

## Can Code Switching Enhance the Learning of the Target Language?

Liswani Simasiku<sup>1</sup>, Choshi Kasanda<sup>2</sup>, Talita Smit<sup>3</sup>

(1. Department of Communication and Study Skills in English, Language Centre, University of Namibia;

2. Department of Mathematics, Science & Sport Education, Faculty of Education, University of Namibia;

3. Department of Language & Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Namibia)

**Abstract:** Grade 10 learners in the year-end examinations in the Caprivi Educational Region, Namibia perform poorly. This study aimed to learn from the English Second Language (ESL) teachers whether the use of Mother tongue in the English medium classrooms could enhance the learning of English Second Language in the Namibian schools. The objective of this study was to investigate whether the use of mother tongue in English medium classrooms enhanced the learning of the target language (English Second Language). The study investigated 12 ESL teachers at 12 schools in the Caprivi Educational Region. The study found that ESL teachers agreed that Code Switching enhanced the learning of the English language, improved the way learners answered questions, and that it enhanced teaching and learning of English as a Second Language. It is believed that the more difficult English language concepts are better understood by learners when explained in the learners' mother tongue.

**Key words:** Code Switching, target language, English for specific purpose context

### 1. Introduction

It is envisaged that the use of code switching in the Namibian English medium classrooms might enhance learners' understanding of the subject content, hence create grounds on which learners can build their learning of the English language and other languages. The switching of codes from learners' mother tongue to the language of learning and teaching in any subject could provide the support needed while learners continue to develop proficiency in the language of learning and teaching. Kavaliauskienė (2009, p. 2) maintains that

Native speakers of English argue that foreign language learning needs as much exposure to the second language as possible during classroom time, and any usage of L1 or translation is a waste of time. In the past, most methods in second language pedagogy dictated that the first language should be prohibited in the classroom. Communicative approaches to language learning in 1970s and 1980s considered the use of first language as undesirable. However, recently the attitude to mother tongue and translation in language classes has undergone a positive change.

Kavaliauskienė (2009) does not agree with the thinking of many native speakers of English and argues that the usefulness of code switching lies in exploiting it in order to compare grammar, vocabulary, word order and other language points in the English language and the learner's mother tongue (L1). Code switching as a teaching

---

Liswani Simasiku, Ph.D., Department of Communication and Study Skills in English, Language Centre, University of Namibia; research areas/interests: curriculum studies and language policy. E-mail: [lsimasiku@unam.na](mailto:lsimasiku@unam.na).

tool takes into account a number of different aspects, such as grammar, syntax, collocation and connotation (Kavaliauskienė, 2009). A good understanding of the grammar, syntax, collocation and connotation of a mother tongue may easily be translated into the second language and thus facilitate the learning of the second language.

Kavaliauskienė (2009) argues that the state-of-the-art of language teaching is based on the communicative method, which emphasizes the teaching of English through English. However, the idea of abandoning the native tongue appears to be too stressful to many learners, who need a sense of security in their experience of learning a foreign language. In the past, those who opposed the prevalence of the Grammar-Translation Method argued that it led to an extraordinary phenomenon and that students were unable to speak fluently after having studied the target language for a long time. This led to the idea that all use of the mother tongue in the language classroom should be avoided (Harmer, 2001).

It should be noted that learning a second language for academic purposes requires the correct usage of that language's grammar in writing. Therefore, good application of one's mother tongue can bridge the learning of the new language. It is with this understanding that the researchers suggest borrowing from the Grammar Translation Method. At the core of the Grammar Translation Method is the translation back and forth between the target language and the learners' native language, comparing and contrasting the structures of the two languages, thereby enabling learners to make connections. The major characteristic of the Grammar Translation Method is, precisely as its name suggests, a focus on learning the rules of grammar and their application in translating passages from one language into the other. Vocabulary in the target language is learned through direct translation from the native language (Thuleen, 1996).

Venzke (2002, p. 63) indicates that

... learning through English is thought to impede learning and also to cause poor mastery of both English and the L1, the poor ... results and the general lack of academic skills and intellectual growth among black learners at secondary and higher education levels are most often attributed to the use of English as medium of instruction.

Eldridge (1996) maintains that code switching is a strategy that has benefits for second-language learners, as it provides a natural shortcut to subject content and knowledge acquisition. Code switching, through the harnessing of the learners' mother tongue or local language, is a resource for exploratory talk. Eldridge's sentiment is also shared by Zabrodska (2007) who reiterates that teachers code switch in order to illustrate those parts which remain unclear to the learners. In fact, Gabusi (2005) and Sert (2006) contend that code switching is a good device that underlines the importance of particular pieces of information where messages have not been understood in one language. Esfahani (2014) argues that in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context, code switching is perceived by teachers to be helping learners understand the grammar being taught. Lasagabaster (2013) maintains that the use of L1 in English medium classrooms is positive as it can serve to scaffold language and content learning.

To further help understand how code switching enhances the acquisition of the target language, it would be better to examine Cummins' (2000, p. 232) two levels of language proficiency:

- Surface aspects (e.g., pronunciation, fluency) and
- Underlying cognitive/academic proficiency.

The two levels are formally known as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1991) and are explained as follows:

(1) Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

According to Cummins (2000), Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are language skills needed in social situations. It is the day-to-day language needed to interact socially with other people. English language learners (ELLs) employ BIC skills when they are on the playground, in the lunchroom, on the school bus, at parties, playing sports and talking on the telephone. Social interactions are usually context embedded. They occur in a meaningful social context. They are not very cognitively demanding. Problems arise when teachers and administrators think that a child is proficient in a language when they demonstrate the use of good social English (Cummins, 2000).

(2) Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) refers to formal academic learning. This includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing about the subject area content material. This level of language learning is essential for students to succeed in school. Students need time and support to become proficient in academic areas. This usually takes from five to seven years. Thomas and Collier (1995) have shown that if a child has no prior schooling or has no support in native language development, it may take seven to ten years for ELLs to catch up with their peers. Academic language acquisition is not just the understanding of content area vocabulary. It includes skills such as comparing, classifying, synthesizing, evaluating, and inferring. Academic language tasks are context-reduced. Information is read from a textbook or presented by the teacher. As a student gets older, the context of academic tasks becomes more and more reduced. The language also becomes more cognitively demanding. New ideas, concepts and language are presented to the students at the same time.

Cummins (1991) argues that in order for a bilingual to achieve CALP status in the second language, he or she must first achieve CALP status in the first language. In support of Cummins are Hakuta, Butler and De Witt (2000, p. 21) who maintain that “instruction that develops L1 reading and writing skills is not only developing L1 skills, but a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency that is strongly related to the development of literacy in the second language”. Hakuta, Butler and De Witt (2000) argue that transferring cognitive skills to second language is made easier if literacy-related skills have been adequately developed in the L1 through a gradual learning process conducted over a number of years. Therefore, the switching of codes from the L1 to second language during classroom interaction is thought to enhance the development of second language, provided the language structures in the L1 are correctly taught. As a matter of fact, Hudson and Smith (2001) (in Venzke, 2002) suggest that if teachers teach the essential elements of successful reading in the learners’ L1, they will be supporting the development of the learners’ L1 cognitive academic language proficiency, which will then transfer to both acquiring a second language and to developing second language literacy skills.

The acquisition of reasonable competency in English seems to haunt many educationists as to what technique to employ in schools to enhance the acquisition of the target language; Namibia is no exception. Jernudd (2002) notes that those familiar with language acquisition theories would agree with the belief common in applied linguistics that code switching and interlanguage errors testify to the learner’s advancement of acquisition of the target language. The subject of course is to make sure that the target norm does not disappear from the acquisition process. According to MacSwan (1997), the syntax of human language cannot be properly modelled by either a generative context free grammar (such as those which underlie the languages of elementary arithmetic and formal logic) or a context sensitive grammar (one which makes reference to constituents in strings). Hence, he proposed a hybrid generative-transformational grammar as a plausible model of human language. Therefore, code switching is in fact quite regular.

## 2. Methodology

Prior to the actual study, a questionnaire and observation checklist were piloted; colleagues approved the reliability of the instrument. The population of this study consisted of all Grade 10 ESL teachers in the Caprivi Education Region. Purposeful sampling also called criterion sampling was used.

### 2.1 Instrumentation

Two research instruments were used to collect data in this study. These were questionnaires and observation checklists. The questionnaire focused on the perceptions of teachers on the use of code switching in English medium classrooms, while the observation checklist assessed the use of language in teaching. The analysis of questionnaires and the observation checklist were coded and categorised. Sub-categories were established and grouped together as themes. Once themes were identified, they were again coded with numbers and analysed by the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). In addition, content analysis was used to group and quantify responses from interviews and the observation checklist into themes and categories to determine the meaning of the participants' views and practices towards Code Switching.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Effect of Code Switching on ESL Teaching and Learning

This category sought to investigate whether code switching had any effect on the teaching and the learning of English Second Language in ESL classrooms. Table 1 presents the responses from the teachers garnered from the six questions asked in this category.

**Table 1 Effect of Code Switching on Teaching and Learning**

Questions	Responses			Total
	YES	No	No Idea	
• Does switching from English to mother tongue help learners learn the EL?	6	5	1	12
• Does code switching improve learners' participation in your English classroom?	9	2	0	11
• Do concepts in the mother tongue in an English medium classroom develop cognitive skills in the English language?	5	4	0	9
• Does a better understanding of the mother tongue's grammar and sentence structure translate easily into the learning of the English language?	4	7	0	11
• Does code switching provide the support needed for learners to develop proficiency in the English language?	5	6	0	11
• Does code switching from mother tongue to English language in an English medium classroom enhance the development of English if the mother tongue's structures are correctly taught?	8	3	0	11

To the question seeking to determine whether switching from English to mother tongue helped learners learn the English language, six teachers agreed, five said no and one did not respond. To the second question, which sought to find out from the teachers whether code switching improved learners' participation in their classrooms, the majority of the teachers (nine) responded "yes", while two said "no". The third question looked at whether concepts in the mother tongue in English medium classrooms developed learners' cognitive academic skills. Here, five teachers agreed and four disagreed. The fourth question focused on whether better understanding of mother tongue's grammar and sentence structures helped learners to easily understand the grammar and sentence structures of the English language. To this question seven teachers disagreed and four agreed. In response to

question five, which sought to find out from the teachers whether code switching provided the support needed for learners to develop proficiency in the English language, six ESL teachers disagreed and five agreed. Question six asked the teachers whether code switching from mother tongue to English in an English medium classroom enhanced the development of the English language, if the mother tongue's structures were correctly taught. In response to this question, eight teachers said "yes", while three disagreed. The perceived advantages of code switching were sought from the ESL teachers.

In Table 2, the teachers' perceived advantages of Code Switching in English medium classrooms are given.

**Table 2 Teachers' Perceived Advantages of Code Switching in English Medium Classrooms**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Responses</b>
A1	Learners don't know any of the things in English, especially the ones that make them to code switch.
A2	It is ease to explain something for learners to understand better.
A3	Learners get to understand what they couldn't.
A4	The teacher has a few roles in explaining to the learners, learners will take the roles as they can explain.
A5	The teacher receives support which makes teaching even easier, though it would deprive learners from acquiring new vocabulary.
A6	Learners will carry out instructions effectively, keep learners actively involved in the lesson, and understand the subject matter.
A7	It makes teaching easier especially if the mother tongue is spoken by all the learners in the classroom.
A8	Makes the topic easier to understand.
A10	Better explanation of the topics/item, better interpretation, and stimulation and participation.
A11	It benefits the teacher to equip himself with the language techniques, teaches and language proficient.
A12	Opportunity to explain concepts which learners do not understand.

From the responses in Table 2, it can be seen that ten of the respondents saw many advantages, ranging from better explanations, better understanding by learners, and better support for teachers to learners in carrying out instructions. The respondents further claimed that learners would be actively involved in their learning, understand the subject matter better and the more difficult English concepts would be better interpreted by learners in the language that they fully understood.

The following arguments were presented by teacher A6, A8, A10 and A11 respectively, for example, "Learners would carry out instructions effectively, keep learners actively involved in the lesson, and understand the subject matter, makes the topic easier to understand, better explanation of the topics/item, better interpretation, and stimulation and participation and that it benefits the teacher to equip himself with the language techniques". The arguments presented by teachers above were in agreement with those by Johnson (in preparation), Cummins (2000), Venzke (2002), Dumatog and Dekker (2003), Gonzalez (1996), Diaz (1983) and Biggs (1991, to mention but a few. These researchers argue that the use of a second language as a medium of instruction poses challenges for many learners.

### **3.2 Code Switching Aids Proficiency in the English Language Classroom**

Data units on how code switching can aid learning, the development of cognitive skills and English proficiency are contained in Table 3.

**Table 3 Code Switching Aids the Learning, the Development of Cognitive Skills and Proficiency in the English Language**

Responses	Number		
	Learning	Cognitive development	Proficiency in English
Yes	6	5	6
No	5	4	5
No Response	1	3	1
Total	12	12	12

What emerges from Table 3 is that half (six) of the ESL teachers indicated that code switching aided learning while five said no. The second variable was whether code switching aided the development of cognitive skills in English, to which five said yes, while four said no and three did not respond to the question. The third variable was whether code switching aided proficiency in the English Language, six said yes while five said no.

### 3.3 Correct Teaching of the Mother Tongue (MT) Aids the Learning of the English Language (EL)

Table 4 presents the various responses given by the ESL teachers as to whether correct understanding of the mother tongue's grammar and sentence structure aided to the learning of the English Language.

**Table 4 Correct Teaching of Mother Tongue Grammar and Sentence Structure Aides the Learning and Proficiency in English Language**

Responses	Number	
	Learning of English	Proficiency in English
Yes	4	6
No	7	5
Total	11	11

Table 4 addressed two questions. Question one dealt with the correct teaching of mother tongue grammar and sentence structure and how it aided the learning of the English language, while question 2 dealt with whether correct teaching of mother tongue grammar and sentence structure enhanced proficiency in English. Responses to question one indicated that seven ESL teachers disagreed that correct teaching of mother tongue grammar and sentence structure translated into the learning of English language while four ESL teachers agreed with the statement. Responses to question 2 indicated that six ESL teachers agreed that correct teaching of mother tongue grammar and sentence structure aided proficiency in English language while five disagreed.

In Table 5 comments made by the ESL teachers regarding the learners who started answering questions in English and then switched to the mother tongue to complete their answers are presented.

**Table 5 Teachers' Reaction When Learners Code Switched**

Respondents	Responses
A2	I will tell him/her not to combine the two languages at the same time.
A3	Let him/her finish and ask him/her later to try and translate that part he/she said in the mother tongue in English.
A4	Though annoying, I will let the learner finish with whatever s/he is saying, then ask any learner to say what has been said by the fellow learner in English.
A5	As a teacher I shall just help the learner or correct him/her to do the right thing.
A6	Encourage the learners to use the correct wording in English for example explaining that which is he/she said in the mother tongue in English.
A7	It will always give a chance to that specific learner to try and give the same answer in English.
A8	Emphasis must be given to learners not to combine the two languages, if it's English it must be English no matter whether learners do not understand through the medium of the English language.
A10	Very uncomfortable and the learners would not be allowed to finish the sentence in the mother tongue but would ask the learner to answer in English as we all know that practice makes perfect.
A11	To handle it professionally.
A12	I will not be happy with learners through code switching may be good; learners should express themselves in the target languages as far as possible.

Seven ESL teachers said that they would allow a learner to continue answering questions in the mother tongue without interrupting him/her and would later on help the learner to use English. Three said they would immediately stop the learner and instruct them to use English.

Table 6 presents responses by the teachers as to how they handled learners who started answering in English and switched to mother tongue in ESL classrooms.

**Table 6 How Teachers Handled Learners Who Code Switched**

Respondents	Responses
A2	Warn the learner that he/she should not repeat the same mistakes. Help the learner with the English word from the mother tongue.
A3	Sometimes I cut him/her off before finishing and remind him/her to use English.
A4	Though on several occasions, I at times stop the learner immediately to avoid the use of the mother tongue or I correct the learner, meaning I tell him/her what he/she was supposed to say.
A5	I correct the mistake immediately.
A6	Yes, I have to explain to the learner the correct wording in English and alert the learners to use English or explain the word(s) to the learner, often I use contextual clues.
A7	I accepted the answer and let the same learner try and explain or look for an English equivalent word.
A8	I interrupted and instructed everyone to use English always in an English class unless otherwise.
A10	Encourage learners to communicate in English, motivate and show the need and benefits of practicing the English language.
A11	Not angry but cohesively let them defend their answers.
A12	Encourages learners to use English unless otherwise.

The ESL teachers' responses (Table 6) differed from teacher to teacher. However, five said that they stopped the learner immediately and warned the learner to only use the English language during classroom discussions, while another five respondents said that they tolerated the learners' code switching

### **3.4 The Use of Code Switching in English Medium Classrooms**

It is a fact that English has become both the language of power and the language of education and socioeconomic advancement, that is, a dominant symbolic resource in the linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1991). However, in Namibia, English remains the language of the minority. Therefore, dominant use of English in the corridors of power ramifies in complex ways in classroom practices. The category on use of code switching in English medium classrooms addressed the following questions: the presence of code switching in ESL classrooms, teachers' use of code switching while teaching, existence of terminologies in the mother tongue and learners' participation when code switching was used. Table 7 gives responses of the teachers to the above questions.

**Table 7 The Use of Code Switching in Grade 10 English Medium Classrooms**

	YES	NO	NO IDEA	TOTALS
Code Switching is present in the classrooms	9	1	0	10
Teachers code switch while teaching	9	2	0	11
Terminologies exist in Mother tongues to facilitate code switching	3	6	0	9
Code Switching improves learners' participation in the classroom	7	4	0	11

As can be seen in Table 7, nine ESL teachers indicated that code switching was present in their classrooms and that they, along with their learners, code switched in their classrooms. Only one teacher said code switching was not present in his English medium classroom. Two said they did not use code switching in their classrooms at all. Although nine teachers agreed that they code switched in their teaching, only three agreed that there were

terminologies in the mother tongue to aid code switching, while six felt that the mother tongue did not have sufficient terminologies to support code switching from mother tongue to English. Three teachers did not respond to the question (see Table 7). As to whether learners' participation improved when code switching was used, seven teachers agreed that code switching improved learners' participation in their classrooms, while four said no.

## **4. Discussion**

This study sought to address the effects of code switching on ESL teaching and learning. To do that, eight questions were asked. There was however, a division in teachers' responses. Table 1 presents the results for the first question. Six ESL teachers agreed that switching from EL to the mother tongue helped learners learn the English language; nine ESL teachers also agreed that code switching improved learners' participation in English medium classrooms; and another five agreed that concepts in the mother tongue in an English medium classroom developed cognitive skills in the English language. On the other hand, seven ESL teachers did not agree that understanding of the mother tongue's grammar and sentence structure translated easily into the learning of the English language, and six did not agree that code switching provided the support needed for learners to develop proficiency in the English language. For the last question, the majority (eight) ESL teachers agreed that code switching from mother tongue to English in an English medium classroom enhanced the development of English if the mother tongue's structures are correctly taught.

The finding in this study is similar to what Travers, Elliot, and Kratochwill's (1993) argue, who found that children with a high degree of bilingualism have a high level of cognitive development. Furthermore, Simon (2001, p. 339) invites teachers to reconsider the role code switching plays in classroom interaction and to "break with methodologically imposed language constraints in order to use code switching strategically to achieve their pedagogical aims". Code switching as a teaching tool takes into account a number of different aspects of the language, such as grammar, syntax, collocation and connotation in both the mother tongue and the target language (see Figure 6). Another finding that emerged from this study was that mother tongue use in the classrooms was not only for classroom management, but also for language analysis, presenting rules that governed grammar, discussing cross-cultural issues, giving instructions or prompts, explaining errors, and checking for comprehension (see Figure 6). Nonetheless, seven Grade 10 ESL teachers were adamant that there were no correlations between the correct teaching of the learners' mother tongue grammar and sentence structures and the learning of the English language.

### **4.1 Code Switching Aids English Language Proficiency**

There were three questions that this category sought to answer, that is, whether code switching aided learning, cognitive development and proficiency in English (see Table 3). With regard to whether code switching aided learning, six teachers agreed while five disagreed. The second question that looked at whether code switching aided cognitive development, and responses show that five ESL teachers said yes, while four said no. The last question looked at whether code switching aided proficiency in English. Six ESL teachers affirmed, while five disagreed. The six ESL teachers who agreed to the question were the majority, which indicates that teachers thought that code switching should be used in English medium classrooms. One can understand the teachers' stance on code switching because code switching as a teaching tool takes into account a number of aspects, such as grammar, giving instructions and classroom control in both the mother tongue and the target language.

The responses of the six ESL teachers in the Caprivi Educational Region supports those of Thuleen (1996),



who noted that code switching serves the following purposes: filling a linguistic and conceptual gap, tattle telling, translation, attracting teachers' attention and expressing emotions (see Figure 6). These observations are in line with those by Gysels (1992) and Crystal (1987) who also stated that code switching is used to fill linguistic and conceptual gaps, as well as to aid multiple communication purposes and to complete sentences when the speaker falls short of vocabulary in the second language. The findings revealed that teachers were equally divided on the issue of whether Code Switching aided learners' English language proficiency or not.

#### 4.2 Correct Teaching of the MT Aids the Learning of the EL

As seen in Table 4, more teachers were of the view that the correct teaching of the mother tongue structures did not enhance the learning of the English language. One can therefore conclude that the seven teachers saw language structures in isolation. The teachers did not see that the language structures in the learners' mother tongues could be used as scaffolds for learning a second language. However, six teachers indicated that the correct teaching of mother tongue structures enhanced proficiency in English. We tend to agree to a large extent with ESL teachers who responded that Code Switching aided learning, cognitive development and proficiency than those who disagreed, because if mother tongue structures are correctly taught it could influence the learning of the English Language structures. To expand our argument, the Caprivi situation will be used, where a teacher might revert to Silozi or another mother tongue to make learners understand the content and to explain the rules of grammar. For example, when learners fail to draw a distinction between the two prepositions "from" and "to" because in Silozi the preposition "*kwa*" is used for both "*to*" and "*from*", the teachers' understanding of the Silozi grammar could be used to explain the distinction to the learners. Another example is the Cisubia and Cifwe words "*izona*" (Cisubia) and "*ezona*" (Cifwe) which mean yesterday or tomorrow. The use of learners' L1 would therefore alert learners to the fact that even though there is one word for the two ideas in their mother tongue, the English equivalent "to" or "from" cannot be used interchangeably as they each mean different things in the English language.

Furthermore, we would argue that when learners are able to compare sentence structures in their mother tongue to that of the English language, learners learn similarities and differences. Structures of Silozi sentences and Cisubia sentences are the same as in English as they follow the pattern: Subject + Verb + Object, while Cifwe follows a different pattern Object + Subject Verb. Knowledge of these similarities and differences in patterns is important to learners as they could be more conscious when writing English sentences.

To further consolidate our argument we have used Poplack's equivalent constraint model to illustrate the similarities and differences of English, Silozi, Cisubia and Cifwe sentence structures (see Table 8).

Table 8 Poplack's Equivalent Constraint Model

Language	Subject	Verb	Object
English	I	go	home
Silozi	Ni	ya	kwahae
Cisubia	Ni	ya	Kumunzi
Nyanja	Ni	yenda	Kumunzi
Bemba	Na	ya	kumushi
Language	Object	Subject	Verb
Cifwe	Kumunzi	ndi	ya

Therefore, knowledge of these language patterns is very important for learners because they think in their mother tongue; they must thus be made aware that no two languages are the same. This could help learners to be conscious, thus eliminating mistakes in the structure of the target language. Since the aim of the Namibian government is to popularise English, the emphasis should be on the SVO pattern in schools where code switching is used. Consequently, the findings show that if learners are able to compare the grammar of two languages, it will help them to be conscious when they construct sentences in any of the languages and thus eliminate errors.

### **4.3 The Use of Code Switching in English Medium Classrooms**

This category addressed four questions (see Table 7). The first question asked the ESL teachers to indicate whether code switching was present in their English medium classrooms. The majority (nine) of ESL teachers said that it was prevalent in their classrooms. The second question looked at whether teachers code switched while teaching English. Again, the majority (nine) of ESL teachers said yes. The third question asked the teachers to indicate whether terminologies existed in the mother tongue to facilitate code switching in English medium classrooms. Six teachers said no and three said yes. The last question asked whether code switching improved learners' participation in English medium classrooms. Seven ESL teachers said yes, while four said no. Despite six teachers having said that there were no terminologies in the mother tongue to be used in the English medium classroom, the same nine teachers agreed that code switching was prevalent in their English medium classrooms and that they too code switched. What was also observable was that the use of mother tongue in English medium classrooms was not only used for classroom management, but for language analysis, presenting rules that govern grammar, discussing cross-cultural issues, giving instructions or prompts, explaining errors, and checking for comprehension.

An argument that has been frequently cited by opponents of code switching is that local languages cannot be media of instruction because these languages lack sufficient terminologies and vocabulary necessary for academic instruction. The matter was put to the teachers who participated in this study to gauge whether there were the possibility that an African language could be used as medium of instruction in Namibian schools. At the heart of this belief is the fact many African teachers subscribe to the notion that African languages have not developed enough terminologies to be used as media of instruction. This is far from being true as it is a known fact that the English language that many African teachers have elevated to such giddy heights has extensively relied on borrowing to supplement its language deficiency. For example, in 2010, when the World Cup was played in South Africa, the English dictionary added the term "Vuvuzela" to its vocabulary. The argument that needs be advanced here is that if the English language is still enriching itself with new vocabulary borrowed from other languages, then what stops African languages from borrowing from other languages to enrich their terminologies?

The researchers also observed that code switching practices were not only inevitable but also necessary in the Caprivi because English was being learned at the same time as it is being used as a medium of instruction. In Table 3, ESL teachers gave both negative and positive effects of code switching on learners' classroom participation. Among the negative effects mentioned were poor English expression of learners, learners not knowing how to answer in English, and learners not able to express themselves in English. Those teachers who saw the positive effects argued that learners had a better understanding of English grammar rules and better understanding of English vocabulary. Two Grade 10 ESL teachers were not sure whether English as the only medium of instruction enhanced classroom participation citing the different achievement abilities of learners such as high, middle and low abilities and that participation was determined by learners' achievement abilities. One of

the respondents felt that the school location had an influence on learners' class participation. For example, learners in urban schools learnt English at an early stage, which enhanced their participation in English-only classrooms compared to learners in rural schools.

The majority of the ESL teachers argued that the mother tongue aided learners to attach meaning to the newly acquired English vocabulary. This finding supports Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie's (2002) views who maintained that the use of the mother tongue was conducive to the correct understanding of the newly-input target language (English) for the learners. Furthermore, Macaro (1997) indicated that most learners expected their teachers to speak their L1 sometimes to facilitate their understanding. It seems from this study that there is a place for code switching in the English medium classroom. Code switching in the English medium classroom serves a variety of functions. It is used as a tool to bridge communication and conceptual gaps among learners whose home language is not the medium of instruction. Teachers should be made to understand that code switching improves learners' performance both in content and language learning. Code switching should therefore be seen as a resource which gives learners an opportunity to understand and comprehend their lessons, thereby subsequently improving performance in the examinations. It is also a tool to increase learner participation in the classroom, which in turn is a necessary prerequisite for academic achievement and cognitive development (see Table 7). After having looked at the arguments presented above, one can only say that code switching is rooted in classrooms that use a second language as a medium of instruction.

## 5. Conclusion

Code switching was used to fill linguistic and conceptual gaps, as well as to aid multiple communication purposes and to complete sentences when the speaker falls short of vocabulary in the second language. When learners are able to compare sentence structures in their mother tongue to that of the English language, learners learn similarities and differences. The majority of the ESL teachers argued that the mother tongue aided learners to attach meaning to the newly acquired English vocabulary. Teachers should be made to understand that code switching improves learners' performance both in content and language learning. Code switching should be treated by teachers and curriculum planners as an additional resource that hastens collaboration between learners and teachers in English medium classrooms. The use of the mother tongue in English medium instruction classrooms should be encouraged to help learners compare their mother tongue structures to those of the English language.

## References

- Biggs J. (1991). *Effects of Language Medium of Instruction on Approaches to Learning*, Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong.
- Bourdieu P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal D. (1987). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cummins J. (1991). "Language development and academic learning", in: Malawe L. W. and Duquette G. (Eds.), *Language, Culture and Cognition*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 161–175.
- Cummins J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Diaz R. (1983). "Thoughts and two languages: the impact of bilingualism on cognitive development", *Review of Research in Education*, Vol. 10, pp. 23–53.
- Dumatog R. C. and Dekker D. E. (2003). "First language education in Lubuagan, Northern Phillipines", retrieved September 15, 2010, available online at: [http://www.sil.org/ldc/parallel\\_papers/dumatog\\_and\\_dekker.pdf](http://www.sil.org/ldc/parallel_papers/dumatog_and_dekker.pdf).
- Eldridge J. (1996). "Code-switching in a Turkish secondary school", *ELT Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 303–311.
- Esfahani F. R. (January, 2014). "Perception of EFL learners towards code switching in ESP context", *Journal of Applied Science and*

*Agriculture*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 107–114.

- Gabusi V. (2005). "Code Switching uses: The focus on the teacher", retrieved November 25, 2005, from Applied analysis in a high school context, available online at: <http://www.facili.unibo.it/NR/rdonlyres/...TessinadiValentinaGabusi.pdf>.
- Gonzalez A. F. (1996). "Using two/three languages in Philippine classrooms: Implications for policy, strategy and practices", *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, Vol. 17, pp. 210–218.
- Gysels M. (1992). "French in Urban Lubumhashi Swahile: Code switching, borrowing or both?", *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, Vol. 13, pp. 41–56.
- Hakuta K., Butler G. Y. and Witt D. (2000). "How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency?", University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute, Policy Report 2000-1, retrieved November 4, 2002, available online at: <http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu>.
- Harmer J. (2001). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hudson R. F. and Smith S. W. (2002). "Effective reading instruction for struggling Spanish-Speaking readers: A combination of two literatures", retrieved June 16, 2007, available online at: <http://www.ehostvgw4.epnet.com/fulltext>.
- Jernudd J. D. (2002). "Education reform and language selection in Hong Kong: Brief remarks by a linguist on the 'medium of instruction' and 'mix' issues", retrieved October 28, 2009, *Hong Kong teachers' Centre Journal*, available online at: [http://edb.org.hk/hktc/download/journal/jl2\\_1.1.pdf](http://edb.org.hk/hktc/download/journal/jl2_1.1.pdf).
- Kavaliauskiene G. (2009). "Tole of mother tongue in learning English for specific purposes", *ESP World*.
- Lasagabaster D. (2013). "The use of the L1 in CLIL classes: The teachers' perspective", *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 1–21.
- Macaro E. (1997). *Target Language, Collaborative Learning and Autonomy*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- MacSwan J. (1997, October 3-5). "The status of NPs in Southeast Puebla Nahuatl: Comments on the polysynthesis parameter", in: *The Annual Meeting of Linguistic Association of the Southwest (LASSO XXVI)*, Los Angeles.
- Nunan D. (1991). *Language Teaching Methodology*, Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall International.
- Sert O. (2006). "The factors of Code Switching in ELT classrooms", *The Internet TESL Journal*, retrieved March 4, 2008, available online at: <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Sert-CodeSwitching.html>.
- Simon D. L. (2001). "Towards a new understanding of Code Switching in the foreign language classroom", in: R. J. (Ed.), *Code Switching Worldwide II*, Berlin: Nouton de Gruyter.
- Thuleen (1996). "Grammar-translation method", retrieved September 24, 2009, available online at: <http://www.nthuleen.com/papers/720report.html>.
- Thomas W. P. and Collier V. P. (1995). "Language minority student achievement and program effectiveness", manuscript in preparation.
- Travers J. F., Elliot S. N. and Kratochwill T. R. (1993). *Educational Psychology: Effective Teaching, Effective Learning*, Oxford: Brown and Benchmark.
- Venzke S. (2002). "The relationship between proficiency in English, grade 12 English results and the academic success of first year students", unpublished master thesis, Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Zabrodskaia A. (2007). "Russian-Estonian code-switching in the university", *SLA & Teaching*, Vol. 14, pp. 123–139.