

## Chapter 8

# Translanguaging and Codeswitching in a Multicultural Classroom: Experiences of University of Namibia Lecturers

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### ABSTRACT

*Code-switching and translanguaging are common pedagogical phenomena in a multilingual classroom. Code-switching occurs when variation occurs between two codes (languages) between people who share those particular codes. How and the frequency of code-switching is depended on a number of social and linguistic factors. This phenomenon, in the Namibian context with English as the medium of instruction, has distinctive attributes in teaching and learning. The chapter focuses on the experiences of academics on code-switching and translanguaging in multilingual tertiary classrooms. Each phenomenon will be described based on literature that already exists, and views and their potential contributions in multilingual classrooms will be discussed, particularly from the point of view of using alternative means to convey meaning during the teaching of science and Namibian Language.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Namibia is considered as a multilingual country. Namibia has about 30 different languages spoken in the society (Kamati, 2011). Multilingualism is a term used to refer to people's ability to communicate in several languages or the co-existence of multiple languages in society (Okal, 2014; Reyes, 2004). These languages in Namibia may be classified as official or unofficial, native, foreign and national or international. This chapter explores two phenomena of code-switching and translanguaging, which are frequent practices in multilingual contexts. The authors adopt the definition of multilingual education as "the use of two or more languages as mediums of instruction" (UNESCO, 2003, p. 17). For example, in Namibia, multilingual education refers to "first-language-first" education because schooling begins in the mother tongue at primary school (grades 1-3) and transitions to English as a medium of instruction (from grades 4-12 and throughout tertiary education). In Namibia, the use of code-switching (henceforth, CS) is more prevalent compared to translanguaging, which often occurs in junior primary schools (Norro, 2022), where English is taught as a subject and reinforced by using literature written in English and a Namibian native language. The question of interest is: Does the practice of CS and translanguaging also manifest in the university classroom in Namibia?

Teachers and lecturers are concerned about their learners' and students' performance and how they involve them in effective learning using their teaching agency (Cummins, 2021; Norro, 2022). Töttemeyer (2010) asserts that the school system underutilised Namibian languages, which in turn led to poor results and high dropout rates. Thus, teachers and lecturers might engage in CS and translanguaging to improve school participation and the outcomes of multilingual pupils (Joduarte & Günther-Van der Meija, 2018). Research indicates that these CS and translanguaging hold the potential to improve the learning experiences of the students. In this chapter, we heed Cummins' (2021) caution of the need to inquire about the degree to which a specific claim or idea is beneficial in supporting successful education by analysing university lecturers' reflections on CS and translanguaging in language and science classrooms. According to Cummins (2021), the usefulness and credibility of certain theoretical concepts, such as CS and translanguaging, are determined by the understanding of lecturers who shape and engage with these concepts at the classroom level. In the next section, we provide an overview of Namibian education before we unpack CS and translanguaging as key concepts in a multilingual classroom.

## **NAMIBIAN CONTEXT-BACKGROUND**

Before the arrival of Europeans in Namibia, education was conducted, which, according to Hailombe (2011), was branded 'informal' due to the undocumented curriculum. Traditional education, according to Auala (1989), was a collective means used by adults in a community to transmit knowledge, norms, beliefs, and skills from one generation to generation. These skills were transmitted using the indigenous languages spoken in the communities. Traditionally, imparting knowledge and skills has been part of everyday life in a community where adults took on the responsibility of teaching, correcting, and punishing any child (Ellis, 1984). Pre-independence education in Namibia was racially segregated. The education was offered demarcated based on which skin colour, race, and cultural orientation that student represents.

The medium of instruction adopted by Finish missionaries was Oshindonga, an Oshiwambo dialect, a vernacular language spoken in the area in which the school is found. Centrally, the Catholic missionaries adopted English, while the Rhenish missionaries adopted Dutch Afrikaans in southern Namibia

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