Interactional Contexts and Functions of Code-Switching in the South African EFL Classroom

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June 2020

Abstract

This exploratory study provides insight into the use of interactional code-switching by teachers and students in the South African classroom where English is taught as a foreign language. During the English lesson, the teachers and students in the Eastern Cape township schools under investigation regularly switch to their mother tongue, isiXhosa. Classroom recordings from Grade 3 were transcribed and analysed using conversation analysis as a framework. The analysis of the discursive context uncovered various functions of code-switching, with providing curriculum access being the main function, since response from the classroom is minimal when English is used. In addition, code-switching is used to redirect students' attention and has a positive effect on the affective climate. However, it is suggested that teachers' use of languages can be improved in order to stimulate interaction and facilitate students' understanding. These suggestions for improvement could have implications for South African teacher training schools, as well as South African's language policy in education.

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Introduction

The constitution in South Africa recognises eleven official languages, causing great linguistic diversity within the population and in the classrooms (Howie, Venter & Van Staden, 2008). In South African primary schools, the first three years are taught in a local language, after which the language of learning and teaching switches to English. This can be problematic because the learners' knowledge of English is insufficient. One frequently employed strategy to cope with these problems is the alternation between languages, code-switching.

In the current research, the classroom interaction between teachers and students is being studied, based on two recordings in primary schools in the South African Eastern Cape. Building on a conversation analytic framework, a microanalysis of interactional code-switching is provided by taking the discursive context into consideration. This analysis uncovers the various functions that are served by code-switching practices.

Firstly, the existing literature will be explored in relation to the context of the research. Subsequently, the method of data collection and analysis will be described. The analysis will be based on six transcribed excerpts from the data and try to reveal functions of code-switching that can afterwards be related to the literature. Finally, suggestions for teachers to causing code-switching to be even more beneficial and recommendations for future research will be provided.

1. Theoretical Background

Since Gumperz’s (1982) influential work on how bilinguals strategically use linguistic codes in social interaction, a body of literature has acknowledged that linguistic choices are of considerable interactional and social significance. However, opinions still differ on questions regarding the motivation of speakers’ language choices and how the orderliness of bilingual interaction is achieved (Wei, 2005). A sociological approach to these questions emerged in the form of conversation analysis (CA), developed by Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1974). The nature of turn-taking in talk-in-interaction is at the heart of CA (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008). This provides a space for microanalysis of interaction, which is built on notions such as adjacency pairs, preference and repair. CA has only recently developed an applied framework, where the resources of CA are applied to different domains, such as the organisation of interaction in classrooms and the assessment of learning (Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby & Olsher, 2002).

In the domain of classroom interaction, CA views the creation and sharing of knowledge and skills as an inherently social activity which is negotiated by talk (Huth, 2011). Huth summarises that “[interactional] practices such as turn-taking, repair and sequence organisation form the interactional environment in which language classroom talk occurs and through which teaching and learning are negotiated” (p. 298). One feature of talk in the second language classroom is code-switching (CS), which is the alternation of languages within or between sentences (Chen & Rubinstein-Avila, 2018). A CA approach to code-switching focuses on the language choice of a participant in that specific sequence in conversation, and thus does not allow for assigning meanings to code-switching beyond the participants’ behaviour in the conversation (Üstünel & Seedhouse, 2005; Wei, 2002).

However, as Ferguson (2003) states, a conversation-analytic approach should not detract from complementary consideration of the wider sociolinguistic context. This is especially important for post-colonial contexts such as South Africa, which has 11 official languages but employs a monolingual education policy where children are taught in their L1 from grades 1-3 and switch to English as their L2 in grade 4. (Howie et al., 2008). Despite this policy, reality is much more complex since the students' level of English after the switch is often insufficient to actively participate. That is why both students and teachers resort to code-switching strategies, which, as will become apparent from the current study, are already used in English lessons in the early grades. In these classrooms, isiXhosa is the shared L1 of both the teachers and 98% of the pupils (see table 1 in Pretorius & Stoffelsma, 2017). Besides linguistic challenges, South Africa's historical legacy of Apartheid still impacts on its educational system today, especially township schools and schools in rural areas. Both types of schools were characterised as black schools under the Apartheid regime, which is why these schools traditionally have a lack of materials combined with poorly trained teachers (Spaull & Hoadley, 2017). This has been found to result in low student achievement in literacy and numeracy (Stoffelsma, 2019). Research by Pretorius and Stoffelsma (2017), for example, shows that there are vast differences in vocabulary, where children who learn English as their L2 know only half of the number of words their L1 English peers do when they switch to English-only education.

Amidst these challenges, the complex reality of linguistic practices is not easily unravelled. A theory such as that of Fishman (1965), who believes that certain topics or types of activity are linked to a particular language, is too simplistic, as Youssef (2016) argues. As opposed to a correlation between speech activity and language choice, Auer's (1995) approach has a more interactional-sociolinguistic emphasis, which focuses on code-switching itself as a contextual cue. The language chosen for one utterance then matters in the light of the language choice in the preceding utterance. Youssef (2016) uncovered various discourse-related uses of code-switching, such as as a side-sequence, reiteration or for rhetorical reasons. In the classroom context, such uses are inextricably linked to what is going on in terms of teaching. When the teacher is explaining a certain concept, she uses interactional devices to work towards the core institutional goal, which in the L2 classroom is that “the teacher will teach the learners the L2” (Seedhouse, 2009, p. 1). This pedagogical focus underlies all interaction in the classroom, in which code-switching is a helpful device. Üstünel & Seedhouse (2005) distinguish two different uses of this device, namely teacher-initiated CS, when the teacher herself code-switches, and teacher-induced CS, when the teacher uses one language to encourage students to take a turn in the other language. Their research uncovered certain patterns in preference organisation where CS occurs, such as long pauses after which the teacher is likely to code-switch, but also the pedagogical focus to encourage learners to speak in the L2 or to induce learners to code-switch.

The patterns found in the use of classroom code-switching can correspond to different aims. Ferguson (2003) summarises these into three main functions for post-colonial contexts: 1) curriculum access, 2) classroom management and 3) interpersonal relations. The first explanatory function is hearer-oriented, since teachers scaffold understanding by switching into the L1 (Chen & Rubinstein-Avila, 2018). Classroom management is speaker-oriented code-switching, since the teacher wants to maintain or establish order and discipline in the classroom where CS functions as an attention-focusing device (e.g. Merritt, Cleghorn, Abagi & Bunyi, 1992). Lastly, CS serves a socialising function, especially in classrooms where teacher and students share their L1. Code-switching to the L1 can then express solidarity, which is important since the L2 may function as an affective filter that diminishes learning outcomes (Krashen, 1981). These three functions are quite broad, which is why this study aims to investigate what specific functions code-switching strategies serve in the case of South African township schools by means of microanalysis of the classroom interaction. The research questions are as follows:

1. In what interactional contexts does code-switching occur in a South African EFL classroom?
2. Which functions does code-switching serve?

2. Method

2.1 Corpus

For this research, I used a subcorpus of data collected by Stoffelsma (see Stoffelsma & Van Charldorp, in press). The data consist of two video recordings of approximately 30 minutes each, recorded in two township schools in South Africa's Eastern Cape. The data were collected in early 2016 in a Grade 3 English language classroom. In the classroom, the teacher teaches English vocabulary and sounds, among other things, while interacting with the pupils. The data further consist of fairly detailed transcriptions that occasionally miss a few words, especially where isiXhosa is used. English translations are provided by a native speaker of isiXhosa where the teacher or children switch to isiXhosa.

2.2 Procedure

An important starting point for doing conversation analysis is to make observations that are derived from recorded interaction (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997). In order to determine which fragments I would transcribe and analyse in detail, I first listed all instances of code-switching. I watched and listened to the data carefully, while taking notes on what was happening, focussing on whenever code-switching occurred. From these notes, I established where CS was most frequent and I grouped sequences where CS was used in a similar manner (e.g. reiteration of an utterance in the other language) together. After that, I chose to include the fragment that best exemplified this pattern in the analysis, resulting in five excerpts. Besides frequency, I also used salience as a criterion, since the teachers did not always use CS when I expected them to, based on earlier studies (see excerpt 3 in the analysis). Hence, one additional fragment was included in the analysis.

Subsequently, I transcribed these excerpts in detail according to the CA transcription guidelines first created by Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1974), of which the most important symbols are explained in the appendix. The teacher is transcribed as T, single students or a few students as S, and most of the class or the entire class as Ss. When isiXhosa was used, I provided the English translation in italics in the line below.

In order to analyse the excerpts, I used the conversational analytic tools offered by Pomerantz and Fehr (1997). According to them, the analysis begins by describing the discursive context in which the sequence occurs, because what happened preceding the sequence helps to direct the analysis of the sequence. After that, attention should be paid to what happens in terms of non-verbal behaviour and timing, since such aspects influence the meaning of that which is communicated (the action) and structure the possible responses for the receivers (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997). Then, a sequence's actions should be described on a turn-by-turn basis by asking for each consecutive turn what the participant is doing. When doing this systematically, the relationship between the actions can be considered, for instance as initiatives and responses. This is followed by considering the speakers' packaging of actions, which is about the specific form chosen to produce the action. In CA, "the speaker selects", meaning that a speaker chooses one out of many alternative ways to produce an action (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997, p. 72). For example, there are many ways to invite someone for lunch, of which some allow the recipient to reject the invitation more than others. For this research, the language in which an action is produced is of particular interest. Finally, the ways in which actions were accomplished implicate certain rights, obligations and expectations derived from participants' identities, roles and/or relationships (Ten Have, 2007). Here, the teacher-student relationship is worth considering. After this detailed step-by-step analysis, I formulated the specific function served by code-switching for each fragment and subsequently related them to the previously identified categories in the literature.

2.3 Background

In South African curriculum documents, the terms Home Language (HL) and First Additional Language (FAL) are used instead of L1 and L2 (Pretorius & Stoffelsma, 2017). Since their meaning is similar, this paper will from now on adopt these terms as well when referring to the South African context. In the Grade 3 classrooms in the Port Elizabeth schools where the data were recorded, both pupils and teachers share their HL isiXhosa. The children receive four hours of English FAL education per week, before switching to English as the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoTL) in Grade 4.

3. Analysis

The contextual setting is similar for each excerpt that will be analysed. The classroom is an institutional context where certain behaviours are expected. In this case, the teacher is talking and when she asks the students something, they respond. What is worth mentioning is that both teachers in the recordings rarely assign turns to individual learners, but that they give collective, choral responses (as researched by Stoffelsma & Van Charldorp, in press). Besides, the teachers often say the answers themselves, with the children joining them. The teachers do most of the talking and students are given little time to think of a response.

In the first recorded lesson, the teacher is teaching the children English sounds, in this case <sh>. She first asks students to come up with words that start with the sound <sh> and then shows the class flashcards with words that she also writes on the blackboard. After a few minutes, another teacher comes in who starts to talk to her in isiXhosa. When the teacher leaves, she continues her lesson by asking the learners in English to come up with more words that start with <sh>.

3.1 Excerpt 1 – Ms. N., minutes 3:06 - 4:12

```
01    T:    words with (.) sound sh:, ok?
02          (13.7) ((The teacher picks a chalk from the blackboard edge,
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03 looks around and points at a student in the back))
04 S: °sheep° (0.9)
05 T: sh:eep, (1.4)
06 what is a sheep?
07 (2.4)
08 intoni >i’sheep<?
09 *what is a sheep*
10 (1.5)
11 ng- nge xhosa in↓<gush>A.
12 *in xhosa it is ingusha*
13 >intoni sheep?<
12 *what is a sheep*
13 (1.4)
14 Ss: ing↓<ush>A!
15 *sheep*
16 T: >ikhona enye< ene isheep, ene isheep
17 *there is another one that’s like a sheep, it’s like a sheep,*
18 S: °igoat°
19 *a goat*
20 T: intoni?
21 *what is it*
22 Ss: ig↓oat
23 T: intOni?
24 Ss: ig↓oa:t
25 T: g°- o:- t-
26 ↑la ig↓oat (.) inga>KANANI<?
27 *the goat is what size*
28 [inku:lu] ((the teacher spreads her arms))
29 Ss: [inku:lu]
30 *it is big*
31 T: iyahamba le goat iyaleni?
32 *where does the goat usually go*
33 Ss: emANzini!
34 *to the water*
35 T: ma’siyibiza sithi yi?
36 *so what is the animal (that we were describing at the*
37 *beginning)*
38 Ss: sheep!
39 T: (10.4) ((the teacher walks to her desk to collect a new
40 flashcard and shows it to her class))
41 Ss: sh::
42 T: see, read?
43 Ss: sheep
44 T: what is this word?
45 Ss: sh:eep!

After one student is assigned a turn, the learner mentions the word *sheep* in line 4. The teacher repeats her and asks the rest of the class what a sheep is in English. This question is the beginning of an IRF-sequence, first introduced by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975). This

Initiation, Response and Follow-up sequence is most frequently used in traditional classroom interaction. The teacher initiates the sequence by asking a question, in this case. The expected response from the class would be an answer, since an action in the form of a question would require the recipient to answer. The question-answer sequence then is an example of an adjacency pair, divided in a first pair part and a second pair part (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). However, what follows is a silence of more than two seconds in line 7, which is an unexpected or dispreferred action. Thus, the normative structure of the IRF-sequence is broken and the teacher has to find a solution to extend the sequence and eventually receive the preferred answer. In this case, the teacher chooses to switch languages and repeats the exact question in isiXhosa, while maintaining the English word *sheep* (line 8). This way, she indicates that it is one specific word she wants to ensure the students know, without them having to put in effort to understand the rest of the question. However, the IRF-sequence is being extended even more, since there is still a lack of response from the children. The teacher then gives the second pair part of the adjacency pair herself: she tells that in Xhosa, the word is *ingusha*, thus confirming that the preferred action was to tell the meaning in Xhosa. However, the students have thus far not provided a response, which is why the teacher repeats the question in Xhosa one more time in line 13. The students collectively respond with *ingusha*, thus showing candidate understanding. The last part of the extended IRF-sequence, however, is absent, but the teacher moves on to the next question which implicitly indicates her satisfaction with the response.

The next question does not start as a question, since the teacher tells that there is an animal like a sheep, without explicitly asking what it is and also no rising intonation at the end (line 16). Since the initiation is fairly weak, only a few children provide a soft response. However, the teacher is not satisfied, given her explicit question *intoni*, ‘what is it’. Now, more children respond with *igoat*, but the teacher repeats her question one more time to get the entire classroom to respond, which they do. The teacher again shows her satisfaction by moving on, this time to asking what size a goat is in line 26. While asking the question, the teacher spreads her arms to give the students a non-verbal cue of the preferred response. She does not wait whether they provide the right answer, but says it in overlap with the choral response of the class. Thus, as the lesson moves on, the teacher tries out different strategies to elicit the preferred responses, since that proved to be difficult at first. Now, the teacher is speaking in isiXhosa, and the class responds in isiXhosa as well, except for the words that are of pedagogical focus, namely *sheep* and *goat*. The next question about where the goat usually goes does not cause any trouble in responding, upon which the teacher returns to the original focus of the lesson by asking what the animal was that they were describing at the beginning (line 31-35). The children provide a satisfactory response, which is used as a prompt to show a flashcard with the word *sheep* to the class. The teacher does not provide any verbal cues, which is why some children make the sound <sh> and others also add <ee> (line 41). Now that the lesson shifts from the animal to the word, the teacher starts speaking in English again and asks the students to read the word, which they do. However, she asks what the word is once more, to which all children even more loudly respond in line 45.

In this excerpt, it firstly becomes clear that IRF-sequences are used without providing feedback. When the teacher is satisfied with the understanding shown by the students, she implicitly shows this by moving on. Secondly, it is interesting that after a failed attempt to initiate responses in English, the teacher initiates code-switching to isiXhosa, followed by the students. In Xhosa, they speak faster and the teacher provides a lot more information. The sentences are longer, contain more substantive information and more cues as to what the teacher expects from the learners. Notably, the words that are being taught are maintained in English throughout the interaction, even attaching the Xhosa article *i* to the words. Because Xhosa is used when children do not know the English words, it seems that the use of code-switching is a strategy to scaffold understanding. Concluding, when looking at the functions of code-switching as defined by Ferguson (2003), code-switching in this excerpt is used for curriculum access and is hearer-oriented, since the teacher reacts to the (lack of) response by the learners.

3.2 Excerpt 2 – Ms. N., minutes 13:20 – 14:23

01 ((teacher takes out a flashcard with the word cheat and shows
02 it to the class)) (3.4)
03 S: cheat
04 T: (.)[all of you]
05 Ss: [cheat]
06 T: cheat:. all of yOU?
07 Ss: chea:t
08 T: all of yOU?
09 Ss: CHEA:T
10 (2.1)
11 T: wha:t is to ch↓eat
12 >what< is to cheat
13 (1.1)
14 >uthiwa< intone u icheat
15 *what do we mean by cheat*
16 (1.5)
17 ktheta intoni.
18 *what are we talking about*
19 kuthetha intoni icheat ngo ↑term?
20 *what does the term cheat mean*
21 (3.4)
22 omntu ufuna uksama,
23 *someone wants to*
24 <Uk↑u(.)QHA(.)tha!>
25 *cheat*
26 T: <UKU?>
27 Ss: <qhatha!>
28 T: you cheat means qha::tha.
29 T: siyavana thina?
30 *do we understand each other*
31 (6.1)
32 S: ewe ((a few other students nod yes))
33 *yes*

After teaching the <sh> sound, the teacher moves on to the sound <ch>. She still uses flashcards to let the students read the words. In the beginning of excerpt 2, the teacher takes out a flashcard and shows it to the class without saying anything. A few students take this as a non-verbal cue of initiation, which expects a response, and say the word that is on the flashcard, namely “cheat”. The teacher approves of this response and tells the students she wants hear all of them (line 4). However, her encouragement overlaps with the majority of the class already saying the word. This indicates that most students interpreted the response of the first few students as an initiation to say the word all together. As a follow-up turn, the teacher repeats the word for the first time, implicitly providing positive feedback and simultaneously initiating a new sequence by encouraging all students to repeat her in line 6. She commands “all of you” one more time until she is satisfied by the loud choral response.

Now that the learners practised the pronunciation of the word cheat, the teacher asks for its meaning. She does this twice, and in English, but receives no response (lines 11-13). Then she switches to isiXhosa, and asks the same questions with significant pauses in between, since she is waiting for response. The teacher asks for the meaning of the word three times in isiXhosa, but varies her word choice in order to facilitate the students’ understanding (lines 14-19). After asking for the meaning five times, she waits a few seconds and says the answer herself, with the translation of the concerning word articulated very clearly. In order to receive some response from the students, now the teacher told them the answer, she invites the students to repeat the word by saying the first part, “*uku*” (line 26). The learners then provide the preferred response by finishing the word. However, thus far the class has not shown signs of understanding, since all they did is repeat the teacher. That is why the teacher asks the students if they understand in line 29. Upon some nods and a rare “*ewe*”, the teacher proceeds to the next word.

From this fragment, it becomes evident that the students behave passively, and only respond when the teacher told them the answer first. This results in quite some trouble for the teacher, who wants to teach English words by using the students’ own knowledge. It could therefore be questioned how much knowledge the students had of the word cheat and its meaning, since they could not even provide a translation or explanation in their HL. Even when the teacher checked for understanding, the minimal response could indicate that most students did not have a clue of the word's meaning. When the teacher had picked up on these cues, she could have provided an explanation. Code-switching is in this excerpt used as one of the strategies to scaffold understanding, for example when the teacher varies her vocabulary more in isiXhosa. Again, code-switching has a hearer-oriented function, since the teacher tries her best to facilitate curriculum access.

3.3 Excerpt 3 – Ms. N., minutes 17:57 – 18:20

```
01    T:    let's read the- let's read the words on the chalkboard
02          let's start with the sound [ch]
03    S:                               [ch]
04    T:    the sound is
05    Ss:   ch:
06    T:    what sound?
07    Ss:   ch::
08    T:    all of you?
09    Ss:   ch::
10    T:    your hands on your lap thank you?
11    S:    sh:
12    T:    the sound is?
13    Ss:   ch::
14    T:    the word is?
15    S:    cheat
```

A bit further in the lesson, the teacher sticks flashcards to the chalkboard with words starting with <ch>. While pointing at the flashcards, she asks the learners to read out the words, but first starts with practising the sound only. When the teacher says to start with the sound <ch>, a few children already join her in saying the sound, since they are used to finishing the sentence as they later do repeatedly. The teacher asks the learners to say the sound three times, all in English since there are no occurring troubles with understanding the instructions (lines 4-8). The rising intonation is the same in each turn, and is maintained while instructing the students to put their hands on their lap. This turn containing classroom management would have a preferred non-verbal response of children putting their hands on their lap, but instead a few learners respond by saying the sound as they did in their turns before. Their answer is a bit uncertain, since the sound is more a <sh> than a <ch>, by skipping over the voiceless part in the beginning of <ch> (line 11). This could indicate that they are not paying attention to what is said very well or they do not understand it. Either way, the teacher chooses to do classroom management in English, but it could be questioned how well it was picked up on by the learners. Therefore, she could have chosen to switch to isiXhosa and ensure understanding, since code-switching has proved to be a helpful strategy for classroom management in post-colonial contexts (Ferguson, 2003).

3.4 Excerpt 4 – Ms. M., minutes 1:32 – 2:39

01 T: when, during the holidays ou:r parents (.) want us to visit
02 ma::ny, many places, neh?
03 S: yes
04 T: so: siyahamba imall ngendawo, neh?
05 *we travel*
06 T: then, in thOse places (.) we s↑ee: things that we don’t have
07 in <ou↑r. own. (.) city. or in ou↑r own. house.> neh?
08 S: [yes]
09 T: [that means] if siyahamba ne sine bazali bethu,(.)
10 *we travel with our parents*
11 ((noises from outside the classroom)) ma siye masiphumile
12 masine (8 syllables) >siza bona unqhobo ekhaya< because ekhaya
13 ama rural:
14 *when we go home we will see friends from rural areas*
15 those are the ru:ral area:s (.)
16 zi rural areas engathi? iareas <zifa:rm> neh?
17 *rural areas are areas similar to farms*
18 (2.1)
19 e kwi-farms, zi bona >intoni<, intone zibonayo kwifarms
20 *when we are in farm areas, what do we see, what is it that we*
21 *see in farms*
22 ((teacher closes the classroom door))(3.6)
23 S: ((student raises hand)) °cows°
24 T: (.) we see co:ws
25 (6 syllables) >sizova< so:nke
26 *we will all show together*
27 what do we see in farms? (.) ((teacher points at student))
28 S: °pig°
29 T: PI:GS
30 who else?

31 (1.3) ((teacher points at student))
32 S: °cow°
33 T: uitshile icows
34 *we already mentioned cows*
35 cow, pigs, what else?

In the second video recording, the teacher starts the lesson by talking about holidays and let students tell where they went for holidays. This excerpt begins with the teacher telling the class that parents and their children travel to many places. She adds the question tag “*neh*”, which is isiXhosa for “not so?”, thus initiating an IRF-sequence. However, only a few learners softly respond with “yes”, so the teacher paraphrases what she said in isiXhosa (line 4). That is how she ensures that everyone is still with her, before continuing in English. This time, she articulates very clearly and speaks slowly, which facilitates the learners’ uptake. However, the class is quite restless: students are chatting with each other and some are looking at the camera. The teacher ends her sentence again with a question tag, but does not wait for the learners’ response, causing overlap with her next turn (lines 6-9). This turn starts with “that means” in English, thus indicating that in what follows, she will be explaining in Xhosa what she told in English. The teacher then explains to the students what rural areas are, and upon switching to Xhosa, the children can be seen to listen attentively again. Thus, the code-switching in this turn serves two functions, namely to redirect the learners’ attention and to provide curriculum access.

While the teacher’s explanation is in Xhosa, she maintains the words *rural areas* and *farm* in English. These terms are the focus of the explanation and were already mentioned earlier. The teacher speaks rather quickly in Xhosa and concludes her explanation of rural areas with an English phrase: “those are the rural areas” (line 15). She then moves on to explaining farms in Xhosa, and asks what animals can be seen in farms. During the last few turns, the background was getting noisier because there were people passing by. That is why the teacher closes the door in the pause following her question in Xhosa. While she walks back from the door, a girl raises her hand and answers “cows”, which the teacher confirms in the follow-up turn in English (lines 22-24). She briefly switches back to Xhosa to tell the class that they will show the answers together, as a sort of side note, and then asks in English again what can be seen in farms. By using English after her explanation, the teacher signals that responses should be in English as well. One student gives “pig” as an answer, and another one “cow” (lines 28-32). However, the latter was already mentioned and the teacher tells the learner this in Xhosa, before continuing her turn with an invitation to come up with farm animal names. It could be concluded that the use of English is restricted to the focus of the lesson, and not additional explanation or side comments such as feedback on an incorrect answer. Since such side sequences are important for humanising the affective climate in the classroom (Ferguson, 2003), it could be argued that code-switching serves a socialising function here. In addition, the code-switching in this lesson helps students to understand the subject matter by reformulating content initially presented in English.

3.5 Excerpt 5 – Ms. M., minutes 3:48 – 5:02

01 T: fortunately, for m↑e (.) I was <ra::ised> (0.5) in a: (.) farm.
02 th↑e:re in trans↓kaai, in the <ru:ral> transkaai
03 so I know <A:LL> of these farm animals.
04 and the <du:t↑ies>
05 you know what means, what means?
06 what do I mean when I say duties?
07 (0.5)
08 ngithetha ngulthini mangith duties?
09 *what am I referring to when I say duties*
10 (1.0)
11 it means (6 syllables in Xhosa) on a ↓farm (.), neh?
12 there are dut↑ies that you d↑o: on a farm, neh?
13 Ss: [yes]
14 T: [on a] farm you plough, neh? (.)
15 S: [°yeah°]
16 T: [that means] siya↓li:ma. (0.3) neh?
17 *we farm*
18 on a farm we <M↑ILK cows>.
19 what do we mean nge ((student coughs)) sixhosa xasith we m↑ilk
20 cows. ((student raises hand, teacher assigns turn))
21 S: °siyasenga°
22 *we milk*

23 T: siyathini?
24 *what do we mean*
25 S: siyase:nga
26 T: siyathini?
27 Ss: siyase:nga
28 T: siyase:ngA.
29 (10 syllables in Xhosa). neh?
30 siyathininі masise:nga?
31 *we are milking*
32 Ss: [SIYASENGA]
33 T: [We are mi:lking]
34 when we masisenga masithini?
35 *are milking*
36 T: we are?
37 [mi:lki:ng]
38 Ss: [MI:LKI:NG]
39 T: so ngobo uthi:ni?
40 *so what does that mean*
41 uku seng:↑a in(.)[↓ko:↑mo]
42 S: [°ko:mo°]
43 *we are milking cows*
44 T: but le: chart angi bale nge-xho:sa neh?
45 *but this chart is not written in xhosa*
46 ((The teacher sticks the paper with images of the farm
47 animals on the board))
48 T: anyway, °we are going to talk about it°.

After talking a little longer about different farm animals, the teacher continues to talk about life on a farm. She speaks in English, but does this slowly and she articulates clearly. The teacher tells that she was raised in a farm and uses the word *duties* (lines 1-4). She asks the children whether they know what that word means twice, but what follows is a pause and no response. Thus, she decides to switch to isiXhosa and ask again, while she keeps using the English word for duties (line 8). Since there is still no response, the teacher continues to explain the word herself in line 11. She begins and ends the turn in English, and code-switches to Xhosa for the substantive part of the explanation. The teacher checks for understanding by saying that “there are duties that you do on a farm” (line 12). The *neh* question tag afterwards initiates a the preferred second-pair part, namely a “yes” from the students. However, the teacher was already starting her next turn, causing overlap with the learners’ response. Upon telling them that ploughing happens on a farm, the teacher does not ask for the meaning of "plough", but gives it in the next turn (lines 14-16). She only uses the Xhosa word for "plough", while keeping the rest in English.

The teacher continues by discussing the next farm activity in line 18. This time, she effectuates more interaction by asking what it means. Remarkably enough, she starts the turn in English, then switches to isiXhosa to ask the children to answer in Xhosa, and switches back to English to finish the question (lines 19-20). Because the teacher mainly uses English thus far, the code-switching to Xhosa is a way to let the class know that they may respond in their HL, which works positively for the affective climate. Another probability is that she uses code-switching because her questions about "duties" lacked response. One learner raises her hand and gives the answer, but the teacher wants to hear a response from the entire class, so she asks for the meaning a few more times. The students answer while increasing their volume, all in Xhosa (lines 21-28). When the teacher continues to ask about what we do when we are milking in Xhosa, the students respond with an extra loud "*siyasenga*" in line 32. However, since the teacher overlaps this turn by saying "we are milking", she indicates that the preferred response would be in English. She solves this by asking the question one more time and immediately giving the first part of the preferred second-pair part: "we are", and the children join her in saying "milking" (lines 36-38). After the teacher asks again what it means in Xhosa, she starts responding herself, the last word "*inkomo*" together with a few students who now understand that she wants them to join in. Subsequently, the teacher explicitly directs the learners' attention to the language again, when she says that the chart is not written in Xhosa, while sticking a poster with pictures and names of farm animals to the board (line 44). Thus, she states the reason to switch back to English and then tells the class that they are going to talk about the chart.

In this excerpt, the teacher tries to speak in English when possible, but seems to admit to the fact that the students are unable to answer her in English. She even does this by confirming in Xhosa that the students are allowed to respond in Xhosa. This is what Üstunel and Seedhouse (2005) call teacher-initiated code-switching, when the teacher switches codes in order to encourage learners to do the same. This way, code-switching is used to elicit response and as a way for the teacher to facilitate the learners’ needs.

3.6 Excerpt 6 – Ms. M., minutes 11:37 – 12:23

```
01          ↑NOMsa ate eggs from the ↑hen?
02          that means where do we get (.) eggs?
03          (0.5)
04          from the? (0.9)
05          [hen    ] (.)
06    S:    [chicken]
07    T:    or the chickens.
08          (2.7)
09          coming from the bees baye.sitya UbUsi obabuvelaphi?
10                               they were eating honey, from where
11          [<kwi nyo↓si>], neh?
12    Ss:   [<kwi nyosi> ]
13          from the bees
14    T:    at night she ate v:ege:tables
15          wayesitya izixhabo ebusU:ku.
16          she was eating vegetables at night
17          and she dra:nk milk?
18          asele nga intone?
19          what did she drink
20          [<nobi:si.>]
21    Ss:   [<nobi:si.>]
22          milk
23    T:    zo:nke ezinto?
24          all of these things
25          a::ll of these things come from the farm
26          they didn’t go out and buy stuff from the supermarket, neh?
27          as (.) the way we do in the: (.) in the town, neh?
```

After discussing the farm animals, the lesson continues with reading a story about Nomsa, who visited her grandmother on the farm. The teacher walks around with a textbook from which she reads aloud and asks questions about what she has just read. After reading that Nomsa ate eggs from the hen, the teacher solicits a turn by asking where eggs come from in line 2. She does not wait long for a response, but encourages the students by telling them the first part of the preferred answer, “from the”. As the learners respond with “chickens”, the teacher gives the answer “hen”, overlapping with the students’ response (lines 4-6). Their response is interesting, since the story did not mention chickens. However, previously in the lesson, the teacher already asked where eggs came from, and the answer was “chickens”, with the teacher confirming this response. That is why the teacher adds “or the chickens” to her turn (line 7), as a form of positive feedback towards this response.

The teacher immediately continues with asking questions about the rest of the story. The first question in line 9 starts in English, but halfway through she switches to isiXhosa. This is rightly interpreted by the students that they have to respond in Xhosa as well, though they are helped by the teacher saying the answer at the same time. The teacher continues and starts two sentences in English, but immediately repeats them in Xhosa (lines 14-18). Since the sentence in line 18 is formulated as a question, the children give a choral response in Xhosa with the teacher joining them again. In the next turn, the teacher starts in Xhosa and holds the students’ attention this way, but then repeats the phrase in English (lines 23-25). She also uses English for the next few sentences, since she does not wait for response but immediately moves on to the next sentence. The minimum amount of code-switching in the Xhosa tag questions mainly work as an attention-focusing device. All in all, it becomes evident that the teacher generally uses code-switching as a way to elicit response from the classroom. As the lesson progresses, she does not even attempt to ask English questions and wait for response, but immediately translates the question in Xhosa. This way, the lesson keeps its flow, but the children are also rewarded for not speaking English. To facilitate understanding, the teacher could try to ask more questions in English, for example after explaining the matter in Xhosa.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Summary and conclusion

This study set out to explore how and to what ends code-switching is used in teacher-student interaction in South African classrooms where English as a FAL is taught. Recalling the three main functions of code-switching as summarised by Ferguson (2003), these are 1) to provide curriculum access, 2) for classroom management and 3) to establish interpersonal relations. It became evident from the data that the vast majority of code-switching instances are hearer-oriented and are used as a strategy to scaffold understanding. When explaining a new word or concept, students rarely showed understanding in English, upon which the teacher switched to their HL, though still saying the respective word in English. This also happened with questions that were initially presented in English and because of a lack of response, the teachers provided a translation or reformulation of the content. Short instances of code-switching in prefixes (*i*sheep) and question tags (*neh*) frequently occurred, which sometimes encouraged response as well. The importance of the curriculum access function of code-switching points to the low proficiency of the students. This makes code-switching a necessary practice, since they need the HL in order to understand the subject matter, but it also poses challenges for the teacher to use both languages in a manner that facilitates learning English and encourages classroom interaction at the same time.

When it comes to classroom management, there were hardly any instances at all of teachers trying to establish order in the classroom. One instance is in excerpt 3, but no code-switching is used here and learners' behaviour did not seem to change because of it. In a more indirect manner, code-switching did serve to redirect the students' attention to the lesson, a function that was also found by Merritt et al. (1992). The last function of code-switching is that it could positively influence the affective climate, which was found to a small extent. Teachers did not provide explicit positive feedback, but could be seen to use side sequences or utterances in Xhosa. The use of English instead could have functioned as an affective filter (see Krashen, 1981), but it could be seen that FAL use was often restricted to the focus of the lesson. In conclusion, most of the functions of code-switching could be traced back to providing curriculum access, while uses relating to classroom management and interpersonal relations were more indirect. This could have to do with the fairly limited quantity and quality of English altogether, and it could be that when the use of English increases, there is more need to resort to code-switching for classroom management or affective uses. When comparing a Botswanan study in Grade 6 for example, there is a much clearer distinction between the uses of the HL and FAL, and code-switching often occurs for class and lesson management (Arthur, 1996). Thus, increased learner proficiency could alter the specific functions of code-switching.

4.2 Implications

While uncovering the functions of code-switching in the South African context, these are often regarded positively (e.g. Setati, Adler, Reed & Bapoo, 2002; Ferguson, 2003). It is good that in these studies and in the current study, code-switching facilitates learning in the way it does, but in microanalysing current practices, it could be argued that there is still room for improvement regarding the teacher’s language choice. For example, when trying to explain an English word, teachers sometimes merely asked for its translation in the HL, while students did not show signs of uptake. Teachers would continue after the class repeated the word, but that does not mean they understand. Eliciting a description of the meaning in English or even in Xhosa would then facilitate the learning process. Another recommendation would be that the teacher does not immediately translate or reformulate sentences in the HL, because children sometimes do not receive the chance to answer in English and are not becoming used to that either, except for repeating words or phrases. To facilitate understanding, the teacher could first explain the matter in Xhosa and then ask the question in English. These suggestions would increase teacher-student interaction as well. It would be helpful to pay attention to this at teacher training schools, since the teaching style right now does not invite students to respond, and thus learn, individually. Teachers should encourage learners to formulate sentences on their own, instead of expecting them to give one-word choral responses. This way, code-switching would be more beneficial. This is also the case in the little bit of classroom management that occurs, which could be more helpful when the teacher switched codes. Since code-switching is a good attention-focusing strategy, this would cause the explicit maintenance of order to have more effect than it has now. Ultimately, these suggestions would not only be applied at teacher training schools, but would also change the governmental language policy for education. Since code-switching appears to be such a widely used strategy to cope with the monolingual language switch, this policy is outdated and even unnecessary. As the government aims for children to achieve a high level of English, this could better be done by some sort of bilingual education, in which the role of English changes over the years from a foreign language to a language in which most, if not all, subjects are taught and in which children are highly proficient. A gradual language change would then prevent problems with academic performance that are now caused by the sudden switch, and would lead code-switching to be a helpful resource rather than a necessary resort.

4.3 Limitations and further research

In order for these suggestions to be applied in South African teacher training schools and language policies, they would require more research than is offered in this small-scale case study. Although the functions of code-switching are not unique to South Africa, future studies would require a larger scale in order to generalise these findings to all English language teaching taking place within a similar culture. Although South Africa’s political and linguistic situation is quite unique, studies conducted in other post-colonial countries such as Kenya, found similar functions of CS (Ferguson, 2003; Merritt et al., 1992). However, because of the relative old-fashioned teaching style in this study it would be problematic to translate the outcomes to a European context, for example. Another direction of future research could be a comparison of the interactional code-switching practices in Grade 3 to those in Grade 4 and higher, after the switch of LoLT took place. In Grade 4, these practices could also be studied in other lessons than English, providing a complete picture of teacher-student code-switching that ultimately could have implications for South Africa’s monolingual language policy in education.

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Appendix

Transcription symbols based on Jefferson, Schegloff & Sacks (1974)

.	Falling pitch or intonation at the end of a contour
,	Slight rise in intonation at the end of a contour
?	Strong rising intonation at the end of a contour
↑	Rising intonation before a syllable
↓	Falling intonation before a syllable
:	Prolongation of sound
CAPS	Increased volume of speech
° °	Reduced volume of speech between these signs
[ ]	Overlapping speech
(1.0)	Time (in seconds) of pause in a speech
(.)	Very brief pause, less than 0.2 seconds
(( ))	Non-verbal utterances
> <	Enclosed speech was delivered more rapidly than usual for the speaker
< >	Enclosed speech was delivered more slowly than usual for the speaker
( )	Unintelligible speech