The Use of Code-Switching Towards the Academic Success Among Senior High School Students of Mindanao State University-Sulu

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ABSTRACT. While the cognitive and socio-affective benefits of code-switching are increasingly acknowledged in bilingual and multilingual education, empirical investigations regarding its influence on pre-university students within higher education contexts remain limited. This study addresses this empirical gap by investigating the extent to which the alternation between Filipino and English influences the academic success of older adolescents. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed to assess 100 Senior High School students at Mindanao State University-Sulu, selected via convenience sampling. Data were collected using a modified-standardized questionnaire measuring the perceived influence of code-switching on comprehension of academic materials, classroom engagement, and articulation confidence. The results indicate that code-switching serves as a highly utilized and effective instructional scaffold, with students reporting its greatest impact on their confidence to articulate thoughts during formal discussions and presentations. Inferential analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in these perceptions across age, gender, or grade level, suggesting the strategy is universally beneficial across this demographic profile. Furthermore, significant positive correlations emerged among comprehension, engagement, and confidence, demonstrating that the cognitive and affective advantages of linguistic flexibility are deeply interconnected. These findings challenge rigid monolingual instructional paradigms, demonstrating that strategic code-switching dismantles affective barriers and acts as an equitable, integrated tool for academic achievement in multilingual classrooms.

KEYWORDS: Code-Switching, Academic Success, Multilingual Classrooms, Communicative Confidence, Cognitive Scaffolding, Philippine Higher Education

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Introduction

Code-switching, defined as the practice of alternating between two or more languages during communication, is increasingly recognized as a strategic pedagogical tool rather than an indicator of linguistic deficiency (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Theoretical frameworks, such as Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory and Giles's (1973) Communication Accommodation Theory, support the premise that linguistic scaffolding and accommodation promote cognitive

development, clearer communication, and classroom inclusivity. Consequently, scholars emphasize that strategic code-switching yields distinct cognitive advantages, enhancing content retention, comprehension, and active participation (Cook, 2001; Ferguson, 2003). Furthermore, leveraging linguistic diversity aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in advancing equitable, quality education (SDG 4) and reducing inequalities (SDG 10) through culturally responsive pedagogy.

Within multilingual environments such as the Philippines—and specifically in culturally diverse provinces like Sulu—code-switching has become an organic and integral component of educational discourse. National educational frameworks structurally validate this linguistic reality. Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013) institutionalizes Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), affirming that foundational learning is optimized when instruction builds upon familiar languages. Similarly, Republic Act No. 7836 mandates continuous pedagogical improvement, implicitly supporting adaptive strategies that meet diverse learner needs. In these contexts, alternating between local languages, Filipino, and English mitigates barriers to participation, boosts self-assurance in academic discourse, and validates students' linguistic identities.

Despite the extensive body of literature on bilingual and multilingual education, an empirical gap remains regarding the localized impact of code-switching on older adolescents transitioning to higher education. Most existing research predominantly focuses on primary and lower secondary levels, often marginalizing the experiences of senior high school learners. Specifically, there is limited investigation into how these linguistic practices directly influence distinct metrics of academic success among pre-service education demographics within Philippine state universities, an oversight that ignores a population uniquely positioned to shape future classroom norms.

To address this limitation, this study investigates the extent to which code-switching influences the academic success of Senior High School students at Mindanao State University-Sulu. Specifically, the research assesses the practice's impact on students' comprehension of academic materials, engagement in classroom activities, and confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions and presentations. Additionally, it examines whether demographic factors—such as age, gender, and grade level—influence the strategy's effectiveness, alongside evaluating the correlations among various code-switching strategies.

Ultimately, this inquiry seeks to provide evidence-based insights to inform classroom instruction and structural language-in-education policies. By establishing code-switching as a legitimate, equity-driven educational practice, the findings aim to equip educators, administrators, and policymakers with the empirical data necessary to maximize linguistic diversity as a functional resource for inclusive learning and academic achievement.

Research Questions

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
    - 1.1 Age;
    - 1.2 Gender; and
    - 1.3 Grade Level?
2. What is the extent of code-switching that influence the academic success of the students in terms of Comprehension of academic materials:
    - 2.1 Engagement in classroom activities; and
    - 2.2 Confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions and presentations?

3. Is there a significant difference in the extent of the use of code-switching towards academic success when the data are categorized according to the respondents' demographic profile in terms of:
    3.1 Age;
    3.2 Gender; and
    3.3 Grade Level?
4. Is there a significant correlation among the strategies subsumed under the use of code-switching towards academic success?

Literature

Cognitive Scaffolding and Academic Comprehension

The consensus across contemporary bilingual and multilingual educational research establishes code-switching as a deliberate, pedagogically valuable practice (Choi, 2023; Jogulu & Radzi, 2024; Li & Wang, 2024). A primary function of alternating between languages in the classroom is cognitive scaffolding, which directly enhances learners' comprehension of complex academic materials (Jeanjaroonsri, 2022; Lizada, 2008; Nemenzo, 2025). Studies consistently demonstrate that strategic code-switching by both educators and students facilitates the clarification of abstract concepts, translates discipline-specific terminology, and sustains cognitive focus (Albirini, 2022; Mangila, 2018; Su, 2024). Exposure to code-switched speech has been shown to heighten bilingual learners' attention, thereby improving overall conceptual retention and reducing misunderstandings during instructional delivery (Salig, 2025; Santos, 2010; Suryarini, 2023).

In structured academic settings, shifting languages acts as a compensatory strategy to bridge lexical gaps and manage the cognitive load associated with target-language immersion (Jia & Zhang, 2019; Tarone & Yule, 2018). Evidence indicates that moderate, teacher-led code-switching improves comprehension metrics, particularly when tackling intricate subjects such as mathematics and science (Datokarama et al., 2023; Malonisio & Dañas, 2024; Nelson, 2016). This scaffolding effect extends beyond traditional physical classrooms into digital and remote learning environments, where linguistic flexibility remains critical for ensuring understanding (Amarille, 2024; Castillo, 2020; MSU Buug Campus Journal, 2023). The literature aligns code-switching with measurable cognitive advantages, enabling learners to negotiate meaning and access curricula that might otherwise be obscured by monolingual constraints (Ellis, 2018; Raymundo, 2013).

Socio-Affective Factors, Classroom Engagement, and Confidence

Beyond cognitive scaffolding, the literature heavily underscores the socio-affective dimensions of code-switching, particularly its capacity to reduce language-related anxiety and foster active classroom engagement. Flexible linguistic practices create an inclusive environment where learners feel empowered to articulate abstract ideas and participate in collaborative tasks without the immediate pressure of structural perfection (Kaur, 2020; Powzi, 2025; Ramos, 2016; Taufiq, Putri, & Eka, 2022). Consequently, code-switching is frequently deployed to manage emotional regulation during high-stakes communication, lowering affective filters and building learner confidence (Hochschild & Johnson, 2020; Hu, Afzaal, & Alfadda, 2022; Jia & Zhang, 2019; Torres, 2025).

Furthermore, situational code-switching transcends pedagogical utility by functioning as an essential tool for social cohesion. Alternating between local dialects, national languages, and English validates students' cultural identities, reinforces cultural pride, and strengthens

interpersonal rapport between educators and learners (Fatima, 2025; Garcia, 2023; Gonzalez, 2019; Mendoza, 2020; Villanueva, 2009). Positive attitudes toward this practice frequently correlate with heightened motivation and improved overall academic performance, as learners feel represented and understood within the academic discourse (Aquino, 2022; Terogo, 2023; Valerio, 2015).

However, the literature presents notable nuances regarding its universal efficacy. While code-switching demonstrably increases student comfort and mitigates immediate communicative anxiety, it does not necessarily mediate or resolve deeper structural language deficiencies (Aparece & Bacasmot, 2023). Additionally, receptiveness to the practice appears linked to proficiency levels; whereas introductory or intermediate learners rely heavily on code-switching for comprehension, highly proficient learners sometimes prefer strict target-language immersion to accelerate fluency development (Erdem, 2024).

The Research Gap

While international and local studies collectively validate the cognitive and socio-affective benefits of code-switching across diverse ESL/EFL landscapes, empirical investigations remain disproportionately concentrated on primary education, basic literacy, or general tertiary contexts. A critical gap persists regarding the localized experiences of older adolescents—specifically senior high school students embedded within specialized, pre-university tracks in Philippine state institutions. Furthermore, few studies simultaneously isolate and quantify the triadic relationship between code-switching and three distinct metrics of academic success: comprehension of specialized materials, active classroom engagement, and presentation confidence. By examining these specific dimensions within the culturally distinct demographic of Mindanao State University-Sulu, this study addresses the existing empirical deficit and provides targeted insights for culturally responsive, higher-education pedagogical frameworks.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design (Calmorin, 1995). This framework was specifically selected to simultaneously detail the existing demographic conditions of the respondents and evaluate the relational dynamics between these demographic characteristics and the extent to which code-switching is utilized to achieve academic success.

2. Participants and Sampling

The target population comprised Senior High School students enrolled at Mindanao State University-Sulu. As shown in Table 1, a final sample of 100 students was drawn using convenience sampling, distributed equally across Grade 11 (n = 50) and Grade 12 (n = 50) to ensure balanced representation. Participants were recruited based on immediate accessibility and voluntary willingness to engage in the study. Ethical compliance was strictly maintained; because the participants were minors, written informed consent was secured from both the students and their legal guardians prior to data collection. The research adhered strictly to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), ensuring absolute anonymity by assigning unique codes to participants rather than using identifying names.

Table 1. Distribution of Sample According to Grade Level

Grade Level	Number Of Respondents
Grade 11	50

Grade 12	50
Total :	**100**

3. Instruments

Data were gathered using a modified-standardized questionnaire adapted from the validated instruments of Castillejo, Calizo, and Maguddayao (2018) and Simasiku, Kasanda, and Smit (2015). The survey was structured into two main sections. The first captured demographic profiles, while the second assessed the extent of code-switching across three 10-item domains: comprehension of academic materials, engagement in classroom activities, and confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions. All 30 domain items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). To ensure contextual relevance and content validity within the local educational setting, the instrument underwent a rigorous evaluation and refinement process by two separate panels of teacher education and assessment experts from Sulu State College.

4. Data Collection Procedure

Following the acquisition of institutional ethics approval, the researcher personally administered the validated questionnaires directly to the student respondents. Prior to answering, participants were explicitly briefed on the academic purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, their right to withdraw without penalty, and the strict confidentiality protocols protecting their data. Upon completion, the instruments were immediately retrieved, anonymized, and securely compiled for tabulation and statistical processing.

5. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were processed to directly address the study's specific research objectives. Frequency counts and percentage distributions were initially utilized to summarize the participants' demographic profiles in terms of age, gender, and grade level. To quantify the perceived extent of code-switching's influence on the three core dimensions of academic success—comprehension, engagement, and confidence—weighted means and standard deviations were computed. Subsequently, independent samples t-tests were applied to ascertain whether significant differences existed in these perceptions when categorized by the respective demographic variables. Finally, the Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson's r) was employed to determine the significance and strength of the interrelationships among the specific code-switching strategies toward overall academic success.

Results

1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

As presented in Table 2, initial analysis established the demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 100). The respondents were overwhelmingly concentrated in the younger age bracket, with 99.0% aged 20 years or below. The cohort was predominantly female (72.0%), compared to male participants (28.0%). Regarding academic standing, the sample was distributed equally between Grade 11 (50.0%) and Grade 12 (50.0%) students, ensuring balanced representation across the senior high school levels.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Senior High School Students at Mindanao State University-Sulu

Demographic Variable	Number of Respondents (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20 years old and below	99	99.0%
21-24 years old	1	1.0%
Gender		

Male	28	28.0%
Female	72	72.0%
Grade Level		
Grade 11	50	50.0%
Grade 12	50	50.0%
Total	**100**	**100.0%**

2. Extent of Code-Switching Influencing Academic Success

Analysis of the data, revealed that respondents frequently rely on code-switching as a mechanism to achieve academic success across all three measured dimensions. As shown in Table 3, the practice most prominently influenced students' confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions and presentations (overall M = 4.41, SD = 0.64). Within this dimension, students indicated that code-switching "Always" helped them explain their ideas more clearly (M = 4.53) and answer questions with greater self-assurance (M = 4.52).

Similarly, code-switching demonstrated a strong, frequent influence on the comprehension of academic materials (overall M = 4.39, SD = 0.48). The data indicates it is particularly critical for collaborative learning, with the highest indicator reflecting that students understand group activities more clearly when the practice is permitted (M = 4.57). Finally, while engagement in classroom activities yielded the lowest relative mean among the three constructs (overall M = 4.27, SD = 0.57), it remained a frequent facilitator of academic success, most notably by establishing a comfort level that encourages students to express their ideas (M = 4.52).

Table 3: Extent of Code-Switching Influencing Academic Success

Pedagogical Domain and Indicators	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation (S.D.)**	**Descriptive Interpretation**
Comprehension of Academic Materials	**4.3860**	**.48074**	**Often**
1. I understand lectures better when the teacher uses code-switching.	4.43	.902	Often
2. Code-switching helps me grasp difficult terms in academic subjects.	4.18	1.077	Often
3. Switching between Filipino and English clarifies instructions during class.	4.44	.729	Often
4. I can follow lessons more easily when peers use code-switching in discussions.	4.42	.768	Often
5. I retain key concepts better when teachers use code-switching.	4.24	.793	Often
6. Code-switching helps me understand examples and illustrations in class.	4.49	.732	Often
7. I comprehend complex readings better when I can switch languages.	4.30	.937	Often
8. Code-switching allows me to ask questions more confidently.	4.32	.920	Often
9. I understand group activities more clearly when code-switching is allowed.	4.57	.714	Always
10. Using code-switching helps me review and summarize lessons effectively	4.47	.731	Often
Engagement in Classroom Activities	**4.2710**	**.57089**	**Often**
1. I participate more actively when code-switching is allowed in class.	4.26	.872	Often
2. Code-switching encourages me to join group discussions.	4.26	.860	Often
3. I feel more comfortable expressing ideas when using code-switching.	4.52	.717	Always
4. Code-switching increases my willingness to answer questions in class.	4.34	.819	Often
5. I collaborate more effectively in group projects when switching languages.	4.32	.851	Often
6. I feel motivated to interact with teachers and peers using code-switching.	4.36	.785	Often
7. Code-switching reduces hesitation in classroom participation.	4.02	.953	Often

Pedagogical Domain and Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Descriptive Interpretation
8. I can follow instructions better during activities due to code-switching.	4.39	.863	Often
9. Code-switching helps me stay engaged during online or hybrid classes.	3.98	.953	Often
10. I feel more included in class discussions when code-switching is practiced.	4.26	.836	Often
Confidence in Articulating Thoughts During Discussions and Presentations	**4.4070**	**.63695**	**Often**
1. I feel confident speaking in class when code-switching is permitted.	4.45	.770	Often
2. Code-switching helps me explain my ideas more clearly.	4.53	.810	Always
3. I am more confident answering questions using code-switching.	4.52	.797	Always
4. I can deliver presentations more effectively when switching languages.	4.50	.847	Always
5. Code-switching allows me to express abstract concepts better.	4.36	.811	Often
6. I feel more self-assured sharing opinions in group discussions using code-switching.	4.44	.833	Often
7. I can clarify misunderstandings more easily through code-switching.	4.41	.854	Often
8. Code-switching helps me reduce anxiety when speaking in class.	4.23	.930	Often
9. I feel more confident debating or defending ideas using code-switching.	4.17	1.025	Often
10. Using code-switching strengthens my overall oral communication skills.	4.46	.869	Often

Rating Scale: 4.50-5.00=Always; 3.50-4.49=Often; 2.50-3.49=Sometimes; 1.50-2.49=Rarely; 1.00-1.49=Never

3. Significant Differences Based on Demographic Profile

To determine if the perceived extent of code-switching's influence varied across different student groups, independent samples t-tests were conducted for age, gender, and grade level across all three academic success dimensions. As detailed in Table 4, the analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in any category. Specifically, age did not significantly alter perceptions regarding comprehension ($t = -0.460$, $p = 0.646$), engagement ($t = 0.596$, $p = 0.553$), or confidence ($t = -0.754$, $p = 0.453$). Similar non-significant results were observed when comparing male and female students, yielding p-values well above the 0.05 alpha level for all dimensions (comprehension $p = 0.653$; engagement $p = 0.379$; confidence $p = 0.911$). Finally, grouping by grade level (Grade 11 vs. Grade 12) also produced no significant variance across the constructs (all $p > 0.05$). These uniform findings indicate that the respondents leverage and benefit from code-switching equally, regardless of their distinct demographic characteristics.

Table 4: Difference in the Extent of the Use of Code-Switching Towards Academic Success Grouped by Demographic Profile

Variables	Grouping	Mean	S.D	Mean Difference	t	Sig.	Description
According to Age							
Comprehension of academic materials	20 years old and below	4.404	.63950	-.29596	-.460	.646	Not Significant
	21-24 years old	4.700		-.29596			
Engagement in classroom activities	20 years old and below	4.389	.48232	.28889	.596	.553	Not Significant
	21-24 years old	4.100		.28889			
Confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions and presentations	20 years old and below	4.267	.57214	-.43333	-.754	.453	Not Significant

	21-24 years old	4.700		-.43333			
According to Gender							
Comprehension of academic materials	Male	4.361	.73804	-.06429	-.451	.653	Not Significant
	Female	4.425	.59782				
Engagement in classroom activities	Male	4.318	.53128	-.09464	-.883	.379	Not Significant
	Female	4.413	.46084				
Confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions and presentations	Male	4.261	.67733	-.01429	-.112	.911	Not Significant
	Female	4.275	.52908				
According to Grade Level							
Comprehension of academic materials	Grade 11	4.366	.75068	-.08200	-.642	.523	Not Significant
	Grade 12	4.448	.50274				
Engagement in classroom activities	Grade 11	4.360	.49322	-.05200	-.539	.591	Not Significant
	Grade 12	4.412	.47149				
Confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions and presentations	Grade 11	4.294	.61392	.04600	.401	.689	Not Significant
	Grade 12	4.248	.52963				

**Significance at alpha 0.05*

4. Significant Correlations Among Code-Switching Strategies

A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the interrelationships among the three dimensions of academic success influenced by code-switching. The analysis established statistically significant positive correlations across all paired variables ($p < 0.01$). Specifically, a strong positive relationship emerged between the comprehension of academic materials and students' confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions and presentations ($r = 0.635$, $p = 0.000$). Similarly, classroom engagement demonstrated a high positive correlation with articulation confidence ($r = 0.626$, $p = 0.000$). A moderate positive correlation was also identified between the comprehension of academic materials and engagement in classroom activities ($r = 0.409$, $p = 0.000$). These concurrent trajectories suggest that the cognitive and socio-affective benefits of code-switching are highly interdependent in this learning environment.

Table 5. Correlations Among the Strategies Subsumed Under the Use of Code-Switching Towards Academic Success

Variables		**Pearson *r***	**Sig.**	**N**	**Description**
Dependent	**Independent**				
Comprehension of academic materials	Engagement in classroom activities	.409**	.000	100	Moderate
	Confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions and presentations	.635**	.000	100	High

Engagement in classroom activities	Confidence in articulating thoughts during discussions and presentations	.626**	.000	100	High

***Correlation Coefficient is significant at alpha .01 level*

Discussion

The fundamental premise of this investigation was to determine how code-switching functions as a facilitator of academic success within a multilingual senior high school environment. The analysis establishes that students consistently leverage the alternation between Filipino and English as a primary catalyst for their academic achievement, most notably in bolstering their confidence during oral articulation and formal presentations. This pronounced reliance suggests that fluid linguistic transitioning does not indicate a deficit in target-language proficiency. Rather, it operates as a deliberate, compensatory cognitive strategy that dismantles affective filters, allowing adolescents to convey complex thoughts without the paralyzing cognitive overload associated with strict monolingual performance requirements.

These findings strongly corroborate contemporary educational paradigms that frame flexible language practices—such as code-switching and translanguaging—as vital tools for scaffolding meaning-making and reducing linguistic barriers in culturally diverse classrooms (García, Otheguy, Lin, & Wu, 2020; Wei, 2022). Furthermore, the specific enhancement in communicative self-assurance observed among the respondents directly supports earlier assertions that strategic language shifting significantly lowers speaking anxiety and facilitates the precise expression of abstract academic concepts (Macaro, 2009; Probyn, 2015). Pedagogically, recognizing this practice as a valid discursive asset rather than a linguistic liability carries immediate implications for instructional design. It challenges educators to adopt more inclusive, culturally responsive assessment frameworks, particularly for high-stakes oral presentations where rigid, target-language-only policies might otherwise stifle conceptual demonstration and student expression.

Building upon the initial findings that established code-switching as a mechanism for cognitive comprehension and communicative confidence, the correlation analysis further solidifies its multidimensional impact. The data reveal significant, positive interrelationships among comprehension, classroom engagement, and articulation confidence. This indicates that these domains do not operate in isolation; rather, they are mutually reinforcing components of academic success. When students comprehend complex materials through strategic language alternation, their willingness to engage in collaborative activities increases, which subsequently bolsters their confidence in formal academic discourse.

These concurrent trajectories suggest that code-switching functions as an integrated instructional mechanism, simultaneously supporting cognitive understanding, active participation, and communicative confidence. This finding aligns seamlessly with contemporary research that highlights the holistic, multidimensional impact of flexible language practices on learning outcomes in multilingual educational settings (García et al., 2020; Wei, 2022). Furthermore, the lack of significant variance across demographic groups—age, gender, and grade level—underscores the universal applicability and equity of this practice within the target population. It affirms that code-switching is not a niche strategy that advantages only specific subgroups, but rather a broadly effective pedagogical tool that provides shared access to content and facilitates equitable classroom participation (Lin, 2020; UNESCO, 2021).

Conclusion

The convergence of findings in this investigation underlines the fundamental utility of code-switching as an integrated, equitable pedagogical scaffold. Rather than serving as an indicator of linguistic deficit, the fluid alternation between languages concurrently drives cognitive comprehension, active classroom engagement, and communicative self-assurance among senior high school learners. Importantly, the uniform efficacy of this practice across diverse demographic profiles reinforces its value as a universally accessible tool for navigating complex academic discourse, challenging the necessity of strict target-language immersion.

These insights necessitate a critical reevaluation of rigid monolingual instructional paradigms in multilingual educational settings. Institutional administrators and macro-level policymakers are encouraged to formalize guidelines that explicitly recognize code-switching as a legitimate, equity-driven instructional asset rather than a communicative violation. Furthermore, educational leadership should prioritize professional development that equips teachers to intentionally deploy flexible language practices. By formally validating these linguistic repertoires, educators can systematically dismantle affective barriers and foster highly inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments.

While the current data offer valuable preliminary insight into these dynamics, the scope of the inquiry was constrained by specific methodological parameters. The reliance on a localized convenience sample from a single state institution limits the broader generalizability of the outcomes to contrasting educational tiers or disparate geographic regions. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design and dependence on self-reported perceptions of academic success preclude the establishment of definitive causal mechanisms or the measurement of objective, standardized academic performance.

To build upon this foundational understanding, subsequent scholarly inquiries should adopt robust mixed-methods frameworks to capture the longitudinal impacts of code-switching on both measurable academic achievement and the ongoing evolution of students' communicative competence. Expanding this research to evaluate how flexible language practices operate across distinct academic disciplines and broader socioeconomic contexts will further clarify how localized linguistic strategies shape long-term learner trajectories.

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