

Analyzing The Use of Code Switching and Code Mixing in Joel Kimetto's Songs

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ABSTRACT

Language is an important tool in our society and in human life in particular. It plays an essential function not only in communication but also in restoring and maintaining harmony in interpersonal relationships. The style in which language is used portrays a lot about the language users and the audience. This paper focuses on two major codes in language that have become common with language users in recent times. These are: code switching and code mixing. Language users have different reasons as to why they employ the two codes. Amongst some, the two codes could be used to display their creativity. This study specifically analyzed the use of code switching and code mixing in four of Joel Kimetto's religious songs (*Hatari Corona*, *Wolowoli*, *Rat Torosta* & *Kichigili*). In his earlier songs, Joel Kimetto sang his lyrics using purely the Kipsigis language. In recent times, though, his songs are marked by switches and mixes from other languages, English, and Kiswahili. These two languages are the official languages in Kenya, with the Kiswahili language being recognized as the national language too. This explains why there is frequent and inevitable contact of these two languages and the Kenyan indigenous languages, resulting in code switching and code mixing by language users. The researcher was interested in highlighting the switches and mixes in Joel Kimetto's songs, establishing the reasons why the artist uses them, and the attitude of the listeners towards their usage. The researcher listened to Joel Kimetto's songs and described the switches and mixes. An interview with the artist was carried out to establish the reasons for the usage. A selected target population of 40 Kipsigis language respondents was picked, and a questionnaire was used to survey their attitudes towards the usage of code switching and code mixing in the selected Joel Kimetto's songs.

Keywords: Code - switching, code-mixing, Joel Kimetto's songs

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Music plays an integral role in the preservation and dissemination of culture. This study analyses the use of code switching and code mixing in Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel songs, namely *Hatari Corona*, *Wolowoli*, *Rat Torosta* and *Kichigili*.

Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel songs have been central in promulgating the Kipsigis community's cultural practices. Moreover, his songs bear great teachings and moral lessons to all and sundry, irrespective of age and gender. Other than great appreciation of his performances experienced in religious set-ups, Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel songs enjoy even a greater appreciation in the social arena, including but not limited to political rallies, weddings, initiation ceremonies, and burial ceremonies. He performs widely both in his country of origin, Kenya, and in the diaspora, too.

Kimetto has embraced the contemporary music style in areas like instrumentation, dancing styles, diction, and lyrics, just to mention a few. It is no wonder that he has transformed from singing purely in his native code Kipsigis to embracing code switching and code mixing to flavor his songs. This has further resulted in ensuring that his songs are enjoyed by a wider range of audience and enabling him to remain relevant in this contemporary, fast-changing world of music.

This study consists of five key areas, namely: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings, Discussion, and finally Conclusions.

Objectives Of the Study

This study was guided by three objectives:

1. To investigate code switches and mixes in selected Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel songs
2. To establish the reasons why the artist uses code switches and mixes in his songs.
3. To investigate the attitudes of Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel songs audience to the code switches and mixes.

Scope Of the Study

The scope of this study was restricted to 40 participants; 20 of whom are adolescents and of middle age (15 – 30 years), and 20 who belong to the old age bracket (50 – 70 years). The researcher used the 40 participants to establish their attitude towards Joel Arap Kimetto's use of code switching and mixing. The artist was also interviewed to establish why he uses code switches and mixes in his songs. The study was restricted to two research tools to obtain data. Questionnaires were used with 40 respondents, and an interview schedule with the artist.

Significance Of the Study

The findings of this research will contribute to the understanding of the common types of code switches and mixes in Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel songs and the reasons why he uses them. Through the findings, the general public will learn the attitudes of his audience towards code switches and mixes; more so, whether the difference exists with the different age groups (adolescents/middle aged and the elderly). On a wider sphere too, the findings will benefit any researcher who is interested in the study of code switching and code mixing, not only in the Kipsigis language and songs but in different languages and contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code switching

Code switching has received different definitions from different linguists. According to Wardhaugh (2006:101), code switching is a condition where a speaker decides to switch from one code to another or to mix codes. This may happen within very short utterances or even longer ones. A speaker who is using code switching may use it in a bilingual setup (two languages) or more (multilingual) in their utterance. He goes ahead to say that code switching occurs in a conversation during turn-taking or simply within a single speaker's turn.

According to Pramojaney and Kitpoonphol (2003), code switching occurs when bilinguals change from one language to the other during their conversation. They go further to say that it can happen consciously or unconsciously during communication.

Categories of Code Switching

There are two major types of code switches depending on the position they occupy.

a) Intra-sentential switching

This refers to switching from one language to another within the same sentence or clause. It can occur at the sentence initial position, in the middle, or at the end. It usually happens without pauses or hesitation, thereby requiring competence and fluency of the languages involved, since the rules of syntax of the languages switched have to be adhered to.

b) Inter-sentential switching

This happens when switching from one language to the other is done between sentences. In other words, one sentence is produced entirely in one language, and the subsequent one is produced in a different language.

Code mixing

Wardhaugh (1992; as cited in Janhom; 2011) defines code mixing as a change in code by a speaker in the same utterance. He goes on to explain that there is no specific rule for mixing the first and second codes since they are context-specific.

Code mixing is used in informal situation and one of the common reasons given by speakers is that they mix codes because they lack sufficient vocabulary to say things in the core language, or there are words completely in the language to explain what the speaker means. Yiamkhumnuan (2010) supports this view that speakers mix codes when they cannot think of words in the original language or when they think that mixing is suitable for the topic at hand.

Pramojaney and Kitjpoonphol (2003) explain that in code-mixing, there are two types of languages: the matrix language and the embedded one. The matrix language is the core or stronger language that plays the dominant role, while the embedded one is the weaker language.

As seen above, the scholars have assumed specific definitions of code switching and mixing. In this study, the researcher will analyze code mixing in Joel Kimetto's songs. These are the different codes that the singer used in the same utterance. The matrix language is Kipsigis, yet we see English and Kiswahili embedded in the same utterances, such as:

- **Kolelach, forever na wewe**

Kolelach is in the matrix language. The words **forever** (English) and **na wewe** (Kiswahili) are embedded in the matrix language, hence code mixing.

Code switching, on the other hand, referred strictly to independent clauses and sentences where one is produced entirely in one language and the subsequent one produced in a different language (inter-sentential code-switching), for example:

- **Nakuchukua mbele za watu** (I'm taking you in front of people)

This is an independent clause appearing in the artist's song. The matrix language is Kipsigis, hence a case of inter-sentential code-switching.

People's attitudes & research on Code switching and Code mixing

The use of code switching and code mixing has drawn different attitudes; both negative and positive across the populace. Those with a positive attitude believe that they are acceptable and a reliable resource for effective communication (Koziol, 2000; as cited in Arrifin & Husin, 2011). On the other hand, those with negative attitudes feel that the two codes are associated with bad manners, language pollution, and incompetence (Grosjean, 1982; as cited in Arrifin & Husin, 2011).

Several linguists have researched attitudes towards switches and mixes in language; a majority of whom have looked at the codes as used in the classroom. (Arthur & Martin 2006; as cited in Arrifin & Husin, 2011) found out in their research that the use of the two codes simplified second language learning among the learners. Yiamkhumnuan (2010) studied the implications of Thai–English mixing and the possibility of internet chat rooms as an alternative learning environment. Shogren (2011) analyzed code switching and mixing among bilingual children.

Several artists have embraced multilingualism to connect with diverse audiences. Moreover, it is a successful way of expressing cultural identity. In the broader worldwide space, examples of these artists include: Beyoncé (English, Spanish, French, and Italian), Shakira (Spanish, English, French, and Arabic), Utada Hikaru (English and Japanese). Other African artists include Yemi Alade (English, Yoruba, and French) and Israel Mbonyi (English, Kiswahili, and Kinyarwanda). In the Kenyan space, such artists include Dj-Kaptama (English, Kiswahili, and Kipsigis) and Lilian Rotich (English, Kiswahili, and Kipsigis)

All these artists, together with Joel Kimetto have used code mixing and switching to showcase the creative potential of language contact in music.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the quantitative as well as the qualitative techniques of data analysis. A questionnaire was given to the 40 respondents to establish their attitudes towards the use of code switching and mixing in Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel songs. Data analysis was made using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to calculate the percentages. On the other hand, the qualitative technique using an interview schedule was used to establish the reasons why the artist uses code switches and mixes in his songs. The respondent's answers were thereafter described.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1:

To investigate code switches and mixes in selected Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel songs.

	Title of the Song	Lyric	Code	Explanation
1.	Hatari Corona	<p>Si kokoonu warning (Issuing a warning)</p> <p>Kikonech kila onyo (We were regularly warned)</p> <p>Kikonech kila warning (We were regularly warned)</p> <p>Corona ko hatari (Corona is deadly)</p> <p>Si kesoruun mapema (Be rescued early enough)</p> <p>Hatari Corona</p> <p>Kagwe's interjection (If we continue behaving normally, this disease will treat us abnormally)</p>	<p>Mixing</p> <p>Switching</p>	<p>The words: warning, Corona (English) onyo, hatari, mapema are (Kiswahili) have been embedded into the Kipsigis sentences (Kipsigis being the matrix language), resulting in code mixing.</p> <p>Hatari Corona (title of the song) and Kagwe's interjection are independent sentences that appear in a different code; English. This is a switch since the matrix language is Kipsigis</p>
2.	Wolowoli	<p>Ak koba kocheng raha en town (And they go look for pleasure in towns)</p> <p>Koyochin abortion (Procures an abortion)</p> <p>Kokotar curl kit (Done with curl kit)</p> <p>Ne kile mini skirt (Called mini skirt)</p> <p>Kokoit ingoryet madiaba kinyasa (A dress known as madiaba kinyasa)</p>	Mixing	<p>The words: raha, kinyasa, ndogo ndogo (Kiswahili), town, abortion, curl kit, mini skirt, shifon (English) madiaba, manyanga, fathee, mathee (Sheng) have been embedded into the Kipsigis sentences, resulting in code mixing.</p>

	<p>Kureen alak shifon (Others call it shifon)</p> <p>Kureen kameet mathee, kwan fathee (They call their mum mathee and dad fathee)</p> <p>Kotuiyo ak manyanga (He got a manyanga)</p> <p>Ose ndogo ndogo (The young ones are the worst)</p> <p>You would think they are well (Ilenen kokisob</p>	Switching	The whole clause appears in a different code; English. This is a switch since the matrix language is Kipsigis	
3.	Rat Torosta	Ko kooba biik zero grazing (People have resorted to zero grazing)	Mixing	The word zero grazing (English) has been embedded into the Kipsigis sentence, resulting in code mixing.
4.	Kichigili	<p>Chamyet nebo iman ko tinye faida (True love is productive)</p> <p>Riben gei chamyet ne konu hasara (Beware of of love that brings loses)</p> <p>Kergei ak UKIMWI ne kagotar biik (Like AIDS that killed many)</p>	Mixing	The words: faida , hasara , UKIMWI (Kiswahili) have been embedded into the Kipsigis sentences, resulting in code mixing.

Research Question 2:

To establish the reasons why the artist uses code switches and mixes in his songs.

Holmes (1992) in her research stated that speakers resort to code switching and mixing for a reason. Having interviewed Joel Arap Kimetto, it first of all emerged that the songs being analyzed were not purely religious as thought by the researcher, but a blend of religion and Kipsigis traditional melodies. The following are reasons he gave for the use of the two codes:

a) To include a wide range of listeners

The artist explained that in order to reach a bigger audience, he needed to use familiar codes, away from the restricted number of his previous listeners, who were mostly Kipsigis due to the purely Kipsigis-coded songs. Hence, the use of the Kiswahili and English codes that are understood by a majority of Kenyans and are “eye-catching”. These two languages are the national and official languages in Kenya, respectively. He aimed at reaching all people, regardless of gender and age.

b) Emergence of contemporary issues

The artist explained that for him to remain relevant to the contemporary world and address the current issues in society, he had to pick his diction appropriately, going for familiar words and clauses like “Hatari Corona, UKIMWI, Zero grazing.” He chose to do it in the most understood codes (Kiswahili & English) to drive the message home, resulting in code switching and mixing. Most of these were songs sung to sound a warning to all the populace on reckless lifestyles that would lead to lethal diseases and even death.

c) Lack of sufficient vocabulary to say things in the core language

Joel Arap Kimetto explained that in certain instances, he opted to mix and switch codes because he lacked the words in the matrix language (Kipsigis) to bring the messages out effectively. These included words like “Corona, manyanga, ndogo ndogo” which, according to him, if loosely translated, would lose the original intended meaning.

Research Question 3:

To investigate the attitudes of Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel song audience toward code switches and mixes.

Although code switching and mixing in language serve specific functions, the usage elicits different reactions and values to the listeners. In the first case, they elicited positive attitudes, with acceptance and tolerance, believing that it displays high and valuable bilingual competence, appropriately used in accordance with desirable themes, contexts, and specific situations. On the other hand, the use of code switching and mixing in language elicited negative attitudes where the listeners believed that it shows a deficit, an inadequate command of language, or a lack of mastery of both languages in use. Moreover, this group attributed it to laziness or sloppy language habits. Below is the overall analysis of attitudes towards the use of code switching and mixing in the selected songs by Joel Kimetto.

Table 1: Attitudes toward code switching and mixing in Joel Kimetto's songs.

Attitudes	Adolescents/Middle-aged 15 – 30 years (N = 20)		Old aged 50 – 70 years (N = 20)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	16	80%	8	40%
Negative	4	20%	12	60%

At 80% positive attitudes by the adolescents and middle-aged against 40% positive attitudes amongst the aged, it is evident that the adolescents and the middle-aged find the use of code switching and mixing more than the aged. 60% of the aged expressed negative attitudes as compared to 20% from the adolescents and middle-aged. This means that a majority of the aged do not tolerate code switching and mixing in Joel Kimetto's songs.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that Joel Kimetto employs both code switching and mixing in his songs. He uses both code-switching and code-mixing technique at different sections of his lyrics to communicate with his audience and express human feelings.

From the data collected from the artist, it is evident that code switching and mixing were not used randomly, but the artist picked the words carefully for intended reasons. The three most outstanding reasons are to include a wide range of listeners, to comply and identify with the contemporary issues, and finally to use switches and mixes due to a lack of sufficient vocabulary to say things in the core language.

Findings from this research also indicate that attitudes on the usage of code switching and mixing in Joel Kimetto's songs are varied. A big percentage of adolescents and middle-aged people tolerate the use of the codes and find them acceptable in songs. Most of the aged indicated negative attitudes with the belief that they dilute the songs, hence missing the communication value.

In conclusion, Kimetto's blending of Kiswahili, English, and Kipsigis is a pointer to Kenya's multilingual state and the audience's diverse linguistic identities. His use of English alongside the indigenous languages showcases the interplay between global and local influences in Kenyan music. He fits into the broader African and worldwide popular music trends that have embraced multilingualism.

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