

CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING AMONG UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN FORMAL INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of code-switching that occurs in lecturer-student interactions. Using Saville-Troike (1986) and Hoffman (1991) models, the study explores the linguistic features of code-switching, that include intra-sentential code-switching, inter-sentential code-switching and code-switching at word, phrase and clause levels, which are examined in both male and female university teachers' lectures. With a sample of nine lecturers and two undergraduate classes of about sixty students each, a corpus of recorded Akan/English code-switching from lecturer-student interactions collected from the Department of English at the University of Education, Winneba, is presented and analysed. Findings reveal that lecturers who speak Akan as their L1 frequently code-switch more than the non-Akan speakers. The study also shows that intra-sentential code-switching is used dominantly by lecturers during their interactions with students at lectures followed by code-switching at the word level. The study concludes that code-switching can occur in formal contexts like the interaction among lecturers and students at lectures; however, whenever lecturers switched code to Akan, the non-Akan speakers become worried because intelligibility is greatly hampered.

Keywords: Code-switching, classroom interaction, bilingual, intra-sentential code-switching, inter-sentential code-switching.

Introduction

Usually, we observe bilinguals mixing two languages when speaking. In fact, this situation of bilingualism is present in every country, in all classes of society and at all age levels (Grosjean, 1982). Ghana is a multilingual society with over fifty languages, with some of the major languages being Akan, Ewe, Ga, Gurune, Dagbani, etc, spoken by people from the Ashanti, Eastern, Central, Western, Volta, Greater Accra, and Northern regions of Ghana, (Sey, 1973; Dako, 1999; Anyidoho & Kropp Dakubu, 2008; Quarcoo & Dako, 2013). These regions, especially the Ashanti, Greater Accra, Western, Eastern and Central, form constitute the cosmopolitan regions in Ghana resulting from education, work, rural-urban migration among others. Many people therefore have the knowledge of two or more languages, making the linguistic phenomenon of mixing languages quite common. For example, if English, the national language of Ghana, is taken, then one can find that the insertion of Akan items in English sentences is a frequent feature in the speech of educated bilingual Ghanaian English speakers. Interestingly, even those who do not possess the ability to speak in English employ some English words and phrases to give their discourse a touch of English that has social meaning. This phenomenon is very common among the Fantes, a section within the Akan ethnic group. When fluent bilingual speakers of various languages make conversation, they often include words, phrases, clauses and sentences from different languages in a single discourse. This alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation is called code-switching (Milroy & Muysken, 1995).

In some time past, researchers such as Hoffman (1991) made us believe that mixing two languages when speaking was restricted to only informal contexts. However, of late, formal situations such as the interactions among university lecturers and students in classrooms are

witnessing this phenomenon. Some lecturers at the Department of English of the University of Education, Winneba, at times, switch or mix their language in one utterance to make their students understand them clearly. That kind of switching and mixing phenomenon in the lecture room underpins this study. In classrooms, code-switching as a learning resource occurs at different levels. If, on one hand, there is a switch of grammatical items i.e. verbs, adjectives and linkers etc., then on the other hand this switch involves registers and technical language. While keeping in view this aspect of code-switching, Malik (1994, p. 10) says, “Code-switching is context-governed phenomenon”. However, in the Ghanaian University setting which has a multi-linguistic context, intelligibility may, perhaps, be hampered if the interlocutors use linguistic items which are not known to each other.

It must be noted that code-switching is a complex process, which involves different levels of switching according to the proficiency in both languages. This paper provides an analysis of the linguistic features of code-switching which serve a variety of pedagogical functions, whether in teacher-led classroom discourse or in teacher-student interaction or in students-students interaction. In this paper, we focus on the analysis of code switching and code mixing in sentences which are taken from lecturers of English at University of Education, Winneba. The analysis is done by examining the types of code switching and mixing based on Hoffman’s (1991) theory, and Saville-Troike’s (1986) for why some lecturers use code switching and mixing when they are interacting with their students.

Theoretical framework

In order to have an understandable research, the study uses Hoffman’s (1991) model and Saville-Troike (1986) to identify the types of code mixing and switching and explain reasons why people switch and mix their languages. Hoffman (1991, p.112) shows many

types of code switching and code mixing based on the juncture or the scope of switching where languages take place. Those are intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, emblematic switching, intra-lexical code mixing, establishing continuity with the previous speaker, and involving a change of pronunciation.

According to Hoffman (1991), inter-sentential switching is the kind of code switching which occurs between clause or sentence boundary, where each clause or sentence is in one language or other. For emblematic switching, tags, exclamation and certain set phrases in one language are inserted into an utterance otherwise in another. Then, for establishing continuity with the previous speaker, interlocutors switch in order to continue the utterance of the previous speaker. For the types of code mixing, intra-sentential switching/mixing is that which occurs within a phrase, a clause or a sentence boundary, while intra-lexical code mixing occurs within a word boundary. Code-mixing involving a change of pronunciation occurs at the phonological level. According to Hoffman (1991, p.116), there are a number of reasons for a bilingual or multilingual person to switch or mix their languages. These reasons include:

- a. Talking about a particular topic
- b. Quoting somebody else
- c. Being emphatic about something
- d. Interjection (inserting sentence fillers or sentence connectors)
- e. Repetition used for clarification
- f. Intention of clarifying the speech content for interlocutor
- g. Expressing group identity

Saville-Troike (1986, p.69) had earlier given three reasons why bilingual and multilingual persons do switch or mix their languages, and these are:

- a. To soften or strengthen request or command
- b. Because of real lexical need

- c. To exclude other people when a comment is intended for only a limited audience

Literature review

Over the years, there has been a heightened interest in studying code switching as a speech phenomenon. This is because “Language is the mirror of a person’s innermost self, and by the power of the words and expressions spoken/written, and the sentence structures built, one’s thought, ideas, feelings, wishes, and intentions may be revealed or concealed” (Asilevi 2008, p.41). Some of the studies (Asilevi (1990), Setati et al (2002), Martin (2003), Arthur (1996), Amekor (2009), Chitera (2009), Mensah (1992), Amuzu (1998), Brew-Daniels (2011), Forson (2009), and Anyidoho & Kropp Dakubu (2008)) focus on code mixing in students’ pidgin English and make a recommendation that code switching should be made a medium of pedagogy in the classroom. Some scholars, Oduro (2013), have also focused on code switching in students’ academic interactions, others such as Vanderpuije (2017) on the phenomenon of code switching and mixing in media discourse, while others have also focused on Christian religious discourse, and interaction among interlocutors in different informal speech events and communities.

Elsewhere in the world, works like Piller (1996; 2001), Bhatia (1987; 1992 and 2001), Martin (2002), Masavisut et al. (1986), and Friedrich (2002) have shown keen interest in the study of code switching and mixing in advertisement and parliamentary debates. Code-Switching is from the combination of two words “Code and switching”. A code is a system that is used by people to communicate with each other. When people want to talk each other, they have to choose a particular code to express their feeling. According to Stockwell (2002, p.8-9), a code is “a symbol of nationalism that is used by people to speak or communicate in a particular language, or dialect, or register, or accent, or style on different occasions and for

different purposes.” Similarly, Wardhaugh (1986) says that the term “code” can be used to refer to any kind of system that two or more people employ for communication, whether it is language or dialect or pidgins and creoles. When two or more people communicate with each other in speech, the system of their communication may be referred to as a code. Therefore, people are usually required to select a particular code whenever they choose to speak, and they may also decide to switch from one code to another or to mix codes, sometimes in very short utterances.

Code mixing, therefore, is a common term for alternative use of two or more languages, varieties of a language or even speech styles (Gumperz & Hymes, 1986). Code mixing suggests that the speaker is mixing codes indiscriminately, perhaps because of incompetence or other factors, whereas code switching refers to a more active manipulation of the symbolic and social meanings of a language choice. In communications, a code is a rule for converting a piece of information (for example, a letter, word, or phrase) into another form or representation, not necessarily of the same sort. In communications and information processing, encoding is the process by which a source (object) performs this conversion of information into data, which is then sent to a receiver (observer), such as a data processing system. Maschler (1998, p.125) views code mixing or a mixed code as “using two languages such that a third, new code emerges, in which elements from the two languages are incorporated into a structurally definable pattern”. Code-switching (inter-sentential) changes from one language or dialect to other sentences or utterances in one language; Code-mixing (intra-sentential) occurs inside sentence elements of one language incorporated in another via words, phrases, particles.

Hoffman (1991, p.104) maintains that code mixing is the switches occurring within a sentence. He explains that code switching

can occur quite frequently in an informal conversation among people who are familiar and have a shared educational, ethnic, and socio-economic background. It is avoided in a formal speech situation among people especially to those who have little in common in terms of social status, language loyalty, and formality.

Difference between Code Switching and Code Mixing

Actually, it is not easy to differentiate between code mixing and code switching. However, some indicators related to the differences of these two sociolinguistic terms can be found. First, in code mixing, bilingual speakers seem to apply some words or phrases from a foreign language (pieces of one language smaller than the clause), while the other language (code) functions as the base language. Second, bilingual speakers are said to mix codes when there is no topic that changes, nor does the situation (Gumperz, 1986). Again, if it involves changing into a foreign clause or a sentence, it is referred to as a code switching, but if it involves the use of foreign phrases or group of words, it is identified as a code mixing. The formality or informality of a situation may also help to differentiate code switching and code mixing. Code mixing is associated with less formal situations, while in code switching is possibly done in formal ones (Hoffman, 1991; Amuzu, 1998).

Ghana as a multilingual society

Ghana has about fifty non-mutually intelligible languages (Anyidoho & Kropp Dakubu, 2008, p.2) and English is the sole language of education from primary four. Code switching and mixing between English and each indigenous language is a norm (Amuzu, 1998). In the university, all students use English consistently and indeed possess basic competence in it as a pass in it at the SSSCE level is a pre-requisite for gaining admission into the university. It is therefore expected that lecturer - student classroom interactions at the

university will be conducted in formal English looking at the multilingual setting of the university classroom.

It is, however, observed that some lecturers at the university switch code in their lesson delivery and class discussions. Analysing the code switching phenomenon in these interactions is justifiable because lecturer-student classroom interactions contain a lot of linguistic resources for analysis, and beyond this it will offer the language analyst the opportunity to identify the motivation for code switching and mixing in formal settings such as lectures.

This study therefore investigates the types of code switching and mixing used in lecturer-student classroom interactions and examines the reasons for code switching or mixing. By so doing, the linguistic gap identified in the literature would be filled.

Methodology

The Context of Study and Participants

The study was conducted at the Department of English Education, University of Education, Winneba – Ghana. The study involved nine lecturers who teach English at the undergraduate level at the English Department. They included five male lecturers and four female lecturers. They were purposively selected because they have been interacting with other members of the department using mixed languages.

Data Collection

The data for this study were derived from data collected from observations and interviews. Due to time factor, each lecturer was observed on two occasions over a period of two weeks but the last observations of each lecturer was used, because it was assumed that the lecturers might have contrived the situation in the first observation and lecturers might find it difficult to articulate the practice of using code-switching in classroom interactions. Therefore, for this purpose to collect data on how lecturers make use of code-switching and use

language in classroom interactions, a digital recorder was used to record lecturers' lectures, and this provided access to the verbal output of the lecturers. A total of nine recordings of the lectures were used. This study focus was on different linguistic features of code-switching among bilingual lecturers. Instances of teachers' code-switching were identified and transcribed from the audio recordings for analysis to help complete the processes in the form of a descriptive report.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Hoffman (1991) and Saville-Troike (1986) models were used in categorizing the types of code mixing and switching used in the classroom situation, and explaining reasons for the switch and mix the languages. This study focuses on the instances of different linguistic features of code-switching. Efforts are made to just bring into account the actual frequencies and percentage values of these instances. In order to find out the frequency of intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching by lecturers in classroom interactions, the data indicates that there are 265 instances where code-switching occurred. Out of this number, 102 examples show intra-sentential code-switching and only 12 instances belong to the category of inter-sentential code-switching. This shows the significant difference between these two types of code-switching. A look at the percentage values of these two types of code switching makes it obvious that intra-sentential code switching, which is 38.49% is much higher than 4.54 % of inter-sentential code switching. Second to the intra-sentential code switching is code-switching at word level with a frequency of 84 (31.70%) instances. This is followed by instances of switching at the clause level with 42 (15.85%), and 25 (9.43%) instances at the phrase level as represented in the table below:

Table 1: Linguistic Features of Code-Switching

Serial No.	Linguistic Features of Code- Switching	No. Occur	Percentage
1	Intra-sentential Code-Switching	102	38.49%
2	Inter- sentential Code-Switching	12	4.53%
3	Code- Switching at Word Level	84	31.70%
4	Code- Switching at Phrase Level	25	9.43%
5	Code- Switching at Clause Level	42	15.85%
TOTAL		265	100%

A. Intra-sentential code-switching

From the analysis we observe that a lot of code-mixing occurs intra-sententially. This is where the speaker incorporates elements such as words, phrases and particles of one language into another due to several reasons, including lack of facility, lack of register, mood of the speaker and to emphasize a point. In some instances, the speaker code-switches the subject and the object but maintains the verb in English. Here are examples of **intra-sentential code-switching** used in the data and their corresponding English equivalents: a) *Me mind mo = I will not mind you.* b) I just told you *se yewo* different varieties of English. = I just told you *that we have* different varieties of English. c). Oral literature *enhwe* poems *nko ara* but... = Oral literature *does not focus on* poems *only* but d) *eye* very sad = *It's* very sad.

The above structures clearly show that the lecturers are mixing two codes: English and Akan (the Twi dialect) in the same utterance.

B. Inter-sentential code-switching

Inter-sentential code-switching refers to the change from one language or dialect to another language with sentences or utterances in one language. This phenomenon is seen to be occurring mostly in compound and complex sentences where one of the clauses is code-switched entirely for a variety of purposes, including identifying with

a particular group, closing the status gap, conveying precise meaning, easing communication, and emphasizing a point. From the analysis it is observed that some lecturers frequently used structures which portray inter-sentential code-switching. Sometimes, they begin the utterance in English and end in Akan or vice versa. Here are examples of such inter-sentential code switching identified in the data:

1. My Head of Department pleaded *se enye hwee enti menfa nkye mo*. = My Head of Department pleaded *that it's nothing so I should forgive you*. 2. *Asem no ye nokore*, so your description of the hero is farfetched = *The statement is true*, so your description of the hero is farfetched. 3. We have realised *semnofrabebreentuminkabrɔfo* so they can't teach it too = We have realised *that most children can't speak English* so they can't teach it too.

C. Code-switching at word and phrasal level

We observe that single lexical items and phrases are inserted in given sentences. This is more or less like the intra-sentential code-switching because they share a common feature of lexical incorporation. The study identified some sentence structures which have this feature. Some of these structures are placed at sentence initial, medial or final as illustrated below: a). Learning English Phonetics and Phonology *enkyere se* the student can speak like a British. = Learning English Phonetics and Phonology *does not mean* the student can speak like a British. b). *Na me nso*, the funniest thing about students is their unpreparedness towards learning, and yet want to get good grades. = *I for one*, the funniest thing about students is their unpreparedness towards learning and yet want to get good grades. c). *Hwe*, this kind of poetry is studied worldwide. = *Look*, this kind of poetry is studied worldwide. d). Students of English will not make such mistakes, *da*. = Students of English will not make such mistakes, *never*. e)

The word ‘clause’ *enye* a new thing to Level 300 students; *efiri se* you’ve met it in all your MESU courses. = The word ‘clause’ *isn’t* a new thing to Level 300 students; *because* you’ve met it in all your MESU courses.

Reasons for code switching among lecturers

The study reveals the following as among the reasons that motivate the lecturers to code switch. The nine reasons have been categorized into two: major and minor categories with the major group consisting of communication, conceptual, emphasis and interlocution. The minor group consists of lexicon. Most lecturers code switch in order to ease communication. Switching code enables them to utilize the shortest and the easiest route to communicate more effectively. By so doing, they shorten the social distance between them and the students and further establish goodwill and support with their audience. Similarly, some lecturers switch codes when they wish to create a certain communication effect. It is also believed that certain habitual experiences have only been experienced in one of the languages one has mastery of. For clarification and a better understanding of such concepts which have much semantic significance, a section of the lecturers use a language they are more comfortable with, especially the Akan. Putting emphasis on a point is another reason for switching code among the selected lecturers. It is realised that a number of lecturers switch code to capture or attract attention, emphasize a point or when they want to make a point. In interlocution, speakers often switch code to appeal to both the literate and illiterate audience. By switching code, the lecturers intend to close the status gap between them and the audience. Once this status gap is bridged, the lecturers identify themselves with the group and group solidarity is expressed.

It is realised that some concepts are easier to express in one’s native language than in English. From the analysis, it was observed

that most lecturers switch code due to lack of linguistic resources in the target language. They do so in order to convey precise meaning of whatever message they wish to express. To communicate more effectively, appropriate registers must be used but due lack of this linguistic facility, lecturers code switch from English to Akan, and the vice versa, before they can communicate more effectively. Also, to negotiate with greater authority, lecturers code switch at times.

Findings and Discussion

From the data analysis it was found out that the Akan speaking Lecturers code switch more than the non- Akan speaking lecturers at the English Departments. It is also evident that both male and female Akan-speaking lecturers code switching at equal proportions. It is clear from the data and its analysis that intra-sentential code-switching is much higher than inter-sentential code-switching. As intra-sentential code-switching involves switching of short stretches of discourse, so one possible reason for this could be that it is easier to switch shorter stretches than longer ones. Another reason can be that as longer stretches of language were produced only when instructions were given or when questions were asked, both of which occurred rarely and that is why intra-sentential code-switching leads inter-sentential code-switching. Similarly, as is mentioned in the findings, code-switching at word level has the second highest value and it seems that it is because of the simple nature of the lexical items, which fit well in the matrix language structure.

Malik (1994) accounts of code-switching, which advocates our results, says that when English is the medium of instruction (in our case the matrix language) then information carrying items, registers and technical words are likely to be from English and linkers and other grammatical items from the indigenous language, in our case Akan. It was also discovered that the growing concern and preference of the teachers was code-switching at clausal level (15.85

%) than at phrasal level (9.43%). The high level of code-switching at clause level is opposite to the assertion that the high frequency of lexical and phrasal code-switching is because of its short form. This study indicated that clauses, which have a relatively longer structure than phrases, have high frequency of code-switching than the short form phrases.

From the analysis, the researcher noted that most lecturers used code switching because of real lexical need (35%) followed by quoting somebody else (18%), talking about a particular topic (15%), expressing group identity (8%), excluding other people when comment is intended for only a limited audience (4%), softening or strengthening request or command (5%). interjection (3%), being emphatic about something (6%), repetition used for clarification (4%) and intention of clarifying the speech content for interlocutors (2%)

Conclusion

The study explored the linguistic features and types of code-switching and code mixing which are mostly used by both male and female university teachers at lectures. Several findings from Akan/English code-switching corpus collected from the Department of English at the University of Education, Winneba were presented and analysed. The study found out that while making use of code-switching, there was a frequent use of different linguistic features of code-switching between Akan and English by university teachers. The study has established that code-switching can occur in formal situations/contexts like the interaction among lecturers and students at lectures. The research has also revealed that lecturers who speak Akan as their L1 frequently code-switching more than the non-Akan speakers. It was also found out, that intra-sentential code-switching is used more by lecturers during their interaction with students during lectures followed by code-switching at the word level. It must be

noted that whenever lecturers switched code to Akan, the non-Akan speakers become worried because intelligibility is greatly hampered.

Although most of the world's population can speak one language, a sizeable minority is able to communicate in two or more languages. When bilinguals come together, a decision has to be made about which of these languages is to be used. In all these, the choice of language is dictated primarily by the milieu in which the speaker finds himself.

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