



Code-switching as an Instructional Strategy in a Multilingual Classroom Setting: Examining Its Effects on the instruction of the Sesotho Home Language

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ABSTRACT

Code-switching remains an enduring and widespread feature of linguistic contact in many South African communities. This study investigated the pedagogical and sociolinguistic implications of code-switching in multilingual South African classrooms by focusing specifically on the teaching and learning of Sesotho Home Language. The study explored how code switching is employed by learners, teachers, and parents to facilitate comprehension, improve classroom participation, and support knowledge transfer. A desktop qualitative research design was adopted. This desktop approach involved a critical analysis of Khetoa's (2016) MA dissertation, which provided foundational insights into linguistic practices in Sesotho classrooms. The findings reveal that code switching is a prevalent and functional strategy used to navigate complex concepts and promote the engagement of the learners. However, excessive reliance on mixed-coded speech can hinder vocabulary development and compromise learners' ability to perform adequately in assessment contexts that require the use of standard Sesotho. The study recommends a balanced approach that embraces code-switching as a scaffold for learning while emphasizing the refinement of Sesotho linguistic competence. This research contributes to African languages scholarship by offering a nuanced understanding of code-switching as both a pedagogical tool and a sociolinguistic reality. It highlights the need for context-sensitive teaching strategies that support progressive multilingualism while safeguarding African language development.

Keywords: Code-switching, Instructional Strategy, Multilingual, Classroom, Instruction

INTRODUCTION

Code-switching is a commonly observed linguistic phenomenon in diverse, multicultural, and multilingual societies like South Africa and many other African countries. Although code-switching is commonly observed among multilingual communities, its function has not been widely recognized in the teaching and learning of Sesotho. Galegane alludes to the fact that code-switching is a significant element or factor in the educational process.¹ It constitutes a prevalent phenomenon within South

¹ Golebamang Galegane, "Code-Switching as an Interactional Strategy: A Case of First Year University Students and Lecturers," *Journal of World Englishes and Educational Practices* 2, no. 3 (2020): 66–80.

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Africa's multilingual and multicultural society.² This concept, code-switching, refers to the notion that a speaker changes from one language or variety to another in the course of a text or a conversation.³ Rose expounds further on this by saying this notion refers to the alternation between languages within a single conversation, often involving alternation within a single speaker's turn or a single sentence.⁴ Eldin argues that code-switching is often the result of sentence limitations in a particular language.⁵

Code-switching can either be situational or conversational, with the former referring to alternations coinciding with the change of interlocutor, setting, or topic, while the latter does not necessarily coincide with any such change but is motivated by factors within the conversation itself.⁶ Speakers often alternate between languages due to the demands of the type of conversation they are having, the topic under discussion, limitations, etc. Code-switching functions as an important medium of social interaction to bridge the linguistic incompetence gaps that occur between languages for clarification and communication purposes. Teachers often support the use of code-switching largely because they view it as a necessary communication tool that enhances transfer of knowledge and minimizes uncertainties during the process of knowledge impartment.

South African communities are stratified in such a way that within a single community, there is a variety of languages that are used. The dominant language depends on the number of speakers that are found within a community. The dominant language then co-exists with a variety of indigenous languages. In many township schools, the dominant language is often elevated to the level of a home-language subject, even when it is not the learners' actual home language. Speakers of other varieties are then forced to take the dominant local language as their home language in township schools.

In linguistically diverse classrooms in South Africa, code-switching has become a prevalent communicative strategy among teachers and learners. Loads of research in the context of South Africa have focused on code-switching between English and African languages in the context of teaching English or content subjects. However, there is a limited study of how this phenomenon functions within the teaching and learning of indigenous African languages such as Sesotho in semi-rural environments. In African language classrooms, code-switching occurs not only between English and Sesotho but also among different varieties of indigenous languages. This linguistic behavior reflects complex patterns of language contact and sociolinguistic hierarchies in education and society.

Intra- and inter-linguistic switching raises important questions about the pedagogical implications of such linguistic practices, especially in township schools where multilingualism is a norm and learners often come from linguistically heterogeneous backgrounds. Code-switching helps students understand and participate in class, but it also affects their linguistic identity and target language acquisition. Although code-switching is frequently and effectively used in classrooms, it is still not well understood in the context of teaching African languages, and little is known about how parents, instructors, and students view its potential to help or impede successful language acquisition.

Studies on code-switching as it relates to Sesotho have been extensively focused on the language situation in Lesotho.⁷ There is a notable geographical gap in existing research, as the studies referenced here focus primarily on Sesotho code-switching in Lesotho, rather than examining linguistic behaviours in South African Sesotho-speaking contexts. This study is situated in South Africa, where language contact is more extensive than it is in Lesotho. This study aims to fill this vacuum by analysing the use of code-switching in the instruction of Sesotho by exploring its effects

² Suzanne Rose and Ondene Van Dulm, "Functions of Code Switching in Multilingual Classrooms," *Per Linguam* 22, no. 2 (August 10, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.5785/22-2-63>.

³ Noor Al-Qaysi, "A Review of Code-Switching: Learners' and Educators' Perspectives" 2 (August 8, 2018): 1–11.

⁴ Rose and Van Dulm, "Functions of Code Switching in Multilingual Classrooms."

⁵ Ahmad Abdel Tawwab Sharaf Eldin, "Socio Linguistic Study of Code Switching of the Arabic Language Speakers on Social Networking," *International Journal of English Linguistics* 4, no. 6 (November 25, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v4n6p78>.

⁶ Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland, *Sociolinguistics: A Reader* (St. Martin's Press, 1997).

⁷ Matsokolo Maria Ramokoena and Andrew Tichaenzana Manyawu, "Code-Switching In Sesotho Classes In Lesotho: Implications For Sesotho Teaching And Learning," *Journal of Comparative Studies* 17, no. 46 (December 2024), [https://doi.org/10.59893/jcs.17\(46\).006](https://doi.org/10.59893/jcs.17(46).006); Francina L Moloi, "I'm Going to Lis the Cows: Development of Code Switching in the Speech of Sesotho-English Bilingual Preschool Children," 2008; Thekiso G Khati, "The Structural Configuration of Linguistic Code-Switching: Examples from Sesotho and English," 2008; Mpho Maboitumelo Semethe, "Code-Switching, Structural Change and Convergence: A Study of Sesotho in Contact with English in Lesotho," 2019....

on learners' understanding of taught concepts, engagement, and the overarching objectives of African language preservation and advancement in education.

In light of this background, the study aims to examine the function and efficacy of code-switching as an instructional strategy in a South African school, with a special focus on its influence on the teaching and learning of Sesotho. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the ways in which code-switching is used by learners and educators during the teaching and learning of the Sesotho Home Language, and to assess its effectiveness in achieving its intended pedagogical outcomes. The question that underlies this study is: In what ways does code-switching support or hinder the pedagogical goals of teaching the Sesotho Home Language in a South African classroom?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although research on code-switching has been extensively undertaken throughout the world, the role of code-switching in teaching and learning Sesotho is relatively under-researched, or there are no data at all on this area of knowledge. There are relatively few studies that have looked particularly at alternations between indigenous languages while teaching and learning an indigenous South African language. Some notable studies that focused on code-switching in South Africa include Hloniphani, Uys, Ncoko et al, Songxaba et al., and Maluleke.⁸ These studies focused on the use of code-switching as a medium or teaching strategy in second language teaching and the teaching of subjects such as mathematics and economics. This study seeks to pioneer sociolinguistic data on this important notion.

Scholars such as Taha believe that complete adherence to the language of teaching and learning in a classroom setup maximizes students' chances of mastering the language used for teaching.⁹ On the other hand, Sert argues that code-switching may prove to be extremely helpful to students.¹⁰ According to Anderson, when a speaker needs to stress a particular statement, he or she will switch to another language.¹¹ In this study, learners change from Sesotho to one of the local languages, for example, isiZulu, Setswana, Tsotsitaal, or English.

A cross-language approach is often encouraged by the learner's or teacher's lack of adequate language competency in the language of teaching and learning. Code-switching is often used to indicate factors that include the inability to cope with the language that is used, ignorance of the words that are used in a conversation, to fulfil a psycho-social need, which is to stand out from the rest, etc. Malik and Eldin, in their studies, list varying factors that encourage speakers to alternate between languages in a communicative circumstance.¹² Provided hereunder is a list of motivations for code-switching as provided by Malik and Eldin.¹³

⁸ Hloniphani Ndebele, "A Socio-Cultural Approach to Code-Switching and Code-Mixing among Speakers of IsiZulu in KwaZulu-Natal: A Contribution to Spoken Language Corpora" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, 2012); Dawid Uys, "The Functions of Teachers' Code Switching in Multilingual and Multicultural High School Classrooms in the Siyanda District of the Northern Cape Province" (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 2010); S.O.S. Ncoko, R. Osman, and K. Cockcroft, "Codeswitching Among Multilingual Learners in Primary Schools in South Africa: An Exploratory Study," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 3, no. 4 (December 2000): 225–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050008667709>; Sister L. Songxaba, Adriaan Coetzer, and Jacob M. M. Molepo, "Perceptions of Teachers on Creating Space for Code Switching as a Teaching Strategy in Second Language Teaching in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa," *Reading & Writing* 8, no. 1 (December 8, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4102/rw.v8i1.141>.

⁹ T A Taha, "Language Alternation in University Classrooms," *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 35, no. 4 (2008): 336.

¹⁰ Olcay Sert, "The Functions of Code-Switching in ELT Classrooms.," *Online Submission* 11, no. 8 (2005).

¹¹ Tyler Kimball Anderson, *Spanish-English Bilinguals' Attitudes toward Code-Switching: Proficiency, Grammaticality and Familiarity* (The Pennsylvania State University, 2006).

¹² Lalita Malik, *Socio-Linguistics: A Study of Code-Switching, (No Title)* (New Delhi: Anmol, 1994); Eldin, "Socio Linguistic Study of Code Switching of the Arabic Language Speakers on Social Networking."

¹³ Malik, *Socio-Linguistics: A Study of Code-Switching*; Eldin, "Socio Linguistic Study of Code Switching of the Arabic Language Speakers on Social Networking."

Table 1: Motivations for code-switching

Reasons for code-switching	Description
Inadequate fluency	This refers to the type of code-switching that is often observed when speakers are unable to find equivalent words in the language of teaching and learning to match words of their native languages.
Showing solidarity	Speakers of code-switch to indicate group membership among addressees or to indicate their ethnicity.
Denotative weight	Code-switching is sometimes used to signal the speaker's attitude, communicative intentions, and emotions to convey linguistic and social information.
Subject matter	The demands of a topic are an important reason that leads multilingual speakers to alternate between varying language varieties.
Habitual experience	Sometimes code-switching occurs due to the speaker's habit of alternating between languages. This habitual practice may be encouraged by the contact between languages and different speech communities living in one area.
Affective disposition	Code-switching is sometimes triggered by the speaker's state of mind or when the speaker is emotionally affected by something.
Emphasizing a point	Speakers often code-switch to stress or put emphasise on a particular statement.

In multilingual classrooms, code-switching serves a variety of pedagogical and communicative purposes. The table above signals that language users often switch codes when they lack sufficient proficiency in one of the languages involved in a communicative circumstance, using the alternative language to maintain fluency and ensure clarity of expression. In addition, code-switching is often used as a tactic to demonstrate solidarity, thereby encouraging a feeling of social cohesiveness and a common identity among participants in a communicative circumstance. The use of code-switching also has semantic significance, as it allows language users to express ideas more clearly or to use culturally embedded expressions that might not have exact translations in other languages. To make their lessons more relatable and contextually appropriate, teachers may use code-switching in classroom discourse to introduce or clarify a topic. Furthermore, code-switching is commonly employed to highlight a point, bringing learners' attention to important concepts, directions, or meaning differences. All the reasons that have been mentioned in the table illustrate that code-switching is a purposeful and context-sensitive communication tool rather than just a linguistic backup.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned by multipronged theoretical perspectives. The study is grounded in a combination of communication accommodation theory and sociocultural theory of language. Together, these theories are well-positioned to provide an adequate understanding of the pedagogical use of code-switching in the teaching of Sesotho. To understand how teachers switch codes to relate to students or control classroom dynamics, this study uses the communication accommodation theory. This theory is also essential for helping the researcher explain motivations for the use of code-switching among the learner population in a Sesotho Home Language classroom. CAT is significant in this treatise because it gives an account of the reasons that influence language users to adjust their speech, including alternating between distinct languages or varieties. Gallois et al. posit that CAT is a theory of interpersonal communication that emphasizes the importance of understanding interpersonal interactions.¹⁴ CAT emphasizes that people can use divergent or convergent communication patterns

¹⁴ Cindy Gallois, Tania Ogay, and Howard Giles, "Communication Accommodation Theory," *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication*, 2005, 121–48.

to emphasize commonalities or differences between themselves and their communicative partners.¹⁵ Language users, particularly those who have competency and performance in multiple languages, often switch between varying languages in their efforts to accommodate others. Another important theory in this study is the sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that social and cultural factors influence how language is used, and how language users shift between languages or varieties in communication circumstances. This theory posits that language is not just a system of communication but is also a crucial tool for cognitive development and thinking. Neupane postulates that sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and sociocultural settings as the influencing factors in the development of higher forms of human mental activities, such as problem-solving, logical thinking, and intentional memory.¹⁶

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desktop research design, which is a qualitative approach that focuses on systematic collection, analysis, and synthesis of existing secondary data sources. Vartanian explicates that secondary data is referred to as the data that have already been collected and are under consideration for reuse for the purpose of getting answers to new research questions.¹⁷ This study seeks to re-examine publicly available data to respond to the questions asked by the study. This study uses an interpretive research paradigm for its exploration of code-switching in the context of a multilingual Sesotho classroom. Its reliance on a desktop approach allowed the researcher to critically engage with the existing literature and documented research findings to develop insights that aligned with the objectives of the study. Although no primary fieldwork was undertaken, the study draws on secondary data sources, with particular attention to documented experiences of learners, teachers, and parents presented in the selected documents. Central to this sample is Khetoa's master's dissertation, titled *Factors Constraining Grade 12 Learners' Achievement in Sesotho Home Language*, which provides a rich account of linguistic practices and educational challenges in the Xhariep District.¹⁸ The sample of Khetoa's study included Grade 12 learners, an educator, and caregivers.

Data were collected through a document analysis of existing literature, theses, and scholarly articles relevant to the focus of the study. The primary source of data was Khetoa's MA dissertation. This was supplemented by other academic texts that discuss code-switching, multilingual pedagogy, and African language education. These documents were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and alignment with the study's thematic concerns. The collected data were subjected to thematic analysis, a qualitative method that involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns within textual data. The themes were drawn from the linguistic practices of learners and a teacher, particularly in relation to the use of code-switching as an instructional strategy. The analysis focused on how code-switching was theorized, practised, and evaluated in the literature, and how these insights could inform pedagogical approaches in Sesotho classrooms. As a desktop study that relied solely on publicly available secondary data, no direct interaction with human participants occurred. However, ethical research principles were upheld by ensuring that all sources were properly cited and that the intellectual property of the original authors was respected. The study also maintained academic integrity by critically engaging with the data rather than reproducing them uncritically.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In this part of the article, the researcher presents a desktop examination of data that was collected on learners' language practices, focusing on learners' tendency to switch between languages while taking Sesotho lessons and their use of language in casual peer-to-peer communication. The examination attempts to reveal patterns of multilingualism, explore why learners make linguistic choices of the kinds that they do, and consider pedagogical implications of the teaching and learning of Sesotho. This

¹⁵ Howard Giles, Nikolas Coupland, and Justine Coupland, "Accommodation Theory: Communication, Context, and Consequence," in *Contexts of Accommodation* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1–68, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511663673.001>.

¹⁶ Binod Neupane, "A Review of Sociocultural Theory and Language Teaching," *International Journal of Research in Academic World* 1, no. 15 (2022): 85.

¹⁷ Thomas P Vartanian, *Secondary Data Analysis* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁸ Soyiso Godsave Khetoa, "Factors Constraining Grade 12 Learners' Achievement in Sesotho Home Language," 2016.

approach allows for advanced analysis of the information with depth from both sociolinguistic theory and contextual sensitivity. This study draws on findings by Khetoa, whose research among Grade 12 learners in the Xhariep District revealed that code-switching was not only prevalent but also functionally significant in classroom discourse.¹⁹ Learners frequently alternated between Sesotho and other languages to navigate complex concepts, clarify meaning, and express themselves more confidently. This section will report on the following: learners' tendency to code-switch, language choice in informal contexts, household use of mix-coded speech, teachers' strategic use of code-switching, and code-switching in learners' oral performances in assessment activities.

Learners' tendency to code-switch

Khetoa found out that the majority of learners in his study alternated between Sesotho and English during lessons.²⁰ This was due to limitations in vocabulary that the learners experienced in the language of teaching and learning. Seventeen learners indicated that they frequently used Sesotho and English, while others signaled that they occasionally used Afrikaans or Tsotsitaal. One learner alluded that "*We know more English words than Sesotho words, hence it is easier to switch*". However, three learners maintained monolingual practices in that they only spoke Sesotho because of the respect they have for the language and the confidence they have in using the language. This data suggests that learners' perception of code-switching signals that they view code-switching as more than just a coping mechanism, as it helps in facilitating comprehension. In the context of this study, these insights highlight how code-switching can be strategically harnessed by teachers to bridge linguistic competency disparities in multilingual classrooms. It also highlights teachers' sensitivities to learners' linguistic competencies within a teaching and learning experience.

Language choice in informal contexts

Khetoa's data signals that learners display varied language choices when they engage in informal conversations with their friends.²¹ Thirty percent of the sample in this study reported that they relied on mix-coded speech. The learners argued that this way of speaking has become their natural mode of communication. Students in Khetoa (ibid:64) articulate, "*It has always been the way we speak*". Others explained that they alternate between various languages because of limited competency issues, "*We do not know most of the Sesotho words correctly*".²² Unlike these views, forty five percent of learners reported that they actively use Sesotho because "*We enjoy speaking Sesotho*". This signals a conscious choice. The rest reported that they prefer to use their primary languages because they were not the primary speakers of Sesotho. These findings illustrate how the linguistic experiences in society influence learners' linguistic choices and performances outside the classroom. It is noticeable that, despite the dominance of monolingual preferences, mix-coded speech is widely practised. This indicates that there is a level of fluidity with which learners use language in the informal surroundings.

Household use of mix-coded speech

Parents confirmed that language mixing was a common feature in households. They observed that their children tended to understand instructions more easily when multiple languages were used. One parent explained that this practice was influenced by the broader multilingual environment. Learners use code mixing to make reference to various things, including naming, as seen in their reference to mother as *mazali* and father as *bo thaema*. Parents admitted to having adopted these forms of speaking, as can be seen in one parent's responses, "*Le rona re se re bua the way ba buang ka teng*" (We also speak the way they speak). This illustrates how code-switching is normalised within family settings, thereby shaping both parent-child communication and the linguistic repertoires that learners bring into the classroom.

¹⁹ Khetoa, "Factors Constraining Grade 12 Learners' Achievement in Sesotho Home Language."

²⁰ Khetoa, "Factors Constraining Grade 12 Learners' Achievement in Sesotho Home Language."

²¹ Khetoa, "Factors Constraining Grade 12 Learners' Achievement in Sesotho Home Language."

²² Khetoa, "Factors Constraining Grade 12 Learners' Achievement in Sesotho Home Language," 64.

Teacher's strategic use of code-switching

Khetoa's study revealed that the teacher deliberately used code-switching as a strategy to clarify complex topics.²³ The teacher introduced literary devices in Sesotho but explained them with English terminology, such as metaphor, personification, and simile. The teacher also relied on mixed codes when explaining unfamiliar words. For example, one learner defined *tjheseho* (enthusiasm) as “*Eh Meneer, tjheseho ke modlandla*”, blending Afrikaans (*Meneer*), Sesotho (*tjheseho*), and isiZulu (*modlandla*). This demonstrates how learners depend on multiple linguistic resources when their Sesotho vocabulary is insufficient. This fluidity of languages in the classroom mirrors the teacher's use of language to explain demanding topics to students. These linguistic practices show how teacher-led code-switching functions as a scaffold to aid comprehension while gradually guiding learners towards standard Sesotho usage.

Code-switching in learners' oral performances in assessment activities

During oral presentations, learners were expected to use standard Sesotho, but the data revealed extensive use of mixed-coded speech. Learners' sentences often contained borrowed English and Afrikaans words. For instance:

- “*Batswadi ba zamme tjhelete ya diregistrations*” (Parents tried to get registration fees)
- “*Tjhehe man! tjhentjha attitude ya hao*” (No man! change your attitude)

These data reveal that learners are heavily reliant on multilingual resources to compensate for gaps in the Sesotho vocabulary. While this demonstrates linguistic flexibility, it also exposes limitations in their Sesotho competence, especially in formal settings where standard language is required.

DISCUSSION

Code-switching as a linguistic strategy

The data reveal that seventeen of the twenty students who formed part of the enquiry actively engage in code-switching. Students often alternate between a colonial language [English] and the language of teaching and learning. This linguistic practice signals strategic linguistic adaptation that learners and the teacher employ in the learning environment to support learning. In this study, code-switching is a resource that helps learners to overcome lexical gaps in Sesotho, facilitates conceptual understanding, and enables learners to communicate without barriers. Mawela and Mahlambi postulate that teachers often code-switch from English First Additional Language to Learner Home Language to enhance learners' understanding of concepts.²⁴ Learners' views about code-switching coincide with Al-musthofa and Angelo's views that “Cognitively, code-switching allows students to use their first language to understand difficult concepts, while socially, the practice reinforces inclusivity and positive dynamics in the classroom.”²⁵ The implications of the findings confirm that code-switching is an effective pedagogical strategy and not simply a communication tool”.

Linguistic erosion/ attrition

The claim of learners that they know more English words than Sesotho words signals a deeper sociolinguistic problem. The language practices of the learners illustrate imbalances in terms of exposure between Sesotho and English. In the South African education system, learners are more exposed to English than to African languages. In the opinion of Nugraha, English continues to be the dominant language in education even though education policy has enforced the constitution to promote additive bilingualism and the use of the mother tongue of the learners as a language of teaching and

²³ Khetoa, “Factors Constraining Grade 12 Learners' Achievement in Sesotho Home Language.”

²⁴ Ailwei Solomon Mawela and Sizwe Blessing Mahlambi, “Exploring Teachers' Views on Code-Switching as a Communicative Technique to Enhance the Teaching of Mathematics in Grade 4,” *International Journal of Educational Methodology* 7, no. 4 (November 15, 2021): 637–48, <https://doi.org/10.12973/ijem.7.4.637>.

²⁵ Wardaniatul Firdausia Al-musthofa and James F. D'Angelo, “Code-Switching In Bilingual Education: Cognitive And Social Implications,” *Interling : International Journal of English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics* 2, no. 2 (August 29, 2024): 58–62, <https://doi.org/10.55210/interling.v2i2.1791>.

learning.²⁶ Nugraha further postulate that there is an irony in the language situation in South African government schools where English is a dominant language; many learners, including teachers, lack sufficient English language competency.²⁷ This sociolinguistic situation has had undesired repercussions on African languages.

Translingual practices

The presence of Tsotsitaal, English and Afrikaans in learners' speech patterns suggests that there is contact between Sesotho and other languages in the schooling environment and perhaps outside school. Learners indicate that multilingual approaches are meaningful to gain access to conceptual issues in the classroom. The dynamic usage of language is shown to destabilize formal literacy in Sesotho.

Code-mixing

For learners, the use of mixed-coded speech is justified. The use of mixed-coded speech is said to be a consequence of habit among learners and due to lexical gaps. This presents code-switching as a consequence of limitations of proficiency in Sesotho. The reasons for linguistic challenges in Sesotho are due to extra-linguistic and linguistic factors such as language contact.

Reasons for code-switching

The interview data and observation data pointed out that code-switching is used for several reasons. According to the interview data, code-switching is used to clarify demanding topics for learners' comprehension or understanding of shared lessons. Learners have a habitual tendency to alternate between languages. Learners also code-switch largely due to their lack of appropriate registers. Learners easily code-switch because they are unable to find appropriate terminology in Sesotho. Moreover, parents and learners use code-switching to facilitate effective communication.

Observations revealed that learners code-switch between Sesotho and other African languages as a means to demonstrate their understanding of topics in other languages. It has also been established that learners code-switch out of habit. The learner who was requested to define 'tjantjello' employed a mix-coded speech. This mix of codes is encouraged by the regular contact between languages in which this study was conducted. From the oral presentations, it was observed that the learners, due to their lack of awareness of linguistic items in Sesotho that are equivalent to English words, opted to employ them.

Alternation between Sesotho and English

Learners stated that they know more English terms than Sesotho ones. This contributes significantly to their failure to continue conversations in Sesotho. This was clearly demonstrated during oral presentations, where learners continued to switch between Sesotho and English. Learners appeared not to be concerned with being graded on their Sesotho skills.

Alternation between Sesotho and other African languages

Code-switching between Sesotho and other African languages functioned as a communicative strategy through which learners demonstrated their understanding of classroom content. This linguistic flexibility allowed learners to draw from their diverse repertoires to make sense of complex concepts, negotiate meaning, and actively participate in learning activities. Learners perceived the classroom as a space where their multilingual identities were acknowledged, and where using familiar languages was not only appropriate but essential to facilitate deeper comprehension and engagement with the knowledge being presented.

²⁶ Sidik Indra Nugraha, "The Language-in-Education Policy in South Africa: A Gap between Policy and Efficacy," in *Eleventh Conference on Applied Linguistics (CONAPLIN 2018)* (Atlantis Press, 2019), 568–72.

²⁷ Nugraha, "The Language-in-Education Policy in South Africa: A Gap between Policy and Efficacy."

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that code-switching must be strategically integrated into Sesotho classroom pedagogy as a supportive tool for comprehension, especially when introducing complex or abstract concepts. However, educators must exercise caution to ensure that code-switching does not compromise learners' acquisition of Sesotho vocabulary and grammatical structures. It is essential to create deliberate opportunities for learners to engage deeply with Sesotho, both orally and in writing, to strengthen their linguistic competence. Teachers must be supported through professional development to balance multilingual teaching strategies with language preservation goals.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the sociolinguistic phenomenon of code-switching as an instructional strategy in a multilingual classroom setting, with a particular focus on its implications for teaching, learning, and language development. The study examined the function and efficacy of code-switching as an instructional strategy in a South African school. It further sought to explore ways in which code-switching is employed by learners and educators during the teaching and learning of the Sesotho Home Language and to assess its effectiveness in achieving its intended pedagogical outcomes. Drawing on responses from learners, a teacher, and parents, it was established that code-switching is a pervasive and often necessary communicative strategy in multilingual contexts. It enables learners to grasp complex subject matter, facilitates effective classroom interaction, and reflects the linguistic realities of the communities in which learners reside. It was also noted that, while the pedagogical benefits of code-switching are acknowledged, this study also cautions against its unchecked use. The overreliance on mixed-coded speech, particularly in assessment contexts, poses a risk to the successful acquisition and preservation of Sesotho. The limited vocabulary and reduced confidence of learners in expressing themselves fully in Sesotho suggest that code switching, if not properly managed, may hinder rather than support language development. This study concludes that code-switching should be strategically employed as a scaffold for learning, not as a substitute for linguistic competence. Educators must encourage learners to refine their Sesotho proficiency and resist the temptation to default to English or other languages when there are Sesotho equivalents. As learners approach the end of their schooling journey, they must be equipped with the linguistic tools necessary to perform confidently and competently in Sesotho. This is especially critical given the concerning trends in matric performance, where few learners achieve top-level results in Sesotho Home Language.

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