

## Significance of Hausa-English Code Switching

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### ABSTRACT

*The research reported in this paper focuses on the social meanings of Hausa-English code switching within the interaction of Hausa bilinguals studying at University Utara Malaysia. Data for the survey were collected through questionnaires disseminated to 80 bilinguals, who completed them. The facts were analyzed within the outline of Gumperz's (1982) conversational functions of code switching and Malik's (1994) reasons and functions of code switching. Thus, the conceptual framework entails eight specific functions of code switching, namely: quotations, reiteration, objectivization, lack of facilities, addressee specification, identity sharing, interjections and clarification. Nevertheless, the outcomes of the survey established that alternating between two or more language varieties is a communicative strategy employ by bilinguals to effectively share interactive meanings during conversation.*

**Keywords:** Hausa, bilingual, code switching, significance

### INTRODUCTION

Hausa is the largest and most widely spoken language in West Africa. It is characterized as a member of a Chadic group of languages from the Afroasiatic language families. The language is mainly established in northern Nigeria and southern part of the Niger Republic. Recently, the Hausa language has been estimated the first language (mother tongue) of roughly eighty to one hundred million people, and comparatively over one hundred million nonnative speakers who demonstrate a varying degree of competence in the language (Yusuf, 2011). Basically, language(s) cannot develop in isolation. For that reason, languages must come into contact with one another, and through the interaction one language often wielded its influence over another. By coming into contact with other languages over the time, Hausa language has been categorized into classical Hausa and modern Hausa. *The classical Hausa* here refers to the Hausa language and literary styles which have been greatly influenced by Arabic and Islamic conviction as opposed to the *modern Hausa*, which have been notably inclined to western civilization and ethics through the activity of the English language (Ahmed and Daura, 1970).

However, the role of English in the teaching and learning periphery, the multilingual setting in Nigeria and the trend of globalization is contributing tremendously in the way English is influencing Hausa. So, the status quo gives rise to a frequent manifestation of various language contact phenomena such as code switching, interference, borrowing, etc. within the spontaneous conversation of Hausa bilinguals in Nigeria and in the diaspora. It reached the extent that the bilingual speakers can hardly maintain a conversation without code switching back and forth between Hausa and the other languages, especially English and Arabic.

On the other hand, code switching as a language contact phenomenon is commonly appearing in various formal and informal contacts of the bilingual speakers. Such social contexts and situations include official meetings, classroom interaction, religious sermons, and conversations between peers or families. Competent speakers in two or more languages often found themselves code switching between the languages in a single sentence or speech to

express their intent and share interactive meanings. Even though, the bilinguals at times may not be aware that they repeatedly switched between the available codes within their utterances (Milroy and Gordon, 2003). In addition, they may not possibly report the code they have chosen in a sequence of communicative exchange (Wardhaugh, 2011). Therefore, code switching can be briefly defined as the ability to use more than one language within the same utterance or statement. Other related definitions of code switching are: Heller (1988), Gumperz (1982), and Auer (2010). Furthermore, the bilingual phenomenon has been observed as a systematic and meaningful habit of language which mostly occurs during a given conversation between bilingual speakers (Li (2000); Woolard (2004)).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Code Switching Phenomena

Language and linguistic studies in the 1940s and 1950s unanimously considered the pattern of code switching as a sub-standard practice of language (Weinreich, 1983). Nevertheless, contemporary linguistic findings noticed the code switching phenomena as a normal bilingual behavior (cf. Essien (2000); Jagero & Odongo (2011)). Other studies observed it as a natural language contact phenomena (cf. Obiamalu & Mbagwu, (2009)). The bilingual act has been perceived as a subconscious behavior (cf. Li (2000); Woolard (2004); Auer (2010)). Yusuf (2012) distinctively argued that code switching is a conscious behavior which often appears during bilinguals conversations. In a nutshell, alternating between two or more languages manifested naturally and subconsciously in the communicative exchanges of bilinguals. For instance, (a), (b) and (c) are the examples of Hausa to English code switching:

- a. Wasu *forcing* dinsu ake.  
Some (people) are being forced. (Abubakar, 1993)
- b. *Thank you, sir.* Sai an jima.  
Thank you, sir. See you next time.
- c. To ai yakamata ka dauki *casual leave*.  
You suppose to take a casual leave. (Yusuf, 2012)

In the same vein, Essien (2000) specified that code switching among bilinguals or multilingual such as Nigerians has to be regarded as a normal linguistic phenomenon within the communities where more than one language or various dialects are spoken. Furthermore, Ariffen and Rafik-Galea (2009) clarified code switching as discourse strategies commonly used by bilinguals to communicate effectively. They also run through code switching acts to express social and linguistic meanings during spoken exchanges. As Bollinger (1975) enlightened that code switching is usually employed by bilinguals to discard conversational difficulties that may ascend in the process of communication. Thus, they may engage in code switching deliberately to disguise or misinform someone outside the dialogue.

### Social Significance of Code Switching

Gumperz (1982) defined the social meanings of code switching while explaining the conversational functions of code switching between selected language pairs: Slovenian-German, Spanish-English, and Hindi-English. He further maintained that code switching is conversational tactics normally used by bilinguals to express interactive meanings among themselves. They do so, in response to the context and other social variables. The functions are: (1) quotations, (2) addressees specification, (3) interjections, (4) reiteration, (5) messages qualification, and (6) personalization versus objectivization. While observing some sociolinguistic aspects of code-switching in India, Malik (1994) described ten functions and

reasons that frequently motivated bilingual speakers to switch between different language varieties: (1) lack of facilities in one language, (2) lack of registral competence, (3) a semantic significance, (4) addressing different audiences, (5) sharing of an identity or solidarity, (6) to intensify and emphasize a particular point, (7) the mode of a speaker, (8) habitual expressions, (9) pragmatic motives, and (10) attention attraction.

In spite of the recent prominence of code switching as distinctive features of speech acts of bilinguals, the study of code switching with reference to Hausa and English; especially in an educational settings, either inside or outside a class room seems very limited based on the researcher's knowledge. Therefore, the present study aimed at identifying some specific functions of code switching during the social contact of Hausa bilinguals studying at University Utara Malaysia. As the analysis of briefly linguistic data is essential in the process of identifying and describing certain functions of code switching (Gumperz, 1982).

### Theoretical Framework

The collected data used in the survey were analyzed within the framework of Gumperz (1982) and Malik (1994). Thus, eight specific functions of code switching are acknowledged in the conceptual framework: quotations, lack of facilities, reiteration, objectivization, clarification, addressee specification, identity sharing, and interjections. Figure 1 below symbolizes the conceptual framework of the survey.

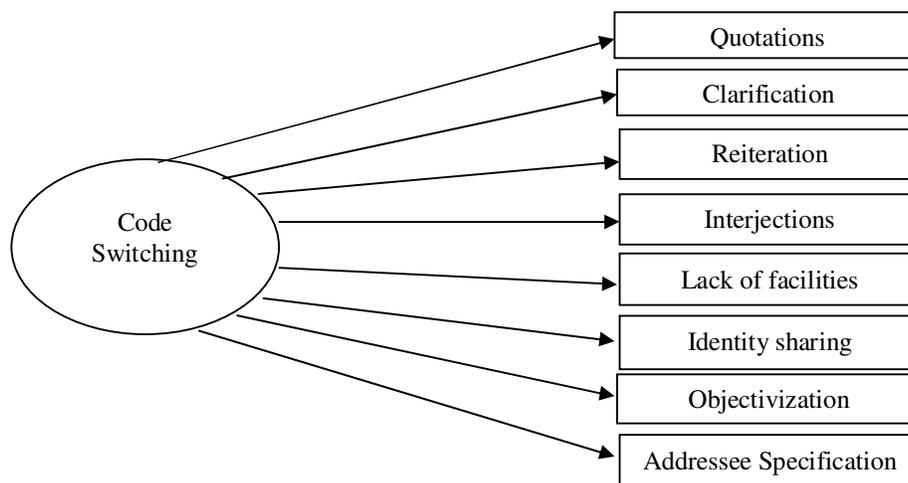


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

In this sociolinguistic investigation of code switching, quantitative procedure was employed for the collection and analysis of the data. Some of the Hausa bilinguals in the research setting shared the same residence halls, a number of them as well study similar courses at various schools. Consequently, this situation triggered a frequent manifestation of code switching within their speeches outside classroom context.

### Participants

The sample used in the study consisted of 80 Hausa bilingual respondents. 68 are males and 12 females, varying in age between 19 to 54 years. They were carefully chosen to represent the targeted population (Haruna, 2010). The participants were purposefully selected based on the defining characteristics of the subgroup members of bilingual speakers (Creswell, 2014).

Almost all the bilinguals partook in the survey were competent in both the languages. Due to the fact that they normally start to become bilinguals right from the elementary school.

### **Instrument**

Questionnaire as a survey instrument which presents respondents with a series of questions to which they are required to respond is used in the study. The researcher locates and adopts a questionnaire previously developed and tested by Van Dulm (2007) in examining the manifestation of English-Afrikaans code switching in South Africa under the frame of feature checking theory. Concerning the reliability of the instrument, it was piloted as pretest, main test and also use in post-test stage to determine its reliability by the author (Van Dulm). Likewise, the adapted questionnaire was piloted with 30 participants before embarking on the main project. Results in table 1 and figure 2 indicate a relative validity of the instrument. Accordingly, a four sections questionnaire was planned which contains twenty seven (27) questions. Section A contains 10 demographic questions. Section B entails further four questions which meant to evaluate the ability of the bilinguals in the two languages. Section C comprises 8 questions which embody the eight specific functions of code switching, where the respondents were asked to consider the statement/sentences presented are 1- acceptable or 2- unacceptable in informal conversation. Section D also presents five questions, which were aimed at gathering the respondents' information concerning their attitude in practicing code switching. However, Milroy and Gordon (2003) upheld that a useful linguistic data can be obtained in a relatively short time spell; perhaps 20-30 minutes maximum. Thus, each questionnaire set was estimated to take its respondents at least 30 minutes maximum.

### **Data Collection**

The investigator, sets out in distributing the questionnaires to the participants, and equally took charge in collecting the completed copies. There are no laid down principles in distributing the questionnaires to the selected bilinguals since they all have similar linguistic ability of alternating between the two languages. He distributed a piece of 90 questionnaires to almost all the accessible Hausa bilinguals within the research location who completed it and returned 80 back to him in December 2013.

### **Data Analysis**

After collecting the required information, descriptive analysis was used for the analysis of the data. According to Creswell (2014), the descriptive analysis is a detailed interpretation of individuals' behavior within a particular context. The collected data were utilized in a descriptive manner by identifying the specific functions of code switching. Certain interrelated steps were actuated in preparing and organizing the data for analysis.

Initially, the researcher, organized the collected hard copies of the questionnaires in numbers from 1-80, before inputting the scores of each questionnaire into the software program (SPSS Version 18). An item score is allocated to each individual participant answers for each question. Further, numeric scores were given to any response category for every question, i.e. questions with two options have been given 1 and 2 figures. For instance, question 2 that asked the sex of the respondents, 1 is given to male and 2 to female. In the same vein, questions that quizzed the participants, whether they considered the statement/sentences presented as acceptable or unacceptable; thus, each question with this style 1 is assigned for acceptable and 2 unacceptable. Moreover, 1 = Yes, 2 = No, and 3 = some time is allotted to the questions that needed three answers. Secondly, Code of similar nature was assembled to propose the functions of code switching. Hence the demographic questions are coded: DM1-DM10. The specific functions of code switching are shortened as: QT01= Quotations,

LF02=Lack of facilities, OJ03=Objectivization, IS04=Identity sharing, RT05=Reiteration, IT06=Interjections, ADS07=Addressee specification and CL08=Clarification.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Profiles of Respondents

The outcomes here are based on 1-10 demographic questions. The section meant to gather information concerning biographical information of the participants such as gender, age, first language, second language, years, and place of second language learning, occupation as well as the level of education of the bilinguals. The following table provides a detailed profile of the overall bilinguals who participated in the survey.

**Table 1. Profile of the Respondents**

<i>Demographic Variables</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age	19-36 Years	53	67.9
	37-Above	25	32.1
Gender	Male	68	85.0
	Female	12	15.5
Place of Birth	North West	49	72.1
	North East	11	16.2
	North Central	8	11.8
First Language (L1)	Hausa	77	96.3
	Others	3	3.8
Second Language (L2)	English	77	96.3
	Hausa	3	3.8
Age of L2 Learning	Before 5 Years	20	25.0
	After 5 Years	60	75.0
L2 Learning Place	At Home	10	12.5
	At School	70	87.5
Occupation	Teacher	55	69.6
	Students	18	22.8
	Others	6	7.6
Level of Education	Ph.D	18	22.5
	Masters	46	57.5
	Others	16	20.0
Regular Language	Hausa	60	75.0
	English	20	25.0

As found in the table 1, most of the participants were in their middle ages. As 53 (66.7%) out of 80 respondents fall between the age of 19-36 years old, while 25 (32.1%) fall between 37-55 years old. Regarding the gender distribution of the participants, it is established that 68 male respondents (85.0%) and 12 females (15.0%) participated. However, The majority of the bilinguals 49 (61.3%) hailed from the northwest, where the dominant Hausa dialect groups are found; such as Kanonci, Zazzaganci, Katsinanci, Sakkwatanci, Zamfaranci, etc. 11 participants (13.8%) emerged from the northeast, where Bausanci and Guddiranci dialects are mainly spoken, and 8 respondents (10.0%) came from north central.

Concerning languages, it is found that 77 respondents (96.3%) spoke Hausa as a first language (L1), while 3 of them (3.8%) spoke Hausa as a second language (L2) in a day-to-day interaction. Similarly, 77 participants (93.3%) spoke English as their second language, and 3 bilinguals (3.8%) spoke the language as a third or fourth language. However, 20 participants (25.0%) started acquiring the second language (English) before 5 years, while 60 respondents (75.0%) started learning the second language after the ages of 5. It is also found that most of the bilinguals began to learn the second language in elementary school. As 70 bilinguals (87.5%) acquired the language at school, and only 10 participants (12.5%) started acquiring the second language at home.

Furthermore, it is found that the majority of the participants are civil servants. As 55 (68.8%) fall within a working class or lecturers in particular, 18 respondents (22.5%) claimed to be students and 6 (7.5%) drop within the others. However, some respondents have at least master degrees or are currently pursuing, as 46 (57.5%) disclosed masters as their educational qualification, while 18 participants (46%) have a doctorate degree or are currently pursuing and 16 respondents (20%) drop within others, i.e. most of them are pursuing undergraduate study and a few indicate they only have a diploma or its equivalent. Subsequently, the bilinguals responded that they mostly spoke their native language in an everyday interaction, since 60 (75.0%) of them prepare to use Hausa than English on a regular basis, and 20 (25.0%) argued that they regularly spoke English in place of their first language.

### Functions of Hausa-English Code Switching

Gumperz (1982) preserved that there are certain functions of code switching within any social contact of bilingual speakers. The functions mostly correlated with the motives that stimulate bilinguals to switch between the two or more languages. As presented in the questionnaire, Hausa-English bilinguals were asked to consider the sentences/statement, whether are acceptable or unacceptable in informal conversation between fluent bilinguals, to which most of them responded positively. The figure 1 below presents the bilingual responses on every function of code switching. Thus every function is being abbreviated as follows: QTT01 = Quotations, LFC02 = Lack of Facilities, OBJ03 = Objectivization, IDS04 = Identity Sharing, RTT05 = Reiteration, ITJ06 = Interjections, ADS07=Addressee Specification and CLF08=Clarification.

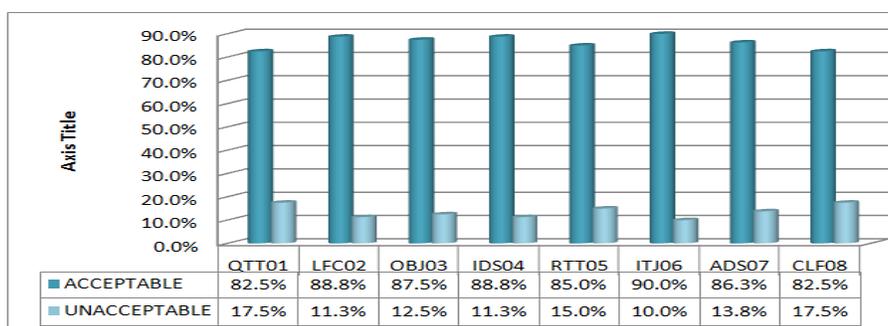


Figure 2. The Functions of Code Switching

### ***Quotations***

Bilinguals normally use code switching phrases to express a direct quotation or speech made by someone in relation to the topic being discussed, which can be a sermon, classroom instructions, official speeches, or exchange of jokes and pleasantries between peers. The result reveals that the majority of the respondents 66 (82.5%) accepted the notion that they use code switching during conversation to quote a statement made by someone, while 14 (17.5%) of them rejected the notion that they employ code switching to express a speech made by someone.

### ***Lack of Facilities***

There are definite ideas in one language that are not accessible in another language, especially technical terms in a particular area of specialization. The outcome shows that most of the code switchers, 71 (88.8%) of them whenever they come across such words and expressions they have no alternative rather than to switch to another variety to fully express themselves. While 9 (11.3%) participants argued that they are not using code switching in conversation, even when one lack a particular term to use in a certain context.

### ***Objectivization***

Code switchers in some instances switch to other varieties to comment personally on the subject of discussion, which may be a rejection, supportive, or pronouncement. It is established that 70 respondents (87.5%) normally employ code switching to make an objective statement which appears in speech to discern between well-known fact and the speaker's opinion. And 10 (12.4%) rejected the notion that they used code switching to objectively comment during discourse.

### ***Identity Sharing***

The code-switching acts that bilinguals usually engage in revealed their class or group identities. The result discloses that 71 (88.8%) Hausa respondents use code switching during conversation to share career or ethnic identities by switching between the two language varieties, while 9 (11.3%) of the bilinguals rejected the view that they use code switching to share identity with fellow associates.

### ***Reiteration***

A speech may be repeated in another code to stress a point. Bilinguals often repeat the same utterance in another language to deliberately emphasize what has already been said. The results showed that the majority of respondents 68 (85.0%) uses code switching by restating the same statement in another language to elaborate a point, and 12 (15.0%) bilinguals vetoed the assertion that they use code switching when they want to elaborate on a particular issue.

### ***Interjections***

Bilinguals in normal conversations or mode switch to another language, purposely to express exclamations such as sadness, shock, pleasure, etc. It is found that most of the participants 72 (90.0%) responded that they usually employ code switching in conversation to show their mode or express exclamations. And 8 respondents (10.0%) rejected the impression that they use code switching to express their mode or situations.

### ***Addressees Specification***

Conversational code switching is normally employed by bilinguals to select out one among the several possible addressees by pointing the message to the targeted recipient (Gumperz, 1982). The result establishes that most of the Hausa bilinguals 69 (86.3%) used code

switching to direct a message to a specific addressee, and 11 (13.8%) bilinguals do not use code switching to direct a message to a particular listener.

### ***Clarification***

Bilingual speakers commonly engage in code switching to clear up a possible misconception on the previous statement that they have already made. The bilinguals answers indicated that the majority of the Hausa-English bilinguals 66 (82.5%) responded that they normally use code switching to clarify message ambiguity. While 14 (17.8%) are not using code switching during conversation to qualify a particular message.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The interactive significance of code switching between bilingual speakers cannot be overstated. Even though, the outcomes of the survey show that it is conversational strategies generally use by bilinguals to efficiently share social and communicative significances. Since the Hausa bilinguals alternate between the two languages to quote a speech made by someone without dropping the intended meaning. They use code switching strategy to address different audiences within the same utterance, and sometimes make an objective comment. Whenever the bilinguals lack a linguistic element in one language, they have an option of using its equivalent in the other code. The bilinguals sometimes use code switching to avoid message ambiguity by uttering the same statement in another language to clarify the message to the anticipated listeners. They, however, switch between languages when they meant to indicate a precise point, or at times to display exclamations such as anger or surprise. Some members belonging to a certain language group or ethnicity, such as students/friends normally used code switching to share the individuality that fixes them together.

In spite of the fact that the study discusses certain functions of code switching among Hausa bilinguals, yet there is need for investigating the syntactic constraints of the two languages in the occurrence of code switching. Moreover, there is demand for extending code switching study to Hausa bilinguals in English as a foreign or second language classroom. Future researchers may also use qualitative procedures to observe and carry out a face to face interview with same participants or other Hausa bilingual speakers to profoundly examine the manifestation of the phenomena.

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