

# Code-switching and communicative competence in the language classroom

**A B S T R A C T** Code switching (CS) is a normal practice among bilingual and multilingual speakers both in the community at large and at schools despite it being mostly prohibited in most South African classrooms. Even though educators express the banes of CS or even deny its use in the classroom, the study on which this paper draws demonstrates that both teachers and learners engage in CS behaviour in classroom interaction. The paper examines language teaching sessions of Grade 8 and 9 learners in multilingual classrooms in three semi-urban schools in KwaZulu Natal. It demonstrates that in language classrooms, within the framework of OBE, CS involving learners' home and additional languages can be used as a teaching and learning strategy in accomplishing communicative competence, especially grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competences, as described by Canale and Swain (1980). The paper concludes by exploring the implications of 'strategic' CS for second or additional language pedagogy, and suggests the need for education role-players to engage in continued consciousness raising as CS is a reality in and outside the classroom.

**Key words:** code-switching, communicative competence, home language, additional language, Outcomes Based Education

## 1. Introduction

Accompanying the swing from traditional structures of pedagogy to Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in South Africa, in the teaching of languages within the learning area, Languages, the foci are on the promotion of multilingualism and the acquisition of communicative competence which is embraced by communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches. In addressing the former goal in the General Education and Training (GET) phase, the Department of Education (DoE) Language-in-Education policy (LiEP) of 1997 recognizes the use of code-switching between the target language and learners' home language (HL). The acquisition of communicative competence which is one of the aspirations of many high schools (Nazari,

2007:203) is embraced in the critical outcome ‘communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes’ which further encompasses six learning outcomes (LOs) outlined in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) document for Grades R to 9. These are: LO 1, Listening; LO 2, Speaking; LO 3, Reading and Viewing; LO 4, Writing; LO 5, Thinking and Reasoning; and LO 6, Languages, Structure and Use. These outcomes clearly articulate the transcendence from purely linguistic forms of language teaching and learning – traditionally based on Chomskyan theory (Chomsky, 1965) which emphasizes the need for grammatical accuracy in communicative competence – to a socio-cultural anthropological framework (Hymes, 1972). Drawing on Hymes’ model, Canale and Swain (1980) proffer that communicative competence comprises not only grammatical competence but sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences as well. Within this framework, communicative competence embraces a variety of ways of speaking and negotiation of meaning, including code-switching, in interactions between teacher and learner, and learner and learner.

The use of code-switching (CS) however is not valued by everybody even though it is a normal practice by bilinguals and – as this paper will reveal – a normal practice by bilingual teachers and learners in the classroom. As far back as the 1950s, Weinreich (1953) observed that CS was mostly perceived as a ‘deviant’ behaviour and evidence from research over the decades (e.g. Agheyisi, 1977; Romaine, 1989; Kieswetter, 1995; van der Walt, 2001 and Sert, 2005) hardly deviates from this view. Not only monolingual educators and learners but bilingual educators and learners as well, have mostly entrenched negative attitudes toward CS in the classroom and consequently its use is mostly prohibited therein (Peires, 1994; Martin, 1997; Macaro, 2006). Nevertheless, attitudes are not static mental dispositions – they shift for various reasons and can therefore, over time, be influenced by conscious awareness.

Those who hold generally positive attitudes toward CS perceive value in its use. Various studies, demonstrate that some of the more salient benefits of using CS in the classroom are that it promotes additional language (AL) acquisition (Cummins, 1999; Walqui, 2000; Liebscher & Dailey o’Cain, 2005; Sert, 2005); promotes cognitive and linguistic development (Garrett *et al.*, 1994; Probyn, 2001; Abad, 2008) fulfills pedagogical functions (van der Walt, 2001; Moore, 2002; Liebscher & Dailey O’Cain, 2005); facilitates teaching and influences learner behaviour (Sarinjeive, 1999; Macaro, 2006; Moodley, 2007; Abad, 2008); serves as a communicative strategy (Moore, 2002; Reyes, 2004; Macaro, 2006 ); and has psychological benefits for the learners (Moodley, 2003; Reyes, 2004; Sert, 2005). However, the value of CS in the classroom continues to be a contentious issue and there are those, for example, Kgomoewana (1993), who present strong arguments against its use in the classroom. It is particularly interesting to note that Canale and Swain (1986:108) advise against the use of CS – they argue that by employing CS behaviour in the classroom, students will not make the effort to understand the second language and may ‘tune out’ and wait for translation. This argument is furthered by Tarone and Swain (1995:168) who state: “... it is fundamental and axiomatic to the philosophy of language immersion programs that almost all academic content be taught through the L2 [second language].” What is noteworthy is that even though people express negativism against CS and much is *spoken* of the negative impact of CS in pedagogy, there is hardly any empirical supportive evidence to the effect.

The position that this paper adopts is that, used strategically, CS in both the first language (L1) and second language (L2) classrooms can serve pedagogical, social and psychological benefits. I use the terms L1 and L2 interchangeably with *home language* (HL) and *additional language* (AL), respectively, as the latter are the terminologies used in the National Curriculum Framework document which informs this study. While the contentious issue of CS continues in various domains of pedagogy and further thoughts on communicative competence as a goal of language teaching, particularly in multilingual and multicultural societies are explored (e.g. Chick, 1996), there appears to be a paucity of research conducted specifically on the role of CS in communicative competence. In his discussion of the functions of teachers and learners, Sert (2005) alludes to the benefits that CS has for development of strategic competence among learners, and Reyes (2004) speaks of the development of communicative competence, particularly sociolinguistic competence, by children during peer interaction.

In this paper, I build on and contribute to studies that demonstrate the use of CS in the classroom for pedagogical, social and psychological benefits. More particularly, in examining the role of code-switching in the classroom, I address the vacuum that exists in its role in communicative competence. As such, I specifically examine the role of CS in communicative competence in the Learning Area (LA), *Languages*, at the Grade 8 and Grade 9 levels in the GET phase within OBE. Firstly, I clarify, with illustration from the broader study from which this paper draws, the concept code-switching. Secondly, I present Canale and Swain's (1980) paradigm of communicative competence. Thirdly, I describe the methodology employed in the gathering of my data. Fourthly, I present evidence that supports the role of strategic CS in promoting communicative competence in the English HL and AL, and Afrikaans AL classrooms. Finally, I present my conclusions, explore the implications of 'strategic' CS for cultural methodology and AL pedagogy, and, like Adendorff (1993) assert the need for education role-players to engage in consciousness raising.

## 2. Code-switching: Concept Clarification

Code-switching is the alternating use of two or more linguistic varieties (languages, dialects of the same language, registers of the same language) at the word, phrase or clause, or sentence level in the course of a discourse (Kamwangamalu, 1992:173; Numan & Carter, 2001:275). For the purposes of this paper CS is interpreted as a switch between the target language and the learner's home language and/or the language that is common to all the learners in a multilingual classroom. The following examples which are drawn from recordings of lessons in the Afrikaans AL and English AL classrooms, illustrate the various points at which they may occur in a context:

I. At the word level:

This is how you will operate, **luister** [listen], going this way.

II. At a clause or phrase level:

They want to rule some other country so they fight those countries. When they defeat them, **mengabe bephumelela** [when they win], they rule them. Is there any other reason why people go to war?

III. At the sentence level:

Die kinders hou om die olifant se rug te ry [They like to ride the elephant's back]. **They like to ride on his back.** Hulle geniet dit [They enjoy it].

IV. At a discourse level:

Yes. Sometimes you go on holiday **Khisimusi** [Christmas] to your uncle's. He's got a big beautiful house but the time will come right? When you want to come back home because **ikhaya lakho indawo ekufunakala ubekuyona. Akukhatha lekile ukuthi umizi waking mungakanani kodwa indawo ekujunakala ubekuyona** [..... the best place to be is your home. No matter how small your house is, it doesn't matter. But it's the place to be]. East or west, home is best. Alright, let's continue.

Myers-Scotton (1992:101) states that CS is "the selection of forms by bilinguals from an embedded language in utterances framed by a matrix language during the same conversation." The matrix language is that language which assumes the dominant role (Kamwangamalu, 1994:74). In this study, the matrix language in the English (E) HL and EAL classroom is English, the medium of instruction (MoI), and the embedded language is Zulu, the learners' HL; and in the Afrikaans AL classroom, the matrix language is Afrikaans and the embedded languages are either English or Zulu – the home languages of the different linguistic groups of learners.

In this paper I use the concept 'strategic' CS as a descriptive element of code-switching to refer to the technique of the alternate use of language such that learners do not resort to their mother tongue to such an extent that the matrix language is the mother tongue. In other words, that CS is not used in such a way that it detracts from the goal of promoting the acquisition of the target language.

### 3. Communicative Competence in the Language Classroom

In defining communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980) propose an integrative model comprising four components viz. grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences.

*Grammatical competence* involves the "computational aspects of language" (Schachter, 1990:40) i.e. the knowledge of lexical items, the rules or formulations or constraints of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology. Contrary to the belief that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) does not recognize the importance of grammatical accuracy, the role of grammatical competence in language acquisition in the RNCS is made quite lucid in LO 6, *Language Structure and Use: The learner will know and be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts*. Canale and Swain (1980:29-330) and Canale (1983:273) emphasize that grammatical competence is an important concern for any communicative approach whose goals include providing learners with the knowledge of how to determine and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances. The role of grammatical competence in language acquisition and learning is further emphasised by Buys and van der Walt (1996) who demonstrate the acquisition of grammatical competence using formal instruction in a communicative approach. This paper shows that it is also significant in that teachers could make use of CS in teaching grammatical competence. For example, the teacher could point out the difference between grammatical structures between the learners' HL and that of the target language. As a point of illustration, in the teaching of Afrikaans L2 to English HL speakers of this study, the teacher provides the following examples

of how she makes use of English to explain grammatical structure and vocabulary: (1) 'In the teaching of prepositional use, in English for example, one would say: "Climb *up* the tree." The Afrikaans equivalent of this statement is: "Klim *in* die boom" and not "op" which is the direct translation of "up"; and (2) 'Lexical items could also be pointed out by contrasting the English and Afrikaans versions. For example, the Afrikaans equivalents of the English words "photograph" and "photographer" are "foto" and "fotograaf" respectively. Learners' attention is drawn to the fact that 'fotograaf' is *not* 'photograph' but photographer.' Similarly, the lesson recordings of the teacher clearly demonstrate how she draws on learners' HL in teaching grammatical structure in the Afrikaans L2.

*Sociolinguistic competence* addresses "the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction and norms or conventions of interaction" (Canale & Swain, 1980:30; Canale, 1983:273). According to these authors appropriateness of utterances refer to both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form. Appropriateness of meaning concerns the extent to which particular communicative functions (e.g. commanding, complaining, inviting, requesting etc.), attitudes (including politeness and formality) and ideas are judged to be proper in a given situation. Appropriateness of form concerns the extent to which a given meaning (including communicative function, attitudes and propositions/ideas) is represented in a verbal and/or non-verbal form that is proper in a given context. In Canale's (1983:274) view, sociolinguistic competence is crucial in interpreting utterances for their "social meaning" (i.e. communicative meaning and attitude) when this is not clear from the literal meaning of utterances or from non-verbal cues. As such, this component of communicative competence should not be perceived as being of less importance than grammatical competence in language acquisition. The need for sociolinguistic competence for both L1 and L2 acquisition is recognized and promoted by OBE. In the RNCS, this can be clearly seen in LO 1, LO 2 and LO 3: LO 1, *Listening: The learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations; LO 2: Speaking: The learner will be able to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide variety of situations; and LO 3: Reading and Viewing: The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.* This paper will show that the strategic use of CS by teachers in the languages classroom facilitates the attainment of these outcomes.

*Discourse Competence* is described as "mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres" (i.e. the type of text e.g. oral and written narrative, an argumentative essay, a scientific report, a business letter etc.). Unity in text is achieved through cohesion (i.e. grammatical links) in form and coherence (i.e. appropriate combination of communicative functions) in meaning (Canale, 1983:275). Cohesion deals with how utterances are linked structurally and facilitates interpretation of a text (Canale and Swain, 1980:30) while coherence deals with relationships among the different meanings in a text (Canale, 1983: 275). As the RNCS stresses both oral and written discourse, discourse competence plays a key role in both L1 and L2 acquisition. In addition to LO 1, LO 2, LO3, and LO 6 described above, the role of discourse competence in language acquisition is evident in LO 5: *Thinking and Reasoning: The learner will be able to use language to think*

*and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning.* However, while the lesson recordings for this study echo the findings of Thornbury and Slade (2006) i.e. cohesion is achieved both within and across speaker turns in discourse strategies in English conversations, the role of CS in discourse competence is unclear.

Finally, *strategic competence* comprises the mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action for two main reasons: (i) to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication (e.g. momentary inability to recall an idea or grammatical form) or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence; and (ii) to enhance the effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberately slow and soft speech for rhetorical effect). Strategic competence, however, is not limited to repair work in grammar but can extend to resolving problems of a sociolinguistic and/or discourse nature (Canale & Swain, 1980:30–31; Canale, 1983:276–277). As such opportunities for the development of strategic competence are provided in the learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the RNCS. This paper shows that the learner could use, for example, paraphrasing as a learning strategy by switching to the mother tongue.

### **3. The Study: Data Collection Procedures and Findings**

#### *3.1 The ethnographic approach*

Drawing on the ethnographic approach, the research was conducted using qualitative methods in collecting the data. The ethnographic approach may be described as “the study of people’s behaviour in naturally occurring, ongoing settings, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of behaviour” (Watson-Gegeo, 1988:76). In the context of my study, ethnography can be described as naturalistic as it captures the natural, everyday talk of learners in the classroom. However, one needs to keep in mind what Labov (1972:209) termed ‘the observer’s paradox’ i.e. the mere act of observing people’s language behaviour is inclined to change that behaviour. Hence, the knowledge that the lessons were being recorded for a specific reason might have, to some degree, influenced what was going on during group-work.

#### *3.2 The data sources*

The domain (i.e. the social context of this research) is the school and the predominant pressure which influences the bilingual participants (i.e. the bilingual educators and learners) towards use of a specific code is educational. The study is set in three schools of differing linguistic demographics in the Lower South Coast of KwaZulu Natal (KZN). For ethical considerations, I refer to them as School A, School E and School Z. Each of these schools has its roots in the previous, apartheid model of education; two of the relevant distinguishing characteristics among these schools are the racial component (and, given the social and linguistic history of South Africa, the L1 of the educators and learners) and the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). *School A* comprises predominantly Afrikaans L1 educators and learners, the LoLT is Afrikaans, and English is studied as L2. *School E*, a previously ‘Indian only’ school is a multicultural, multilingual school comprising English L1 speaking educators and learners, as well as Zulu L1 speaking learners. The Zulu speakers (for whom English is L2) study English as a home language and all learners study Afrikaans as L2. The LoLT at this school is English. *School Z* comprises predominantly Zulu L1 speaking educators and learners. The learners



study three languages viz. Zulu HL, English AL and Afrikaans AL. While the LoLT of School Z is English, my observation during school visits, interviews conducted with both educators and learners (which inform the broader study upon which this paper is drawn), and the lesson recordings clearly indicate that code-switching is a normal practice between teacher and learners, and learner and learner at this school. The major research which informs this paper – and which is not discussed here – shows that: (i) CS in the English AL classroom in School A is prohibited; (ii) CS in the English HL classroom in School E is not used by teachers and teachers either discourage or tolerate its use by learners; and in the Afrikaans AL classroom CS is used as a conscious resource by the Afrikaans L2 educator participant and is a normal practice by learners; and (iii) CS in the English AL and Afrikaans AL classrooms in School Z is a normal linguistic behaviour by both the educator and learner participants; and when CS is used in the Afrikaans classroom, the switch is first made from Afrikaans to English, and then from English to Zulu.

The subject content comprises the different aspects of language teaching, the lessons of which were tape-recorded and analysed using Canale and Swain's (1980) framework of communicative competence and the learning outcomes for languages outlined in the RNCS for OBE. The following language lessons in their respective grades were tape-recorded: (i) School A: Grade 8, English AL – Oral work (group-work comprising Afrikaans HL speaking learners on the topic 'Culture'), vocabulary development, comprehension, language study and literature study (*Love David* by Dianne Case); (ii) School E, Grade 9, English HL – Oral work (Group work in preparation for debate on the topic *Should HIV children be in mainstream schools?*), Literature study (Group work in response to a work sheet on a chapter from *Animal Farm* by George Orwell); Grade 8, Afrikaans AL – Language study, *Kommunikasi* [Communication], Comprehension and Poetry (*As Boetie Bad*); and (iii) School Z: Grade 9, EAL – Oral work (group-work comprising Zulu HL speaking learners on the topic 'Animal World'), Comprehension, Language Study and Poetry (*An Irish airman foresees his death* by W.B. Yeats); Grade 8, Afrikaans AL – Poetry (*Die Olifant* by Jan Kromhout), Comprehension, Language Study (Persoonlike Voornaamwoorde) [Personal pronouns] and literature study (the short story *Vostruis se Vuur* by A. van der Merwe).

### *3.3 Discussion of findings: The role of code-switching in communicative competence*

Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence is an integrated one and the learning outcomes and their respective assessment standards are cross-critical in nature. As such, even though the findings, using each of the components described by Canale and Swain are presented, it must be understood that each competence does not exist in isolation; there might exist overlaps in the promotion of grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competences – the three areas that the discussion focuses on as the data does not show evidence of a relationship between CS and discourse competence.

An analysis of the transcriptions show that in the English AL of School A, CS was hardly used as it was prohibited at the school. The group work lesson shows no instances of CS and the vocabulary development and comprehension lessons reveal the scarce resort to Afrikaans, the learners' L1, only for translation of single word items using the dictionary. In addition, the lesson recordings reveal that CS is used by groups that comprise only isiZulu NL learners

and hardly ever by groups that comprise isiZulu and English L1 learners. Furthermore, in the Afrikaans AL classroom which comprises both English L1 and Zulu L1 speaking learners, the switch occurs mostly between Afrikaans and English as English is the shared language between the two linguistic groups of learners and the languages of the teacher. Given these dynamics, the analysis is based on transcription of lessons from School E, the EL1 group work and Afrikaans AL lessons, and from School Z, the English AL and Afrikaans AL lessons where instances of CS for various reasons (discussed elsewhere) were used. The data reveals that when teachers employ CS in their various lessons of either English L2 or Afrikaans L2 teaching and when teachers allow learners to experiment with language through the use of CS, they provide opportunities to explore their creative linguistic potential and develop communicative competence.

### 3.3.1 Code-switching and grammatical competence

The data reveals that through the use of CS for reiterative, explanation, elaboration and providing content information purposes, the teacher participants promote competence in grammar in a variety of ways. Consider the following instances of CS by them:

Extract 1: Afrikaans AL, Language study (Communication), Grade 8: School E

T Mohamed, wat was julle situasie? Wat dink jy wat moet ons vir Rishal sê as dit sy verjaarsdag is? [Mohamed, what was your situation? What do you think what we must say to Rishal if it is his birthday?]

L Veels geluk op jou verjaarsdag [Congratulations on your birthday].

T Nee. Veels geluk met jou verjaarsdag [No. Congratulations on your birthday]. **Listen, everybody. In English “op” is “on” but we don’t say “op jou verjaarsdag” we say “met jou verjaarsdag. Okay?”** En dan die tweede een... tweede... **second one** [And then the second one]. “Ek wens jou ‘n gelukkige verjaarsdag” [I wish you a happy birthday]. **It’s a bit of a long winded one but if I translate that for you – I am wishing you a happy birthday. You can chop it up by saying** “Rishal, gelukkige verjaarsdag.” [Rishal, happy birthday].

Extract 2: Afrikaans AL, Language study (Personal pronouns), Grade 8: School Z

**Okay!** Laat ons kyk verder die persoonlike voornaamwoorde. Kom ons bespreek ‘n paar voorbeelde [Let us look further a personal pronouns. Let us discuss a few examples]. Ons praat oor. [We speak of]. **Stand up. When we refer to a boy, we say Hy staan op. When we refer to a girl, we say Sy staan op ... [He stands up... She stands up]. Hy vir ‘n seun. Sy vir ‘n meisie. Hy for a boy, sy for a girl [He for a boy. She for a girl].**

In Extract 1, the teacher introduces new information by explaining the difference in the use of the prepositions “op” [on] and “met” [with] in English and Afrikaans. In Extract 2, in switching to English, the teacher succeeds in providing the rules for use of personal pronouns. The evidence of intersentential CS at both the phrase and sentence levels in both instances in showing the difference in grammatical structures between the learners’ L1 and the L2, addresses the assessment standard (AS) of LO 6 (Language structure and use), ‘identifies and analyses the components of a sentence’. The switch helps learners to more easily grasp the concept being taught.



Extract 3: English AL, Poetry lesson (*An Irishman foresees his death*), Grade 9: School Z.

But now, now this pilot er, he tells us that he is not sent by law, he is not sent by duty, he is not sent by the cheering crowds ... so what right, so now the question comes, why does he fight? **Ulwelani?** [Fight?]

Extract 4: Afrikaans AL, Poetry lesson (*Die Olifant*), Grade 8: School E

Ons noem hom die digter. **Digter**. [We call him a poet. Poet] **Poet**. Die olifant. Wat is die olifant? [The elephant. What is an elephant?]

In both these examples, intrasentential CS as reiterative (i.e. repetition of a word or message) at the word level aids in verifying or enhancing vocabulary as illustrated in the switch to the single word **Ulwelani** [fight?] and **Poet** in Extracts 3 and 4 respectively. In teaching vocabulary development in literature, the teachers address LO 6, AS ‘working with texts’ to teach ‘synonyms, antonyms and repeating words’.

Extract 5: English AL, Language study (Proverbs), Grade 9: School Z

T Alright. She behaves like her mother. Do you know what they say it in Zulu? Like mother, like daughter?

L **Ukhamba luchithwe yimbiza** [Like mother, like daughter].

T Yes. Like mother like daughter.

Extract 6: English AL, Language study (Proverbs), Grade 9: School Z

Good. Perseverance is the mother of success. **Zama uphinde uzame ungalahli ithemba ngoba uma uzama uziyi thola into uyifunayo**. [You must always try and try. You must not give up easily. If you keep trying you will get what you want]. You must persevere. **Ungalahli. iThemba** [Keep trying. Don't give up]. If you fail you must try, and not run.

In Extract 5, although no new information is added to the switch to Zulu “**Ukhamba luchithwe yimbiza**” [Like mother, like daughter] by the learner in the grammar lesson on *Proverbs*, by inviting the learners to provide the Zulu equivalent of the given proverb, the teacher fulfils a pedagogical function; the teacher ensures that his learners understand the proverb being discussed. Similarly, Extract 6, the teacher explains, in Zulu, the meaning of the proverb “Perseverance is the mother of success” to ensure that learners understand it. Clearly the purpose of CS for explaining proverbs, so that the string of words in English is not viewed as remote from the learners’ own understanding and experience, promotes grammatical competence. These examples also demonstrate how the teachers LO 6, AS ‘use idioms and idiomatic expressions of the language appropriately and creatively’.

### 3.3.2 Code-switching and sociolinguistic competence

The findings also demonstrate that CS by both the teacher and learners facilitates the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. The benefits of CS for teaching appropriateness of form and meaning is particularly apparent in the various learning situations (e.g. expressing a wish, expressing congratulations in different situation, greeting somebody, extending an invitation,

expressing thanks and seeking advice) in the lesson ‘Kommunikasie’ [Communication] by the teacher of Afrikaans in School E as well as in the comprehension lesson, ‘The Long-toothed Woman’ by the teacher of English in School Z. Consider the following sample transcriptions:

Extract 7: Afrikaans AL, Language study (Communication), Grade 8: School E  
[Teacher addresses one of the 6 groups of learners]

T Your activity? Asking somebody for advice. What example are you doing?

L My vriend, ek het ‘n probleem, kan jy vir my asseblief help? [My friend, I have a problem, will you help me please?]

T Daars ‘n partytjie en ek weet nie watter rok aan te trek nie. Wat dink jy? [There’s a party and I don’t know what dress to wear. What do you think?] **By simply saying, “Wat dink jy?” you are asking for advice.**

Extract 8: Afrikaans AL, Language study (Communication), Grade 8: School E  
[Teacher addresses another of the 6 groups of learners]

T Jou pa het ‘n nuwe motor gekoop. Hoe sal jy hom gelukwens? [Your father has bought a car, how will you congratulate him?] **Congratulate him? He’s bought a new car.**

L Pa, ek is baie bly oor jou nuwe motor.

T Okay klas. Luister mooi. [Okay class. Listen carefully]. **Quiet now, and listen carefully.** [Teacher addresses class].

T Ons groet iemand deur te sê. In die môre, Goeie môre. In die aand, goeienaand, In die nag, goeienag [We greet someone by saying. In the morning, good morning. In the evening, good evening. At night, good night]. Julle bedank iemand vir ‘n present. Baie dankie vir die mooi presentjie [You thank someone for a present. Thank you very much for the lovely present]. “Mooi” **can be replaced with** pragtige [pretty], wonderlike [wonderful], skitterende [splendid], **any adjective. Thanking someone for a favour.** Dawood, bair dankie vir die guns [Dawood, thank you very much for the favour]. What can you add to that? To show that you appreciate the favour?

L Jy was baie gaaf [You were very kind]. **You are very kind.**

T Dawood, baie dankie vir die guns. Dit was gaaf van jou [Dawood, thank you very much for the favour. It was kind of you]. **It was kind of you.**

The use of CS in the above examples, at phrase and sentence levels, in addition to illustrating how it contributes to grammatical competence, serves to demonstrate how the teacher explains the appropriate forms of politeness markers (e.g. greetings, expressing a wish, extending an invitation) within the Afrikaans community as well as to discuss the difference in meaning between Afrikaans and English forms of the different politeness markers – thus contributing to the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence.

Extract 9: English AL, Comprehension (The long-toothed woman) Grade 9: School Z.

T So she doesn’t like to eat her own kind? Okay but we’ve got a lot of women, they

eat man (Pupils laugh). So why does this woman eat man? Judy, **wena ukoskazi uyawandla amadoda?** [Judy, you are a woman, do you eat man?] (Pupils laugh).

L I think man is delicious to eat because they are so powerful (Pupils laugh).

Extract 10: English AL, Comprehension (The long-toothed woman) Grade 9: School Z.

T Yes. Like mother like daughter. Okay boys. **Kulungile bafana bheka umawentombi yakho-bese uyabona ukuthi intombi yakho izobanjani mase yikhulile** [Okay boys, look at your girlfriend's mother – then you will know what she is going to be like when she's old]. Just like her mother. (Pupils laugh).

In the instances of CS in Extracts 9 and 10, the teacher jokes with specific learners, creating both solidarity with his learners and a tension-free learning atmosphere. In addition, the instances of CS show that the learners are able to appreciate language in context, enhancing their sociolinguistic competence. The first example is particularly noteworthy in that the learner displays her wit with an appropriate, quick retort. In these examples, by using CS the teachers were able to teach pupils the effects of voice modulation and tone variation; and demonstrate, mostly unconsciously, how the contextualized use of pun and jokes add colour to speech and create a tension-free atmosphere.

The sociolinguistic skills discussed in examples 7 - 10 are important for language acquisition and learning as learners are better equipped to face the linguistic challenges outside the classroom, more especially when they come face-to-face with the diverse cultures which are typical of the South African population. Not only will learners be able to carry out the social graces with confidence but they will also recognize the value of using language for rhetorical effect. In addition, they will be able to identify how meaning varies according to cultural, social and personal differences and identify the ways in which context affects meaning and understanding. The functions that CS serve in promoting sociolinguistic competence is in line with the assessment criteria of LO 1, *Listening*, LO 2, *Speaking* and LO 3, *Reading and viewing*.

### 3.3.3 Code-switching and strategic competence

The data also shows that when learners are allowed to use their mother-tongue in the form of CS in learner-learner interactions, they learn how to negotiate language by compensating for breakdowns in communication (e.g. inability to recall an idea or grammatical form and enhancing the effectiveness of communication for rhetorical effect). The findings reveal that the use of CS, either between speakers or by a single speaker, aids in promoting strategic competence in a variety of ways. While an example on each is provided, as already stated, any single example may fulfil more than a single function.

- (i) By providing cues to suggest hesitancy and 'buy' time for thinking out what one wants to say e.g. by using cues such as 'huh', 'Er', 'Mmm' and so on:

Extract 11: English AL, Oral lesson (group work), Grade 9: School Z

L The answer is huh **siyathola inyama ngezinkukhu** [we get meat from the chicken].

- (ii) By signalling cues such as 'Okay', 'Ja' and 'Alright':

Extract 12: English HL, Literature (Group work, Animal Farm), Grade 9: School E

L3 You have to take action like now. **Njengamanje ungayi thatha iaction** [Like now, you can take action].

L1 But the animals were also at fault. Their fault is that they are wrong themselves.

L3 Even men fight against themselves. **Ja, ngoba nani niyalwa nodwa** [Yes, even people fight amongst themselves].

L1 You see/and

Extract 13: English AL, Oral work (Group work), Grade 9: School Z

T Okay. Okay. **Isi khathi soku khuluma nga lendaba 10 minutes kuphela.** [We have only 10 minutes for the discussion so get on with the topic].

(iii) By seeking clarification:

Extract 14: English L1, Literature (group work), Grade 9: School E

L1 Hey Andile we need your cooperation here. Examine this speech closely, what elements of propaganda are evident in this speech – when Major was addressing the animals?

L3 **Uqonde ukuthini** [What do you mean]?

L1 **Kusa fanele sibheke lento eshiwo uMajor** [We must examine what Major said] and determine what was ... We must look at what Major is saying and what, where the propaganda words used on humans.

(iv) By directing an address:

Extract 15: Afrikaans AL, Poetry (Die Olifant), Grade 8: School Z

T Die olifant is groot maar sy stertjie is klein. Die stertjie is kort. **Yes, it is small.** [The elephant is big but he has a small tail. The tail is short...]. **Excuse me you people, you are late! Baleythi** [They are late]. Gaan na die personeelkamer! [Go to the staff room!] **Come look at the poem.** Kyk na die poesie. Die olifant geniet dit. [Look at the poem. The children enjoy it]. [loudly] **Look at the poem pupils!**

(v) For negotiating turn-taking (for speaking):

Extract 16: English AL, Oral lesson (Group work), Grade 9: School Z

T Right, let us listen to him. Quiet! Quiet! You in the corner ... there ... **sithulili manje** [We are all quiet now]. **Silalela futhi qhubeka** [We are listening. Please proceed].

and

Extract 17: English AL, Oral lesson (Group work), Grade 9: School Z

L **Let's continue** guys. **Khulumani** [Talk, talk].

(vi) For rhetorical effect e.g. using hushed tones, loud tones, expressing frustration or excitement.

Extract 18: Afrikaans AL, Poetry (As Boetie Bad), Grade 8: School E

T Watter woord is **'garden'**? Watter woord in die gedig?

[Which word means 'garden'? Which word in the poem?]

(No response from learners)

T [Loudly and deliberately] **Which word is garden?**

L Tuin. [Garden].

Clearly, strategic competence extends beyond merely 'compensatory strategies'; as Brown (1994:228) aptly points out, it occupies a special place in an understanding of communication in that strategic competence is "the way we *manipulate* language in order to meet communicative goals." The use of CS at the various points in the given examples contribute to strategic competence by addressing LO 1, *Listening* and LO 2, *Speaking*, and more specifically the assessment standards 'use language to include rather than exclude people' when learners 'answer questions'; 'use appropriate tone' and 'interrupts politely' when speaking.

#### 4. Summary and Conclusions

This contribution to the literature on CS practices in the classroom has focused on the benefits they have for the development of communicative competence, more specifically grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competences, among learners within the framework of OBE. Grammatically, I have shown that by the strategic use of CS for reiteration, explanation, elaboration and providing content information purposes, the teachers were able to draw learners' attention to the difference between the grammatical structures of the L2 and learners' HL so that the learners could more easily grasp the concepts taught; explain vocabulary so that it is employed appropriately in context; and explain proverbs, so that the string of words in English is not viewed as remote from the learners' own understanding and experience. Sociolinguistically, the benefits include learning appropriate forms of politeness markers (e.g. greetings, expressing a wish, extending an invitation) of the sociocultural community of the target language; effects of voice modulation and tone variation; and how the contextualized use of pun and jokes add colour to speech and create a tension-free atmosphere. I have also shown that CS aids in promoting strategic competence by providing cues to suggest hesitancy and 'buy' time for thinking out what one wants to say; by signalling cues; by seeking clarification; by directing an address; for negotiating turn-taking for speaking; and for rhetorical effect. The paper does not claim that every instance of CS is of specific pedagogical value resultant of conscious performance by the teacher, nor does it suggest that CS is a panacea for the language acquisition process. Rather, that CS, used strategically, can be a resource for those who have more than one linguistic repertoire.

In view of the above and that educational role-players generally perceive CS as an avoidance strategy in the classroom, together with the knowledge that teachers' ideas and beliefs affect the way they teach (Nazari, 2007) and that attitudes can be shaped over time, I suggest that there is need for consciousness raising especially among educators. Educators must be made aware of how CS – which the language policy documents espouse as a means of promoting multilingualism – can be a powerful tool in language teaching and learning. They should be,

as Adendorff (1993:19) implores, be disabused of “deficit notions such as CS is dysfunctional.” Essential too, in consciousness raising, is that educators should be alerted to the possible subtractive effects of CS if not used strategically. The issue of consciousness raising coupled with ‘strategic code-switching’ implies that CS can be a conscious phenomenon. However, as research mostly shows that CS is unconscious speech behaviour there is need for further research in this aspect of CS.

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