

## **The Effects of Code-switching and Code-mixing in Bi-lingual Communities: A case of Bulilima District where Kalanga and IsiNdebele Co-exist as Mother Tongue and Target Languages**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to explore the effects of code-switching and code-mixing in Bulilima district of Matabeleland, South province in Zimbabwe where Kalanga and IsiNdebele co-exist as mother tongue and second languages respectively. Basically, the objective of the study is to establish the effects of code-switching and code-mixing in the learning of the target language in either code-switching or code-mixing in bilingual areas. The study is conducted in Bulilima District of Matabeleland South. The mother tongue interference in the learning of the second language results in code-switching and code-mixing. This inquiry employed a qualitative research paradigm and focused on two purposively sampled schools comprising one primary school and one secondary school. The sample consisted of six primary teachers, two IsiNdebele secondary school teachers, one primary school Teacher-in-Charge (TIC) and one secondary school Head of Department (HOD). The interview and observation instruments are used for collection of research data. Collected data is presented and analysed through use of tables and descriptive statistics. Revealed in the study is that code-switching and code-mixing are indispensable phenomena in bilingual and multilingual communities. Precisely, both phenomena are inevitable as people happen to code-switch and code-mix when they are acquainted with two or more languages spoken in a particular area. While code-switching and code-mixing have a negative effect on the development of the dominated language, they may be considered as useful strategy in the classroom since they clarify, reiterate and influence continuity in a language discourse.

**Key words:** Bilingualism, Code-switching, Code-mixing, Mother tongue, Second language, Languages in contact.

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### **I. Introduction**

Several scholars and academics have extensively researched on the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing in bilingual and multilingual societies. Some of the outstanding ones are Amuda (1989), Romaine and Braj (1992), Atoye (1994), Numan and Carter (2001), Poplack (2001), Ayeomoni (2006), Alenezi (2010), Bhatia and Ritchie (2012) and Viriri and Viriri (2013). Code-switching and code-mixing are well-known traits in the speech pattern bilingual in any human society the world over (Ayeomoni 2006). According to Muchenje et al. (2013), many countries in Africa are characterised by linguistic diversity which makes these countries multilingual nations. Therefore, Zimbabwe cannot be an exception as it is also a multilingual country. Due to this linguistic diversity, issues related to code-switching and code-mixing emerged in life and in learning situations in particular.

In expressing the linguistic situation in Zimbabwe, Hachipola (2012), states that Zimbabwe is a multilingual country with sixteen (16) spoken languages. Of these languages, until the Amendment of Zimbabwe Constitution, Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013, English is the official language, while Shona and Ndebele are national languages spoken by 70% and 15% of the population respectively (Peresuh and Masuku 2002). Shangani, Venda, Kalanga, Nambya, Tonga, Chichewa, Sotho, Chikunda, Sena, Barwe, Hwesa and Tshwawo were regarded as minority languages (Chimhundu 1997). According to the Amended Constitution of Zimbabwe (No.20) (2013; 17), Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, Koisian, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, sign language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda and Xhosa, are the officially recognised languages of Zimbabwe and that an Act of Parliament may prescribe other languages as officially recognised languages. With reference to the Zimbabwe's national language policy on education as contained in the Education Act of 1987 (amended in 1990, 2006), Mareva et al. (2016) assert that, in areas where minority languages exist, the Minister may authorise the teaching of such languages in primary schools in addition to English, Shona and Ndebele. Therefore, in Bulilima District of Matabeleland South region, Kalanga is taught in addition to IsiNdebele which is the national language spoken in Matabeleland regions. As a result, code-switching and code-mixing prevails as Bulilima is a bilingual district where these two languages co-exist.

Having highlighted the linguistic situation in Zimbabwe, the study focused on its main thrust which precisely hinges on the effects of code-switching and code-mixing in Bulilima District where Kalanga and IsiNdebele languages co-exists and happen to be spoken by the members of the community. Bulilima is a bilingual community of Matabeleland, south province where Kalanga is the mother tongue and dominant language. IsiNdebele is the second language taught and learnt in schools as a national language in the region. The fact that Kalanga and IsiNdebele are languages in contact in Bulilima District since they co-exist makes it inevitable for code-switching and Code-mixing to prevail in communication. Speakers of more than one language are known for their ability to codeswitch or code-mix languages during conversation (UK ESSAYS 2017). However, as code-switching and code-mixing unfold in bilingual communities like Bulilima, several effects are realised. The study therefore, addresses and examines some of the effects of code-switching and code-mixing in Bulilima community in respect of Kalanga and IsiNdebele which co-exist in the district.

## **II. Conceptual framework**

Code-switching, code-mixing, bilingualism and languages in contact are crucial in the topic under discussion. Several scholars like Belly (1976), Amuda (1989), Bokamba (1989), Atoye (1994), Maschler (1998) and Muysken (2000) have attempted to define code-switching and code-mixing. Prior to defining the concept, it should be observed that, very often the expression code mixing is used synonymously with code switching. Bokamba (1989) defines both concepts thus: "code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event... code-mixing is the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clauses from a cooperative activity where the participants, in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand." Apparent in this statement is that, the definitions are closely related, hence there is a superficial distinction between the two terms. Although they have been defined as related, Myers-Scotton (2006) in Alenezi (2010; 3) explains code-switching as "the use of two language varieties in the same conversation" However, in this study, code switching and code-mixing involve the use of Kalanga and IsiNdebele in Bulilima where people and learners code-switch or code-mix in the same discourse since they are conversant in both varieties.

Bilingualism is another important concept in the study. It is generally perceived as the ability of using two languages alternatively and automatically shifting from one language to another without hesitation. According to Bhebe (2013:93), cited in <https://aiiulistya.wordpress.com/2013/0624-/the-bilingual-method/bilingualism>, "refers to the phenomenon of competence and communication in two languages". The competence referred to in this definition is the ability to converse in two linguistic codes without any linguistic obstacles as stated above. Bulilima District in Matabeleland South region, is an appropriate example that depicts bilingualism as Kalanga is the language of the locals while IsiNdebele is the national and second language taught and learnt in schools. It is in this view that the study is considered to address and examine the effects of code-switching and code-mixing in a bilingual community of Bulilima.

Some authorities on bilingualism like Brazzaville (1962), Wenreich (1974), Grosjean (1982), Zantell (1985), Beardsmore (1986) and Muysken (2000) concur in that language contact is when two or more languages are in contact, hence they tend to exert influence on one another (Bhebe 2013). Furthermore, with regards to languages in contact, Bhebe (2013; 24 ) argues that, "... when languages are in contact, new forms come into a language, become part and parcel of it, to the extent that even speakers of the language are not conscious that the terms were never part of their language originally." The other challenge experienced in language contact is expressed by Pujiono et al. (2017; 216) who state that " Language contact occurs in Japanese language learning as well. The university students who speak Batakoba language and Simalungun language as their mother tongue will experience language contact with other students who speak Japanese. This situation will eventually create a problem for those who frequently speak their mother tongue other than Japanese." In the same vein, learners in Bulilima who are not conversant in IsiNdebele are expected to experience challenges related to code-switching and code-mixing in the learning of it as the second language.

## **III. Research Design and Methodology**

According to Creswell (2009), research is a plan of action that guides process. In this respect, research design serves as stratified plan of operation outlining methodology, activities and instruments in the course of the study. The study use the qualitative design which is mainly characterized by descriptions and explanations of phenomena using words. Research is referred to as a systematic way to solve problems (Rajasekar et al. 2006). Regarding research instruments, the study employed interviews and observations which work well with the qualitative paradigm. These instruments are used in order to obtain valid and reliable data on the effects of code-switching and code-mixing in Bulilima District where Kalanga and IsiNdebele co-exist and are interchangeably used in schools within the community.

#### IV. Population and Sampling

Fraenkel and Walter (1996), Ary et al. (1996) and Best and Khan (2014) define population as the total of all individuals who have certain characteristics that are of interest to the researcher and to whom he or she would like to generalise the results of study. The population under investigation involves teachers and learners from Tokwane Primary and Secondary Schools in Bulilima District where Kalanga and IsiNdebele languages are in contact. Since the investigation could not include all the individuals, sampling was therefore, inevitable. Cohen and Manion (2011; 510), define a sample as " a subset of a population or a group of participants carefully selected to represent that group of participants." This statement confirms the preceding one, which categorically states that it is not feasible to involve everyone in the study, hence sampling becomes a pre-requisite. Therefore, purposive sampling is used to select the participants or interviewees for the study. Bulilima District is purposively selected among several others in Matabeleland South region because it is where Kalanga is the mother tongue and pre -dominantly spoken while IsiNdebele is taught and learnt in schools. It is in this view that co-existence of these languages appear to be inevitable.

#### V. Data Analysis and Discussion

The presentation and analysis of data are the results of the interviews and observations. The interviews involved 10 respondents who were purposively sampled in order to obtain desired data on the effects of code-switching and code-mixing among the bilingual learners in Bulilima District schools. The sample consisted of a primary school Teacher-in-Charge (TIC), a secondary IsiNdebele Head of Department (HOD), six primary school teachers and two IsiNdebele secondary school teachers. However, respondents were exposed to similar questions meant to acquire authentic and balanced data from individuals in different levels and capacities of teaching.

**Table 1: Sex of respondents N = 10**

Sex	Male	Female	Total
Number	4	6	10
Percentage	40%	60%	100%

Table 1, reflects the gender of sampled respondents from the selected primary and secondary schools. Males were four and female six, thus resulting in difference of two. However, this different numbers of gender did not have any effect on the results because they were selected on the basis of having specialised in the teaching of IsiNdebele and that they also happen to teach it to learners in Bulilima community.

**Table 2: Whether respondents are bilingual or not N=10**

Response	Bilingual	Not bilingual	Total
Number	8	2	10
Percentage	80	20	100%

The issue of whether respondents were bilingual or not is indicated in table 2. Eight of them were bilingual, while the remaining two were not. Although the two were not bilingual, they understood Kalanga, but were not competent in conversation in the variety as they were in IsiNdebele which was their mother tongue and had majored in it at collage. In this respect, they had positive impact in this study since they had ability to easily detect the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing when they obtain.

**Tables 3: Whether code-switching and code-mixing can be noticed in IsiNdebele lessons N=10**

Response	Noticed	Unnoticed	Total
Number	10	0	10
Percentage	100%	0%	100%

Shown on Table 3 is that all the respondents representing hundred percent expressed that code-switching and code-mixing can be noticed in IsiNdebele lessons or discourses. This common response from respondents categorically confirms as authentic the prevalence of code-switching and code-mixing in bilingual Bulilima schools. According to Cook (2001), code-switching in the classroom is a natural response in a bilingual situation. In other words, these phenomena are inevitable since learners unconsciously and spontaneously shift from either Kalanga to IsiNdebele or IsiNdebele to Kalanga during lessons as these languages co-exist in Bulilima bilingual district. Below is a table display a list of some of the Kalanga and IsiNdebele terms recorded during lesson observation.

**Table 4: Kalanga terms that featured during code-switching and code-mixing in lessons observations or conversations N=20**

Original Kalanga terms	Ndebelerised Kalanga terms	IsiNdebele equivalent	English translation	Number of respondents	% of total
Nhaka	Inaka	Ilifa	Deceased Estate	18	90%
Nhopi	inopi	Isijeza	Pumpkin porridge	18	90%
Lukwalo	Ugwalo	Umbhalo	Text	15	75%
Mainini	Umayinini	Umamomncane	Aunt	20	100%
Dombo	Usodombo	Umkhongi	Marriage go between	18	90%
sekuru	usekuru	Umalume	Maternal uncle	16	80%
Kukwanisa	Ukukwanisa	Ukwelisa	To be able	20	100%
Bhasikili	Ibhayisikili	Utshelelezani	Bicycle	18	90%
Bhabhula	Ukubhabhula	Ukubeletha	Carrying on one's back	12	60%
Kwama	Isikhwama	Isamba	Pocket	16	80%

Table 4, highlights the frequency of code-switching and code-mixing in lessons or conversations. The frequency of the words involved in code-switching and code-mixing range from sixty to ninety percent. *Bhabhula 'ukubhabhula / ukubeletha'* (carrying on one's back) had the lowest percentage of sixty while *'ukukwanisa / ukwelisa'* (to be able) and *'amayinini / umamomncane'* (aunt) had the highest of hundred percent respectively. The frequency of remaining words ranged between seventy-five and ninety in terms of percentage. It has also been observed that terms in this table are not only code-switched and code-mixed in communication but were pronounced in IsiNdebele from their original Kalanga statuses through borrowing and phonologisation processes. From the given frequencies is that code-switching and code-mixing is a regular feature in lessons conducted in bilingual schools. As a result, learners in Tokwane Schools are unconsciously and automatically interchange Kalanga and IsiNdebele during observed lessons. The reason being that Kalanga is their mother tongue while IsiNdebele is the national language that is taught in schools within Matabeleland South region as stated in the Zimbabwe's national language policy, contained in the Education Act of 1987 (as amended in 1990, 2006).

**Table 5: Reasons for code-switching and code-mixing in IsiNdebele lessons in Bulilima District schools N=10.**

Reasons for Code-switching and Code-mixing	Number of respondents	% of total
Mother tongue Kalanga interferes with IsiNdebele	2	20%
Lack of equivalent words in the target language	4	40%
To expand Kalanga and IsiNdebele vocabularies	1	10%
To clarify, emphasise and illustrate concepts	3	30%
Total	10	100%

As reflected on Table 5, respondents furnished major reasons for code-switching and code-mixing. Four respondents representing forty percent, they cited lack of equivalent words in the target language. "Words or phrases in two languages may not correspond exactly, and the bilingual may switch to one language to express a concept that has no equivalent in the culture of the other language" (Baker, 2007:108). In concurrence, Belly (1976) stresses that, code-mixing occurs when a speaker is momentarily unable to remember a term in the target language, but is able to recall it in a different language. Implied in these citations is that failure to have an equivalent word and to remember a term results either in code-switching or code-mixing. The reason involving clarification and emphasis was from three respondents with a percentage of thirty. In agreement with this reason, Amuda (1989), states that, code-switching may also be used to emphasize a point, or to add more force to a phrase. Furthermore, "speakers switch to manipulate or influence or define the situation as they wish, and to convey nuances of meaning and personal intention" (Trudgill 2000; 105). The category of two respondents

representing twenty percent stated that mother tongue Kalanga interference with IsiNdebele as their reason. One respondent with a percentage of ten percent expressed the reason of expanding Kalanga and IsiNdebele vocabularies. Although respondents presented varied reasons, they are appropriate and authentic as they clearly spell out valid causes of code-switching and code-mixing in lessons and conversations in bilingual schools.

**Table 6: major effects of code-switching and code mixing in Bulilima bilingual schools N=10**

Major effects of Code-switching and Code-mixing	Number of respondents	% of total
Development and expansion of affected languages	2	20%
Failure to preserve cultural linguistic issues	1	10%
Penalization of the unofficial language in written work	3	30%
Decay of the dominated variety	4	40%
Total	10	100%

The last table indicates the responses of respondents on the effects of code-switching and code-mixing in Bulilima bilingual schools. The major effects presented include the development and expansion of affected languages, failure to reserve cultural linguistic issues, penalisation of unofficial language in written work and decay of the dominated variety. Of these effects, the popular ones were ‘the decay of the dominated variety’ and ‘the penalisation of unofficial language in written work as they came from the respondents. According to Moyo (2002), when lexical items from one language are allowed to dominate another language, the result may be the decay of the dominated language. In this regard, code-switching and code-mixing which are inevitable phenomena that protect Kalanga from decaying as it is not a language of the majority but a mother tongue of people in Bulilima District.

Although most of the effects of code-switching and code-mixing highlighted on Table Six are negative. Eldridge (1996) perceives code-switching differently by revealing that it serves some functions either beneficial or not. According to Eldridge(1996), code-switching has four main functions and the first one is equivalence which operates as a defensive mechanism for students as it allows them to bridge the gaps resulting from foreign language incompetence. Floor-holding is the next mechanism and is used to avoid gaps in communication, which may result from lack of fluency in target language. In presenting the third function of code-switching which is reiteration, Eldridge (1996) asserts that, messages are reinforced, emphasized, or clarified where the message has already been transmitted in one code, but not understood. This repetitive technique is meant to magnify the message by using mother tongue in addition to the target language. The last function is the conflict control where code-switching becomes a strategy to transfer the intended meaning in order to use words indirectly for specific purposes. Apparent from the presented and discussed effects, code-switching and code-mixing concepts have both negative and positive effects in language communication.

## VI. Conclusion

From the conducted study and findings, it is demonstrated that code-switching and code-mixing are the phenomena that are unavoidable in bilingual societies. Both phenomena have positive and negative effects on language acquisition and learning of the affected languages. Therefore, teachers in bilingual communities should endeavor to prevent negative effects from affecting the growth and expansion of affected languages in language learning situations. Educators and linguists are advised not to always perceive code-switching and code-mixing as a deficiency and language interference. They should consider them as useful strategies meant to emphasise, reiterate, substitute and clarify issues in an efficient manner in language learning processes. In this regard, these phenomena should be permitted to occur whenever necessary in specific language situations.

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