

MOTIVATIONS BEHIND LUBUKUSU DIALECT AND ENGLISH CODE SWITCHING DURING COMMUNICATION AMONG SPEAKERS IN BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

The effect of globalization, migrations, social interactions and search for identity has led to an increased linguistic phenomenon of language contact hence bilingualism and multilingualism. Besides, language, a rather dynamic concept is not static and has always been subject to political, social and economic changes throughout human history as most speakers of any language or dialect at any given time would resort to code switching and mixing or borrowing whenever they communicate in their local languages or dialects. As a result, it would shape and influence the speech patterns of the speakers. Code switching therefore is defined by Wardwaugh (1998) as shifting as the need arises, from one code to another. Although it may seem as obvious phenomenon, the important thing is not that code switching occurs but the main reasons why people decide to code switch. Furthermore, people are likely to ask questions such as who somebody is, where they are from and what they are in the eyes of the society in which they belong on the basis of the speech they are engaged in. Consequently, as people participate and communicate in different social domains owing to their different social roles, they influence their language of communication and their communicative intent. They do this by code switching and mixing their speech either consciously or otherwise. This aspect of bilingualism where people code switch from one language to another or within the same language, the manner in which they undertake this phenomenon could either be regarded as smooth or 'uneventful' in one way or purposeful in some other way. This means that either the speaker or the context of the speech influences code switching and mixing patterns or even the message. It was on that perspective that this study sought to investigate the effect of code switching and mixing of Lubukusu and English on communication among Lubukusu speakers of Bungoma County, Kenya. The general aim of the study was to fill the sociolinguistic gap on how code switching and mixing between a local language and a dominant language would influence communication in certain contexts/ social domains among Lubukusu speakers of Bungoma County as existing literature indicate most studies in this area have majorly dwelt on phonological, morphological and syntactic studies of Lubukusu but little or no study has been undertaken in contact area, especially from the domain perspective. The study's objective was to find out motivations behind code switching and mixing among Lubukusu speakers of Bungoma County. The study's research design was qualitative. Interview schedules and participant observation mode were applied in all aspects of the study. The target population was Lubukusu speakers of varying age groups from Bungoma County. The total respondents were 80 local Lubukusu speakers from Bungoma Central Sub county selected using a purposive sampling method. The researcher collected data using both open ended and structured interview schedules, partly developing some themes from the collected data. The study aims at coming up with findings that would

contribute new knowledge on language dynamism that may be relevant to the field of linguistics, sociology and sociolinguistics.

Key words: code mixing, code switching, bilingualism, multilingualism

Background to the Study

Code switching is the hallmark of bilingual communities worldwide especially when bilinguals (or multi-lingual's) mix two or more languages in discourse often with no change of interlocutor or topic (Poplack 1993). It is a common phenomenon in conversation among bilingual speakers and it occurs more often in conversation than in writing (Zentell 1985) According to Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011), code switching is a speech style unique to bilinguals in which speakers switch languages between or within sentences in a particular social situation. It can also be regarded as a process of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction; where contextualizing talk may refer to local discourse practices such as turn-taking or taking relevant information beyond the current exchange (Nilep 2006).

Valdes-Fallis (1977), avers that code switching is the use of two languages simultaneously or interchangeably. It implies some degree of competence in the two languages. It is used to achieve two things; filling a linguistic gap and for communication purposes (Gysels 1992). Milroy & Muysken (1995), define code switching as the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation while Myers- Scotton (1993), considers code switching as alternations of linguistic varieties within the same conversation. The term 'code' is a relatively neutral conceptualization of a linguistic variety- be it a language or a dialect(Poplack 1993), while bilingualism is the practice of alternatively using two or more languages and the individual involved as bilingual, where both languages are regularly accessed in normal interaction (Poplack 1993).The Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language refers to code switching and mixing in sociolinguistics as terms of language that refer to speech that draws to differing extents on at least two languages combined in different ways as when a Lubukusu/English bilingual says, "Luno se mbone any reason yakhuchaengotawe". Today I didn't see any reason for going home.

However, most researchers do not agree on the terminologies that describe the different aspects of language contact such as code switching, code mixing, borrowing and code alternation. There have been several criteria and proposals to distinguish these terms, however, some researchers like Myers- Scotton have adopted the term CS as a cover term for most of these aspects. Hence, CS is used as a cover term under which different forms of bilingual behavior are subsumed, that is, intra-sentential CS (code mixing) is used to refer to switching within the sentence while inter- sentential switching (code switching) is used for switches between sentences (Botzepe 2003).This research will thus adopt use of CS as an umbrella term to cover the phenomenon of alternating between two or more languages, in this case Lubukusu and English, within the same conversation.

Code switching emphasizes on movement from one language/code to another while code mixing emphasizes on language hybridization. Thus, in any bilingual or multilingual community, whose members are, equally or invariably proficient in more than one language, speakers may often alternate between two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation. This will result into code switching/mixing. Code switching may involve a word or a phrase in a single sentence – sometimes referred to as code-mixing –or it could be

an alternation between one or several sentences of the two or more languages (Mazrui 1995). This study will focus on different motivations for code switching & mixing and how it impacts on communication in different social domains & age groups and the nature of the speech itself, as whether 'natural' or 'unnatural' among the Babukusu, a dialect of the Luhya language found in Bungoma County.

Lubukusu is one of the seventeen Luhya dialects. It is spoken mainly by Babukusu who are found in Bungoma and Trans-Nzoia counties and in formerly Lugari District of Kakamega County in Western Kenya. There are, however, many other speakers of Lubukusu found in other parts of Kenya due to continuous migrations.

According to Were (1967), Babukusu trace their origins to the foothills of Mount Elgon commonly referred to Mt 'Masaba' in Lubukusu dialect. It is postulated that they lived here for many years and increased in population although they had originally come from and interacted with some Kalenjin sub-tribes in a place known as Sirikwa. Lubukusu is also believed to be a dialect of the Masaba people of Uganda. It is strongly related to Gas dialect of Masaba people in Eastern Uganda and to the Luhya dialect of Tachoni than any other dialects spoken by the Luhya (Mutonyi 2000). Lubukusu is influenced by other dialects due to interaction between its speakers and speakers of other languages (Lwangale, 20016).

Thus, this contact between Lubukusu and other dialects of the Luhya language and neighboring languages such as the Kalenjin led to varieties of the language both at the syntactic and morphological level (Mutonyi 2000). Hence, during communication, speakers of Lubukusu are likely to alternate within Lubukusu varieties or between Lubukusu and other Luhya dialects or other local languages. This is besides English and Kiswahili which are formally taught in schools in Kenya. Kiswahili is the national language and English is the official language thus they are taught in Kenyan public schools as compulsory subjects and as courses in colleges and universities. Therefore any speaker of Lubukusu who has gone through the public school system in Kenya has some considerable level of competence in both Kiswahili and English.

As a language used widely for communication in the pre-colonial era and even after, English attained a special status in the lives of many Kenyans, notes Wafula (2008) while quoting Parron and Holloway (1965), and because of its educational, economic, political and social use, many Kenyans including Lubukusu speakers have pursued it. My study, therefore, will focus on the effect of the aspects of code switching and mixing between Lubukusu and English, a language learnt and acquired mainly in schools, on communication in Lubukusu among the Babukusu of Bungoma County.

According to Nabea (2007), on language hegemony in Kenya, there have been attempts to promote English over other local languages including Kiswahili as cited educational policies from pre-colonial times through the colonial era up to now. He argues that many Kenyans, in spite of this, have not remained passive to the language situation. They have asserted themselves in their L1 by CS and mixing to suit the local circumstances. Speakers of local languages, (Lubukusu included), and who are by way of the constitution and language policy exposed to English and Kiswahili at school resort to CS and mixing of their L1 with English or Kiswahili as bilinguals/multi-lingual's in different social domains (Nabea 2007) On English hegemony, he thus states;

“There is empirical evidence that people have not simply acquiesced to the situation but have acted on it. They have both mediated and acted on linguistic supremacy in a number of ways though at non- official levels” (128)

This therefore shows that although speakers of local languages in Kenya such as Lubukusu do learn English at school, whose aim is to have it appear superior, but have simply blended it with their local languages to their advantage. While quoting Ashcroft et.al (1989) Nabea (2007), postulates that speakers of native languages have resorted to reconfiguring English to suit their levels of use. This entails CS and mixing local languages and English especially by domesticating English words into local languages at the phonological, morphological, syntactic and even lexical level. For example, CS and mixing between Ki-Meru and English, (Nabea 2007), avers that English is domesticated into Ki-Meru where two different lexemes, one from English and one from Meru are dovetailed into one word.

Statement of the Problem

Myers-Scotton (1993), notes that dominant languages especially English and Kiswahili, will continue to grow and expand at the expense of indigenous languages in Kenya due to continuous migrations. So there is need to find out how this affects local languages like Lubukusu. Besides,(Nettle and Romaine 2001), state that this increasing pressure will be at the expense of indigenous languages. This, thus, creates gaps in ascertaining some needed facts about the linguistic situation of some indigenous languages in Africa, (Muaka 2011).The pressure exerted by a dominant language and what a dominated language does in the context where speakers of a speech community were once fluent in only one language.

Nabea (2007), however, notes that despite the pressure from official/national languages such as English and Kiswahili on Indigenous languages, speakers of indigenous languages have simply resorted to blending, that is, by code switching and mixing these languages to their advantage- to ease communication though at the expense of language change (a dominated language adopting new words thus easing or impeding communication). Bilingual speakers use CS to express social and linguistic meanings during conversation(Gumperz,1983) while (Bollinger,1975) enlightened that bilinguals use code switching as conversational tactics to lessen communication difficulties but also bilingual speakers may engage in CS to disguise, misinform or brag to the listener! This means that code switching and mixing can be used strategically by some speakers to either enhance or impede communication in the event of an interaction.

It is on this basis that this research investigates the reasons for CS between an indigenous language (Lubukusu) and an official language (English) in different domains and how the speakers of different ages communicate in Lubukusu in their daily conversations and interactions in Bungoma County-Kenya.

Literature Review

Alternating the use of two or more languages in conversation has developed in two distinct but related dimensions- structural and sociolinguistic code switching (Boztepe 2003).The structural approach to CS is mainly concerned with the grammatical aspects of CS which focuses on how the syntactic and morpho- syntactic constraints of code switching work. The sociolinguistic approach primarily looks at code switching as a discourse phenomenon that focuses attention on the social meaning CS creates (Auer 1998).These two approaches according to Boztepe (2003), always complement each other whereby the structural approach

identifies the morpho- syntactic patterns underlying the grammar of CS whereas the sociolinguistic approach explains why bilingual speakers speak the way they do.

According to Auer (1998), the sociolinguistic approach to code switching looks at how variables such as the topic of conversation, the participants, the setting and the affective aspect of the message influences communication. Besides, factors regarding linguistic behavior in different social domains and even gender (Gardner-Chloros 2009) are relevant to understanding CS and its effect on communication. According to Gardner Chloros (2009), men code switched/mixed twice as much as women although the differences were also connected to what community they belonged and the social context of the exchange.

The grammatical approach to code switching can be divided into sub-categories such as extra sentential code switching, inter sentential code switching, intra sentential code switching, unit insertion, unit hybridization, sentence insertion, idiom, proverb or collocation insertion, inflection attachment and lexicalization.

Extra-sentential code switching: This is where a common feature is used like to add a tag question, for example like in; *Dukommerval pa torsdag*, right? (Swedish English) You will come on Thursday, right?

Inter-sentential code switching: This is where a switch occurs at clause/sentence boundaries. For example in English and Kiswahili; this is the boy *mwenyealikujahapa Jana*. (This is the boy who came here yesterday) Intra-sentential CS, where switches occur within clauses or within words, for example, *Mis amigos* finished first= Spanish+ English (My friend finished first).

Intra-sentential CS according to Poplack (1993) is the insertional type based on data which represents lexical borrowing. This therefore confirms that there is no clear demarcation between CS and borrowing as elements of language contact phenomenon. This is despite researchers such as (poplack1993) citing that there is a difference between CS and borrowing due to the fact that borrowed elements identify with donor language etymologically but assume the morphology, syntactic and often phonological identity of the recipient language. He further argues that these elements tend to recur in the speech of an individual and are widespread across the community.

Unit insertion refers to introduction of a grammatical unit above a word in a sentence of a given language from another language, (Kachru, 1975). In case of Lubukusu-English code switching, it is the introduction of an English grammatical unit above a word in a Lubukusu Sentence such as use of a noun phrase (NP), Verb Phrase (VP) or adjectival phrase (AdjP) and so on. For example of Lubokusu-English code switching:-

Nichile Early Enough- Adverbial Phrase Insertion.

(I came Early Enough)

Ndecha Tomorrow –Adverbial Phrase

(I will come tomorrow)

My sister *Kha-travel-a Luno*-Verb Phrase

(My sister is travelling today)

Ndakhurumila my address- Noun Phrase insertion.

(I will send you my address)

Unit hybridization refers to code switching and mixing within a unit for example a noun phrase or a verb phrase. In Lubukusu English code switching, the morphemes of both languages are mixed within a unit. The example of hybridization is as below:-

Opposition NibhoBharerangaConfusionMkenya.(NP + PP)
(It is opposition who bring confusion in Kenya)

Sentence insertion according to Kachru is the insertion of a sentence from one language into the sentence of a second language. In Lubukusu English Code switching, such sentential insertions can be illustrated as follows:-

In fact*sende* chatomorrow Tawe.
(In fact I will not come tomorrow).
My *brotheali* very funny lelo.
(My brother is very funny now days)
Ndola Meeting *Neyanchile*
(I will arrive when the meeting has started).

Idiom, Proverb or Collocation insertion is the insertion of idiomatic expression proverbs and collocation of one language to another language, for example, insertion of English idiomatic expression wise sayings or proverbs into Lubukusu, discourse as indicated below.

Kenyakhanaomanyeoli better late than never
(You should that it is better late than never)
Khehopa Nandi the truth shall prevail,
(I am hoping that the truth shall prevail)
Khocha, Truth is Bitter
(Uncle Truth is Bitter)

Inflection attachment as an aspect of code switching and mixing is where inflectional morphemes of one language are attached to the other language for example:-

Chi+computerinflection for plural for computer
Ch+message inflection for plural.

The inflection attachment has to do with person, number, noun class, tense and so on.

The above inflection attachment as shown in Lubuku English code switching- “Chi” marks plural and “ko” marks past tense.

Lexicalization in code switching (Kachru, 1975) refers infusion in a language from a lexical source not native to the particular language in use.

In Lubukusu code switching infusion of some English language word into Lubuku speech is as follows:-

Last month *sena-make-ilekhucha* to schooltawe
(Last month I did not make it to school)

There is also the distinction between code switching as an asset for bilinguals with a high competence in both languages and code switching as a reparation tool for inefficiency in the L2, the so called restricted code switching (Hammers and Blanc 2000). According to Song and Andrews (2009), code switching is ‘an attempt to keep the conversation flowing without having to pause or abandon the message. My study will consider the aspect of conversational code switching between Lubukusu and English by speakers of Lubukusu with the interest of showing the reasons for CS, the effects of code switching/mixing on communication in different social domains and how the interlocutors have adapted to the mechanism.

According to Crystal (1997), the aspect of code switching or mixing occurs when a bilingual person is able to communicate to varying extents in a second language. This includes those who make irregular use of a second language, are able to make use of a second language but have not for some time or those who have considerable skill in a second language. The kind of code switching between languages could be alteration of sentences, phrases from both languages succeeding each other and switching in a long narrative. There are a number of possible reasons for code switching from one language to another (Crystal 1997). In many bilingual communities, Aranoff and Miller,(2003),code switching occurs mostly when speakers do so for a number of reasons and when they do so,it is because they have available options. Mono-lingual speakers can switch between styles or even dialects. Code switching by mono-lingual within one language by mixing dialects or types of vernacular or mixing academic speak with street speak is also a common phenomenon. Other reasons for code switching as cited by Skiba(1997) range from need to amplify or emphasize by the speaker or the mood of the speaker. Also, when the speaker wants to quote other people, to show identity or as a means of expressing habits. Code switching also occurs due to speakers lexical needs that is, when people often use some technical terms or words written in another language. In this case, people try to translate these words which leads to distortion of the exact meaning and the value of the term or word. Thus, code switching occurs to maintain the exact meaning of the word.

Methodology

The researcher employed simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques to select the sample from the population. Simple random sampling was used so that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected fairly. Purposive sampling was then used to come up with required number of individuals with information necessary for the study (Mugenda&Mugenda 2003). Therefore, 80 individuals will be selected purposively from the target population.

Table 1: Sampling Frame

Category	Education	Sample	Total	Percentage
Men	Secondary	20	20	100
Women	Secondary	20	20	100
Children	Primary	20	20	100
Elderly	Secondary	20	20	100
Total		80	80	100

The researcher looked into what motivated Lubukusu-English CS by speakers of Lubukusu in Bungoma County by considering the level of education and the age of the respondents. The researcher looked at what motivated switching in relation to the level education and age of the speakers to establish if reasons for switching varied if not similar.

Speaker’s level of education

Motivation for code switching was studied in terms of the level of education of the speakers. The researcher looked at what reasons motivated code switching in relation to what level of education the speaker had as education is one of the factors that influence language use

according to(Fishman 1977) on domains of language use. SharafEldin (2014) studied Arab Moroccan immigrants in Canada and concluded that more educated high income speaker code switched more and with different reasons more than the lowly educated. The guiding question was; while speaking Lubukusu, do you switch to English or even mix with English words sometimes in your speech and if so why?

The results were tabulated in the tables 3 and 4 as indicated below:-

Table 2: Motivation for code switching with primary and below education

Reasons for code switching	No. of respondents	(%)
To lay emphasis	25	31%
To incorporate new concepts	40	50%
For clarification	10	13%
Place of speech	05	06%
Total	80	100%

Source: Field Data (2019)

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In table 3 above, reasons for code switching by respondents with primary education and below ranged from laying of emphasis during speech, incorporating of new ideas and words, to clarify and the place of discourse. 31% of all the respondents resorted to code switching to emphasize what they are communicating while 50% resorted to code switching in order to incorporate new concepts and words for effective communication. Also, 13% of the respondents resorted to code switching to clarify what they were communicating while 6% of

the respondents said they resorted to code switching depending on the place where the discourse is taking place.

Table 2: Motivation for code switching with secondary education and above

Reasons for code switching	No. of respondents	(%)
To lay emphasis	10	13%
To incorporate new concepts	05	06%
To shift the topic/direction of talk	20	25%
Familiarity	35	43%
Attitude	10	13%
Total	80	100%

Source: Field Data (2019)

In table 4 above, motivation for code switching by speakers with a secondary level education and above stemmed from factors such as need to emphasize what one was saying, to incorporating new words or ideas that are not common in Lubukusu. They also resorted to code shifting whenever there was a shift in the topic or due to familiarity with the interlocutors while few others mixed language because of the attitude they had towards their listeners. Therefore, 13% of the respondents that were interviewed cited emphasis as their main reason for code switching of Lubukusu and English language. 6% resorted to code switching in order to incorporate new words and concepts that are alien to their language. 25% acknowledged using code switching especially when there is a shift in the topic that is being discussed whereas 43% claimed that they code switching due to familiarity with the person or group they are interacting with in conversation. 13% code switched in order to impress upon the listener about their bilingual knowledge.

Code Switching in Relation to the Speakers Age

Motivation for code switching was studied in terms of the age of the speaker. According to Fishman (1977) and Apple and Muysken (1987), age is a factor in language use. Individuals tend to exhibit different patterns of language use at different ages in life. There are therefore three age groups or generations that use language differently, that is, the young age, 18 years and below, the middle age 19 to 55 years and the old age 56 years and above (Fishman 1977). The researcher looked at what motivated the speaker’s code switching in Lubukusu in their day to day conversation. The results were tabulated in table below:-

Table 3: The Young Age (18 yrs. and below)

Reasons for code switching	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Expressing new ideas	10	50
Seeking attention	05	25
Lack of competence	04	20
Fashionable	01	05
Total	20	100

Source: Field Data (2019)

In the table 5 above, 50% of the respondents cited the aspect of expressing new ideas as the main reason for code switching while 20% code switched so as to seek the attention of their listeners. 15% of the respondents, however, resorted to code switching due to lack of

competence in their L1 while 6% resorted to code switching because they find it as a fashionable thing to mix Lubukusu with English during speech.

Table 4: The middle age (19 – 55 years)

Reason for code switching	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Expressing new ideas	03	15
Seeking attention	10	50
Lack of competence	02	10
Fashionable	05	25
Total	20	100

Source: Field Data (2019)

In the table 6 above, 15% of the respondents who are adults in the middle age group resorted to code switching due to need to express new ideas/concepts in Lubukusu. 50% code switched in order to receive attention from their listeners while 10% would opt to code switch for lack of competence in the language they are speaking, in this case Lubukusu. Another 25% resorted to code switching to impress upon their listeners as they thought it something fashionable to be bilingual. It suggested they were more educated.

Table 5: The old age (56 years. and above)

Reason for code switching	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Expressing new ideas	15	75
Seeking attention	04	20
Lack of competence	01	5
Fashionable	-	-
Total	20	100

Source: Field Data (2019)

In table 7 above, 75% of the respondents cited cause for CS as need to express new ideas/concepts while speaking Lubukusu. 20% of the respondents said they code switched in order to get attention from their listeners while only 5% said they resorted to code switching due to lack of full mastery of their L1, that is, Lubukusu.

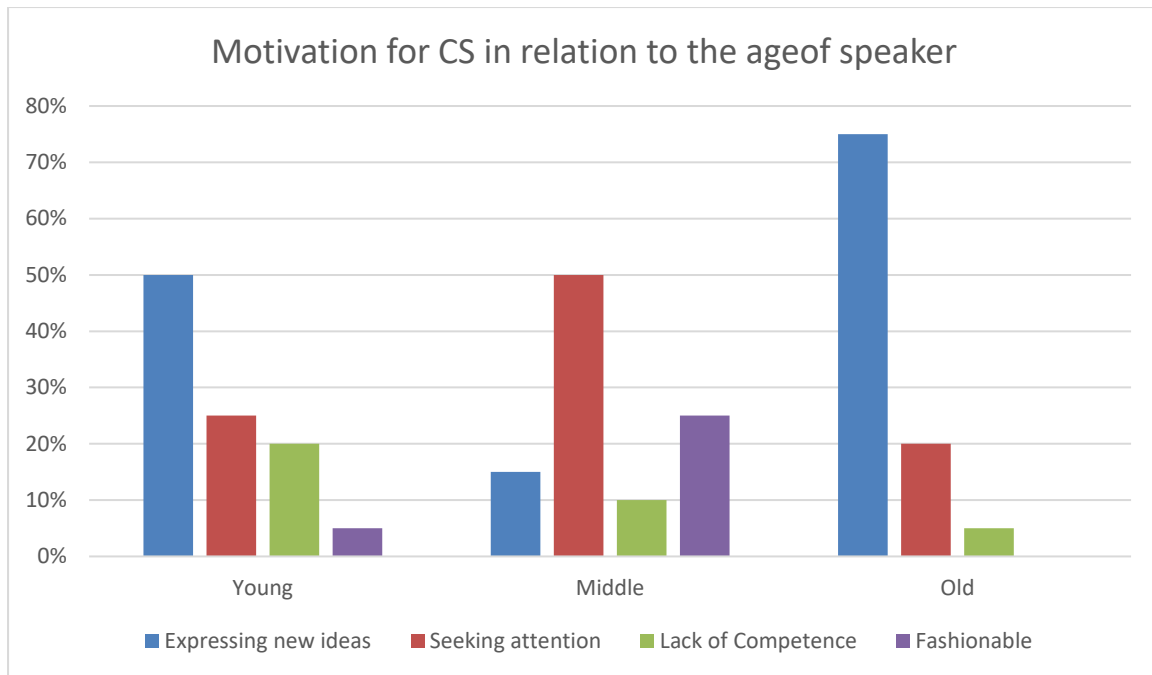
The above tables indicate that there are variations in reasons for code switching and mixing between Lubukusu and English language in relation to the age of the speakers of the Lubukusu dialect. The table below is a summary which shows the differences in percentage for code switching reasons in relation to the age of the speaker.

Table 6: Summary of motivation for CS in relation to the age of speaker

Reason for code switching	Young age(18& below)	Middle age(19-55)	Old age(56 & above)
Expressing new ideas	50	15	75
Seeking attention	25	50	20
Lack of competence	20	10	5
Fashionable	5	25	-
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Field Data (2019)

Information in the above table can also be represented as in figure 1. Below



Source: Field Data (2019)

Conclusion

This study concludes that reasons for English – Lubukusu code switching by speakers of Lubukusu are determined by factors such as educational background and the age of the speakers. Code switching is experienced more in the public domain such as church, work places, street and so on than in the home domain. Most speakers of Lubukusu consider English-Lubukusu code switching as way of easing communication among interlocutors.

Recommendations

There is need for more research into the code switching and other bilingual/ multilingual language phenomena owing to the dynamic nature of our social lives that could be attributed to many changes in social, technological, and societal realms. This could help project whether native languages such as Lubukusu faced a bleak future or not in the event that they are facing a lot of pressure from dominant global languages such as English.

Funding should be increased and made available to interested groups/individuals willing to study and contribute to local languages literature through writing of books to ensure local language vitality.

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