AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF LANGUAGE USE AND PREFERENCES AMONG NURSING LECTURERS AND STUDENTS AT MZUZU UNIVERSITY IN MALAWI

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Abstract

This article reports on the insights gained from multilingual nursing lecturers and students at Mzuzu University in Malawi on the languages they use and prefer in a classroom setting. Research (Setati, Chitera and Essien, 2009; Chowdhury 2012) has found that both lecturers and students in multilingual and multicultural settings favour code-switching practices in the classroom setting. Code-switching is, therefore, an important phenomenon, which researchers should continue exploring because of the several distinctive attributes associated with it. The study adheres to qualitative and quantitative designs through the use of a questionnaire and follow-up interviews as methods of data collection. The results reveal that both lecturers and students favour code-switching from English to Chichewa during lectures. From both lecturers' and students' perspectives, code-switching helps to translate and clarify difficult concepts. It also helps to prepare students for the nursing profession. The study has some practical and pedagogical implications. On the one hand, it contributes some meaningful insights for language planners and policy-makers; on the other hand, the study sheds important light on the need to include the workplace dimension during language in education and language planning conversations. This study is also important because it addresses the issue of how code-switching might effectively be exploited as a communicative and pedagogical resource in instruction.

Keywords: *Code-switching, Markedness Model, Communication Accommodation Theory, Multilingualism, Language Attitude*

Introduction

Malawi is a multilingual and multicultural country with an estimate of fifteen indigenous languages including Chichewa, Chitumbuka, Chiyao, Chilomwe, Chisena and Chitonga (Kayambazinthu, 1998). Chichewa is widely spoken (Lewis, Simons and Fennig 2015) and has a substantially greater literacy rate than any other indigenous language (National Statistical Office, 2008:40). On the other hand, English, Arabic and Swahili are considered

as non-Malawian minority languages (Kayambazinthu, 1998). English was introduced in Malawi by the British colonial administration towards the end of the 19th century. It acted as the main official language of administration and government (Simango, 2006:1968). Malawi language-in-education policy as announced in March, 2014 by the Ministry of Education stipulates that all subjects ought to be taught in English, with the exception of the use of Chichewa when teaching or learning it as a subject. This appears to be the trend in many African countries as testified by Ferguson (2003:1) who states that 'in Africa, and quite a number of post-colonial societies elsewhere, the official medium of education at upper primary and secondary levels continues — very often — to be the former colonial language: English, French or Portuguese.'

According to language-in-education policy in Malawi, learners are expected to be introduced to English right away from the first grade in primary school. What this policy implies is 'the view that proficiency in English will also facilitate acquisition of knowledge in math and science' (Kamtukule, 2019:5). However, this may not be the case. It has been widely documented that teaching using a medium that is foreign to many learners is of a great disadvantage (Ferguson, 2003). African nations settle on the use of English as the medium of instruction under the guise of the popular perception that it is the key to socio-economic opportunity (De Swaan, 2001). Nevertheless, the English-only medium only serves the interests of the elites thereby making it difficult for an ordinary citizen to propose any changes to the policy. Most ordinary citizens do not know that 'the emphasis on English at the expense of mother tongues may undermine children's education and ultimately be detrimental to the formation of the desired English language skills' (Kamtukule, 2019:5). Additionally, the English-only medium of instruction can impede learning and can lead to poor mastery of both English and the mother tongues (Banda, 2000).

Having noticed the great disadvantages of using English as the only medium, teachers have resorted to using indigenous languages alongside English. According to Ferguson (2003:1), 'there is at the level of practice considerable evidence that teachers have evolved pragmatic strategies for coping with situations where pupils have limited proficiency in the official language medium.' Some of these strategies are *code-switching* (Tien, 2009; Uys, 2010) and *translanguaging* (Probyn, 2015). These two important phenomena are not only being applied in primary schools but they have also become useful at both secondary and tertiary levels. Scholars are, therefore, interested in exploring how such classroom practices help to facilitate acquisition of knowledge. Although it has widely been documented in the literature about how code-switching (CS) and translanguaging support learning, the practices lack 'legitimacy' and they are consequently 'neglected or marginalised in teacher education' (Ferguson, 2003:1). While some countries such as South Africa favourably support their use in the classroom (Banda, 2000; Klapwijk and Van der Walt, 2016; Turner and Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2014; Wildsmith-Cromarty and Turner 2018), others have not welcomed such use (Ferguson, 2003). In particular, as reported by Ferguson (2003), Hong Kong officials/policymakers have openly protested against the use of code-switching(CS) by calling out teachers to refrain from using what they refer to as 'mixed code' teaching. Hong Kong officials have clearly pointed out that they do not want learners to be taught in *Chinglish* but rather in English or Chinese.

This article reports on the insights gained from multilingual nursing lecturers and students on the languages they use and prefer in a classroom setting. Research (Setati, Chitera and Essien, 2009; Chowdhury, 2012) has found that both teachers or lecturers and students in multilingual and multicultural settings favour CS and translanguaging practices in the classroom setting. Both CS and translanguaging are, therefore, important phenomena which researchers ought to keep on exploring because of the several distinctive attributes associated with them. However, the use of CS and translanguaging from primary to tertiary levels in Malawi is in conflict with the language-in-education policy which advocates the use of English as the medium of instruction.

In the section that follows, the terms CS and translanguaging are explained. This is followed by sections on functions of CS and attitudes towards CS. Thereafter, two important theories linked to CS and language choice respectively are discussed. Finally, details of the present study are provided.

Code-switching Versus Translanguaging

Adler (2001) defines code-switching (CS) as the use of two or more languages in the same conversation. In a classroom situation, this may involve shuttling between the official language of instruction and another language, usually, the learners' home language. Code Switching as a teaching methodology aligns itself with the concept of translanguaging which is defined by Baker (2011:288) as 'the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, understandings and knowledge through two languages.' While translanguaging is a specific teaching practice performed consciously to scaffold instruction (Probyn, 2015), CS happens consciously and/or unconsciously. Hence, the focus in this article is on the conscious and unconscious use of two or more languages by bilinguals or multilinguals which cannot go unaccounted for in a classroom setting.

Functions of Code-switching

Code-switching in the classroom is a widespread phenomenon in multilingual, language contact settings in Africa and the multilingual world. It is favoured in the classroom setting because it fulfils some of the following functions:

(i) To reformulate and clarify lesson content initially presented in English (Adendorff, 1993; Arthur, 1996; Merritt *et al.,* 1992).

(ii) To engage students' attention and encourage participation and response (Adendorff 1993; Merritt *et al.,* 1992).

Information in the literature on CS in a classroom shows that there is a fair degree of similarity in as far as functions of CS are concerned (Auerbach, 1993; Ferguson, 2003; Myers-Scotton, 1993). In view of this, Ferguson (2003) collapsed all the functions of CS at classroom level into three broad categories. The first category is CS for curriculum access which helps pupils to understand the subject matter of their lessons. Then there is CS for classroom management discourse which fulfils some of the following functions: motivating, disciplining and praising pupils, and signalling a change of footing. The final category is CS for interpersonal relations where codeswitching is used to fulfil affective

function and negotiate identities respectively. In agreement with Ferguson's functions of CS is Reilly (2016), who states that the classroom in a Malawian setting, functions as a dialogic space in which both English and Chichewa serve pedagogical and social functions.

Eldridge (1996), on the other hand, focused on students' use of CS and found four functions as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Four Functions of CS as Summarised by Eldridge (1996)

Function	Explanation
Equivalence	Using equal lexical units from L1 in target language
Floor-holding	Filling the gaps with L1 use
Reiteration	Conformation, underlining, or clarification of message that was not understood
Conflict	Management of clash use of language

Likewise, Hymes' (1962) study focused on students' CS and found five functions, out of which four are basic communicative functions as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Five Functions of CS as Summarised by Hymes (1962)

Function	Explanation
Expressive	CS when expressing emotions
Directive	CS when giving directives and getting the listeners' attention
Metalinguistic	CS when defining terms and paraphrasing others' words, and some metaphors
Poetic	When a speaker inserts some jokes, stories, poetic quotations to add a sense of humour during a conversation
Contact	Using CS to make learners have a sense of belonging or to enhance their activity

Regarding functions of CS in the nursing profession, Lee, *et al.,* (2006) found that nurses use CS to fulfil some of the following functions: responding to patients' chief complaints, taking doctor's orders or operating medical treatment. Lee, *et al.,* also state that CS helps to generate social meanings such as the speaker's language attitudes, preferences, and community norms and values. In another study conducted in the medical profession, Woods (2018) found that CS fulfils several functions. In the first place, Woods states that CS helps to build rapport with patients. In so doing, a patient may be influenced to adhere to a treatment plan because they feel good that the doctor or nurse shares their language

or culture. Additionally, Woods explains that CS helps the patient to build their trust in the doctor or nurse. When a doctor accommodates a patient's manner of speaking, it results into the patient viewing the doctor as more genuine. Hence, the patient eventually, starts trusting the doctor even more than before. Furthermore, CS enhances a patient's understanding of the diagnosis, treatment, medical terminology, and so on. According to Woods (2018:466), '[i]f the physician speaks in their patient's dialect, language, tone, or vocabulary, it is easy to imagine how that patient's comprehension of their illness or condition might increase.'

Attitudes towards Classroom Code-Switching

Studies that have been conducted on CS report diverse attitudes that scholars have towards CS. In general, these studies highlight two positions toward CS, namely; positive and negative. Table 3 provides a summary of scholars' justifications for supporting and not supporting CS respectively.

Table 3: A Summary of Scholars' Justifications for Supporting and not Supporting CS

Justifications for Supporting CS	Justifications for not Supporting CS
1. CS has some psychological effects in the sense that learners feel safe and are able to express themselves when they code-switch (Auerbach, 1993). 2. CS helps learners to feel that their L1 identities are valued (Lucas and Katz, 1994). 3. CS should be considered as a teaching strategy (Cook, 2002; Jingxia, 2010; Tien, 2009). 4. CS facilitates the process of learning in the classroom and helps to harmonise different capacities of language competency (Brown, 2006). 5. CS is effective in conveying the meaning (Ahmad and Jusoff, 2009; Skiba, 1997). 6. CS enriches vocabulary and grammar, relaxes learners and thereby fosters learners' comprehension (Ahmad and Jusoff, 2009).	1. CS hampers the learning of the target language (Eldridge, 1996; Cook, 2001; Sert, 2005). 2. CS may be problematic if a class is multilingual with different first languages (Cook, 2002). 3. Some scholars oppose CS because they consider 'no L1 use' as the only strategy to make learners successfully submerge in the target language (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). 4. CS to the first language undermines the process of learning (Chambers, 1991; Halliwell and Jones, 1991; Macdonald, 1993).

How do Students View Code-Switching?

Information in the literature reveals that students have both positive and negative attitudes towards CS. However, most of the reviewed literature demonstrates students' strong preference towards CS (Alenezi, 2010; Al-Nofaie, 2010; Hait, 2014; Moghadam, Samad and Shahraki, 2012; Reilly, 2016; Younas *et al.,* 2014). For example, the findings of a study that Alenezi (2010) conducted on students' attitude towards using CS as a medium of instruction in the college of health sciences clearly indicate students' strong preference toward Arabic/English code switching. In this study, the majority of the students strongly agreed that using CS is beneficial because it makes the course easy to understand. Additionally, Younas *et al.,* (2014) report that the majority of students agree that they feel comfortable when a teacher code-switches because it helps them to understand words, concepts, and terms of L2. Furthermore, the findings of a study that Reilly (2016) conducted on language use and language attitudes in Malawian universities reveal that students feel that a mixture of languages should be used in universities because it benefits them greatly. The majority of students agree that while it is acceptable to code-switch from English to Chichewa, lecturers should remember that English is a primary language while Chichewa is not. In this case, students look at Chichewa as a language that could be utilised to clarify lessons that are taught in English.

On the contrary, some students have negative attitude towards CS. The results of a study that Dykhanova (2015) conducted at Kazakh-British Technical University revealed that the majority of students at the university did not prefer the use of CS. Dykhanova reported that 73.5 per cent of the students believed that English-only approach was beneficial to them. While realising that CS facilitates interactions, students in a study that was conducted by Rahimi and Jafari (2011) did not condone the use of CS by both teachers and students in a classroom.

The Markedness Model

The Markedness Model attempts to explain how speakers in a multilingual community choose to use particular codes in order to fulfil socio-psychological motivations (Myers-Scotton, 1993). According to Myers-Scotton, the model is based upon one common theme of disciplines including the sociology of language, pragmatics, linguistic anthropology, and anthropology. In view of pragmatics, the model uses a negotiation principle which is based on Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. Myers-Scotton states that the negotiation principle helps speakers to choose the form of utterances in accordance with the set of rights and obligation (RO) which they wish to be in force in a particular communicative exchange. She presents her negotiation principle in this way: 'Choose the form of your conversation contribution 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' (Myers-Scotton, 1993:113). The assumption in this model is that bilingual or multilingual speakers are rational beings who are free to choose a language that does not only clearly mark their RO set but a language that suits a particular setting, participants and topic. For example, speakers who have acquired Chitumbuka, Chichewa and English would make a rational

choice of using English in a formal setting because this is a language that befits such a setting. They would, therefore, choose English in order to balance their RO set of the addressee and the setting.

Furthermore, the Markedness Model emphasises that a speaker is a creative actor. Hence, they make linguistic choices that help them accomplish several language functions other than the usual referential purposes (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Myers-Scotton (1998) states that within the Markedness Model, the speaker's code choice is intentional because it is made to achieve specific social ends. When speakers make such choices, they expect the addressee to recognise that the choices were made with a particular intention.

The Markedness Model as used in bilingualism or multilingualism in general and CS in particular, concentrates on two concepts, namely; *marked* and *unmarked*. The term *unmarked* in this context refers to a language that is common, usual, expected and normal in a particular setting or domain. In other words, what a community would predict is unmarked. Thus, in a Malawian university classroom situation, everybody expects a lecturer to teach in English. In that case, English is considered as the unmarked language since it is expected in that situation. On the other hand, the term *marked* refers to a language that is unexpected, uncommon, unusual and abnormal in a particular setting or domain. Thus, what a community would not predict is marked. Using a similar example as above, if the lecturer one day comes to class and instead of lecturing in English, he uses Chitumbuka, everyone will be surprised because the language is not appropriate to the setting. In this case, Chitumbuka is considered as marked because it is unexpected in that situation. According to Myers-Scotton (1993), the marked versus unmarked distinction is, therefore, used in the Markedness Model to explain the social and psychological motivations for choosing one code over another.

Battistella (1990), however, warns that markedness relations are not fixed but rather depend on the language, setting, domain and the community using the language. Thus, a marked language in one society can be unmarked in another community depending on the situation. Consequently, CS is considered as 'unmarked' if it is expected in a particular situation, and it is also considered as marked if it is not expected in a particular situation. The Markedness Model accounts for all instances of code-switching as one of four complementary types, namely; CS as sequential unmarked choice, CS as unmarked choice, CS as marked choice, and CS as an exploratory choice.

Code-Switching as a Sequential Unmarked Choice

This is a situation whereby bilingual speakers switch between languages that are common in a particular community. The basic assumption is that in the community, speakers can converse in more than one language with almost equal competence. For example, in most of the locations in Mzuzu, a city in northern part of Malawi, most people use Chichewa and Chitumbuka with equal competence. Both languages are unmarked because it is expected that speakers can speak these languages, so if speakers code-switch between Chitumbuka and Chichewa, they are involved in sequential CS. Uys (2010) states that sequential CS is mostly used to indicate the speakers' bilingual identity and to maintain social relationships.

Code-Switching as Unmarked Choice

This is the most common type of CS among bilingual speakers. It is a situation whereby CS is expected because it carries the desired communicative intentions (Uys, 2010). For example, if during a lesson conducted in English, a teacher comes across a concept that students cannot understand in that language, the teacher will be forced to code-switch to Chichewa to convey its meaning effectively. In this case, CS is expected because it carries the desired communicative function of clarifying a concept in a language that most people understand. In this case, even the language for CS is unmarked.

One thing that differentiates between CS as a sequential unmarked choice and CS as unmarked choice is that a sequential unmarked code choice is made only when there are changes in situational factors as a conversation progresses. For example, the unmarked RO set changes when the composition of the participants making up a conversation changes, or whenever the topic changes (Myers-Scotton, 1993). On the other hand, when unmarked code choice is made during a conversation in CS as an unmarked choice, the situational factors remain unchanged. Myers-Scotton (1993) explains a sequential unmarked CS using an example of a conversation in an office between two colleagues. While both English and Swahili were the unmarked choices for both speakers, they addressed each other using English. However, Swahili as another unmarked choice was used when one of the two colleagues addressed his secretary. Thus, the colleague switched from English to Swahili when addressing another person, hence, a change in a situational factor, that is, the change in the person being addressed (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Code-Switching as Marked Choice

This is the type of CS where the switch itself compliments referential message. This is a switch that people do not expect and the language used to code-switch is the one that is unexpected in that particular situation. Thus, instead of using the unmarked code choice, the speaker takes a different path and 'disidentifies' with the expected RO set (Myers-Scotton, 1993:131). Myers-Scotton posits that in this type of CS, the message is the medium, and the switch mostly intends to convey anger or condemn disruptive behaviour.

Code-Switching as an Exploratory Choice

Speakers make such choices in a situation in which they are not sure of what codes are expected to be used in a particular society. In view of this, Myers-Scotton (1993) states that when the unmarked choice is not clear, speakers would use CS to make alternate exploratory choices in order to establish an unmarked choice as an index of an RO set favoured by them. In such a scenario, the speaker keeps on changing codes in order to explore the right code that can be used in a particular setting or domain. The basic assumption is that the speaker might not know the language that people are mostly comfortable with. According to Myers-Scotton (1993:142), this type of CS is favoured in the following situations:

(a) A clash of norms – a conversation between a brother and sister, but not at home.

(b) When it is not clear which norms apply, in particular when little is known about the social identity of a new acquaintance.

Having looked at the four complementary types of CS as stipulated in the Markedness Model, it is important to point out that the choices that speakers make are in relation to two important goals namely; to enhance the reward and to minimise the cost. In other words, according to Myers-Scotton (1998:19), the goal of speakers is to optimise any chances of gaining some form of reward from the interaction. This entails that speakers opt for languages that provide more benefits than costs. In order to accomplish this, as stipulated in this model, the speaker may accommodate to the style of the addressee in the interaction, or may even use politeness strategies, or refrain from using them (Myers-Scotton, 1998:19). Ndebele (2012) provides a typical example of how a speaker may code-switch to another language to maximise benefits. She states that if two speakers are arguing, then both may switch to their L1 in order to feel more confident and proficient in their argument and hence, to reap the rewards, and to minimise the costs of losing the argument. In this example, the two individuals engaged in a fight consciously calculate costs and benefits, and thereby 'discover that the rewards of CS will be greater than those of maintaining a monolingual discourse pattern' (Boztepe, 2003:15). The idea of CS in order to accommodate to the style of the addressee in the interaction is the centre of focus in the next section.

Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), a theory that was initially known as Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT), originated in the early 1970s with an aim of understanding how and why speakers adjust to each other's communicative styles (Soliz and Giles, 2014). In particular, the theory focused on shifts in speech styles with a specific focus on accents and dialects. According to Soliz and Giles (2014), the theory recognises two core concepts of accommodation, namely; *convergence* and *divergence*. To converge is to adopt similar speaking styles or communicative behaviours to the person with whom you are speaking (Soliz and Giles, 2014). Soliz and Giles (2014:108) explain that speakers who converge do so 'to seek approval, affiliation, and interpersonal similarity as a manner of reducing social distance.' In this way, convergence is viewed positively and divergence negatively. It is the best interest of any speaker to get along with people and the best way to do this is by speaking like them as it will decrease the social gap. Convergence is also seen to be advantageous because it improves the effectiveness of communication (Gudykunst, 1995). As such, converging speakers are generally viewed more favourably than diverging speakers because they are perceived to be more efficient and cooperative in their communications (Soliz and Giles, 2014).

On the other hand, to diverge is to intentionally speak differently to the person with whom you are speaking. Giles and Coupland (1991) explain that divergence can occur when speakers focus on differences between themselves and others. An interesting example of divergence is provided by Sachdev and Giles (2004) about how some clients

in a Welsh bar displayed their linguistically divergent behaviour. The customers had the tendency of switching from English to Welsh whenever a monolingual English-speaker entered the room. In this way, linguistic divergence appears to be a strategy that enables speakers to achieve the following functions: maintaining integrity or creating and keeping distance between themselves and their interlocutors (Giles and Coupland, 1991).

As shown above, there are social motivations for converging or diverging. Myers-Scotton (2006:131) explains that CAT reflects how a speaker can be 'motivated to make changes' that are more favourable to the listeners. In this case, the language that the speaker switches to may appear to be more favourable because it helps to achieve certain communicative goals. In this way, it can be said that CAT seems to be a relevant theory when describing CS where a speaker switches to another language to accommodate listeners. This is a favourable practice in a classroom where teachers converge to learners' speech characteristics in order to facilitate comprehension. This is in line with one of the propositions introduced by Thakerar, Giles and Cheshire (1982) that accommodation strategies fulfil not only an *affective* function (that is, of identity maintenance) but also a *cognitive* one that requires speakers to organise their output by taking into account the requirements of listeners. In so doing, accommodation strategies are seen to facilitate comprehension. A study that was conducted by Tien in 2009 on conflict and accommodation in classroom shows how teachers' accommodation strategies of switching codes help to achieve the following: unlocking the meanings from the monolingual English textbooks, managing classroom and promoting harmony in the classrooms.

The Present Study

This study explores the languages that multilingual nursing lecturers and students use and prefer in a classroom setting. In particular, the study answers the following questions:

(i) What languages do lecturers use when teaching multilingual nursing students?
(ii) Why do lecturers make the language choices they make when teaching multilingual nursing students?
(iii) What are the multilingual nursing students' language preferences during lectures?
(iv) What are the reasons behind multilingual nursing students' preferences during lectures?

This study was further guided by the following hypotheses:

(a) Multilingual lecturers and students in the nursing profession prefer CS during lectures because it helps them clarify concepts.
(b) When it comes to languages of instruction (LoI), Malawian lecturers tend to combine English and Chichewa during lectures.
(c) The nature of the profession plays an important role in lecturers' choice/use of LoI.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodology that was followed in this study in terms of the following: population of study, sample size, study design and method of data analysis.

Population of Study and Sample Size

The participants in this study were both lecturers and students of nursing profession at Mzuzu University. The study targeted all the eighteen lecturers that were available in the nursing department at the time of the study. However, only fourteen lecturers (7 males and 7 females) managed to answer the questionnaire that the study had utilised as the main tool for data collection.

In view of students, the researcher targeted a population size of 245 students (83 males and 162 females[1]). These students were from three different levels or years of study. Level one had eighty-three students (28 males and 55 females) while level two and level three had seventy-six (26 males and 50 females) and eighty-six students (29 males and 57 females) respectively. Out of the population of 245 students, 120 students (12 males and 28 females from each of the levels, that is, forty students from each level) were randomly selected. However, a total of 106 students (32 males and 74 females, that is, 12 males and 26 females in level one, 10 males and 23 females in level two and 10 males and 25 females in level three) participated in this study.

Study Design and Method of Data Analysis

The study mainly used both qualitative and quantitative designs through the use of a questionnaire and a follow-up interview. The questionnaire utilised a combination of closed ended and opened ended questions in order to test hypotheses and explore multilingual nursing lecturers' and students' language use and preferences.

The researcher analysed the qualitative responses to extract useful information as guided by the research questions and hypotheses. The rest of the analyses were done quantitatively through the use of SPSS. In view of the responses from the lecturers, the focus was on the following variables: languages used when lecturing, a combination of languages used and factors influencing their language choices. When capturing data from the students' responses, close attention was paid to the following variables: languages used when learning, combination of languages used, language preferences and factors influencing the language preferences. Thereafter, analyses in terms of cross-tabulations were made from which charts and graphs were plotted.

Ethical Consideration

In the first place, all the respondents were briefed on why the study was being conducted. During the briefing, they were also assured that their views and opinions would be treated with maximum confidentiality and they would be used anonymously. Additionally, they were told that their participation in the study was voluntary to the extent that they would be allowed to withdraw at any time. Finally, the respondents were also informed that the findings would only serve to achieve the objectives of the study and nothing else.

[1] Note that the imbalance in the gender ratio in the population size is due to the fact that Mzuzu University currently admits more female students than males into the nursing programme.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of this study. The findings are organised and presented according to the themes corresponding to each research question as follows: language(s) used by lecturers when teaching multilingual nursing students, factors influencing lecturers' use of the stated languages, multilingual nursing students' language preferences during lectures and factors influencing multilingual nursing students' language preferences.

Language(s) Used by Lecturers When Teaching Multilingual Nursing Students

When lecturers were asked to mention the languages they use when teaching, they all indicated that they use a combination of languages. When the lecturers were further asked to indicate the specific languages they use when teaching, 71.4 per cent of the lecturers said they combine English and Chichewa. Only a few said they combine English and Chitumbuka (7.1 per cent), Chichewa and Chitumbuka (7.1 per cent) and, English, Chichewa and Chitumbuka (7.1 per cent). Figure 1 represents the languages that lecturers combine. Similar data was obtained from the students who indicated that although 21.7 per cent of the lecturers use a single language when teaching, the majority combine languages as indicated in Figure 2. The students said that 54.7 per cent of lecturers use English and Chichewa, 20.8 per cent use English, Chichewa and Chitumbuka and the remaining 1.9 per cent use Chichewa and Chitumbuka.

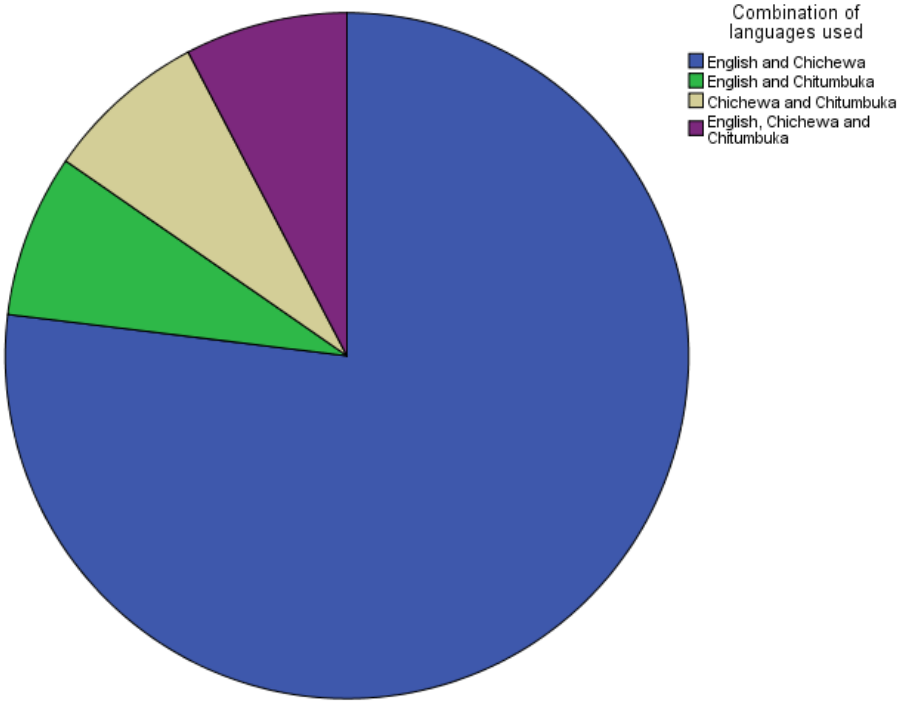

Figure 1: Language Combinations (from Lecturers' Perspective)

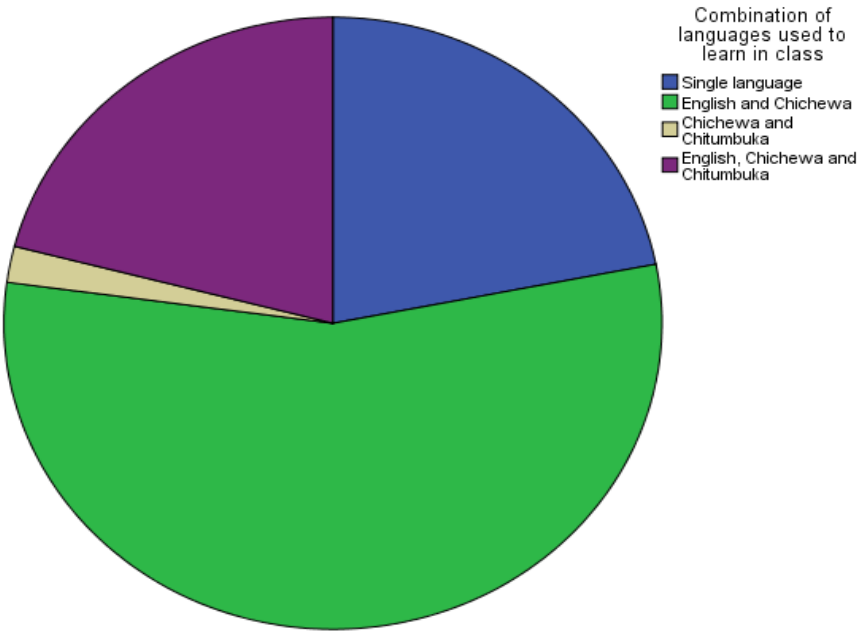

Figure 2: Languages Used by Lecturers (from Students' Perspectives)

Factors Influencing Lecturers' Use of the Stated Languages

One of the lecturers' justifications for the use of a combination of English and Chichewa was that students have difficulty in expressing themselves properly in English and understanding concepts that are presented in English as indicated below.

> *The standard of English for our students is poor. I, therefore, use Chichewa to help clarify points.*
> *I have noticed that some students do not get the concepts in English. So, I sometimes, use some Chichewa to clarify concepts.*

Some of the lecturers felt that the use of English and Chichewa was the best alternative because English is the official language of communication while Chichewa is the lingua franca.

> *English is the official language of communication. Chichewa as a common language may be used to illustrate a point.*

Furthermore, the lecturers said that a combination of English and Chitumbuka cannot be avoided because of similar reasons stated above concerning English. They also indicated that they cannot avoid using Chitumbuka because it is the dominant language in the northern region of Malawi where Mzuzu University is situated. Additionally, the lecturers indicated that a combination of three languages (English, Chichewa and Chitumbuka) was necessary because these three languages are needed in clinical practices.

Above all, the findings support lecturers' use of a combination of languages for two main reasons: to translate and clarify difficult concepts (64 per cent) and to prepare students for profession (57.1 per cent). The first reason is in tandem with Ferguson's (2003) first category of CS functions which recognises the important role played by CS especially when it aids learner's understanding of the subject matter. However, it is important to note that CS does not only enhance understanding in the classroom setting but also in a hospital setting. According to Woods (2018), CS enhances patient's understanding of statements made by a doctor or a nurse. Woods states that 'if the physician speaks in their patient's dialect, language, tone, or vocabulary, it is easy to imagine how that patient's comprehension of their illness or condition might increase' (2018:466). Some doctors or nurses reach the extent of using the patient's language even when they are not fluent in it. In so doing, doctors or nurses act in line with the principles of Communication Accommodation Theory. According to Woods (2018), such forms of accommodation help patients to become understanding and eventually, cooperative. As a result, they change their lifestyle in line with the doctor's advice.

Regarding the other reason, students need to be prepared for the profession which requires the use of a combination of languages. In a particular way, they need to be ready for the profession which requires them to have the knowledge of and the willingness to use the local languages. Some of the lecturers and students in this study said that they meet patients who have no faint knowledge of Chichewa or English. In this case, they are expected to interact with the patients in other local languages such as Chitumbuka in order to build rapport. This compels them to converge rather than diverge in order to effectively communicate with the patients. In the medical profession as clarified by Woods (2018), nurses or doctors need to build a rapport with patients. The rapport is the doctor's attempt to establish a harmonious relationship which is in line with Ferguson's (2003) final category of CS function which is CS for interpersonal relations. This has also been underscored by Uys (2010) who states that CS is mostly used to maintain social relationships. The rapport can positively influence a patient's adherence to a treatment plan in the case where a patient resists following doctor's advice. In this case, according to Woods, CS serves the distinct purpose of charming the patient into changing their lifestyle.

The lecturers also indicate that they rarely use a combination of languages to give tasks and instructions (14.5 per cent) and to have the students pay attention (21.4 per cent) because the students are able to understand tasks and instructions that are given in English. Besides, university students being adults would not need a switch to another language for them to pay attention. Table 4 provides detailed information on factors that influence the use of the combination of languages.

Table 4: Factors that Influence the Use of Combination of Languages

S/N	Factors	Yes (per cent)	No (per cent)
1	Express specific emotions	42.9	57.1
2	Give tasks and instructions	14.3	85.7
3	Translation and clarity of difficult concepts	64.3	35.7
4	Relate to students	35.7	64.3
5	Encourage participation	35.7	64.3
6	Keep attention	21.4	78.6
7	Prepare students for profession	57.1	42.9

In line with Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, lecturers are expected to code-switch to fulfil the following functions: translating and clarifying difficult concepts, and preparing students for profession; conversely, they are not expected to code-switch when doing the following: expressing specific emotions, giving tasks and instructions, relating to students, encouraging participation and keeping attention. On the other hand, it can also be said that lecturers code-switch to accommodate those students who may have missed a point while delivering a lesson. A nursing programme being scientific in nature may likely have specific registers which require translation and clarification. According to Woods (2018:465), the typical CS that is practiced in the medical setting is a lexical one where doctors or nurses are expected to provide explanations of 'complex medical states, pathophysiologic mechanisms, and pharmacologic treatment modalities to [the patient's] level of understanding.' In this case, accommodation strategies of switching codes, as argued by Tien (2009) help to unlock meanings of complex lexical items.

Multilingual Nursing Students' Language Preferences during Lectures

The findings indicate that 61.3 per cent of the students prefer the use of combination of languages during lectures while the rest prefer the use of one language (35.8 per cent prefer English, 1.9 per cent prefer Chichewa and 0.9 per cent prefer Chitumbuka) (See Figure 3 for more details). These findings are in line with what most scholars found that students demonstrate strong preference towards CS (Alenezi, 2010; Al-Nofaie, 2010; Hait, 2014; Moghadam, Samad and Shahraki, 2012; Reilly, 2016; Younas *et al.,* 2014).

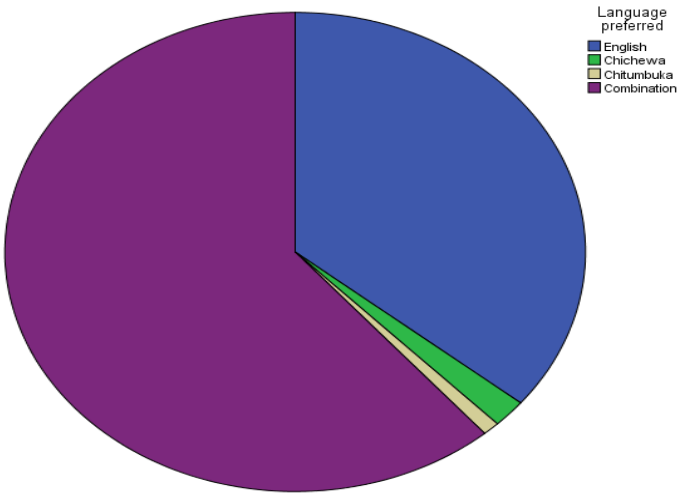

Figure 3: Language Preferences of Students

Furthermore, the most popular combination is English and Chichewa (78.1 per cent). The least preferred combinations are English, Chichewa and Chitumbuka (15.6 per cent) and, English and Chitumbuka (6.3 per cent) respectively as shown in Figure 4. Although the students have different first languages, CS from English to Chichewa would not be a problem because Chichewa is most widely spoken. Besides, it is Malawi's lingua franca.

The concerns expressed by Cook (2002) who said that CS may be problematic if a class is multilingual with different first languages may not apply to this classroom setting. Those who prefer CS from English to Chitumbuka do so because, as said before, Chitumbuka is a dominant language in the northern region. Besides, the students who prefer Chitumbuka may have acquired Chitumbuka as their first language and hence, they may want to be identified with it. This is in line with Ferguson's (1993) final category of CS function in which code-switching may be used to negotiate identities.

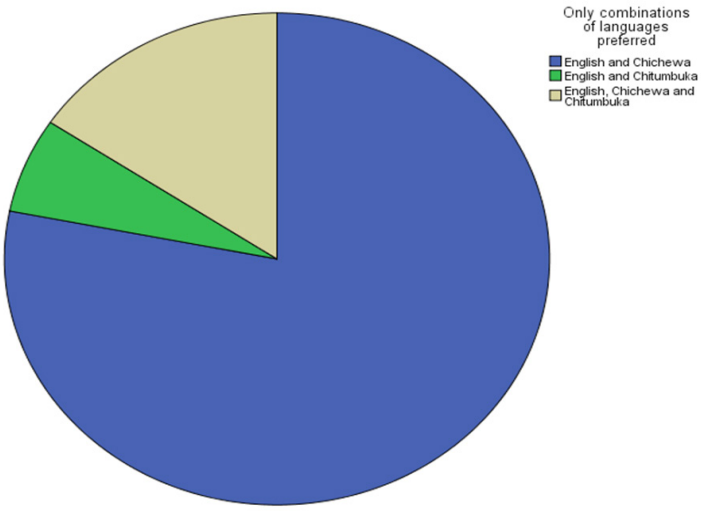

Figure 4: Students Language Combination Preferences

Factors Influencing Multilingual Nursing Students' Language Preferences

Similar to the lecturers' responses, the students indicated that a combination of languages was necessary because it helps to clarify difficult concepts. Unlike the lecturers, 34 per cent of the students did not see the use of combination of languages as a necessary preparation to the demands of the nursing profession. Furthermore, the students agreed with the lecturers that a combination of languages is not preferred in as far as the following functions are concerned: lecturers attempt to relate to students and keep their attention respectively. See Table 5 for more details.

Table 5: Factors Influencing Multilingual Nursing Students' Language Preferences

S/N	Factors	Yes (per cent)	No (per cent)
1	Clarify difficult concepts	58.5	41.5
2	Relate to us	3.8	96.2
3	Motivate our participation	16	84
4	Keep our attention	5.7	94.3
5	Prepare us for the demands of nursing profession	34	66

In line with Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, CS is unmarked in a classroom situation in as far as the factor of clarifying difficult concepts is concerned. On the other hand, CS is marked when it comes to the following factors: relating to students, motivating their participation, keeping their attention and preparing them for the demands of the nursing profession.

Conclusion and Implications

The findings in this study support the three hypotheses in several ways. Both lecturers and students favour the use of CS from English to Chichewa during lectures. From lecturers' and students' perspectives, CS helps to translate and clarify difficult concepts. It also helps to prepare students for the nursing profession. Code-switching is, therefore, useful in the medical profession because it fulfils several functions and helps doctors or nurses to build rapport with patients. Addditionally, it also helps patients to build trust in the doctors or nurses. Finally, CS enhances the patient's understanding of medical information. In particular for a nurse, CS helps in responding to patients' chief complaints, taking doctor's orders or operating medical treatment.

This study has implications for language policymakers, lecturers and researchers. Firstly, as a large difference exists between language policy and language used by lecturers and students' preference of first language (L1), decision-makers should revise their language policy in order to reach the desirable goal of learning, in which code-switching

could be included in the planning of syllabi. Secondly, lecturers of a nursing programme might want to consider the students' language preferences and attitudes toward the LoI. Thirdly, lecturers should be encouraged to make adequate use of CS in classrooms when clarifying difficult concepts to students to enable them actively participate during lessons. Lastly, researchers can help identify the correct level of utilising CS as LoI to promote the discussion of newly raised issues related to the effective teaching language, which will eventually, contribute to facilitating the advancement of classroom teaching and learning.

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