THE EFFECTS OF CODE SWITCHING ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT TWO SCHOOLS IN SIBBINDA CIRCUIT

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ABSTRACT: Code-switching is mostly used by different language users, this diversion from the language of instruction to the language that accommodates is said to have certain effects on learning and teaching. Though code-switching has been discouraged, little is known whether it has negative or positive effects on English language learning and teaching. This study mainly focused on the effects that code-switching has on English teaching and learning. This study was guided by the following research questions: What impacts does code-switching have on the learning and teaching of English? What perception do learners and teachers have towards code-switching at the selected school? And how does the society influence codeswitching at the selected school? A qualitative research design was used for this study. The population consisted of two schools (one primary school, and a secondary school, but it focused on upper primary grades only). The sample consisted of grade 5-7 learners and teachers. Nine learners and four teachers were selected to participate in this article. Data was collected using interviews and observations. Code-switching has positive effects on English language learning and teaching. It helps learners to understand difficult aspects of the lesson taught and therefore are able to follow the instructions given. When the teacher explains what was said in mother tongue, it helps learners to participate especially those with English learning difficulties. It also helps them to express themselves if they do not know how to say certain things in English. Furthermore, code-switching helps teachers manage their classrooms.

KEYWORDS: Code-Switching, Mother Tongue, Sibbinda Circuit, English Language Learning, Teaching

INTRODUCTION

The Orientation

Most schools in Sibbinda Circuit in the Zambezi Region of Namibia enroll learners who both understand the Mother tongue from the region (Silozi) as well as those who do not understand. Most teachers are from the region and so most of them prefer to use their mother tongue. This article aimed at finding out how the use of mother tongue (Silozi) affects English language teaching and learning, as most teachers, code-switch while teaching English. Code-switching refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of languages in a conversation. Furthermore, code-switching refers to the act in which the speaker diverts from his/her language, dialect or speaking style in order to suit the listener's environment (Gonzalez, 2017). Schools now have teachers from outside the region, and these teachers sometimes use to wish they were teaching learners who speak the same home language as theirs, as this would have made learning easier. Both learners and teachers code-switch and this has an effect on learning English. In June 2015, our student teacher did her teaching practice at the case school

and she observed that teachers themselves contribute a lot to code-switching. According to her, teachers felt so comfortable when they spoke in the native language, and it seems to them that the knowledge is being delivered when they spoke in Silozi. Our student teacher had even asked the principal why he preferred addressing his learners in their mother tongue, and he said it was the best way for them to understand. The principal is one of the major contributors to code-switching.

Statement of the problem

The use of Silozi in English lessons has been discouraged, and the government, as well as schools, tried to banish it but nothing has changed. It still results in teachers, code-switching to Silozi while teaching English and learners also code-switch when having difficulties in speaking English. Some learners tend to fail English because teachers fail to explain more on the topic, and this affects both the teacher and the learner. Because learners are not experts in English and the teacher is also unable to translate into their mother tongue, this tends to leave learners with no understanding of the topic. On the contrary, teachers from outside the region struggle to find ways to explain to learners in other ways, but they have failed; to an extent that some teachers normally wish they could speak the same language as their learners. Therefore this article focused on finding out the effects of code-switching on English language teaching and learning at two selected schools in Sibbinda Circuit

Research questions

The main research question for this article is what is the effect of code-switching on English teaching and learning at the selected schools? This question was further explored using the following sub-questions.

What impacts does code-switching have on learning and teaching of English at the selected schools? What perception do learners and teachers have towards code-switching at the selected schools? How does society influence code-switching?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Code-switching is the alternating use of two or more languages in teaching and learning for easy acquisition of knowledge by learners. Code-switching has positive effects on learners and teachers (Ahmad, 2009; Promnath, 2016). Researchers like Ibrahim (2013), Promnath (2016) and Then (2009) have explained that most teachers show positive attitudes towards code-switching, but believe that code-switching should be moderate. The school location has certain effects on how a learner learns English. Learners who are in rural areas are negatively affected than those who are in towns (Simasiku, 2015).

The impacts of code-switching on English learning and teaching

According to Ahmad (2009), code-switching provides students with opportunities to communicate and enhance their understanding. Furthermore, it is time effective because teachers don't waste time to explain or search simple words to simplify any confusion that arises. Research conducted by Promnath and Tayjasa (2016), showed that code-switching was beneficial for the students' understanding. During learning, code-switching saved time and

made students feel more confident and comfortable. The use of code-switching helps students with lower performance to be able to follow the lessons better than using English only. It reduced students' stress by not worrying about what to say because they could switch to Thai when they didn't have an idea of how to say it in English. In addition, switching to Thai helped to effectively manage classrooms and incorporate morality and ethics.

According to Domalewska (2015),

When Code-switching is used, it is based on the processes of assimilation, accommodation, developing meaningful cognitive sets (i.e., forming logical connection and organization in the material), and using advanced organizers (i.e., general concepts that help the learner to organize and understand new material). Meaningful learning allows the information to be retained for a longer period of time; the information may be retrieved faster; furthermore, the student's cognitive structure is developed (p. 7).

Simasiku (2015), observed that the use of mother tongue in English medium classrooms was not only for classroom management, but for language analysis, presenting rules that governed grammar, discussing cross-cultural issues, giving instructions or prompts, explaining errors, and checking for comprehension. He conceded code-switching as a resource, which helps learners to understand and comprehend their lessons, which improves their performance during examinations. It is also a tool that increases learner participation in the classroom, which in turn is a necessary prerequisite for academic achievement and cognitive development.

Learners and teachers' perception towards code-switching

According to Then (2009), in three government secondary schools in Kuching City, teachers code-switch to repair trouble or silence in university classes. The teachers switched to other languages for re-voice, to calling attention and facilitate learners' understanding and build their vocabulary knowledge.

When interviewed by Promnath (2016), teachers suggested that code-switching was not supposed to be carried out word by word; rather, switching should be done inter-sententially or intra-sententially. They advised that code-switching word by word is time-consuming, so both teachers agreed that the switching to Thai should be done for the emphasis of some important messages or difficult content in order for the students to understand. They added that switching to make a conclusion for each lesson can help students recall what they have just learnt, and this can also help them realize what they missed the lesson.

One teacher who was interviewed during this study said that code-switching is appropriate when used for socializing and organizing the class. According to her, speaking English only sometimes could not get the students' attention, but they showed to pay more attention when the teacher spoke Thai.

Teachers showed positive attitudes towards code-switching. They believed that moderate codeswitching is tolerable as long as the switches do not interfere with the essential processes of the learning itself (Ibrahim, 2013).

The influence of society on code-switching

Some teachers said that school location had a great influence on learners' class participation. They explained that learners who stay in towns are exposed to English at an early age and this enhanced their participation in English only medium classrooms compared to learners in rural schools. (Simasiku, 2015)

The role of culture and social interactions are imperative to cognitive development. According to Vygotsky's theory, both informal and formal conversations and education that parents give their children play a major role in how children interpret the world. He further argued that complex mental processes begin as social activities. As children develop, they gradually internalize processes they use in social contexts and begin to use them independently. This internalization process allows children to transform ideas and processes to make them uniquely their own. Returning to our example, the child and father are simply reading a book, but this social activity is transforming the way the child perceives modes of transportation. She will begin to classify these items herself when she sees cars, trucks and boats in real-life settings.

Vygotsky believed that adults in a society foster children's cognitive development in an intentional and systematic manner by engaging them in challenging and meaningful activities. Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. In contrast to Jean Piaget's understanding of child development (in which development necessarily precedes learning), Vygotsky (2014) felt social learning precedes development; he stated that every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people - interpsychological and then inside the child - intra-psychological (Vygotsky, 2014).

Theoretical framework

This study was shaped by Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism. Constructivism is a theory based on observation and scientific study about how people learn (Mascolol & Fischer, 2005). This theory outlines that people's knowledge and understanding of the world they live in is constructed through experiencing things and making reflections on those experiences. When children interact with their parents and everyone within the society; this plays a very big role in how they develop (Vygotsky, 2014)

In this theory, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2013). They, therefore, tend to develop personal meanings of their experiences. This result in data collected to depend more on the participants' opinions and perceptions of the situation or topic.

When teachers, code-switch during lessons, learners can reflect on their experiences and this helps them remember things they do not know. Parents also who only speak the mother tongue in their homesteads have negative influences on their children, including schools in which learners only interact in the mother tongue.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A qualitative research design was used for this study, and it was taken in a form of a case study. Wyse, (2011) describes qualitative research as a primarily exploratory research used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Population

The population in this article consisted of primary and secondary schools in Sibbinda Circuit in the Zambezi Region. Both learners and teachers took part in the study. The aim of this article is to investigate the effects of code-switching on English language teaching and learning.

Sampling

The sample consisted of grade 5-7 learners and teachers at two selected schools in Sibbinda Circuit. The sample of teachers was drawn by using the purposeful sampling technique. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling technique. Purposive sampling focuses on the units that are investigated based on the judgment of the researcher. The sample being investigated is quite small, especially when compared with probability sampling techniques (Palys, 2008).

The advantage of purposive sampling is that it is based on the researcher's knowledge and experience of the groups to be sampled and those clear criteria can be used (Gay, 2009). The disadvantage of purposive sampling is that results obtained cannot be generalised.

Research Instruments

Data was collected using interviews and observations. Four classes were observed, two from each school. We only observed grade 5 and 7 at school X and then grade 4, 5 and 6 at school Y. Four teachers were interviewed (two from each school) and eighteen learners - where nine learners were interviewed from each school.

Data collection procedures

Interviews

During interviews, a set of questions were arranged which helped in collecting the necessary data. Open-ended questions were used during interviews. Questions were posed then participants responded, they were given a platform to express their individual views. All interviews were recorded.

Observations

Direct observations were also used to collect data. Creswell (2012) defines observation as "A process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site" (p. 213).

We chose observation because we wanted to understand the natural environment without altering or manipulating it. Observation also helped us to obtain more unbiased information

that was used to triangulate the information provided by participants during interviews. The disadvantages of observations were that it was expensive to go to the site and observe, and it also needed a lot of planning and time. Observed lessons were tape recorded and pictures were taken. An observation guide was also used.

Data Analysis

We followed the processes outlined by Creswell (2013) which involved preparing and organizing data, then reducing it into themes through the process of coding and condensing the codes. The transcripts were read several times to have a better understanding of the data collected. Notes and memos such as short phrases and ideas were written in the margins or behind each transcript or picture. Data was then classified into codes and themes. Creswell, (2013) further explained that the process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code. We also used phrases which were used by participants to organize themes.

RESULTS/ FINDINGS

Observations at school X and Y

The appropriateness of code-switching and how it affects English learning

During our observations at School X, Teacher A decided to have a reading lesson. The first word that she said was "wee", which means you, but in this context, it was not used in a proper way. She instructed learners to open on a certain page, but they were taking long, so she got angry and shouted at them to hurry up. Learners seemed to be scared and immediately they lost interest and focus on the lesson. She also said "neh", which is slang.

When a learner was reading and made a mistake, the teacher disagreed by saying "aha" which is a disagreeing word in their mother tongue, but the question is, "is this an English word?" because this might mean something else. She also explained the word 'sad' in mother tongue as "kutunkeha". This helped learners understand more and reflected on real-life situations during moments of sadness.

During our second observations at the same school with Teacher B, she was teaching "a telegram". The teacher code switched to explain features of a telegram. She explained what the sender's and the receiver's address means in Silozi. When she diverted to English, learners seemed to understand more and were responding to questions. An instruction on the homework was given in English and later in Silozi, to accommodate learners with learning difficulties.

Our other observation at school Y in Teacher C's class focused on storytelling. Learners were telling stories and during this time some code switched when they sang the songs in the story. Some code switched because they did not know which words to call certain things such as pounding stick and traditional vegetables from their farms. In our second observation with the same teacher, she was doing a reading lesson on "The mine" she code-switched by explaining what a mine is in Silozi (mukoti), she further explained what miners are. She explained, "A mine is where minerals like gold are extracted, and miners are the people who work in the mine." She also reminded her learners how miners are called in their home language based on

the tales from their grandfathers who went for mining in Johannesburg. She did this because learners did not know what a mine was and they pronounced it wrong. Just when she finished explaining, learners had a picture of what was being read about and their attention was brought to class.

I had my third observation at the same school with Teacher D, he was teaching idioms and proverbs. He realized that learners were lost so he decided to code switch. He explained what idioms are in Silozi as linguli and proverbs as mashitanguti. He further gave examples of idioms and proverbs in Silozi and told his leaners that these two are the same as in English and that was their lesson of the day. After explaining in Silozi, learners showed understanding and started participating.

4.1.2. The frequency and length at which code-switching takes place during lessons

At school X, Teacher B code switched a lot, she mostly explained features of a telegram in Silozi and then she changed to English. Code-switching lasted for more than twenty minutes. She urged learners who had difficulties in English to pay attention, but then most teachers only code-switched when there was a need to explain.

Interviews at school X and Y

The impacts of code-switching on learning and teaching of English in schools

At school X, both teachers A and B said they see code-switching as a better tool because it helps learners to understand what is being taught. Teacher A said the type of learners that she teaches have problems in English, and therefore further explanations need to be done for them to have a clue of what is being taught. So, to her, it has a positive effect on learners.

Learners at this school supported that code-switching has a positive influence because it helps them to understand more on the topic; it helps them to understand difficult words. They further indicated that it helps them to follow instructions based on certain class activities and homework. It still helps them to express themselves and pause questions using words in their mother tongue which they do not know in English.

Teacher D at school Y mentioned that code-switching helps learners who cannot express themselves in English do it in their mother tongue. And that it does not have any negative impacts on both teachers and learners. He further supported his point that code-switching to mother tongue is needed in schools because it helps to explain to learners who don't really understand the target language to better understand what is being discussed.

Learners at school Y indicated that code-switching helps them understand the lesson. As well as expressing themselves comfortably especially when they don't know what words to use in English. They further added that it helps their teachers to explain more to learner if learners do not understand because it allows her to use words which they understand.

Learners and teachers' perceptions towards code-switching

Both Teacher A and B at school X further argued that code-switching helps learners understand more on the topic. However, it is not good because leaners might get used to just being taught in their mother tongue, as well as expressing themselves in Silozi and this affects their English learning skills.

Most learners indicated that code-switching is a very effective tool for learning and that we should continue with it because it helps learners who don't understand English to understand more on the topic.

One learner from school Y mentioned that, though code switching helps them understand better during English lessons when they are used to it, it has negative effects on both learners and teacher in a case where the teacher does not understand Silozi, and the learner is also not fluent in English.

At school Y, Teacher C indicated that code-switching is not good for learners. She further urged that the government should implement a curriculum for lower primary learners to be taught in English for schools to have a strong foundation. According to her, learners being taught in Silozi at lower primary level increase the use of code-switching at the upper level in schools, because they are used to be taught in their mother tongue.

Teacher D at school Y mentioned that in his class some learners do not like it when their teacher or fellow learners' code switch. He has observed that his average learners enjoy learning English only and have a mentality of punishing those who are not good in English for them to score more marks and them to be on the average level. He further advised that teachers should not code switch by teaching the whole lesson in mother tongue, but rather pick only the difficult parts to be explained. He further added that we should continue with code switching depending on the situation or context as well as the type of learners one is teaching.

Many learners indicated that code-switching has a good influence on their learning of English. However, another learner observed that when the teacher code switches to Silozi, learners tend to make noise and they do not pay attention to the teacher, but when he starts teaching in English they pay attention. From her view, this is a sign that in their class they do not like codeswitching at all.

One learner mentioned that she is not in favor of code-switching. She explained that; both learners and teachers should use English only. "This is how others will learn English better." She said. The other one said it is not good in a context where your classmates don't understand the mother tongue, this results in them being left out.

How learning environment influence code switching when learning and teaching English

Many teachers indicated that teaching learners in rural areas are very much different from teaching learners who are in urban areas. Reason being; learners in town are exposed to televisions and other types of digital media sources. Most parents in rural areas also don't have time to help their kids with homework or check in their performance in schools. But instead, they just drink tombo which is their traditional beer and focus on their farms as well as fishing.

Teacher B further added that learners only speak Sifwe at home which is their mother tongue and they are only exposed to English when they are at school. And because of this, they tend to have a negative attitude towards English to an extent that even when they are told to speak English they tend not to. Even during group discussions they only discuss in their mother tongue.

Three learners mentioned that at their school they only speak their home language which is Sifwe and this affects them because they are not exposed to English so often, except during

English lessons. Another learner indicated that learners who are in town speak English better than them who are schooling in rural areas.

One learner argued that both parents and teachers have an influence on them learning English. He added that parents in town teach their kids how to speak English than those at the rural areas. She explained that "Some Teachers only use Silozi during English lessons. They only use English when they are visited by the Head of Department or the inspector".

Teacher C from school Y also mentioned that society plays a very big bad influence on learners who are in rural areas as they are only exposed to their mother tongue instead of English. This makes it difficult for them to speak English on their own, except in English class.

According to Teacher D, culture and beliefs have a very bad influence on English learning, some learners have a belief that English is not their mother tongue so they should not be forced to learn or speak it, so they tend to have negative attitudes towards English. He concluded that geographical locations of schools have an influence on teaching English because a teacher needs to be material wise; teaching aids and resources are hard to find in rural schools.

Learners also argued that the use of home language in their households has a very negative influence on their learning of English. She concluded by advising that learners should practice speaking English at home. Another one said that some learners are so ignorant that they tend not to speak English and only speak in their home language.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Code switching's role on the academic achievement

According to the findings of this article, it is true code switching helps learners understand what they are taught. From most observations, after explaining of certain aspects from English to Silozi learners showed awareness, interest and even stated participating. This means that before code-switching, leaners were a bit lost, but after code-switching, they started following the lesson.

Teacher C code switched on the story of the mine to remind learners of what their grandfather used to tell them about mines. This helped learners to make connections with what they know and its relation to the current topic. Therefore this study's findings resonate with the findings of Ahmad, (2009), Domalewska (2015), Promnath, (2016) and Simasiku, (2015) who explained that code-switching helps students to understand more during lessons. The findings are also similar to those of Domalewska (2015), Promnath (2016) and Simasiku (2015) who argue that code-switching has a positive influence (such as, making learners understanding more easier, teachers' explanations clearer, classroom management becomes more effective and helps learners with low performance to mention but a few) on the teaching and learning processes for both teachers and learners. Promnath (2016) also added that the use of code switching helped students with lower performance to be able to follow the lessons better than using English only. In this study teachers and learners agreed that learners with English learning difficulties are accommodated during code-switching. Code-switching can help them to express their thoughts.

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This study's findings further showed that code switching helps in presenting rules that governed grammar, discussing cross-cultural issues, giving instructions or prompts, explaining errors, and checking for comprehension. Therefore the above information collaborates with the first observations done with Teacher A at school X. She code switched to manage the class, as well as when giving instructions. Learners also indicated that this strategy helps them to follow instructions because some words in English are difficult to understand. Another finding on code-switching in this study was on re-voice. It was found that teachers switched to other languages for re-voice, to calling attention and facilitate learners' understanding and build their vocabulary knowledge. The first observation at school x, in this study, was that the teacher used words such as "weena", (which means hey you), and this helped her to get learners' attention, and it really worked. She constantly used these command words. After observations, the researcher asked her why she was using those words then she said some learners can only respond when the teacher talks to them in such a way. And this was confirmed by a research conducted by Promnath (2016), revealed that speaking English only sometimes could not help the teacher get the students' attention, but they showed to pay more attention when the teacher spoke Thai - their mother tongue.

Teachers perceptions towards code-switching

One teacher advised not to code switch throughout the whole lesson, but instead, it should only be done when necessary. From the literature review, teachers who were interviewed by Promnath (2016) suggested that code-switching was not supposed to be done word by word as it is time-consuming but it should only be done to emphasize important messages or used to explain difficult content during lessons.

From the data collected by Simasiku, teachers explained that there is an enhanced participation in English only medium classrooms from learners who attend schools because they are exposed to English at an early age compared to learners in a rural school (Simasiku, 2015). Simasiku further urged that the government should implement a curriculum for lower primary learners to be taught in English for schools to have a strong foundation.

Comparing with the data collected in this report it was suggested that the government should establish a strong foundation by ensuring that lower primary learners should be taught in English. Both teachers and learners said that attending school in the rural area has a very big impact on English learning. They mentioned that learners in towns are exposed to English at an early age through watching televisions, playing games and going to kinder garden unlike them who are in rural areas.

Vygotsky belief is that adults in a society foster children's cognitive development in an intentional and systematic manner by engaging them in challenging and meaningful activities. The results of this study indicated that parents have a very big influence on their children's learning process. They don't speak English in their homes; learners are only exposed to English at school. They don't have time to help their learners in their school work and some have a negative attitude towards English, from a belief that it is a language for whites. So, this mentality from parents affects their children to have a negative attitude towards English.

Implications to research and practice

Code-switching should be seen as a way to improve communication. The usage of codeswitching varies according to its context. We do agree with Heller (2010) that

Code-switching must be understood in terms of individual communicative repertoires and community speech economies, particularly as these are tied to a political economic analysis of the relationship between the availability and use of linguistic varieties, on the one hand, and the production and distribution of symbolic and material resources. (P. 1)

CONCLUSION

Conclusions

In conclusion, code-switching has positive effects on both learners and teachers. It helps learners understand difficult aspects of the lesson as well as enabling them to participate in lessons. It also helps them in making connections to their prior knowledge. It helps with classroom management. Learners are also able to express themselves without the fear of being stuck. Learners in rural areas have problems in English therefore when they speak they are able to translate difficult sentences into their mother tongue.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this study are based on the findings of this article. Therefore the aim of the study is to enlighten all the stakeholders in the Ministry of Education such as the directors, Education officers, teachers, learners and role of parents in their children's learning process, which are the most important stakeholders in improving the learners' performance in whatever subject they learn. Therefore if these stakeholders in education are aware of what is happening in schools, they will stand a better chance to advise the curriculum designers on what ground rules should be incorporated on the implementation of code-switching in teaching English which will give teachers a clear guideline on how to use code-switching in their lessons.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education should do the following in order to improve the implementation of code-switching in schools.

- The curriculum designers should take the use of English as the medium of instruction at lower primary grades into considerations.
- Ground rules should be incorporated into the curriculum designed so as to give a clear guidance to teachers whether they should use code-switching or not.
- Inspectors should also visit teachers in rural areas unexpectedly because teachers normally use to change their attitudes when they know that there are visitors to the school. Language teachers should encourage their learners to write correct spellings and play spelling games as well as doing a dictation to help the learners improve the spelling and pronunciation of the words in both Silozi and English.
- Teachers should not stop code-switching, because it helps learners to understand difficult aspects of the lessons, and enables learners to express themselves and helps teachers with classroom management.

Code-switching should drastically be reduced as learners, progress from grade 4 to 9 and it should not be used in grade 11. Even though code-switching has positive effects on English language learning and teaching, it should not be overused or used inappropriately. The above recommendation from this study will assist the stakeholders to implement the use of code-switching well. If the curriculum designers incorporate the ground rules on how teachers should use code-switching in the teaching and learning processes, we are certain that Code-switching will become a good learning and teaching tool. Code-switching is not only used by teachers to code switch from English to mother tongue but sometimes mother tongue teachers code switch from mother tongue to English to enhance learners' understanding.

Future Research

One potential area for investigation will be to find out the possibilities of using English as the medium of instruction beginning from Grade one. Other local languages could be study as subjects.

Another research could investigate how teachers should use code-switching in the teaching and learning processes and it should be incorporated into the curriculum.

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