



## Teachers' Use of Code-Switching and Secondary School Students' Achievement in Oral English in Oyo West Local Government Area, Oyo State.

ARAROMI MAXWELL OLAKUNLE  
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

**Abstracts.** This study investigated teachers' use of code-switching and secondary students' achievement in oral English in Oyo West Local Government Area, Oyo State. The descriptive survey research design of correlational type was adopted. Five senior secondary schools were randomly selected from eleven (11) public senior secondary schools in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State. A total number of two hundred (200) students and ten (10) teachers participated in the study. Teacher Code-Switching Observation Schedule (TCSOS) and Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT) were used to collect data. Data were analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistics. The study showed the most important reason for teacher code-switching is that the teachers use code-switching to increase students' participation during lessons. It was recommended that teachers should have knowledge of oracy skills so as to give quality knowledge to students in the area of oral English.

**Keywords:** Code-Switching, Secondary School Students, Achievement in Oral English, Teachers' Use, Oyo West

### 1. Introduction

English language is unique in Nigerian education because of the significant roles it plays. It enhances students' educational attainment and improves their communicative competence. Nigerian government made it a core and compulsory subject for students in Nigerian school. The importance of the language in Nigeria educational system cannot be over-emphasized because it plays a crucial role. Apart from being the medium of instruction, especially at the upper primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, it is also the language of the textbooks (Ezeokoli, 2005). The teaching and learning of the English language focus on the four major language

skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills are categorised into the receptive and the productive skills and they could also be oracy and literacy skills. Oracy deals with the capacity to express oneself and understand speech while literacy is the ability to read and write correctly (Harmer, 2007).

The assessment of English language in the external examinations organised by recognised examination bodies like WAEC and NECO maintains the standard that the subject is in three stages. Paper one is structured into essay writing, comprehension and summary; paper two consists of lexis and structure (grammar) and guided close passages while paper three consists of the test of Oral English where the segmental and supra-segmental phonology are tested for proficiency in English language. The segmental features consist of the vowels and consonants while the supra-segmental features are stress, rhythm and intonation. The vowels and consonants are separate sound segments but the features of stress, rhythm and intonation affect the quality of the sounds and extend over longer sequences of utterances like words, phrase and sentences. Stress and intonation must be properly used by teachers and learners of English if they want to be understood properly by other users of the English language.

According to Dada (2000), oral English entails ability to fully understand what is said in English language. spoken at a normal speed. This involves ability to perceive the sounds of the language and derive meaning from the utterances of the speaker. Ability for fluent expression in a way that the speaker will adequately understand. This also involves the ability to emit sounds and the sounds chains in a way that is acceptable in the language community. Ability to use the structure of the language to clearly and correctly express ideas.

The most problematic aspect of Oral English has been identified to be the supra-segmental (prosodic) features. These features and their importance are highlighted by Egwuogu (2012) that materials for speech work would be far from complete if they did not include the supra-segmental features like stress, rhythm and intonation. Adegbite (1994) notes that more attention is paid to the segmental features than the supra-segmental which are the core speech features. These features influence and modify segmental features, vowels in particular. Adegbite explains that if a syllable in English sentences or phrase lacks stress, the pronunciation of the vowel present in that syllable is affected. This is problematic for ESL learners of English because the stress and unstressed syllables in words of English language are great problems to learners.

Adegbite (2007) stressed that some second language learners of English pronounce English consonant and vowel sounds correctly. Omoniyi (2009) said that the phonological systems of the various indigenous languages are different from those of English because English is learnt as a second language, what simply takes place is an adaptation of indigenous phonological systems for English speech sounds and rather than an attempt to manage two phonological systems separately. This is to show that learners of English have challenges in their oral pronunciation. Also, learners might experience difficulties in the area of intonation and stress due to mother tongue interference (Brown, 2001; Mendelsohn, 2006).

Researchers have looked into the problems arising from the teaching and learning of oral English. Some of the problems manifested as a result of factors like lack of motivation and interest as a result of teachers' incompetence. Rababa'h (2005) pointed out that there are factors such as teaching strategies, the curriculum and environment. As a way to address the problem of students' poor performance in oral English among secondary school students, studies have been carried out on learner-centred strategies (Oyinloye, 2007), students' psychological factors (Fasanmi, 2006), attitude (Gardener and Lambert, 1972) and teacher commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). However, these studies came up with good contributions to the teaching and learning of oral English in secondary schools but with little attention on influence of teachers' code-switching in oral English classroom. two or more languages in teaching and learning for easy acquisition of knowledge by learners (Poplack, 2001).

Adegbite and Akindele (1999) describes code-switching as means of communication which

involves a speaker alternating between one language and the other in communicating events. Coupland and Jaworski (1997) note that code-switching is the use of two or more languages in the same conversation or utterance. It refers to all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence. Code-switching has positive effects on learners and teachers (Ahmad, 2009; Promnath, 2016). Clegg (2012) notes that code switching is the style of short-term alternation between languages. That is a situation whereby markets women switch into an alternate language for a short stretch of talk and switch back. De Klerk (2006) asserts that code switching is the use of more than one variety of language in the same conversation. Also, Moodley (2007) defines code switching as the alternate use of two (or more) linguistic varieties (languages, dialects, registers of the same language) at the inter sentential level, i.e. at word, sentence boundaries.

Code-switching is a linguistic behaviour that arises as a result of languages coming into contact with each other and the need for individuals to effectively communicate. Generally, it simply means mixing of words, phrases or smaller units of one language into the structure of another language in order to effectively communicate. Hymes (1962) asserts that code-switching is a common term for alternative use of two or more languages, varieties of a language or even speech styles. Code-switching which is often times referred to as 'code-mixing', 'code-shifting' or 'code-changing' has also been defined as the act of alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent" (Poplack, 2008). Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) notes that code alternation is the mixing of various linguistic units (morphemes, words, modifiers, phrases, clauses and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems within a sentence.

According to Cook (2000), the practice of alternating languages in teaching can be traced back to the end of 19th century when the Direct Method was first led into the education. Malik (2010) conducted a study in exploring the significance of various functions of codeswitching in Pakistani classroom has unveiled 11 functions of code-switching among 406 school teachers across Pakistan. The functions were listed based on the following ranking: Clarification (68%), ease of expression (63.3%), giving instructions effectively (62.1%), creating a sense of belonging (57.1%), checking understanding (56.9%), translation (55.2%), socializing (55.2%), emphasis (53.4%), repetitive functions (47.5%), topic shift (48%) and linguistic competence (39.9%).

Malik (2010) research showed that none of the purposes proposed in his significant role in catering students' learning needs in classroom.

Gwee (2006) conducted a study with the same objective in the Singaporean context by observing, tape-recording and transcribing 110 lessons in Singaporean multilingual fifth grade Science, Mathematics, social studies and English classroom. In her study, some functions of code-switching that were summarized include: emphasis, procedural scaffolding, humorous effect, softening of a command, rapport building, regulation, solidarity, reiteration, and checking on students' engagement. It was concluded that code-switching practice among the teachers in multilingual classroom serves important education functions.

According to Ahmad (2009), code-switching provides students with opportunities to communicate and enhance their understanding. Furthermore, it is time effective because teachers do not waste time to explain or search simple words to simplify any confusion that arises. Research conducted by Promnath and Tayjasa (2016), showed that code-switching was beneficial for the students' understanding. During learning, code-switching saved time and made students feel more confident and comfortable. The use of code-switching helps students with lower performance to be able to follow the lessons better than using English only. It reduced students' stress by not worrying about what to say because they could switch to their mother tongue when they didn't have an idea of how to say it in English. In addition, switching to mother tongue helped to effectively manage classrooms and incorporate morality and ethics.

According to Domalewska (2015), when Code-switching is used, it is based on the processes of assimilation, developing meaningful cognitive sets (i.e. forming logical connection and organisation in the material), and using advanced, organisers (i.e. general concepts that help the learner to organise and understand new material). Meaningful learning allows the information to be retained for a longer period of time; the information may be retrieved faster; furthermore, the student's cognitive structure is developed.

This study investigated teachers' use of code-switching and secondary students' achievement in oral English in Oyo West Local Government Area, 'Oyo State.

### 1.1 Purpose

This study investigated teachers' use of code-switching and secondary students' achievement in oral English in Oyo West Local Government Area, Oyo State. However, the specific purpose of the study is to determine the teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching and their contributions to students' achievement in oral English.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The following questions guided the research:

- What is the correlation between teacher code-switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) and students' achievement in Oral English?
- What is the joint contribution of teacher code-switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) to students' achievement in oral English?
- What is the relative contributions of teacher code-switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) to students' achievement in oral English?
- What is the major reason for teacher's code-switching during oral English lesson?

### 2. Research Methodology

The descriptive survey research design of correlational type was adopted for this study. This is suitable for the study since the researcher could not directly control the independent variables because their manifestations were already in existence.

The population of this study was all English Language teachers and students in public secondary schools in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State. Five senior secondary schools were randomly selected from eleven (11) public senior secondary schools in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State. Two English language teachers were selected from each school making a number of ten (10) English language teachers. Also, forty (40) students were selected from each of the five sampled public senior secondary schools thereby, making a total two hundred (200) students. In all, a total number of two hundred (200) students and ten (10) teachers participated in the study. Two research instruments were used for data collection. These are: Teacher Code-Switching Observation Schedule (TCSOS) and Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT). (TCSOS)

was a self-designed to measure teacher code-switching level. It was divided into four sections. Section A consists of demographic information of respondents and Section B was used to seek information on teachers' rate of code-switching during oral English instruction. The section was structured into 0= none, 1 = low, 2 moderate and 3 high, while Section C contained question on teachers' perception of code-switching with responses as Very Positive=5, Positive=4, Uncertain=3, Negative2, Very Negative=1. Section D has 15 well- structured items on reasons why English Language teachers code-switch during oral English lesson. The items were structured into the following: 1 Never, 2 Rarely, 3 Sometimes and 4 Always. (OEAT) was adapted from WAEC past questions to measure students'

achievement in oral English. The achievement test questions were adapted from WAEC past questions with specific focus on the oral aspects of the English Language. The achievement test was divided into two sections; A and B. Section A provided demographic information of the respondents such as name of school of participant, sex, class and serial number, while section B is made up of 50 questions on sounds, phonetic symbols, rhymes, word stress and emphatic stress. The format of the test was Multiple Choice. The data collected in this study were analysed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage scores, mean and standard deviation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis were also used to provide answers to the research questions.

**3. Results**

**Research Question One:** What is the correlation between teacher code-switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) and students' achievement in Oral English?

**Table 1:** Correlation Matrix of the Independent Variables and Students' Achievement in Oral English

Variable	N	Mean	St.D.	1	2	3
Students' achievement in oral English (1)	200	16.81	6.114	1.000		
Teacher Rate of Code-Switching (2)	10	13.25	4.580	0.23	1.000	
Teacher Perception of code-switching (3)						1.000

Table 1 shows the relationships that exist between students' achievement in oral English and the teacher rate of code switching and teacher perception of code-switching. The results reveal that students' achievement in oral English had a positive significant correlation with teacher rate of code-switching ( $r = .023$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and teacher perception of code-switching ( $r = .042$ ;  $p < .05$ ). This implies that the two variables had positive significant relationships with students' achievement in oral English.

**Research Question Two:** What is the joint contribution of teacher code-switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) to students' achievement in oral English?

**Table 2:** Summary of Regression Analysis of the Combined Independent Variables on Students' Achievement in Oral English

R = .792					
R2 =.627					
Adjusted R2 = .520					
Std. Error of Estimate = 7.497					
Regression	660.945	2	330.473	.0261	.032b
1 Residual	393.455	7	56.208		
Total	1054.400	9			

Table 2 shows the contribution of the two independent variables (teacher rate of code- switching and teacher perception of code-switching) to students' achievement in Oral English. The two independent variables, when pulled together, were significant in predicting the dependent variable for significance of the composite contribution was tested at  $p < .05$  using the F- ratio at the degree of freedom (F (2,9) .026 1, pc 05). The table further shows a coefficient of Multiple Regression (R) of .792 and a Multiple R Square of .627. This means that 62.7% of the variance in the students' achievement in English grammar was accounted for by the combination of the two independent variables used in the study.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relative contributions of teacher code-switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) to students' achievement in oral English?

**Table 3:** Summary of Relative Contributions of the Independent Variables to Students' Achievement in Oral English

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
	B	St.d Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-28.273	18.190		-1.554	.164
Teacher Rate of Code-Switching	13.091	4.927	.625	2.657	.033
Teacher Perception of Code Switching	7.273	2.769	.617	2.627	.034

Table 3 reveals the relative contributions of the two independent variables (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) to students’ achievement in oral English. Using the standardized regression coefficient to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables to the dependent variable, the table indicates that the relative contributions of teacher rate of code-switching (13 .625, t= 2.657, p<0.05) and teacher perception of code-switching (f3 .617, t -2.627, p<0.05) were significant. This implies that each of the variables contributed individually to students’ achievement in oral English.

**Research Question Four:** What is the major reason for teacher’s code-switching during oral English lesson?

**Table 4:** Mean Values for Teacher’s Reasons for Code-Switching during Oral English Lesson

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Std
1	The teacher uses code-switching to explain questions or statements that are incomprehensible to students.	2.90	.738
2	The teacher uses code-switching to correct students when they provide incorrect answers	1.50	.527
3	The teacher uses code-switching to acknowledge students or to call on them to respond to class discussion	2.10	.994
4	The teacher uses code-switching to facilitate a student’s understanding	2.90	.568
5	The teacher uses code-switching to enhance students’ mastery intonation	2.90	.568
6	The teacher uses code-switching to check student’s understanding	3.00	.816
7	The teacher uses code-switching to highlight important points	2.70	.675
8	The teacher uses code-switching to introduce the lesson topic	1.90	1.100
9	The teacher uses code-switching to establish good teacher student relationship	2.50	.527
10	The teacher uses code-switching to maintain good classroom management	3.00	.471
11	The teacher uses code-switching to increase students’ participation during lessons	3.20	.789
12	The teacher uses code-switching to interpret words during oral dictation	2.20	.919
13	The teacher uses code-switching in order to avoid confusion	2.70	.483
14	The teacher uses code-switching to help students with lower performance	2.70	.483
15	The teacher uses code-switching in discussing cross-cultural issues.	2.90	.568

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation values for teachers’ reasons for code-switching during oral English lesson. The data showed that item 11 has highest mean value of 3.20. This implies that the major reason for teacher code-switching during oral English lesson is that “The teacher uses code-switching to increase students’ participation during lessons”.

**4. Discussion on the findings**

The study found that positive significant relationships exist between teacher code- switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) and students’ achievement in oral English. The study also revealed that the two independent variables (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching); when pulled together, were significant in predicting the independent variable. The study reported that teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching made significant relative contributions to students’ achievement in oral English. The probable explanation for this is that when teachers hold positive perception of code-switching and use it in

the classroom, it will aid students’ understanding and help them achieve better. The last finding of this study showed that out of numerous reasons which account for teacher code-switching during oral English lessons, the most important reason for teacher code-switching is that the teachers use code-switching to increase students’ participation during lessons. This further explains why positive relationship exists between teacher code-switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) and students’ achievement in oral English. When students are actively engaged and participated in the learning activities, they stand the chance of having good grades. V

The findings of this study accord perfectly with the works of Li (2008), Madonsela (2016), Moodley (2010) and Mahofa and Adendorf (2014), who view code-switching in a positive light. They claim that code-switching has great potential for helping the bilingual teacher to achieve context-specific teaching and learning goals like clarifying difficult concepts and reinforcing a student’s bilingual lexicon. This study is also in line with the research conducted by

Promnath and Tayjasa (2016) which showed that code-switching was beneficial for the students' understanding. During learning, code-switching saved time and made students feel more confident and comfortable. The use of code-switching helps students with lower performance to be able to follow the lessons better than using English only.

Gulzar (2010) also highlighted the functions of code-switching in Pakistani EFL classrooms. She reported that different functions such as clarification, effective instructions, translation, socialization, repetition, and topic shift were emphasized by the participants. Similarly, Bensen and cavuoglu (2013) found that teachers in EFL classrooms in North Cyprus code-switched for topic switch, affective, and repetitive functions.

### 5. Conclusion

The study examined teacher code-switching as correlate of students' achievement in Oral English. Two independent variables (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) were used in the study. The study found that positive significant relationships exist between teacher code-switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) and students' achievement in oral English. The study had thus provided a better understanding of some of the teacher related factors that could influence students' achievement in oral English in secondary schools. It could be concluded from this study, therefore, that teacher code-switching (teacher rate of code-switching and teacher perception of code-switching) is crucial to evolving practical solutions to the persistent problem of poor achievement in oral English among senior secondary students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo state.

### 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that teachers should have knowledge of oracy skills so as to instruct the students in the area of oral English. Education Policy should be reviewed in a way that teachers are allowed to code-switch in students' first language during teaching irrespective of students' educational level or class. Government and Employers should put all the necessary measures in place to expose English language teachers to seminars and workshops so as to improve their knowledge of oral English. Teachers should enrol for higher degree in English language in order to update their knowledge.

### References

- Adegbite, W. (2003). *The psycholinguistics of English language in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Kraft Books Limited.
- Ahmad, R.H. (2009). Teachers' code-switching in classroom instructions for low English proficient learners. *English Language Teaching*, 2(2), 49-55.
- Brown, H. (2001). *Teaching by principles; An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed) Longman: White Plains, NY.
- Cook, M (2000) *Writing and Role Play: A case of Inclusion*. Literacy DOI:[10.1111/1467-9345.00138](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9345.00138) Corpus ID: 144523738 [Volume34, Issue2](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9345.00138)
- Cook, V. 2001. Using the first language in the classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57/3, 403-423.
- Coupland, n. and Jaworski, a. (eds) (1997) *Sociolinguistics: A Reader and Coursebook*, houndmills: Macmillan Press.
- Dada, A. (2000). Teaching oral English for application beyond the classroom in Oluwole and Fasanmi (eds). *Proceedings of UNICEF sponsored workshop with schools of education TASUED, Ijebu-ode in developing strategies for teaching oral English in primary schools*. Ijebu-Ode lucky odoni (pub).
- Ezeokoli, F.O. (2005). Home language as discriminant of reading interests of senior secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Issues in language communication and education: A book of readings in honour of Caroline Okedara*. Eds. A. Dada, A. Abimbade and C.O.O Kolawole Ibadan: Constellation Book.
- Gardner, R. and Lambert, W. (1972). Evaluating the effect of teacher degree level on educational performance. Paper presented at the NCES state data conference
- Gulzar, M. A. (2010). Code-switching: Awareness about its utility in bilingual classrooms. *Buiretin of Education & Research*, 32, 23-44.
- Gwee, B.Y.S., (2006). Teacher code-switch in multilingual classroom. Available from [http://repository.nie.edu.sg/jspui/bitstream/10497/3099/1/CQ.onfO6\(AERA\)\\_Gw\\_eepdf](http://repository.nie.edu.sg/jspui/bitstream/10497/3099/1/CQ.onfO6(AERA)_Gw_eepdf)
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching*. 4th ed. London: Longman.
- Hymes, D. H. (1962). The ethnography of speaking. In T. Gladwin & W. Sturtevant (Eds.), *Anthropology and Human Behavior* (pp. 13-

- 53). Washington, DC: Anthropological Society of Washington.
- Malik, J.G., (2010). Code-switching: Awareness about its utility in bilingual classrooms. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 32(2): 23-44
- Moodley, V., (2010), Code switching and communicative competence in the language classroom', *Journal for Language Teaching* 44(1), 7—22.
- Morgan, R.M. and Hunt, S.D. (1994). The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 20-38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252308>
- Poplack, S. (2001). Code switching: Linguistic. In N. Smelser P and Baltes (Eds). *International encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 20622065). Elsevier. Science Ltd.
- Promnath, K. (2016). English-Thai Code-Switching of Teachers in ESP Classes. *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand*, 51, 97—12
- Rabab'ah, G. (2005) Communication problems facing Arab learners of English. *Journal of Language and Learning* Vol 3 No 1, University of Sharjah