

An Examination of Code-Switching among Itsekiri-English Bilinguals.

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Abstract:

This study set out to examine the Socio-linguistic constraints on conversational code-switching among educated Itsekiri-English bilinguals living in Lagos. It was carried out with the primary aim being, to distinguish the social factors motivating the bilingual's code-switching and to establish the linguistic constraints on the code-switching.

This study was carried out with the aid of a preliminary 4 weeks of field observation of participants in different settings and interactions followed up with 4 hours and 20 minutes of tape recordings of naturally occurring conversation between participants. A detailed analysis of the recorded conversations was carried out to establish the nature of Itsekiri-English bilingual code-switching. Constraints on the switching were attributed to both linguistic and social factors. From this exercise, the varieties of code-switching, the matrix language, word classes and categories of items, the grammatical rules and the number of grammars involved in the code-switching situation were determined.

Finally, suggestions were given as to the possibility of establishing a universal grammar for code-switching by comparing the findings in this investigation with those of other people who have worked in this area of language contact.

Keywords: Conversational code-switching/ Itsekiri-English bilinguals/ linguistic constraints

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