

# **Stakeholders' Opinions on the use of Code Switching/ Code Mixing as Coping Strategies and its Implications for Teaching and Learning in Tanzanian Secondary Schools**

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***Abstract:** This paper focuses on the opinions of stakeholders on the use of code switching for teaching and learning in Tanzania secondary schools although examinations are set in English. English-Kiswahili code switching is employed intensively in the classrooms by both teachers and learners, as a coping strategy to attain meaningful learning. This practice is not permitted officially in Tanzania even though it may be the only possible strategy at the moment to move away from the difficulty faced in using English only to communicate in teaching and learning. Specifically the study used interviews, observations and documentary analysis. Major findings from the stakeholders indicate that code switching appeared to be a very natural, obvious and necessary practice. There were various reasons advanced for teachers and students code switching practices. In addition there were different manners in which the two languages were used; reasons for this are explained. Code switching was employed unsystematically despite stakeholders' preference to use code switching. Code switching as it is used currently does not lead to competence in either Kiswahili or English. It is stressed in this paper that competence in English and Kiswahili is beneficial. It is thus recommended to improve the teaching of English and Kiswahili by using qualified language teachers. It is also recommended that multilingualism rather than bilingualism through code switching is worth encouraging and facilitating. It is important for Tanzanian students to learn several languages apart from English and Kiswahili and gain reasonable competence in them.*

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The languages officially used for teaching and learning in the different levels of the Tanzanian education system are Kiswahili and English. Kiswahili is used at the primary level while English is used at the secondary level (Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) 1995). It is stated in MoEC (1995) in the Education and Training Policy that it is expected that at the end of seven years of primary education, pupils will have acquired and developed adequate mastery of English; both spoken and written, to cope with the demands at secondary, post secondary and the world of work. However, what was anticipated in this policy seems not to be the case as it is noted from a number of different studies (Roy-Campbell and Qorro, 1997; Brock-Utne, 2000; Galabawa and Lwaitama, 2004; and Vuzo, 2005). Students, therefore, proceed in education with deficient skills in the medium of instruction. Teachers and students alike frequently employ the use of anomalous

patterns of communication like concurrent translations, code mixing and code switching (CS) where usually Kiswahili is the matrix language<sup>4</sup> and English the embedded code, in activities and tasks in lessons to fill in this gap in English language proficiency that is lacking. Consequently the medium, especially in secondary schools, is effectively a mixture of English and Kiswahili. This is regardless of the fact that examinations are set in English.

Various authors define CS differently. Heller (1988) for instance, defines CS as the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode. Such switching involves the use of two or more languages in the same conversation, usually within the same conversational turn, or even within the same sentence of that turn. Myers-Scotton (1993), further defines CS in a slightly more technical and explicit way as the selection by bilinguals or multi-linguals of forms from an embedded language (or languages) in utterances of a matrix language during the same conversation. Winford (2003) defines code switching as involving several types of bilingual language mixture including the alternating use of relatively complete utterances from two different languages, alternation between sentential and/ or clausal structures from the two languages, and the insertion of (usually lexical) elements from one language into the other. Deducing from these definitions code switching is a form of practice of bilingualism.

There are some controversies, however, in the definition of code switching. The tendency to define code switching as a unitary and clearly identifiable phenomenon has been questioned by Winford (2003) who refers to code switching as a fuzzy edged concept. According to him, CS overlaps with other kinds of bilingual mixture and the boundaries between them are difficult to establish. This indeterminacy is reflected in the difficulty of distinguishing code switching from borrowing on the one hand and mixing / interference on the other. Likewise, Herdina and Jessner (2002), argue that it is not easy to distinguish between code switching and code mixing as it appears to be a more or less grammatical or lexical distinction rather than a psycholinguistic one. In sum, most scholars do not agree on precisely what kinds of alternations should be included under the designation 'code switching'.

In this respect Myers-Scotton (1993), states that single word switching and borrowing are essentially similar processes which fall along a continuum of code switching based on degree of integration or assimilation. Appel and Muysken (1995), highlight that while CS is described as the use of several languages in the same discourse there may not be one socio- linguistic definition. They distinguish three types of switches; emblematic switching which involves a tag, or a parenthetical in another language than the rest of the sentence; intra sentential switches which occur in the middle of a sentence and it is often called code mixing while inter sentential switches occur between sentences. The issue discussed among

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<sup>4</sup> The matrix language is the main language in code-switching utterances, while the embedded language has the lesser role (Myers-Scotton, 1993)

researchers is whether all types of intra sentential alternation should be included within code switching proper.

There are several factors for CS. Appel and Muysken (1995), identify the following factors for switching between languages:

- The referential function - this often involves the lack of knowledge of one of the languages or lack of facility in that language on a certain subject;
- The directive function - which is directed to the hearer either to include a person more by using her or his language or the opposite to exclude a person from portions of the conversation;
- The expressive function - where speakers identify a mixed identity through the use of two languages in the same discourse; the phatic function which involves switching to indicate a change in tone of the conversation;
- The metalinguistic function - which is used when speakers switch to impress the other participants with a show of linguistic skills; and finally,
- The poetic function - which involves switching for instance in jokes and pun (Appel and Muysken, 1995).

Winford (2003), mentions some of the socio-linguistic situations that promote code switching.

- First, is the stable long-term situations such as those in Switzerland where bilingualism is the norm;
- Second, are situations for instance in Africa where colonization introduced European languages to serve official purposes like education and administration alongside the indigenous languages;
- Third, the increasing flow of immigrants into more industrialized nations. In Europe, for instance, these minority groups have to become bilingual in the host community's language;
- And finally, there are situations in which speakers of non-standard dialects are required to learn the standard variety of their language for purposes of education and social advancement.

Thus, CS is a cover term for varied types of bilingual and bi-dialectal language mixture resulting from quite different social circumstances and motivations.

Given the contradictions between scholars as presented above with regard to the definition of code switching, this study has used code switching as a cover term for code mixing, code switching, and borrowing and translations - although it is noted that code mixing is generally looked at more negatively than code switching (Appel and Muysken, 1995). For this reason code mixing is defined in some detail.

Code mixing is seen as the unsystematic result of not knowing very well one of the languages involved and is a form of linguistic decay (Appel and Muysken, 1995). On the contrary, code switching does not necessarily indicate a deficiency on the part of the speaker but may result from complex bilingual skills of the speaker (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Code switching is a strategy that even a teacher with good command of English may use when s/he sees that his/ her students do not

understand. It is a strategy that is often used by teachers who are knowledgeable in the first language of students. In the Tanzanian classrooms, it has been noted by some researchers, for instance, Brock-Utne (2004) that code-mixing seems to be the most prevalent form of coping strategy commonly used by teachers. These teachers are not language teachers and a couple do not have a good command of the medium of instruction. In this study therefore code switching underscores the negative aspects associated with code mixing.

English-Kiswahili code switching is employed intensively in the classrooms by both teachers and learners, as a coping strategy to attain meaningful learning. Although this practice is not officially permitted in Tanzania, it may be the only possible strategy at the moment to move away from the difficulty faced by using English only to communicate in teaching and learning. Otherwise teachers practice either chorus teaching where students repeat in chorus or the so called safe talk (Brock-Utne, 2004). Ferguson (2002), who has done research in post colonial settings, notes that official attitudes towards this practice in various settings range from neutral in South Africa to extremely negative in Hong Kong. Hence, he argues that code switching should not be seen as a dysfunctional form of speech behaviour, but on the contrary an important even necessary, communicative resource for the management of learning. This is especially for pupils with limited proficiency in the official instructional medium. This however, calls for research into this area since CS could also be viewed negatively as a form of language interference (Senkoro, 2004). Moreover, CS may have a different impact in the Tanzanian context since it is used by teachers and students not proficient in one of the languages. It is expected that this study provides some insight in this respect.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **A Reflection on Additive Bilingualism**

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), defines the term bilingual education as relating only to the language of instruction, which requires that at least two languages should be used as means of instruction in subjects other than the languages themselves. This term is not intended to apply to the educational goal but to the means.

There is an assumption that the use of two or more languages in school curriculum automatically leads to the raising of standards, more effective outcomes and a more child centred education. Wurm (2001) mentions some advantages of bi and multilingual as being more flexible, more alert minds and a greater and quicker thinking capacity. This is on the basis of the much greater volume of memory which they have for mastering two or more languages with different language systems, different vocabularies, grammars, sound structures and idiomatic expressions. Moreover, they have access to a far greater volume of information and knowledge (both linguistic and general in their minds) than monolinguals. According to Chalker and Weiner (1994), a multilingual is a person who speaks several languages. Cummins (2000) however, cautions that there are limitations in the pedagogical benefits of bilingual education. For example bilingual education does

not always guarantee effective schooling. Building on this notion Baker (2002) draws our attention to the fact that among bilingual schools in every country there appears to be a mixture of the outstanding and the ordinary; and bilingual education is only one ingredient among many to effective schooling.

Therefore, educationalists need to understand the politics behind, and sometimes against bilingual education if there is to be forward movement. The defence of bilingual education cannot come suddenly from language planning perspectives or through a statement of the many and real advantages of bilingual education. The benefits of bilingual education are neither self-apparent nor are they intrinsically obvious (Baker, 2002).

In view of bilingualism, Lambert (1977) developed the concepts of additive and subtractive bilingualism. Additive bilingualism refers to the positive outcomes of being bilingual where a new language is learnt in addition to the mother tongue which is further developed. The person's total linguistic repertoire is then extended. Subtractive bilingualism, on the other hand, refers to the negative affective and cognitive effects of being bilingual. A dominant or majority language is learned at the cost of the mother tongue, which is displaced and both languages are underdeveloped. Additive bilingualism therefore, is a precondition for enhanced cognitive, linguistic and academic growth.

In order to promote additive bilingualism, Cummins (1989) puts forward the linguistic inter dependence theory which is defined as:

The extent that instruction in L1 is effective in promoting proficiency in L1, transfer of this proficiency to L2 will occur provided there is adequate exposure to L2 (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn L2 without detriment to competence in L1 (Cummins, 1989: 29).

The underlying concept of the linguistic interdependence principle is that the level of competence to be attained in additional languages is highly dependent on the stage of development that has been reached in the first language. This is a valuable contribution. It is noted that additive bilingualism promotes positive aspects. The problem with the additive bilingualism thinking though is that it does not seem to fit the Tanzanian situation. The thinking comes from environments where speakers of a minority language are confronted with a society and schools run in the language of the majority population. It is not the mother tongue of the minority children but it is a majority language they hear all day around themselves, in post offices, banks, public places, in the media and in the streets except in their immediate home surroundings. They, as a result, actually become bilingual like many Tanzanians who speak both their vernacular and Kiswahili which they are also exposed to daily. This is not the case with Tanzanian students having to use a minority language as the language of instruction (Brock-Utne, 1999).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used mainly qualitative approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that the qualitative approach helps the researcher to study a phenomenon in its natural setting and attempts to make sense of it to interpret a phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to it. This enabled the researcher to obtain first hand information from the informants. Simple counting techniques were also used in this study as Silverman (2001) argues that quantification can neatly tie in with the logic of qualitative research. Thus, instead of just taking the researchers word for it, the reader has a chance to gain a sense of flavour of the data as a whole. The study made use of triangulation; that is, the use of multiple sources of data collection to strengthen the study by enhancing validity (Denzin, 1978). The study was conducted purposely in two government secondary schools. Government secondary schools were selected purposively as they have a uniform curriculum and the government prepares, supervises and implements the secondary school curriculum and syllabus.

The target population in the study were Form I government secondary school students, teachers and head teachers in Tanzania. Due to the shift in language of instruction between primary and secondary school level, secondary school students is the group being most affected by the language policy in use. Teachers were used in this study due to the fact that they are the language policy implementers. Head teachers are also stakeholders as the overseers of teaching and learning in their respective schools.

The study specifically used interviews, observations and documentary analysis. Interviews were conducted on the 2 head teachers for the two schools used in the study and 4 teachers. The selection of the teachers was left to the discretion of the headmasters who each selected 2 teachers in his school that were teaching Form I and who were willing to participate in the study. A total of 42 students participated in the interviews. An equal total number of 21 boys and 21 girls from school X and Y participated in the study. Student interviewees were selected purposefully from a list of names written on the basis of school performance, such that some were selected from the top, from the middle and from the bottom of the list. Given the positions they held, it was expected that they would give a general representation of the students in each class.

Observations were used to describe classroom sessions and the language used for teaching and learning as practiced in the classroom context. This method was also used to verify the information gathered from interviews. Several and separate classroom observations were conducted during the course of the study. Data collection was done for six months. The study was conducted in a normal Tanzanian classroom setting, where students sit in rows facing the blackboard in front of the class where the teacher is mostly positioned. Documents were used in this study to augment evidence from other sources.

## Research Objectives

### Research objectives were as follows:

- To investigate the opinions of stakeholders of code switching in secondary school setting
- To examine the nature of code switching that takes place in Tanzanian secondary schools
- To assess the extent of code switching as practised in Tanzania secondary schools
- To explore the factors contributing to code switching by teachers and students' in Tanzanian secondary schools
- To assess the effect of the practice of code switching on teaching and learning

## Research Questions

### The following were the research questions:

- (i) What are the opinions of stakeholders on code switching?
- (ii) What is the nature of code switching as practiced in Tanzanian secondary schools?
- (iii) What is the extent of code switching as practiced in Tanzania secondary schools?
- (iv) What are the factors contributing to code switching by teachers and students in Tanzanian secondary schools?
- (v) What are the effects of code switching for teaching and learning in Tanzanian secondary schools?

## MAJOR FINDINGS

### Students' Views on Code Switching as Practiced by Teachers

Given the inadequate proficiency in English on both teachers and students, code switching seems inevitable in Tanzanian secondary school classes. Students' views were solicited in order to find out the extent to which code switching was a common practice in classes. Apart from one student respondent who claimed that teachers do not code switch, all other 41 student respondents claimed that teachers normally code switch. It appeared to be a very natural, obvious and necessary practice. One of these students' commented, '*Waalimu wanatumia Kiingereza na Kiswahili kidogo...wengi wao lazima wachanganye...(Teachers' use English and some Kiswahili...most of them must CS)*'. Drawing from this view it implies that teachers themselves are used to code switching. Students in this case assume it is normal that the teacher should code switch. In addition, student respondents highlighted that in cases where the teacher did not apply code switching students demanded code switching to be used. This has been pointed out by a couple of students. One of these students claimed, '*Wanachanganya Kiswahili kidogo asipochanganya tunamwambia mwalimu hatujaelewa ...Teachers' insert some Kiswahili if they don't code switch we tell the teacher that we have not understood*'.

Despite the fact that nearly all student respondents acknowledged **that teachers code switch it is mentioned by majority of these students that they do not code switch a lot compared to their students**. A total of 27 out of 42 student respondents stated that when code switching teachers used mostly English Medium of Instruction (MOI), a little Kiswahili is used when necessary to assist students in some aspects. The remaining 14 out of the 42 students emphasized that CS was practiced. They did, however, not indicate whether teachers used more of Kiswahili or English as the MOI. Students' responses hold the view that the general tendency of teachers code switching is that the matrix language is English and the embedded language is Kiswahili. However, classroom observations that I made showed that there was no formula in relation to the use of Kiswahili and English. Some teachers used more Kiswahili than English while others used more English while code switching. It also varied from subject to subject, whereby in one subject a teacher could use a lot of Kiswahili and in another subject the same teacher would do otherwise and use more English. Findings from observations show that when code switching, Kiswahili is used unofficially to involve students by participating more in the process of learning where they seem not to be following. Teachers gave directives and commands in class in Kiswahili MOI and Kiswahili is used to crack jokes and pass informal comments.

Students put forward various reasons triggering off this conduct of code switching by their teachers which are encapsulated in the Table 1.

**Table 1: Students' Reasons for Teachers' Code Switching**

<b>Reason to code switch</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
To elaborate and to clarify	6	14
To give detailed explanations	2	5
Beginning the lesson	2	5
To translate	3	7
To give examples	3	7
To explain vocabularies	4	10
To explain difficult concepts	3	7
To assist and simplify our learning	2	5
To ask and answer questions	4	10
To enable us to understand	7	16
To give directives	2	5
It is just a habit	3	7
**None of the above	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>



Reasons students gave for teachers' code switching implied that they, too, see the necessity for code switching. It seems that without code switching it would be next to impossible for quite a number of students to follow instruction. Most of the reasons advanced stress the importance of enabling students to understand. Other reasons put forward are related to this reason for instance the need for clarifications, to explain vocabularies, to give translations, to give detailed explanations, to elaborate difficult concepts and for giving vivid and real examples from students' experiences in Kiswahili. In addition, teachers used CS for classroom administration; to get students' attention at the beginning of the lesson and to provide directives. Although not indicated by students, the use of CS by teachers could indicate lack of English language competence on the part of the teacher in relating to new concepts. This was observed in some of the class sessions.

### **Code Switching as Practiced by Students**

A total of 32 out of the 42 student respondents declared that they use code switching frequently. In addition, they verified that they used mostly Kiswahili compared to English. Findings demonstrated that 8 of these 42 students declared that they do not code switch but use only Kiswahili. They argued that it is the language that they know and can communicate easily amongst each other. These students claimed that they did not know much English. Hence, there is disparity in the use of these languages. This could also have grave consequences as it means that for some of the student respondents almost nothing is grasped in some classes where English use preponderates. The remaining 2 of the 42 student respondents maintained that they never code switched but used English only as the MOI. These findings indicate that most students use code switching quite frequently. However, it seems to be the general inclination as it was suggested by student respondents that Kiswahili is used more than English while code switching in comparison to their teachers. To them, Kiswahili is the matrix language and English is the embedded language. The reason behind this is that students said they were much more competent in Kiswahili than English.

### **Determinants of Code Switching by Students**

Student respondents reported diverse reasons that encouraged code switching:

- ***Tunatumia mchanganyiko...tunaogopa kuchekwa tukikosea English...*** We use both English and Kiswahili because we are scared of being laughed at when we make mistakes in English.
- ***Tunatumia Kiswahili darasani kuuliza maswali ili kupata maana na kuelewa zaidi...*** We use Kiswahili in class to ask questions so as to get meaning and to understand more.
- ***Tunatumia Kiswahili darasani ili kuelekezana maneno magumu...*** We use Kiswahili in class so as to explain to each other the difficult words.
- ***Natumia Kiswahili ninaposhindwa kutunga sentensi kwa Kiingereza...*** I use Kiswahili especially when I cannot construct a sentence in English.

A few students acknowledged of using English MOI just in situations that compelled them to use it. For instance in debate clubs:

*'Mara nyingi tunatumia Kiswahili... tunatumia Kiingereza mara chache... labda iwe ni muda wa mjadala ambapo tunajifunza kuongea Kiingereza lakini hata hapa huwa tunapopungukiwa maneno ya Kiingereza tunatumia Kiswahili. We use mostly Kiswahili... we rarely use English... unless it is debate time where we learn to speak English but even here when we are short of words in English we use Kiswahili...'*

There were various determinants for code switching as reported by the student respondents. A summary is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Determinants of Students' Code Switching Practices**

Reason to code switch	No. of respondents	Total percentage (%)
To ask and answer questions	11	26
Incompetence in English MOI	3	7
In classroom tasks	2	5
During absence of teacher	4	10
To ask a neighbour for elaborations	4	10
Fear of being laughed at	2	5
To understand	5	11
To get translations of terminology	6	14
To express myself better	4	10
**Holding contrary opinion	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>

Hence, there are variations in determinants for code switching between teachers and students. All however, culminate in the need to enable students to understand. From Table 2, it is indicated that a majority of the student respondents' code switch to ask and answer questions in class. This was especially the case in instances where the teacher permitted students to code switch. Or else students insisted on asking and answering questions in Kiswahili. Student respondents also pointed out that the presence of a teacher in class, in most occasions, prevented students from code switching:

*Wanafunzi wanachanganya zaidi mwalimu asipokuwepo... Students code switch more when the teacher is not present.*

*Kiswahili ndio lugha tunayotumia hata darasani kwani hatujui Kiingereza vizuri. Hatutumii Kiingereza labda mwalimu awepo. Kiswahili is the language that we use even in class because we do not know much English. Unless the teacher is present we do not speak English.*

*Tunatumia Kiswahili na Kiingereza, hasa mwalimu anapoondoka darasani tunazungumza kwa Kiswahili. We use both Kiswahili and English, especially when the teacher leaves the class, we chat in Kiswahili.*

Student assertions illustrate that they do not use only English when communicating. It is only when they feel compelled by the teacher that they use much English. Teachers in schools are supposed to enforce the “English only policy” and so they have to ensure that students do not use Kiswahili in class and also out of class. However, this is not generally practised by most teachers although they are required to do so. The findings from some students indicate that unless the teacher permits them, students do not freely code switch in class. One of the students reported, ‘*We use code switching to answer some of the teacher’s questions and we are sometimes allowed by the teacher to ask questions in Kiswahili*’. It is also noted that if the teacher does not allow code switching students remain silent as it was expressed by one of the students, ‘*Wanafunzi wengine huomba kujieleza kwa Kiswahili. Mwalimu akikataa basi watanyamaza kimya... Some students ask for the permission to express themselves in Kiswahili. If the teacher refuses they remain silent*’. Therefore, the presence of a teacher either discontinues the use of Kiswahili or should limit the use of Kiswahili by students. Even though, stopping the use of Kiswahili seems difficult as one of these students’ accounted, ‘*we mostly use Kiswahili... even when the teacher is present we use Kiswahili in low tones*’.

### **Code Switching as Practiced in Classroom Group Discussions**

The general assumption is that a group discussion ought to promote participatory learning where all group participants take an active part rather than being on the sidelines watching. Students reported that in order to have consensus in group discussions and to involve everyone they used a lot of Kiswahili. Thirty-five of the 42 student respondents acknowledged this. Most of these interviewees reported that when they are given an assignment they translate the task given first to Kiswahili to assist each other to understand it. The students claimed to conduct the discussion mainly in Kiswahili. Afterwards they would translate what has been noted down in Kiswahili to English:

*Tunajadili kwanza kwa Kiswahili ili kumshirikisha kila mtu halafu ndio tunatafsiri kwa English. Ili kila mtu aelewe neno tutakalozungumza kama liko sahihi... We first discuss in Kiswahili so that everyone is involved then we translate what we have discussed to English so that everyone understands and that we all agree as a group if the words used are correct.*

Using code switching seems imperative so as to enable understanding and to maximize the participation of all members of the group. Otherwise very few students will contribute. This is elaborated by one of the student respondents, ‘...*We code switch... to understand each other. Otherwise very few will participate in that task...*’ Highlighted is the fact that at times there is disparity within the group as some of the students speak in Kiswahili while others speak in English. This, as I

noted from classroom observations led to poor management of the group discussions and resulted in noise during activities given as several speakers spoke at the same time in each group.

The situation was also mentioned by one student who stated that, 'In group discussions *some of us use English while others use Kiswahili. We use Kiswahili to give details to the whole group on the assignment given*'. Learning like this however, is difficult. A few students realize this as well, '*Tunajadili kwa Kiswahili na kutafsiri kwa Kiingereza ila ni ngumu sana kusoma hivi nafikiri ingekuwa nafuu ingewezekana kutumia lugha moja... we discuss in Kiswahili and translate to English but it is difficult to learn like this, I think it would be better if it was possible to use one language*'.

Meanwhile, this type of learning also appears to encourage inequity among the students as it was pointed out by one of the student respondents, '*Wote tunachanganya lugha lakini wenzetu wenye uwezo mzuri wa Kiingereza hutufafanulia na kututafsiria... We all code switch but some of us who are better off in English give details and translations to the rest...*' Thus, those who are better off in English have power over the rest of the members in the group as they take charge in translating for the group and in most cases take the initiative to present to the rest of the class on the group's findings. In this situation the privileged students are promoted. The rest of the students continue being inferior and silenced. One of the student respondents underscored this fact:

*Sana natumia Kiswahili wengi primary tumesoma shule za Kiswahili kama ni swali limetolewa kwa English wale wa English medium hutafsiri maswali au wale waliosoma English course hutuongoza.... I mostly use Kiswahili... in primary schools most of us studied in Kiswahili... if a question is asked in English those who attended English MOI primary schools or those who attended English course after class VII guide the rest of the group by giving translations.*

Illustrated from this viewpoint are some of the perceived benefits of English MOI primary schools that possibly encourage parents to take their children to these schools. There were also a small number of 7 of the 42 student respondents who maintained that they used only Kiswahili in class group discussions basically to simplify the discussion. This, they remarked, was because of being used to speaking in Kiswahili from childhood:

*Tunatumia Kiswahili labda mwalimu awe anatusimamia hapohapo... kwa sababu tunaewa sana Kiswahili toka udogoni... We use Kiswahili in group discussions unless the teacher directly supervises us... this is because we understand Kiswahili very well from childhood.*

## Teachers' views on Code Switching

Due to poor communication between the teacher and the students in classes taught in English, 3 of the 4 teachers in this study mentioned that there was a high necessity to code switch. It was noted that the high temptation to code switch in lessons taught in English was attributed to lack of proficiency and difficult vocabularies in English. Despite efforts made to explain the words in English by the teachers, students did not seem to understand and as a result did not participate in class sessions. These situations were very tempting on the part of teachers to code switch. Teachers blamed conditions leading to the likelihood to code switch on themselves and students:

*Ndio, mimi nachanganya lugha, mfano wanafunzi wanakutazama tu, hawaitiki, au wanaitika kwa wasiwasi... saa nyingine umefundisha kitu unapouliza swali hawajibu. Hivyo inabidi niwasaidie wanafunzi kwa kutoa mifano, kuchora na vilevile kuisisitiza. Yes, I do CS, for instance, when students stare at you and do not respond to questions and if they do, they do so with great uncertainty which you can tell from the tone of their voices... sometimes you have taught something after which you ask a question and no one responds. In this case I am forced to code switch to Kiswahili to help them understand by giving them realistic examples, drawings and stressing points.*

Another teacher stated:

*Naona umuhimu wa kuchanganya lugha katika vipindi kwa sababu... wanafunzi wanaonekana kutokuelewa somo na kutokushiriki darasani... saa nyingine pia na mimi mwenyewe napungukiwa na maneno ya kujieleza vizuri. I find it important to use code switching in class because students seem not to have understood the lesson and they are not active and at times I experience being short of words to express myself well in English.*

However, only 1 of the 4 teachers was adamant that she did not see the need to CS in lessons and stated:

*Hamna sababu ya kuchanganya Kiswahili na Kiingereza kwa sababu inawalemaza sana wanafunzi katika mitihani yao ya mwisho unawajengea msingi mbaya. There is no need to CS because it could ruin students so much in their final exams that are in English, this also leads to a poor English language foundation on the part of the students.*

Therefore, just like their students, the chances of CS for the teachers as well, appear to be high. Despite 3 of the 4 teachers being in favour of code switching, 2 of these teachers highlighted that there was some inherent difficulty in this practice and they claimed that the difficulty faced was related to inconvenience and time management. These teachers complained that they had to keep repeating themselves. Specifically one of them said, '*...Students understand better when you*

*code switch, if you do not... they will keep on asking you questions and you are forced to repeat ... to give them a translation... As such it takes teachers much time to explain things’.*

### **Head Teachers’ Views on Code Switching**

In the school context students are encouraged to use English but prohibited to use Kiswahili. In regard to the two headmasters in this study, they were adamant on the view that code switching should not be allowed. They argued that examinations should be set in English so long as it remained the official language of instruction. They emphasized that code switching was used, especially in the absence of a teacher. The presence of a teacher restricted the use of code switching and unless the teacher has given permission to code switch, it could entail punishment. One of them noted that but sometimes a teacher is found using Kiswahili; *‘Teachers don’t use English in class. You find a teacher teaching Physics / Biology in Kiswahili. English is the MOI but is used very rarely as Kiswahili dominates’.*

Despite efforts by the schools administration to encourage the use of English, nearly all of the student respondents claimed not to use English much compared to Kiswahili in the school context because they are not much competent in the language; they cannot express themselves in English easily and generally find it difficult. Students may be subjected to punishment for failure to observe the rule to use English. However, this has dire consequences as students avoid speaking English at all costs as they are not able to. Being punished to speak one’s language has a negative impact. Ngugi wa Thiongo, (1986) emphasizes that this was a form of mental control used by the west.

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

CS is a necessary coping strategy to attain meaningful learning. It has been noted from classroom observations that, if it is not used, teachers practice safe talk where students repeat in chorus. Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) define safe talk as:

Classroom talk that allows participation without any risk or loss of face for the teacher and the learners and maintains the appearance of doing the lesson while in fact little learning is actually taking place... This particular style of interaction rises from teachers’ attempts to cope with the problem of using a former colonial language, which is remote from the learners’ experiences outside school, as the main medium of instruction (Heller and Martin Jones, 2001: 13).

This type of learning as mentioned by Stroud (2002) takes on a semblance of a ritualized character and may also often function as a form of a shield for teachers who may experience language insecurity. This is especially when pupils cannot understand and respond in cognitively adequate ways as it is in the Tanzanian case.

### **Bilingualism in View of CS in Tanzanian Classrooms**

As observed in the classrooms, the way CS is practised indicates that there was no formula on how English and Kiswahili were used. Moreover, it is strange to use the term bilingual education to the majority population in the Tanzanian context that has to acquire their academic learning through a foreign language they seldom hear outside the classroom. Due to its differential origins, bilingual education when used in an African context is often misinterpreted. Brock-Utne and Hopson (2005) point out the misuse of the expression bilingual education; it is used in connection to using the mother tongue (sometimes only orally) as a bridge to schooling in a European language. Along similar lines of thinking, Tadadjeu (1977) advocates a trilingual model on the grounds that there is a widespread triglossic pattern in African countries where three distinct functional types of languages are used at three corresponding social levels. All in all trilingual or bilingual models are limiting, multilingualism should be the goal and African languages should be used at all levels of education.

It is important however, to underscore the need to come up with a language policy in education that will take into consideration the peculiarities of Tanzania and not to import models from elsewhere. Banda (2000) insists that no single model of bilingual education is universally applicable. Whatever model adopted should take into consideration socio- economic and educational factors existing in the country. Furthermore, a bilingual policy in terms of code switching will be misdirecting the problem as it may not lead to competence in either Kiswahili or English. Competence in English is acknowledged to be beneficial. It is thus recommended to improve the teaching of English by using qualified teachers of English (Qorro, 2004).

### **CONCLUSION**

The goal in the Tanzanian context should be to promote linguistic diversity in terms of a multilingual education policy. The Tanzanian secondary school education system practices subtractive bilingualism, where the second language replaces the first language as medium of instruction. The language policy in Tanzania is, in other terms, basically a transition model. Essentially the aim of a transition model is monolingualism, as the primary focus of this model is for the minority language speaking child to function in the majority language as quickly as possible (Hornberger, 1991) and not to be functionally bilingual. This implies that the Tanzanian majority children are being treated the way minorities are treated elsewhere in the west.

Yet, an ideal situation would be one where an additive model is used as it facilitates transfer of cognitive processes from the mother tongue to the official / foreign language. Hamers and Blanc (1989) assert that such a transfer is possible if the mother tongue is sufficiently well established and the official language is sufficiently well known. On the contrary the transition models do not facilitate transfer through cognitive processes. This is because the shift from the mother tongue to the official / foreign language as MOI happens before the learner has

sufficient knowledge in the mother tongue, that is, before the pupils can transfer knowledge and academic competencies to the official / foreign language (ADEA, 2005).

Bilingual models vary in their origins and results, so it is important that we are cautious not to import models from elsewhere. In my view, if we consider implementing a bilingual education policy in Tanzania with English and Kiswahili code switching being the target languages, there will always be a tendency to use Kiswahili and ethnic languages once out of the school context as they are more commonly used. Such a tendency could also happen in class as it was indicated by one student, *'We use Kiswahili in group discussions unless the teacher directly supervises us... this is because we understand Kiswahili very well from childhood'*. The danger therefore is that students and teachers will gain more competence in Kiswahili and or ethnic languages but not gain competence in English to be functionally bilingual. However, drawing from the theoretical framework of this study a bilingual policy is discounted as one that is limiting. Instead, multilingualism is worth encouraging and facilitating. It is important for Tanzanian students to learn several languages apart from English and Kiswahili and gain reasonable competence in them.

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