

Reasons for Use of Code-Switching English and Kiswahili During English Lessons in Public Primary Schools in Eldoret West Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

English is a language of international communication hence it has special place in educational systems of most countries in the world. In Kenya, English is a language of instruction as well as examinable subject in Kenyan schools. Apart from making learners to be linguistically diverse, it also has some economic returns in the job market. The aim of this paper was to investigate the reasons for use of code-switching English and Kiswahili during English lessons in public primary schools in Eldoret West Sub-County. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The sample size was 33 teachers of English, 8 grade three teachers and 292 learners. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected through the use of questionnaires, interviews and observation schedule. Piloting of research instruments was conducted in the nearby Wareng Sub County which shares similar characteristics as the study area. Validity was ensured through expert judgment while reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient after piloting. The data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics; frequencies and percentages while content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The study found out that majority (79.3%) of the teachers of English reported that code switching encouraged learner participation in class. In addition, majority (79.4%) of the teachers reported that code switching was used in cases where the learner's level of understanding English was low thus enabling them to actively participate in class while majority (75.7%) of the teachers also acknowledged that code switching eased students' anxiety during the teaching process. The findings will benefit the Government of Kenya in formulating language policies for schools. The study will also be of significance to teachers of English in coming up with the strategies to boost performance of English.

Key words: *Reasons; Code-Switching, English, Kiswahili, Primary Schools*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak and understand English is regarded as being essential to providing high-quality education. Benson (2016) identifies a number of rising nations that allow a single foreign tongue to predominate in their educational institutions despite being classified as multilingual societies on both a personal and societal level. A student's capacity to engage is based on their language proficiency in four domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, according to Ndlovu (2019). According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2018), teaching kids a language they do not often speak is called "submersion" since it is similar to holding them underwater without teaching them how to swim. The question of whether multilingual, bilingual, or monolingual education is more effective in the classroom is up for debate. When students are unable to communicate through the medium of instruction, code switching has shown to be an effective teaching and learning strategy in schools that use a second language (Ogechi, 2019; Zabrodskaia, 2015).

Karpava et al. (2018) describe code-switching as the use of two or more languages in a single discussion, typically during the same turn of the conversation or even inside a single sentence. Code switching can occur in many different ways, such as when sentences or phrases from both languages are changed, or when a lengthy story is interrupted (Shafi, Kazmi, & Asif, 2020). Kasperczyk (2015) distinguished between two types of code switching: intra-sentential and inter-sentential. While intra-sentential code switching happens in the middle of a sentence without any pauses, hesitations, or interruptions indicating a change, and the speaker is typically unaware of the change, inter-sentential code switching happens at sentence boundaries and is typically used by fluent bilingual speakers.

In two Arabic-speaking countries (Saudi Arabia and Sudan), code switching is an unavoidable habit for EFL teachers, and interacting with individuals who speak the same language as you is easier and more natural (AbdelMagid and Mugaddam, 2013). The study also found that First language (L1) is a crucial part of teaching and learning other languages. This runs counter to Al Adnani & Elyas's (2016) findings, which suggested that code switching should not be used in language classrooms. The study's findings indicated that there appeared to be a significant difference in the academic performance of students whose teachers used code switching more frequently compared to pupils whose professors did not employ code switching at all.

It is possible that in some circumstances the instructor is unaware of the roles and results of the code-switching process, indicating that English teachers are not always aware of these things (Mahdi, & Almalki, 2019). Thus, code switching accomplishes the same fundamental goals whether it is done consciously or unconsciously, which makes it advantageous in a language learning context. The ability to code switch is a crucial capability for students to have when learning in the context of multilingual and diverse communities, according to experts. The study increasingly supports the notion that code switching in the classroom is normal, beneficial, and encourages continuity in speech when done well as a means of transference of meaning to struggling students. It facilitates social connection and communication between teachers and students (Paramesvaran & Jia, 2018).

According to a study conducted in Kenya in 2020 by Misati and Lwangale, code switching is used to help students comprehend the material being taught. Nevertheless, it is possible that employing code switching to teach English speaking abilities will compromise the student's motivation and

effort to learn the language. Akumu (2015) found that code switching affected students' speaking performance more than their written performance in terms of phonetic, syntactic, lexical mistake levels, and prosodic. However, the study's article examined the rationale behind the employment of Kiswahili and English code-switching during English instruction in public primary schools in Kenya's Eldoret West Sub- County.

METHODOLOGY

The Eldoret West Sub-County served as the study's location. The Soy and Turbo divisions are the two divisions of the Eldoret West Sub-County. In this study, a descriptive research design was adopted. According to Muyembe (2019), descriptive research designs are used to gather data by interpreting or distributing a questionnaire to a group of people. Measurement of a set of variables in their natural environment is the goal of descriptive research (Gravetter & Forzano, 2011). Teachers and students in 64 public elementary schools in the Eldoret West sub-County were the target group. According to Eldoret West Sub County figures, there were 7,140 students enrolled in all of the sub county's schools and 641 teachers. However, because class eight students were preoccupied with exam preparation, the target group for the current study consisted of 343 upper primary English instructors, 64 grade three teachers, and 2176 class seven students. Teachers of grade three were singled out because code switching begins in the early grades, whereas English teachers have a deeper understanding of their students.

The sample size of this study was based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination formula as cited by Kasomo (2001). The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{X^2 * N * P(1 - P)}{(ME^2 * (N - 1)) + (X^2 * P * (1 - P))}$$

Where;

n=Sample size

X^2 =Chi Square for the specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom=
(3.841) from tables

N=Population size

P=Population proportion (.50 in the table)

ME=Desired margin of error (expressed as a proportion=0.05)

For teachers (Teachers of English + Grade 3 teachers = 307)

$$= 3.841 \times 307 \times 0.5 (1-0.5) / 0.05 \times 0.05 (307-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5 (1-0.5)$$
$$= 171$$

For learners

$$= 3.841 \times 2176 \times 0.5 (1-0.5) / 0.05 \times 0.05 (2176-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5 (1-0.5)$$
$$= 327$$

Using a simple random selection procedure, the researcher chose 20 schools for this investigation. Based on the division, the schools were chosen in a proportionate manner. The English teachers who were instructing the class seven students were chosen using a purposeful sample technique. To choose students to take part in this study, a combination of basic random sampling and selective sampling was used. 10% of the students from the chosen schools who were in class seven were purposefully chosen to participate in the study, and this was done using simple random sampling. Additionally, eight teachers of third grade were chosen to take part in the study using a simple random sample technique. Creswell (2018) asserts that research results from randomly chosen

samples can be extrapolated to larger populations within statistically defined error bounds. In order to minimize the influence of unrelated variables and eliminate systematic bias, random sampling also involves assigning and selecting subjects at random. The instruments used to collect data were interviews, questionnaires, and observations. Research questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from English teachers and students in class seven. Qualitative data was gathered through interviews with grade three teachers in the sub-county. This approach was used in order to gather comprehensive data regarding code-switching and its effects on students' proficiency in the English language. The qualitative information gleaned from the interview schedule supplemented the quantitative information obtained through the use of a standardized questionnaire.

Furthermore, non-participant observation was employed to observe participants in their normal settings in order to ascertain whether or not English teachers employ code-switching as a teaching strategy in the classroom. This method was also seen to be important for enhancing the information gathered from the surveys and interviews. The English teacher was observed by the researcher using three (3) different observation schedules. The purpose of the observation was specifically to find out if English professors employed code switching, in what circumstances, and how students used it.

A pilot study was conducted in the nearby Wareng Sub County, which has characteristics similar to the subject location, prior to the major examination. The supervisors were briefed on the pilot research findings so that any necessary adjustments could be made to the instrument. The pilot's primary objective was to evaluate the validity and dependability of the instruments. Expert judgment was employed to evaluate the research instruments in order to ascertain their validity, taking into account both the instrument's face validity and content. The instruments were adjusted as needed based on their feedback. Using Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of the research instruments was evaluated. The study's co-efficiency of 0.72 indicates that the data gathering tools were deemed dependable. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to assess the data that had been gathered. With the use of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 22), descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages were used to statistically examine the data from the questionnaires. Using content analysis, data from the observation schedules and interviews were qualitatively examined. The quantitative analysis was supplemented with qualitative descriptions that probed and elaborated on the quantitative findings in order to provide thorough explanations of the results and validation. The data after analysis was presented using tables and figures.

The researcher complied with all the standards and guidelines established in Kenya for doing scholarly research. A research permit was obtained from the appropriate authorities, such as the County Director of Education and the National Council of Science, Technology, and Innovations (NACOSTI), Approval number NACSOSTI/P/21/9161 prior to starting fieldwork. Transparency, privacy, and confidentiality in the data collection process were upheld for the entire study. The main ethical concerns were the researcher's regard for human dignity, the participants' informed consent, privacy and secrecy of the information provided, anonymity to protect the respondents' identities, and privacy and confidentiality of the information supplied (Luey, 2005). The respondents gave the researcher their consent before they started the study.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that lead English and Kiswahili code-switching between teachers and students in public elementary schools in Eldoret west Sub-County. In order to achieve this goal, teachers were asked to respond to a questionnaire on the rationale behind code-switching between English and Kiswahili during English courses by rating their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale. The scale rating scale was 1=Strongly Disagree (SD); 2=Disagree(D), 3=Undecided (UD), 4 =Agree (A) and 5=Strongly Agree (SA). The outcomes of their replies were tallied and are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers’ Responses on Reasons for use of Code-switching English and Kiswahili during English lessons

Statement	SD		D		UD		A		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Code switching is necessary for encouraging learners’ participation in class	13	9.9	11	8.5	3	2.3	37	28.2	67	51.1
Code switching can be used if the learner’s level of understanding English is low	6	4.6	15	11.5	6	4.6	45	34.3	59	45.0
Code switching can be used to ease students’ anxiety	9	6.9	20	15.3	4	3.1	43	32.7	55	42.0
Code switching helps to strengthen personal relationship of the teacher and learner	7	5.3	13	9.9	5	3.8	54	41.3	52	39.7
Code switching helps during classroom management	8	6.1	10	7.6	7	5.3	42	32.1	64	48.9
Code switching is used to summarize certain idea during the teaching process	17	13.0	11	8.4	8	6.1	49	37.4	46	35.1

Table 1's results demonstrate that 67 (51.1%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement that code switching is essential to promoting students' participation in class; 37 (28.2%) teachers agreed with the statement; 13 (9.9%) teachers strongly disagreed; 11 teachers (8.5%) disagreed with the statement; and 3 (2.3%) teachers were unsure. Overall, 79.3% of English teachers at public primary schools in the Eldoret West sub-county thought that code switching promoted student participation in the classroom.

Regarding the statement that code switching can be used if a learner has a low level of English comprehension, 59 (45.0%) teachers strongly agreed, 45 (34.4%) teachers agreed, 15 (11.5%) teachers disagreed, 6 (4.6%) teachers strongly disagreed, and 6 (4.6%) teachers were neutral. A majority of teachers (79.4%) stated that code switching can be utilized to help students who don't grasp English well enough to engage fully in class.

Additionally, 55 (42.0%) strongly agreed, 43 (32.7%) agreed, 20 (15.3%) disagreed, 9 (6.9%) strongly disagreed, and 4 (3.1%) teachers were unsure about the statement that code switching can

be used to reduce students' anxiety. According to the survey, 75.7% of teachers thought that code switching helped pupils feel less anxious while they were being taught. In terms of code switching strengthening the teacher-student relationship, 52 (39.7%) teachers strongly agreed, 54 (41.3%) agreed, 13 (9.9%) disagreed, 7 (5.3%) strongly disagreed, and 5 (3.8%) were unsure. The majority of primary school teachers in the Eldoret West sub-county (81.0%) seemed to think that code switching improves the teacher-student interaction.

Regarding classroom management, 64 (48.9%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement that code switching facilitates classroom management, 42 (32.1%) study participants agreed with the statement, 16 (13.7%) teachers disagreed, and 7 (5.3%) were unsure. According to the responses, 81.0% of public primary school teachers thought that code switching improved classroom management. Furthermore, 49 (37.4%) teachers agreed that code switching is used to summarize specific ideas during the teaching process, 46 (35.1%) strongly agreed, 17 (14.0%) strongly disagreed, 11 (8.4%) disagreed, and 8 (6.1%) had no opinion. The majority of English teachers (72.5%) admitted to using code switching while summarizing concepts when teaching.

DISCUSSION

The results suggest that one strategy for promoting learning is code switching. This is consistent with the findings of Domalewska (2015), who contends that language learners may only pick up language abilities by engaging in interactions and forming associations with other speakers of both L1 and L2. Additionally, Simasiku (2016) contended that when utilized as a teaching tool, code switching has a beneficial impact on students' participation in the classroom. Therefore, code switching is linked to students' engagement in the classroom, which raises their performance. According to the comments, the majority of teachers (79.4%) stated that code switching can be utilized to help students who don't grasp English well enough to engage fully in class. Low English proficiency learners can understand the subject matter and the classroom activities, according to a study by Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) on teachers' code-switching in the instructions. Code switching is therefore associated with student learning outcomes.

The survey found that the majority of teachers (75.7%) thought that code switching helped pupils feel less anxious while they were being taught. This supports the findings of Burden (2001), referenced by Ahmad and Jusoff (2009), who discovered that code switching helps students feel at ease and free from needless anxiety, allowing them to pay attention and actively participate in class activities more effectively.

In a similar vein, the majority of primary school teachers in the Eldoret West sub-county (81.0%) seemed to think that code switching improves the teacher-student interaction. This is consistent with the findings of Clegg and Afitska's (2011) study, which found that code-switching contributes significantly to pedagogy in the classroom by fostering positive classroom relationships and ensuring that the lesson runs smoothly. This increases student participation in the classroom and improves their English language proficiency. The majority of public primary school teachers (81.0%) thought that code switching improved classroom management. This validates previous research by Mati (2002), who pointed out that code switching contributes to classroom management and creates a welcoming environment for students.

The majority of English teachers in the study area's primary schools (72.5%) admitted to using code switching while summarizing concepts when teaching. This makes it easier for students to comprehend the synopsis of the lessons they have learned, which improves their ability to acquire English. The results of this study are consistent with those of other researchers, such as Ferguson (2009) and Adriosh and Razi (2019), who observed in their research that teachers employed code switching to condense concepts that students appeared to be unclear about, hence facilitating students' understanding of the ideas.

During interviews with grade three teachers, it was discovered that one purpose of code switching between Kiswahili and English was for classroom management. This finding was consistent with the research findings of Simasiku et al. (2015), who advised teachers to use code switching as a means of controlling students' behavior. Increasing the comprehension of English instruction for all students was a significant role that code switching served. The majority of students were able to understand the true meaning of several English words with the help of Kiswahili, according to teachers surveyed. Additionally, the researcher noticed that teachers used code switching in Kiswahili to get the students' attention when teaching the English language to individuals in grade three.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the study's findings, code switching is primarily used to improve classroom management, ease students' anxiety during instruction, strengthen the teacher-student relationship, and enable learners who have limited English comprehension to participate actively in class. It is also used to summarize concepts during the teaching process. According to the study, code switching between English and Kiswahili improves classroom management and fosters healthy relationships between teachers and students, all of which have a favorable impact on learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers in public primary schools be encouraged to use code switching as a strategic tool to promote student engagement and participation. Teacher training programs should incorporate modules on effective code-switching techniques to ensure that educators can use this method effectively without compromising the learning of English. Additionally, educational policymakers should consider revising language instruction guidelines to formally recognize and support the use of code switching in classrooms, particularly in multilingual settings. Furthermore, schools should provide continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to refine their code-switching practices and explore innovative ways to integrate this strategy into their teaching. Research should continue to explore the long-term effects of code switching on students' language acquisition and academic performance, with a focus on identifying best practices for different educational contexts. Finally, collaboration between linguists, educators, and policymakers is essential to develop a comprehensive framework that leverages code switching as a pedagogical tool while maintaining a strong emphasis on English language proficiency. By doing so, schools can create inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse linguistic needs of students, ultimately enhancing their educational outcomes and overall learning experience.

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