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TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF CODE-SWITCHING TO FACILITATE COMPREHENSION IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIAN PRIMARY MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

The study was conducted to ascertain teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian primary multilingual classrooms. This was a descriptive study based on quantitative and qualitative approach in gathering and analysing data. Purposive, proportionate and random sampling techniques were employed to select 3 States (Lagos, Òndo and Òyó), 15 schools and 150 teachers respectively. Researcher-designed questionnaire in quantitative and qualitative approach was the instrument employed to elicit information from the participants on their perception on the use of code-switching. The percentage was used to describe the demographic data of the respondents, and the research question one. All the three research hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical techniques at 0.05 level of significance, while the thematic approach was used for qualitative data. It was discovered that there was no significant difference in the perception of the South-western primary school teachers on the use of code-switching based on classes and the school type, indicating that code-switching was in operation in both lower and upper classes, also at private and public primary multilingual classrooms. However, the finding showed that the degree of code-switching in the rural primary school settings was low when compared with their counterparts in the urban settings. It was therefore, recommended that 'combined approach' of the theory of policy implementation should be adopted in order to integrate policy and implementation of the language policy in South-western Nigerian primary schools. Also, the status of code-switching should be defined appropriately in the language policy to facilitate comprehension in Nigerian primary multilingual classrooms.

Key words: Perception, Code-Switching, Comprehension, Multilingual, Mother-tongue

Introduction

Language Policy in the Primary Education

Language in the primary school education could either be the language of teaching, or the subject or both. Language of teaching is a medium of education which teachers employ in teaching in the institution of learning. It is a method of passing on knowledge, ideas, and information to students. It is the communication language used during teaching and learning activities. For instance, it was stipulated in the national policy that the language of instruction in the lower primary (1-3) school should be the mother-tongue of learners, and at the upper primary (4-6) levels the English language would be the medium of instruction respectively (FRN, 2013). The national policy on education stipulates that the language of instruction for the pre-primary education and lower primary levels shall be the first language or the immediate community's language, while the teachers in the upper primary level (4-6) shall progressively change the medium of instruction to English language to teach all other subjects. Although Nigeria has a great number of local languages, three languages are recognised as developed and major languages. Languages that have developed orthographies, established written forms, and have a large number of native and second language speakers are considered developed. Hence, in Nigeria, Yorùbá, Igbo and Hausa are considered as the developed and significant languages. They are also regarded as national languages (Bámgbóṣé, 2013). However, there appears to be a significant gap between this policy and its execution, particularly in terms of using the mother-tongue as a teaching medium. There is language misconception in the primary school education, the Yoruba language is not exclusively used as a medium of teaching neither did the English language assume the prominent roles of teaching in primary schools.

Adesina and Jegede (2020) discovered that the language in which teaching takes place is critical, as the chosen language may either increase or hinder educational quality. The researchers Adesina and Jegede (2020) stated that when primary school Mathematics is taught in English, students whose first language is not English may have difficulty in understanding the concept. Ogunniran (2015) supported this opinion that alternating the language of instruction (mother-tongue and English language), particularly in multilingual classrooms with pupils from various linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds can lead to a better understanding of Mathematical concept, by implication therefore, code-switching has a rivalry position with the learners' language (mother-tongue) in primary school level. In this study, the researchers investigated the teachers' perception on code-switching in multilingual South-western Nigerian public primary schools, and how the factors such as class levels, school location and school type of learners determine the elementary school student's choice of medium of instruction.

Code-Switching

According to Sakaria and Priyana (2018), code refers to languages, dialects, styles, registers, and other linguistic subsets that are employed to conceal several sub-divisions of a single language. Therefore, it is certain that in a multilingual classroom, the implementation of two or more codes are frequently used in the communication activities. Hence, Sakaria and Priyana (2018) described code-

switching as the use of at least two languages within a communication exchange. It is deduced that Code-switching is a method of communication that allows teachers/speakers to switch between one language and another in the context of communication. That is why Adésinà and Jégédé (2020) expressed a view on the concept of code-switching as a way a person who is bilingual dwells between two languages during verbal communication with another person who is also bilingual. In other words, code-switching is referred to as a switch of languages from one language to another language in a communicative situation. As a result, it is required that the teacher and students involved in language switching circumstances have a basic communicative competence in both languages. In addition, Anyadiegwu (2015) stated that code-switching occurs when words, phrases, and sentences from two distinct grammatical schemes are mixed across sentence boundaries inside the same dialogue event. Moreover, Mahbub-ul-Alam and Quyyum (2016) emphasised three types of code-switching as Inter-Sentential, Intra-Sentential and Extra-Sentential or Tag Switching.

Types of Code Switching

1. Inter-Sentential: In inter-sentential code switching, the language switch is done at sentence boundaries—words or phrases at the beginning or end of a sentence. This type is seen most often in fluent bilingual speakers.

2. Intra-Sentential: In intra-sentential code switching, the shift is done in the middle of a sentence, with no interruptions, hesitations, or pauses to indicate a shift. The speaker is usually unaware of the shift. Different types of switches occur within the clause level and within the word level.

3. Extra-Sentential or Tag Switching: This is the switching of either a single word or a tag phrase (or both) from one language to another. This type is common in intra-sentential switches. It involves the insertion of a tag from one language into an utterance in another language.

Benefits Derived in Code-Switching

Anyadiegwu (2015) attested that codeswitching can be subtractive or additive. Subtractive create a difficulty to the meaning making process while additive can ease understanding. Bilingual code switch if the person is deficient in the target language and he could not express himself adequately in one language, he shifts to the other language to make up for language deficiency. However, Edwards (2012) affirmed that code-switching is instigated by a lot of psychological factors that include hesitation and sociological variables such as topic, audience and context. The scholars had established that code-switching may mar or make the teaching in multilingual primary schools.

Sakaria and Priyana (2018) analysed the benefits of code-switching in classrooms that code-switching is practiced for the proceeding reasons: Code-switching practised from the societal viewpoint, applying that a bilingual person who get involved in conversation would like to make his thoughts clearer to others. Modupeola (2013) lends her voice when she said that code-switching frequently take place not only because of people's deficit in the language focused. Henceforth, this obviously shows that code-switching is accomplishing a sociolinguistic function at the moment. In the classroom, code-switching is primarily used as a teaching tool, providing opportunities for primary school students to better understand the subject matter while also ensuring smooth classroom instruction continuity. This means that code-switching in the classroom helps to bridge

the gap of miscommunication between the teacher and primary students who arrived at school speaking their native language.

Pedagogical factor, the primary school teachers code-switch to giving instruction, discipline and expressing key issues with the effort to facilitate equitable and enhanced teaching and learning. Jegede (2012) supported this view that code-switching provides an additional resource for meeting pupils' cognitive and linguistics needs. It helps to focus or regain the learners' attention, or to clarify, enhance, or reinforce lesson material, and eventually communicate effectively both in the learners' language and the official language to meet the pupils' academically, physiologically and sociologically needs. In a broader sense, while teachers can utilize code-switching to support while talking in the target language, it can also be used to maximize students' understanding as well as support language comprehension to keep the discussion going. Furthermore, teachers frequently use students' native language as a teaching approach, mostly for instructions, to aid students' comprehension of content that would be too cognitively challenging to comprehend without instruction in another language.

Sakaria and Priyana (2018) emphasised that code-switching was in operation for linguistically factor, while pupils were learning the target language, the switching practices in the course of teaching and learning may significantly rise pupils' acquaintance in the target language. Therefore, first language, or the predominant local language, helps in the process of teaching and learning foreign languages.

For socio-cultural perspectives the language and the society are inseparable, and the pupils grow within the society, therefore, when the mother-tongue of learners blends with the official language, the pupils will have the sense of belonging. As a result, code-switching is utilized to develop positive social interactions and keep control of the classroom setting, but it is also used to express complex concepts to guarantee that high levels of understanding are reached.

Makulloluwa (2013) stressed another factor influencing teachers to switch codes is that the teachers desire to reduce the social distance between them and students. It was explained that teachers code-switched in order to break the silence of the pupils and develop contact with them. Actually, the functions to the individual scholars are not the same, Mahbub-ul-Alam and Quyyum (2016) lend their voices that code-switching has five distinctive status, such as: (i) referential, (ii) directive, (iii) expressive, (iv) phatic and (v) metalinguistic, then. Malik (1994) discussed about the communicative functions of code switching as the absence of capability and register, speaker's mood, emphasizing a point, usual experience, semantic significance, showing identity with a group, addressing a different audience, logical reasons, to draw attention, etc.

Empirical Studies of Code-switching in the Multilingual Primary Education

Jegede (2012) affirmed that teachers in the multilingual primary schools adopt code-switching in the mathematics class, as a communicative means in their classrooms that it permitted primary pupils to use his/her languages in a creative and meaningful way to acquire knowledge, and link what they know with the new information. Therefore, it was mentioned that the use of code switching in multilingual mathematics classrooms does not result in a deficiency in learning, but is a useful policy

in classroom communication and effective way of transferring knowledge to primary school learners. Anyadiegwu (2015) asserted that the use of a media that is unknown to the students may have an impact on science because such disciplines require a higher level of abstract thinking, linguistic skills, and mastery of scientific terms. It is also true that technological concepts have become somewhat problematic in English medium of instruction classes for second language learners, as discovered in Nigeria, and that the only reasonable course of action for the teacher when confronted with such a problem is to code-switch the teaching process.

According to Sakaria and Priyana (2018), teaching English using code-switching facilitates students' understanding of difficult concepts and, as a result, consolidates their target linguistic competence. More so, according to Almelhi (2020), teachers utilise code-switching to: a) Provide activity instructions; b) Translate and assess comprehension; c) Provide individual remarks to students; d) Provide feedback; and e) Maintain discipline. Jingxia (2010) also suggested that in the L1 class, teachers and learner use code-switching to translate vocabulary, explain grammar, manage the class, and form intimate relationships with the learners. Cook (2001) agreed that code-switching in multilingual classrooms should be avoided since it can lead to misunderstanding and confusion because the students do not speak the same language. Even Adebola (2011) asserted that the use of mother tongue in foreign language classrooms impedes the acquisition of the target language, implying that frequent code-switching by language teachers demoralizes students' interest in listening to the target language and leads to low language skills.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, this study intends to:

- a. examine teachers' perception on the use of code-switching (with regards to the use of English and Yoruba) to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian lower and upper primary multilingual classrooms.
- b. investigate teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian public and private primary multilingual classrooms.
- c. check teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian urban and rural primary multilingual classrooms.

Hypotheses:

The following research hypotheses were tested in this study.

H₀₁. There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian lower and upper primary multilingual classrooms.

H₀₂. There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception on the use of code switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian public and private primary multilingual classrooms.

H₀₃. There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian urban and rural primary multilingual classrooms.

Methodology

This study was a descriptive study of the cross-sectional type that was based on quantitative and qualitative method in gathering and analysing data on the teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian lower and middle basic multilingual classrooms. 3 States (Lagos, Ondo and Oyo), 150 primary school teachers, and 5 primary schools were selected from each local government in each State. Purposive Proportionate and random sample techniques were employed to sample 3 States, 150 teachers and 15 schools respectively. Researcher designed questionnaire in quantitative and qualitative approach was the instrument employed to elicit information from the participants on their perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian lower and middle basic multilingual classrooms. The percentage was used to describe the demographic data of respondents, and the question one. Research hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical techniques at 0.05 level of significance, while the thematic approach was used for qualitative data.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian lower and upper primary multilingual classrooms

Table 1: The t-test Analysis Showing Difference that Exists in the teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian lower and upper primary multilingual classrooms

Class	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Cal. t-Value	Sig.	Inference
Lower	78	23.420	1.327	148	.234	0.58	NS
Upper	72	18.110	1.292				

$P > 0.05$

Table 1 shows the result of the independent t-test ($F_{(148)} = .234$; $p > 0.05$), and the calculated significant value (p-value) is 0.58 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated significant value (p-value) is greater than the chosen 0.05 level of significance ($0.58 > 0.05$), hence, the null hypothesis one is not rejected. Therefore, no significant difference existed in the use of code-switching as a medium of teaching in South-western Nigerian lower and upper primary schools. This implies that teachers employed bilingual method (code-switching) in the teaching activities in the lower and upper primary schools.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian private and public primary multilingual classrooms.

Table 2: The t-test Analysis Showing Difference that Exists in the teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian private and public primary multilingual classrooms

School type	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Cal. t-Value	Sig.	Inference
Public	77	20.420	2.327	148	.246	0.69	NS
Private	73	19.201	1.292				

$P > 0.05$

Table 2 shows the result of the independent t-test ($F_{(148)} = .246$; $p > 0.05$), and the calculated significant value (p-value) is 0.69 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated significant value (p-value) is greater than the chosen 0.05 level of significance ($0.69 > 0.05$), hence, the null hypothesis two is not rejected. Therefore, no significant difference existed in the use of code-switching as a medium of teaching in South-western Nigerian private and public basic multilingual classrooms. This implies that teachers employed bilingual method in the teaching activities in South-western Nigerian private and public primary schools.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian urban and rural primary multilingual classrooms

Table 3:

The t-test Analysis Showing Difference that Exists in the teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian Urban and rural basic multilingual classrooms

Location	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Cal. t-Value	Sig.	Inference
Urban	100	21.420	2.301	148	.747	.002	S
Rural	50	28.110	1.292				

$P > 0.05$

Table 3 shows the result of the independent t-test ($F_{(148)} = .747$; $p < 0.05$), and the calculated significant value (p-value) is 0.002 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated significant value (p-value) is less than the chosen 0.05 level of significance ($0.002 < 0.05$), hence, the null hypothesis three is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference existed in the use of code-switching as a medium of teaching in South-western Nigerian Urban and rural primary multilingual classrooms. This implies that teachers in the urban primary schools employed more bilingual method in the teaching activities than their counterparts in the rural primary schools because the pupils in the rural setting are linguistically homogenous.

The qualitative data supports the quantitative data that primary school teachers employed bilingual method (code-switching) as a medium of instruction, indicating that code-switching was the teachers' preferred language in South-western Nigerian primary schools. It was discovered that Yoruba that was stipulated in the National Policy on Education to be used as a language of teaching in the lower primary was not exclusively implemented neither did the English language that was stated to be the medium of instruction in primary 4-6 was completely executed.

Discussion of the Findings

No significant difference existed in lower and middle teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian. The finding revealed that the South-western Nigerian lower and upper primary school teachers code-switched to buttress their points and aid the pupils' comprehension in the cause of teaching. That is why Anyadiewgue (2015) declared that code-switching was employed when teaching science-related subjects because teachers believed that those subjects need a higher degree of mental thinking, language skill and the understanding of the scientific concept. Likewise, The finding of this present research coincides with Adésinà and Jégédé (2020) who considered the practice of code-switching (English and Yorubá) in Nigerian lower and upper primary schools as an innovation and suitable medium of instruction to cultivate knowledge effectively in bilingual environment. It could be concluded that code-switching method of teaching the lower primary would facilitate learners' comprehension.

No significant difference in the public and private teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian lower and upper primary multilingual classrooms. The result is in line with the submissions of Githinji (2014) that both the public and private primary schools code-switched when teaching. Also, Anyadiewgue (2015) averred that Nigerian public and private teachers did not outright reject the mother-tongue policy and they did not stick to the use of English as a medium of instruction, but they reached a compromise and decided to employ code-switching as a medium of instruction to strike a balance between English and Yorubá instructional media. It indicates that code-switching is in operation in primary school in South-western States to enhance comprehension.

There was a significant difference existed in the urban and rural teachers' perception on the use of code-switching to facilitate comprehension in South-western Nigerian lower and upper primary multilingual classrooms. It indicates that the urban teachers viewed the use of code-switching more exclusively in the lower and upper primary classrooms than their counterparts in the rural settings (Jegede, 2012; Sakaria and Priyana, 2018). It implies that the rural teachers employ the use of the learners' mother-tongue than their

Conclusions

South-western Nigerian primary schools' teachers had formulated and operated in another language policy which is contrary to the one stated in the Policy on Education. The teachers' perception was that they could balance the equation of the language policy by employing code-switching, signifying that they alternated in between the learners' Mother-tongue and the English language which is the official language.

Recommendations

The 'top-down perspective' which is the 'policy-centred' and policymakers 'view, where the society and implementers are ignored should be abandoned, and pick the 'down-top perspective'. Therefore, these stages are recommended in the language policy: fact-finding, fact experimentation, policy formulation and finally, policy implementation. This would involve the direct implementers (educational stakeholders) and then, the policymakers would be able to check the end-product of the language policy in primary school education. The school types (private and public) and locations (urban and rural) should be properly monitored to enforce the Yoruba language policy at the lower primary, and English at the middle primary. Furthermore, it is recommended that the status of code-switching as a language of teaching should be considered and incorporated in the language policy to facilitate comprehension in Nigerian primary multilingual classrooms.

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