

CODE-SWITCHING AMONG STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND.

by

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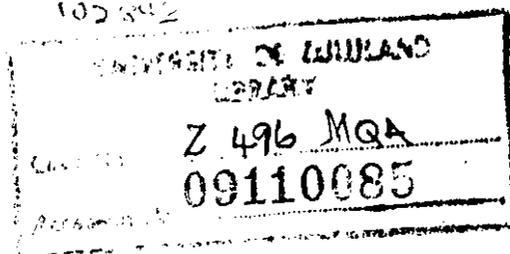
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother Nomagcino and my daughter Sindiswa for being patient and supportive when I was studying.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own unaided work.

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CHAPTER I

1.0 INTRODUCTION

"The main campus of the University of Zululand is situated approximately 142km North of Durban and 19km South of Empangeni off the N2 National Road on the Natal North Coast.

The main campus is mainly a residential University with board and lodging facilities" (University Calendar 1990:A5)

By international standards, the University of Zululand is a small community. Yet it is to some extent a cultural and linguistic melting pot. Of a total population of 4975 students in 1988, 4290 spoke Zulu as their mother tongue, 168 spoke Tsonga, 157 spoke Xhosa, 111 Southern Sotho, 109 Swati, 86 Tswana, 14 Venda and 40 other languages (South African Post Secondary Education System, University of Zululand, 1989).

In a multilingual community like the University of Zululand, there is a common tendency among speakers to mix languages during verbal interactions.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The linguistic and cultural diversity indicated above causes an adulterated mode of communication. What happens when people need to communicate but have no common language? Usually, when people come together for a short period, they go their separate ways before they acquire adequate proficiency in each other's language. The few scraps of each other's language which they have picked up are lost when these speakers separate and lose contact. But there are situations in which speakers of several languages may be together for longer periods of time and they may acquire

adequate proficiency in each other's languages. The University of Zululand is one such situation. In such cases, new systems of communication spring up to meet the obvious needs.

It has also been observed that there are those purists who do not understand why people mix languages whether in formal or informal situations. This has led to some having a negative attitude towards code-switching. We would like to highlight some truths about language and how it works. We would also like to know what it is exactly that triggers the process of code-switching among the students at the University of Zululand.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to investigate why students at the University of Zululand code-switch. The research focuses particularly on environmental and social factors which lead students to code-switch. It also looks into the functions of code switching. On the whole it is intended to contribute to the findings already made on code-switching. Many researchers have found out that people tend to code switch because it has become a habit to do so. Such a reason does not sound linguistically convincing to me. Others claim that people code-switch because they want to display their 'education' or that they come from urban areas or townships. This again is not convincing enough since code-switching is a reality and would seem to come naturally. It is not something one does when one feels like - it is usually done unconsciously.

It has also been found out by some researchers that people code-switch in an attempt to grapple with and adjust to linguistic diversity. The main reason why people talk is to communicate. Other researchers claim that speakers code-switch so that it becomes harder for listeners to understand them. This is true in

certain contexts. This research will help indicate other possible causes of code-switching which other researchers have not yet come up with, e.g. that students or people code-switch because of the affinity or familiarity that exists among them and that their frequency of code-switching depends on the situation they find themselves in.

It is also true that code-switching would be adopted as a mechanism to exclude certain people and confine communication only to the target group who understand and use the mixed code.

This study intends to add to and improve existing knowledge on the subject. We also want to draw a broad understanding of human language and how it works.

1.3 Hypothesis

Students code-switch more in informal situations than in formal situations.

Null-Hypothesis:

Students do not code switch more in informal situations than in formal situations.

1.4 Significance of the study

People have all sorts of beliefs about language and languages, only some of which have been supported by linguistic research. One of the incidental significances of this study is to correct misconceptions about code-switching. Some of these misconceptions are harmful in the sense that they can lead to people having negative attitudes towards some linguistic aspects. Some of these beliefs could lead one to spend a great deal of time trying to change things that cannot be changed or do not need changing.

It must be noted that every language is enormously complex. Despite its enormous complexity every language is systematic. In actual speech there are errors, hesitations, slips of the tongue, misunderstandings and confusions.

Language usage varies systematically from person to person, area to area, situation to situation. We must also note that speech is almost entirely unconscious so that it is not easy for speakers of a language to reflect on it.

Another factor is that the attitudes that the people hold about language and other languages or about their speech and other people's can be very different from the facts about them.

It is therefore hoped that after reading this study people who have adopted negative attitudes towards code-switching will be left with a deeper understanding of the nature of language or languages and the way they work. It is also hoped that after reading this study they will be left with a livelier interest in all language manifestations.

This study will also acquaint students with the basic concepts necessary to pursue linguistic studies further. It could also contribute a great deal to our understanding of the genetically determined constraints on grammar.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For purposes of this research the following definition of code-switching is proposed:

Code-switching is the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same interaction. The so-called varieties may be mixed up together in the same stretch of speech. The switch may be only

one word or more. The varieties may be anything from genetically unrelated languages to two styles of the same language. The use of solitary, established loan words or even phrases will not be considered code-switching (Scotton and Ury : p.5). Also included will be what Blom and Gumperz (1971) refer to as metaphorical code-switching which according to them, is code-switching where a variety which is normally used in one kind of situation is used in a different kind of situation because the topic is the sort which would normally arise in the first kind of situation. This latter type is common at the University of Zululand.

2.2 Variety

We shall use the term 'variety' to refer to what is traditionally referred to as language.

2.3 Status of language varieties

By status of language varieties, is understood the perception of the varieties and their use by the speakers of the varieties themselves.

2.4 Communication

The term 'communication' will be used to mean the exchange of ideas or information between two or more persons.

2.5 Participants

'Participants' in this study, will refer to persons who are present in a speech event and whose presence may have an influence on what is said and how it is said (Richard et al, 1985 : 207).

2.6 Social prestige

By 'social prestige' is understood, the influence or good reputation of a language.

2. CHAPTER II

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Not much work has been done in this field, especially by speakers of African languages. In trying to answer the question : why do students code-switch more in informal places than in formal places various suggestions of other writers will be discussed in this chapter. Labov (1977 : 17) suggests that "others suggest that switching takes place for semantic reasons, on lexical items that are associated with one or the other language, as with the television" He goes on to say that "Another possibility is that the speaker does not know either language well enough to speak it without 'interference'. It seems likely that due to the speakers incompetence in one language, the tendency will be to mix languages so as to communicate an idea. We would like to think, therefore that students do code-switch because as one of the reasons, they do not know either language well enough to speak it without mixing varieties".

In the case of the students at the University of Zululand, which is, as mentioned earlier on, a linguistic and cultural melting pot, students may tend to code-switch because they do not know either language and yet they want to communicate. The mixing of languages would not frequently take place in formal places because in such places English is usually used in communication.

Leshoai (1988) says that much of English spoken in townships is unintelligible to someone not acquainted with township culture, because it has undergone a process of fusion with a number of indigenous South African languages. He argues that the average Black in the township speaks a coherent mixture of English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, Xhosa, Shangaan, Venda and Ndebele. In conversation the speaker draws from any of these

languages to express an idea. The mixing of varieties by Blacks in the townships and by the students at the University of Zululand in particular from what Leshoai says, is something that is a practice of the average Black in the township. The implication is that code-switching is habitual. Most students come from townships where language mixing is a common practice and therefore, they, in trying to adjust to linguistic diversity, mix together varieties in order to communicate.

Code switching is not something unique to the University situation, but it is something students adopt from their various townships.

Leshoai seems convincing in saying that the mixing of languages is common in townships more especially in Soweto where people of different cultures and who speak different languages stay together and communicate on daily basis. To know that people code-switch does not tell us why they code-switch. To explain the 'why' of code-switching will mean to explain the relationship between the speaker who code-switches and the situation he finds himself in and even the societal norms that give a variety its meaning. In other words code-switching is not only habitual but is also situational. This is the reason why it is alleged that students at the University of Zululand code-switch more in informal situations because it has become a habit to do so, than in formal situations because the situation does not always allow them to do so. Students, it seems, also code-switch in both the formal and informal situations because they fail to get an appropriate word that fits more perfectly than a term in their mother-tongue.

In a paper on language depression entitled "What we sometimes do to our language" delivered at a conference on knowledge and method that was held at the Human Science Research Council in Pretoria in 1989, Ngcongwane says:

"It is common knowledge that even a frequent phenomena like language mixing is a direct result of multilingualism while you speak, a better term from a different language crosses your mind, and it fits more perfectly with what you were planning to say, indeed, more perfectly than a distant term in your own language which would in any case not be able to convey the same concept. You then mix your talk by employing a label from a different language". (Ngcongwane, 1985 :5)

It becomes clear then, that students code-switch because it has become a habit and they will code-switch depending on the environment they find themselves in. They also code-switch for a purpose of 'better communication'. The question arises as to whether we could not communicate best without mixing varieties.

It is very true that we may lack apt words to say what we exactly want to say in our first languages. In an attempt to express ourselves perfectly we mix our talk with the apt words from other languages that say exactly what we want to say.

Languages have their statuses and prestige. Depending on the status of the language the students will tend to use more of the prestigious language for identity. English, it is true, is indispensable and therefore is prestigious and everybody wants to know it for various purposes. The use of English is to some a sign of education. Depending on the variety a speaker uses, it is easy to tell whether a speaker is educated or not, or is from the township or from a rural area.

Matlhasedi (1988) in an article submitted for publication in the Linguistics Journal observes that:

The first impression one gains of the language situation in South African multilingual townships is of a veritable Tower of Babel. However, each language variety has its own functions, and together the functions of the varieties form a dynamic system. Each variety has its own status or prestige relative to different view points. (Matlhasedi, 1988:2)

The general township language may enjoy popular prestige, while usage of the standard variety may be regarded as a sign of education or in some cases as a mark of a rural person who is ignorant of town life.

English is a preferred language because it is an 'international language, the language of science, commerce and industry'. Students tend to switch to English to show off their education. They also code-switch to identify with township life. This is noticed in people who go to a township, for example to Soweto, once, and come back to the rural area saying something like "Mara yini ye?" This in itself says "By the way I have been to Soweto, I am therefore better than you".

Thipa (1987) in a paper he delivered at the Stannon Nguni Workshop concurs with the above submission that there is a display of one's education in variety mixing or in code-switching. In the light of this statement it is believed that one can be said to be displaying one's education depending on the situation or the people listening.

For example, take the case of a student who mixes English and Zulu in an English class when the lecturer is English-speaking and some students are Venda speaking and others South Sotho speaking. To say that such a student is displaying his education would be wrong because it would seem all he is displaying is ignorance of the English term he is supposed to use. On the other hand, if he mixes Zulu and English at the bus rank where most of the people are illiterate, he can then be said to be displaying his education or knowledge. So it is a question of which is the predominant variety or medium of communication.

Thipa (1987) goes on to say that "The elements of status and social prestige are also there". To illustrate this point he gives the example of the term "ukuattenda" (to attend) as a particularly prestigious term used to refer exclusively to attending lectures at the university. This term is frequently used by the university students at Zululand also. Thipa also mentions that "language purists on either side of the social divide would probably reserve their enthusiasm for utterances such as those which show code-switching or the simultaneous use of the first and second languages". From what Thipa says, it seems that code switching is something that can be avoided. It is therefore, to some extent true that some people code-switch because they want to display their 'education' and because it is prestigious to do so.

Matlhasedi and Thipa agree that people do code-switch to display or to draw other people's attention to their status or education. We have noticed that this is more so in public places, for example, outside the post office where the public telephone booths are. This is where the students usually queue up to use the telephone, and one can easily identify them by their mixing of varieties with English being predominant in one stretch of speech. They code-switch more in informal situations than when

they are in formal situations. They actually use words that are prestigious and that reveal their status. For example, words like "ukufraza" (to frustrate) and "ukubanka" (to bunk lectures). When one hears these words one immediately knows that the speaker is a University of Zululand student.

Mzimela (1983) in a research paper entitled "Some problems caused by acculturation, education and religion in the development of the Zulu language" says that while the main function of a language is communication of ideas. This element should not be exercised at the expense of the language as a repository of cultural heritage.

In other words, Mzimela does not concur with what was said earlier on, that students start to learn other varieties in order to communicate easily. He argues that communication should not be exercised at the expense of cultural heritage. Code-switching also implies that language groups have come together in the multilingual wider community. This can be attributed to the inevitable process of acculturation. It is true that unfamiliarity with an appropriate word will force a speaker to code-switch. Salami (1972 : 162) in support of the above view observes that code-switching is the result of the native speaker's unfamiliarity with or ignorance of an appropriate word. That then forces the native speaker, especially a bilingual one, to resort to the language with which he seems more familiar namely English in most cases among Zulus, Sothos, Xhosas and speakers of other African languages. Salami and Ngcongwane are of the same idea that code-switching is as a result of one's lack of an appropriate word for what one wants to say. While I agree with them, I do not think that is the only reason people code-switch. Other reasons have to do with people displaying their education and also because of the social affinity or familiarity between the speakers.

Rowland (1963) says that code-switching serves to make up the lexical inadequacies in the language of the native speaker. In other words Rowland confirms what Salami, Ngcongwane and I say, viz. because of the lack of appropriate words, people do code-switch. The lexical inadequacies that Rowland speaks about may also mean that a variety does not have that item as a result an item from a foreign language is borrowed.

It was mentioned earlier on that borrowing or inclusion of solitary established loan words will not be considered code-switching. From the following illustration it will be obvious that there is a relationship between code-switching and lexical borrowing: "I-thermometer ikhombisa ukuthi itemperature yakho iphezulu kakhulu" (The thermometer shows that your temperature is too high). There is no Zulu or Xhosa equivalent for thermometer and temperature. When foreign words are introduced into an indigenous language, there is definitely going to be change in the lexicon of that particular indigenous language.

These loan words are so widely used that most speakers will even pronounce them according to the sound system of their own indigenous language. Code-switching starts early in a Black child's life, when he goes to school and is introduced to English and Afrikaans when he is still struggling with his mother tongue.

Mzimela (1983) gives the following illustration of language mixing:

Sy is my/	number one/	mbuzana
Afrikaans	English	Zulu

Mzimela has the following to say about the above example:

"Here we have Afrikaans, English and Zulu in one sentence.

The laws of language have been broken. We have distorted language here. This causes the problem in developing the Zulu language". He further asserts that 'language is dynamic' and it is constantly developing correctly or wrongly. It is a repository of culture. Acculturation is a clash of cultures. Acculturation may accelerate the development of a language through its encouragement of mixing varieties (English/Afrikaans) at the expense of indigenous language (Mzimela, 1983 : 10).

Mzimela also observes that the black child enters school still struggling with his first language; that in due course the child is introduced to English and then to Afrikaans. He goes on to suggest that this sudden introduction of and switching over to foreign languages has an impact on the child's mind; that the child then starts speaking a muddled language e.g. tsotsitaal etc. (Mzimela, 1983 : 16). In the South African context, particularly as regards the Black child, another reason for code-switching may be that the white man has always superimposed his language over the majority vernaculars. Code switching therefore becomes inevitable for English as an official language and a language of power is a compulsory subject and a medium of instruction at schools.

All things said, it seems that the major reasons why students code-switch are, firstly, that it is habitual. Secondly, it is to show or display one's education or knowledge as Balls puts it:

English is the language of science and formal education, the language of the sophisticated city speaker who wishes to demonstrate his knowledge (Ball; 1971)

Ball agrees with Thipa and Matlhasedi that English is used in code-switching to demonstrate one's education or knowledge.

All these do not, however, include as a factor the lack of appropriate words in one's own indigenous language which Ngcongwane, Salami and I include.

In addition, none of them include the affinity and/or familiarity of speakers as another probable reason why people code-switch.

I want to agree with Labov in saying that....

"Speakers (who code switch) are making it harder for listeners to understand them. (Labov, 1977:12)

This is what Blom and Gumperz (1971) refer to as metaphorical code switching. This is code-switching which is to conceal information from the outsiders. The intention is to deliberately attract the attention of listeners and leave them with questions that cannot be answered.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY OF INVESTIGATION

Twenty taped conversations with twelve students who know their first languages well and who have learned English and Afrikaans at high school were used. Each conversation was introduced by an indication of the situation and the purpose of the research. Further taping was made until seventeen natural and clear samples of conversations in formal and informal situations were obtained. cursory notes after the interviews were made and the interviews with six lecturers of the Faculty of Education were taped and the content list of each tape was drawn.

Participating students were four first year students whose mother tongues are Zulu, Xhosa, South Sotho and Swati respectively and who all speak English; the next four were second year students whose mother tongues are Zulu, Venda, Shangaan and Xhosa respectively; the other four were third year students who speak Zulu, Xhosa, South Sotho and Swati respectively; and the last four were Honours students who all speak Zulu as their mother tongue and English as a second language. Each conversation took 10 minutes.

Literature on code switching and multilingualism was studied and compared with the findings. The Human Science Research Council was contacted for some notes on methodology, data collection, and the material written on code switching which was used as references for this research.

The recordings were then transcribed, translated and compared.

Two lecturers in the Faculty of Education were then asked to listen to the recordings and to give their opinion as to where they thought the interaction took place, in a formal or public place. They were also asked to say why they thought the interactions took place where they took place.

Finally all the information obtained from the recordings, the lecturers opinions and the information found in written material were compared, analysed and a conclusion was drawn that upheld our hypothesis. A test was then used to test the hypothesis where:

1. Figures in columns 2 and 3 represent the frequency of occurrence of code switching by the same student under two different conditions over ten minutes of taping.
2. Column 4 consists of the difference of the entries in columns 2 and 3.
3. Column 5 is the squared value of each entry in column 4.
4. $\sum d$
5. $\sum d^2$

NUMBER OF STUDENTS	INFORMAL	FORMAL	d	d ²
1	6	2	4	16
2	4	0	4	16
3	5	1	4	16
4	6	0	6	36
5	8	3	5	25
6	7	4	3	9
7	4	1	3	9
8	3	0	3	9
9	1	2	1	1
10	5	2	3	9
11	6	0	6	36
12	5	0	5	25
13	10	0	10	100
14	4	4	0	0
15	6	2	4	16
16	3	1	2	4
17	6	0	6	36

H₀ : There is no difference in the number of times a student code switches in public and formal situations ($\mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$)

H₁ : Student switches more in public places than in formal places ($\mu_1 > \mu_2$)

$$\mu_1 > \mu_2$$

$$t_{\bar{d}} = \frac{\sum d}{\sqrt{\frac{N \sum d^2 - (\sum d)^2}{N-1}}}$$

$$\mu_1 > \mu_2$$

$$t_{\bar{d}} = \frac{\Sigma d}{\sqrt{\frac{N \Sigma d^2 - (\Sigma d)^2}{N-1}}}$$

$$df = N - 1 = 17 - 1 = 16$$

Let $\alpha = .05$ or $.01$ for a one tailed test

$$\alpha = .01 = t_t = 1.746$$

$$\alpha = .01 = t_t = 2.583$$

\therefore Our calculated t – value (t_c) of 7.350 is significant at both levels.

We therefore reject H_0 and uphold H_1

Conclusion:

Code-switching occurs with the greatest frequency in public conversations than in formal situation.

CHAPTER IV

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The question is why do students code-switch. Is it really because code-switching has become a habit? Is it because they want to display their education or the place where they come from?

My findings are that they code switch because it is natural to do so. They do not mix varieties consciously - although they speak according to a great many complex rules, we are no more conscious of them than they are of the principles that govern horse-riding.

The other important fact is that whether they do code-switch or not, the main purpose of talking is to communicate in the best possible way they can. Code-switching is a realistic experience more so in a multilingual set up like the University. English, being a predominant language and a vehicle of education is always mixed consciously or unconsciously with native languages.

4.1 Environmental factors that lead students to code-switch

It has been observed that there are differences in how men and women speak (gendelects). In certain languages very great differences between the sexes have become entrenched so much that speakers of other languages might think men and women in that society were speaking different languages. For instance, in Zulu, certain consonants in men's speech are pronounced with more emphasis than in women speech e.g. -ng as in 'ngubani lo?' etc (who is this?).

Besides pronunciation differences, some languages have differences in vocabulary items; men and women use different words to refer to the same thing. Male students at the University of Zululand seem to be more innovative and make more changes in their speech. Blom and Gumperg (1971) refer to this type of code-switching as metaphorical code-switching. The male students code-switch so that the other people outside their circle may not understand what they say. This type of mixture at the University of Zululand is common with students who got together to smoke 'grass'. This mixture is unintelligible to one who is not a member. They will say things like:

1. 'Hey mgyu just yenza that tsha' (Hey, you guy just do that thing)
2. 'You seem to be guft baby' (You are drunk)
3. 'That mwife is tuneling me the mdanso'
(That women is beating about the bush)
4. 'This tshau is laka' (This food is delicious).

It is very rare to hear a lady student speaking such a mixed variety. It has been adopted by men for the precise reason of communicating in a way that cannot be understood by others.

Code switching in this case is environmental for they will only speak like this when they are together smoking. It also responds to a need in people to be creative in their language use and to show group membership (often unconsciously) through their language use.

English is - not only a vehicle of education but it is an international language, a language of power and economic advancement. The introduction of English to the native speakers has resulted in a shift to English because of its symbolic power. Thus those who do not master English are handicapped in their efforts to increase their social status.

It has also been observed that in a multilingual community like the university language can serve as a symbol of group solidarity. For example, at the University of Zululand there are Zulus, Xhosas, South Sothos, Tswanas, Vendas, Shangaans and others - and Zulu is the native language of most students and although others have their own indigenous languages, they can at least speak Zulu. Almost all students may use Zulu when speaking to one another although with an accent. Their use of Zulu, it seems, identifies them as members of a group which has had extensive contact with people from outside of their community.

This study reveals that whether a person is in a formal or in an informal place, code switching is likely to manifest itself, not because of where he finds himself but because code-switching is a reality and unconsciously they will code switch to meet an obvious need - communication.

This study reveals that the only reason why students code-switch more in public than in formal places is that in the latter situations there are certain rules that govern our conduct; and students are aware that they must speak English in a lecture hall. To go back to what was said earlier, as code-switching is natural and sometimes done unconsciously, students will code switch even in formal places for lack of appropriate items in the language used.

4. Social factors that lead students to code-switch

It has also been observed that when people who speak different languages come together for whatever purpose, will to a certain extent, come to understand one another language. From this language contact, several developments are possible. Native speakers of X, perhaps due to a sense of cultural inferiority, or being few in number, may gradually abandon their language al-

together in favour of the language of the indigenous population. The following was observed in this study: Venda speaking students who are fourteen in all, abandoned their mother language in favour of Zulu which is spoken by 4290 students who are in the majority. It has been observed that Venda speaking students do not speak their native language, instead they strive to learn Zulu. When they lack an appropriate Zulu word or phrase they will opt for English words to say what they intend saying.

Some people feel that code-switching is wrong because it hinders the development of their base languages - the hinderance may be there but it was also observed that code-switching is not wrong since it serves a worthwhile goal - communication. By providing means of communication in a community, it facilitates the integration of newcomers who would have a much more difficult time learning the other languages.

One other finding is that if someone is to achieve native mastery of a second language, he must have occasion to use it in daily affairs for prolonged periods of his life. Yet, few societies provide the opportunity for extensive exposure to more than one language. If two languages are spoken in a single society at all, it frequently happens that one language is spoken in the home and among close friends, while the other is used for specialised functions such as communication in lecture halls, administrative interactions. The psychological result of such a situation is that one of the two languages is always less dominant than the other. For example, think about a rector of a university whose position forces him to function in English in addition to his native language. Of course, his command of English is certainly sufficient to allow him to participate in spontaneous interviews, meetings, tell jokes and even get angry and 'conduct himself' successfully in all of the situations in which native English speakers might find themselves. But no na-

which native English speakers might find themselves. But no native English speaker would have trouble identifying him as a non-native speaker of English. Like most people who speak English as a second language, he sometimes has difficulty finding the words that characterise his thoughts precisely. Like many foreigners who find themselves in this situation, he substitutes a phrase or a definition for the word he is unable to locate. He code-switches. Students at the university, I found out, code-switch in order to express an idea using an appropriate term in a second or first language depending on the language dominantly used, which otherwise is difficult to locate in their language or in the first language. I therefore agree with Salami and Ngcongwane that code switching is as a result of one's lack of an appropriate word for what one wants to say.

CHAPTER V

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have tried to look into reasons that lead students at the University of Zululand to code-switch. We also looked into the purpose served by code-switching and we saw that it meets one need - that of communication.

We also saw what some people think about people who code-switch for example - we even got to know that some people hold negative attitudes towards this style called code-switching. In conclusion, as mentioned earlier on, it is hoped that through the views expressed in this study people will come to understand that there is nothing wrong with code-switching and it cannot be controlled. It can only be accepted.

Since code switching is a realistic and natural experience it has to be seen as a worthwhile area for research.

Code switching plays a vital role in unifying different cultures.

Most of what we do with language we do in a social context and it should not be surprising that how we use the language reflects the nature of our society. South Africa is seen as a country in which people are created equal, which presents something of a problem in context in which people exercise power over others. There can be little doubt, however, that it is our ability to do things with language - to perform speech acts that make language useful to us. In fact, with language we can do things that would otherwise be impossible. Code-switching is a

style of communication. Nearly everybody has a style, - at least an informal and a formal style as pointed out by Fromkin and Rodman (1988 : 275):

"In an informal style the rules of contraction are more often ... and many words are used that do not occur in the formal style. Many speakers have the ability to use a number of different styles, ranging between the two extremes of formal and informal".

It has been observed that everyone speaks with great care and precision in formal situations and shifts to a freer style allowing contractions as the situation becomes more relaxed.

Code switching is there to stay and there is nothing that can be done to eradicate it. Code switching came about as a result of contact situations. The language of the dominant group tends to displace the language that has lower prestige. The most valuable thing about code-switching is the purpose it serves - that of communication.

We need to have a better understanding of the changes that are to be controlled and what kinds are beyond our control. Those that are beyond our control should be accepted gracefully.

The most fundamental of human rights is the right to be oneself. Linguistically speaking this means feeling comfortable about the way other people naturally speak; and feeling free to vary one's speech as appropriate to the situation.

It is also significant and interesting to note here that Afrikaans, though a second official language in this country is rarely used by the students who take Afrikaans as a subject. They use it in the lecture halls during Afrikaans periods. Its

role or use in code-switching is very limited indeed, being observed in only a few lexical items that are mixed with the indigenous languages more especially by the students who come from Soweto.

The unpopularity of Afrikaans, and hence its insignificant role in code-switching, dates back to the 1976 students riots when students reacted to the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools. This would seem to lend support to the view that the status of English as the language not only of education and science but also of prestige is a determining factor in code-switching among students at the University of Zululand.

This study reveals that whether we are in formal or informal situations, whether we are students or not, we code-switch in order to express thought precisely.

One conclusion to be drawn from this research is that language is far too complex; that code switching is not only a habit; that it is not only because we want to show off our education, nor to despise anyone's language; - that it serves a vital role of communicating ideas which otherwise would not be understood. Let us accept it and feel comfortable about the way other people speak. In this way there shall be peace among people of different cultures.

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