

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Language can be said to be the most complex and detailed aspect of human existence. It is the DNA of human behaviour and culture as the people's history and memory is embedded in it. This memory encapsulated in language also determine, among other things, how they used language and how language uses them. This volatile characteristic of language has birthed, directly and indirectly, such bridge studies such as sociolinguistics which is the descriptive study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context, on the way language is used, and the effects of language use on society (Wikipedia).

The organic feature language implies that it surfaces in its use. A person fluent in more than one language would often find his or herself segueing from one language to another and consequently one language system to another. Language affects perception and in the expression of thought verbally, these varying thought patterns is seen.

This switching isn't just in moving from one language to another but can be seen in the use of systems of one language in another showing a consciousness that is tied to a language even when one has extensive command of the one presently in use. This is how pidgins are born: the establishment of unique systems in language use across bilingual users. Against this backdrop, we would be doing a sociolinguistic study of code-mixing and code switching in secondary schools in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Among secondary school students in Nigeria presently are varying language uses including English which is the official language and the language of education. However, these are children who go home to parents and peers who speak their native language. Sometimes for the singular fact that there is a lack in a proper teaching of the English language, these secondary school children learn and use the language through the eyes of their mother tongue.

Other times, it is simply the bilingual presence of dexterity in two languages equally so that

thought is exercised simultaneously in these two or more languages. This is known as code-mixing and interchanged with another term, code switching by scholars. This phenomenon has been studied severally across varying language users but not specifically among Nigerian secondary school students who are unique in that they represent adequately the percentage of the Nigerian populace who have good command of both languages (English and their mother tongue).

1.3 Research Questions

1. Can code-mixing and code-switching be used interchangeably?
2. What are the factors that inform their presence in secondary school students' language use?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To determine if code-mixing and code-switching be used interchangeably.
2. To examine the factors that inform their presence in secondary school students' language use.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This work is of great significance to any sociolinguist on a research on any of the manifestations of code-mixing and code-switching among a certain age and topography of Nigeria especially one whose focus is on a patterned manifestation.

It's also very relevant for teachers in tracking a child's acquisition of a second language and to what extent this child exercises thought in the languages at his or her disposal. So that the modules for teaching can be fashioned with a specific aim in view.

1.6 Research Hypothesis

Ho₁: Code-mixing and code switching are not used interchangeably significantly.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is strictly studying code-mixing and code-switching among secondary school students across the different regions in the country. However, the study subject will consist of one school for each from the different geopolitical zones with one covering for the whole of the north due to lack of space, time and resources.

Also, data will be gathered through the use of one on one interactions with the students and the passing of questionnaires with questions that aims at capturing this form of language use

on and off the learning environment.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

A research such as this one would require a thorough examination of the sociolinguistic issue of code-mixing and code-switching across a large pool of students and reading materials as it is a topic that cuts across disciplines and bridge disciplines. The above are the limitations of this research work namely the time constraints and financial inadequacies to cover wider grounds.

1.9 Definition of Term

Code-mixing

This is the mixing of two or more languages and language systems during a speech act so that one slide from one string of phrases to another.

Code-switching

Most linguists and sociolinguists use both code-mixing and code-switching interchangeably. However, in code-mixing what is emphasized is the hybrid created from this mixture of two language systems while code-switching merely captures just this drawing from two language systems.

Sociolinguistics

This bridge discipline between sociology and linguistics studies in detail the societal influences on language and also how language influences society.

CODE MIXING AND CODE SWITCHING IN NIGERIA - A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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