MANIFESTATION OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL CODE SWITCHING IN NAIROBI, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses Manifestations of Code Switching in Nairobi. The main objective is to examine the influence of Variables such as Formality and Informality of the conversation context in Code Switching and Code selection. The researcher tape- recorded spontaneous speech from the respondents, then the tape recorded data was transcribed on paper and the extracts from the transcribed text were analyzed based on the tenets of Speech Accommodation Theory and Markedness Model. The study has revealed that speakers Switch Codes in an attempt to exhibit their level of confidence, domination and also when they desired a need for social integration and approval. It was further revealed that Formal (English /Kiswahili)and Informal Codes (Sheng'/mother tongue) were used for different function, Formal Codes were used to convey a more official context and seriousness while Informal Codes were used for a relaxed context and lack of seriousness. It was therefore realized that each of the Codes has a specific function and social symbolism to each individual group

Keywords: Formal, Informal Code switching in Nairobi.

INTRODUCTION

In a Multi-lingual society such as Kenya, due to Socio-structural factors, different Speech Communities, Gender, Age groups and even Professional Rank determines a speaker's Social vitality and therefore the level of confidence a speaker has amongst other speakers. It is therefore this actor among others that determines the patterns of conversation of different speakers and therefore evens the Code Switching pattern of different speakers.

Nairobi is Kenya's capital and as such it harbors people of diverse ethnic backgrounds interacting and working together. For instance it is very normal to find people of ten different ethnic backgrounds working together. It is also possible to find a mixture of races. Apart from Blacks, one may encounter Whites and even Asians.

Many Nairobians are multilingual and employ the habit of CS in their day-to-day interaction. It is quite a complex linguistic situation and therefore not easy to identify a system used. A college like Nairobi Aviation College is one place where people from different ethnic communities work and interact. People communicating in such a situation need to use language very creatively and productively. The college staff room is a central place where people of different Ranks and Gender different topics, which have varying degrees of formality.

Therefore this study aimed at establishing how males and females speakers and also staff of higher and lower Ranks Code Switch, bearing in mind that language doesn't exist in a Social Structural Vacuum. The study intended to show that although CS is just speech behavior, it also indicates the Socio-cultural position and beliefs, Professional Rank and even as a manifestation of Power or influence of difference of different speakers.

Speech Accommodation Theory

Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) was proposed by Giles (Giles & St Clair 1979). SAT is a social psychological Theory of language use in society and has been used by social psychologists as well as linguists in studying language behavior during contact between speakers from different linguistic groups (Trudgill 1986; Russell 1982; Giles & St Clair 1979; Giles et al 1980).

The theory explained the dynamics of speech adjustments in the process of interaction. Central to this theory was the claim that during social interactions, participants were motivated to adjust their speech styles as a means of gaining or not gaining social approval, attaining communicative efficiency between interactants and maintaining positive social identities (Giles et al 1982).

The value of SAT lied in its ability to explain and predict CS in terms of social psychological processes operating both at interpersonal level (e.g. similarity-attraction; Byrne 1969) and the intergroup level, where social categorization processes are of primarily importance (Giles 1978; Tajfel 1982).

The process of adjustment is called Accommodation works in 2 opposite ways. The first way is called Convergence. The speaker uses the language that the hearer knows or likes best-speakers therefore convergence when they desired social integration and approval. In speech convergence, the interlocutors became more alike in the languages they use.

The SAT also view Convergence as social exchanges during which interlocutors incur certain costs in order to obtain potential rewards. The rewards of converging may be in form of material rewards or social approval and the costs may include linguistic effort or group identity loss (Giles & Robinson 1990).

The second form of Accommodation is Divergence; the speaker tries to distance himself and the hearer by maximizing differences in language use. Speakers would therefore diverge when they wished to differentiate from each other socially. These phenomena may occur simultaneously on a variety of linguistic levels (paralinguistic, content style, accent etc) and speakers are not always aware that they are modifying their codes.

According to Similarity attraction, a person might induce another to evaluate her or him favourably by reducing dissimilarities between the two of them. Speakers automatically adjust themselves to each other, both in gesture and often positioning of the body and type of speech. This theory helps in interpreting the choice of a particular language in terms of the other speaker's language and identity.

Social Exchange theory states that before one engages in an action, he or she weighs up its potential rewards and costs. This suggests that people have a tendency to engage in behavior, which reap rewards and avoid behaviour that results in unpleasant outcomes. Hence, one expects speech convergence to occur only when it entails more potential rewards than costs. In ethnic interaction, rewards for converging to the output language could include either being better perceived or accepted by the out-group interlocutors, while potential costs may include linguistic effort. The theory is used to investigate the motivations for convergence and it is also helps to find out whether convergence results in any rewards.

This study therefore used the above 3 theories of SAT to explain the motivational factors that influenced the choice of codes by speakers during interactions with interlocutors from a different linguistic background. The theory attempted to explain why speakers converged to or diverged from their listener's language. From the above outline of speech divergence and convergence, it was apparent that not all speech strategies could be explained in terms of psychological motivations.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area and Target Population

The study was carried out at Nairobi Aviation College in Nairobi. The college was considered ideal because people from different linguistic backgrounds worked there. In this study, the location was the

college (Nairobi Aviation), role relationship was among lecturers and other staff who are colleagues at the college and topics were the various conversations in the college staffroom. The individuals in question came from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds and interacted with each other on other on various topics and formalities, in the staffroom. This set an ideal context for CS. The data studied was the various conversations, specifically sentences and phrases produced by speakers during conversations.

For formal topics, the lecturers used a different language from the one they used during informal contexts. Apart from topic formality/informality, there were many other factors, which determined the choice of language. The lecturers therefore, used the Official language, National language, Slang' language and local varieties in specific contexts, during the staffroom conversations. The staffroom therefore, presented a rich field for CS study. Other key variables that the study focused on were the Gender and Professional Rank of the speakers.

Sampling

One sampling technique was used in the study. This was the Judgemental Sampling method. The Judgemental sampling was used to choose the college, the staffroom (of all the other places) and also the specific group of people to be studied at any given time. The college had numerous staff but only a selected number were studied. The underlying principle of this method involved identifying in advance the type of speakers to be studied (Milroy 1987:26). This sampling technique was considered appropriate because the researcher identified in advance a "college" that would give representative data on which to make generalizations.

Due to the fact that the Staff was studied as they conversed, the researcher hoped to get their natural speech behavior at a particular time. This assumption was guided by the fact that at different times, some staff in the staffroom always sat in clusters or groups for conversations. It is such groups that the study sought and studied.

Variables considered by the researcher were Gender and professional rank (at the college). These variables were also used or considered when selecting the conversation group studied at any given time. This was another reason for using the Judgemental sampling. The objective of the research being to find out the gender distinctions in CS, existence of Unmarked and Marked CS and also describe the Motivational, Normative and Socio-structural factors that influence the choice of codes in the college staffroom conversations, it was necessary to observe the influence of these variables in code selection and then find out the general CS pattern in the college staffroom.

Sample Size

According to Milroy (1987:21) socially sensitive study of language variations depends on a good data, which entail the provision of sufficient types and quantities of language. She further observed that large samples tended not to be as necessary for linguistic surveys as for other surveys because they tended to be redundant, bringing increasing data handling problems, with diminishing analytical returns.

The sample consisted of a total of approximately 20 informants selected through the Judgemental Sampling. The informants were studied in 5 different Conversation groups. The researcher also established that most of the conversation groups had a representation of different ethnic groups. Small samples were sufficient for useful accounts of language variation in large cities. Large samples are no longer necessary for studies in speech communication because sampling procedures have improved greatly (see Milroy 1987: Trudgill 1974). Also the small sample of 16 was due to the fact that the entire college had a total staff population of about 90, of which 40 were the ones who always interacted in the staffroom. Therefore the number of 20 for staffroom was an adequate number for the researcher to make generalizations.

DATA ANALYSIS

The Qualitative and Quantitative approaches to data analysis were be used in this study. The data were initially described and summarized using descriptive statistics (Mugenda et al 1999:117). Consequently, the tape-recorded conversations were transcribed on paper. The extracts from the transcribed text were studied to identify the codes used by different speakers and in different contexts in the staffroom conversations.

The data was analysed and also presented in tables and graphs portraying the specific CS variances as affected or determined by each variable, which were then descriptively explained and finally, from the total outline or flow of CS depending on different variables in the college staffroom conversations, viable conclusions and recommendations were made.

FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION

Observation notes were also surveyed to gather other useful information on CS in the college staffroom. The data was divided into 5 categories:

a. Male speakers of different ranks. (c1)
b. Mixture of male and female speakers; different ranks. (c2)
c. Female speakers of different ranks. (c3)
d. Mixture of male and female speakers; low ranks. (c4)
e. Mixture of male and female speakers; high ranks. (c5)

The study examined main Variables such as:

a. Codes used. (Formal and Informal Code Switching)
b. CS as an 'in-group Code' (effect of outsiders on CS).

However, Gender was the variable permeating through all the other Variables; this means that the other Variables such as Rank were examined in different Genders, for instance in Low Rank Male and Low Rank Female Speakers.

The study came up with Data comprising of conversations of both male and female speakers in staffroom. The speakers from both genders were mixed during some conversations, but there were other conversations of only male speakers and also for female speakers only. The different Gender groups were also further specified in terms of Ranks. The figures were organized in Tables and Graphs; Qualitative Techniques whereby the results were elaborated using words, comparative Citations from other Scholars and examples from the Data. It was then possible to establish how the variables determined language choices in different contexts in the college staffroom. The data presented on Graphs and Tables portrayed the specific CS variances as affected or determined by each variable and generally, the total outline or flow of CS in the college staffroom conversations; from which Conclusions and Viable recommendations were made.

Distribution of Various Codes (Formal/Informal)

Whenever People interact, they judge consciously what mode of behavior best suits the interaction. For example conversation concerning ethnic and status relationships are frequently jocular. Those who choose English tend to have high status connotation while Kiswahili is used by all groups to connote "brotherhood" or neutrality because it helps to bridge between the English and Ethnic language differences. The Ethnic languages on the other hand connotates "solidarity" (Parkin, 1974).

The study therefore perceived the languages used as having different levels of Formality; English as the most Formal, followed by Kiswahili while Sheng', which is a fusion of Kiswahili English and Mother tongue, (Kanana, 2003) is less Formal. Mother tongue is perceived by the study as the least Formal. The study also classifies the languages into 2 groups; Formal Codes comprising of English and Kiswahili and Informal comprising of Sheng and Mother Tongue. This classification therefore makes it possible also for the study to assume the existence of Formal CS and Informal CS. Formal CS

is viewed as a situation whereby the speaker switches to Formal Code of either English or Kiswahili while Informal CS is viewed as a situation whereby a speakers switches to Informal Codes of either Sheng or Mother Tongue.

c3

110. ARANGO: Ukweli ni kwamba: unapotakikana, utaambiwa chochote. Babangu husema, *"nyako kapodi idwari, gimoramora itimoni!"* (*The truth is that when you are wanted, you will be told anything. My father says, "if a lady is wanted then she is given anything anything she wants."*)

111. SAYAPA: Sasa hiyo ni kusemaje? *(Now what does that mean?)*

112. ARANGO: Inamaanisha, ukitafutwa, chochote utakacho utakipata, kama wataka kusikia hamna chochote, ati hakuna wife, utaambiwa hivyo hivyo unavyotaka, pete atakitoa mfukoni. Siku ile utapelekwa kwao nyumbani…*(it means that, when you are wanted, whatever you want, you will be given, if you want to hear that there is nothing,that there is no wife, you will be told that as you want it, he will remove the ring from his pocket. The day you will be taken to his home….)*

c1

39. RONO: wachawacha adiera Ainea, niluongebang'e (*just say the truth Ainea, you called her later*)

40. JOSH: Nyinyi mbona mnatunyima hiyo siri yenu:? Kwanini kijaluo sasa? *(You guys why are you denying us that secret? Why Dholuo now?)*

41. ANDREW: Unajua kuna vitu huwezi sema kwa lugha kama Kiswahili. *(You know there are some things you cannot say in Kiswahili language).*

Table 1. Distribution of Various Codes According To Gender And Ranks.

4.4.2A. Distribution of Codes during CS (Formal and Informal)

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Code	High rank male	High rank female	Low rank male	low rank female
English	33	47.6	26	29.5
Kiswahili	39.9	45	30.3	27.2
Sheng'	8.3	17	12	18
Mother-tongue	0.3	3	0	0.3

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Figure 4.

Note: The High Rank Speakers are also the Senior Age Group (above 30s) while the Low Rank is also the Junior Age group (below 30s).

The female speakers have more formal codes and formal CS. This confirms to Cheshire (1978) who stated that Women are more Standard than Men and Kanana (2003) who stated that Female Speakers are 'Status Conscious and hence preferred English. Cheshire also adds that Sex and Age are important variables in CS. As regards to Ranks, the High Rank Speakers Male and Female, have more English than their Low Rank counterparts. The High Rank Speaker, Male and Female also have more Kiswahili than their Low Rank counterparts. Therefore the High Rank Speakers have more Formal CS as compared to Low Rank Speakers. As regards to Informal Codes of Sheng and Kiswahili, the Low Rank Speakers have more Sheng' than High Rank Speakers but the High Rank Speakers have more Mother tongue than the Low Rank Speakers.

The use of all the Codes connotate "Solidarity" for the particular group using it, whether it is the Formal or even the Ethnic languages, (Kanana 2003). This seems to be the case because the High Rank Speakers strive to for their 'High Status Solidarity' by using more of the Formal Codes and Formal CS, as compared to the Low Rank Speakers. There is also the question of age, in that the High

Rank are also the Senior Age group and by using the Formal Code more means that they are creating a boundary in the conversation, not just as regards to Rank or position but also Seniority in age and experience.

The question of age apart from Rank is probably another reason as to why the Speaker of Low Rank have more Sheng as compared to the Speakers of High Rank. As far as Sheng is concerned it had been already established by Echesa (1990) that it is a language system that has evolved in cosmopolitan areas like Nairobi, especially among the youths. He also emphasizes that Sheng is a necessary for youths and is also a form of social identity. The also emphasizes that Sheng is a necessity for youths and is also a form of social identity. The current results therefore seem to confirm to Echesa's view in regards to age. On the other hand the Speakers of High Rank who also are of senior Age group, have more of Mother Tongue as compared to the Speakers of Low Rank. Age is therefore an important determinant for CS among speakers just as Rank. Characteristics of a person apart from the Setting, Purpose of communication and Topic of conversation forms what Bourhis, (1979, 1985) refers to as 'Normative Factors' which affects the way a person uses language, and in this case, Age and Rank are the important characteristics that affect how a person Code switches.

It is therefore possible to deduct that Age is one of the factors that makes the High Rank (senior age group) Speakers to have more Mother Tongue than Low Rank (junior age group) Speakers, i.e. those who are older in age always prefer to use Mother tongue more than those assumption that they prefer using Sheng more than those who are Older. This conclusion is supported by the fact that those who are Low Rank are all below 30s or in their 20s, while those of High Rank are above 30s and some are even in Mid 30s or late 30s.

Kanana (2003) also states that, Sheng is the language preferred by teenagers and youths in Nairobi and the Low Rank speakers who are not yet 30 years can be said to be just above teenage. They will therefore use a language variety that unifies them or emphasizes solidarity. On the other hand it is deductable that use of Mother tongue signifies seniority in age, because it is the older speakers who always prefer Mother tongue (Kanana 2003). Use of Mother tongue in a group discussion, especially where there are people of different ethnic backgrounds requires high level of confidence by the speakers because it results to a neglect of those speakers who do not understand the language.

This CS behavior is what Giles (Giles & St. Clair, 1979) refers to as Speech Divergence as a part of Speech Accommodation Theory. It is divergence because the speaker has chosen a Code that is not understood by some participants. Confidence in this case seems to come from seniority in terms of Age and High Rank. For Example in c3 (Female Speakers of Different Ranks), Arango who is a High Rank and also Senior Aged exhibits the CS from Kiswahili to Mother tongue (Dholuo) at no. 110. In c1, Rono who is also of High Rank Code Switches to Mother tongue at no. 39.

This therefore means that Gender and Age are major variables in language use and consequently CS, the same case is true in the current study, which also adds Rank to the list of Variables together with Sex and Age. From this, it can be concluded that the High Rank/Senior Age prefer Formal CS and Formal Codes as a way of indicating their high status solidarity. Mother can also be seen to be a Code preferred by the High Rank/Senior Age because it indicates their level of confidence, which comes with GAe and High Rank. Their preference of Mother tongue to Sheng also shows that the speakers (High Rank/Senior Age) are conservative and proud of their Mother tongue and are not embarrassed to use it in public even if some listerners do not understand, this behavior is also attributed to people who are of Senior Age and Rank. The Lower Ranks/Junior age on the other hand, have less Formal Codes And Formal CS but have Sheng than Mother tongue. This shows that while the High Rank Speakers/Senior Age are more Formal and Standard, the Low Rank Speakers/Junior age are less Formal and non Standard. Female Speakers also have more of Formal Codes/CS than Male Speakers; therefore Female Speakers are more Formal than Male Speakers and High Rank/Senior Age are more Formal and Standard than the Low Rank/Junior Age.

SUMMARY

As regards to Formal and Informal CS, Female Speakers of both high and low ranks use more English than the male speakers. Also female speakers of high ranks have more English than their male counterparts of the same rank while also the female speakers of low ranks/junior age have more English as compared to their male counterparts of the same Ranks/Age. The Female Speakers of High Ranks/Senior Age also have more Kiswahili than their Male counterparts of High Rank/Senior Age also have more Kiswahili than their Male counterparts of High Rank/Senior Age but the Male speakers of Low Rank/Junior Age have more Kiswahili than the Female counterparts of Low Rank/Junior Age have more Kiswahili than the Female counterparts of Low Ranks. This means that the Female Speakers have more Formal Codes in CS than the Male Speakers and consequently the Female Speakers have more Formal CS than the Male Speakers. Female Speakers of High Ranks and senior Age have the highest levels of Formal CS. As regards to Ranks, the High Rank speakers Male and Female, have more English than their Low Rank counterparts. The High Rank Speakers Male and Female also have more Kiswahili than their Low Rank counterparts. Therefore the High Rank Speakers have more Formal CS as compared to Low Rank Speakers. On Informal Codes, the Low Rank Speakers have more Sheng' than High Rank Speakers but on Mother Tongue, the High Rank Speakers/Senior Age have more than Low Rank/Junior Age speakers.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a difference in level of confidence between the Low Rank/Junior Age group and the High Rank/Senior Age Group with the result showing that the High Rank/Senior Age group have more Confidence than the Low Rank/Junior age group. This is therefore a reflection of the Markedness Model (Scotton 1993) and Giles et al (1979) which identifies Social-psychological motivations to language use; this as mentioned earlier categorizes the speakers' feelings as well as their perception of intergroup relation and their awareness of existing Social norms and Status. High Rank Speakers/Senior Age and Low Rank Speakers/Junior Age are both aware of their different Statuses, and this makes them to react differently in their Speech indicate their level of confidence during the entry of the Senior Management Staff in their respective conversations. In both cases, they are both (Low Rank and High Rank) are trying to show their confidence but they do so in different ways depending on their Status.

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