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CODE MIXING AND CODE SWITCHING AMONG STUDENTS AND WORKERS IN THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, SAGBAMA, BAYELSA STATE.

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Abstract

This study investigates the patterns, functions, and sociolinguistic significance of code-mixing and code-switching among students and workers, employing a qualitative descriptive research design, the study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of bilingual communication practices in both formal and informal settings. The study is anchored the linguistic and second language Acquisition theories. Data were collected from a purposive sample of 60 participants using open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observations, drawing on both primary and secondary sources (Dane, 2007; Nwana, 2005).Analysis of data followed a thematic-descriptive approach, examining the application of grammatical rules in English, Izon, and Pidgin, and highlighting the functional and pragmatic aspects of language alternation (Izon, n.d.). Findings indicate that participants strategically employ code-mixing and code-switching for identity, expression, social cohesion, clarification, and contextual adaptation, reflecting both sociolinguistic competence and communicative efficiency. The study underscores the systematic and meaningful nature of bilingual language practices and provides insights for educators, linguists, and others interested in multilingual communication dynamics.

Keywords: Code-mixing, Code-Switching, Sociolinguistics Grammatical Rules, Language.

INTRODUCTION

Language contact is an inevitable feature of multilingual and multicultural societies, and Nigeria provides a particularly rich environment for studying such linguistic phenomena. One of the most prominent outcomes of language contact is the occurrence of code mixing and code switching, especially in educational institutions where speakers with diverse linguistic backgrounds interact daily. These linguistic practices occur when bilingual or multilingual speakers alternate between two or more languages within a sentence, clause, utterance, or conversational turn. Within school environments, such as the College of Education, Sagbama, both students and workers commonly switch or mix languages as they study, teach, socialize, and share ideas.

In sociolinguistic literature, code mixing and code switching are recognized as important communicative strategies that enable speakers to negotiate meaning, express identity, improve comprehension, and achieve conversational goals. According to Appel and Muysken (1987), mixed discourse emerges from sustained language contact, where speakers exploit lexical and

structural resources from different linguistic systems to construct meaningful utterances. Similarly, Weinreich (1968) asserts that when two languages co-exist within a community, speakers naturally alternate between them, creating hybrid speech forms that reflect both linguistic competence and cultural adaptation.

Although some researchers use code mixingand code switchinginterchangeably, others draw clear distinctions between the two. Pandit (1990) argues that code switching often involves alternation between languages at clause or sentence boundaries, while code mixing tends to occur within the sentence, making it more intra-sentential. Myers-Scotton (1993) further explains that code switching involves the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation,whereas code mixing usually refers to the insertion of lexical items from one language into another. These distinctions help scholars identify the structural patterns and sociolinguistic motivations underlying bilingual communication.

The works of Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) further suggest that code switching among bilinguals is not merely a sign of linguistic interference but an indicator of linguistic sophistication, contextual sensitivity, and sociocultural alignment. Speakers often modify their language based on whom they are speaking to, the topic under discussion, and the social meanings they wish to convey. Consequently, code switching reflects both linguistic knowledge and the speakers awareness of communicative norms within their community.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the communicative and social benefits associated with code mixing and code switching, their persistent and sometimes excessive use among students and workers of the College of Education, Sagbama has raised concerns. Many individuals mix languages even in formal situations such as classroom discussions, academic presentations, official meetings, and competitions. This practice often affects their spoken competence in Standard English and may distort the grammatical structure of their native language.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to:

1. Determine the communicative context that encourages the use of these linguistic practices

2. Identify the languages predominantly used in mixing and switching.

3. Analyze the linguistic elements involved in the process.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What kind of communicative context involves code mixing and code switching?

2. What languages are mixed and switched?

3. What are the Linguistic elements involved in the communicative process?

2.0 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on two (2) theories of language learning. They include:

1.The linquistic learning theory of language development comes from the work of Noam Chomsky, an American linguistic who is also regarded as the initiator of modern cognitive science. Chomskys linguistic is based on the idea that people are born an innate ability to learn Language. Chomsky argued that all human brains are wired with a language. This explains why the linguistic theory of language acquisition. The innatist theory maintains a core assumption that environmental and cognitive factors alone cannot justify the speed and aptitude for language acquisition that happens during childhood.Theories in language acquisition

2. Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex and multifaceted process that has long fascinated professionals across domains including linguistics, psychology, neuroscience and education. Their aim has been to understand how people who already know one language can best learn a second. Over time, a number of theories have been developed to explain the process.

2.1 REVIEW OF RELATED WORKS

Mixing and switching of codes in classroom interaction by meristika Moetia. The study was carried out based on the issue code mixing and code switching in teaching English to find out the most frequently used type of code mixing and code switching and to observe the benefits and drawback of using them in the English as ESL classroom interaction.

In collecting data for the study sheets and interview guides were used as the research instruments. The teacher interview was done right after the observation and this interview was also recorded using an audio recorder. At the end all the results were then analyzed and transcribed by using the pattern proposed by musyken (2000) and Poplack (2000).However, based on the discovery from the study and the result of the interview with the teacher, the reason for code mixing and code switching done by teacher is an attempt to cover up the lack of target language proficiency of students and to make the learning process run smoothly and effectively in the school environment. Another vital reason is that excessive mixing and switching of code in their native language than in English language could make it difficult for students to spell and read English words very well and consequently make them unaware and lazy to use English in the process of teaching and learning in the classroom.

- An analysis of code mixing and code switching in EFL teaching of cross cultural communicative context, Kustati (2014).

In the study the researcher determines the type code mixing and code switching adopted by both students and teachers in the EFL cross cultural communication and identified reasons for the emergence of code mixing and code switching in the academic environment. Amorin (2012) a research under titled code switching in student interaction, functions and reason. The research

also analyzed student -student interaction and worker -worker interaction during a group work - speaking activity to uncover some of the reasons for code mixing and code switching.

However, from the result of the research it was discovered that both students and worker mixed and switched to their choices of language use and as a major identity marker for them.

2.2 Empirical Review

The nomenclature of code-switching has a long history in linguistics. Einar Haugen (1956:40) defined it as "when a bilingual introduces a completely unassimilated word from another language into his speech". Carol Myers-Scotton (1993:3) broadened the definition by saying that code-switching "is the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals of forms from an embedded variety (or varieties) in utterances ... during the same conversation". Eyamba Bokamba (1989:3) distinguishes code-switching and code-mixing: "Code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event ... [while] code-mixing is the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (free morphemes), phrases and clauses from a co-operative activity where the participants, in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand".

3.0 Methodology

This research involves a qualitative descriptive study that produces descriptive data in the form of words. As stated by Dane (2007:19); qualitative data usually involves recorded spoken data (field) notes, and documents of various sorts, and distribution of questionnaires.

3.1. Research Design

The research design for this study is the survey method (design).

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the sudy comprises of students and workers in the college of education, Sagbama Local government area, as well as the indigenes of the Local government area.A total population of 60 individuals will be used for the study.

3.4. Method of Data Collection

The methods of data collection for the study include; the primary source and secondary source.The primary source involves one on one chats and conversations while the secondary source includes the use of the internet, article, textbook,journals, radio and tv programs.

3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis is based on the grammatical rules of the specific language to be analyzed in the study (Izon, English, Pidgin) and how the grammatical rules are applied effectively.Data was obtained verbally, non-statistically and the thematic descriptive mode of analysis was followed.

4.0 PRESENTATION OF DATA

The collected data consist of (4) conversational texts. The languages used include English, Izon, and Nigerian Pidgin.

(Student Codemixing in Izon)

These texts display intra-sentential code mixing, characterized by the insertion

English words into Izon sentences:

Todays lecture emele bo what do you think?

It means 'Today's lecture was too sweet, what do you think?

Here, the English lexical item, embele bo' (meaning too sweet), was embedded within English structures. This is insertional mixing, where English nouns and adjectives are used to simplify communication.

There is also semantic extension, such as the use of too sweetmeaning interesting, which is typical in Nigerian Pidgin. (Student code switching between English and pidgin)

This text shows a blend of English and Nigerian Pidgin:

Please give me feedback after the call, make I know wetin dey happen.

Him say no cash for now.

The mixing involves:

Pidgin verbs (dey happen,say)

Pidgin pronouns (him,I)

English nouns embedded in Pidgin structures (feedback,call)

This is congruent lexicalisation, where the grammar of Pidgin dominates but English lexemes are inserted

(Student and Worker Conversations)

These texts include Izon words inserted into English sentences and vice versa:

Ama la dei? I will be in the village tomorrow.It means - are you in the village already?l will be in the village tomorrow.

Here,the Izon lexical item 'ama la dei' has been mixed with the English phrase 'l will be in the village tomorrow.It is a communication in English and Izon to find out a person's location.

This shows,alternational mixing -switching between whole phrases in different languages.

Workers mix languages when discussing health, work duties, or expressing emotions. This aligns with Appel &Muyskens (1987) observation that bilinguals switch languages to enhance clarity and social meaning.

(Workplace Conversations)

Mixing occurs mostly in administrative contexts:

Director fha

(It means Director is absent.)

The English noun doctor was embedded with the Izon word 'fha' which means absent to create awareness that the director is not in his office.

(students communication)

Speaker 1 - Our school fees are increasing by the day,l need to start up a business to enable me take of my bills and l need a capital,igbogi eni bra fha akpor kuro bo.

(It means l need to start up a business to enable me take care of my need as school fees are increasing by the day but l do not have money and life is very difficult)

Here, there is a switch in language use from English language to lzon during a conversation that has to do with personal well being.

4.1 ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES

Lexical Categories Used

Data reveals frequent mixing of:Nouns: lecture, programmes, Noun phrases: school facilities, cash,verbs:will be,happen,Adjectives; sweet ,big, expensive.Adverbs;gradually,tomorrow. Sentence types indentified include:Declarative sentences — majority of utterances,Imperatives — l beg call,tell directorInterrogatives — Are you aware?Wetin happen?

Syntactic Structures

English follows SVO, Izon follows SOV and these are the major languages associated to the study

Students/workers switch between these structures naturally, showing high bilingual competence.

4.2 FINDINGS

The findings are therefore summarized as follows:

In order to answer the research question,the communicative contexts or kind of communication that warrants code mixing and code switching include; **Formal and informal context.**They are further divided into formal and informal. The formal context includes official communication, Lectures, communication between Lecturers and students, Communication between Head and subordinate.

Informal context includes, exchange of greeting, exchange of pleasantries, communication between students, communication centered on one's personal life and relationship, phone calls, communication that do not warrant third party interference, when two or more persons choose to talk about someone absent or present with them but do not have knowledge of the language in use.

In response to research question two and also from the analysis carried, the dominant languages are:English — official/academic communication

Izon — cultural identity, solidarity.Nigerian Pidgin — informality, emphasis, emotional expression.

The students mixed codes between English, Izon and Pidgin. and the workers switched codes from English to Izon and pidgin. Hence, the dominant languages in use as regards the study include English, Izon and Pidgin.

In order to answer research question three, the linguistic Elements Involved are;

Nouns,phrases,verbs,adjectives,adverbs

Adverbs Sentence types (declarative, imperative, interrogative)

Switching also reflects structural differences between English (SVO) and Izon (SOV the linguistic properties involved in the code mixing and code switching process includes, nouns, NP, Adverbs, Adjectives, verbs, imperative and declarative sentences, questions for exchange of pleasantries such as "how are you". The analysis also outlines the English SVO sentence structure such as "The HOD gave your colleague a query letter"(text 8) and the Izon SOV sentence structure such as Ebibo /u/ bulo tei (Ebibou has duped him).

However, from the semantic, syntactic and lexico-semantic properties analyzed, the types of mixing identified in the study are: intra - sentential and inter sentential code mixing, according to Blanc (2000) occurs within boundaries and the languages are mixed within such circumstanced linguistic units as the clause of even the word, while inter sentential code mixing usually occurs in turn taking involving bilinguals.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the findings made in this study and the conclusions drawn from them, the following recommendations are made:

1. A massive awareness campaign should be carried out to inform bilinguals on the relationship that exists between the way English is used and the actual use of Izon (Nigerian) culture cannot be exactly the same as it is used especially in the native British context which is indicated in the dictionary. Thus, even if an expression in the English of Izon-English bilinguals is not found in the dictionary, such an expression should not be condemned as an error but should be considered and accepted as a variant especially if it reflects the Izon socio-cultural experience.

2. Both the federal and state governments, the ministry of the Niger Delta, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and other similar commissions in the oil-producing states where the Izon is spoken should make it a point of responsibility to provide the required enabling environment that can assist the learners in terms of exposure to good use of Izon and English accurately.

More research should be carried out on the phonetic, phonological and grammatical variations in English and Izon, so as to provide a complete picture of the benefits and effects of using more than one language in the process of communication.

In conclusion, the research explores the significance of code mixing and code switching and the linguistic feaures associated thereby focusing on the use of English as a dominant language along side Izon and pidgin.The objectives were successfully addressed through a comprehensive analysis of the communicative processes involving code mixing and code switching, It is anchored on the theories of language learning and use basically the cognitive, interaction and behaviourist theories.The research methodology employs a survey design, utilizing a convenient sampling technique to select 60 individuals which includes students and workers in COE, Sagbama. Data were collected through the primary source(discussions and conversations) and the secondary sources (textbooks, internet, articles).

Finally, the study contributes to the understanding of the importance of switching or mixing two or more language in a single conversation to ease understanding and shedding more light on the syntactic and semantic intricacies of communication.

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