

The Ideological Implications of Code Switching as Discursive Strategy: An Analysis of Sri Lankan Hansards

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Language policy has been an ethno-nationalist issue of contention in post-colonial Sri Lanka (Dharmadasa, 1996; De Silva, 1998; De Silva, 2007). Given Sri Lanka's language history, the Parliament, a specific locale in which national policy is debated and formulated, is a space in which language choice both upholds and creates ideologies to which codes are linked. Code switching, defined by Gumperz (1982) as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems" (p. 59), in such a locale as the parliament, at specific moments, is noteworthy because they are performances of linguistic choice. As a shift in codes is a concrete expression of specific ideologies which may have practical implications at the policy-level, this study positions itself as exploring these ideologies in greater detail. Influenced by the 'third wave' in sociolinguistic variationist research, this paper examines code switching as local practices that index wider ideologies by studying this phenomenon in the Hansard records of the 2nd sessions of the 6th Parliament of Sri Lanka (i.e. September - December 2008). Using qualitative conversation analysis, the paper engages with the larger socio-political implications that undergird code switching practices by considering what functions code switches play in Parliamentary discourse, and what comment code switching provides on the framing and discussions in the Parliament. The paper argues that in addition to functioning as rhetorical devices, language choice both originates from and reinforces linguistic ideologies in Sri Lanka, and reveals how situated code choice practices can function as a commentary on wider social ideologies.

Keywords: Code switching, Hansard records, Ideology