

Motivational Factors for Code Alternation in Pre- Service Teachers' Verbal Communication in Oyo and Ekiti States

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Abstract

This paper presents why bilinguals (Students of Colleges of Education) mix two languages and switch back and forth between two languages and what triggers them to mix and switch their languages when they speak. These bilingual phenomena are called 'code alternation or' code-mixing' and 'code-switching' and these are ordinary phenomena in the area of bilingualism. According to Hammers and Blanc 2000, 'code -mixing and 'code-switching' were considered as signs of incompetence. However Khnert, Yim, Nett, Kan and Duran (2005) remarked that an alternative view is to recognize the cultural, social, and communication validity of the mixing of two traditionally isolated linguistic codes as a third legitimate code. As mentioned, these phenomena may influence bilingual's language positively. The purpose of this paper therefore is to indicate the motivational factors for code-mixing and code switching among the pre-service teachers verbal communication. Questionnaires were used to elicit responses from pre-services teachers and Chi-square was used to analyse them.

Keywords: motivational factors, code alternation, pre-service teachers, verbal communication

1. Introduction

As in most new fields of research, labels can be disconcerting and confusing, because they change as new theories see the light, even when such theories are neither new nor bears any significant modifications. So it is with code alternation, which some scholars refer to as code switching, code mixing, code-shifting, code-choice, code-swaying etc. As used, in this paper therefore, code alternation simply refers to code switching and code mixing and are used interchangeably.

Code-switching and code mixing are well-known traits in the speech pattern of the average bilinguals in any human society. Code-switching and code-mixing are also linguistic behaviours that arise as a result of language coming into contact. Code-switching has been defined as the act of alternation of two language within a single discourse, sentence or their constituents Poplack (1980). By implication, code-switching is the concurrent use of more than one language or language variety, in conversation. Code -mixing, according to Muysken (2000) refers to all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from, two languages appear in one sentence. To Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), Code mixing refers to the mixing of various linguistic units (morphemes, words, modifiers, phrases, clauses, and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems within a sentence. More specifically, code-mixing is intrasentential and is constrained by grammatical principles. Code-switching, on the other hand, occurs when we have intersentential alternations when the switch is made across sentence boundaries. Perhaps this is why Dipietro (1977), Grosjean (1982) and Torres (1989) define it as the use of more than one language by communicants in the execution of a speech act.

People used to think about code-mixing and code-switching relatively. According to Hamers and Blanc (2000) code-mixing and code-switching were considered as signs of incompetence. Informed linguists as Hugen (1950) and Weirech (1953) also see them as abnormal oversights on the part of bilingual speakers. These opinions might make bilinguals feel they have a lack of both language and they are not included in both cultures either. However Khert, Yim, Nett, Kan, and Duran (2005) remark that an alternative view is to recognize the cultural, social and communicative validity of the mixing of two traditionally isolated linguistic codes as a third legitimate code.

When bilinguals switch or mix two languages, there might be motivation and reasons for code-switching and code-mixing. Grosjean (1982) suggest some reasons for alternation. For example some bilinguals mix two languages when they cannot find proper words or expressions or where or when there is no appropriate translation for the language being used. Also, their interlocutors, situations, messages, altitude, and emotions generate code – mixing. According to Grosjean (1982), code –switching can also be used for many other reasons such as quoting what someone has said (and thereby emphasizing one’s group identity), specifying the addressee (switching to the usual language of a particular person in a group will show that one is addressing that person), qualifying that has been said, or talking about past events. On the basis of a number of factors such as with whom (participants: their backgrounds and relationships), about what (topic, content), and when and where a speech act occurs, bilinguals make their language choice (Bhatia and Ritchie, 2004).

It is evident that pre- service teachers in college of education do alternate their codes in communication. What are their reasons for alternating codes? Is it because they are lazy or inadvertent speech act or is it because they are linguistically incompetent? Do they code- mix or code switch because of factors like participant roles and relationship, situational factors, language attitudes, dominance, and security? Since code alternation is a common feature of pre-service teachers in college of education, it becomes imperative therefore to examine the motivational factors or reasons for their code alternation in southwest part of Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

Muysken (2000) defines code-mixing as all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence. In terms of the definition from Bhatia and Ritchies 2004, code-mixing refers to the mixing of various linguistic unit (morphemes, words, modifiers, phrases, clauses and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems within a sentence. More specifically, code mixing is intra sentential and is constrained by grammatical principles. It may also be motivated by social and psychological factors. Despite these definitions, many people may have difficulty using the terminologies since many researchers use different terminology for code-mixing. For instance, Pfaff (1979) employs the term “mixing” as a neutral cover term for both code-mixing and borrowing while Beardsome (1991:12) rejects the use of the term code-mixing “since it appears to be the least-favored designation and the most unclear for referring to any form of non-monoglot norm-based Speech patterns”. Yet others use the term code-mixing to refer to other related phenomena such as borrowing, interference, transfer, or switching (Mc Laughlin, 1984).

In fact, some people have difficulty distinguishing between code-switching and code-mixing. Code-mixing transfers elements of all linguistic levels and unit ranging from a lexical item to a sentence, so that it is not always easy to distinguish code-switching from code-mixing.(Grosjean, 1982). Code switching is defined as the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent. Inter sentential alternations occur when the switch is made across sentence boundaries (Grosjean, 1982; Torres, 1989). DiPietro (1977:23) defines it as “the use of more than one language by communicants in the execution of a speech act”. Poplack 2000 States that code switching is the alternative use of languages either within a sentence or between sentences.

Irrespective of these diverse views, there is a common ground on which all seem to agree that code-mixing and code-switching are widespread phenomena in bilingual communities where speakers use their native languages (L1) and their second language (L2) in different domains.

There are processes of code alternation. Eunhee, K. (2006) highlights three of them which are; insertion, alteration and congruent lexicalization. Insertion is defined as insertion of material such as lexical items or entire constituents from one language. According to Muysken (2000), approaches that depart from the notion of insertion view the constraints in terms of the structural properties of some base or matrix structure. Here, the process of code alternation conceived as something akin to borrowing: the insertion of an alien lexical or phrasal category into a given structure. The difference would simply be the size and type of element inserted, e.g. noun versus phrase. Muysken (2000) mentions that insertion is fragrant communities, where there is a considerable asymmetry in the speakers’ proficiency in the two languages. A language dominance shift, e.g. between the first and third generation in an immigrant setting, may be reflected in a shift in directionality of the insertion of elements: from insertion into the language of the country of origin to the presence of originally native items in the language of the host country.

Approaches departing from alternation associated with the Poplack (1980) view the constraints on mixing in terms of the compatibility or equivalence of the languages involved at the switch point.

Conjunction and appositions are incorporated through adjunction rather than insertion. Verbs are often incorporated through adjunction to a helping verb. Language alternation is a normal common and important aspect of bilingualism (Grosjean, 1982 Pennington (1995). According to Muysken, the process of alternation is

particularly frequent in stable bilingual communities with a tradition of language separation, but occurs in many other communities as well. It is a frequent and structurally intrusive type of code-mixing.

The third process is congruent lexicalization. The notion of congruent lexicalization underlies the study of style shifting and dialect/standard variation, as in the work of Labor (1972) and Trudgill (1986), rather than bilingual language use proper Muysken (2000). Congruent lexicalization is akin to language variation and style shifting: switching is grammatically unconstrained and can be characterized in terms of alternative lexical insertions. Linguistic convergence feeds into congruent lexicalization and the two processes may reinforce each other. Some cases of word-internal mixing can be viewed as congruent lexicalization. The exception is the bilingual research by Michael Clyne (1967) on German and Dutch immigrant in Australia. This comes closest to an approach to bilingual language use from the perspective of congruent lexicalization, Muysken (2000), congruent lexicalization may be particularly associated with second generation migrant groups, dialect/standard and post-creole continua, and bilingual speakers of closely related languages with roughly equal prestige and no tradition of overt language separation.

In a study conducted by Grosjean (1982), he observed that code alternation could be used for many reasons, such as quoting what someone has said (and thereby emphasizing one's group identity, specifying the addressee switching to the usual language of a particular person in a group will show that one is addressing a person), qualifying that has been said, or talking about past events. He said further that people also code-alternate on the basis of a number of factors such as with whom (participants: their backgrounds and relationships), about what (topic, content), and when and where a speech act occurs.

In a related study by Adetuyi, Akinghobe, Akinola, Ogunleye, and Omole, (2011) among the undergraduate students of the University of Ibadan, it was revealed that the majority of the students code mix and switch their languages because they want to explain things in their mother tongue because they don't know the interpretation of such words in their learnt language. i.e. English. Some also asserted that alternating codes earn them respect.

Rafiu, K. (2009) has looked into the motivational factors for code alternation in selected home-video in Nigeria. The researcher found that emotional out burst, condemnation/curse, jest, incantation and socio-cultural identity are among reasons why people alternate codes.

This paper, however, concerns itself with motivational factors among the pre-service teachers in college of education since there is no known work to the researcher in this area.

3. Statement of Problem

The need to examine the motivational factors for code alternation is compelling in view of the growing importance of this linguistic phenomenon. This study therefore sought to examine reasons and motivations behind code alternation by pre-service teachers from two colleges of education in southwest, Nigeria.

4. Research Questions

Five research questions were raised in the study and they are:

- 1) Do participant roles and relationship motivate pre-service teachers to alternate codes in their verbal communication?
- 2) Do situational factors, account for code alternation in the pre-service teachers' verbal communication?
- 3) Is message intrinsic factor responsible for code alternation in pre-service teachers' verbal communication?
- 4) Is reiteration or paraphrasing a factor for code alternation among the pre-service teachers in college of education?
- 5) Will language attitude, dominance and security be reasons for code alternation in the pre-service teachers' verbal communication?

5. Research Design

The descriptive survey design was adopted in the study because the variables of interest to the researcher have already occurred. Thus the design was adequate in helping the researcher to gather necessary data.

5.1 Population and Sample

All the pre-service teachers at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State and Ikere Ekiti College of Education, Ikere, Ekiti State constituted the population of the study. 200 of them were selected through stratified random sampling procedure and used in this study.

5.2 Method of Data Collection

A self-constructed questionnaire titled “Motivational Factors for code Alternation in Pre-service Teachers’ verbal Communication”. The questionnaire had .68 reliability coefficient index before it was used in the study. Copies were produced and taken to the pre-service teachers in their respective schools where they were completed and collected for analysis.

5.3 Data Analysis

Chi-square was the major tools used to analyse the data generated in the study.

6. Findings

Table 1. Research Question 1: Do participant roles and relationship motivate pre-service teachers to alternate code in their verbal communication?

STIMULUS		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	X ² . Cal	X ² tab.		
I code mix and code switch with my friends.	O	140	60	0	0	200	275.06	12.59		
	E	72.5	57.5	52.5	17.5					
I do not alternate codes when talking with my lecturers.	O	30	60	70	40	200				
	E	72.5	57.5	52.5	17.5					
I tend to use Yoruba and English within the same conversation.	O	70	80	50	0	200				
	E	72.5	57.5	52.5	17.5					
I do not switch or mix codes when talking with my friends	O	50	30	90	30	200				
	E	72.5	57.5	52.5	17.5					
TOTAL		290	230	210	70	800				

From Table 1, it could be deduced that participants roles and relationship motivates college of education students to code mix and code switch in their verbal communication. This is because X² calculated (275.06) is higher than the table value (12.59). This corroborates the findings of Eunhee Kim (2006.) that participant roles and relationship motivate people to alternate their codes.

Table 2. Research Question 2: Do situational factors account for code alternation in the pre-service teachers verbal communication?

STIMULUS		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	X ² . Cal	X ² tab.		
I code mix with my colleagues during departmental meeting	O	110	50	30	10	200	258.10	12.59		
	E	72.5	45	50	32.5					
My code alternation is not extended to my senior	O	50	40	50	60	200				
	E	72.5	45	50	32.5					
I always code mix with opposite partner (sex)	O	90	80	10	20	200				
	E	72.5	45	50	32.5					
Code switching is not rampant among students	O	40	10	110	40	200				
	E	72.5	45	50	32.5					
TOTAL		290	180	200	130	800				

The data in Table 2 show that situational factors account for code alternation in pre-service teachers verbal communication. The reason for this is that X² calculated 258.10 is higher than the table value (12.59). The finding is consonance with the findings of Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) who postulated that social variable such as class, religion, gender, and age can influence the pattern of language mixing and switching both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Table 3. Research Question 3: Is message intrinsic factors responsible for code-alternation in pre-service teachers verbal communication?

STIMULUS		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	X ² . Cal	X ² tab.		
When quoting a person, I do alternate codes	O	70	50	50	30	200	75.45	12.59		
	E	72.5	60	45	22.5					
Whenever I use local proverbs, I do not alternate codes	O	60	60	40	40	200				
	E	72.5	60	45	22.5					
I use code alternation for emphasis.	O	70	50	10	20	200				
	E	72.5	60	22.5	32.5					
When I do not find the equivalent in English, I alternate codes	O	90	80	20	10	200				
	E	72.5	60	45	22.5					
TOTAL		290	240	180	90	800				

Table 3 shows that message intrinsic factors is one of the motivating factors for code alternation. The justification for this is that X^2 calculated 75.45 is greater than 12.59. This shows that pre-service teacher alternate their codes when quoting a person directly or in reported speech situation. The main reason for this is to present what the original speaker has said in the language he used. This corroborates the view of Gumperz (1982) who argued that a Spanish-English bilingual who mixes two languages through a quotation.

Table 4. Research Question 4: Is reiteration or paraphrasing a factor for code alternation among the pre-service teachers in college of education?

STIMULUS		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	X^2 . Cal	X^2 tab.
Code alternation is used to ascertain agreement	O	50	90	40	20	200	75.98	12.59
	E	55	67.5	40	37.5			
“give me the money “biko” is not common in my class.	O	70	70	20	40	200		
	E	55	67.5	40	37.5			
“Haba! How would you do that” is a common expression in my class.	O	60	70	20	40	200		
	E	55	67.5	40	37.5			
I do not code switch when I want to paraphrase.	O	40	40	70	50	200		
	E	55	67.5	40	37.5			
TOTAL		220	270	160	150	800		

Table 4 shows that 490 respondents agreed and agreed strongly that reiteration or paraphrasing is a factor that motivate pre-service teachers in college of education to code mix and code switch while 310 respondents disagreed. The X^2 calculated is 75.98 which is higher than the table value (12.59). This shows that pre-service teachers alternate codes when paraphrasing.

Table 5. Research Question 5: Could language attitude, dominance and security be reason for code alternation in the pre-service teachers' verbal communication?

STIMULUS		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	X^2 . Cal	X^2 tab.
Alternate codes when talking with a Yoruba English bilingual.	O	100	50	30	20	200	306.23	12.59
	E	67.5	85	42.5	5			
When students do feel secure, they tend to mix languages.	O	90	90	20	0	200		
	E	67.5	85	42.5	5			
I mix elements from my dominant language (Yoruba) when using my non-dominant language rather than vice versa.	O	60	130	10	0	200		
	E	67.5	85	52.5	5			
I do not alternate code even when many of the linguistic structures communication are lacking in the non-dominant language.	O	20	70	110	0.5	200		
	E	67.5	85	42.5				
TOTAL		290	340	170	20	800		

From Table 5, it could be deduced that language attitude dominance and security motivates college of education students to alternate their codes. This is shown in the data above where the X^2 calculated (306.23) is higher than X^2 table value (12.59). The implication of this is that there is a general tendency for pre-service teachers in colleges of education to mix elements from their dominant language when using their non-dominant language, rather than vice-versa, because many of linguistic structures for communication are lacking in the non-dominant language.

7. Findings

It can be concluded here that the findings of this research have show that pre-service teachers code mix and code-switch for various reasons. First, they code alternate their languages in accordance with a variety of situations. Eruin (1964) observes that various situations (settings) many be restricted with respect to the participants who may be present, the physical setting, the topics and functions of discourse and the style employed. Secondly, it is also worthy of note that language attitude dominance would motivate pre-service teachers to code mix and switch. Thirdly, other variables such as social status and age would cause pre-service teacher to alternate codes in their verbal communication. For example, pre-service teachers in college of education alternate codes when talking with their colleagues but never do so when talking with their lecturer. This, corroborates the view of(Soeseno(1991) who observed that in east Jana, the higher status person switches into Ngoko or plain Krama level of Jananese from indonesian while the lower status person uses Krama with

honorific term if he/she is able to, or continues, in Indonesian. Fourthly, it is also discovered that pre-service teachers alternate codes when they are reiterating a point or paraphrasing.

The implications of the above findings on pre-service teachers in college of education are obvious. It is not surprising, therefore to find out that pre-service teachers alternate codes despite various strategies aimed at making them to speak English only. The code alternation is not because they are linguistically incompetent but as a result of some unavoidable reasons highlighted in this discussion.

8. Recommendations

It is recommended for the teachers and parents to have a positive attitude toward code-alternation and not to see code alternation as a sign of linguistic competence. Code-alternation provides a crucial means of accomplishing lessons across the curriculum and management problems of working with texts that are mostly written in English. It hereby recommended that code alternation should be used judiciously in learning of new vocabulary in speaking class. Teachers must also be encouraged to use code-alternation to build rapport with students or asserting teachers' authority.

9. Conclusion

As mentioned somewhere in this discussion, the reasons why pre-service teachers in college of education switch their utterance and alternate codes is not because of their lack of language skills but because they try to deliver better meaning related to the society they belong to. Therefore, making students use only English in school does not necessarily make them learn the language effectively. Also it is important to remember that code-alternation contribute to effective learning and communication.

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