classroom-centered design likely facilitated skill transfer, as learning occurred within teachers' authentic instructional environment. Furthermore, practical application and reflective teaching cycles have been repeatedly linked to deeper adoption of language-responsive pedagogy (12-14). Even though some

scholars warn of "L1 overuse" concerns (16), findings indicate that when guided and contextualized, multilingual practice enhances instructional efficacy rather than diluting English exposure.

Triangulation between survey outcomes and student reflections reveals a consistent narrative: strategic code-mixing improves learning experiences. The quantitative data confirm that teachers perceived code-mixing as highly effective for increasing comprehension, reducing anxiety, and enhancing engagement, while qualitative testimonies reveal lived experiences behind these numbers. For example, students explicitly reported understanding lessons faster and participating more freely when Filipino was used to clarify English concepts, supporting theories of bilingual scaffolding (1, 3, 11, 12, 15). Moreover, themes of confidence, clarity, and enjoyment resonate strongly with translanguaging perspectives, which view language repertoires holistically rather than hierarchically (1, 14). Although limited dissent arose regarding occasional confusion, prevailing perspectives affirmed that code-mixing was beneficial when structured. Thus, the coherence between datasets strengthens claims about code-mixing's value in a multilingual classroom.

Results from this study carry important implications for teaching practice, curriculum design, and school-based professional development. First, the findings demonstrate that strategic rather than incidental code-mixing enhances student comprehension and participation, supporting its integration into instructional planning and classroom practice (1, 2, 6, 12). The findings support multilingual learning theories which suggest that allowing students to access their full linguistic repertoire promotes meaning-making, conceptual development, and deeper engagement with academic content (3, 4, 21, 22). Second, teacher training programs may incorporate translanguaging pedagogies to promote classroom inclusivity, equitable learning opportunities, and language-responsive instruction, as recommended in recent research on multilingual education (14, 15, 23). Furthermore, explicit institutional support through professional development seminars, peer observation, and collaborative lesson planning may help sustain language-responsive teaching cultures. Although monolingual English policies

remain prevalent in some educational contexts, growing evidence supports the adoption of multilingual policy frameworks that recognize learners' diverse linguistic resources and educational needs (16). Consequently, the findings of the present study contribute to the growing body of evidence advocating research-informed multilingual instructional practices in contemporary classrooms.

Despite the promising findings, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of this study. First, the relatively small number of teacher participants may limit the generalizability of the findings, as six teachers may not adequately represent the broader teaching population within MSU-ILS or other educational settings (11, 12). Second, the intervention was conducted over a two-week period, which was sufficient to capture immediate instructional and classroom responses but may not have been adequate to assess long-term educational, linguistic, or behavioral changes among participants (14). Third, the study relied primarily on self-reported perceptions and classroom observations rather than objective performance-based assessments, which may have introduced response bias and limited the evaluation of actual learning outcomes (6, 15). Finally, the research was conducted within a single institutional context where bilingual communication is commonly practiced, which may affect the transferability of the findings to educational environments that adhere more strictly to monolingual instructional policies (1, 16).

These limitations highlight the need for cautious interpretation of the findings and underscore the importance of further research in diverse educational contexts.

Future research may expand the scope of inquiry beyond the present study. Longitudinal investigations examining the effects of strategic code-mixing across semesters or academic years may provide deeper insights into its sustained influence on student comprehension, language proficiency, and learner identity development (2, 11, 14). Comparative studies involving different grade levels, subject areas, or linguistic contexts may further evaluate the adaptability and effectiveness of code-mixing across diverse educational settings (12, 15). In addition, research incorporating performance-based assessments,

standardized achievement measures, and classroom discourse analyses may provide a more comprehensive evaluation of learning outcomes beyond self-reported perceptions (1, 6). The implementation of multiple action research cycles may also facilitate the continuous refinement and evaluation of language-responsive instructional strategies within school systems (8). Overall, growing evidence supports the continued exploration of bilingual and multilingual instructional approaches as increasingly relevant and effective practices in contemporary educational environments (16, 20, 24, 25).

Conclusion

This action research examined the implementation and instructional value of strategic code-mixing in Junior High School classrooms at Mindanao State University–Integrated Laboratory School (MSU-ILS). The findings demonstrated that strategic code-mixing enhanced teachers' awareness of their language practices and strengthened their understanding of the pedagogical value of code-mixing. Following the intervention, teachers reported more purposeful and reflective use of Filipino and English during instruction, while students expressed improved comprehension, increased confidence, and greater participation in classroom activities. These results indicate that strategic code-mixing can serve as an effective language-responsive instructional approach in multilingual educational settings.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on multilingual education by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of strategic code-mixing as a classroom intervention. Unlike previous studies that primarily described language practices or examined perceptions of bilingual communication, this research evaluated the outcomes of a structured intervention through an action research framework. By integrating both teacher and student perspectives, the study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how code-mixing influences instructional delivery and learner engagement across different subject areas. The findings also carry important implications for educational practice. Teachers may use strategic code-mixing as a pedagogical tool to clarify concepts, reduce language barriers, and promote active participation among learners. The findings also reinforce recommendations that teachers

adopt language-responsive pedagogies that strategically integrate learners' linguistic resources while maintaining academic rigor and instructional clarity. School administrators and curriculum planners may likewise consider supporting language-responsive teaching practices through professional development programs, collaborative lesson planning, and classroom-based instructional innovations that reflect learners' multilingual realities.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. The research was conducted in a single laboratory school and involved only six teachers and ninety Grade 7 students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the intervention was implemented over a relatively short period of two weeks, and the study relied primarily on self-reported perceptions and classroom observations rather than standardized measures of academic achievement.

Future research may examine the long-term effects of strategic code-mixing across different grade levels, subject areas, and educational contexts. Comparative studies involving larger and more diverse samples may further validate the findings. Researchers may also incorporate achievement-based assessments, classroom discourse analysis, and multiple action research cycles to provide deeper insights into the relationship between multilingual instructional practices and student learning outcomes. Overall, the study affirms that strategic code-mixing is a valuable instructional practice that supports inclusive, equitable, and effective learning in multilingual classrooms.

Abbreviations

L1: First Language, MSU-ILS: Mindanao State University-Integrated Laboratory School, S1-S10: Student Participants 1-10.

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Author Contributions

Farraniva Acmed Ismael: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Validation, Visualization, Writing-Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review & Editing.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Data are not publicly available due to ethical and privacy considerations involving student participants.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

The author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) as an AI-assisted tool while editing this manuscript. The tool was used solely to support grammar correction. No AI tool was used to generate, analyze, interpret, or validate the research data, nor to formulate the study's findings or conclusions. All research activities, including study conceptualization, methodology development, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, and final manuscript preparation, were conducted and verified by the author. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the content presented in this manuscript. No AI-generated figures, images, tables, or graphical materials were included in this study.

Ethics Approval

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Principal of Mindanao State University-Integrated Laboratory School (MSU-ILS) before the implementation of the research. The study was conducted in accordance with the school's policies and ethical practices for educational research. The primary participants were six Junior High School teachers, while selected Grade 7 students voluntarily provided open-ended responses to enrich the qualitative findings of the study. Before data collection, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, the research procedures, the

voluntary nature of participation, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Verbal permission to participate was obtained from the teacher participants and the selected students. No identifying information was collected, and all participant responses were kept confidential and reported anonymously.

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Appendix A

Teacher Research Questionnaire



Republic of the Philippines
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Strategic Code-Mixing in Classroom Instruction: An Action Research on Junior High School Teachers' Perceptions and Its Effects on Student Comprehension and Participation at MSU-ILS

Directions:

This questionnaire aims to gather information about your perceptions and instructional practices regarding the strategic use of code-mixing in classroom instruction. The same questionnaire will be administered as a pre-test and post-test. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for research purposes.

Please place a check (✓) in the box that best represents your response.

Rating Scale

Scale Description

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 5 | Strongly Agree |
| 4 | Agree |
| 3 | Neutral |
| 2 | Disagree |
| 1 | Strongly Disagree |

PART I. Teachers' Awareness of Code-mixing Practices

No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1	I consciously use code-mixing during classroom instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I understand when and why code-mixing should be used in teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I intentionally switch between English and Filipino to facilitate learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I use code-mixing only when it is necessary to clarify difficult concepts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I consider my students' language proficiency when deciding to use code-mixing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	I monitor my language use during classroom instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	I distinguish between strategic and habitual code-mixing. ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I recognize situations where code-mixing supports learning more effectively than English-only instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I am confident in deciding when to use code-mixing during my lessons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I consider strategic code-mixing an intentional instructional practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

PART II. Pedagogical Purposes of Code-mixing

No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1	Code-mixing helps explain difficult concepts more clearly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Code-mixing improves students' understanding of lesson content.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I use code-mixing to reinforce important concepts and classroom instructions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Code-mixing helps maintain students' attention during lessons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I use code-mixing to encourage classroom interaction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6	Code-mixing makes communication between the teacher and students more effective.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Strategic code-mixing encourages students to participate actively in class discussions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Code-mixing supports inclusive learning among students with different levels of English proficiency.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	Code-mixing minimizes students' confusion during classroom instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Strategic code-mixing is an effective instructional strategy in multilingual classrooms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

PART III. Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects of Strategic Code-Mixing on Students' Comprehension and Classroom Participation

No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1	Strategic code-mixing improves students' comprehension of lesson content.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Students participate more actively when code-mixing is used appropriately.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Strategic code-mixing increases students' confidence in asking and answering questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Students express their ideas more freely when both English and Filipino are used during instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Code-mixing reduces students' anxiety during classroom discussions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Students become more engaged in classroom activities when strategic code-mixing is used.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Students become more engaged in classroom activities when strategic code-mixing is used.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Students remain attentive throughout the lesson when code-mixing is incorporated appropriately.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	Strategic code-mixing promotes an inclusive and supportive classroom environment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Overall, strategic code-mixing enhances students' comprehension and classroom participation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix B

Student Reflection Guide



Republic of the Philippines
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Strategic Code-Mixing in Classroom Instruction: An Action Research on Junior High School Teachers' Perceptions and Its Effects on Student Comprehension and Participation at MSU-ILS

Directions: You have experienced classroom lessons where your teacher strategically used both English and Filipino during instruction. Please answer the following questions honestly based on your classroom experience. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used only for research purposes.

Open-ended Reflection Questions:

1. How did the teacher's use of both English and Filipino during the lesson help you understand the topic?

2. Describe how the teacher's use of code-mixing affected your confidence in asking questions, answering activities, or participating in class discussions.

3. How did the use of both English and Filipino influence your interest, attention, and participation during the lesson?

4. Which do you prefer during classroom instruction?

☐ English only

☐ Filipino only

☐ A combination of English and Filipino (code-mixing)

Please explain your answer.

5. What suggestions can you give to teachers regarding the use of English and Filipino during classroom instruction?
