

Didacticization of Code Switching as a Tool for Bilingual Education in Mali

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Abstract : Mali has started experimentation of teaching the national languages at school through the convergent pedagogy in 1987. Then, it is in 1994 that it will become widespread with eleven of the thirteen former national languages used at primary school. The aim was to improve the Malian educational system because the use of French as the only medium of instruction was considered a contributing factor to the significant number of student dropouts and the high rate of repetition. The Convergent pedagogy highlights the knowledge acquired by children at home, their vision of the world and especially the knowledge they have of their mother tongue. That pedagogy requires the use of a specific medium only during classroom practices and teachers have been trained in this sense. The specific medium depends on the learning content, which sometimes is French, other times, it is the national language. Research has shown that bilingual learners do not only use the required medium in their learning activities, but they code switch. It is part of their learning processes. Currently, many scholars agree on the importance of CS in bilingual classes, and teachers have been told about the necessity of integrating it into their classroom practices. One of the challenges of the Malian bilingual education curriculum is the question of 'effective languages management'. Theoretically, depending on the classrooms, an average have been established for each of the involved language. Following that, teachers make use of CS differently, sometimes, it favors the learners, other times, it contributes to the development of some linguistic weaknesses. The present research tries to fill that gap through a tentative model of didacticization of CS, which simply means the practical management of the languages involved in the bilingual classrooms. It is to know how to use CS for effective learning. Moreover, the didacticization of CS tends to sensitize the teachers about the functional role of CS so that they may overcome their own weaknesses. The overall goal of this research is to make code switching a real tool for bilingual education. The specific objectives are: to identify the types of CS used during classroom activities to present the functional role of CS for the teachers as well as the pupils. to develop a tentative model of code-switching, which will help the teachers in transitional classes of bilingual schools to recognize the appropriate moment for making use of code switching in their classrooms. The methodology adopted is a qualitative one. The study is based on recorded videos of teachers of 3rd year of primary school during their classroom activities and interviews with the teachers in order to confirm the functional role of CS in bilingual classes. The theoretical framework adopted is the typology of CS proposed by Poplack (1980) to identify the types of CS used. The study reveals that teachers need to be trained on the types of CS and the different functions they assume and on the consequences of inappropriate use of language alternation.

Keywords : bilingual curriculum, code switching, didacticization, national languages

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