

**A STUDY OF PATTERNS OF CODE-MIXING AND CODE-SWITCHING
AMONG NUPE-ENGLISH BILINGUALS IN MOKWA TOWN, NIGER
STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Language contact has been identified as the prime cause of bilingualism or multilingualism, hence many societies and individuals have become bilinguals. Bilingualism results to or give birth to code-mixing and Code switching. The Nupe people engage in the practice of the phenomena consciously and subconsciously. Hence, the study investigated the patterns of code mixing and Code switching among Nupe-English bilinguals. To achieve this aim, the data used for the analysis were collected in Mokwa town through the use of tape-recording and the process of interview. The methodology employed for data collection is that of structural analysis of utterances produced in different sociolinguistic contexts of natural conversation. The research employs simple random sampling technique and spontaneously recorded speeches from sixty (60) respondents. Then, the tape recorded data were transcribed and the extracts from the transcribed texts were analyzed based on the matrix language frame model which holds that in bilingual code mixing one of the speaker's two languages can be considered his or her first or dominant language in relation to the other. The study concluded that switching in Nupe-English Code switching grammars are possible along morphemes, words phrases, clauses, and sentence boundaries. The paper recommended among other things that, The English language and the indigenous languages like Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba & Nupe should be put on equal footing and their roles should be explicitly stated so as to ensure that indigenous languages are no more de-emphasized.

Introduction

English is an official language in Nigeria, as is the case in other English-speaking countries in the West African coast like Ghana, Liberia and Gambia (Banjo, 1989). Many scholars have undertaken studies on language in contact and their significance in Nigeria. Such studies have addressed the issue of forms or varieties of English that have emerged in Nigeria. Many bilinguals and multi-linguals in Nigeria often code-switch and code-mix their indigenous languages with the English Language in their conversation. This is a typical example of what

happens in language contact situation, especially since the point of contact in such cases is the bilingual individual who usually engages in language switching and mixing (Amuda 1986, Ofuya 1978 & Scotton 1982).

In Nigeria, the contact between the indigenous languages and English can be viewed historically from two perspectives (Banjo, 1989). The first was a minimal type of contact since the users of English then were few and lived separately from the indigenes. The other type was in the later years of colonization when English and the indigenous languages were interrelating tremendously, partly because of the decline in the political, social, as well as the educational influence of the native speakers of English. Again, school population increased and intimate contact developed between the local linguistic communities and English. Many people thus became bilingual at varying degrees and this later established the social and historical contexts of code mixing and Code switching (Obafemi & Babatunde 2003).

Some linguists e.g. Clyne (1991) use the term code mixing and Code switching more or less interchangeably. Especially in formal studies of syntax, morphology, etc, both terms are used to refer to utterances that draw from elements of two or more grammatical systems (Auer, 2009). The contrast between code mixing and Code switching can be highlighted thus:

Code mixing and code switching are sociolinguistic phenomena which occur as an outcome of linguistic contacts especially among bilinguals and multilinguals. Code switching is a communicative strategy utilized by bilingual speakers to achieve certain communicative intent. Code switching refers to the movement by a speaker to and forth from one linguistic code to another. According to Hoffman (1991, p. 110), the term “Code switching” refers to “the alternate use of two or more languages within the same utterance or during the same conversation”. This suggests that code mixing is the change of one language to another within the same utterance or in the same oral/written text. It is a common phenomenon in societies in which two or more languages are used. Studies of code mixing enhance our understanding of the nature, processes and constraints of language and of the relationship between language use and individual values, communicative strategies, language attitudes and functions within particular socio-cultural contexts.

Code mixing simply refers to the random alternation of two languages within a sentence. Pfaff (1983) says this language behavior is governed by linguistic and sociolinguistic factors. Banjo (1983) calls it language mixing and that it occurs in a sentence made of element of

language **A** and language **B**. According to Hammers and Blanc (1989), code mixing is unlike Code switching which to them is as a result of language incompetence. Bentahila and Davies (1983) also say it is the ability to choose one or the other of a bilingual's two languages in a particular situation, they also argued that the nature of the interlocutor, topic, setting and purpose determine the choice of the code. Ayodele and Adeniyi (1990) perceive it as the mixing of two languages or codes in a discourse. That the bilingual may incorporate in his discourse, some grammatical elements in the second language even while basically using the first language or vice-versa for example, "in fact nagan yaron jiya" (Hausa) i.e in fact I saw the boy yesterday.

Code switching can be said to be a verbal skill requiring a large degree of linguistic competence in both languages. Besides, it is also a device or strategy used to convey both social information and stylistic purpose. It also has something to offer to language use in bilingualism (Stephens, 1983). Beside, code mixing is a speech act in which the utterances contain element of language A and B. Code switching according to Banjo (1983) is a phenomenon in which in speech events interlocutors make utterances sometimes in language A and sometimes in language B. According to him, syntactically Code switching occurs in a discourse which is made up of sentences of language A as well as sentences of language B.

The practice is individually based and emerges from interactions. Muysken (2000:1) offers another distinction of the terms, noting that Code switching is "the rapid succession of several languages in a single speech event", while code mixing refers to "all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence." Faltis (1989) code mixing is the intra-sentential switching whereas, Code switching is the inter-sentential switching. He notes that language contacts are the outcome of increased social interaction between people of different linguistic culture, who are living as neighbors; and it is usually initiated by the assumed prestigious and powerful languages.

In a related study, Ngozi (2014) classifies switching into four major types. These are:

- a) Inter-sentential switching which is switching outside the sentence or clause level, for example at sentence or clause boundaries. Example, *He came here because akporo m ya na fomu.* (He came because I called him on phone).
- b) Intra-sentential switching which is switching within a sentence or a clause. Example, *please, biko, call him* ('biko' is 'please' in Igbo).

- c) Tag-switching: this type of switching happens when one word from a different language is added in the end of the sentence as a tag form. For example, you came yesterday kashi? (This is a common intra-sentential switch). Example, *O biara because a chorom ichu ya n'oru*. (He came because I wanted to sack him from work).
- d) Intra-word switching is switching within a word itself, such as at a morpheme boundary. Example, *God is imirimious* (*imirimi* in Igbo means mysterious, deep or complex but the suffix 'ous' is English and helps in giving the word *imirimi* an English status).

From the above disposition it could be deduced that Code mixing and Code switching are linguistic phenomena that have attracted a lot of interest within the linguistic cycle. Despite the fact that various studies have been carried out on this linguistic issue, yet to the best of the researchers' knowledge there is hardly any work that considered code mixing and Code switching among Nupe-English bilinguals. Hence, the *raison d'être* for the present study.

Theoretical Framework

This work uses the socio-linguistic model called matrix model developed by Myers-Scotton (1993). The model recognises that in the bilingual code mixing, one of the two languages of the speaker can be considered his or her first or dominant language in relation to the other. The dominant language then functions as the matrix language (Chan, 1998, p. 199). The matrix language is sometimes called the Host Code and the Embedded language the Guest Code (Chan, 1998, p. 199). In this work the Nupe language is the Host Code because it is the dominant language while English is the Guest Code.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The research was set out to achieve the following objectives which are to:

- a) Identify the various patterns of code mixing and Code switching among Nupe-English bilinguals in Mokwa town; and
- b) Examine the frequency of code mixing and Code switching among Nupe-English bilinguals.

Research Questions

The following questions are pertinent in line with the above objectives:

- a) What are various patterns of code mixing and Code switching identifiable among Nupe-English bilinguals in Mokwa town?

- b) What is the frequency of code mixing and Code switching delineated among Nupe-English bilinguals with respect to the languages code-switched and code-mixed?

Methodology

The researcher used non-experimental research design under which it focuses on a larger group of subject through the use of simple random sampling that can be later generalized. The population of the subject used for this study consisted of Educated-Nupe English bilinguals in Mokwa town. The samples used for the study were selected ten (10) teachers from six (6) schools giving a total of sixty (60) subjects.

The researcher has used simple random sampling technique to select some areas in Mokwa where Nupe-English bilinguals can be reliably got. Before one of the research instruments tape recording was administered, six (6) different areas were selected and these are Niger State College of Agriculture; Niger State College of Education, Mokwa Study Center; Government Science College, Mokwa; Hakimi Aliyu Secondary School, Mokwa and Government Girls College Mokwa, all in Mokwa town. In each unit, few number of subjects were selected. Before the Tape recording was conducted, a preliminary verbal investigation was carried out with a view to finding out the language background of the subjects so as to ensure that responses are from the appropriate subjects. Aside from the sampling for the use of tape recording another sampling has been done to select subjects that are used in the production of natural discourse. Therefore, another sampling for the use of verbal interview, Nupe-English bilingual subjects were selected with a mindful of language background of the subject, needed for the interview at a strategic conducive environment for the interlocutors.

Data Presentation

The data collected on code mixing in this study are presented with the following sessions.

Code mixing Among Women

Women who are bilinguals in Nupe and English often code-mix in the course of their conversation. Here are some of the code-mixed structures recorded and transcribed.

- a.) Girl nazhi a serious ko degin a
(Girl these a serious at all little neg)
these girls are not serious at all.
- b.) Mum we nwa lucky be fridge woro nne, wen la freeze kamindoro.
(Mum your is lucky with fridge new this, it take freeze every time.)
your mum is lucky with this new fridge it is freeze always
- c.) Nna wunchi wen la egan doro simple a
(Lady that is take talk each simple neg)
That lady does not take any issue simple.
- d.) Ga disturb sister woma wo leye wan lele a
(Don't disturb sister your you see is asleep emphasis)
Do not disturb your sister, do you not see that she is asleep.
- e.) Mi nya saye sister mi
(I have miss sister my)
I have missed my sister.
- f.) Snakes are beautiful ama age eli bua
(Snakes are beautiful but are good character not)
Snakes are beautiful but are not good in character
- g.) We were not expecting you today ama dagana wo dabiani na you are welcome
(We were not expecting you today but as you have already, come you are welcome)
we were not expecting you today but as you have come you are welcome.
- h.) La charger mi yami I need to charge my phone
(Take charger my give me I need to charge my phone)
Give me my charger I need to charge my phone.
- i.) Jumai stubborn saranyin
(jumai stubborn very much)
jumai is too stubborn.

In the examples above, it is often noticed that women who code-mix prefer to use more of Nupe language than English, which is the embedded language here.00

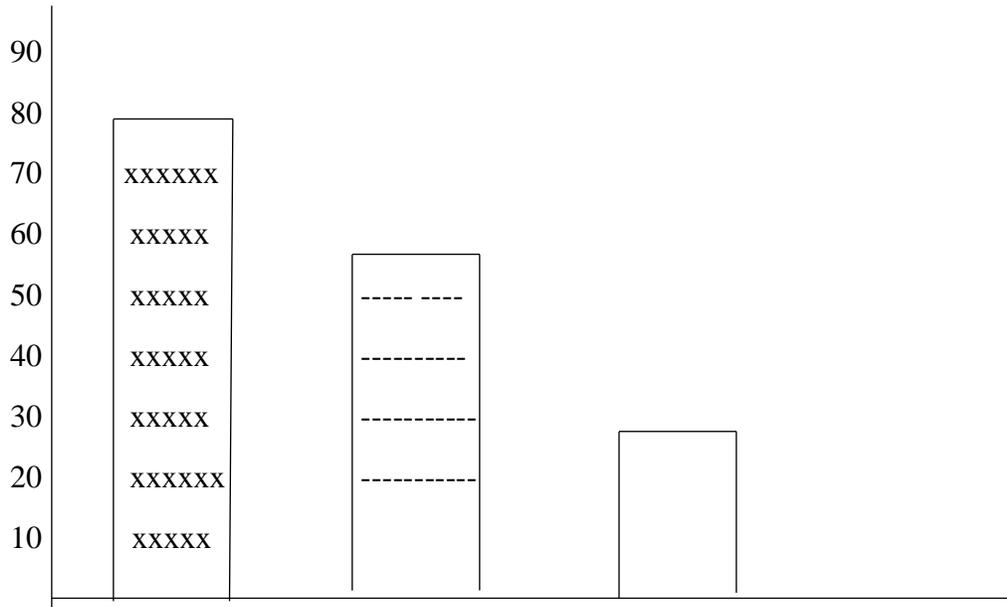


Fig. Code-mixing among women

key

xxxxxxx	Mixture of English and Nupe
xxxxxxx	
-----	English only

-----	Nupe only

Code mixing among Elder/Adult

- a) Issue nya security ungayi major problem Nigeriao
(the issue security major problem Nigeria)
The security issue is the Nigeria's major problem.
- a) Kami chichi yabe de independent be ti yiyin o?
(when shall we be independent)
When shall we actually be independent?.
- b) Egi gbanizhi money tsa a la dan yegboro bo.

(the children of nowadays money is what they put forward)
The nowadays children give priority to money.

From the above we shall see that the adults do code-mix frequently in which a times appear more than one place as in the first example (a) issue, security and major problem, whereas in the other two examples the two interlarding is in object position only.

Code mixing among Children

The following are code-mixed expressions produced by children who are Nupe native speakers:

- a.) Egizhi pa tyre
(*Children drive tyre*)
The children drive tyre
- b.) Believe me mi de ewo indoor a honestly
(Believe me I get money any not honestly)
Believe me; I don't have any money honestly.
- c.) Mi yebo rice gan ezo
(Me like rice than beans)
I like rice more than beans
- d.) Handwriting boy nyna sa
(Handwriting boy this beautiful)
(This boy handwriting is beautiful)
- e.) Boy wunchi wu ewa
(Boy that kill snake)
The boy kills the snake

In the examples above, it can be observed that children who code-mix prefer the use of Nupe language as the dominant language than English.

Code mixing among Youth

Nupe youth who speak English as a second language are fond of code mixing Nupe and English. The following are extracts from the expressions they produced

- a.) Interpreting a ga jin yawun

(Interpreting they did for him)
They interpreted for him

- b.) Ki yi evidence wa leye gan o wa nao
(What is evidence you see that he will not like)
What evidence did you see that he is not interested
- c.) Wa be Mokwa na wa ewo drop?
(You come Mokwa that you money drop)
When you came to Mokwa did you drop any money?
- d.) Wun a travel be eyau yin
(He has traveled with friend his)
He has traveled with his friend
- e.) Me wa jin iron nyan ede.
(I want do iron of clothe)
I need to iron my clothe

In a conversation among youth, the researcher find out that, the use of Nupe language is highly prefer and very few prefer the mixture of English and Nupe in their conversation.

Code mixing among Women/Youth

From the findings, the rate at which women are code mixing English Nupe in their daily conversation is lower than when they engage on conversation with men. This implies that very low percentage of women code-mix among themselves.

Code mixing with respect to various Occupations

Education/ teacher

Teachers who are bilinguals in Nupe and English often code-mix too. The following data are excerpts produced by them:

- a.) Payment wuchi a lau serious iyaka
(Payment that they (neg) take serious as such)
They didn't take the payment so serious
- b.) Student zhi gayi the main problem o
(Student (pl) are the main problem)
Students are problematic

- c.) Ke la mass failure be o
(*What bring mass failure come*)
What cause the mass failure?
- d.) Fondoro seiwoga late
(*Every again you do late*)
Everyday you do come late
- e.) Musa e drive lo mankanta fondoro
(*Musa drive to school day every*)
Musa drives to school daily
- f.) English kpaku wan la we lo bandondoa
(*English hard will not take you to anywhere*)
hard English will not take you anywhere
- g.) Wun tun peak yan career wun ani
(*he reached peak of career his*)
He has reached the peak of his career
- h.) So that means gan, kaganwagyi exam nyangbania wag a be yiu try achigawakeyiugiwo
(*So that means that if you did not pass exam for now if you come and re-try that is how you will pass it*)
If you fail an exam at a sitting you can try it again
- i.) Wa script exam mark zoa ni?
(*Have you script exam mark finish?*)
have you finish marking the exam script?

Explanation

- (a) Two words are interlarded ‘payment’ and ‘serious’. The subject position and adjust respectively. The same sentence can be rendered thus:

‘Ala payment wunchi serious iyaka a’

The last ‘a’ is negation, while the first ‘a’ shows plurality (i.e third person plural)

- (b) and (c) the both sentence end with ‘o’, however each ‘o’ performs different functions, and the ‘o’ in (b) shows emphatic pronoun (themselves) while the ‘o’ in (c) is interrogative.

- (d) ‘fondoro’ is adverb of time (Everyday). A sort of elision is observed and is derived from two words: ‘efo (day)’ and ‘doro (any)’ to mean ‘everyday’. ‘e’ is deleted and we have ‘fondoro (everyday)’.

From the above, except a, b and c indicate that the teachers who code-mix prefer to use more of English language than Nupe language in an informal situation. However in except 'd' the Nupe language is the dominant language.

Health workers

The following data are excerpts produced by Nupe-English bilinguals who are health workers:

- a.) Agan a la egizhi jin immunization
(they said they should children do immunization)
They aid children should be immunized
- b.) Zhi la mi book o de?
(who take my book?)
who took my book?
- c.) Gajin overdose ma
(Don't do overdose)
don't do overdose.
- d.) Accident wunchi terrible
(Accident that terrible)
that accident is terrible
- e.) Doctor zhi a fi strike o
(Doctors are in strike)
the doctors are on strike

In the above exert, it can be seen that the health worker who code-mix prefer to use more of Nupe language than English to the villagers.

Sport

The following data are excerpts produced by Nupe-English bilinguals who engage in Sport activities:

- a.) Footballers are earning much now ama aman ewo wa, that is why aga retire e de yandoro bea
(Footballers are earning much now but they don't know money make, that is why if they retire they don't have anything again.)

footballers are earning much now but they don't know how to make money, that is why when they are retired they don't have anything left.

- b.) Players yan Green Eagles a laye dan ba a.
(Players of Green Eagles concentrating not)
Green Eagles players are not serious
- c.) Ezhimisu kichi walleye gan Ronaldo deal be nyin gbaniun
(*Language mouth which one you see that Ronaldo deal with for now*)
Which language do you think Ronaldo speaks now
- d.) Ka Spanish Laliga o won la communicate be Spanish lea interpreting gajinya won
(*Even Spanish Laliga he has not communicate with Spanish before interpreting they did for him*)
Even in "Spanish Laliga" he has not been speaking Spanish, they do interpret for him
- e.) How many year Ronaldo jin gun England bo
(*How many years Ronaldo do inside England*)
How many year did Ronaldo stay in England

From the above, one will observed that in sports, people prefer highly the use of English language than Nupe. Also in most cases the code-switching takes places at the clause boundaries.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Family Relationship

In our finding when the family members are engaged in casual conversation, the interlarding of English and Nupe will be significantly noticed. When communication is between husband and wife a very few number choose the interlarded English and Nupe so also high number of people also interlarded the two languages when communicating with their children. When the conversation is with one's parent very few members will code– mix English with Nupe.

The Nupe language is preferred when the communication is between someone and his grandparents. Therefore it is observed that the choice of the English Language family conversation is significantly low.

Code mixing with respect to various Occupations

Language use is being considered at different occupational setting for a limited number of profession.

In a conversation between a teacher and a student, the use of English language is highly preferred, very few prefer the mixture of English and Nupe. This implies that a reasonable high percentage of students use English Language whenever they engage in a formal communication with their teachers. In a communication with a doctor and a patient the use of English prevails more. This implies that doctor as a professor warrant the use of English mainly, since the language can effectively and adequately capture the register of the profession even in an informal situation.

When conversing with a house servant very few opt for the use of English while a very significant high percentage preferred the mixture of English and Nupe and reasonable number Preferred Nupe only.

Conclusion

Following the results of the study, it is observed that this paper has presented empirical evidence to support the unavailability of code mixing and Code switching especially in non-formal intra-group speeches among educated Nupe-English bilinguals. As already explained, the mixing of codes is a process characterized by the transfer of element from a language (the second language) to the base language (mother tongue/first language). Unlike borrowing, which is generally limited to lexical units which are more or less well assimilated, code mixing transfers element of all linguistic levels and units ranging from a lexical item to a clause. Code mixing is seen as a strategy of a bilingual speaker, whereas borrowing is not, in the way that monolinguals can practice it in a language contact situation.

The study suggests that, often times, the phenomenon of Code switching and code mixing can, of course, express the seeming lack of the needed words in the base language, especially in a spontaneous speech situation where the speaker cannot immediately select the appropriate lexical item of the base language. In this direction, the mixing of codes as well as the switching of codes serves to compensate for this type of lackness. The phenomenon can as well be the bilinguals' specific code type which enables him to express attitudes, intentions, roles and also to help in identifying which group one belongs to.

Unlike code mixing which is intra-sentential, Code switching which is inter-sentential, does not raise any linguistic problem. This is because the switch from one language to the other does not appear to violate the syntactic rules of either language. Also, the sociolinguistic context in which Code switching takes place is paramount in determining the type of code to be used and

the speaker's inclination to the message and other fellow speakers. This paper has revealed the inevitability of the two phenomena under study in the non-formal conversational discourse of Nupe-English bilinguals. Bilinguals who are youth have also shown the tendency of being prone more to code mixing in the process of their daily conversations than bilinguals above the youthful age. This support the characteristic of the youths as being innovative as well as creative even at the linguistic level.

Banjo (1996) has noted that when two languages are in contact, the more dominant language must be expected to have a more conspicuous mark on the other language than vice-versa. For the present day Nigeria's bilinguals, English has taken dominance in terms of the degree of language mixing and switching, but in terms of the syntactic rules of the sentences formed, the Nupe language is in total control. However, it is important to note that the most obvious sociolinguistic effect of the language situation in the area studied is the emergence of a Nupe-English bilingual elite which is expanding in line with increase in educational opportunities.

Recommendations

In view of the contact between the English language and the Niger State's indigenous language (in which Nupe is a major one), the phenomena of code mixing and Code switching become imperative and unavoidable. The results of the study seem to suggest that when codes are consciously mixed, they are used as a device by the speaker to make himself better understood. The mixing of codes is a function of the audience, the topic and social level of conversation and the phenomena could be both conscious and subconscious.

The multilingual nature of Nigeria has some implications for national policy on indigenous language and how to maintain them. It is therefore suggested and recommended as follows:

- i. The English language and the indigenous languages like Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba & Nupe should be put on equal footing and their roles should be explicitly stated so as to ensure that indigenous languages are no more de-emphasized.
- ii. The indigenous languages should be developed, modernized and standardized so as to promote their cognitive frames.
- iii. The mixing and switching of codes should be seen as rich and veritable communicative methods because of their roles in the process of communications.

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