

## Code-switching as a Means of Struggling against the English hegemony at Midlands State University

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### Abstract

*English, as a foreign language has enjoyed superiority over indigenous African languages since the advent of British colonisation in Africa. At Midlands State University English is the language of hegemony. Policy regarding language use stipulates that English is the working language and language of instruction, and indigenous languages are completely disregarded. The study recognises that whilst there are hard and fast rules that speak against the use of indigenous languages, people do not conform to the standard mainly because English is not the language of the people. There are means that are used to operate above the hegemony and code-switching is one such avenue. That being the case, this inquiry examines the extent to which code-switching is used and can serve as a means of struggling against the hegemony of English language at Midlands State University. The study also unpacks the forces that are behind the nurturing of the hegemony of English language. In an attempt to come up with informed decisions, a hybrid theoretical framework comprising the competence and markedness model is adopted. The study is qualitative in nature and data was collected through observation and personal interviews. The study establishes that code-switching is the order of the day in lectures at Midlands State University. It acknowledges the role that is played by code-switching in ensuring that indigenous languages are not completely excluded from domains that are reserved for English language. The study concludes that code-switching is an effective way of struggling against English hegemony since it enhances the use of indigenous languages, particularly Shona in the classroom.*

**Keywords:** Code-switching, English Hegemony, language situation, status planning, English language, indigenous languages, linguistic competence.

The use of code-switching in education is a reality which has been received with mixed feelings by its users and the authorities. The use of code-switching has its roots in the language situation that promotes the use of English language as

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the language of education. The language situation that prevails in institutions of learning in Zimbabwe today has roots in colonialism. The language situation in Zimbabwe before the advent of colonialism was that each linguistic community would use its own language which was adequate for its purposes. However the advent of British colonialism brought with it English to African societies. Since colonialism and British conquest in Zimbabwe, English has been used as a language of the official domain whilst indigenous languages are peripherised in the public domain. Colonial education promoted the use of English language at the detriment of indigenous languages. Shona and other indigenous languages were regarded as inferior to English. Consequently English became the language of official communication, thereby enjoying a hegemonic status.

The attainment of independence in Zimbabwe did not reverse the language situation. When Zimbabwe attained political independence in 1980, she inherited the colonial language system which perpetuated the use of English language. Mutasa (2006, p. 62) notes that “although there have been concerns with regard to the position and status of African languages, the continent has failed to shake off the vestiges of the colonial legacy.” Zimbabwe managed to free itself from political subjugation, but the linguistic revolution is still on. The language issue has remained an area of concern long after independence where the colonial language is still occupying a position that is superior to that of indigenous languages.

The relationship that exists between English and indigenous languages in Zimbabwe has been an area of great concern to scholars. According to Magwa (2008, p. 181) “policy regarding the status of English vis-a vis indigenous Languages in this country has always been a thorny issue, thus the question of language policy in education has and will remain controversial.” He condemns the Zimbabwean political leadership whom he accused of allowing English, the former colonial language to function as the official language in all domains including education. The ongoing argument is that, long after independence English is still a domineering force over indigenous languages.

The language situation at Midlands State University strongly resembles the language situation in the nation and continent at large. It is an extension of the Zimbabwean language situation which regards English as “the language” without which people cannot succeed. At Midlands State University, English is the language of all formal and official discourse. All lectures are conducted in English and this renders it a dominating language. It is noteworthy that even lectures in African languages are undertaken through the medium of English language.

Despite the institutional policy that stipulates that English is the language of official communication in the Faculty of Arts, both students and lecturers frequently code-switch to Shona and Ndebele which are the mother tongues for the majority

of them. This research therefore investigates how students at Midlands State University contest the hegemony of English through the use of code switching. The paper focuses on English-Shona code switching. This entails interrogating code-switching as a strategy of challenging English hegemony. The study also aims to find out where and when code-switching is used and the extent to which it serves as a fight against English hegemony.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative research methodology was used in the study. This enabled the researcher to extract details about human behaviour, emotions and personality characteristics. Ritchie (2003) notes that it provides a unique tool for studying what lies behind or underpins a decision, attitude, behaviour or other phenomena. Qualitative research design allows the researcher to explore the reasons behind code-switching. The study obtained data through interaction with people. This was done through the use of observation and personal interviews. Observation was the main data collection tool. According to Chiromo (2006, p. 27) "observation seeks to ascertain what people think and do by watching them in action as they express themselves in various situations and activities." It gives the researcher an opportunity to have first-hand information from the participants. Using the observation method, the researcher was able to observe the physical reaction of learners and lecturers during lectures. It enabled the researcher to collect data in its natural setting. The researcher observed lectures in progress and this enabled her to listen to code-switching instances by lecturers and students during teaching and learning. The researcher also observed her own lectures, thereby affording her an opportunity to identify instances of code-switching. Through observation, the researcher ascertained the reasons for code-switching. The researcher observed four lectures from the Departments of History, African Languages and Culture, Development Studies and English and communication skills. Observation was used continuously since the researcher is also a lecturer in the Faculty of Arts at Midlands State University. Lectures were observed between August and December 2016.

Key informant interviews were conducted with both students and lecturers who provided information as to why they use code-switching. Borg and Gall (1989) define an interview as the collection of data through direct interaction between individuals. Interviews were used to collect data on covert variables such as attitudes and motivations. Interviews assisted the researcher to explore the perceptions of students and lecturers towards code-switching. Interviews were used as a follow up to information obtained through observation. The technique also helped the researcher to acquire information about students' and lecturers' perceptions regarding the use of code-switching. Fourteen students and six lecturers from the Faculty of Arts were interviewed.

## **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

### **Theories: Competence and Markedness Models**

The research is guided by Chomsky's competence model and Myers-Scotton's Markedness model. Chomsky's model is concerned with the unconscious knowledge that native speakers possess of their language. It deals with the rules, principles and conventions of a language. According to Syal and Jindal (2004, p. 29) "competence is the native speaker's knowledge of his language." Chomsky's idea is that competence is the knowledge of rules of a language which is in the brain of the speakers and it underlies linguistic performance which is the use of language in real life situations. The way people use language is directly linked to the competence that they possess. In order for one to be able to use language in concrete situations he or she must possess linguistic competence thus Chomsky is of the view that competence underlies linguistic performance. To Ellis (1985, p. 6) "the utterances that the learner produces are treated as windows through which the internalized rule system can be viewed."

The competence model of language directs the study in the sense that it is the knowledge of a language that a person possesses that enables him/her to use such a language in concrete situations. For an individual to communicate in a language he/she must have a language bank in that particular language. The competence model accounts for the idea that there are circumstances in which people code-switch to their native languages because of inadequate linguistic competence in English language.

The Markedness Model is grounded on the premise that code-switching is socially motivated. The model suggests that code-switching is grammatically structured and systematic and therefore cannot be treated as a sign of deficient language behaviour. The model therefore extends the view that an exclusively grammatical approach to code-switching cannot explain fully the reasons for code-switching. According to Myers-Scotton (1993), the Markedness Model is therefore a sociolinguistic theory which looks beyond the formal aspects and concentrates on the social, pragmatic and cultural functions of code-switching. It allows people to identify the psychological and social motivations underlying code-switching. It contends that the speaker is a creative actor and by code-switching s/he accomplishes more than the conveying of referential meaning.

The theory allows the researcher to delve into social reasons for code-switching. With the theory one can examine the social meanings of code-switching and how the languages in question can be associated with certain meanings. The Markedness model accounts for the fact that code-switching can be used to achieve so many goals including to fight the hegemony of English language which is the focus of the present study.

## Literature Review

**Code-Switching.** According to Fasold (1984), code-switching is whereby pieces of a different language are used while a speaker is using another language. Poplack (1980) defines code-switching as alternating between two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent. He goes on to categorise code-switching into intersentential where two different languages are used in different sentences or clauses; tag switching which involves inserting a tag in one language which is otherwise in another language and intrasentential where there is code-switching within the sentence boundary. Basically code-switching is the concurrent use of more than one language in the same discourse.

Closely related to code switching is the term code-mixing. Hoffman (1991) says that code-mixing is the switches occurring within a sentence and code switching are changes over sentences. This shows that there is an overlap in the definitions of code-switching and code-mixing since Poplack talks about intrasentential code switching. Boztepe (2003) posits that the difference between code-switching and code-mixing is explained by the classification of intra-sentential and intersentential code-switching and that making use of either terminology is a matter of personal preference but one that creates unnecessary confusion.

This paper makes use of the term code-switching to refer to all instances where there is concurrent use of more than one language in the same discourse.

**Language Situation in Zimbabwe.** The language history of Africa shows that before the advent of colonialism Africans used their own languages which were adequate for their purposes. According to Mutasa (2006, p. 63):

Their (African) languages are languages they have used from time immemorial in their day-to-day business without any feeling of fear, inferiority complex or prejudice. Through their languages, they were determined to achieve their goals, be they social, economic, [that are] advantageous to the general well-being of the community as a whole.

This state of affairs reached a turning point with the advent of colonialism, where there was the emergence of colonial languages particularly Portuguese, French and English in different African countries. According to Gudhlanga (2005, p. 54) “after colonizing African countries, the colonial masters were eager to impose their own languages on all their subjects.”

Language policies that promoted the use of colonial languages were put in place by the colonial governments thereby creating diglossic situations, whereby foreign languages were used alongside indigenous languages. Wardhaugh (2006, p.89) notes that “a diglossic situation exists in a society where there are two distinct codes which show clear functional separation; that is one code is employed in one set of circumstances and the other in an entirely different set.” In a diglossic situation two

varieties or languages are accorded different status with one being a low and the other a high variety. This kind of language situation resembles the one that prevails in most African countries since colonialism where the languages of the colonisers occupy a high status whereas those of the colonised a low status.

The British promoted the use of English language and the hegemony of English language over African languages was nurtured through education in order to develop a corps of natives who would be literate in English and could be used to facilitate the political administration of the colonies (Mutasa, 2006, p. 18). It is also important to note that it was also through the use of foreign languages that colonialism was spread. By virtue of being the conquering race, the British were perceived as a superior race and everything that belongs to them was also regarded as superior. Thus, the British, for instance were considered to have a superior life ideology, a superior civilization, a superior religion, a superior culture and a superior language (English) that was used to communicate everything that was considered superior. Since English was considered to be a superior language, people were eager to be associated with it. This resulted in the intensive use of the language. Commenting on the hegemony of English, Mutasa (2006) recognises that English is a matter of life and death and that it has overwhelming power. Because of the multifaceted roles that are assigned to English language it became the language of hegemony.

Zimbabwe is one of the countries that is a victim of the afore-mentioned state of affairs. Colonialism has done the same damage to Zimbabwe as it has done to many other African countries that is in as far as the issue of language is concerned. When Zimbabwe attained political independence in 1980, she inherited the colonial language system where there is the perpetuation of the predominant use of English language particularly in education and other formal sectors. Mutasa (2006, p. 62) argues that “although there have been concerns with regard to the position and status of African languages, the continent has failed to shake off the vestiges of the colonial legacy.”

In other words, Zimbabwe has managed to free itself from political subjugation, but the Cultural Revolution is still on. The language issue has remained an area of concern long after independence where the colonial language is still occupying a position that is superior to that of indigenous languages. This has been alluded to by Chivhanga and Chimhenga (2013) who argue that English is the language of power and prestige in Zimbabwe and has retained the role that it played during colonialism in independent Zimbabwe. It has retained its status in independent Zimbabwe as compared to local languages which according to Robinson (1996) are characterised by oral usage, individual or community usage, village solidarity and personal loyalties whilst English the official language is associated with success, power, prestige, progress and achievement.

The need to challenge the status quo is evidenced by strides that have been taken in terms of promotion of indigenous languages in the country. The African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) was put in place to promote the indigenous languages of Zimbabwe. In the same vein, the Shona Language and Culture Association (SLCA) was put in place to promote the use of Shona language.

### **Status Planning and the nurturing of English hegemony in Zimbabwe.**

The position that English language occupies vis-a-vis other Zimbabwean languages is a result of status planning. Status planning activities have got to do with the decisions about the roles and functions that are assigned to languages in a country. Designation of languages such as official language, language of instruction, regional language, and language of wider communication are all status planning decisions. According to Hadebe (2006), status planning deals with policy issues. In general, status planning is a political activity that deals with issues of language power. What this means is that the social standing of languages is a result of status planning activities.

Status planning activities in Zimbabwe have ensured that English enjoys superiority over the indigenous languages of the nation. This is evidenced by the roles and functions that it is expected to accomplish. The statuses of the different languages in Zimbabwe were first captured in the 1987 Education Act. The Education Act promotes English as the language of hegemony. This policy advocated for the use of indigenous languages like Tonga, Venda, Shangaan and Kalanga as well as Shona and Ndebele as media of instruction up to grade 3 in those areas where they are commonly spoken. Pupils were to be taught either Shona or Ndebele as subjects while English was the official medium of instruction from grade 4 upwards (Government of Zimbabwe, 1987). According to Gotosa, Rwodzi and Mhlanga (2013) the Education Act was amended in 1999 and 2006 but the amendments did not bring any significant changes with regards to the statuses of languages, thus they refer to the amendments as mere *paper policy*. Thus, English language has remained a high status language as compared to indigenous languages.

The Education Act (Chapter 2504) as amended in 2006 recognises Shona, Ndebele and English as the main languages of Zimbabwe. However, the languages do not enjoy the same status. English is the official language whilst Shona and Ndebele are national languages with restricted official use (Campbell & Gwete, 1997). This puts the languages in a hierarchical order where English is at the top of the ladder.

Up to until the signing of the new Zimbabwean constitution into law in 2013, the language situation in Zimbabwe identified three language statuses which are the official language, the national language and the minority language. The official language which is English is used in media, in offices, schools, administration, and economic transaction and in government amongst other contexts. National languages, that is Shona and Ndebele, are used in national gatherings like political rallies, religious ceremonies, and daily communication in the media etcetera. Minority languages are restricted to the domestic arena and the media. Largely, the language situation in

Zimbabwe promotes English as a language of politics, education and economy. The peripherisation of indigenous languages has consequently resulted in attitudes which have impacted negatively the development of indigenous languages, which further promotes the hegemony of English.

In the case of Zimbabwe, English is both the official language and also the primary language of globalisation. This being the case, Zimbabweans are eager to be associated with English language, since they find little relevance of their own languages. Nyaungwa (2013, p. 7) notes that in Zimbabwe, English appears to be a language of prestige, social mobility, a language to be used to further one's education and a language of employment. Thus, it is associated with development, progress and success.

From the discussion above it is clear that status planning has triggered the language debate that has persisted in Zimbabwe since independence. It is status planning that has rendered indigenous languages inferior, by not giving them space in education. Because of the predominant use of the English language in Zimbabwe, most Zimbabweans view indigenous languages as primitive. They hold English as a language with innate superiority over indigenous languages, and this results in the marginalization of indigenous languages. However, the superiority of English language over indigenous languages in education is highly contested. People have and are still using different strategies to fight against the hegemony of English.

## **Findings**

### **Language Situation at Midlands State University.**

The language situation at Midlands State University (MSU) is an extension of the Zimbabwean language situation which regards English as "the language" without which people cannot succeed. Status planning at Midlands State University also promotes the hegemony of English and completely disregards indigenous languages. The language situation that obtains at Midlands State University draws from the national education language policy as embodied in the 1987 Education Act that gives English a higher status over indigenous languages. Lectures in all modules and programmes at Midlands State University are conducted in English and this renders it a language of hegemony. MSU policy regards English as the language of all formal discourse. Indigenous languages have got their place outside university business where they are used for daily communicative business as embodied in the university yearbook (2007). There is nowhere on paper where there is an option for the use of indigenous languages in formal discourse. Status planning at Midlands State University is silent on the role of indigenous languages and it follows that the languages are not given space. As a result, indigenous languages lag behind English.



It is one of the university's concerns that each and every individual should be in a position to speak and use English language. In fact, at this university it is a prerequisite for an individual to have a good command of English language. The General Provisions 3.5.1 as laid out in the Midlands State University Yearbook (2007-2010) says "Every student must satisfy the university that he/she has adequate command of the English language. New students may be required to undertake a test in English proficiency set by the university upon registering for Bachelor's degree studies." This implies that the knowledge of English language is considered very important without which an individual cannot enroll as a student at the university. It is one of the General Academic Regulations for undergraduate degrees and diplomas of Midlands State University as stipulated in the Yearbook that the possession of all the other necessary qualifications does not guarantee anyone a place at the institution unless supported with a display of a good command of English language. A pass in "O" level English language with a C or better is also a passport to qualify for any programme that is offered by the university. This means that the rule is applicable to everyone who wishes to study in the university.

According to the Midlands State University Yearbook (2007-2010), there are privileges that those who gain admission through mature entry enjoy, but when it comes to the issue of English they are not spared. At Midlands State University, persons who are 25 years of age for males and 23 years for female who are not eligible for entry under the normal or special entry regulations may apply for mature entry provided they have got a pass in "O" Level English language: The University may also require them to attend interviews and or special tests designed to assess their command of English language, numeracy and reasoning ability and general suitability for admission to the Bachelor's degree studies (Midlands State University Yearbook 2007-2010, Section 3.3.1). Applicants who fail this interview will not be considered for entry. Such regulations make English a superior language at Midlands State University.

Through observation the researcher realised that all formal communication at the institution is undertaken in the medium of English language. Announcements, notices and advertisements are done in English. Seminars and workshops are as well conducted in English language. Assessment of studies at the university is done through the medium of English. Lectures, tutorials and presentations are all undertaken in English. All examinations, assignments and tests are also set and answered in English language. English is therefore the language of official communication and academic discourse.

The language situation that obtains at Midlands state University goes a step ahead in promoting the use of English language as compared to the use of language stipulated in the Education Act. In the Education Act there is at least the provision of the use of indigenous languages though to a limited extent which is unlike the situation at Midlands State University where African languages are even taught in English language. In the department it is only examples that are given in indigenous languages but it is mandatory to translate them to English language. This makes

English the primary form of communication even in the Department of African Languages whose mandate is to promote African languages. This further elevates English language.

Apart from this students are expected to have a pass in O' Level English language despite the fact that they will be enrolling for a degree in African languages. The idea that English is the criterion for admission into any programme makes English the language of the arts, the language of commerce, the language of sciences and the language of law etcetera.

Language planning at Midlands State University promotes English as the language of hegemony, whereas indigenous languages are kept at the periphery. There is nowhere in the university regulations where provision is made for the use of indigenous languages. There is no programme where an indigenous language is taken as an entry requirement except for African languages where English is also a prerequisite. The indigenous languages are however the languages that both students and staff use outside university business in their day-to-day interaction. They are used in discussions, and in general daily conversation in the hostels and on the university grounds.

This shows that persons at Midlands State University are exposed to two completely different worlds; where in one world they are supposed to communicate in one language and in the other they are expected to communicate in yet another language. This shows that the language situation that prevails at Midlands State University is generally diglossic in nature where English occupies the official arena and indigenous languages particularly Shona and Ndebele which are spoken by the majority occupy the unofficial arena. Whilst English language is the official language at Midlands State University not everyone is proficient in the language; competence is a major problem. With this state of affairs, code-switching at Midlands State University is inevitable. It is through code-switching that indigenous languages have penetrated the lecture room; a place that is officially reserved for English language.

### **The Struggle against English Hegemony**

The findings show that code-switching is rampant at Midlands State University. Both students and lecturers occasionally alternate between English and their mother tongues. Results obtained from interviews done with lecturers from the Faculty of Arts indicated that lecturers do not encourage the use of code-switching because it tends to produce a confused crop of students who will have problems since they are expected to write their examinations in English. However, they contend that, despite efforts to discourage the use of code-switching it is still a part of classroom discourse. Quite interestingly the author observed that code-switching is not only used by those who are discouraged to use it but even by those who discourage its use. Both lecturers

who tend to discourage its use and students who are discouraged to use it engage in code-switching time and again. Through code-switching indigenous languages such as Shona and Ndebele have managed to penetrate the supposedly English-only classroom at Midlands State University.

Code-switching is regarded by both lecturers and students as both a voluntary and an involuntary activity. It is used to achieve a wide range of goals. From the interview data, students and lecturers see code-switching as a communication strategy that is used to achieve a range of linguistic to non-linguistic goals that include clarifying ideas, emphasising ideas, and easing classroom tension amongst others. What is of interest is the idea that whether the reasons are of linguistic or non-linguistic nature, they all accord indigenous languages a place in areas that are reserved for English language. This, in turn, shows that code switching is an effective way of fighting against English hegemony.

One of the reasons for code-switching is incompetence in English. An interviewee who is a student in the Department of English and Communication said that “code-switching makes communication easier because one might not be good in English. So if he/she code-switches it will be easier to communicate his/her message.” It is arguable that there is no reason why people should code-switch unless they fall short of knowledge in a language in which they will be conversing. Due to the fact that English is not a first language of the majority of students they always fall back to their languages because of lack of confidence in English language. Students feel that they cannot adequately convey messages through the use of English language. In one of the lectures that the researcher observed one of the students who was presenting said “kana tichiti behaviourists believe that kids inherit language from their caregivers’ tinenge tichireva kuti vana vanodzidziswa kutaura nevanhu vavanogara navo.” The researcher recognised that this behaviour was common to presenters who would read information from their researches which they would relay in Shona. When the student was asked the reason behind this behaviour she said that she was not sure if she had communicated adequately in English so she had to repeat the information to make sure that she did not short-change her colleagues. This shows that students code switch to their languages because they are not sure about their English competence.

Al Zoubi (2018) recognises that one’s competence in the language is determined by exposure. However, at Midlands State University when most people are out of the lecture room, they make use of their mother languages and this impacts their ability to acquire English language. The interview data shows that English is not a language of the people. Interviewees say that they are still in the process of learning the language hence they sometimes fall back to their languages. Lecturers argued that students lack adequate command of English language, hence they fall back to their languages when the need arises. This is in line with Cook and Newson’s (2007, p. 229) observation that, “in LI acquisition, virtually all children acquire full LI competence. Though many people

start to learn a L2 few, if any manage to gain knowledge of the L2 equivalent to their knowledge of the L1.” This entails that since English language is a second language to both students and lecturers they do not have full competence of the language hence code-switching is inevitable.

Thus Huerta-Macias and Quintero (1992) are of the view that if students have difficulties with communication in English language, code-switching may serve as helpful means of teaching and learning. Since English is not a first language to the majority of people at Midlands State University, one should not expect everyone to have a perfect command of English language. A lecturer from the Communication Skills Centre commented that during presentations students actually do not code-switch from English but they actually use Shona. The interviewee was supporting the idea that there is too much code-switching and for her it is mostly because of a poor command of English language. People sometimes fall short of words, such that they end up falling back to the languages that they know best. Under such circumstances code-switching is used to cover communication gaps. This supposes that people can communicate effectively in the medium of their own languages. At the end of the day if people are required to use languages other than theirs, they will always fall back to their languages when the need arises. When this happens indigenous languages undertake the roles that is reserved for English Language.

Interviewees were also of the view that code-switching can be a result of the interference of the first language. A lecturer from the Department of African Languages was of the opinion that the use of indigenous languages in areas that are reserved for English language at Midlands State University will remain a reality because English language is not the first language for the majority hence their own languages will always interfere with the use of English language. Another interviewee from the Department of History contends that the majority of the people at Midlands State University are at least bilingual and the language that they are supposed to use is a second language, hence they fail to separate the two language systems. This finds support in Cook’s (1996, p. 85) argument that, “perhaps code-switching is inevitable in the classroom if the teacher and students share the same languages and should be regarded as natural.” Our languages are part and parcel of our everyday communication; hence it becomes quite difficult to separate the languages from English language. It follows that code-switching can be regarded as mere intrusion or influence of first language which cannot be avoided.

Scholars have identified code-switching as part and parcel of bilingual societies, (Cook 1996; Wardhaugh 2006). This means that code-switching is rampant at Midlands State University, because the society is bilingual. In the same vein, Chimhundu (1993) asserts that code-switching is unavoidable in bilingual or multi-lingual settings. It is a common phenomenon that people use to convey a complete idea. It follows that code-switching exist in the classroom simply because the students and lecturers at Midlands

State University are bilingual and they fail to separate the two language systems that they possess. In the lectures that the researcher observed she recognised that there are Shona words that are incorporated in discourse because of the interference of the first language. In one of the lectures the lecturer who was commenting on a presentation said “you mentioned *nyaya yekuti* they are Western funded because *vanouya nemastrings* attached, *vachiti* you have to follow this *handiti*. The way Shona words are inserted in a sentence that is otherwise in English language shows that it is not because of a limited English vocabulary but because of the fact that the speaker failed to separate the two grammars that he possesses. Another example where code switching is as a result of the interference of the first language is when only morphemes are code-switched particularly prefixes; for example *nemastrings*, *mamorphemes*, *manovels* etc.

Students were also of the opinion that they do not perform well in class presentations because they lack confidence in the language that they are expected to use. Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that although exposure to English can help learners to achieve success, this exposure may not always work effectively in every context. There are still lots of factors affecting the success of learning; for example, English only classroom would lead to frustration and anxiety because the learners cannot get enough and proper comprehensible input. They contend that some of the code-switches are a result of lack of confidence in English language. Since English language is a language of prestige at the institution, students fear to be stigmatised when they make mistakes. As a result when they are required to use English language they are always on guard not to make mistakes. Consequently when they are not sure they do not risk using English but they tend to code-switch to their languages. According to Weinreich (1970) code switching in some cases allows learners to express themselves more fluidly when they are unable to conceive an appropriate word within a limited amount of time. Skiba (1997) also notes that code-switching helps the senders transfer information to the receivers effectively. Students at MSU said that it is rare to find a presentation which is solely done in the medium of English.

Code-switching is also used to break classroom tension. The findings show that there is so much tension in lectures that are conducted in English through and through. This finds support in Ahmad and Jusoff's (2009) view to the effect that code-switching provides a psychologically favourable learning environment. Students contend that they hesitate to participate in class discussions because they are not comfortable using English language. In order to ensure classroom interaction, lecturers also tend to code-switch. According to Shizha (2012, p. 791) “teachers frequently use code-switching, shifting between the students home language and the official medium of instruction to encourage learners to speak and participate in classroom activities” (Gotosa, Rwodzi & Mhlanga, 2013).

To achieve this, lecturers sometimes make jokes in indigenous languages to ease classroom tension. Sometimes they change the code from English to Shona in order to make students more comfortable. In one lecture the lecturer addresses presenters using Shona when she says, “*ko imi muri kupresenter mava kuita kunge muri kutya wani.*” The lecturer code-switches to Shona in order to encourage the students to feel free to air their views. In some other circumstances lecturers encourage students to explain ideas in their languages when they see that students are struggling to put across an idea. In one of the lectures, the lecturer encouraged a student by saying “can you put it in Shona”. It was observed that in classes where students are allowed to code-switch to their languages were livelier as compared to those where code-switching is not allowed. It follows that use of code-switching relieves classroom tension and gives students confidence and at the same time affords indigenous languages a chance to exist side by side with English language.

Code-switching is also used in lecture rooms at Midlands State University to aid communication or to ensure comprehension. All the study’s respondents were of the view that code-switching is functional because it allows people to express themselves clearly. One of the interviewees said:

Code-switching is triggered by the use of English language as a formal medium of instruction in the university; English is imposed on people who have their own languages. In an attempt to make students understand a concept the lecturer has to zero down to the local language understood by the students.

This suggests that code-switching by lecturers is sometimes done in order to reach their audience who may find it difficult to understand concepts in English language. Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) note the various positive functions of code-switching such as explaining new concepts, making learners relax resulting in improving learners’ comprehension during the learning process and making concepts clearer.

The study observed that code-switching is mostly used when offering explanations or when defining concepts. Hence during presentations, when students feel that they are not communicating or carrying along their colleagues, they tend to switch and use indigenous languages. Presenters also switch to Shona when they feel that they have not expressed themselves well in the medium of English. Such code-switches are sometimes preceded by such statements as “Am I clear, are we together, *Manzwisisa.*” In one of the lectures, one of the presenters said that the vowel is a compulsory element of a syllable; “what I am trying to say is *Hakuna* syllable *isina* vowel, *masyllables ese anofanira kunge aine* vowel”. In other words, the presenter was repeating the same idea in Shona in order to make sure that everyone has captured the definition of a vowel.

This is in line with Magwa's (2008) view that learning in general occurs more effectively if the required cognitive development has already taken place through the use of the first language as a language of learning. The idea that sometimes people do not understand when one is communicating in English encourages one to switch from English to Shona or Ndebele; the languages of the majority of students to ensure comprehension. What this means is that code-switching is not always a result of a poor command of English language by the speaker but can be enforced by the poor command of English of one's listeners. When conversing, the main goal is to communicate, hence there is need to use the code that ensures maximum communication.

The study's findings show that code-switching at Midlands State University is also common when explanations are being offered. Lecturers prefer to repeat explanations previously given in English language using their own indigenous languages to ensure maximum comprehension. In one of the lectures, the presenter said

simultaneous interpreting is when the speaker and the interpreter speak at the same time. They do not give each other time to speak. *Havapane nguva yekutaura, vanoti umwe achitaura umwe achitochinja zvataurwa achiisa mune umwe mutauro.* The other presenter also says that interlingual translation is translation that is done between two languages and intralingual is done within the same language. *Kana tichishandura chinyorwa chakanyorwa nechirungu kuisa kuShona tinenge tichiita interlingual translation sekuti "You are a dog toshandura kuisa kushona tinoti, Uri imbwa.* There are two languages involved here, Shona and English. This is what we call Interlingual translation. But when we are translating within the same language it becomes intralingual *trankation sokuti uri kushandura chinyorwa chezezuru kuisa kuKaranga.*

From these examples, it can be seen that information that has been relayed in English is repeated in Shona or an explanation is given in Shona to ensure comprehension. Despite the idea that English language is considered as a prestigious language and as an important language by regulations at Midlands State University, the way people behave when it comes to the practical use of languages clearly indicates that they subscribe to the notion that people can best learn in their own languages; that is the reason why switches are most common when giving explanations.

Code-switching is also used to emphasise points. Under these circumstances code-switching is used to reinforce ideas and to draw the attention of the class to a particular idea. This can be seen through the use of code-switches that are done mostly at sentence level where one point is repeated using different languages. An example was when a lecturer said "a morpheme is the smallest meaningful part of a

word". He repeated the same idea in Shona" "*Chidimbu chidikisa cheizwi chine zvachinoreva uye chisingagoni kudimburwa zvakare* and remain meaningful." This was done to direct the attention of the students on the definition of a morpheme. By so doing students will know that it is important to understand the meaning of the concept. In such cases it is clear that people do not necessarily code-switch because they lack skills in a language but may code-switch for emphasis.

There are code switches that occur in the lecture room for confirmation. Such words as "*Handiti* (Is that so?), *Tiri tose/Sisonke* (Are we together?)" are some of the most commonly used switches by lecturers to confirm whether students are listening or not. However, some lecturers say that the use of such words and phrases were mere mannerisms and habits rather than meaningful units.

There were instances when code-switching was used to protest against the use of English language. This is particularly so with those students who study African Languages who are taught so much about the importance of their own languages. Such students subscribe to the idea that English language is a weapon of continued British oppression. These students prefer their own languages because they do not like English language and not necessarily because they are not well versed in English. They see English as the language of the oppressor and its use is synonymous with neo-colonialism in a post-independent Zimbabwe and so they see no reason why it should be promoted above indigenous languages. They, therefore, use code-switching as a means of struggling against the hegemonic status of the English language and as a way of creating space for their own languages. For these persons, code-switching can be used as an identity marker.

## Conclusion

It is clear that code-switching has gone a long way to fight the hegemonic status of English. The language situation that prevails at Midlands State University favours the use of English. In fact it does not give any space for indigenous languages. However, indigenous languages have penetrated the classroom; a place that is reserved for English language through the use of code-switching. From research results, it is clear that in the majority of cases effective classroom communication at Midlands State University is achieved through the use of code-switching. It follows that code-switching can actually fight the hegemony of English because it has afforded indigenous languages space in the classroom amidst discouragements. Code-switching appears in the classroom as a deliberate act and at times as a sign of incompetence but whatever nature it takes it has afforded indigenous languages a place in the classroom. Status planning at Midlands State University ensures that indigenous languages are not given a place in classroom discourse, however local languages have penetrated the classroom through code-switching; an arena that is



exclusively reserved for English language. The use of indigenous languages through code-switching has also impeded a good command of English language by members of the Midlands State University community, because they are aware that they have got somewhere to fall back to when gaps in communication arise. It should also be noted that despite the fact that code-switching is not condoned, it has become part and parcel of everyday official communication at the institution which students and lecturers cannot do without. The study recommends that there is need for the government and institutions to enhance status planning so that it seeks to preserve the Zimbabwean languages and cultures rather than creating linguistic and cultural alienation. It should be noted that all the languages have the right to exist and governments have the duty to guarantee that as a basic right.

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