

## A CASE STUDY OF CODE-SWITCHING IN BURKINA FASO POST-PRIMARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM

**Dyadi Romain PALM**

University Joseph KI-ZERBO, Burkina Faso

[palmromain2018@gmail.com](mailto:palmromain2018@gmail.com)

&

**Moses Kwadwo KAMBOU**

University Joseph KI-ZERBO, Burkina Faso

[moses.kambou@gmail.com](mailto:moses.kambou@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Code-switching is a common phenomenon in bilingual and multilingual discourse communities. It is the alternation of two or more varieties of languages within a given conversation. In bilingual contexts, code-switching most often occurs in the foreign language classrooms with young learners by the use of the first language (L1) within the second language (L2) utterances. It encompasses various pedagogical functions such as knowledge construction and transmission as well as classroom socialisation. However, how code-switching actually works in foreign language classes in multilingual societies is still not well-known. This paper aimed at analysing and discussing the significant role code-switching could play in the English language (L3) classrooms, in Post-primary education, in Burkina Faso's multilingual context through the use of L2 (French) and the learners' L1 (mother tongue). Interview and questionnaire data were collected in addition to recording 3 English lessons using telephone (itel S32) recorder. Data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively on the basis of Drew and Heritage's (1992) and Canagarajah's (1995) approaches. The results showed that the use of L2 and L1 in the targeted English classrooms was beneficial to both teachers and their students. Code-switching was viewed as playing the role of saving time, solving the problem of misunderstanding of classroom discourse, and mediating between L1 and L3. It was therefore recommended to develop Burkina Faso post-primary English curriculum accordingly.

**Keywords:** code-switching, English, discourse, multilingualism, curriculum.

### UNE ÉTUDE DE CAS SUR L'ALTERNATION DE CODE EN CLASSE D'ANGLAIS AU POST-PRIMAIRE, BURKINA FASO

**Résumé :** L'alternation de code est un phénomène courant dans les communautés bilingues et multilingues. C'est l'emploi de deux ou plusieurs variétés de langues dans une conversation. En contexte bilingue, l'alternation de code se produit le plus souvent en classes de langue étrangère avec des jeunes apprenants par l'usage de la langue première (L1) en même temps que la langue seconde (L2). Elle comporte différentes fonctions pédagogiques comme la conception et la transmission de la connaissance ainsi que la socialisation de la

classe. Cependant, le fonctionnement réel de l'alternation de code en classe de langue étrangère dans les communautés multilingues est encore mal connu. Cet article visait à analyser et discuter l'important rôle que l'alternation de code jouerait en classe d'anglais (L3), dans l'éducation Post-primaire, au Burkina Faso, par l'usage du L2 (Français) et du L1 de l'apprenant. Les données ont été collectées par interview, questionnaire, et par l'enregistrement de 3 leçons d'anglais à l'aide d'un téléphone (itel S32). Elles ont été analysées qualitativement et quantitativement sur la base des approches de Drew & Heritage (1992) et de Canagarajah (1995). Les résultats ont montré que l'usage de L2 et L1 dans les classes d'anglais cibles fut bénéfique aux professeurs et élèves. L'alternation de code fut perçue comme jouant le rôle d'économiseur de temps, de résolution de problème d'incompréhension de discours, et de médiation entre le L1 et L3. Il a été donc recommandé de développer le curriculum d'anglais au Post-primaire au Burkina Faso en fonction de ce qui précède.

**Mots-clés :** alternation de code, anglais, discours, multilinguisme, curriculum.

## Introduction

Burkina Faso is a multilingual country where English is used as a third language after the 59 national languages and French, the official language. Taught as a foreign language since the 1950s, English is introduced to learners from post-primary education which is composed of the following levels: sixième (Form one), cinquième (Form two), quatrième (Form three), and troisième (Form four). As stated in the education orientation law<sup>1</sup> (EOL henceforth) of Burkina Faso, "[t]he media of instruction ... [in the education system] are French and the national languages ..." "Other languages can intervene as subjects or to teach [...] in respect with the established texts"<sup>2</sup> (EOL, Article 10, p. 7; our translation). In the EOL, however, no directions are mentioned about foreign language instruction; nor does exist an official document regulating the teaching of English in Burkina Faso. Only a circular letter was published by the Ministry of Education in 1983, which set as the main goal of the teaching of modern languages, in Burkina Faso, learners' fluency in communication (cf. Kima 1998, p. 6). That is the reason why it is not surprising to notice that the English teaching syllabi, in this country, makes no explicit mention of the medium through which English should be taught in schools. Nevertheless, various researches, so far, have been carried out (Sawadogo, 1984; Paré, 1990; Kouraogo, 2001; Somé-Guiébré, 2018) in order to improve English teaching and learning in Burkinabe secondary schools. In this endeavour, however, very few of

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<sup>1</sup> Loi d'Orientation de l'Éducation, in French. Loi n° 013-2007/AN du 30 Juillet. This Law directs the educational system in Burkina Faso.

<sup>2</sup> « Les langues d'enseignement utilisées au Burkina Faso sont le français et les langues nationales ... » « D'autres langues peuvent intervenir comme véhicules ou disciplines d'enseignement ... conformément aux textes en vigueur ».

them addressed the question of classroom language management. But interestingly enough, inspectors or teacher trainers generally recommend the maximum use of the target language, English, both by the teacher and the students in the classroom. For instance, the following was stated in the book entitled “Professional Development Training for English Teachers of Burkina Faso”, published by the English Inspectorate (2002/2003, p. 21): “Students should be equipped with the basic language they need to use in the classroom in order to avoid constantly to resort to French or to their mother tongue ...”. In this respect, in English classes, teachers would always try to adopt the monolingual target language teaching principles they were recommended. Yet, in trying to do so, they still encounter some difficulties in communication with the students as we have experienced ourselves for more than a decade as English teachers. This uncomfortable situation most often compels the concerned teachers to find appropriate alternatives to adapt to the current teaching context. Some of them and their students would therefore use both languages, English and French to various extents and in various ways, according to the class level, the type of pedagogic activities, or the topic discussed. Others would even sometimes resort to the learners’ L1 (mother tongue(s)) for a given purpose.

This fact of alternating or mixing code shows that it is difficult for the English teachers and their students to effectively communicate only through English in the Burkinabe post-primary classrooms; this fact may negatively affect English teaching/learning in that context. Using French (L2) and/or Mooré (L1) in these English classrooms, only when appropriate, will then enhance that language learning and will make its teaching more effective. This paper aims at analysing and discussing the way the phenomenon of code-switching actually works in post-primary English classes, in this specific multilingual setting. In other words, what are the English teachers’ and students’ opinions on code-switching? What functions do L2 (French) and L1 (mother tongue) have in the English classroom? Before looking into these questions, it will be important to first understand what the literature says about code-switching and its related educational implications, then to describe the methodology of this study.

## **1. Understanding code-switching**

Code-switching (CS) is typical of bilingual and multilingual communities. This situation comes about by partial or total mastery of at least two different languages or varieties and their permanent contact in daily communication. CS most often occurs due to the change of either the listener, the setting or the conversation topic (Baker, 1980).

### **1.1 Defining code-switching**

There are various definitions of CS which overlap at some points. For Poplack (1980, p.583), it refers to “the alternation of languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent”. In a similar vein, De Klerk (2006), Baker (2011), Crystal

(1987), and Hamers and Blanc (2000) describe CS as the alternation of language units or varieties within a unique stream of conversation. In addition, Hamers and Blanc (2000, p. 602) view CS as a “communicative strategy” which is typical of bilingual speakers. Other linguists have attempted to find out the discrepancy between code-switching and code-mixing. The latter is generally used to depict intra-sentential switches (see subsection 1.2), at the morpheme boundary (e.g. I hate eating *haricot/benga*<sup>3</sup>), Bokamba (1989). For Berruto (1990), code-mixing<sup>4</sup> is rather psychologically conditioned whereby speakers in interaction alternate codes or languages depending on how the linguistic items are processed in their brain. ‘Borrowing’ is another umbrella term for code-switching which deals with switches as loanwords in the other language. Baker (1980, p. 6) defines it as “single-item terms that are proper nouns or names of particular places or things, items that cannot be translated”. In this study both code-mixing and borrowing will be used to describe code-switching where appropriate. In view of what precedes, how people switch code or cope with the language contact phenomenon in social interactions has not only been the concern of linguists. Scholars in anthropology, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and so forth, have addressed the issue as well. For focus sake, this paper will only emphasise the linguistic and sociolinguistic viewpoints of CS.

## 1.2 Code-switching from the linguistic perspective

From the linguistic point of view, CS is handled on the basis of language structure. In the light of her definition of CS given earlier, Poplack distinguishes the following linguistic CS: *tag-switching* (i.e. the insertion in the other language of such tags as “you know”, “anyway”, “I mean”), *inter-sentential switching* (i.e. switching at the entire sentence boundaries of the languages in use) and *intra-sentential switching* (i.e. the one occurring “within the same sentence or sentence fragment” (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 4). With regard to ‘tag-switching’, Poplack (1980, p. 589) qualifies it as emblematic’ or ‘less intimate type’ of code-switching. This involves, in addition to tags, “interjections, and some idiomatic expressions, even individual noun switches”. Meanwhile, she uses the term ‘intimate’ code-switching to refer to ‘intra-sentential switching’. She clarifies that in the intimate type “a code-switched segment, and those around it, must conform to the underlying syntactic rules of two languages which bridge constituents and link them together grammatically” (Poplack, op. cit.). However, Poplack (2001), aligning with Auer (1998), raises the issue of code-switching constraints; she explains that some grammatical or morphosyntactic incompatibility and mismatches may occur in intra-sentential switching (she uses ‘*intrasentential*’). In this regard, Poplack argued that research has shown that speakers are most often able to “circumvent these difficulties” (2001, p. 2062). Besides, she noticed from her research that both emblematic and intra-

<sup>3</sup> Students used to utter the word ‘benga’ (= ‘beans’ in mooré, the most spoken local language in Burkina Faso) in one of the author’s classes when they ignore the meaning of that word in English.

<sup>4</sup> Instead of code-mixing, Auer (1999) and Muysken (2000) use the terms ‘language mixing’ and ‘insertion’ respectively.

sentential switching were usually employed by highly proficient bilinguals (with an emphasis on the latter). As for the 'less intimate' code-switching, it was revealed as common with non-fluent bilinguals.

### *1.3 Code-switching from the sociolinguistic perspective*

Sociolinguistics is one component element of sociocultural linguistics whose concern goes beyond the simple formalistic view of code-switching (CS) to its socio-pragmatic and cultural characteristics. Works such as "Language Contacts" (Hans, 1954, inspired by Weinreich's book, *Language in Contact*) and "Social meaning in linguistic structures" (Blom and Gumperz, 1972) might have set the basis for CS research. Both Weinreich and Hans were firstly interested in describing the effect of language contact in bilingual or multilingual societies. CS was thus considered as one product of this socio-cultural phenomenon whereby bi/multilingual speakers alternate codes to convey meaning or to achieve particular functions or to express an identity. This sociolinguistic-triggered code-switching was split by Gumperz (1982) into situational code-switching and conversational code-switching. Gumperz's situational code-switching aligns with Fishman's (1965/2000) 'domain analysis' and is triggered by the change of topic, interlocutor, and speech setting. Situational code-switching, in fact, depicts the social status and role of the speakers in interaction as well as the type of context and the speech style (i.e. formal or informal) they are using (Baker, 1980). In other words, situational code-switching operates by social conventions which are determinant in the choice of language in communication and also depends on who is speaking and to whom s/he is speaking. With regard to what precedes, Blom and Gumperz (1972, p. 409) argue that in situational code-switching "alternation of varieties redefines a situation, being a change in governing norms".

The second type of sociolinguistic code-switching, conversational code-switching, is characterised by direct and reported speech, interlocutor identification, interjections, reiteration, message qualification, and so forth (Blom and Gumperz 1972, Gumperz 1982). Gumperz defines it as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems". He adds that "Most frequently the alternation takes the form of two subsequent sentences, as when a speaker uses a second language either to reiterate his message or to reply to someone else's statement" (1982, p. 59). Conversational code-switching differs from the situational code-switching in that in the former, there is no change of speakers, topic, and setting. According to the literature, how teachers and learners, as members of bi/multilingual speakers' community, operate code-switching in the classroom, is the focus of the next subsection.

#### **1.4 Code-switching in the language classroom**

Studies on CS in Burkina Faso are very rare. They even seem to be inexistent in the domain of foreign language instruction in Secondary Schools. Otherwise, language alternation or mixing is a real fact in the Burkinabe educational system. In contrast, this phenomenon of CS, in language classes in other bi/multilingual areas, is well-known through literature. In that vein, the researchers have been interested in what motivates to and when teachers and learners switch code in the classroom and whether this fact allows or does not impair effective target language (L2/L3) learning. Obviously, teachers or learners switch code when need be. In effect, Jingxia (2010) argues that code-switching is used by teachers and learners in order to bridge the target language gap between them and become closer. This situation is recurrent in Burkinabe post-primary lower classes where students are newly introduced to the language, English, (here switching to French occurs) and also do not have a good command of French (here switching to a local variety may occur). Whereas Cook (2001) thinks that CS facilitates classroom interaction and makes learners more comfortable, Simon (2001) points out that it allows informal communication and solves the problem of misunderstanding through the use of the target language. For example, Lin (2013) puts forward that some concepts (e.g. in vocabulary lessons) can be explained or clarified using the learners' L1. Likewise, CS usually intervenes in grammar teaching (Cook, 2001).

Furthermore, when learners are taught in a language that they master, learning is likely to occur and teaching to become efficient. That is why "Effective teachers make use of every available resource--including knowledge of a limited English proficient (LEP) students' native language--to ensure that students learn..." (Tukinoff, 1985, pp 19-50). In fact, while Tukinoff encourages the switch to the learner's L1 for effective instruction, Cummins & Swain (1986) advocate that the languages be used distinctly. Anyway, for learning to occur, Ovando & Collier (1985) claims that teachers should only code switch inter-sententially and that learners' intra-sentential CS should be tolerated. With reference to the use of L1, however, to make learning effective, Cook (2008) and Song & Andrews (2009) maintain that CS should be minimised or even be avoided since there may exist many L1s in the classroom. The latter idea became more appealing with the advent of Communicative Language Teaching in the 1970s. It is a method which has been famous worldwide since then and which promotes the acquisition of the target L2 or L3 through its communicative practice.

Nonetheless, CS is becoming recurrent in the language classrooms, namely in the Burkina Faso context. Why so? Only through research can plausible answers be provided as the present study attempts to do. Meanwhile, based on previous findings on CS, this phenomenon is currently pervasively performed due to the functions that it covers. In this paper, focus will be on Canagarajah's (1995) micro-functions of classroom CS. These micro-functions are related to two main categories of classroom events: Classroom management (including 'Opening the class',

'Negotiating directions', 'Requesting help', 'Teacher encouraging'...) and Content transmission (including 'Review', 'Definition', 'Explanation', 'negotiating cultural relevance', 'Parallel translation'...). To this, Ferguson (2003) adds the sociolinguistic function of CS in the classroom. He argues that, in the classroom, both teachers and learners usually code switch when they seek to display an identity and their belonging to a bi/multilingual environment by shifting from their formal relationship. In other words, besides its linguistic function of clarifying or explaining language concepts and grammar, CS plays a role in learners' socialisation in the classroom (Adendorff, 1993; Martin, 1996; Rollnick and Rutherford, 1996).

## 2. Methodology

This section describes the subjects, schools, and instruments selected to carry out the present study. It also addresses the theory within which the recorded data were analysed.

### 2.1 Study samples

The study was conducted in Ouagadougou (the capital city) and in one rural area of Burkina Faso, i.e. Ziga. In the former place French<sup>5</sup> is mostly spoken and people generally switch between that language and *Mooré* or other minority national languages (even English, in school/academic settings). In the latter place, the rural area, people usually speak local varieties and would switch to French occasionally. Data were collected from 6<sup>e</sup> to 3<sup>e</sup> classes (i.e., Form one to Form four) of the first cycle, in four different schools in Ouagadougou as well as in one Departmental School, in the rural area. Eighty (80) students and five (5) English teachers took part in the research. The students, randomly selected, speak *Mooré* and regularly attend the English class. Similarly, the five teachers have a good command of *Mooré*, except one teacher, and all are certified teachers from the Burkina Faso national teachers' training school (*Ecole Normale Supérieure de Koudougou*). They have between five and thirty years of English teaching experience.

### 2.2 Instruments and data handling

As described below, a data recorder, questionnaire and interview schedule were used to gather information related to this study.

#### -Recording device

Three English classes (i.e. 6<sup>e</sup>, 5<sup>e</sup>, 3<sup>e</sup>) were observed and recorded using a mobile phone (Itel S32). The classrooms were visited with the permission of the Head of the Schools and according to the teachers' availability. Only the teachers knew about the real purpose of the class visit; the students were not informed about it. The observer (one of the authors) also took notes of particular events or behaviours from the part of the learners and their teachers. Recorded data were

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<sup>5</sup> 10 - 15 % of the Burkinabè population speak French (Nikiéma, 2000) and 48% speak *Mooré* (Wolff, 2006).

transcribed and analysed (including the notes taken) according to a Conversational Analysis (CA) framework (cf. subsection 2.3.).

#### *-Questionnaire*

A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was submitted to the 80 target students to complete. The objective was to obtain information about those learners' habits of language use in general in the English classroom and also their experience of and viewpoints on code-switching. The questionnaire completion was anonymous and voluntary. The related data were processed by KoboToolBox<sup>6</sup> before they were quantitatively analysed and interpreted.

#### *-Interview schedule*

An interview guide (cf. Appendix B) served to collect the five target teachers' knowledge of code-switching and their opinions on its use in the English classroom. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted face-to-face and, on the phone, when necessary. In the latter case, only the teacher from the Departmental School was concerned as he was geographically distant to be physically met with. Ethical issues related to the interview procedure and the interviewees' anonymity were considered. The interview data, thus recorded, were transcribed and analysed qualitatively. Some data were quantified where necessary.

### **2.3 Theoretical framework**

As previously announced, this subsection presents the approach adopted to analyse the recorded data from the classroom observations. Called Conversational Analysis (CA), this approach was firstly developed by Drew & Heritage in 1992. CA focuses on the sequence of talk such as turn-taking, contiguous pairs, followed by speakers in interaction. It has at its centre stage, 'context', which is considered as the 'project' and 'product' of the speakers' attitudes in a given conversation. In this regard, CA helps to make a meaningful description of the interlocutors' linguistic and sociolinguistic productions as they code switch. In the present paper, evidence based on the transcripts of the recorded data from the classroom observations were analysed using CA; the goal being to understand the type(s) and functions of code-switching characterising the post-primary English classrooms.

## **3. Results and interpretations**

In the light of the research questions, this section presents the results and interpretations of the interview, questionnaire and classroom recording data.

### **3.1 English teachers' general opinion on code-switching**

Most of the interviewed English teachers showed a positive attitude to code-switching in the English classroom. Four of the five teachers agreed that their

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<sup>6</sup> [www.kobotoolbox.org](http://www.kobotoolbox.org)

students use French in English class although they required them to talk only in English during oral practice. In fact, the concerned teachers thought that the alternation of both English and French helped students better understand the lesson and allowed teachers themselves to save time. Besides, all the interviewees viewed the local language–*Mooré*– as an alternative to ease understanding in the English class when the teacher failed to explain something to the students in French and English. However, most of the teachers were unanimous that the more French was frequently used in the English class, the less the students made effort to speak English. Also, teachers who said to always teach English only through English decided to do so for various reasons. For teacher (tr.) 3, it is because they were advised to do so in the Teacher Training School and that this “allows students to get new words [and] expose them to the language”. Meanwhile tr. 5 said he “want[ed] to help the students to have the habit of expressing themselves in English”.

### ***3.2 The actual use of code-switching by English teachers in the classroom***

None of the interviewed teachers said to teach English only through French. Rather, they said they would use French, most often in 6e and 5e, simply to explain or “to make [students] understand some points” (tr. 1). This generally happened when the teacher gave the students the instruction in the essay writing (tr. 4), or “talk[ed] about abstract nouns” (tr. 5) or difficult words (tr. 3) with no pictures to show to the students. As for tr. 2, she would resort to French when her students showed the impression that they did not understand her questions or what she said in English. Although it was rare, when the students still did not grasp what was said in French, some teachers (i.e. three out of five) said they would resort to some ‘collocations’ or ‘proverbs’ in the students’ L1(mother tongue). Otherwise, teachers emphasised that they would not switch code in the situations where they felt that students understood the point or during grammar and reading-comprehension lessons, as well as in the correction of tests and exercises. In such classes as 4e and 3e, teachers equally said they spoke English most of the time.

### ***3.3 Code-switching from students’ perspectives***

80 students from 6e, 5e, 4e, and 3e gave their preferences about the use of code-switching in the English classroom by completing a questionnaire. The survey reported the following: 52.5% of students preferred that their English teacher used only English when s/he wanted to encourage them whereas 50% of them wanted him/her to explain or define difficult words in French only. But to introduce a lesson, the majority of students (46.2%) would like the teacher to make use of both English and French. While 37.5% of students agreed that the teacher sometimes explains what they did not understand in *Mooré*, few of them, 23.7% and 17.5%, disagreed because they preferred French and English respectively. 85% and 80% of students wanted their teacher to teach grammar and vocabulary, respectively, by combining English and French. Most of the students (70%) acknowledged that they

always understood their teacher when s/he used French than they did (47.5%) when s/he spoke English. When students did not understand what their teacher said, they generally asked the question in French. 50% usually asked the teacher and 36.2% asked a friend. In the latter case, 82.5% said they understand the point better. Similarly, 58.7% of students said they preferred to answer the teacher's questions both in French and English since it was observed by 80% of them that their teacher also used to alternate or mix the two languages.

### 3.4 Functions of L2 (French) and L1 (Mooré) in the English classroom

After analysing the audio transcripts of the three classrooms observed using a Conversational Analysis (CA) framework, the following micro-functions of code-switching, according to Canagarajah (1995), were identified:

*-Parallel translation, definition, explanation (in content transmission).*

Samples of the transcript of a vocabulary lesson on vegetables in a 6e class.

- Teacher 3: "Do you know what 'expensive' means"? "Yes, what"?
- Student 2: "*Marché*" [Definition/meaning].
- Teacher 3: "*Marché? 'marché' is 'market' not 'expensive'. 'Expensive' c'est 'cher', quelque chose qui est chère. Vous savez ce que 'cher' veut dire?*" ('Expensive' means 'cher', something that is expensive. Do you know what 'expensive' means?) [Explanation].

Choral: "*Oui*" (yes).

- Teacher 3: "*Voilà. Donc*" (That is it. So) "*Les aubergines coutent chères [ici]*" [Parallel translation of an example previously given (Garden eggs are expensive here)]. "*C'est pas vrai?*" (Aren't they?) "Good let us continue..."

Although tr. 3 tried hard to comply with the recommendation to always teach English through English, he was compelled to use French in the English class so as to ease understanding. In a similar vein, tr. 5, in 4e class, sometimes mixes French and English to explain some concepts (Berruto, 1990). An example is the following intra-sentential switches (Myers-Scotton, 1993): "*Quand on ne peut compter, then it is 'little'. If it is countable, then you use 'few', quand on peut compter on utilise 'few'. Is it ok?*"

*-Negotiating cultural relevance (in content transmission).*

Samples from a 4e class.

- Student 11: "... little '*tô*' every day."
- Teacher 5: "So, '*tô*' is a borrowing" [from a local language]. "It is not an English word, ok?"

Samples from a 5e class:

- Teacher 3: "Look, look at this. Can you see it?" [the teacher shows a picture of Garden eggs].

Group-students: "*Gombo*"

- Teacher 3: How do you call it in *Mooré*?

Choral: "*manne*"

As to align with Cummins and Swain's (1986) stance, tr. 3 and tr. 5 used *Mooré* here distinctly from English for the purpose of effective instruction.

Another function of code-switching related to sociolinguistics (Ferguson, 2003) was observed during the students' group work, in the 4e class. Each group was asked to provide three sentences using 'little' and 'few'. The following is an excerpt of the interaction of two of three students in a group.

- Student a: "We drink little tea". "Bwě"? (What?)
- Student c: "Drink"?
- Student a: "*Bware*" [the French word '*boire*' is calqued here into *Mooré*].
- Student c: "*Boire*"? (Drink?)
- Student a: "*Oui*; we drink little...."
- Student c: "*fo nuda fāta*" (you drink *fanta*).
- Student a: "*Fanta*". "*Petit 2*" (Small 2).

This group discussion seemed to be an opportunity for the students involved to display their actual identity or their belonging to a multilingual setting through an extent use of *Mooré* besides English and French.

#### 4. Implications for English instruction

Code-switching, the way it is applied in Burkina Faso post-primary English classroom can have the following related implications. First of all, teachers shift to French mostly when they feel that the students do not understand their speech in English. This may motivate students and facilitate classroom communication (Simon, 2001 & Cook, 2001). But code-switching here may have a negative effect on the students if the teacher does not become aware of their preferences and take them into consideration in situational talk (Gumperz, 1982).

Second, English teachers seem to frequently resort to French in the classroom because of students' low proficiency in English. This is probably due to a lack of application of adapted teaching strategies in order to permit them to effectively practise English mainly in 4e and 3e classes. Therefore, better ways should be identified to achieve the latter goal. For that purpose, English teachers training programme should be enriched by considering the issue of code-switching in lower classes.

Third, findings from classroom visits showed that switches to *Mooré* can be helpful in cultural mediation. It can also participate in students' socialisation in group works by easing interaction between them. However, as *Mooré* is not the L1 of all students, it would be more helpful if it were only used occasionally (Song & Andrew, 2009) to solve some intercultural linguistic issues.

## Conclusion

As shown in the paper, code-switching is recurrent in Burkina Faso post-primary English classes, mainly in 6e and 5e. English teachers and their students are unanimous on its usefulness in the management of the classroom discourse. Although teachers do their best to give the lessons in English, they are most often constrained to shift to French so as to explain either an instruction or to translate some difficult items. *Mooré*, the dominant mother tongue, is equally often used by both teachers and students for the same aforementioned purpose. A case in point is students' interaction during classroom group works whereby those learners usually switch to *Mooré* to display their multilingual social identity. Students say they prefer this state of affairs since it allows them to better understand the topic being discussed and the lesson as well. In contrast, their teachers think that students' level in English is weak because they are much more exposed to French. Otherwise, by the end of the first cycle, in addition to writing, students should be capable of speaking English meaningfully in a given situation; a good start to becoming, later, fluent. From what precedes, it can be stated that the earlier-mentioned hypothesis according to which the use of code-switching in the Burkinabe post-primary English classroom would ease teaching/learning and make it effective, is partly confirmed. This implies that English teachers, in Burkina Faso, should have a good control of or minimise code-switching in this context as often as possible in order to make English learning more beneficial. Also, post-primary English curriculum would need to be revised accordingly if more studies on the topic are undertaken and the results confirm what we reached in this study. To that end, focus should be on the proposition of practical strategies for situational and conversational code-switching. These strategies should address, among others, the following questionings: what language(s) do the students being taught speak? (i.e. their L1s, dominant L1, other foreign languages), what are the students' prerequisites, current level(s) in English? (i.e. feedback on their proficiency; diagnostic test), who is the person teaching them? (i.e. teacher's qualification/competency), how can the classroom discourse be managed, according to this information, so that students can learn? (i.e. selection of teaching contents, materials, methods/approaches). It goes without saying that one of the biggest issues, that of the choice of the L1 (minority versus majority L1), to be used in the English classroom should not be overlooked. This will help cope with the phenomenon of code-switching in post-primary English classrooms for a successful teaching/learning in that specific educational setting.

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### Annexe A: Questionnaire for students

This questionnaire survey is meant to collect information on your language use habits in the English classroom. The questionnaire is anonymous and voluntary. Thank you for your help.

Name of school: .....

Class: 6e  ; 5e  ; 4e  ; 3e

Male  Female

**Check with a cross (x) in the box in front of the answers proposed. You may select more than one option.**

1. **You want the English teacher to use only English when he/she wants to...**
  - a. Introduce a lesson
  - b. Give instructions
  - c. Encourage the pupils
  - d. Explain/define difficult concepts
  - e. Joke or to relax the pupils
  - f. Review a lesson
  - g. Correct a test
2. **You want the English teacher to use only French when he/she wants to...**
  - a. Introduce a lesson
  - b. Give instructions
  - c. Encourage the pupils
  - d. Explain/define difficult concepts
  - e. Joke or to relax the pupils
  - f. Review a lesson
  - g. Correct a test
3. **You want the English teacher to use both English and French when he/she wants to...**
  - a. Introduce a lesson
  - b. Give instructions
  - c. Encourage the pupils
  - d. Explain/define difficult concepts
  - e. Joke or to relax the pupils
  - f. Review a lesson
  - g. Correct a test
4. **Do you prefer that the English teacher uses Mooré to explain what you don't understand?**
  - a. Yes, always
  - b. Yes, but sometimes
  - c. No, because I prefer English  or French
  - d. No, because I don't understand Mooré well
  - e. Not at all
5. **You want the English teacher to explain the grammar lesson...**
  - a. In English
  - b. In French
  - c. In both English & French
  - d. By sometimes using Mooré
  - e. By sometimes mixing French & Mooré
6. **You want the English teacher to give the vocabulary lesson...**
  - a. In English
  - b. In French
  - c. In both English & French
  - d. By sometimes using Mooré
  - e. By sometimes mixing French & Mooré
7. **When the teacher talks in English you understand him/her...**
  - a. Always
  - b. Very often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Rarely
  - e. Never
8. **When the teacher talks in French you understand him/her...**
  - a. Always
  - b. Very often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Rarely
  - e. Never
9. **When you don't understand the teacher, you usually...**
  - a. Ask a friend in English
  - b. Ask a friend in French
  - e. Ask the teacher in English
  - f. Ask the teacher in French

- c. Ask a friend in Mooré
  - d. Ask a friend by mixing French & Mooré
  - g. Don't ask
- 10. You better understand something when a classmate explains it to you ...**
- a. In English
  - b. In French
  - c. In Mooré
- 11. You want the teacher to allow you to answer his/her questions.**
- a. In English
  - b. In French
  - c. Both in French & English
- 12. In the classroom, your teacher usually speaks....**
- a. English
  - b. French
  - c. Mooré
  - d. English/French
  - e. French/Mooré

**Annexe B:** Interview schedule for teachers

- Male  Female
  - Class(es) taught: 6e  5e  4e  3e
  - Teaching experience: ..... year(s)
1. Do you always teach English through English? Why?
  2. In which class(es) do you usually use French to teach English? Why?
  3. In which class(es) do you usually use both English and French? Why?
  4. In what situations do you usually decide to use French in the English class? Why?
  5. In which classroom situations do you use only English?
  6. What do you do when you feel that your students still don't understand you in French?
  7. Does it happen to you to resort to Mooré to explain something to your students? If yes, explain.
  8. Do you think that the use of Mooré in the English class can be occasionally helpful? Why?
  9. According to you, what are the advantages of using both English/French in the English class?
  10. What can be the disadvantages of using both English/French in the English class?
  11. Do you sometimes allow students to talk in French in the English class? When?
  12. When do you generally encourage your students to speak English in class? Why?