Patterns and Motivations of Code Switching among Male and Female in Different Ranks and Age Groups in Nairobi Kenya

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Abstract

This paper discusses Patterns and motivations of Code Switching among male and female speakers of different ranks and age groups in Nairobi. The main objective is to examine the influence of Variables such as Gender, Rank and Age group in Code Switching and Code selection. The researcher tape- recorded spontaneous speech from the respondents, then the tape recorded data was transcribed on paper and the extracts from the transcribed text were analyzed based on the tenets of Speech Accommodation Theory and Markedness Model. The study has revealed that speakers Switch Codes in an attempt to exhibit their level of confidence, domination and also when they desired a need for social integration and approval. The various groups; Male and Female, High and low Rank are consequently found to use these Codes in different ways. It was therefore realized that each of the Codes has a specific function and social symbolism to each individual group in different contexts.

Keywords: Code switching, Male, Female and ranks in Kenya

1. Introduction

It is considered normal for a person to speak more than one language. Multilingualism is a state whereby an individual has access to two or more linguistic codes as a means of communication (Hammers and Blanc, 1982). It is such communication that creates a phenomenon called Code Switching (CS). Code Switching is also defined as the alternate use of more than one language in the same conversation.

In a Multi-lingual society such as Kenya, due to Socio-structural factors, different Speech Communities, Gender, Age groups and even Professional Rank determines a speaker's Social vitality and therefore the level of confidence a speaker has amongst other speakers. It is therefore this actor among others that determines the patterns of conversation of different speakers and therefore evens the Code Switching pattern of different speakers.

Nairobi is Kenya's capital and as such it harbors people of diverse ethnic backgrounds interacting and working together. For instance it is very normal to find people of ten different ethnic backgrounds working together. It is also possible to find a mixture of races. Apart from Blacks, one may encounter Whites and even Asians.

Many people in Nairobi are multilingual and employ the habit of CS in their day-to-day interaction. It is quite a complex linguistic situation and therefore not easy to identify a system used. A college like Nairobi Aviation College is one place where people from different ethnic communities work and interact. People communicating in such a situation need to use language very creatively and productively. The college staff room is a central place where people of different Ranks and Gender different topics, which have varying degrees of formality.

2. Theory

2.1 Markedness Model

The theory proposed that speakers have a sense of Markedness regarding available linguistic codes for interaction but choose their codes based on the personal and/ or relation with others, which they wish to have in place. The "Negotiation Principle" proposed by Scotton (1983) embody the strongest and central claim of the Markedness Theory; that all code choices could ultimately be explained in terms of speakers' motivations. It allowed for code choice as long as meanings were constrained by reference to common interpretative components shared by all members of a speech community.

The Negotiation Principle was modeled after Grice's "Cooperative Principle". (Grice 1975). A Negotiation principle is seen as underlying all code choices. The principle says, "Choose the form of your conversation such that it indexes the set of rights and obligations which you wish to be in force between speaker and addressee for the current exchange (Scotton, 1993).

The Markedness Model rests on the Negotiation Principle and its set of maxims. These maxims are "unmarked choice maxim", "the marked choice maxim", and the "exploratory

maxim".

Unmarked choice maxim states that speakers chose the most expected linguistic variety as a medium of talk exchange, given the norms of the society regarding the salient situational factors present, for instance the speakers and addressees, the topic and setting. The unmarked choice is termed "safer" in well-defined role relationships since it conveys no surprises but indexes an expected interpersonal relationship.

The unmarked choice maxim is complemented by a virtuosity maxim. Virtuosity maxim states that whenever any participants in the conversation don't have the linguistic ability in the unmarked choice, the virtuosity maxim directs speakers; "switch to whatever code is speakers present," (Scotton, 1993). The speaker in his code selection takes into account the competence of the listener.

The Marked choice maxim; though it is "safer" to make an unmarked choice, speakers don't always do. They assessed the potential cost and rewards of all the alternative choices and made their decisions unconsciously. They thus resorted to marked (unexpected choices), the speaker is saying, "put aside any presumptions you have based on societal norms for these circumstances and view our relationship to be otherwise", (Scotton, 1993).

Exploratory choice maxim; speakers might employ CS when they themselves were not sure of the expected or optimal communicative intent or at least not sure which one would help achieve their social goals. Exploratory choice might be found when it was not clear which norms applied in a particular interaction, for instance when little was known about the social identities of the new acquaintance.

Since speaking is an interactional behavior, code choices are therefore a function of Negotiation; speaking is seen as rational process involving decisions. A Negotiation Principle and its set of maxims govern conversations. The Negotiation directs the speaker to choose the form of conversational contribution such that it symbolizes the sets of rights and obligations which he/she wishes or forces between speaker and addressee for a given exchange. Scotton observes that the Negotiation principle deals with the use of conversation to negotiation of social identities.

The importance of these maxims as Scotton pointed out was that, central to any form of conversation was giving and receiving of information, influencing and being influenced by others, the theory therefore accounted for the societal norms in explaining code choices and the functions these codes served in a marked setting. Theory had a Normative basis in that it looked at the normative factors influencing CS. Scotton (1993) observed that choice of one code, rather than another would be seen as identify of negotiation by participants in a conversation.

3. Literature Review

Gumperz (1982) studies: conversational CS. He defined conversational CS as: juxtaposition within the same speech exchange or passage of speech belonging to 2 different grammatical

systems or subsystems. In conversational CS, speakers communicate fluently without hesitation or pauses to make the shift in codes.

Participants immersed in the interaction itself are often unaware which code is being used at any one time. The main code is with the communication effects of what they saying. Selection among linguistic alternates is automatic, not readily subject to conscious recall. Gumperz points out that the bilingual exchanges studied show that CS did not necessarily indicate imperfect knowledge of grammatical systems in question. The study gives insights on CS and reiterates CS as functional and not imperfect knowledge of the grammatical systems.

Romaine (1994) examined CS and its role in bilingual communicative competence. The study was based on researches done among a Punjabi speaking community in Britain and bilingual children in Papua New Guinea. Two codes were distinguished: the "we" code and the "they" code. The "we" code typically signified in-group, informed, personalized activities. The "they" variety marked out group, more formal relations. Also she distinguished metaphoric and transaction switching. Transaction switching as switching controlled by components of the speech event like topic and participants while Metaphorical CS as the various communicative effects the speaker intended to convey.

The central concern in Romaine's study was constraints for choices. She recognized that CS served some specific functions and behind CS were some motivations for doing so. Another observation made was that attitudes of the participants involved in language use might affect switching behavior.

In this study CS was seen as serving an expressive function and had meaning. Her study also recognized CS as functional. However her study differed from this study in the choice of the sample and the languages in question. Our sample was drawn from an African setting and the languages in question were English, Kiswahili, Sheng (slang) and local languages.

In Kenya, because of its multilingual nature, the use of more than one language is a common phenomenon. Whitely (1974) notes that an attempt to make any useful comment about the state of multilingualism poses a big challenge. This is because one has to specify the unit or area that one is referring to. Also one has to find out (this has also been a major focus of study) the incentives, which, in Kenya today, men and women to learn and speak other languages other than their first language. For instance is it acquired in order to be able to deploy it to one's own advantage in the game that is everyday living? Scotton (1993) supports the argument when she says that researchers have not provided enough evidence from multilingual settings in Africa, explaining why people code switch. CS as a subject therefore has not been widely studied in the Kenyan context.

Muthwii (1986) studied language use in Pluri-lingual societies and the significance of CS. She observed that most people in Kenya used Cs as a speech code that was emblematic of community identity. She studied CS among 3 languages; English, Kiswahili and Kalenjin.

Using Functional Framework Theory proposed by Gumperz (1983), Muthwii identified the stylistic functions of CS; mimicry, quotations, interjections, reiteration, personalization, objectification and addressee specification. In that study, she argued that it was not always absolutely possible to predict the situations to which English or Kiswahili might have been individuals and communications at the interpersonal or interactional levels, and as a marker of ethnic identity. Muthwii observed that language alternation by speakers was either intended to have communicative intent or not. Muthwii's sample was drawn from a rural setting.

Muthuri (2000) examined the functions of CS among multilingual students at Kenyatta University. The study described the choice of codes involving the use of English, Kiswahili and local languages. Other than the stylistic functions, the social functions of CS, the social symbolism and functions of the codes involved in switching were investigated. The strategies the speakers adapted in meeting their goals were also examined. The study looked at CS based on 3 theoretical approaches; Giles SAT, Scotton's Negotiation Principle maxims and Gumperz's Conversational Functions Model.

Kanana (2003) used Theoretical approaches of Markedness Model (Scotton) and Giles SAT, to study CS in a cosmopolitan market setting in Nairobi. The study focused on the functions of CS and also the motivations behind the choice of a particular code at any given time. His study examined CS and choice of codes involving the use of English, Kiswahili and local languages. The chosen codes were found to fulfill the functions of "solidarity" (whether it is the more formal English, Kiswahili or even the local languages). When such a function had been fulfilled, it became easier for a trader at the market, to convince prospective customers to buy their products. It is important to note that in this study, the respondents were cosmopolitan (local Kenyans from different tribes, Asians, whites, Chinese, Arabs etc). This is because the study was conducted at Maasai market in Nairobi, where curios are sold to Kenyans of all tribes and races and even tourists from all over the world. This cosmopolitan characteristic applied also to our current study of the staffroom conversations.

4. Methodology

4.1 Sampling Techniques

One sampling technique was used in the study. This was; the Judgment sampling method. The Judgment sampling was used to choose the college, the staffroom (of all the other places) and also the specific group of people to be studied at any given time. The college had numerous staff but only a selected number were studied. The underlying principle of this method involved identifying in advance the type of speakers to be studied (Milroy 1987). This sampling technique was considered appropriate because the researcher identified in advance a "college" that would give representative data on which to make generalizations.

4.2 Sample Size

According to Milroy (1987) socially sensitive study of language variations depends on a good

data, which entail the provision of sufficient types and quantities of language. She further observed that large samples tended not to be as necessary for linguistic surveys as for other surveys because they tended to be redundant, bringing increasing data handling problems, with diminishing analytical returns.

The sample consisted of a total of approximately 20 informants selected through the Judgmental Sampling. The informants were studied in 5 different Conversation groups. The researcher also established that most of the conversation groups had a representation of different ethnic groups. The researcher did not have the power to determine the number of speakers in particular groups as he chose the groups that had already been formed but the researcher preferred groups comprising of 6-8 speakers which ensured ease in studying each speaker at any given time. The number was also large enough to represent all the variables targeted at any given moment.

Small samples were sufficient for useful accounts of language variation in large cities. Also the small sample of 16 was due to the fact that the entire college had a total staff.3 population of about 90, of which 40 were the ones who always interacted in the staffroom. Therefore the number of 20 for staffroom was an adequate number for the researcher to make generalizations.

4.3 Data Analysis

The Qualitative and Quantitative approaches to data analysis were be used in this study. The data were initially described and summarized using descriptive statistics (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999). Consequently, the tape-recorded conversations were transcribed on paper. The extracts from the transcribed text were studied to identify the codes used by different speakers and in different contexts in the staffroom conversations.

The data was analyzed and also presented in tables and graphs portraying the specific CS variances as affected or determined by each variable, which were then descriptively explained and finally, from the total outline or flow of CS depending on different variables in the college staffroom conversations, viable conclusions and recommendations were made.

5. Findings

The study came up with Data comprising of conversations of both male and female speakers in staffroom. The speakers from both genders were mixed during some conversations, but there were other conversations of only male speakers and also for female speakers only. The different Gender groups were also further specified in terms of Ranks. The figures were organized in Tables and Graphs; Qualitative Techniques whereby the results were elaborated using words, comparative Citations from other Scholars and examples from the Data. It was then possible to establish how the variables determined language choices in different contexts in the college staffroom. The data presented on Graphs and Tables portrayed the specific CS variances as affected or determined by each variable and generally, the total outline or flow of CS in the college staffroom conversations; from which Conclusions and Viable

recommendations were made.

5.1 The Code Switching and Unswitched Code Patterns in Different Genders

One of the most important Variables examined was Gender; how the Code Switching Patterns of male speakers differs from that of the Female Speakers.

During the Conversations the Participants were either using language without switching or at times they were Code Switching. It was therefore imperative to analyse the different levels of Code Switching (CS) and also of Unswitched Code among the different Genders.

5.1.1 Male and Female Speakers of different Ranks

> 54. ARANGO: There is a fact that you have to understand; a man is still a man. A good man is the one that can provide all those you mentioned plus much more, if you can provide your woman with all that and make her happy, there will be no other man in her life; who is this foolish woman to walk out looking for another man when she has such a man at home?
> 55. JOHN: Akitaka nimpe kila kitu pia yeye inafaa awe na courtesy, nikiingia kwa nyumba aniulize, "Ulishinda aje sweetie?" achukue briefcase yangu halafu anichemshie maji moto ya kuoga! *(If she wants me to give her everything then she should also have some courtesy, when I enter the house she should ask, "how was your day sweetie?" she then takes the briefcase then heats for me bathing water!)*
> 56. HALLA: Hata wewe inafaa umuulize bibi yako ameshinda aje? *(Even you should ask your wife how she spent her day.)*
> 57. JOHN: Sasa nikitoka job jioni nimechoka, napata amenuna, halafu ananiuliza, "umetoka wapi saa hizi?" *(Now if I come back from work/job tired, I find her in moody, then she asks me, "Where are you coming from at this time?)*

Table 1. The Cs Levels among Male Speakers and Female Speakers

CONVERSATION	MALE	FEMALE
c1	73	N/A
c2	41	37
c3	N/A	85
c4	53	37
c5	13	34
TOTAL	180	193

The total CS instances were 373

In c1 where there were only Male Speakers, there were 73 CS Instances while on the other hand in c3 where there was only Female Speaker, there were 85 CS instances. Therefore in these two Conversation groups where the Male and Female Speakers are not mixed, the Female Speakers tend to have more CS levels than the Male Speakers. However in the other Conversation groups (c2, c4 and c5), the Male and Female Speakers were mixed. In c2 the Male had more CS instances than Female Speakers; 41 and 37 respectively; in c4 again the

Male Speakers had more CS than Female Speakers; 53 and 37 respectively while in c5 the Female Speakers had more CS than Male; 34 and 13 respectively.

Therefore Male Speakers generally have more CS than Female Speakers whenever the two Genders are mixed in one conversation. Out of 3 mixed Conversation groups, the Male Speakers have more CS than Female speakers in 2. On the other hand whenever the Male and Female Speakers are not mixed, the Female Speakers exhibit more CS levels in comparison to their Male counterparts. This shows that Male speakers tend to be more relaxed whenever they are conversing with Female as compared to when the Female Speakers are alone. On the other hand Female Speakers are much more relaxed when they are alone but become less relaxed when they are mixed with Male Speakers hence the sue of CS.

Linguistically, CS being a non standard variety of language, this means that Male Speakers deliberately become non standard language (CS) whenever they are mixed with Female Speakers, while the Female Speakers become more standard in such instances. This reflects to the Social Psychological approach to language by Giles et al, (1979) which means that CS is the Psychological reaction by both Male and female speakers. For Male Speakers, they tend to use the non standard variety when they are with Female Speakers as a way of showing their dominant social position and confidence, while the Female Speakers tend to be more standard whenever they are mixed with Male Speakers as Psychological reaction which indicates their opposition to the existing 'Male domination'.

Table 2. The Unswitched Code Levels between Male and Female Speakers

CONVERSATION	MALE	FEMALE
c1	44	N/A
c2	27	42
c3	N/A	58
c4	21	31
c5	80	30
TOTAL	**172**	**161**

The total Unswitched Code instances were 333

The Male Speakers who are not mixed (c1) had less Unswitched Code of 44, as compared to the Female Speakers (c3) who are also not mixed; who have 58 while in mixed Conversation Groups; in c2 the Female Speakers had more levels 42 as compared to Male Speakers which was 27, in c4 again Female speakers had more; 31 as compared to 21 for Male speakers while in c5 the Male Speakers had more compared to Female Speakers. The results of the Unswitched Code are the exact opposite of the case in Code Switching. Whereas CS is non standard language and shows relaxed atmosphere or non-formality, the Unswitched Codes are standard language varieties, which indicate more formal atmosphere.

While the Male Speakers use more CS whenever they are with Female Speakers, their female counterparts on the other hand use more Unswitched Code whenever they are mixed with

Male Speakers. This therefore shows that while Male speakers tend to be more informal when Female speakers are around, the Female speakers tend to be more formal whenever Male Speakers are present. This deduction confirms the idea that, 'women tend to be more Standard Speakers than men,' (Cheshire, 1978).

There are several from the data, which show a pattern of Male Speakers using CS while Female Speakers using Unswitched Code in the same Conversation, from the example, Arango (Female) asks a question at 54 in a full Unswitched Code of English and then John (Male) in 55 replies in CS variety of Kiswahili/English. Halla (Female) speaks next at 56 with a full Kiswahili and John again responds in a CS variety of Kiswahili/English. This shows that these pattern of Male Speakers preferring non Standard (CS) while Female Speakers preferring standard (Unswitched Code) is therefore assumed to be a prevalent feature.

5.2 The Cs Patterns among the Genders in Different Age Groups and Ranks

The Rank of the Speakers was another Variable in the study. It is important to examine the patterns existing between the two Genders in their respective Ranks. There were two distinctions of Ranks: the High Rank and the Low Rank. It is also important to note that Age groups were synonymous with Ranks, such that the High Rank Speakers were also the senior aged (Early 30s and above) while the junior aged were also the Low Ranked Speakers (Below 30 years). Therefore we shall examine how Rank/age affects the Gender CS pattern:

Among the Low Rank Speakers, the Female Speakers have more CS and Unswitched Code than their Male counterparts, while in the High Rank speakers; the Male Speakers have more CS and Unswitched Code than the Female Speakers. Also the Female Speakers of Low Ranks have more CS levels than those of High Ranks, while the reverse is the case for Male Speakers; where the High Ranks Speakers have more CS than the Low Rank speakers. It is therefore logical to conclude that the Female Speakers are more dominant than Male Speakers in entire conversation (CS plus Unswitched Code) in Low Rank while Male Speakers are more dominant than Female Speakers in entire conversation among the High Rank Speakers.

It is clear that the Male Speakers and Female Speakers have different characteristics depending on their Ranks. The Male Speakers in Low Rank do not have the confidence or even the goal of controlling conversation, this therefore gives the Female speakers who are more relaxed and confident, to control and dominate the conversation. The general atmosphere seems to be relaxed and that is why CS is higher than Unswitched Code among Low Rank Speakers. While in High Rank Speakers, the atmosphere seems more formal and that is why Unswitched Code seems higher than CS but Male Speakers seems to be more dominant than their Female counterparts. Among High Rank Speakers, both Male and Female Speakers seem to be conscious of the formal atmosphere, as Unswitched Code is higher than CS between both Male and Female Speaker. However Male Speakers seem more conscious of their status and the expected norms as compared to their Female counterparts, this is why

the male speakers in High Ranks use more Unswitched code than their female speakers.

And as Scotton's (1983) states, "norms do not determine language choices but language switches take place within a Normative framework so that norms determine the relative markedness of linguistic codes". Scotton also suggests that interlocutors are free to assert their individual motivations as all code choices are open to them, with interlocutors weighing up the relative costs and rewards in seeking their goals. This seems to be true because even though the Male and Female Speakers may have the same Rank but still there are significant differences which occur due to gender distinction; male speakers have more Unswitched code than Female Speakers in high ranks.

6. Summary

The Male speakers generally have more CS than Female Speakers whenever the two Genders are mixed in one conversation. This could be seen from the fact that in 2 out of 3 mixed Conversation groups; the Male Speakers have more CS than their Female counterparts. On the other hand whenever the Male and Female Speakers are not mixed, the female Speakers exhibit more CS levels in comparison to their Male counterparts. Therefore female speakers use more formal and non-standard while in the presence of male speakers.

The results of the Unswitched Code are the exact opposite of the case in Code Switching; whereas the Male Speakers use more CS than Female Speakers whenever the two are mixed, the Female Speakers on the other hand use more of the Unswitched Code whenever they are mixed with Male Speakers. However, Female Speakers who are alone have more CS than Male Speakers who are alone. Female Speakers who are alone also have more Unswitched Code than Male Speakers who are also alone. According to Ranks, the Female Low Rank speakers have more CS and Unswitched Code than the Male Speakers, while in the High Rank speakers; the Male Speakers have more CS and Unswitched Code than the Female Speakers. Also the Female Speakers of Low Ranks have more CS levels than those of High Ranks, while the reserve is the case for Male Speakers; where the High Rank Speakers have more CS than the Low Rank speakers.

7. Conclusions

There is an obvious distinctive CS pattern between the two genders; this could be seen from the fact that Male Speakers tend to be more Informal (more CS) than female Speakers when they were mixed, while when they are alone, the Female Speakers tend to be more Informal than the male Speakers. Female Speakers on the other hand were more Formal (Unswitched Code) than Male Speakers whether they were mixed or alone.

This means that Gender of the Speakers is an important motivating factor to the CS pattern used. While the Male Speakers seem more relaxed when mixed with female Speakers, they are less so when they are alone and the Female Speakers seem less relaxed when they are with Male Speakers but more relaxed when alone. This clearly indicates that the Socio-Psychological differences between Male and females account for how they view

themselves when they are alone and when they are with members of the opposite sex, this therefore leads to differences in how they use language when alone and when they are mixed. When alone, both Male and female Speakers are relaxed; they both had more CS levels than Unswitched Code; however, Females seemed more relaxed than Males because the female Speakers have more CS than Male Speakers. This shows that there is less pressure between the two Genders when they are alone, with the Female Speakers having much less pressure.

This reflect to Giles et al (1979) which identifies Socio-psychological motivations to language use, this is also elaborated in Markedness Model (Scotton 1993) that, 'speakers' feelings as well as their perception of intergroup relation and their awareness of existing Social norms and Status. Male Speakers are more aware of themselves when mixed with Female Speakers; that is why they show their confidence and control by being relaxed and using CS more, while the female Speakers use Unswitched Code more than Male when they are mixed to show their opposition to the 'Male domination'.

The factors of Confidence and lack of Pressure come into focus when Male and Female Speakers were examined according to their Ranks/Age Groups. While Female Speakers of Low Rank exhibit more CS than the Male Speakers of the Same Rank, the Male Speakers of High Rank exhibit more CS than the Female Speakers of the Same Rank. This means that the female Speakers of Lower Ranks/Lower Age groups seem to be more relaxed as compared to their male counterparts of the same Rank and Age bracket, whereas the Male Speakers of High Rank have more CS than their female counterparts of the Same Rank.

Therefore the Male Speakers are least conscious of their Rank/Age group as compared to the female counterparts of the Rank and Age group. This generally means that while female Speakers of Low Rank/Low age group are more relaxed than Male speakers of the same Rank/age group, the Male Speakers of high Ranks are also less conscious of their Rank and are more relaxed than their Female counterparts of the same Rank and Age Group. Therefore apart from the general Socio-Psychological factors of Markedness Model which distinguish Male and female CS patterns, it is further compounded by norms; Normative Framework (Scotton 1993). This means that even though it is expected for High Rank Speakers and Low Rank speakers to have different language patterns, they are further affected by the individual or group motivations which explains why the Male Speakers of High Rank are more conscious of their Rank than the Female group of the same Rank, it also explains why Female Speakers of the Low Rank and Age group are more relaxed than the Male counterparts of the same Rank and Age group. This means that the Gender CS pattern is further influenced and modified by the variables of Rank and Age group.

This shows that Age as a factor in CS and Code choice had already been identified. In this study, the Low Rank speakers are also the junior age group (Below 30 years) and therefore they are mostly in 20s which means that they fall within the youths bracket: it is therefore not surprising that they are using Sheng. The High Rank speakers are also Senior Aged (above 30s) and therefore the seniority in age is most like the reason for their using Mother tongue more than Sheng. This can also be explained in terms of the Negotiation Principle of

Markedness Model by Scotton, (1993), where it has been noted that speakers of the same Rank and Age Group share the same Rights, Obligations, attitudes and even aspirations. That is why the same Senior Age Group uses Mother Tongue while the Junior Age Group preferred Sheng.

Recommendations

This study makes two Recommendations; the first one is on the Variable of Age and Rank. It is first of all important to note that at the beginning, this study had hoped to examine Age Groups as an independent Variable but upon collection of the Data, it was realized that the Age Groups of the speakers were synonymous with the Ranks in that the High Rank Speakers were at the same time the Senior Age group; this was probably due to the fact the staff at the Nairobi Aviation College are Promoted to High Ranking positions due to the fact the staff at the experience. Due to this fact, the study would consequently like to recommend another research to be carried out with a focus on Age as a separate entity from Rank. This may most likely uncover more results, which would be very important to the understanding of this work and for the benefit of the Field of Code switching as a whole.

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