

Code Switching as a Medium of Instruction in Basic Schools in Osun and Oyo States, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the use of code switching as a medium of instruction in basic schools in Nigeria and its implication for national development. The study cut across Osun State and Oyo State, with a focus on Osogbo and Ogbomosho. Two schools were selected from each town, thus, a total of eight schools were surveyed. The respondents included both teachers and pupils and data were gathered through structured interview and observation. The findings revealed that teachers used code switching throughout the lower basic schools in the selected schools as against the stipulation of the Nigerian Language-in-Education Policy. The respondents also strongly agreed that the adoption of code switching as a medium of instruction in lower basic schools would promote national development and unity. The study concluded that the use of code switching as a medium of instruction in basic schools in Nigeria will improve academic performance of pupils, which in turn will foster national development.

Keywords: Code-Switching, Language of Instruction, Language Policy on Education, Mother Tongue

Introduction

Over the past years, there has been an increasingly significant interest in the use of code-switching in the

process of teaching and learning. This interest has created a web of controversies and opposing views on the use of code-switching in bilingual classrooms for scholars and researchers. These divergent views have considerably occupied serious discussions on whether to use only the target language exclusively or to use it alongside the first or the predominant local language in second or foreign language classrooms.

Proponents of exclusive use of the target language in second or foreign language classrooms believe that by employing the target language exclusively as a learning model habituates students to building their own language system through communication practices while code-switching disinterests students in listening to the target language (Sakaria & Priyana, 2018). For these studies, it is clearly expected that the target language should be the main language to be used both as a language of instruction and communication. Amongst the reasons attached to this belief is that extensive language exposure to the target language will not only help students to achieve a native-like command of the language, but the exclusion of first language usage in second or foreign language classrooms will leave room for the target language to be the only students' primary source of their exposure (Sakaria & Priyana, 2018). Thus, in their views, the use of monolingual approach, for instance, teaching English through English, arguably introduces authenticity in the process of teaching and learning thereby substantially facilitating students' familiarity to the target language.

On the contrary, advocates of cross-lingual pedagogical strategy argue that the use of students' first language significantly enhances target language

development and it should, therefore, be incorporated in the second or foreign language teaching and learning encounters (Sakaria & Priyana, 2018). To them, the integration of first language in the process of teaching and learning, essentially makes it easier not only for teachers in relation to grammar explanation and discipline but it also helps students to understand difficult concepts thereby subsequently consolidating their target language competencies.

Based on these conflicting views, this study seeks to examine code switching as an innovation and valuable medium of instruction in bi/multilingual classrooms, and its prospects for national development. With reference to this, the paper draws inferences from various theoretical orientations and empirical evidence within the confines of second language acquisition underpinning its fundamental contribution to the teaching and learning process in bi/multilingual classrooms. It is, therefore, with this given background that this study seeks to justify the utilization of code-switching with particular focus on its functions and, most significantly, its pedagogical implications and prospects for national development.

Code Switching (CS) has become an interesting phenomenon to study especially in the field of classroom interactions since it is one of the major aspects of bilingual's development process. Therefore, this phenomenon is considered as useful strategy in classroom interaction, especially if the aims of CS are to make meaning clear and to transfer knowledge efficiently to the other members of classroom community (Magdolna, 2001; Ernesto, 2001). Many studies have been carried out on the use of code switching in the classroom. Sukiyah &

Rahman (2018) examine the reasons for the use of code switching in the classroom. They examined the fact that CS occurs because the speaker is deficiency in target language, in particular and for multiple communicative purposes, in general. Some scholars have also examined CS based on social, discourse and pedagogical functions (Li, 2000; Canagarajah, 2001; Chen, 2004; Gulzar, 2010).

Based on the overview, this study is intended to explore the teachers' and students' CS in bi/multilingual classrooms. This study is conducted with the view that the results will significantly broaden the understanding of code-switching use in the classroom and help raise awareness on this issue. The study will also examine the implication of CS for national development.

The objectives of the study are to examine code switching as an innovative instructional strategy in bi/multilingual public primary schools in Nigeria; determine the functions of code switching during the teaching and learning process; and discuss the implication of the choice of code switching as a medium of instruction for national development.

The Concept of Code-Switching

The term code refers not only to different languages, which include their dialects and styles but how these language varieties are dealt with within the same language. This implies that the term code embraces how people use the language within their communication. It is therefore not strange to find out that in bilingual or multilingual contexts, and in particular, bilingual classrooms, the application of two or more codes are often used in the communication practices (Adebola, 2011; Mokibelo, 2016).

Code-switching, on the other hand, refers to the use of at least two languages within a communication exchange. Code-switching is defined by Ariffin (2009) as a way of communication which entangles a speaker alternating between one language and another in communicative situation. Expressing a similar view, Erman (2003) relates the concept of code-switching to the way an individual who is bilingual alternates between two languages during his or her speaking engagement with another bilingual. In the same vein, code-switching is seen as a phenomenal switch of languages from one language to another language in a communicative phenomenon (Sakaria & Priyana, 2018).

So, by virtue of these given definitions, it is highly expected that the speaker involved in such switching language circumstances should have a high level of at least basic communicative competency in both languages being alternated. Given these definitions, it clearly shows that code-switching is practiced for various reasons and functions. From the societal perspective, for example, Jacqueline (2013) highlights that code-switching oftentimes occurs not only because of people's deficiency in the target language but because people want to get involved in conversation and make their opinions known to others.

Hence, this clearly indicates that code-switching is performing a sociolinguistic function in this particular instance. From a classroom perspective, code-switching in the classrooms is mainly practiced as a tool for communication, both offering opportunities for students to understand the taught concepts well, and enhancing a

smooth continuity of the classroom instruction (Jegade & Adetuyi, 2016). This implies that the practice of code-switching in the classroom helps to fill the bridge of miscommunication between the teacher and the students particularly as regards to giving instruction, discipline and expressing key issues in an effort to facilitate equitable and enhanced teaching and learning.

The Context of Languages and Education in Nigeria

Nigeria has about 400 languages which have been categorized in different ways by scholars, based on the parameters of sequence of acquisition, number of speakers, and roles assigned to languages. The categorization in terms of number of speakers and roles assigned to languages has provided us with the following labels:

- a) Dominant official language, English, spoken by a small population of speakers;
- b) Major ethnic languages, regional lingua francas, proposed but not utilized as official languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba;
- c) A trans-national language, proposed as second official language: French
- d) Main ethnic languages used in network news: Angas, Edo, Efik/Ibibio, Fulfude, Kanuri, Ebira/Igala, Idoma, Ijo, Nupe, Tiv, etc.;
- e) Minor ethnic languages: Fula, Ikwere, Itsekiri, Jukun, Kalabari, etc.;
- f) Restricted lingua franca: Pidgin English;
- g) Languages for religious and personal use: Arabic, Latin and German.

Another categorization presents the status of Nigerian languages in ethnographic terms thus: dominant, deprived, endangered and dying (Dada, 2010). The dominant label matches English in Nigeria. The deprived languages refer to Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, which though have a relative advantage over the minority languages in terms of extent of their use mainly for informal communication, are less officially recognized than English.

Endangered languages are minority languages that are used very little, for informal communication, or are not used at all (Igboanusi & Lothar, 2005). Lastly dying languages are languages that are almost in extinction. On the educational context, we observe that apart from the informal education or home training that is generally assumed for all human beings, the *National Policy on Education* has a list of the following categories of education: Early Childhood/Pre-primary (2-5years); Basic education (Primary and Junior Secondary): Primary education (6-11years); Secondary education: Junior (3 year duration) and Senior (3 year duration); Tertiary education; Mass literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education; Science, Technical and Vocational Education; Open and Distance Education; and Special Education.

While primary to tertiary education above has been administered in schools over several decades, the others are designed as ad-hoc or remedy programmes to tackle problems as they arise. The schools are of two types, viz. public schools run by the state and private schools owned by individuals and organizations. The general impression of Nigerians in recent times is that education of children is better in private schools than in public schools, because the former has better infrastructures and management

than the latter, which has suffered neglect over the years (Oyetade, 2002). The consequence of this is that only the children of the low working class attend public schools, while the rich and others who can afford it send their children to high fee paying schools at home or abroad. It is however, important to note that the private schools are of different standards and the quality of education received by learners differs in them.

Language Policy, Planning and Implementation in Education

The language provisions pertaining to education are contained in several sections of the NPE. But these can be properly considered in relation to the general provisions on language in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Below, we present the language provisions in both documents that are relevant to the discussion in this study.

1. The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Ibo (sic) and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefore.

(The Constitution 1999, Paragraph 55)

2. The business of a House of Assembly shall be conducted in English, but the House may in addition to English conduct the business in one or more other languages that the house may by resolution approve.

(The Constitution 1999, Paragraph 97)

3. Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion; and preserving cultures. Thus every child

shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba.

(*NPE*, 2004, Para. 10a)

4. For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in Primary and Junior Secondary schools but Non-vocational elective at the Senior Secondary School.

(*NPE* 2004, Para 10b)

5. Government shall ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community in early childhood/pre-primary education.

(*NPE* Para 14c)

6. The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English will be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as the medium of instruction, and the language of the environment and French shall be taught as subjects.

(*NPE*, Para 19e and 19f)

7. Junior Secondary School

Core Subjects (Languages): English, French and Language of immediate environment. (The language of the immediate environment shall be taught as L1 where it has orthography and literature. Where it does

not have, it shall be taught with emphasis on oracy as L2.) Elective (Language): Arabic
(NPE, Para. 24a)

8. Senior Secondary School

Core Subjects (Languages): English language, a major Nigerian Language Electives (Languages): Literature in English, Arabic, any Nigerian language that has orthography and literature.
(NPE Para 25c).

The provisions above, without any doubt, have some prospects. First is the recognition of the importance of language in national communication, for social interaction, cohesion and unity, smooth interaction with our neighbours and as mediums of instruction and subjects in schools. Where there is a multiplicity of languages, all of such languages must be cultivated and developed to serve the various communicative needs in these different domains.

Secondly, the identification of indigenous languages in the policy alongside English expresses the desire to break away from an exogenous policy situation in which a non-indigenous second language alone is used by a fraction of the population for governance, to the exclusion of the majority of the population. Another prospect is that of bilingualism/multilingualism, which has the double advantage of enabling the nation to preserve its indigenous languages and forge a unique (indigenous) national identity, on the one hand, and foster national and international communication, on the other hand, in the present-day world. For example, by the end of secondary education, a child is expected to have learnt three or four

languages, if his or her L1 is different from a major language, thus:

- a) The language of the immediate environment,
- b) English,
- c) A major language, i.e. one of Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba (henceforth referred to as “other” language).
- d) French

The learning of the above is done without prejudice to other languages like Arabic and Pidgin English which the child may find expedient to use by virtue of his/her religion or area of birth.

Just as the provisions have their strong points, they have also have weak points which scholars have labelled differently as “weaknesses”, “constraints” and “threats”. Bamgbose (2006) identifies the following constraints in the implementation of the provisions: failure to accord priority to language policy, negative attitude to all indigenous languages, absence of well-coordinated implementation strategies, administrative or political instability leading to frequent changes of policy makers and policies, failure to use language experts and lack of political will. He considers, for example, the expression “when adequate arrangements have been made therefore” in Provision 1 as gratuitous and unnecessary. It is an escape clause that is not time bound, which justifies why the formulators have not been bothered about its non-implementation after almost three decades of the initial formulation in 1979.

Also, he avers that the tentativeness of the clause in Provision 2 “*but the House may* in addition to English conduct...” has removed the steam from the engine of a

provision that would have promoted bilingualism/multilingualism. Owolabi (2006) identifies possible threats in terms of (i) downright opposition to the policies from three quarters, viz. speakers of main and small group languages whose native languages are not overtly recognized, elite who have the native language prejudice syndrome (NLPS) and those who would like to oppose the policies because they are not part of the teams that produce them; and (ii) official reluctance to implement the policies. Nigerians from the ethnic minority groups believe that some of the provisions favour the three major Nigerian languages and neglect others. Meanwhile, the hegemonic status of the three major languages has diminished over time in response to political action. For example, the constant creation of states and local government areas since 1967 has brought into prominence several other ethno-linguistic units and more of former minority languages have gained ascendancy in the status and functions assigned to them. Thus, part of the weakness of Provisions 1 and 3 is the overt mentioning of the indigenous languages to be used, which has created the rivalry and fear of dominance among the ethnic groups.

Lastly, Omoniyi (2007) perceives threats to macro-language policies in terms of the complexities associated with the nation-state formation. According to him, nation-state policies plans would seem to have been set out to fail or at least have difficulty in succeeding because of problems such as the complex demography and heterogeneous population, policy formulation and disparity between the language needs of the larger population, migration into urban cities, displacement of refugees as well as dual habitation and citizenship in

arbitrary boundary demarcations. For example, scholars have reported instances of non-implementation of Provisions 4, 5 and 6 above.

On Provision 5, Ohiri-Aniche reports that most of the nursery schools in Nigeria, which are privately owned, use English as a medium of instruction and some of them do not even have the language of the immediate environment as a subject on the school time table. On Provision 6, some prominent scholars have commented that the fourth year period of change-over from language of immediate environment to English is too early for effectiveness. They suggest that the native language should be used as a medium of instruction throughout the six years of primary school or even up till the end of basic education, while at the same time taught alongside English as a subject.

Furthermore, the political circumstances surrounding the formulation of Provision 4, have been questioned by some scholars, who argue that French does not deserve the status of a second language, most especially at a time when Nigerians are still grappling with the problem of learning and using English effectively and at the same time clamouring for more attention to be paid to developing indigenous languages.

Views on the Use of Code Switching in the Classroom

There are a handful of scholars with the notion that the use of code-switching should not be employed in second or foreign language classrooms. For example, a great number of scholars believe that exclusive use of English language by teachers in language classrooms should be strengthened as a learning model of English which leads

to students habituated to using English in their communication practices (Sakaria & Priyana, 2018). For these scholars, the use of mother tongue or first language in second or foreign language classrooms hinders the acquisition of the target language. This implies that regular code-switching by language teachers demotivates students' interests in listening to the target language and eventually gains low proficiency in the target language (Macaro and Lee, 2013; Modupeola, 2013; Jingxia, 2010).

Littlewood & Yu (2011) caution that there is a chance that codes-switching might not be necessarily effective especially in linguistic classrooms which are diverse in nature, as the use of code-switching might disadvantage students with no shared mother tongue while those with a shared mother tongue are effectively being advantaged. In his research article, Stylianou-Panayi (2015) finds out that some researchers are in favour of using first language while teaching the second language while some are against it. Those against the use of first language believe that learners do not have to understand everything said by the teacher and thus there is no real need for code-switching. He also believes that one is able to avoid the use of mother tongue by following certain techniques within the second or foreign language classroom. Thus, by applying those techniques, the language will become real and learners will build their own language system only when the target language is being used within the classroom.

King and Chetty (2014) form part of various scholars who criticize the use of mother tongue in the process of teaching and learning English language. They urge classroom practitioners to create language-rich

classrooms that promote the use of English in all English conducts and beyond, but also to teach English through English and encourage learners to interact with each other in English. Evans & Nthulana (2018) warn that, although offering a first language equivalent may be viewed as a shortcut to building comprehension of what is being learned, it could nonetheless impoverish students' opportunity to attempt comprehension by inference. This notion is complemented by other studies which indicate that teachers do not often allow the use of first language on the ground of relevant language policies that prohibit its use in language classrooms (Jegade & Adetuyi, 2016). Nonetheless, the above views do not go well with a large segment of scholars in the sense that the exclusiveness of English use in language classrooms does not warrant achievement in the acquisition of foreign language and in English language in particular. This paper supports the use of code-switching in the process of teaching and learning as this phenomenon significantly contributes to the development of students' competence in the target language.

This paper opines that the incorporation of code-switching in bilingual classrooms strategically leads to an increased students' participation, inclusion, comprehension, and most significantly, to building and strengthening student-teacher interpersonal relationship.

Pedagogical Implications of Code-Switching

First language, or the predominant local language, serves various functions in the process of teaching and learning. Hence, it is very important to acknowledge that many a time code-switching is likely to occur in bilingual classrooms more especially in language classrooms where

the teacher's first language is the same as that of the students (Macaro and Lee, 2013; Modupeola, 2013; Jingxia, 2010). This phenomenon is observed almost in all bilingual classrooms the entire globe over, and Nigeria is no exception. Ideally, teachers do employ code-switching as a correspondence between first language and second language in order to prevent breakdowns in students' comprehension of the language lesson. This employment of teaching strategy strategically maximizes students' use of second language by efficiently and effectively directing activities while using the first language.

While a considerable amount of time may be needed to learn the target language, the switching practices in the process of teaching and learning may significantly increase students' exposure in the target language. Thus, code-switching is practiced not only to establish constructive social relationships and maintaining control over the classroom environment, but it is also used as a tool to communicate complex meanings to ensure that understanding is highly achieved (Otemuyiwa, 2011). In a bigger sense, while teachers can use code-switching as a tool to scaffold when communicating in the target language, code-switching can equally be used to maximize students' understanding as well as to support the comprehension of the language to keep the conversation ongoing. In addition, teachers normally employ students' native language as a teaching strategy mainly for instructions to help students' comprehension of material that would have been too cognitively difficult to understand without instruction in another language.

In English language classrooms, for example, code-switching can be used as a tool to maintain classroom

management in the sense that it serves as a powerful approach to execute orders as well as a means to emphasize important key terms (Jegede, 2012). It is also used to signal the preferred language choice in the classroom, and to mitigate the language preference to the target language. In addition, teachers often employ code-switching as a scaffold for learning, where the first language or mother tongue is used to explain cognitively difficult or new concepts. This means that code-switching, as a pedagogical strategy in second or foreign language classrooms, keeps the conversation ongoing by translating new vocabulary or by repeating a whole sentence from target language to first language and vice versa (Mingzhu, 2018). Moreover, teachers use code-switching to enhance the expression of affection, which motivates students to keep talking.

In addition to that, teachers code switch not only because of lack of language proficiency and difficulty in finding appropriate words in the target language, but they also code-switch purposively for cultural reasons, politeness, and most significantly, for explaining difficult concepts in order increase their students' understanding on what is being learnt (Adebola, 2011; Mokibelo, 2016). Translated understandably, teachers may bring in first language to comprehensively explain important aspects as some students might not be able to understand key issues being raised through the target language. Apart from these functions, it is indicated that message reiteration, message qualification, and interjection or sentence filler are also found to serve as functions of code-switching in the process of English teaching and learning (Brice, 2000). For example, the insertion of first language interjections or subconscious markers is used by teachers as

communication strategies. Relatively, teachers can also employ code-switching for knowledge construction, classroom management, interpersonal relations, and for expressing personal affective meanings.

Besides that, there are also other functions of students' code-switching in bilingual classrooms. These are equivalence, floor-holding, reiteration, and conflict control (Jegede, 2011). Firstly, it is indicated that students use lexical aspects of the target language and progressively use such equivalent items to switch to their mother tongue. This means that students normally use equivalence as defensive technique primarily due to the insufficiency of their linguistic competence of the language that is being learnt. This defensive strategy helps them to build their confidence to engage in continued communication thereby subsequently increasing their target language development. Secondly, students code switch for floor-holding purposes. This means that during interlocution in the target language, students oftentimes use gap fillers with their own first language as a result of insufficient command in the target language. While some scholars indicate that floor-holding is disadvantageous to students in the long run, Jegede (2011) believes that it helps students to learn the target language by building on their own native language.

The third function raised by Jegede (2011) is reiteration. This function serves as a tool that reinforces students' understanding through repetition technique essentially by reemphasizing and clarifying what is being learned in their mother tongue. While alteration may be of particular benefit to students whose target language is significantly low, it may likewise negatively impact the

acquisition of the target language of those whose target language proficiency is reasonably above basic threshold as a result of the first language transfer phenomena. Last but definitely not the least, students may also use code-switching as a conflict control mechanism. Jegede (2011) emphasizes that conflict control is used by students in their pursuit to eschew erroneous interpretation of the intended meaning. Conflict control is usually employed to shun away possible misunderstanding of intended meaning particularly in cases where the target culture and local culture differ extensively.

Theoretical Framework

Matrix Language Framework Model (MLF Model)

While some studies (for example, Brice 2000) analyse the linguistic features of code switching in the classroom, Myers-Scotton (2001) proposes the matrix language framework model (MLF model) which lays emphasis on identifying the matrix language and the embedded language in a sentence. The model benefited from the insights of earlier researchers who recognised the unequal participation of languages in code switching (Myers-Scotton 2006: 234).

The model holds that in a code switched sentence, one language acts as a domain or matrix language (ML) and the other as a subordinate or embedded language. According Myers-Scotton (2001: 23), the matrix language plays the main role in setting the sentence frame where the code switching arises and the embedded language is considered as having been inserted in a matrix language frame to achieve a purpose. Ferguson (2003: 39) observes that the introduction of the embedded language is necessary because it helps pupils to understand the subject matter; it helps teachers to motivate, discipline

and praise pupils; it facilitates interpersonal relation between the teacher and the pupils.

The model can be applied to describe the roles or functions played by the matrix and embedded languages in the classroom.

Application of the Theory

The theory is applicable to the study because of the following reasons.

1. It will enable us to identify the matrix or dominant language and the embedded or subordinate language used in a multilingual mathematics classroom, where code switching is used.
2. It will enable us to analyse and discuss the roles played by these languages in the classroom.

It will also enable us to analyse the features of these languages and how they have contributed to the effective teaching and learning of mathematics.

Methodology

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methodology because it allows the researcher to make deductions from data frequencies, and capture naturally occurring interactions among the participants. The qualitative approach enables us to see natural phenomena of classroom interaction. Detailed observations and descriptions of context and what people said or did formed the basis for our inductive analysis.

The population for this study comprised all the teachers in public primary schools in Osogbo, Ile-Ife, Oyo and Ogbomoso. The participants involved in this study were 80 students and 8 teachers from 8 bilingual public

basic schools, two each from Osogbo, Ile-Ife, Oyo and Ogbomoso. Stratified Random Sampling Technique was used to select schools in Osogbo. This was done by selecting schools based on strata (street by street). The schools include:

- a) Salvation Army Middle School, Alekuwodo, Osogbo
- b) L.A. Middle School, Adenle, Osogbo
- c) Methodist Elementary School, Sabo, Ile-Ife
- d) St. Bernard Elementary School, Lagere, Ile-Ife
- e) Nurudeen Basic School, Kuye, Ogbomoso
- f) St. David Anglican Basic School, Agbonin, Ogbomoso
- g) Aatan Baptist Primary School, Isale Oyo, Oyo
- h) Baptist Primary School, Isokun, Oyo

The study focused mainly on primary six pupils. In an average class, there were about twenty students. Only ten students were selected from each classroom. The age of the pupils ranged from 9 to 11 years old. The teachers selected for the study were primary six teachers and they were allowed to teach the subject of their choice.

The data were gathered through structured interview and classroom observations. During observation, the interaction between the teachers and the pupils were recorded with a recorder and converted into written form (transcripts). The field notes taken were also interpreted alongside the responses in the questionnaire.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Teachers' Choices of Language

The table above shows languages mostly used in the classroom from the schools and lessons sampled. Question 1a was asked to find out, from teachers, what

language they tended to use most for instructing pupils during lessons. The data show that all the eight teachers responded to the question. Seven teachers (87.5%) claimed to use English and Yoruba while one teacher (12.5%) claimed to use Yoruba and Hausa. Our observation and record from sitting in at the lessons show that the claims of the teachers are true because the teachers taught the greater part of the lesson mostly in the mother tongue. The only teacher that claimed to use Yoruba and Hausa as the main medium of instruction was from Methodist Primary School, Sabo. The teacher, being a Yoruba man, had to learn Hausa to be able to teach the pupils, because most of them were Hausas.

Other Languages (Support Languages) Teachers used in the Classrooms

The table above shows the other languages used in the schools sampled. The data collected show that all the eight teachers responded to the question. The table above shows that Yoruba is the other language mostly used in the schools surveyed. All the teachers (100%) claimed that they used English as the other language in the classroom. Our observation shows that the eight teachers used English as a supplement because majority of the pupils in their classrooms were of Yoruba extraction. The teachers, thus, taught in Hausa and Yoruba in order to make the pupils learn, and occasionally switched to English when the content could not be interpreted in both Yoruba and Hausa.

Reasons for the Teachers' Preferences

Question 1b was asked to find out the reasons for the teachers' preferences in question 1a.

The teacher from St. Bernard Primary School, Lagere, Ile-Ife and Salvation Army Middle School, Alekuwodo, Osogbo responded that:

The pupils learn better in their mother tongue. However, English Language is an official language in Nigeria and it enables pupils to do external exams. We also use English because we are not expected to use Yoruba language to teach in upper classes.

The teachers observed that the status of English in Nigeria should not be underrated by using the language of the immediate environment solely as the medium of instruction in education at the expense of English, which is Nigeria's official language. She also observed that external examinations are in English, as a result, pupils should be taught in the medium of English during English lessons. She noted this would allow the pupils to be able to read and write in English during the exams.

The teacher from L.A. Middle School, Adenle, Osogbo responded that:

English is the medium the school authorities and local inspectors said we should be using and that is why it is the main language.

The teacher observed that the school authorities and the local inspectors of education (LIE) said the medium of instruction from primary four upward should be English. During the lesson, the teacher tried to teach in the medium of English alone. The teacher was trying to conform to the instructions of the LIE. However, the pupils had a hard time coping in the medium of English. The

teacher had to switch back and forth between English and Yoruba for the pupils to really understand what she was teaching them.

The teacher from St. David Anglican Basic School, Ogbomoso responded that:

It would let them (the pupils) understand the teaching.

The teacher believed that the use of Yoruba together with English would aid the pupils understanding of the topic taught. Our observation and record show that the pupils actually enjoyed the lesson more in their mother tongue (Yoruba) than in their second language (English). Their responses also show that they had some measure of understanding of the topic.

The teacher from Nurudeen Basic School, Kuye, Ogbomoso and St. David Anglican Basic School, Agbonin, Ogbomoso responded that:

If we use only English, they will not cooperate.

The teachers observed that the pupils show more cooperation when she used their mother tongue (Yoruba) than when she taught in English. Our observation and record also confirmed this. The pupils paid more attention to the teacher each time the teacher switched from English to Yoruba. This showed that they were ready to cooperate with the teacher, provided she taught them in Yoruba.

We will also observe from table 1 that only a teacher (from Methodist Primary School, Sabo, Ile-Ife) indicated that he used Yoruba and Hausa most. He responded that:

The pupils show low interest in the English Language.

Our observation from sitting in at the lessons in this school showed that the pupils did not understand English at all. The way they watched the teacher teach them in English showed that they did not even have interest in the English-medium. They were all from Hausa extraction and only speak Hausa at home, and Yoruba, only when they are interacting with pupils from Yoruba extraction. Their major language is Hausa while their second language is Yoruba. As a result of this, the teacher used Yoruba and Hausa as media of instruction.

Similarly, the teacher from Aatan Baptist Primary School, Isale Oyo, Oyo said that she used Yoruba because “it makes the lesson more effective. The Pupils will be able to contribute more to the lesson”. According to her, the use of Yoruba makes her teaching effective, such that the pupils will be made to learn in the language they are familiar with. As a result, they will be able to give their feedback in the language they understand fluently. Through this, the teacher is able to really determine which pupil is doing well and which of them is not doing well.

The teacher from Baptist Primary School, Isokun, Oyo said that she used Yoruba “to enable them understand very well. It facilitates the teaching of subjects such as mathematics.” From the response of this teacher, we could observe that the teacher used Yoruba to help the pupils understand what she taught them in English. The teacher believed that a subject such as mathematics needed to be taught in a language that the pupils were familiar with.

The teacher from St Bernard Primary School, Lagere, Ile-Ife said that she used Yoruba because “the best way to teach the pupils effectively is to interpret what you teach them in Yoruba, their mother tongue”. This teacher believed that the best way to teach pupils mathematics is by using their mother tongue as the medium of instruction. This is also the idea of the two teachers discussed earlier.

Similarly, the teacher from Salvation Army Middle School, Alekuwodo, Osogbo said that she used Yoruba “to arouse their interest because it is their mother tongue.” This teacher believed that the best way to attract the pupils’ attention in the classroom is by using their mother tongue. This makes the pupils feel at home and forget the tension and anxiety they usually have in their English classroom. It is worthy of note that speaking English in answering questions in English could be a dilemma for a pupil. However, answering questions or giving comments in Yoruba makes things easier for the pupils, and even, the teachers.

Our observation during the lesson was that English was used only when some concepts could not be taught in Yoruba and Hausa. Thus, Code-switching was the language of instruction in those schools. In other words, Tables 1 & 2 show that code switching has become a common practice in Nigerian classrooms.

The table above shows that all the pupils preferred being taught in their mother tongues to English in order to learn effectively. From the responses of the pupils, we observe that a higher percentage of the pupils, 70 (100%)

of the 80 pupils interviewed said they preferred Yoruba, while 10 (10%) of the 80 pupils said they preferred Hausa.

All the pupils indicated their interest in the medium of code switching. Just like the teachers' claim that the pupils learnt better in their mother tongues, the pupils, in turn, believed that being taught in their mother tongue had great gain. Their preferences could also be linked to their teachers' use of CS in the schools and their inability to speak and understand English well.

The table above shows that all the eight teachers responded to the question and they all said they do code switch while giving their lessons. Our observation and record also show that CS was used throughout the lessons and by both the teachers and the pupils. In other words, Yoruba-English CS and Yoruba-Hausa CS are practised in public primary schools in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

This section presents the findings of this study dealing with the functions of CS. This study identifies different functions of CS employed both by teachers and students in the two classrooms. The functions of CS employed by the teacher include explanation, checking for understanding, grammar translation, and admonition. The functions of CS employed by the pupils involve students helping each other, self-correction, unofficial interaction, and clearing misunderstandings.

This study revealed that four CS functions were employed by the teacher in their regular classes. These functions were explaining or clarification, checking for understanding, grammar translation, and admonition. In

the student function, six functions were found among the students during their regular classes; these include requesting help, helping each other, self-correction, unofficial interaction, clearing misunderstanding, and student's initiation. Similarly, Pui (2009) points out three functions of code-switching, i.e., to help students better understand the English content, to make sure that students understand the content, and to discipline students when students are out of control. The present study shows that code-switching can serve several functions: a) for translation whose primary purpose is also to make the teaching content much more comprehensible to students, b) for checking students' understanding, and c) for maintaining class discipline when the class is noisy. Two functions of teachers' code-switching claimed by Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult (1999) are topic switch and the affective functions, both of which are also obvious in the classrooms in this study. Moreover, the present study finds students' code-switching for affective functions, that is, code-switching to deliver the student's appreciation, respect and excitement towards the teacher.

Furthermore, this study also identifies that the students used English mostly in *materials-dependent talk*, i.e. the use of English by students as it is demanded by the learning task or the textbook, especially reading comprehension. This is in line with the study of Canagarajah (2001) which reported that English was only used for *material-based communication* while the first language (L1) was reserved for other activities. In this study, the material facilitates the students' interactions during the lessons, or for commenting on the exercise. This is also in line with the finding of Liu (2011) when he says that CS is one of communication strategy that the member

of classroom community use to be better understand the lesson or concept.

Apart from that, CS took place in different contexts of learning. First, CS occurred when the focus of the lesson is on discussing mathematical concepts or grammar terms. Second, CS occurred when the students were responding to their teachers' instructions, doing exercises or having a discussion. As evident in this research, a large percentage of respondents switch from English to Yoruba. This is done in their attempt to explain or interpret some English concepts in Yoruba. The students also have got themselves familiarized with the mixture. This might not be unconnected with the fact that their teachers do use Yoruba to explain some new concepts of English to them. Coupled with this is the frequent use of the mixture of English and Yoruba between the parents and the students at home, thus, they now find it easy to code-switch instead of sticking to the use of either Yoruba or English.

Another fact that is evident here is that during the conduct of the research, it was observed that all the teachers that were involved in the research did code-switch. The reason for this might be either one or more of the reasons stated by the respondents above. Obviously, it is no gainsaying the fact that the home of individuals has a tremendous influence on them. This is equally true of the language phenomenon. The research revealed some likely impacts the language one uses at home could have on one's choice of language in the classroom. This is also due to the fact that out of the 24 hours that makes a day, only eight hours is spent in school while the rest sixteen hours is spent at home. Based on this fact, pupils should

be taught in the language they are most familiar with – their home language.

Implication for National Development

Languages are said to represent state of affairs other than themselves. This traditional view of languages captures adequately the fact that language is the tool used to bring thoughts into existence. The human achievements are said to be products of intensive thinking and reflections. Many scholars conclude that the limits of language are the limits of thought. The implication of this is that human thought is only able to think those things which have only been fashioned by language. National development is a product of human thought. However, following our understanding that no thought is possible without language, national development is at the same time the product of language. Thus, the formulation of the term, national development, is made possible simply because as human beings we have the capacity to use language. This point should stand as the first proof of the relationship between language and national development, where language is seen as giving birth to the national development.

To this end, our understanding of national development rests on language. Thus, the communication of national development is made possible only with the instrumentality of language. We communicate to our citizens the objectives we want to achieve in our national development. We use language to advance to them the best possible reasons in support of these objectives, projecting in the best possible manner the advantages which we expect to draw from the national development objectives. Also, we detail for them how the outlined goals should be achieved. Also, when progress is made with reference to

the national development objectives it is also communicated to the citizens. All these are majorly done by the use of language.

We can never overemphasize the importance of documentation. It is the tool with which we preserve the various human achievements. Preserving these achievements is quite important as it makes them available to future generations. Language stands out as the most important tool for this preservation.

Democracy thrives on aggregating views and demands of diverse people and groups, language serves as the tool of assembling these diverse views. This means that language is the tool with which the diverse perspectives of individuals and groups, their vital interests of all sorts are communicated to those in power. This makes communication, facilitated in every way by language, a necessity for democracy. We can easily prove that, most of the times, the difference between political requests acceded to and those not acceded to is the difference between the language used in packaging, presenting, and projecting the requests. This attests to the fact that one who wants to be heard and who seeks to have his needs catered for in a democracy must express so in language. The inability to use language skillfully is a stumbling block for anyone who wants active participation in politics. Such a one, if elected to the National Assembly, may not be able to express the needs of his constituency in a coherent and competent manner.

Language can also play a great role in ensuring a country where the freedom of citizens thrives. The role of language in promoting a free society cannot be over-emphasized because freedom is not merely a matter of

freedom of speech, press, assemblage, and worship. Such freedom may only magnify confusion and mutual frustration, if the language of expression is not effective in transmitting the real values of one group or class to the others involved.

There is also a natural connection between language and equality. This can be seen in the fact that all human beings make use of language and that this use of language makes all human beings equal. Thus, despite the external realities suggesting otherwise, the natural situation is that we are all equal. The natural equality established by language can serve as impetus for Nigerians to view themselves as equals. This means that people are to be treated equally in the distribution of societal gains and pains. No person is to enjoy any advantage or disadvantage on account of his or her social status, ethnicity, and religion.

Additionally, language is the key to building a united, strong and self-reliant nation. Based on the diversity in the country, some people arrived at the conclusion that Nigeria cannot survive as a united country. Positions like the above have fanned embers of division within the Nigerian polity. However, a closer look at the Nigerian languages reveals that they can be source of unity for the country. Obafemi (2012) observes that most Nigerian languages are inter-related in the final analysis, and they ought really not to provide a basic reason for ethnic fractionalization and disunity. Thus, language can be exploited in fostering a united Nigeria. When Nigeria is united, when all of its part sees themselves as the same because they take into account their interrelatedness, it will give room for cooperation. This

cooperation will in no small measure make the country strong and self-reliant.

In a nutshell, language is an important variable in national development. Indeed, it can be said that development will be completely impossible without the phenomenon of human language. Both the formulation of the term, national development, and the articulation of what constitutes it are only possible because there is language to express them.

Conclusion

This study has explored the function of code switching, demonstrating that teachers' code-switching is purposeful and helpful to the teaching-learning process. This was made possible by the matrix language framework model used for this study. The framework made it possible for us to identify the languages used in the schools surveyed. Through the Model, we were able to determine the main (matrix) language of instruction and the other (embedded) languages of instruction. We were also able to find out the roles of these languages and their positive effects on the teaching and learning of mathematics.

Looking at the significance and roles of languages in Nigeria, this study resolves that both the mother tongue (or language of the immediate environment) and the English Language should be used together as language of instruction in schools. This will increase the survival rate of endangered languages, especially the minority languages and further strengthen the English language

and the regional languages in the country. This in turn will promote unity, peace, honesty, and national development.

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