

CODE-SWITCHING IN THE CLASSROOM OF DOTI

✉ *Padam Prasad Neupane**

Abstract

This article entitled 'code-switching in the classroom of Doti' is an attempt to identify the types of code-switching and reasons behind those code-switching which take place in the Nepali or Doteli language in English medium classes. The data of the study were collected through both primary and secondary sources. The sample population consists of 10 teachers teaching in secondary level English teachers of Silgadhi, Doti. The researcher used questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The study shows that teachers switch Nepali and Doteli code in English medium classes. Code-switching in the English medium classes occur in all the levels of language. Teachers' lack of competency in the target language and existence of multiplicity of language and cultures are the main reasons of code-switching. Sometimes, they switch Doteli code to break monotony and create fun in English medium classes.

Key words: Bilingualism, Multilingualism, code-switching, lack of competency, language classroom, fun, Doteli

Introduction

Bilingualism and multilingualism are common in every society of today's globalized world. So many languages exist in this world. All the languages have no equal number of users. Only few languages are dominant in the world. Many languages are used by only few speakers. Crystal (2009, p.14) reports that; 96% of the world languages are spoken by just 4% of total population. He states that 51 languages are spoken each by just a single speaker. In the context of language, today's citizens are not only limited to their country where they live. They are the citizens of the world. Due to advanced technologies, they interact with the people of every part of the world, just sitting in their own room. When they have to communicate with the people of unfamiliar language, they switch their code to express their feelings, ideas, beliefs, thoughts etc instead of using their mother tongue only.

The term 'code' refers to any language or its varieties used for communication. Code is a term in linguistics referring to alternation between language or its varieties in conversation, stretches of discourse or utterances among people who have more than one language in common. Speakers having at least knowledge of two languages can shift themselves from one code to another, during communication. The case of code-switching occurs when bilingual/multilingual substitutes a word, phrase or clause from one language and another from next language or its varieties. It takes place in all levels, aspects and skills of language.

Richards et al. (1985, p. 43) say that code-switching is a change by a speaker (writer) from one language variety to another. Code-switching can take place in a conversation when one speaker uses one language and another speaker answers in different language. A person may start speaking one language and then change over to another one in the middle of their speech or sometimes even in the middle of the sentences.

In similar way, Wardhaugh (2008, p. 101) views code-switching as bilingual speakers are usually required to select a particular code whenever they speak within a social situation; they may also be required to switch from one code to another when certain change takes place in the situation or in the social context, such as arrival of a new person, change of the topic, change of the style and so on. The instance, when speakers tend to change their code from one to another for some reasons and duration of time that is known as code-switching.

Code-switching occurs to bridge the linguistic and communicative gap. Sometimes one participant may not understand other participant's language, at that time both of them search for common language and they switch themselves in that language. The extent of code-switching depends upon the individuals involved including gender and inters personal role relationship among the participants. In this case, one language might help the other and sometimes both of them create a new idea, image, thought, outlook, organization and adaptation and thus move culture to new adaptive places in the dynamics of cross-cultural life.

Types of code-switching

There are various types of code switching. Polack (1980, p. 581) has mentioned three types of code switching which are cited as:

- i. Tag switching
- ii. Intrasentential switching
- iii. Intersentential switching

A tag in one language is inserted into an utterance of another language in tag switching. A tag is inserted anywhere in an utterance i.e. beginning, middle or at the last. A tag in one language brought into another language which entirely different from first one 'You know', 'I see', 'I mean', 'yeah' are some of the English tags 'a' 'haina', 'ni', 'kyare,' are Nepali tags. For example:

Student 1: Have you drawn picture of eagle?

Student 2: I have already finished it 'kyare'.

Here 'kyare' Nepali tag is inserted in English sentence at the end of the utterance. Tag switching is most common among code-switching.

In Doteli 'Ye', For- 'Ok'

'Haina Ba, '- 'You Know'

'Yeso ho Maannu'- 'I See'

Intrasentential code-switching occurs within clause or sentence boundary. Some words or phrases are inserted within a single sentence of another language or its variety. For example 'marriage ko lagi' he has bought a new expensive red saari. (He has bought a new expensive red saari for marriage.)

Example found in the English classroom of Doti:

'Jaat lai' he has returned from India.(He has returned from India to celebrate Jaat.)

Intersentential code-switching takes place outside the clause or sentence boundary. A clause or sentence in one language is switched in to another language or its varieties outside the clause or

sentence boundary. It requires greater fluency in both languages because major position of the utterance must confine the rules of both languages.

For example, 'Timi parikshya ma pass ta bhayou' but you have yet to sponsor a party. (You have passed the exam but you have yet to sponsor a party.)

In Doteli, 'Tu jachami paas bhaya hai la'.

Now, linguists have added one more type i.e. intra-word switching. Intra-word switching takes place within a single word such as at morpheme boundary.

For example, He is 'khaaing' mangoes. (He is eating mangoes.)

In Doteli, Homework 'arihalyaa'

Most of the linguists describe three types of code switching which are given below:

- i. Situational code-switching
- ii. Metaphorical code-switching
- iii. Conversational code-switching

Situational code-switching takes place when a language or its variety is switched according to the situation. The participants switch their language according to the situation. The participants switch their language according to the demand of the situation. The speaker speaks one language in one situation and switches into another one in different situation. For example,

An English Teacher (in his class): In Doti' so today we'll discuss on the topic . 'Condolence.'

Then suddenly (mobile phone rings) he says (reply on mobile phone) la ma kehi chhin pachhi phone garchhu (I will call you latter on.) or

In Doteli

'Ma thhokai pachhi phone arlaa'

Here he switches from English to Nepali or Doteli because the caller in the phone needs reply in the Nepali or Doteli language on the basis of who is calling if the call is from his village then reply will be in Doteli.

Metaphorical code-switching happens when there is change of topic in some case requires change in language, too. Change of topic makes metaphorical code-switching to take place. Such as when a Brahmin does pooja he utters mantra in Sanskrit and in other time he speaks in his mother tongue.

In Silgadhi code-switching happens while taking with the people from village and with the people from Silgadhi. We must use Doteli while dealing with the people from village especially while buying their goods.

When we discuss about computer or scientific invention we may need to switch ourselves into English.

In conversational code-switching, a speaker essentially chooses one code but elements of another code are mixed up in the course of utterances. It is equal to code-switching. The bilingual speakers simply display their ability and technology to use two languages together sometimes the speakers require no change in topic or situation to switch their code. The type of code-switching which mostly used in conversation without change of topic and situation is conversational code-switching.

Reasons of code-switching

Code-switching is done for various reasons. It is more convenient to switch the code than waiting for appropriate words/ sentences. It gives sense of identity and belongingness to the ethnic minority groups. Some of the reasons of code- switching are cited below:

- i. Lack of linguistic competence
- ii. Mood of the speaker
- iii. Semantic importance
- iv. Belongingness or identity in a group
- v. Pragmatic reasons
- vi. To create merriment
- vii. To fulfill situational demand
- viii. To communicate
- ix. To clarify
- x. Develops good relationship

Lack of linguistic competence causes the switch of code. If a speaker has no command over the language that he wants to speak than he switches the code over to the familiar language.

For example Teacher translate the nepali dress 'Ghalek' as 'Bhotya' in Doteli because of the lack of linguistic competence.

Mood of the speaker is also one of the reasons of code-switching. The speaker speaks in the language or its variety in which his mood wants. The language which the speakers speak depends upon the mood of the speaker. If a speaker changes his mood, he switches his code too. If the teacher is not satisfied from student's work then he starts using Doteli terms such as:

'Khali ho yaauda aaunye'

'Dakar matrai nikali raakha tu', Nin gaadye'

To make the meaning clear, speaker sometimes switches the code in which recipient is familiar with. Unless the message is clear, it is useless to utter the words or sentences. Some terms are inherently difficult to understand the meaning, unless they are switched in mother tongue.

Code-switching can help an ethnic minority to retain a sense of identity or belongingness in the same group. Code-switching makes to feel sense of intimacy and differentiate them from society.

Pragmatic reasons sometimes create the room for code-switching. It demands the speakers to switch the code. It is the situation according to which we should use the language or its variety.

Sometimes, to create merriment one switches the code. Such as, in a group of students when they chat, one speaks in English than switches it into Nepali or in their mother tongue (Doteli) to create fun among them.

Methodology

Sources of data

Ten teachers who are teaching English at various secondary schools of Silgadhi, Doti district were the primary sources of the data for the study. Various books, journals, articles were secondary source of data.

Sample population and sampling method

Ten teachers of English from Secondary level of Silgadhi, Doti were sampled as the study population using purposive sampling method.

Tools for data collection

Questionnaire was the tool for data collection. The questionnaire consisted nine closed ended questions and one open ended question.

Results and discussion of the responses obtained from the teachers regarding open ended question

Code-switching in English medium classes occur due to various reasons. On the basis of the data collected from informants, the reasons of switching code in English medium classes can be listed below:

Linguistic background of the teachers and students

Linguistic background of the teachers and students is one of the causes of code-switching in English medium classes. English is taught as a second or foreign language at schools and colleges in Nepal. The mother tongue of teachers and students in Nepal or Doteli is not English. They speak Nepali most of the time and Doteli with friends, family members and relatives. They use English in schools only. Willingly or unwillingly code-switching occurs in English medium classes.

To create fun

The Nepali or Doteli language is switched in English medium classes sometimes for breaking monotony and boredom. It is used for joking, creating fun or merriment. Unless, some jokes are told in Nepali or Doteli, they cannot make humor or create merriment. Some of the examples of code-switching for merriment are as:

Teacher: Beer is an expensive wine. I have never tested it. I have only taken 'tharra' (locally made crude.) Here, the teacher used Nepali word 'tharra' or the typical Doteli word 'daaru' for creating fun among students.

Some examples of Doteli to create fun in the classroom.

'Nikkai chha ki?'

'Raam heddu gayaa hau?'

'Tum kakchhami sutya bhanye ma nanni nanni bhanye hu?'

Inherent linguistic reason

Some terms are inherently difficult to find equivalent words in the target language. These terms require to be explained in mother tongue or in Nepali. The words related to Nepali culture and religion, ethnic group, geographical region etc. may compel the teachers to switch in Nepali code in English medium classes. The Nepali words such as: doko, namlo, gundruk, dhindo, sindur, ghalek, upanayan etc. do not have exact equivalent terms in English but in Doteli have some equivalent terms 'namlo'>'jyaulo', 'gundruk'>'gunuru', 'sindur'>'chanan', 'ghalek'>'bhottya', and 'upanayan'>'bartibandha'. Because of the difference in culture and religion, the terms related to them need switch of the 'Nepali or Doteli language in English medium classes.

To facilitate understanding

The Nepali or Doteli language is switched in English medium classes sometimes for semantic clarification. If the students do not understand in English then Nepali is switched over there to make the students understand. If they are still unclear then Doteli terms are used. The main reason of code-switching in Nepali or Doteli in English medium classes is to ensure mutual understanding between the teachers and students.

Results and discussion of the responses obtained from the teachers regarding close ended question

Question: How often is the Nepali/ Doteli language used while teaching in your class?

Table no. 1

Use of Nepali in the class

S. N.	Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
a.	very often	0	
b.	sometimes	3	30
c.	rarely	2	20
d.	when situation demands	5	50
Total		10	100

The given table shows, most of the teachers use Nepali in English medium classes. 50% teachers use Nepali/Doteli when the situation demands. Percentage of the teachers using Nepali/Doteli sometimes is 30% and rarely is 20 % of each. No teachers use Nepali/Doteli very often in English medium class.

Question: What situation demands code-switching?

Table No. 2

Situation for code-switching

S. N.	Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
a	background of the learner	5	50
b.	school environment	2	20
c.	socio-cultural terms	2	20
d.	it makes learning easier	1	10
Total		10	100

According to the table, background of the learners occupies 50% of the causes to occur code-switching. School environment and socio-cultural terms cover equal i.e. 20% of the situation to lead code-switching respectively. Only 10% of the respondents agree that code-switching makes learning easier that is why it takes place.

Question: What sorts of words require use of the Nepali/Doteli language?

Table No. 3

Need for code-switching

S. N.	Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
a	Literary	1	10
b.	Technical	3	30
c.	Concrete	3	30
d.	Abstract	3	30
Total		10	100

The given figure vividly presents that abstract, literary and technical terms require use of Nepali/ Doteli in English medium class. Each of them occupies 30% of the responses. Only 10% of the response shows concrete words require code-switching.

Question: What impacts does code-switching have on English medium classes?

Table No. 4

Impact of code-switching

S. N.	Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
a	positive	3	30
b.	negative	2	20
c.	Mixed	5	50
d.	Zero	0	0
Total		10	100

The given table shows that most of the respondents agree with the mixed effect of code-switching in English medium classes. Code-switching has situational effect in English medium classes. Sometimes it has more positive impacts i.e.30% than negative impacts of 20% . No respondents think it has no effect at all.

Question: If code-switching has positive impacts, in what way does it help learning?

Table No. 5

Positive impacts and its effect

S. N.	Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
a	by facilitating understanding	5	50
b.	by enhancing interaction in the classroom	4	40
c.	by increasing speed of teaching and learning	1	10
d.	by developing communication in both languages	1	10
Total		10	100

The given table shows, 50% of the teachers agree that code-switching takes place because, it facilitates understanding.40% of the respondents view, it develops interaction in classrooms. 10% teachers think that it increases speed of teaching and learning and develops communication respectively.

Question: In what level of language does code-switching take place?

Table No. 6

Linguistic level of code-switching

S. N.	Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
a	Word	3	30
b.	Sentence	2	20
c.	Discourse	1	10
d.	all of the above	4	40
Total		10	100

The above table demonstrates, the most of the respondents agree that, code-switching takes place over all the levels of language i.e. word, sentence and discourse .Each of them occupy 30%, 20% and 10% responses; most of the respondents (40%) think that it occurs at every levels of language.

Question : What happens in actual meaning when code-switching takes place

Table No. 7
Meaning and code-switching

S. N.	Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
a	gain of meaning	3	30
b.	lose of meaning	1	10
c.	situational effect	6	60
d.	no effect at all	0	0
Total		10	100

The above table presents, code-switching has situational effect on actual meaning (60%). Each of the options, gain and lose of meaning cover 30% and 10% respondents to think so. None of the respondents thinks code-switching has no effect at all, in the actual meaning of the terms.

Question: Who do you feel responsible for code-switching at school?

Table No. 8
Responsible for code-switching

S. N.	Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
a	Students	6	60
b.	Teachers	2	20
c.	Campus administrator	2	20
Total		10	100

The table presents that 60% of the teachers feel students are responsible for code-switching. The teachers who feel campus administrator and themselves responsible for code-switching are 20% .

Question: People blame teachers' incompetence is the main cause of code-switching. Do you agree?

Table No. 9
Incompetancy and code-switching

S. N.	Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
a	agree	3	30
b.	disagree	7	70
Total		10	100

Most of the teachers (70%) do not accept peoples' blame that teachers' incompetence is the main cause of code-switching. But, 30% of them accept this blame.

Conclusion

Mother tongue of the teacher definitely influences him while teaching.

The data show that code-switching occurs to bridge the communicative gap. The existence of multiplicity of languages compels the teachers and students to switch Nepali as well as Doteli code in English medium classes knowingly or unknowingly. Lack of competence over target language is the most responsible factor of code-switching. The poor proficiency in English results the case of code-switching on the part of the learners and teachers. Not only this teachers are using Doteli outside the class so he brings easily inside the class too. Words dealing with religions, jargons and name of the commodities demand code-switching. Code-switching takes place at all the levels of language. Code-switching takes place sometimes to break monotony in the classroom and create fun or merriment. Subject like social studies necessitates maximum use of code-switching. The research shows, to compare words in two languages causes code-switching. Teachers' training, teaching through proper methodologies and techniques minimize the code-switching. Availability of teaching aids and materials discourage the code-switching in English medium classes. Doteli terms are used as the last weapons i.e. first teacher explains in English then while translating it uses Doteli.

REFERENCES

- Chomsky, N. (1957). *Syntactic Structure*. The Hague Mouton.
Crystal, D. (2009). *Language Death*. Cambridge: CUP.
Gumperz, R. (1983). *Language in contact*. The Hague: Mouton.
Hudson, R.A. (1983). *Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: CUP.
Labov, W. (1971). *Examples of code-switching*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Polack, W. (1980). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: CUP.
Rai, V. S., (2005). *Psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics*. Kathmandu: Bhundipuran Prakashan.
Richards, et al. (1985). *Longman dictionary of applied linguistics*. Essex: Longman.
Wardhaugh, R. (1986). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. England: Basil Blackwell.

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TEACHERS

School:

Name (optional): -.....

Subject: -.....

Open ended question

1. Why do English teachers switch Nepali code while teaching English language in the classroom?
Give reasons.

.....

Close ended questions

Tick (?) the correct answer

1. How often is the Nepali language used while teaching in your class?
a. Very often b. Sometimes c. Rarely d. When situation demands
2. What situation demands code-switching?
a. Background of the learner b. School environment
c. Socio-cultural terms d. It makes teaching easy
3. What sorts of words require use of the Nepali language?
a. Literary b. Technical c. Concrete d. Abstract
4. What impacts does code-switching have on English medium classes?
a. Positive b. Negative c. Mixed d. Zero
5. If code-switching has positive impacts, in what way does it help learning?
a. By facilitating understanding
b. By enhancing interaction in the classroom
c. By increasing the speed of teaching and learning
d. By developing communication in both languages
6. In what level of language does code-switching take place?
a. Word b. Sentence c. Discourse d. All of the above
7. What happens in actual meaning when code-switching takes place?
a. Gain of meaning b. Loss of meaning
c. Situational effect d. Not effect at all
8. Who do you feel responsible for code-switching at school?
a. Students b. Teachers c. Campus administrates
9. People blame teachers' incompetence is the main cause of code-switching. Do you agree?
a. Agree b. Disagree.