This study was an investigation into the patterns and functions of code switching in pre-primary classroom discourse in selected schools of Kasarani division Nairobi Kenya. The investigation involved the identification of the languages used for code switching in the pre-primary school classroom discourse Acts. It also involved determining the occurrence and frequency of Acts, according to Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) in the classroom discourse. In addition, the patterns of code switching in relation to the Acts and the functions of such code switching were investigated.

Data collection was by audio-recording, actual classroom observation, and informal interviews with the teachers. Three schools out of nine were selected using systematic random sampling. In total, these schools had six pre-primary classes in which audio-recording of lessons was done. Three subjects: Language, Number work and Environmental activities were purposively selected for audio-recording. Ten teachers were also interviewed. The audio-recorded data was transcribed and nine lessons analysed using Sinclair & Coulthard's Model (1975).

Three languages, namely, English, Kiswahili, and Kikuyu were found to be used for Code Switching. English and Kiswahili were used in the lesson, while Kikuyu was used by the teachers amongst themselves. It was further discovered that the 22 Acts proposed by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) do actually occur in the pre-primary school classroom discourse with varying frequencies. Acts that relate more directly to the content of the lesson and classroom management such as Directives, Elicitations, Replies, Starters, Loops, Markers, Accepts and Informatives were more frequent than others such as Clue, Cue, Bid, Nomination, Metastatements, Silent stress, Comments, Asides and Conclusions.

The findings further revealed that these Acts displayed different patterns of code switching. Those Acts that involved the learners more such as Directives, Replies, Elicitations and Informatives showed an inclusive pattern of code switching being variously performed in English, Kiswahili and Mixed statements. Others that did not require much from the pupils like Loops and Markers were more in English.

The Code Switching in the Acts was found to serve various discourse functions useful to the teaching process. These included quotation, addressee specification, reiteration and message qualification. On the whole code switching was found useful in content delivery, classroom management as well as pupil motivation and encouragement. The study also established that though the teachers admit to code switching and its usefulness, there is still a negative attitude towards it. They would wish to instruct pupils in English only. In addition, the teachers are not adequately prepared to handle to multilingual situation, neither is their level of competence in other languages such as Kiswahili and local languages assessed.