

Influence of code switching on students' oral and written discourse in English in selected schools in Nyatike District, Migori County, Kenya

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Abstract: English, as a language for international communication, has a special place in the educational systems of most countries of the world. However, among non-English speakers or speakers of English as a second language (L₂), learners tend to code-switch back and forth between English and their first languages (L₁). This tendency has been viewed as a hindrance to students' mastery of the language. The KNEC examinations reports have decried poor performance in English. Reports from seminars conducted for teachers of English have also shown growing concern that students code switch whenever they write essays. This study sought to establish the cause and effects of code switching on students' performance in oral and written English with a view to suggesting possible solutions to the adverse effects of code switching on proficiency in English. The samples of the study were seven out of seventeen secondary schools in Nyatike District, Migori County, Kenya. A total student sample of 112 was used. The researcher used descriptive survey design. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Howard Giles' Speech Accommodation Theory and Gumperz's Conversational Functions Theory constituted the theoretical framework employed in the study. The findings showed that the students code-switched at the intra-sentential more than inter-sentential level. Majority of the students switched from L₂ to L₁. Code-switching was influenced by the context and the school environment. Code switching affected the students' oral performance more than written performance in terms of syntactic, phonetic, prosodic and lexical error levels. The strategies used to navigate CS were mainly out-of class learning activities, language policy and teaching methodology. The study recommended that these strategies should be reinforced. Further research was recommended to establish the impact of language policy on students' English language proficiency, and the impact of teachers' professional qualification and experience on students' communicative competence.

Keywords: Inter-sentential Code Switching, Intra-sentential Code Switching, Tag switching.

1. INTRODUCTION

Code switching is the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction (Myre-Scotton, 1993). Poplack (2000) as quoted by Kim (2006) states that code switching is the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent. In an educational context, code switching is defined as the practice of switching between a primary and a secondary language or discourse (Coffey, 2008). It is a common occurrence among the bilingual and multilingual communities in Africa, India, immigrants in Europe and America. Code Switching (CS) is far from homogeneous and the actual linguistic behavior involved varies depending on the sociolinguistic circumstances. As far as language learning is concerned, CS is a global problem. In multilingual communities, research has revealed that the use of two or more languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent is widespread phenomenon that extends from daily life and workplaces to classrooms in which specific languages have been instituted as the official languages of instruction (Then & Ting, 2009).

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In the 2009 KCSE examination the percentage mean for the English composition paper dropped by 8.08 points from 40.48 in the previous year to 32.40, the lowest mean in four years under review (KNEC Report, 2009). In the same year, Nyatike District recorded in English a mean grade of 4.774 down from 4.834 from the year 2008. The best school had a mean of 7.477 while the worst had 2.813 (DEO's Report on Nyatike District Education Day, 2010). The KNEC report on the KCSE examination results of 2009 indicates that some candidates have the habit of code-switching hence write essays with errors due to negative transfer of L₁ expressions into their imaginative compositions (KNEC Report, 2010). In so doing they write distorted and incomprehensible essays. In some sections of functional skills, tests on homophones and silent sounds pose serious challenges to the candidates. According to Theo et al. (1984), using audio lingual approach, intra-lingual and inter-lingual errors which L₂ users make would be attributed to interference from L₁. Clearly, non-English speakers are generally challenged since English is not their mother tongue. The study sought to establish whether CS leads to negative transfer of the syntactic and prosodic features of L₁ into L₂. Further, the study sought to establish whether report on the impact of CS on the students' performance on the KCSE examination would be traced back to their oral and written discourse in school long before they do the final KCSE.

Seminars for teachers of English conducted by The British Council, the various district panels of teachers of English, like MIRKTEP, and newspaper carried by the reporters Sam Otieno and Dorothy Otieno in the East African Standard published on 3rd March 2010 and by Sam Otieno on the 23rd September, 2010 captured the KNEC report on the concerns about drop in the performance in English, the worst being recorded in the year 2009 (KNEC Report 2009). The most significant concern was on pronunciation in which candidates give mother tongue versions of English words. These are indicators of CS in the written essays and the concern to help the students out of the problem cannot be overlooked. Similarly, reports by teachers on science congress competitions (Nyanza Provincial Science Congress Report, 2008), inter-school debates, games activities, and even concerns by the communities around the schools show the students have a tendency to code switch back and forth between L₁ and L₂.

Statement of the Problem

A good mastery of English determines students' understanding and performance in other school subjects. In some cases, a student who is not competent in English may perform poorly in other subjects. The four language skills -listening, speaking, reading and writing-will always be required for mastery and good performance in other subjects. However, students tend to overcome the challenges of English as a second language (L₂) in the classroom by code switching. During CS, proficiency in oral and written discourse is affected. This strategy goes on in learners of L₂ up to secondary level. In Kenya, where English is the language of instruction besides being examined as a subject, CS may be one of the factors which affect English learners' performance in their day-to-day use of English as well as in the national examination (KNEC Report, 2009). Researchers have documented that CS is a communicative strategy in the use of two or more languages for effective communication (Nthinga, 2003; Theo and Ting, 2009; and Gabusi, 2006). In fact, these researchers concur in their findings that teachers and students use CS quite often to make them be understood in the learning process. CS is therefore a communication strategy to negotiate meaning or repair misunderstanding. However, there are negative effects of CS on students' written and oral discourse not just in Nyatike district, but also in many other places across the globe. This called for further research. In Nyatike District, for instance, students code switch from English to Dholuo and back yet limited research has been conducted to establish what influences CS and its effect on students' proficiency in English. Besides, previous researches elsewhere have shown that CS is common in heterogeneous language setup. But Nyatike district lies in a homogeneous setup where Dholuo is predominantly spoken. Therefore, there was need to establish why students in this environment code switch.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- a) To establish the nature of code switching among secondary school students in Nyatike District.
- b) To establish the factors influencing code switching in spoken and written discourse among students in Nyatike District.
- c) To determine the influence of code switching on students' oral and written discourse in English language in Nyatike District.

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Vol. 6, Issue 6, pp: (31-55), Month: November - December 2019, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

d) Determine the strategies teachers and students employ to navigate code switching.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

- a) What is the nature of code switching among secondary school students in Nyatike District?
- b) What are the factors influencing code switching in spoken and written discourse among students in Nyatike District?
- c) What is the impact of code switching on the students' oral and written discourse in Nyatike District?
- d) Which strategies do teachers and students employ to navigate code switching?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The current study was guided by Giles' Speech Accommodation Theory (1973) but it was supported by Gumperz's Conversational Functions Theory (Ryan & Giles, 1982). According to Giles (1973) as cited by Fasold (1984) an individual's linguistic behavior may either converge with or diverge from the speech of whoever he is talking with. In a sense, convergence is an expression of feeling of unity between people engaged in a conversation. Divergence is an expression of separation, or a withdrawal away from the person someone is talking to, and into one's own in-group.

Accommodation takes the form of convergence when the speaker chooses a language or language variety that seems to suit the needs of the person being spoken to (Jasper, Veschuereen and Ostman, 2010). Under some conditions it may take the form of divergence in which the speaker fails to converge. He might make no effort at all to adjust his speech maximally unlike the other person's speech. This will happen when the speaker wants to emphasize their loyalty to their own group, and dissociate themselves from their interlocutor's group.

There are also instances of non-convergence when no possibility is perceived. In this case the dominant group maintains its prestige language or dialect in the normal fashion. The group expects the subordinate group members to make necessary linguistic adjustments (Walte, 2007). The speaker of the 'correct' variety or 'appropriate' language would not easily give up his natural linguistic practices for fear of offending the subordinate group members.

Convergence and divergence do not require the selection of one choice, but there is the possibility of making numerous combinations of choices among the variants within a language. One will also use strategies such as translating portions of one's discourse or slowing down one's rate of speech. Giles (1973), Bourhis (1982) reveal that the most convergent behavior would be to use the other person's language and make every effort to pronounce it the way its native speakers do. The less convergent would be to use the other language with relatively heavy accent. An English speaking Canadian would speak French with a heavy accent to a French speaking Canadian. The most divergent would be a speaker speaking his own language at a normal rate of speed, leaving the other person on their own to understand as best as she can. In this case language is used as a way of holding the out-group at a distance.

In Speech Accommodation Theory, speakers adjust their linguistic behavior in reaction to the person they are talking to by changing to a different language (or not), using words or larger units from another language (or not), and using strategies such as short passage translation, modifying the rate of speech, and maximizing or minimizing their accent (Jasper et al. 2010). As to when a speaker is likely to use non-convergent, convergent and divergent strategies depends on whether the speaker is a member of the dominant or subordinate socio-cultural group in the society. It also depends on whether or not the speaker thinks social change (improving the position of the social group) is possible.

Within the framework of Speech Accommodation Theory of convergence, maintenance, and divergence strategies, the motivation for code switching finds an explanation. Based on Giles's (1973) theory, the study sought to establish how students use either English or Dholuo codes interchangeably to suit the needs of their interlocutors. The study established that CS is prevalent outside class for purposes of convergence, a feeling of unity between people engaged in a conversation. Also, it established that CS was used as divergence between students of rural background and those of urban upbringing who use Kiswahili or Sheng. The study would sensitize teachers to encourage students to use English as the official language in the school environment.

Based on Giles's (1973) theory, it must be pointed out that CS for purpose of convergence may be used as a stylistic device. It shows strategic communicative competence which plays a positive role in English language learning. Dholuo words and phrases are interspersed in the English sentences to clarify the interlocutors' point of view or to emphasize an idea. The same has been seen in previous literary works (Ogola, 1994). Clearly, the purpose for which CS is employed may influence acquisition of the target language, English. This influence may be negative or positive depending on the level of language competence of the learners. While it will have benefitted those who are already competent in English, it may impact negatively on learners who are not yet proficient in English. This research sought to establish whether students' use of CS benefits or impacts negatively on the English language competence. Giles' theory helped to establish whether Convergence plays a positive role or not in language learning.

Since Gumperz's (1982) Conversational Functions Theory is more pedagogical based, it was used to support Giles' theory. Gumperz conducted his studies in three areas namely Austrian-Yugoslavian border of farmers and labourers, Indian College students from urban Delhi, and Chicano College students and urban professionals born in USA. Gumperz's (1982) theory identifies two codes: 'We Code' and 'They Code'. In the three areas where the research was conducted the speakers used Slovenian, Hindi and Spanish as the 'We Code'. That is, the three languages were mainly used in conversations involving kins and close friends or to express a personal opinion. English and German were used with outsiders or in a special type of discourse. In some cases the two languages were used to express generally known facts, warnings or casual remarks. In the study, the 'We Code' was L₁ of the students (Dholuo), and the 'They Code' was L₂ (English) which the students were expected to gain competence in. Any Kiswahili codes were ignored. The study found out that the purpose for which CS is employed influences the acquisition of the target language, in this case English. This was based on the question using Gumperz's (1982) theory: do conversations involving kins and friends, as CS occurs, motivate learners, or have a negative impact?

The Nature of Code Switching

The literature related to the topic of the study which is reviewed here shows that the nature of code switching manifests under three major types of code switching (inter-sentential, tag-switching and intra-sentential) and three sub-types (metaphorical, conversational and situational). These are discussed below.

According to Poplack (1980), the first type of code switching is inter-sentential switching. It takes place between sentences, that is, the switch occurs at a clause or sentence boundary where each clause or sentence is in a different language (Romaine, 1995). Furthermore, inter-sentential switching may take place between turns. This type of switching requires the least integration as code switching happens between sentences. According to Gluth (2008), inter-sentential code-switching may serve to emphasize a point made in the other language, signal a switch in the conversation participants, indicate to whom the statement is addressed, or to provide a direct quote from, or reference to, another conversation. An example of inter-sentential switching is from Poplack (1980): *Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish yterminó en espanol.* (Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish and finish it in Spanish.).

The second type of code switching is tag-switching, which requires only little integration of the two languages. According to Gluth (2008), the tags serve as an emblem of the bilingual character of an otherwise monolingual sentence. Poplack (1980) uses the term tag-switching. In contrast, Milroy and Muysken (1995) employ the term extra-sentential switching or emblematic switching to refer to tag-switching. Poplack (1980) also uses the term extra-sentential switching, however, when using this term she refers to both tag-switching and inter-sentential switching. This is her way of separating them from intra-sentential switching. The current study treated tag-switching as part of inter-sentential switches which serve the function of interjection or sentence filler. An example of tag switch is the use of English tags such as *you know, you mean*, like in the Spanish phrase: *se sininen talo, you know* (that blue house, you know).

The third type of code switching is intra-sentential code switching which requires a lot of integration and is usually associated with the most fluent bilinguals (Poplack, 1980). Intra-sentential switching occurs within a sentence. As this is so, it also involves the greatest syntactic risk as words or phrases from another language are inserted into the first language within one sentence or utterance. As two languages are mixed within a sentence, there are also two different grammars in play which means that the speaker has to know both grammars in order to produce a grammatically correct utterance. Poplack (1980) refers to this type of code switching as a more intimate type than inter-sentential switching since both the code switched segment and those around it must adapt to the underlying syntactic rules of the two

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Vol. 6, Issue 6, pp: (31-55), Month: November - December 2019, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

languages. This is to say that the speaker needs to know the two grammars to avoid ungrammatical utterances. An example of intra-sentential switching between English and Spanish given by the author is as follows: *Why make Carol SENTARSE ATRAS PA'QUE everybody has to move PA'QUE SE SALGA?* (Why make Carol sit in the back so everybody has to move for her to get out?). Apart from mixing within clause or sentence boundary, intra-sentential switching can include mixing within word boundaries (Romaine, 1995). For example, an English word may get a Finnish inflection as in *simplekin* where *-kin* is a Finnish inflection meaning 'also'.

Within the three major types of code switching, Hudson (1980) and Gumperz (1982), further identify three sub-categories of CS, namely: metaphorical, conversational and situational code switching. A metaphorical code involves the use of a variety normally used only in one kind of situation to be used in a different kind of situation because the topic is required for a change in language to occur. Auer (2002) is of the view that metaphorical switches have been characterized as typically brief and intra-sentential, initiating or, bringing about' new contexts. The speakers are able to manipulate the norms governing the use of varieties in just the same way as they can manipulate those governing the meaning of words by using them metaphorically. According to Wei (1994), metaphorical code-switching is regarded as symbolic of alternative interpersonal relationships, where, in bilingual communities, choices of language are often seen as a metaphor for relationship being enacted.

A conversational code switching is referred by many authors as code switching proper (Auer, 2002; Cantone, 2007; Nguyen, 2009). Cantone (2007) identifies three main functions of conversational CS: quotation, interjections and message qualification. The varieties concerned are most clearly different as they are when they are distinct languages. The syntactic categories used in classifying the linguistic items may be independent of their social descriptions. The switch takes place within a single sentence. For example, *Du musst mitgehn* (you must come along) *u Vlok* (to Villach). The switch is from Austrian-German to Slovenian. Muthwii (1981) as cited by Munuku (2005) assessed language use in plurilingual societies and the significance of code switching involving three languages: English, Kiswahili and Kalenjin. She used Gumperz's Conversational Functions Model. Her findings were that CS involved whole sentence. Her study provides an insight into the stylistic functions of CS and the communication intent of the speaker. The current study was also to consider the use of English and Dholuo codes. Furthermore, in conversational code switching the sharing of codes and principles of interpretation depends on whether speakers do not understand each other and can agree on what is being accomplished in particular settings (Gumperz, 1982).

A situational code switching is also referred to as diglossia by Gumperz (1976). Each point of switching corresponds to a change in the situation. Its aim is simply to produce instances of two varieties in some given propositions. For example, a speaker expresses one sentence in English and another in German when speaking to a German who understands English. *I don't like beer. Ich haette gern eine Cola. (I would prefer coke.)* The language in this case coincides with a change in the interlocutors, setting or topic. A practical problem of distinguishing different types of CS is that they tend to occur in the same context and same speakers. Gumperz further points out that at a linguistic level, a distinction between CS in which two varieties involved are held to preserve their monolingual characteristics.

A study on CS between English and Spanish reveals that each of the two languages preserved their monolingual characteristics, and instances which did not conform to this pattern were held to be loan words. Hudson (1980) explains borrowing as words used as though they are part of the language. But according to him, CS comes when a word unlikely to be borrowed is used alongside the borrowed word. Code switching encourages the language concerned to become more similar in their syntax so that items from each variety may be more easily substituted for one another within the same sentence. Otherwise there is bound to be syntactic constraints in subject predicate constructions, noun complements, verb of prepositional attitude and so on. The speaker must also have the ability to distinguish between meaningful and non-meaningful code constraints (Gumperz 1982).

Factors Influencing Code Switching Behavior

Studies have shown that students whose mother tongue was English but taught in French as a medium of instruction did not reach the mother tongue proficiency in the productive skills, but they did well in receptive skills (Muthwii, 1981). The research by Theo et al. (1984) on the learning and teaching of foreign languages records that the transfer of L₁ into L₂ or a foreign language impedes L₂ learning. This can also be attributed to the effect of CS on English learning and proficiency. The amount and frequency of the L₂ a learner is exposed to may help reduce negative transfer of L₁ and CS.

Wilkin (1974), on the other hand, maintains that the frequency of the learner's contact with L₂ is more significant than the amount of the language.

Ochola (2006) addresses what happens to grammatical structure of languages when speakers are bilingual and their speech brings two or more languages into contact. Her study hypothesizes about the grammatical structure of CS that is explicit or inherent in the Matrix Language Frame Model of Myers-Scotton (1997). The data considered in her study came from urbanized elite Dholuo L₁ speakers. The data to be considered in this study came from rural secondary school going students whose L₁ is Dholuo. Like in Ochola's study, the data in the current study was analysed with focus on singly occurring Dholuo words in English code. Ochola's study in which Dholuo is the main language had the following gaps: first, what is the social motivation for switches in Dholuo-English CS? Are there contexts in which English is subordinated to Dholuo, and if so, what might account for that? The current study treated English as the main language and would attempt to answer these two questions.

Literature suggests that other causes of CS also include modernization, westernization and social advancement. This is due to migration to other countries, regions, or urban centres; advancement in education, and expanding social network. Social status and self-prestige also cause CS (Gumpez & Hymes, 1972). Learners with limited social network and of low social status may be limited in using a variety of codes, while learners of middle or high status have a denser social network to use a variety of languages. The learners from low social status may imitate their teachers who code switch without them paying attention to syntactic and phonological constraints.

Grosjean (1982) as cited by Kim (2006) suggests some reasons for CS. Firstly, CS occurs because the bilinguals cannot find proper words or expression. Another reason is that there is no appropriate translation for the language being used by the speaker. Bilinguals view CS as a sign of "laziness", an inadvertent speech act, an "impurity" and an instance of linguistic decadence and a potential danger to their linguistic performance.

Romaine (1995) investigated code switching and its role in bilingual communicative competence in Punjabi speaking community in Britain. She also studied bilingual children in Papua New Guinea. All these works were to give an insight into code switching among bilingual students in the rural district of Nyatike. Poplack (1980) found in her study of the bilingual Puerto Rican community in New York City that the least bilingual proficiency was required in tag-switching since tags can be produced in L₂ with only minimal knowledge of the grammar of L₂. Next on the scale when moving up was inter-sentential switching, the production of which requires more knowledge of L₂.

Intra-sentential switching requires a high level of bilingual proficiency as the speaker needs to know enough of the grammar of both languages to produce grammatically correct utterances. In her data Poplack (1980) found that there was an equal use of intra-sentential and extra-sentential switching. Romaine (1995) furthermore points out that all these three types of code switching may be found within one discourse. In sum, the current study was to establish how students use intra-sentential and inter-sentential code switching and its influence on their oral and written performance in English.

Kim (2006) presents in a paper the reasons and motivation for CS where he asserts that CS and CM are signs of incompetence. The current research instead focused on the influence of CS on students' competence in English. The reasons given by Kim such as participant roles and relationship, situational factors, message intrinsic factors, and language attitude, dominance and security helped explain the reasons for code switching back and forth between English and Dholuo.

Swarbick (1994) identifies four components of communicative competence: Grammatical Competence which involves linguistic competence narrowly defined as pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary; Discourse Competence. This is the knowledge of rules governing structures of longer texts and conversations; Sociolinguistic Competence. This is the control of speech and writing style appropriate to different situations and the knowledge of rules of politeness; Strategic Competence which is the knowledge of coping with strategies which can keep communication going when language knowledge is still imperfect, for instance how to negotiate meaning or repair misunderstanding.

Coffey (2008) observes that the research conducted among the African American students reveals that these students perform significantly lower than their white peers. This is not because of the content of the tests, but because they experience great difficulties understanding the language of the tests. The African American children often speak vernacular English and do not realize the difference between Standard English and Vernacular English.

Johansson (2004) also conducted a research on CS and CM in a Swedish high school. From the findings she concluded that tags are mixed with other codes, entire phrases are switched. This is to compensate for deficiencies in one language. A more objective research was recommended to give a clear picture on how, when and why students code switch. However, a research conducted by Bitutu (1991) observes that speakers who code switch are competent in the syntactic rules of the two languages involved. Indeed, some research findings show that CS is a creative use of two varieties of language or two or three distinct languages. It requires that the speaker is competent in the different codes being switched.

According to Gumperz and Hymes (1972) there are rules of language use without which the rules of grammar would be useless. Wilkin (1974) records that the greater the use of L_1 , the less will be the learners' practical command of the foreign language [or L_2]. Actually, the learners are expected to model their own language performance on significant instances of target language behaviour. Such phonetic overlap and phonological influence of English on Dholuo and vice versa were also a point of concern in the current research.

Strategies of Navigating Code Switching

The national language policy in educational institutions emphasizes the use of mother tongue in the first three years of primary education in homogeneous language settings (Kimemia, 2002). English and Kiswahili are taught as subjects. In most primary and secondary schools in Kenya, pupils speak Kiswahili and English as languages of the school while at home they speak mother tongue and Kiswahili. English appears to be the language of the school environment. From the fourth year of primary education through secondary education up to tertiary institutions English becomes a medium of instruction and a subject. However, in heterogeneous settings, English is used as a medium of instruction but can sometimes be interchanged with Kiswahili right from pre-primary level. In all institutions of learning English is a compulsory medium of instruction, interaction and communication. Despite this fact, a casual observation reveals that students and even teachers use mother tongue in a number of rural schools. It is evident that the school language policy is flouted and instead speakers of the three languages English, Kiswahili, and mother tongue keep switching from one language to another. Kimemia (2002) asserts that in spite of having a national language policy in education which specifies the language that should be used as a medium of instruction and communication, "there is what may be called functional school language policies...unwritten policies of the school language which emerge either from consensus by negotiation or intuitively by practice in the individual school system or tradition."

In the classroom, teachers switch codes due to language policy which allows the use of two or more languages in school. This is based on the researches conducted in Kenya (Kimemia 2001; Kimemia 2002), Malaysia (Then & Ting, 2009) and in Hong Kong, China (Lu, 2002). The current study was to point out some of the causes of CS among students as they use English in naturally occurring environment, and establish whether Kimemia's claim applied to language use in Nyatike District.

According to Kimemia (2002), the use of English as a language of social interaction in schools need not be overemphasized since competence in the language is a requirement for understanding other school subjects, and for international communication and social prestige. English is perceived as a language of power and prestige as compared to mother tongue. When a child speaks fluent English, the parents will be proud of her. The child is socially seen as a well-educated individual. Internationally, acquisition of English opens the doors to wider communication and economic opportunity to its users. As Whiteley (1974) noted 'the incentive of sending children to school is to acquire English'. This motivation is frustrated when children speak mother tongue at secondary school level. English enjoys more prestige than Dholuo though not all speakers are competent in it.

Learners of L_2 face a number of challenges which leads to their making error in using L_2 . Studies in the past on CS reveal that learners have strategies to cope with the challenges and the role of the teacher in such a learning environment (Kimemia, 2002). Lado (1974) maintains that many linguistic distortions heard among bilinguals correspond to the describable differences in the languages involved. The teacher must therefore make comparison of L_2 with the native language of the learners to know better what learning problems are and can provide for teaching them. CS can be motivated or unintentional. The switches may lead to errors which reveal a shortcoming in the teaching strategy. The errors as a result of CS are evidence of the state of the learner's language, a useful indicator of which the teacher should adopt (Theo, 1984). With the right methodologies, learners of L_2 may be able to overcome the challenges.

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Then and Ting (2009) conducted a research on teacher code switching in secondary English and science in Malaysia. Their findings went beyond confirming Gumperz's discourse functions of CS to identifying the co-occurrence of reiteration and message qualifications as useful strategies to enhance teacher explanations of referential content for the students' benefit. They further found that in circumstances where students' proficiency in the instructional language is lacking, CS is a necessary tool for the teacher to make their message more comprehensible for the students. However, the study did not establish the negative effects of CS on the students' language proficiency.

Another research on teacher code switching was conducted by Gabusi (2006) in an Italian high school. The findings revealed that when linguistic uncertainties threaten the regular flux of the speech, appealing to the native linguistic codes appears to be the most widespread and instinctive way to proceed in order to try to express what the speaker wants. It was however important to establish whether the teacher's code switching interferes with the student's use of English in a natural environment.

Nthinga (2003) looked at the functions of code switching in pre-primary classroom discourse. Her work was concerned with how CS aids the teaching process. It focused on pre-primary classroom discourse in Kasarani division, Nairobi. She found from the research that CS was a normal practice out of necessity so that a teacher would be understood, and that Kenya is a multilingual society and CS is an upshot of the same. The study also revealed that English and other languages can co-exist. According to Muthwii (1981), CS does not in any way suggest that a speaker who code switches is incompetent in one language or the other. Rather, it is a strategic competence; an imaginative way of using alternative codes to communicate an intention.

An alternative view is to recognize the cultural, social, and communicative validity of the mixing of two traditionally isolated linguistic codes as a third legitimate code. Once it is legitimized, CS becomes a stylistic strategy to convey messages and meaning. The purpose of his paper was to indicate the positive factors of CS for language education. As a learning strategy, CS makes the languages concerned to become more similar in syntax and phonology so that items from each variety may be more easily substituted for one another within the same sentence. The speakers should be able to distinguish between meaningful and non-meaningful code constraints (Gumperz 1982).

Byram (1989) points out that knowledge of human beings can only be linguistically communicated. This must be in the correct vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Studies have shown that learners can learn more than one language at the same time if teachers use correct methodology. Some teachers have the ability to bridge the gap between L₁ and L₂ without traumatising the learners. Still, the problem of CS in language learning is far from solved. How CS leads to linguistic interference in the mastery of grammar and phonetics of the target language still called for further research.

Bennet (1984) postulates that the aim of teaching L₂ is to provide the best grammar as an account of the knowledge which characterize the native speaker. Once this aim is realized in class, out of class activities should provide opportunities which allow the learners to practice the language. This reflects the saying that all languages are easier learnt by practice than from rules (Stern, 1983). Teachers should therefore provide for the right language environment and what syntactic, morphological and lexical structures the learners should imitate. The present research was to establish whether learners employ the strategy of imitation in the language learning process and whether this impacts negatively or positively on their language acquisition.

Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual model was used to explain the relationship between the study variables. As shown in figure 1, the student's performance in English language, as indicated by the use of syntax, phonology, prosody and lexicon in oral discourse and, syntax and lexicon in written discourse is influenced by L₁ background, social network, topic, language competence, and context (such as classroom, outside the classroom or even in the neighborhood). However the performance of the students in English language, moderated by strategies the students and teachers use to navigate CS such as learning activities, language policies and methodology varies by the nature of CS namely: inter-sentential, tag switching, intra-sentential, metaphorical, situational and conversational code-switching.

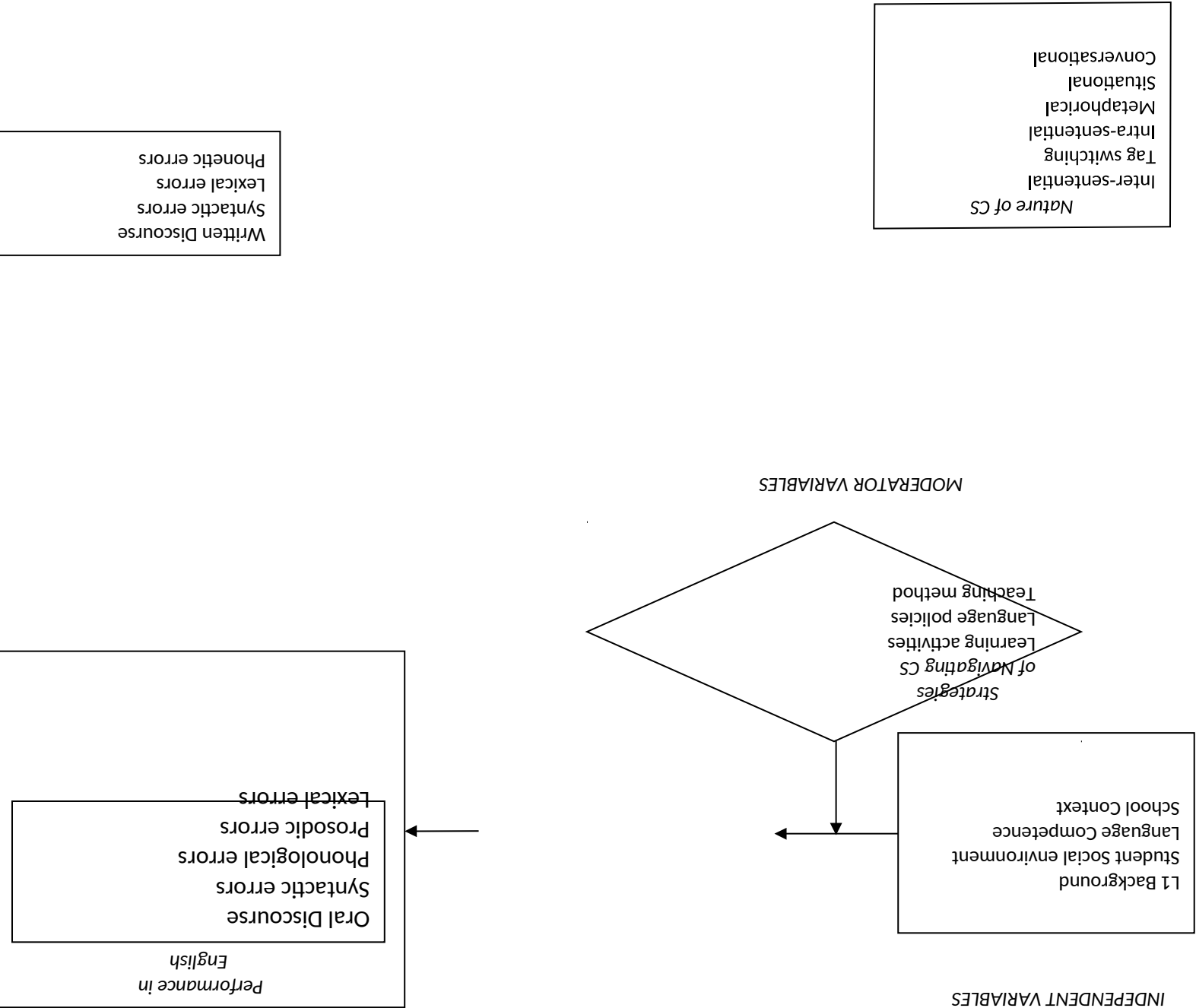


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY*****Research Design***

This study employed a descriptive research design. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), descriptive designs are used to collect information by interpreting or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. Descriptive research design involves measuring a set of variables as they exist naturally (Gravetter & Forzano, 2011). It attempts to answer immediate questions about a current state of affairs (Matthews & Kostelis, 2011). It is designed to provide in-depth information about the characteristics of subjects within a particular field of study (Houser, 2011). Descriptive design can be used to collect information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The aim of descriptive design in this study was to collect information on when, how and why students code switch. The key variables in the study were: English language performance as the independent variable whereas the factors, types and strategies of navigating CS were independent and intervening variables, respectively.

Location of the Study

The study was carried out in public schools in Nyatike District, Migori County, Kenya. The district borders Tanzania in the south and south west stretching into lake Victoria in the west to border Uganda at Migingo Island, Gwasssi and Ndhiwa districts in the north, and Migori and Uriri districts in the east. There are very few pockets of emigrants from Gusiiland, Luhyaland, Tanzania, Kikuyuland most of whom speak Dholuo. There is a sense of homogeneity among the inhabitants and the dominant language is Dholuo except in the urban and peri-urban centres such as Macalder, Muhuru, Migingo, Matoso and Sori where some of the emigrant business people live. At the beaches Dholuo, Kiswahili and a bit of English are spoken. The homogeneity away from the beaches which characterizes the district determines the dominant local language spoken in schools.

Target Population

The research targeted students in rural schools who have a good command of L₁ but must use the official school language while in school. For this reason the study involved Form three students in the 27 public day secondary schools in Nyatike district. Out of this number 23 schools are in the district category while 4 are in the provincial category. The researcher involved mixed schools in the study to establish the frequency of CS between girls and boys. The researcher involved one school in the provincial category (currently referred to as county schools) and six schools in the district category (currently referred to as Sub County Schools) to establish the extent of CS in the two categories of schools. The study also targeted day schools and boarding schools since day scholars have two environments to use languages, while boarders have only the school environment during school days. The forms one and two students were not involved in the study. The Form fours were also left out because at their level the focus was on remedial lessons. Statistics obtained from the D. E. O., Nyatike District (2011) showed that the total population of form three students in the district was estimated 1120 students. This formed the target population of the study.

Sampling Technique

The technique used in this study was systematic sampling technique. According to Denscombe (2010), systematic sampling operates on the same principles of random sampling whereby every population member has an equal chance of being selected, but introduces a system whereby samples are chosen based on every 'nth' case. According to Taylor

(2005), this sampling technique arranges individuals in the population in some logical order from which a list of random numbers may be used to select the samples needed. Rao and Richard (2006) argue that this method is simpler and much more convenient than random or stratified sampling since the need for preparing a frame for selection is avoided. Because of the limitations of sampling students within a classroom setting, the sampling technique was implemented post-hoc. The sample interval (*k*) was determined as follows:

$$n = \frac{\text{population size}}{\text{sample size}}$$

$$= \frac{1120}{112} = 10$$

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The study used three samples: the student sample, the school sample and the teacher sample. The researcher sampled students out of 1,120 Form three students for the study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommend that 10% of the population is an adequate sample. Therefore 112 students, equivalent to 10% of the student population were used for the study. Based on the sample size of the students and the average class size expected in Kenyan schools, the researcher used stratified random sample to select 7 schools for the study. The researcher involved four schools of mixed day category and three schools of mixed boarding and day category through simple random sampling technique. In each school only one teacher of English was chosen as an informant since the report at the DEO’s office indicates each school has only one teacher of English. In total 7 teachers were the subjects. The sampling grid below summarizes the sample size.

Table 1: Sampling Grid

| | Total Population | Sample size | Percentage size |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Mixed day | 10 | 4 | 4/17×100=24% |
| Mixed boarding and day | 7 | 3 | 3/17×100=18% |
| Students | 1120 | 112 | 112/1120=10% |

Data Collection Instruments

A combination of observation schedule and listening, focus group discussions, questionnaire and written test was used. Kothari (2009) explains that under the observation method, information is sought by way of investigator’s own direct observation without asking from the respondent. The main advantage cited by the author is that subjective bias is eliminated if it is done accurately, and the information obtained relates to what is currently happening; thus it is not complicated by either the past behavior or future intentions. This tool was used to collect data on CS during class discussions and debates on two prescribed literature set books: *The River Between* and *An Enemy of the People*. These are fairly controlled situations which lend opportunities for easy data analysis. There were two topics for discussion:

- a) *The River Between*: The coming of the white man to the ridges of Makuyu and Kameno was a blessing.
- b) *An Enemy of the People*: Dr Stockmann is responsible for the suffering he goes through.

The students chose for discussion one set book they were familiar with. They discussed the topics in small groups before debate. The researcher listened as the discussion went on and wrote down English expressions or sentences containing Dholuo codes and vice versa. The researcher made notes on switched codes during the group discussion and debate. In each school only one class was observed which gave a total of 7 classes involved in the study. Later, the codes were analyzed according to type, function and level of CS. The extent to which students code switch and the influence CS has on their communication were established. Observation helped establish the strategies students employ for navigating CS.

As a follow up to the plenary session and class discussions, there was a focused group discussion. According to Silverman (2004), discussion from a focused group on a subject is typically recorded and the data transcribed and then analyzed using thematic analysis. The respondents were divided into small groups of 8 to discuss their views on CS in the school. The data collected were compared with the responses from the teachers.

Questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers of English on whether their students code switch, and if so, when, how and why. It also sought to solicit their views on how to overcome negative effects of CS. The questionnaire method is favored because it presents respondents with a relatively easy task of picking one or more answers which are spelt, thus, the data collected are very unlikely to be contaminated through variations in the wording as variables are clearly spelt out (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). On the first day of visit to the school, the researcher issued the copies of the questionnaires. On the day of the interview, the researcher collected the duly filled questionnaires from the teachers. All the informants except one were co-operative and handed in the filled in questionnaires as scheduled. The finding established the cause and effects of CS on English language performance. It also established which strategies students and teachers employ for navigating CS, and how students are mediated through CS.

Written test was also given to the students. Mertler (2005) argues that tests, whether they be standardized or teacher developed, can be used quite efficiently for action research purposes. In this study, the written test sought to establish Dholuo codes in the essays and the influence Dholuo expressions have on the written discourse. With the help of the teachers, the researcher gave each class under investigation a composition exercise. The students were expected to write a story beginning with the given statement. They ought to have brought out how the changing weather conditions affected characters in the story or the life of the narrator. The skills tested included use of connectors, interjections, vocabulary, agreements among others.

Data Analysis

The data collected on CS behavior, causes and influence of CS were analyzed using quantitative methods such as tables with explanations, percentages, pie charts and bar graphs, and qualitative methods such as descriptive statistics, quoted voices in a narrative précis. The two types of analysis complement each other to help give more comprehensive conclusions. The data collected during group discussions and debate were classified on CS behavior, types, function, cause, frequency of occurrence, and effect on communication. The codes were assigned values and analyzed using descriptions, numbers, frequencies and percentages. The data from the focused group discussion guide and questionnaires were assigned codes, analyzed in terms of frequency and percentage differences of CS in different schools based on gender, school status and context of language use. The influence of CS was established by looking at the frequencies of lexical, phonetic, phonological, syntactic and prosodic errors. The test data was handled as follows: Once the errors due to CS (interference from L_1 –Theo, 1984) in the students' essays were identified, the frequency of occurrence was recorded. Finally, the errors were evaluated to assess the influence of each.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Languages Spoken in School

Respondents were asked to identify the languages that the students spoke while in school. Figure 2 shows that the language mostly used by students during school was English language (37%) followed closely by Dholuo (32%). The figure shows that students also communicated in Kiswahili (26%) whereas some 5% of the respondents observed the use of Sheng among the students. Therefore, English and Dholuo were the two most dominant languages spoken by the students while in school. This goes contrary to the school language policy which allows English and Kiswahili as the language of communication. Consistent with Kimemia's (2001) study, this environment potentially makes it conducive for students to code-switch between English and Dholuo.

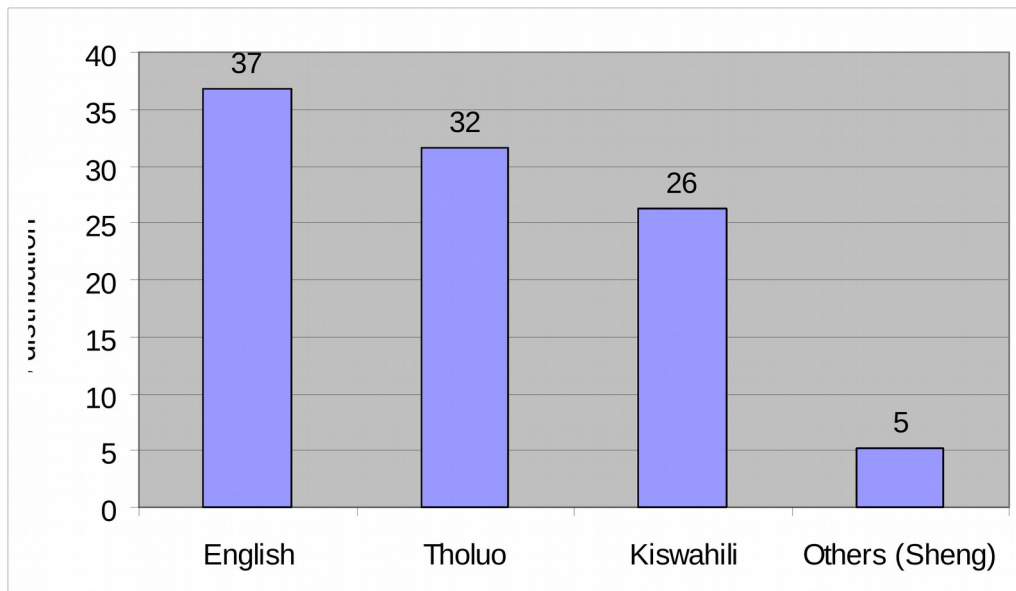


Figure 2: Languages Spoken by the Students while in School

Code Switching among Students

The study sought the English language teachers’ views as to whether their students use two languages at the same time in their utterances or when writing. Figure 3 shows that majority of the respondents (98% of the students and 83% of the teachers) said that code-switching was prevalent in the schools. However, some 17% of the teachers and 2% of the student respondents said no. This suggests an acknowledgment within the school community that code-switching was a common occurrence. This agrees with a previous research in multilingual communities by Ting and Then (2009) which has revealed that the use of two or more languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent is widespread phenomenon that extends from daily life and workplaces to classrooms in which specific languages have been instituted as the official languages of instruction.

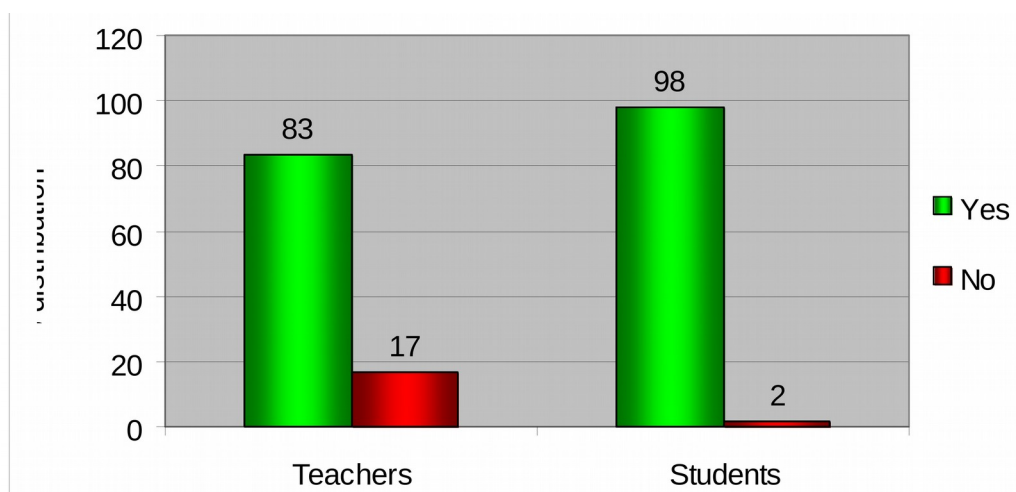


Figure 3: Whether Students Code-switch in School

The Nature of Code Switching among Secondary School Students

The study sought to establish the nature of code-switching by identifying the usage of the two major types of code switching and three sub-types among the students. In terms of the major types, figure 4 shows that 79% of the code-switching cases were intra-sentential and 21% were inter-sentential. This supports the claim by Romaine (1995) that both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code switching represents the two major types of CS. The students confirmed that

most of the switched codes among boys were at inter-sentential level while most Dholuo codes among the girls were at intra-sentential level.

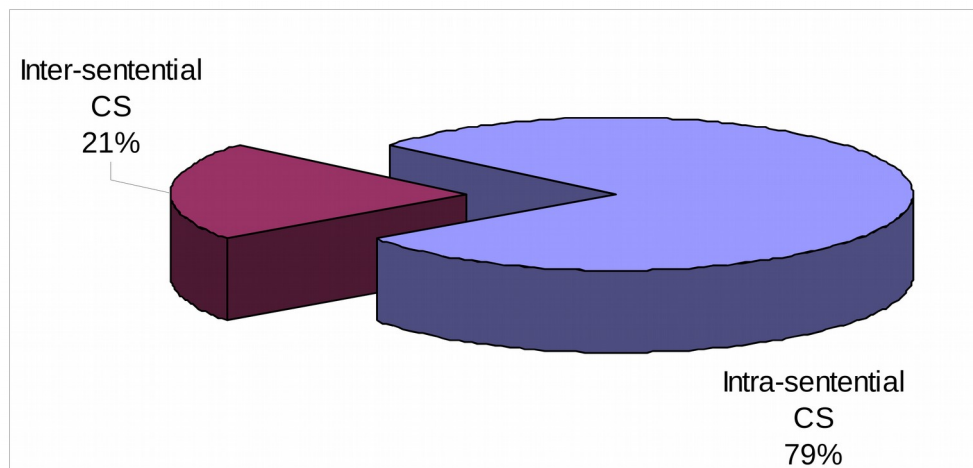


Figure 4: Distribution of Code-Switching Cases

The study further sought to determine from the debates and written assignment the usage and prevalence of tag-switching and three other sub-types of code switching such as conversational code switching, metaphorical code switching and situational code switching. The five categories of CS are part of the findings of the study. These findings are represented in the narrative précis shown in Situations 1 to 11 as follows.

Situation 1: Student of School five. The class is discussing the play *An Enemy of the People*. Students are arguing over the given topic of discussion.

- A Who will start off the discussion?
- B Let me start by saying Dr Stockmann is not to blame for his suffering.
- C Ah! That’s obvious. We want points. *Omera (brother)*, give us points!
- B *Yawa!(Hey)* Let me explain what I mean.
- A *Kamano (that is it)*. Let her continue.

In the first switch the Dholuo codes (*Ah!*, *Omera*) is used to call attention while the second one (*Yawa!*) is an interjection of disapproval of the interruption. The third code switch (*Kamano*) is meant to emphasize what speaker B says. This illustration indicates the use of both inter-sentential (Speaker A) and intra-sentential (Speaker C and B) code switching. In this example, inter-sentential CS has taken place between turns as has been argued by Poplack (1980). It has also signaled a switch in the conversation participants and indicated to whom the statement is addressed as opined by Gluth (2008). Tag switching (Speaker C and B), where Dholuo codes are used as words or phrases of sentence fillers, interjection and affixes was also evident as explained by Milroy and Muysken (1995) who termed them as extra-sentential CS. However, situational, metaphorical or conversational code-switching was not observed in this Situation.

Situation 2: The students of school three are discussing the novel *The River Between*.

The group wants to start a discussion but one member does not have a copy of the novel.

- B Allow me pick my copy from a form four girl. She took it yesterday.
- A Hurry up! *Reti* (Hurry up!)

In the above situation, the speaker A switches from English to Dholuo to reiterate his statement. In the following dialogue student B also uses CS for reiteration. “*Reti*” means hurry up. This indicates the usage of inter-sentential CS. In the next sample the two students continue with their discussion.

- A The whiteman brought roads and railway lines.

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B Let me write that point down. *Iwachoni?* (Pardon please).

This is also another instance of reiteration where the speaker switches from English code to Dholuo code at inter-sentential level. The findings agree with Gluth (2008) who contended that inter-sentential code-switching may serve to emphasize a point made in the other language. In this study finding, the speaker brings out his intention to put down a point but begs for pardon by asking in Dholuo.

Situation 3: the students in school four are discussing the novel *The River Between*. The group members are arguing over a point.

A Really? Really?

B *Tiende ni point no ok oyie godo.* (Meaning he is opposed to that point)

C Let me explain myself. *Siriana ok en mana kar lemo to en kar somo bende.* (Siriana is not only a place of worship but it is also a place for learning).

Speaker B clarifies the doubt in speaker A about the point speaker C has raised. This is an example of intra-sentential CS mixed within clause and sentence boundaries as expounded by Romaine (1995) and it reflects conversational code switching as discussed by Cantone (2007), in this case, serving the purpose of message qualification. It shows bilingual competence in the two languages on the part of speaker B. In his turn, speaker C switches code from English to Dholuo to clarify his point. This is inter-sentential CS intended to erase any doubt in the listeners. The use of inter-sentential CS by speaker C implies that he perhaps lacked the proper expression to help clarify his point in English. It may also imply that speaker A has a deficiency in understanding English, thus, it was necessary for speaker C to clarify his point in L₁. This agrees with Theo et al. (1984) who pointed out that CS is a window to linguistic weakness inherent in the code switchers and leads to negative transfer of L₁ into L₂. It supports the claim that students switch codes due to lack of appropriate words in the L₂ discourse. The debate proceeds as follows.

A There is land alienation.

B *Jogi ywak.* Give me a shield and a spear.

In this case the Dholuo code is meant to introduce the idea of the brewing protest among the natives. This type of CS is both inter-sentential and metaphorical. The finding agrees with the observation by Auer (2002) that metaphorical switches have been characterized as typically brief although it contradicts the author because it is not intra-sentential. This may be because the expression, although short, is a complete sentence in itself. As explained by Wei (1994) the statement, *Jogi ywak* may be regarded as symbolic of alternative interpersonal relationships, where, in bilingual communities, choices of language are often seen as a metaphor for relationship being enacted.

Situation 4: School five. Students are discussing the play *An Enemy of the People*. A member of the group wants to clarify the task set for them. He starts in English but midway switches to Dholuo then continues in English.

A How do we answer the question?

B The motion *wachoni* (says): Is Doctor Stockmann to blame for the problems he goes through?

C I suggest we identify the sufferings he goes through.

This is intra-sentential code switching which is conversational. It is possible the student knows the meaning of the Dholuo word in English but prefers to use the local language as quick fix to put his point through. It demonstrates bilingual competence on the part of the speaker because of the speaker's adherence to the syntactic rules. This is consistent with the argument by Poplack (1980) suggesting that intra-sentential switching requires a high level of bilingual proficiency as the speaker needs to know enough of the grammar of both languages to produce grammatically correct utterances.

Situation 5: In the same school four. A student requests to use Dholuo to clarify a point to the rest who don't understand the topic of discussion.

A I don't think I've understood the topic.

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B Let me explain to you. *We awachni gi* language *ma i* understand best. (Let me explain in a language you understand best)

A It is not about the language. It is about the topic of discussion.

The speaker B switches from English to Dholuo to emphasize as well as clarify his request to use Dholuo. This is also intra-sentential CS and is used as a conversational code switching, implying bilingual competence on the part of speaker B, again supporting the argument by Poplack (1980). The finding supports Giles' (1973) Speech Accommodation Theory, which as Jasper et al. (2010) argued, takes the form of convergence when the speaker chooses a language or language variety that seems to suit the needs of the person being spoken to.

Situation 6: In school six. Students are debating on the effect of circumcision as portrayed in the novel *The River Between*.

A Are the reasons for discouraging circumcision really convincing? *Donge* (Is it not true) Muthoni's death was an isolated case?

B *Ne* (excuse me), I want to contradict that point. Muthoni's death is a warning to all who practice female circumcision.

The first speaker shifts the question by using Dholuo code. The second speaker calls attention of the chairperson of the discussion to be allowed to oppose the aforementioned point. Both speakers code-switch in the conversation at the intra-sentential level, demonstrating bilingual competence.

Situation 7: In school six. The students are discussing the benefits of the white man's education as portrayed in *The River Between*. At some point one member discovers one of them is not concentrating.

A One good blessing *en* (is) education.

B Correct. The children of both ridges go to Siriana.

C And because of that the old conflict *onge e sikul* (is not in school). What are you doing?

A *Atemo* draft *mana gimoro matin*. (I am trying to draft something small.)

C Concentrate on what we are doing, ok?

In the above dialogue, speaker A switches from English to Dholuo by using the word "is" in Dholuo to keep the conversation flowing. This shows that it is natural to switch codes for purposes of maintaining the "We Code" (a conversational CS) explained in Gumperz's (1982) Conversational Functions Theory. As a confirmation of the point mentioned by speaker B, the other speaker C switches from English code to Dholuo code. Speaker A is apologetic for having deviated to do his own things. She wants to sound informal for purposes of familiarity. She uses Dholuo code but expresses the verb form in English. The debate shows usage of conversational and situational CS at intra-sentential level which, as explained by Gumperz (1976) corresponds to a change in the situation. This is implied in Speaker A's response by saying, "I am trying to draft something small".

Situation 8: In school seven. During the discussion, one member notices another member is dull and lacks in concentration.

A Why do you look so dull?

B I had a bad night.

C Did you went (sic.) to *nyatie dero* (a night dance)?

B *Ee!* Do you think I can go to a night dance?

Speaker C switches from English to Dholuo perhaps because he doesn't know how to refer to a night dance. This is an example of borrowing where words are used as though they are part of the language, thus supporting the argument of Hudson (1980). It is intra-sentential CS used both in the situational and metaphoric sense: situational because the discussion detours from the main debate to discuss the lack of concentration by one of the participants. It is also metaphoric in the sense that it is brief and intra-sentential, initiating new context as argued by Auer (2002). The syntactic

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error (did you went...) therefore might be associated with CS by the speaker because the characters that form the tense structure for the verb “went” (*dhi*) do not change in Dholuo unlike English whose present tense is “go”. In Dholuo, what changes is the phonetics of the same set of characters. Speaker B interjects in Dholuo to disapprove of speaker C’s claim. This is tag-switching, used as an interjection.

Situation 9: The students from school three are discussing *The River Between*. In the process of the discussion the group members switch to issues outside the topic.

A Ngugi says if you stop circumcision you leave the society confused.

B That is a curse. *Ne, Otieno miya bugano.*(Otieno, give me that book of mine) I want to make some reference. Circumcision is like a bond that held the people together.

C Indeed circumcision bound the people to their gods.

A We will show you dust.

B The coming of the white man is a curse. *Ne, onge gima joka dhiwacho ma ok wakuedo, sawa?*(Hey, we shall oppose all the points they raise)

C We oppose all their points, agreed?

In the first example, Speaker B makes a request on what is not related to the topic of the discussion. This is like an aside statement for addressee specification. The code switching is inter-sentential and situational. In the second example, the statement by Speaker B is meant to emphasize the stand taken by the group. It is also like an aside since it is not related to the topic under discussion. Therefore, the findings manifests a kind of situational CS as put forward by Gumperz (1976) as each point of switching corresponds to a change in the situation.

Situation 10: In school seven. Students are discussing the value of education as portrayed in *The River Between*. One member feels the points are exhausted but the others oppose him.

A Are all the points already mentioned?

B Wait. *Omera*, points *pod ng’eny* (You guys, there are still many points). Who has a new paper? *Adwaro ndiko* fair copy (I want to write a fair copy).

C Chege knew the value of education. That is why he tells his son to learn the white man’s ways.

B *Ero* (Exactly)! But not follow his vices. *Point no liet* (That point is very relevant). Explain further.

Speaker B switches back and forth between English and Dholuo. This is intra-sentential CS, implying bilingual competence of the speaker. In the first instance he calls the attention of the group members and further clarifies why he wants a new paper. Later, he exclaims to express excitement at the new point mentioned and further clarifies how strong the point is relevant to the discussion. This is consistent with Giles’s (1973) theory as the speaker (B) demonstrates strategic communicative competence which plays a positive role in English language learning. Dholuo words and phrases are interspersed in the English sentences to clarify the interlocutors’ point of view or to emphasize an idea. The same has been seen in previous literary works (Ogola, 1994). The latter expression (*Ero*) is tag-switching, serving as an interjection.

The prevalence of code switching in the students’ oral and written work is shown in figure 5 below. The figure shows that during oral debate, 64% of the students code-switched. This agrees with reports by teachers on science congress competitions (Nyanza Provincial Science Congress Report, 2008) in which inter-school debates, games activities, and even concerns by the communities around the schools show the students have a tendency to code switch back and forth between L₁ and L₂. In comparison, only 5% of the students code-switched in their written work. However, it was evident that there were many expressions translated directly from Dholuo into English. In the essays from one school the Dholuo words used were for stylistic effect. Only in a few cases did the students use the Dholuo words due to lack of appropriate vocabulary.

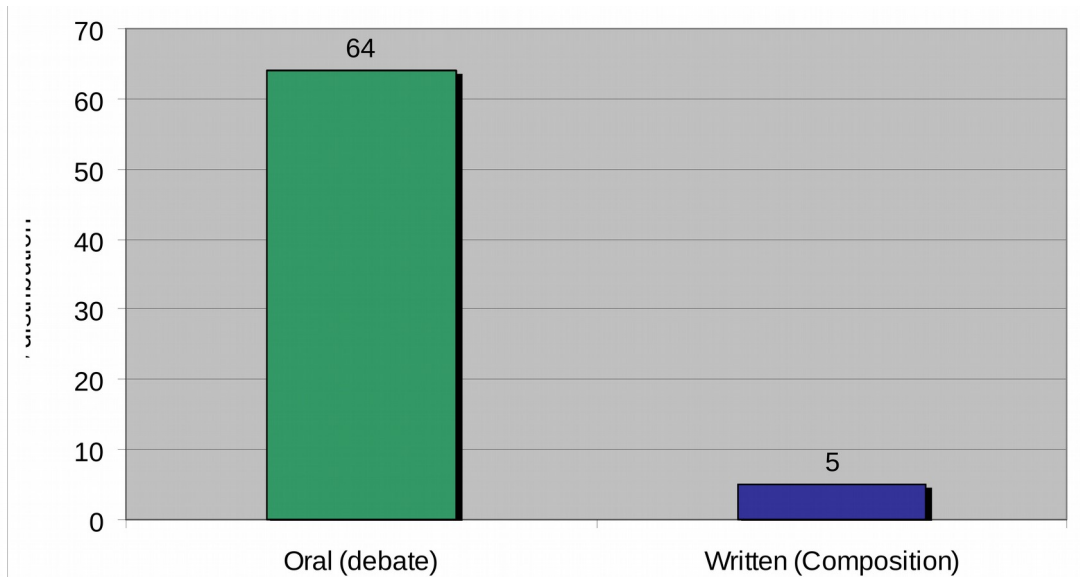


Figure 5: Prevalence of CS on the Students English Work

Factors Influencing CS in Spoken and Written Discourse among Students

The study sought to establish whether language competence was a factor influencing CS. As a measure of language competence, the study sought to establish pattern of CS, that is whether CS among the students began from English to Dholuo or the reverse, Figure 6 shows the findings from each school. The figure shows that students in 5 out of the 7 schools in the study code-switched from English to Dholuo more than they did from Dholuo to English. In comparison, the students in 2 out of the seven schools switched language from Dholuo to English more than they did English to Dholuo. The figure suggests that CS was prevalent in School 1, School 5 and School 6. Therefore, it is evident that the highest frequency of CS is the use of English to Dholuo. This may be attributed to limited L₂ vocabulary. The students get stuck midway in their conversation; hence, they revert to Dholuo. This agrees with the argument by Theo et al. (1984) who pointed out that CS is a window to linguistic weakness inherent in the code switchers as students switch codes due to lack of appropriate words in the L₂ discourse. In this study, School 5 had the highest percentage of gliding from English to Dholuo while School 1 had the highest glide from Dholuo to English.

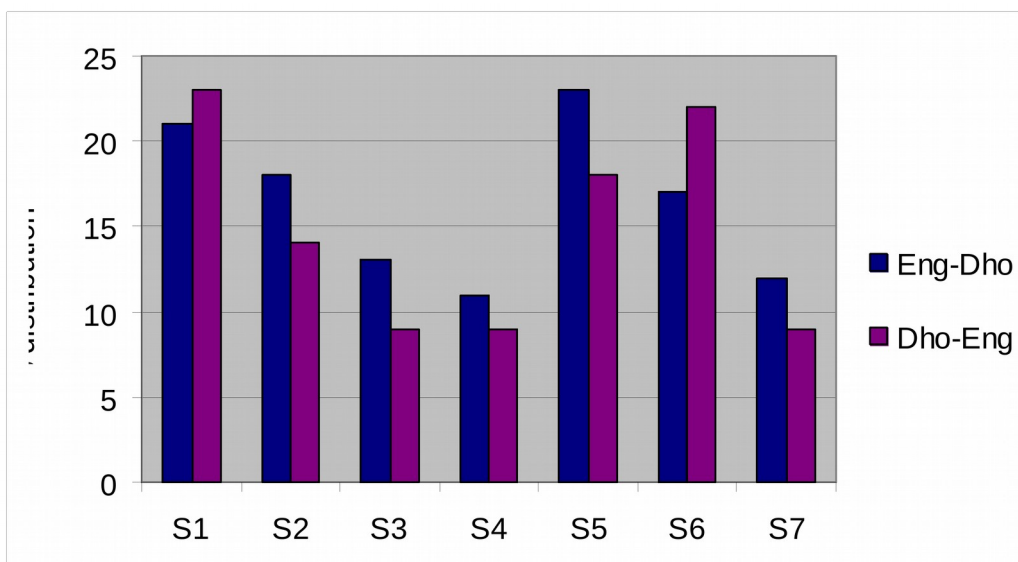


Figure 6: Students' response on code switching by school

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The study also sought to establish whether the prevalence of CS among the students varied by context. Figure 7 show that code-switching was used by the students 100% of the cases during games time and 57% of the cases during mealtime. The students and teachers interviewed were of the opinion that the highest frequency of use of Dholuo is because the students find the environment free of strict supervision on language use. According to the English language teachers, code-switching was observed in 14% of the cases during manual work, school debate or symposia. Most of the topics under discussion were not formal hence the students follow Giles (1973) theory of Convergence. The findings further reinforce the findings of Nyanza Provincial Science Congress Report (2008) in science activities showed the students have a tendency to code switch back and forth between L₁ and L₂.

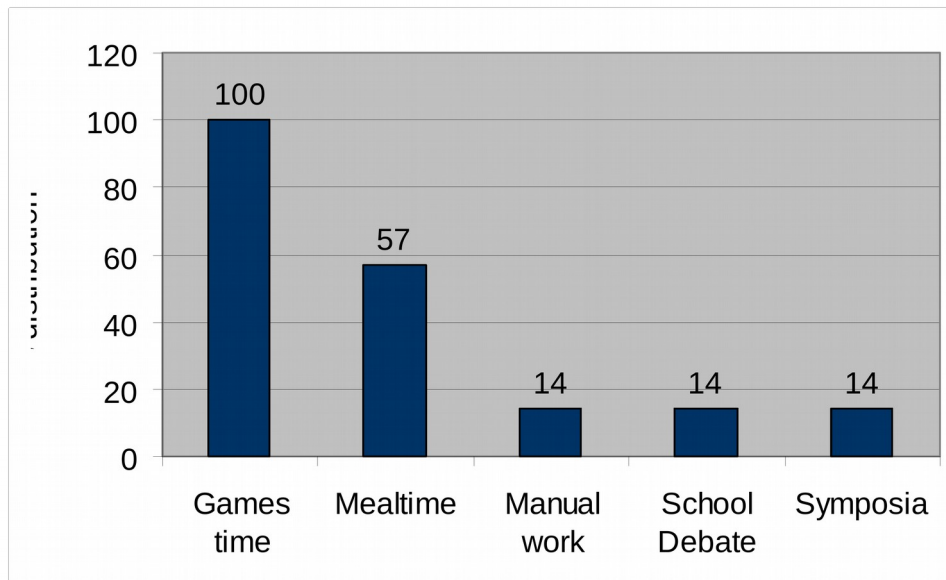


Figure 7: Distribution of CS cases by School Context

In order to evaluate the impact of student’s social environment, the opinion of the respondents was sought as to whether students who were day scholars’ code switched more often than the boarders. Figure 8 below shows that 43% of the respondents agreed and 29% strongly agreed. However, 14% of the respondents were neutral whereas another 14% disagreed. The students confirmed that Day Scholars code switch more often than Boarders. They attributed this to the interaction the day scholars have with the community around the school and the informal conversations students engage in as they travel to and from home during school days. The language of the neighbourhood is carried into the school set up. The findings are consistent with the research conducted by McAlister, de Klerk and MacSwan (2006) among the Spanish and English speaking school-age children in America which focused on the effects of a CS environment and established that it did affect the English language performance of the students.

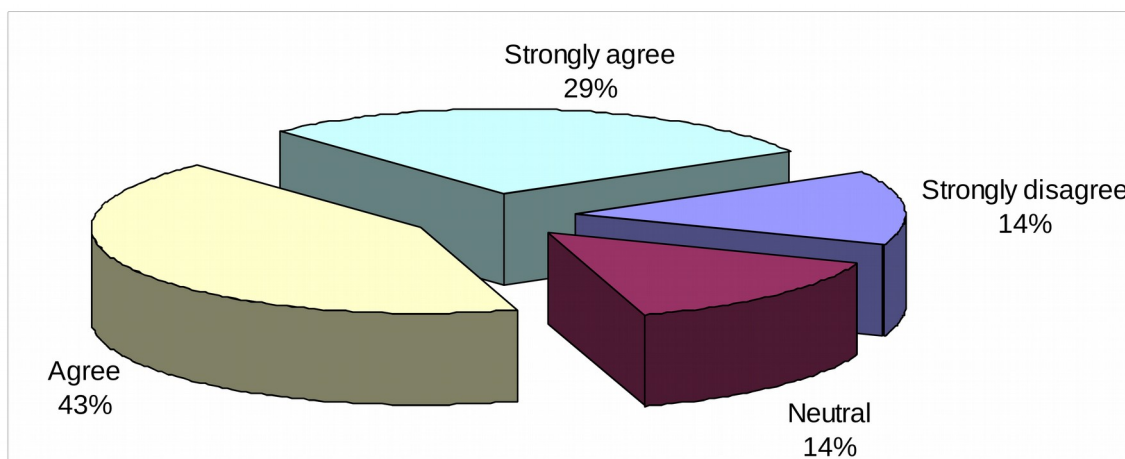


Figure 8: Day scholar students code-switch more often than boarders

The Impact of CS on the Oral and Written Discourse of Students

The impact of CS on English language performance of students was assessed at two levels. These are: oral performance and written performance. Oral performance was checked for lexical errors, phonological errors, prosodic errors and syntactic errors. For written tasks, lexical, syntactic and phonetic errors were checked. Views of the teachers were also sought regarding prosodic errors and other impact of CS on students’ performance.

The impact of CS on oral and written discourse is shown in 9. The figure shows that lexical errors in the form of direct translation was the most prevalent, at 8% in oral performance and 3% in written work. This was followed by syntactic errors (wrong grammar) with 4% and 3% of cases observed in oral and written work, respectively. Lastly, phonetic errors could only be observed in written work at 3% whereas there were no prosodic errors (wrong intonation/stress) recorded. These results agree with a previous research conducted by McAlister et al. (2006) among the Spanish and English speaking school-age children in America whose analysis of syntactic, morphological and lexical error rates showed that children’s performance was affected. However, the English language performance of majority of the students was not affected by code switching as suggested by the relatively small percentage of errors established in this study.

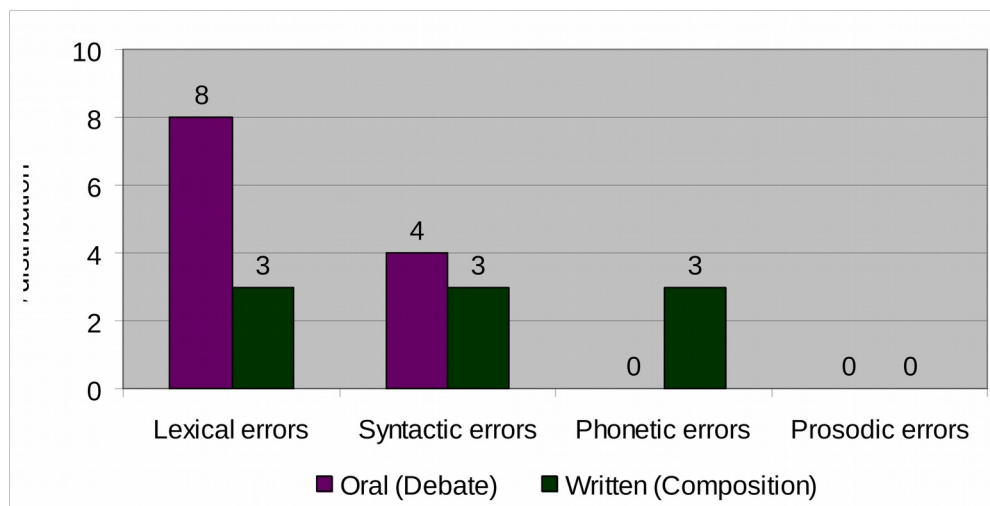


Figure 9: Impact of CS on Student’s English Language Performance

The study sought to establish other ways in which CS affected the students in terms of their languages apart from lexical, prosodic, phonetic or syntactic indicators. Figure 10 shows that the students’ performance as a result of CS manifested mostly in terms of lack of fluency (86%), wordiness (43%) and/or speaking difficulties (43%). This could be attributed to the learners’ interlanguage which is still far from the target language hence they revert to direct translation or use of many words where one word would suffice. The results agree with the point by Theo et al. (1984) that CS is a window to linguistic weakness inherent which make students to code-switch due to lack of appropriate words in the L₂ thus facing the difficult task to effectively communicate in L₂. Therefore, mother tongue interference is evident in the students’ oral and written discourse.

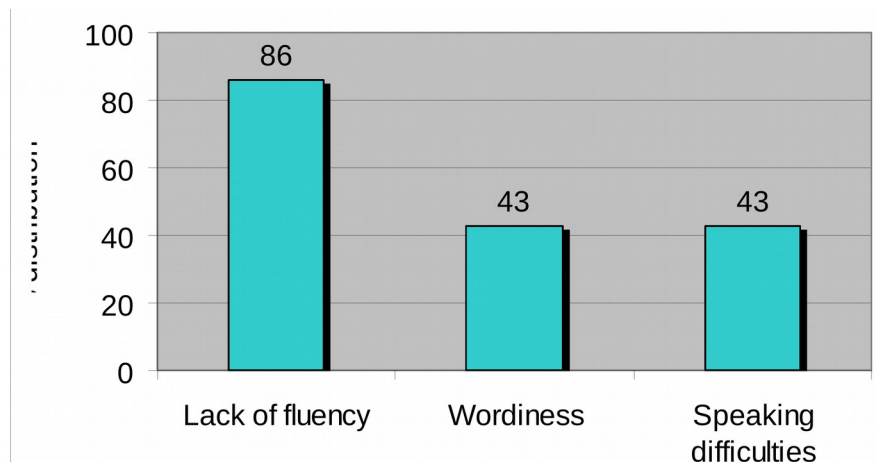


Figure 10: Other Effects of CS on Student’s English Performance

The Strategies Teachers and Students Employ to Navigate Code Switching

In terms of learning activities, the question sought to establish which language activities the school offered to help students navigate through code-switching. Figure 11 below shows the findings. The figure shows that drama (86%) and debate (86%) were the most often used strategies, followed by debate (71%) and extensive reading (57%). Other strategies cited includes the participation in Journalism Clubs (43%), the establishment of language days (29%) and giving students extra essay writing (29%). The findings imply that the learning activities gave more weight to oral language competence than written ones.

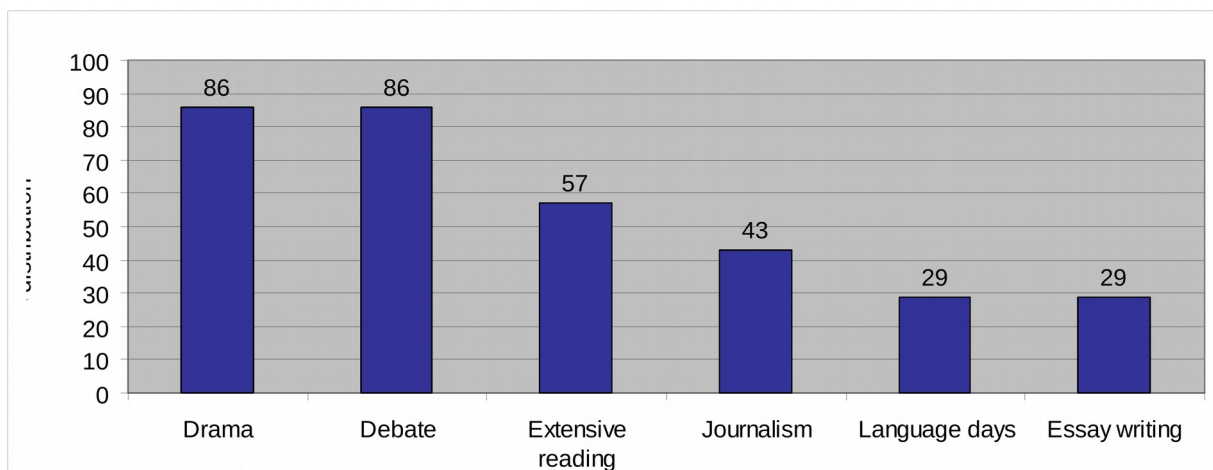


Figure 11: Learning Activities used to Navigate Code-Switching

In assessing the enforcement of school language policy, respondents were asked to indicate the actions taken against students who code switch. Figure 12 shows that physical punishment was meted on culprits in all the schools whereas 86% of the schools also required students to buy set books. Only 29% of the teachers asked their students to write extra essays, while 14% suspended the students who code-switch.

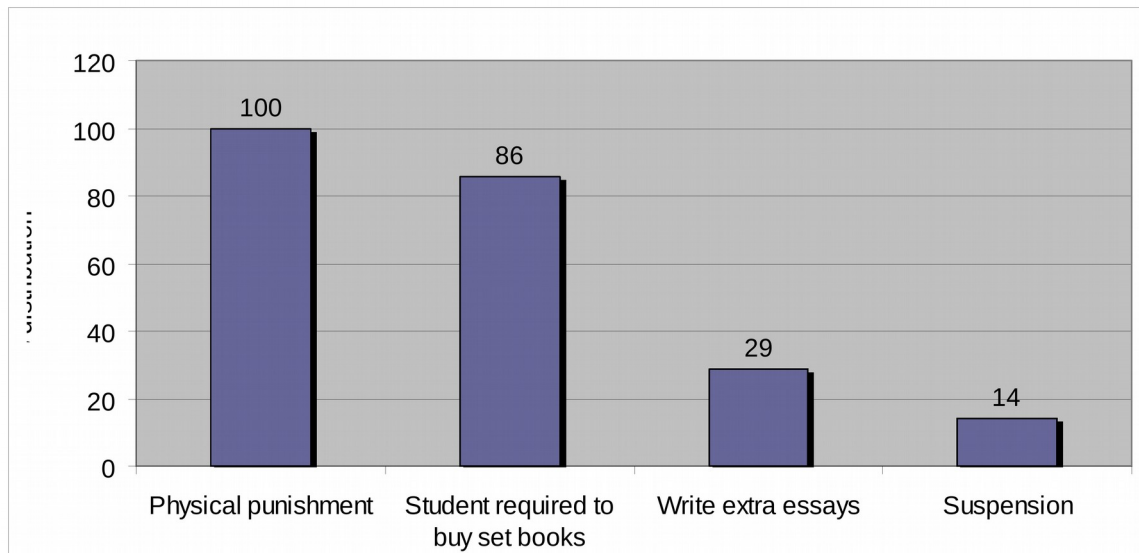


Figure 12: Ways School Language Policy was Enforced

The opinions of respondents were sought as to whether students code-switched outside classes because they hear their teachers do the same. Figure 13 shows that 57% of the respondents agreed. However, 29% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that students code-switched because their teachers also code-switched. The findings agree with a previous study by Then and Ting (2009) who conducted a research on teacher code switching in secondary English and science in Malaysia. However, while they argued that CS was a necessary tool for the teacher to make their message more comprehensible for the students in circumstances where students’ proficiency in the instructional language is lacking, the findings in this study suggests that teacher code-switching impacted on the students negatively as they imitated their teachers.

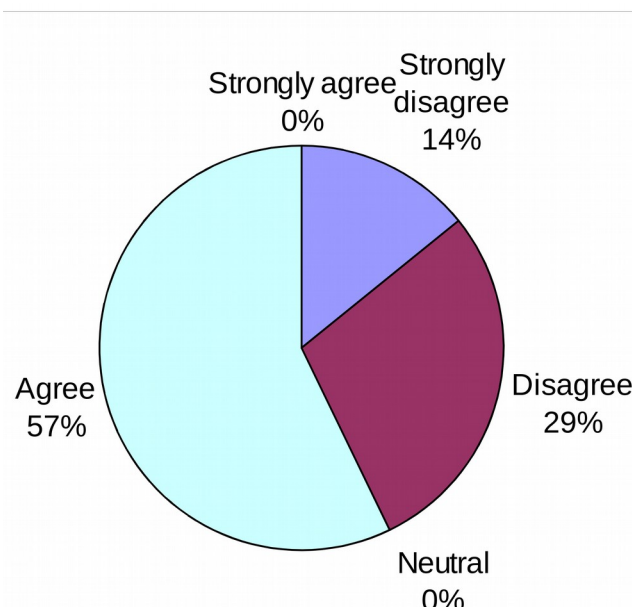


Figure 13: Whether Students Code-Switched Because Teachers did the same

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Code switching outside the classroom is a common phenomenon among students in Nyatike District. The switch is mainly from English to Dholuo and is most prevalent during games time and meal time. This could be attributed to the rampant use of Dholuo language within and around the school environment. There were very few cases of CS in the written

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essays. This could be attributed to the conscious effort of the students to avoid using Dholuo in their written work. They also feared scoring low marks in their essays or face punishment from the teachers. The predominant use of Dholuo in the neighbourhood encourages students to use CS. The language of the students' social environment influences the language used in the school context. Therefore, the students have limited vocabulary hence they use CS to keep the conversation going and reduce misunderstanding. Also, students are motivated to use CS when they hear their teachers do the same. Code switching has a greater influence on conversation than on writing. It has a slow growth in language and misunderstanding when the interlocutors are from different L1 background. Also, it has some phonological influence on the pronunciation of English. Clearly, CS could be one of the factors that affect students' performance in oral and written discourse.

The school language policy is not adhered to. Although the language prefects supervise the use of official languages in school, there are still many culprits of mother tongue punished. The commonest mode of punishment is physical punishment and suspension to buy story books. The use of punishment is to act as a deterrent to use of mother tongue or code switching. However, the students have a negative attitude towards the punishment hence they still continue to code switch. Participation in language club activities is aimed at helping students to practice speaking in English. The popular clubs include debating, journalism and drama. The strategies put in place to discourage CS have not realized the desired effect. Many students still code switch due to limited vocabulary. The negative influence of CS can be converted into useful strategies for communicative competence. However, the teachers were not doing enough to help students navigate CS. This could be attributed to lack of professional training, experience, and sheer apathy. Students are also motivated to use CS when they hear their teacher code switch.

Against the backdrop of improving the students' competence in English, The teachers and curriculum developers should be guided by the challenges identified in this research to come up with correct teaching strategies. Of great urgency is the use of interjections and hesitation markers. Learners should be guided through these areas and master the correct English equivalence of interjections. The vocabulary learnt in class should be of immediate use. The teachers should guide the students to distinguish between meaningful and non-meaningful code constraints. That is, they should help the students acquire the grammatical rules or structural factors which dictate in which contexts CS is possible. Teachers should plan for lessons whose content is geared towards language use in daily life. Examples used in class should relate to the students' immediate environment so that the students can use the same as they interact outside classes. The vocabulary learnt in class should be of immediate use. Also, the teachers should show a good example to the students by avoiding CS in the school environment. The teachers should equally establish whether the errors students make are as a result of CS or due to other learning difficulties and provide for teaching strategies.

The schools should provide language activities which encourage the use of English outside the classroom. These activities include programmes that are attractive to the students and geared towards the use of language in naturally occurring environment. Equally, the teachers should intervene whenever students use CS. They should not only make instant corrections when students code switch in their presence, but they should also organize remedial lessons on vocabulary, speaking skills and grammatical structures. In schools which are multilingual, they should use the correct methodology which can help bridge the gaps between L1 and L2. Students should be exposed to the correct vocabulary, grammar and syntax.

There is need to establish whether CS is communication problem in secondary schools with multicultural or it is just a problem in schools with students from a community. Further research is required to establish why students code switch more in conversation than in writing. There should be a further research on the impact of school language policy on students' proficiency in English. Equally important is a research on the impact of forced buying of story books on the students' attitude towards reading and speaking in English. There should be research on the causes of direct translation in the oral and written use of English. The relationship between code switching and performance in English needs to be further researched on. The researchers need to establish whether there are other linguistic factors contributing to CS or performance in English. Finally, there should be further research on the impact of teachers' professional qualification and experience on students' performance in English.

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