CODE ALTERNATION IN PRE SERVICE TEACHERS' VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN OYO AND OGUN STATES: REASONS AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Code alternation has become a common feature of oral conversation among bilinguals. However, scholars do not agree on the reasons for this. While some see it as a sign of linguistic deficiency, some see it as a welcome development and a normal feature of bilinguals. Several studies have been carried out on incidence of code alternation both locally and internationally. But very few of such studies examined reasons and implications for code alternation among Yoruba/English bilingual students. This study examines the variables that may influence bilingual – pre-service teachers in colleges of education to alternate codes in their verbal communication. Descriptive survey design was adopted in the study and all pre-service teachers at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Oyo state and Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State constituted the population. Four hundred students were randomly selected for this study while a self constructed questionnaire titled "Code Alternation in Pre-service Teacher Communication; Reasons and Implications" which had a reliability coefficient index of 0.68 was used to elicit responses from the subjects. Chi square was used to analyse the data generated in the study. Findings revealed that participants' roles and relationship have significant influence on code alternation. Also, there is significant influence of situational factors on code alternation among the pre-service teachers in colleges of education. Based on the findings of the study, appropriate recommendations were made.

Introduction

Code alternation, also known as Code-switching and code mixing, is a well-known trait in the speech pattern of the average bilinguals in any human society. Code-switching and code mixing are also linguistic behaviour that arises as a result of languages coming in contact. Code switching has been defined as the act of alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent (Poplack 1980). By implication, code switching is the concurrent use of more than one language or language variety in conversation. Adegbite & Akindele (1999) describes code-switching as means of communication which involves a speaker alternating between one language and the other in communicating events. In other words, someone who code-switches uses two languages or dialects interchangeably in a single communication. On the other hand, Coupland & Jaworski (1997) define code switching as the use of two or more languages in the same conversation or utterance. It refers to all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence. Rafiu (2009) defines code-mixing as the random alternation of two languages within a sentence. As observed by this scholar, it is clear that code-mixing always involves two languages and it occurs in a sentence made of elements of language A (Yoruba for instance), B (English) in this regard e. g:

i. Mo + encourage + yin ki e wa hardworking.
Meaning: I encourage you to be hardworking.

ii. Mi o ti i+ take breakfast+ mi
Meaning: I have not taken my breakfast.

In terms of the definition from Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), code alternation 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 alternation is intra sentential and is constrained by grammatical principles. It may also be motivated by socio-psychological factors. In spite of these definitions, many have difficulty using the terminologies since many researchers use different terminologies for code alternation. For instance, Pfaff (1979) employs the term 'mixing' as a neutral cover term for both code-mixing and borrowing while Beardsome (1991) rejects the use of the term code-mixing "since it appears to be the least favoured designation and the most unclear for referring to any form of non-monoglot norm-based speech patterns" pp 65. Yet others use the term code-mixing to refer to other related phenomena such as borrowing, interference, transfer, or switching (McClaughin 1984).

In fact, some people have difficulty distinguishing between code switching and code-alternation. Code-alternation 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). Poplack (2000) sees code-switching as the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent. Inter sentential alternations occurs when the switch is made across sentence boundaries. Poplack (2000) states that code-switching is the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent. Irrespective of all these diverse views, there is a common ground on which all seem to agree that code-alternation and code switching are widespread phenomena in bilingual communities where speakers use their native languages (L1) and second language L2 in different domains.

When bilinguals switch or mix two languages, there might be reasons for code-switching and code alternation. Grosjean (1982) suggests some reasons for code alternation. For example, some bilinguals mix two languages when they cannot find proper words or expressions or where or when there is no appro priate translation for the language being used. For instance, Yoruba words like "Agbada, Irukere, Ewedu, Aso-Ibora," do not have equivalent in English. Also, the interlocutors situations, messages, attitude 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 addresses (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 who (participants: their background and relationships), about what/topic, content), and where a speech act occurs, bilinguals make their language choice (Bhatia and Ritchies, 2004).

Reasons for code alternation have been successfully researched outside the shore of Nigeria. For instance, in an empirical study conducted by Penlope (1997) on reasons for code-switching in three Strasbourg department stores, he found that accommodation to the linguistic environment, external pressure to use one's language rather than the other and influence of the interlocutor are reasons why people alternate codes. In a similar empirical study by Dawid (2010), he also discusses the function of code switching during teachers' interactions with their learners and examined reasons for teachers' employment of code switching in South

Africa. It was revealed that teachers alternate codes to help learners interpret the subject matter. Other scholars who have also worked in this area include: (Adendorff 1993, Setati and Adler 2000, Ncoco 2000, Arthur 2001, Ferguson 2000, Adedigba, Fakeye 2012) They enumerated the functions of teachers' code switching as follow: it helps to build up learners understanding of subject matter, assisting learners in interpreting the subject matter, confirming that learners have understood what was explained, encourages learners participation, supporting classroom communication and explanatory talk.

Back home in Nigeria, Rafiu (2009) looked into the reasons for code alternation in some selected home-videos in Nigeria using Super Story as a guide. The researcher found that emotional outburst, condemnation/curse, jest, incantation and social identity are among reasons why artists alternate codes in their verbal communication. Also, in a related study conducted by Adetuyi Akinghibe, 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 do not know the interpretation of such words in their learnt language i.e. English. Fakeye (2012) has also looked at reasons why pre-service teachers alternate codes in their verbal communication.

From the foregoing, it is clear that scholars have examined reasons like accommodation to the linguistic environment, external pressure to use one's language rather than the other, influence of the interlocutor, condemnation, incantation, emotional outburst, social identity etc that may influence bilinguals to alternate codes in their verbal communication. None of the studies above was conducted in colleges of education, where the incidence of code alternation was prevalent, nor did any examine variables like participants' roles and relationship and situational factors that might equally motivate bilinguals to alternate code in their verbal communication. This work, therefore, investigates these variables that might influence bilinguals, pre-service teachers in colleges of education, to alternate codes in their verbal communication.

First, it has been observed by Bhatia and Ritche (2004) that participants' roles and relationship play a very critical role in bilinguals' unconscious agreement and disagreement on language choice. That is, whether bilinguals code-mix or not depends on whom they talk to. Crosjean (1982) presents some interviews about how interlocutors affects bilingual's languages. The interviewed who is a Greek English bilingual remarked, 'I find myself code switching with my friends who are all Greek… they know English so well and nobody gets offended with code switching… I don't switch with my parents as I do with my friends" pp. 105.

Second, situational factors are another variable of interest. Some languages according to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) are viewed more suited to a particular social group, setting or topic than others. They also postulate that social variables such as class and can influence the pattern of language mixing and switching both quantitatively and qualitatively. With regards to gender, one of the variables there are many traditional societies where gender roles are clearly demarcated i.e. men work outside the home and women are engaged in domestic activities, language mixing and switching in women is qualitatively different from that of men.

There are other sociolinguistic facts about code-alternation. First, code alternation can be used to exclude the thirdly party in a conversation. Thus, it is used for exclusion. Bilinguals who are seriously engrossed in their conversation may not want the third party to know what they are talking about may switch to the other language the third person does not understand. Also, code alternation can also be used to oppress. For instance, an educated person dialoguing with a conductor may switch to English to show

that he does not belong to his class. In this case, code alternation is used to oppress to and assert social status. Deep discussion may also account for.

In addition, the National Policy on Education gives credence to code alternation when it states that a child should be taught in his language of immediate environment at lower primary school, and later English, at the upper primary school (NPE, 2004). Of a fact, reasons and motivations for code alternation are indefinitely many but this article will examine two reasons which are participant's role and relationship and situational factors.

Statement of Problem

Code alternation has become a common feature of conversational discourse among Yoruba/English bilingual not excepting tertiary institution students. Scholars do not agree on the reasons for code alternation. While some see it as a sign of linguistic deficiency some see it as a welcome development and a normal feature of bilinguals. Several studies have been carried out on incidence of code alternation both locally and internationally. However, very few of such studies examined motivational factors for code alternation among Yoruba/English bilingual students. Besides, such researchers focused largely either on secondary school students or university undergraduates. This study therefore, examined the above mentioned variables that may influence bilinguals – pre-service teachers in colleges of education to alternate codes in their verbal communication.

Research Questions

Based on the stated problem, the following research questions were formulated and tested in the study.

1. What is the influence of participants' role and relationship on pre-service teachers' code alternation in their verbal communication?
2. What is the influence of situational factors on pre-service teachers' code alternation in their verbal communication?

Methodology

The study covered two Colleges of Education drawn from Oyo and Ogun States respectively. The colleges are: Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State and Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State. The subjects for the study were also limited to 200 level students of the five schools (Arts and Social Sciences, Languages, Education, Sciences, Vocational and Technical Education) in each of the colleges.

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

Four hundred (400) of them were selected through simple random sampling procedure and used in this study. These two colleges were chosen through purposive sampling because they represented the south west Nigeria very well. Oyo and Osun were formerly a state-Oyo State, while Ogun state was equally a state in the South-West. By implication, two states were chosen out of the then four states in south-west Nigeria.

A self-constructed questionnaire tagged "Reasons and Motivations for Code alternation in Pre-service Teachers' Verbal communication" was used to elicit response from the participants. The questionnaire had eight items – four items for each of the research questions.

The first draft of the questionnaire was given to experts in language and language education to ensure its content and face validity. Suggestions were offered and necessary corrections were made in order to suit the purpose it was meant for. The items were also shown to two senior colleagues in post-graduate class. They offered suggestions and these were taken into consideration. Thereafter, the reliability of the instrument was determined

using Chronbac Alpha and a coefficient of 0.67 was obtained.

Copies of the questionnaire were produced and personally taken to the pre-service teachers in their respective schools where they were completed and collected for analysis. Chi-square was the tool used to analyse the data generated in this study.

Result and Discussion

The result of the data analysis and discussion of findings of this research work are presented in line with the hypotheses for the study in this chapter.

Table 1

Research Question 1: What is the influence of participants' role and relationship on pre-service teachers' code alternation in their verbal communication?

S/N	STIMULUS		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	X^2 Cal	X^2 tab.
1.	I code mix and code switch with my friends.	O E	280 145	120 115	0 105	0 35	400	552.12	12.59
2.	I do not alternate codes when talking with my lecturers.	O E	60 145	120 115	140 105	80 35	400		
3.	I code-mix irrespective of the participant.	O E	140 145	160 115	100 105	0 35	400		
4.	I do not switch or mix codes when talking with my colleagues at school.	O E	100 145	60 115	180 105	60 35	400		
	TOTAL		**580**	**460**	**420**	**140**	**1600**		

Table 1 show that, there is significant influence of participants' roles and relationship on code alternation among college of education students in their verbal communication. This is because X^2 calculated (552.12) is higher than the table value (12.59). This corroborates the findings of Eunhee (2006.) that participant roles and relationship motivate people to alternate their codes.

Table2

Research Question 2: What is the influence of situational factors on pre-service teachers' code alternation in their verbal communication?

S/N	STIMULUS		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	X^2. Cal	X^2 tab.
5.	I code mix with my colleagues during departmental meeting	O E	220 145	100 90	60 100	20 65	400	516.2	12.59
6.	My code alternation is not extended to my senior	O E	100 145	80 90	100 100	120 65	400		
7.	I always code mix with opposite partner (sex)	O E	180 145	160 90	20 100	40 65	400		
8.	Physical setting determines my code alternation.	O E	80 145	20 90	220 100	80 65	400		
	TOTAL		**580**	**360**	**400**	**260**	**1600**		

Table 2 shows that there is significant influence of situational factors on code alternation in pre-service teachers' verbal communication, the hypothesis is therefore rejected. The reason for this is that X^2 calculated 516.2 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.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated reasons and implications for code alternation in pre-service teachers' oral communication in colleges of education. Findings revealed that pre-service teachers in Colleges of Education switch languages depending on their interlocutors or conversational partners. For instance, most of the students indicated that they never attempted to switch forth and back languages when discussing with their lecturers but will do so when talking with their colleagues. This is in consonance with the finding of Eunhee(2006) who reported that in coastal Kenya, the young use both Swahili and the local language when speaking to one another, but never use Swahili when talking to elders. The similarity in these findings may be as a result of similar linguistic experience –both countries are multilingual.

Secondly, students in colleges of education were alternate language in accordance with a variety of situations. Eunhee (2006) observes that various situations (setting) may be restricted with respect to the participants who may be present, the physical setting, the topic and functions of discourse and the style employed. Another example is the report of Poplack (1985) who reported in a study of French/English code-switching in Ottawa, where French is the minority language, and the Hull, where English is the majorly language. Speakers of French tended to switch three to four times more frequently in Ottawa than in Hull, which reflects the norms and values for the use of the two languages in these two setting.

Implications of the findings

The implications of the above findings on pre-service teachers in colleges of education are obvious. Since the findings revealed that pre-service teachers' alternate codes in spite of various strategies aimed at making them speaking English only; it is better for language teachers to introduce bilingual education into their classroom and try to teach students in two languages. The findings also confirm that pre-service teachers in colleges of education alternate codes in their verbal communication for various reasons aside from linguistic incompetence. This means that parents, teachers and other stakeholders in education should change their negative point of view about the concept (code alternation).

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 to which they belongs. 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 contributes to effective learning and communication.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. The teachers and parents should have a positive attitude toward code-alternation and should not see code alternation as a sign of linguistic incompetence.
2. Teachers must also be encouraged to use code-alternation to build rapport with students or use it to assert their authority.
3. Teachers should apply code alternation to vocabulary teaching in English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language classes (ESL).
4. Bilingual education should be encouraged because it may lead to more effective and meaningful language learning and better education.

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