By ‘code alternation’ in this paper, we mean both ‘mixing’ and ‘switching’ of codes. Code alternation is a common phenomenon in sociolinguistics, it is the inevitable consequence of bilingualism/multilingualism. Much research attention has been devoted to this concept since its first appearance in 1971, (at least with regard to its occurrence in normal language use in general). However, little attention has been devoted to it as a common feature in music in Nigeria, especially, gospel music. This research endeavour is our attempt to fill this obvious lacuna. Five gospel artistes (two males, three females) have been purposively selected for analysis in this paper. Myers Scotton’s Matrix Language Frame (MLF), whose main proposal is that code-mixing has a dominant language called Matrix Language (ML) and a subordinate language, called Embedded Language (EL) form the theoretical framework employed for the research. One feature that is common to the artistes whose works are selected is the fact that they are all bilingual in Yoruba and English. They all have Yoruba as their mother tongue and English as their second language. Of the twenty tracks selected for analysis, 13 have the Yoruba language as the Matrix Language, while the remaining seven have the English language as the matrix language. As for the main reason why gospel artistes code-mix in their songs, it is obvious that they code-mix because majority of their fans are youths, at least over 60%. Knowing fully well that code-mixing is a common feature among the youths, these gospel artistes resort to this phenomenon to gain acceptability among them. Code-mixing is fast becoming a significant practice in the Nigerian music industry (especially gospel and hip-hop genres).

Keywords: Code-mixing, Gospel music, Language use, Matrix language framework, Myers-Scotton


Preamble

A tún tí ríre
E wá báwa yò
E gbọ new dimension ní gospel music.
We have witnessed a good thing
Come and rejoice with us
Listen to the new dimension in gospel music.
Yinka Ayefele (2006)
INTRODUCTION

By code in this paper, we refer to any system that can be employed by two or more people for communication. It does not necessarily mean language alone, it may be a dialect, a style or register. In actual sense, nobody is monocodal. Sociolinguists use the term code to denote any identifiable speech variety, including both a particular language and a particular variety of language. The term code-mixing was first introduced in West Africa by Ansre (1971). He referred to it as ‘inserting varying chunks of English into the performance of the West African languages. Simply put, it is the mixture of two or more languages within a single sentence. It comprises various linguistic units, such as affixes, words, phrases and clauses from two distinct grammatical systems within sentence and speech events. It is the alternation between two or more languages within the same sentence. According to Banjo (1983), it may be defined as a speech act in which utterances contain elements of language ‘A’ and ‘B’.

Code switching on the other hand, is like a twin sister of code-mixing. Gumpers (1982) defines it as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passage of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. Most frequently, the alteration takes the form of two subsequent sentences as when a speaker uses a second language either to reiterate his message or to reply someone’s statement. The difference between code-mixing and code-switching is that in the former, two languages or two dialects of the same language are mixed together within sentence boundary, that is within a single sentence, whereas, in the latter, a complete sentence is made in one language while another sentence is made in another language. In other words, code-mixing is intrasentential while code-switching is intersentential (Oluwadodo, 2015). Dada (2006:63) observes as follows:

Code-switching is a universal Linguistic phenomenon. It has been observed in the language behaviour of Filipino-English bilinguals of Philippines (Lande et al., 1979); of Malteso-English bilinguals in Maine (Schweda, 1980); of Spanish-English bilinguals of the United States of America (Lipski, 1982); of Punjabi Sikh community, Malaysians who use a mixed code that consists of three languages (David et al., 2003). In Nigeria, code-switching is evident in the speech of the various communities in the country. For instance, Nwadike (1981), Brann (1978), Ahukanna (1990) among others, all observed this phenomenon in the language behaviour of Igbo-English bilinguals, while Banjo (1996) and Lamidi (2003) among others worked on code-switching in the speech behaviour of Yorùbá-English bilinguals.

For more information on code alternation, see Yusuf (2017) and Sabiu (2017).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A number of linguistic phenomena which characterise speech communities in Nigeria can be traced to language contact. One of such phenomena which has been the subject of research and comments by linguists is code-mixing and switching. However, most of these research works only concentrate on natural, normal, day to day speech, without paying attention to the occurrence of these phenomena in songs, especially the gospel genre. This study therefore aims at examining the occurrence of code-mixing in gospel songs of bilingual gospel artistes.

METHODOLOGY


THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on Myers-Scotton’s Matrix Language Frame (MLF). MLF is one of the theories that explain the grammatical field of code mixing and switching. Its basic proposal is that code mixing has a dominant language called Matrix Language and a subordinate language called an Embedded Language (EL). The theory was elaborated by Myers-Scotton in a series of articles and in her books (1993b) and (2002). In Gardner Chloros (2009:8) words, the matrix language is:

A grammatical template which can usually be identified with a particular language.

Myer-Scotton (1993a&b) developed certain principles to highlight how to distinguish between the ML and the EL. First, the ML determines all the grammatical structures of the code-mixed sentence. Second, it highlights the asymmetry of the relationship between the matrix language and the embedded language. Third, the ML supplies the system morphemes, whereas the EL supplies the content morphemes.

In 2006, Myers-Scotton evolved the discourse oriented
criteria to distinguish between the ML and EL. The language of conversation in the code-switched sentence is the Matrix Language. The use of statistical interpretation is the second discourse oriented criteria and it states that the language with more morphemes is the Matrix Language. See Myers-Scotton (2002:194-196) for a detailed discussion on the occurrence of morphemes in this model. She observes further that in psycholinguistic terms, ML is defined as the language most activated for the speaker. In Muysken’s words,

Myers-Scotton employed Chomsky’s projection principle of his x-bar theory in Chomsky (1986), which states that the Matrix Language is the one where each governing element (verb, preposition and auxiliary) creates a maximal projection; so, all the functional constituents must be from the Matrix Language. Finally, the MLF contains constraints known as Embedded Language Islands and they highlight the fact that code-switching is not a random phenomenon, but a structured one. For more information on this theory, see Lamidi (2003).

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data for this research are presented in a tabular form as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>No of Morphemes</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ḣèlè tọ́ ŋèlè ní āgbáké, terrorist kó, warning ní. È jé ká examine ara wa, thorough examination.</td>
<td>Yorùbá</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ML – 13 EL – 5 Total – 18 morphemes.</td>
<td>Item 1 has 18 morphemes, 13 of which are Yorùbá, while 5 are English. Yorùbá is therefore the ML, while English is the EL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ori tí mo gbé wáyé kó ní dààmú mi, mo maa rí bá tí sê, mo maa rónà gbégbá láyé. Màá tún gba glory tuntun.</td>
<td>Yorùbá</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ML – 27 EL – 1 Total – 28 morphemes.</td>
<td>Item 2 has 28 morphemes, 27 of which are Yorùbá, while only 1 is English. Yorùbá is therefore the ML while English is the EL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mówó wá Mówó wá. Mówó wá. Congratulation! Mówó wá. Bring your hand (3ce) Congratulation Bring your hand (3ce)</td>
<td>Yorùbá</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ML –12 morphemes EL – 1 morpheme. Total – 13</td>
<td>Item 3 has 13 morphemes, 12 of which are Yorùbá while only 1 is English. Yorùbá is the ML while English is the EL.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1: continues

**Title of song: Ogo to Unique**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yorùbá</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Help me to testify, That Jesus is the only King, All the world testify, That Jesus only is the King.</td>
<td>Yorùbá</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Item 4 has 17 morphemes, 15 of which are Yorùbá, while 2 are English. Yorùbá is therefore the ML, while English is the EL.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>This year, I will use a new car, Brand new one I will also travel abroad, You will not mourn with me, My labours will be greatly blessed.</td>
<td>Yorùbá</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Item 5 has 27 morphemes, 25 of which are Yorùbá while 2 are Nigerian Pidgin. Yorùbá is therefore the ML, while English is the EL. The word mọ is considered to be Yorùbá. It has been borrowed and nativised. Tear rubber appears to be Nigerian Pidgin.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The world has come to an end. Christians do not sleep Let us remember our home This world amounts to nothing It is vanity upon vanity.</td>
<td>Yorùbá</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Item 6 has 26 morphemes, 22 of which are Yorùbá, while only 4 are English. Yorùbá is therefore the Matrix Language, while English is the embedded language.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I am expressing my opinion I am emphasising it that Jesus is the way There is no other way through which you can obtain salvation Through which you can get to heaven There is no other way.</td>
<td>Yorùbá</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Item 7 has 43 morphemes, 38 of which are English, while only 5 are Yorùbá. Therefore, Yorùbá is the Matrix Language, while English is the Embedded Language.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1: continues

**Title of song: Ogo to Unique**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Yoruba</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Eh, Angels are singing You are worthy o Lord.</td>
<td>Angels are singing You are worthy o Lord.</td>
<td>ML – 11</td>
<td>EL – 6</td>
<td>Total – 17</td>
<td>Item 8 has 17 morphemes, 11 of which are English, while only 6 are Yoruba. English is therefore the Matrix Language while Yoruba is the Embedded Language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Alright, we lift your name higher We lift your name higher. We lift your name higher. We lift you up We worship you Higher.</td>
<td>We lift your name higher. A gbé ṣókè A júbà ṣe Higher. Alright, we lift your name, higher We lift your name higher We lift you up We worship you Higher.</td>
<td>ML – 12</td>
<td>EL – 9</td>
<td>Total – 21</td>
<td>Item 9 has 21 morphemes, 12 of which are English while 9 are Yoruba. English therefore is the Matrix Language, while Yoruba is the Embedded Language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Gospel Artiste – Lânre Tèrìba

**Title of Song: New Chapter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>No of Morphemes</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Má fówó flash mi o Baba Má fọmọ flash mi o làyé Gbogbo àdèhùn ayò tó bá mi se Àwọn iléri ayò tó bá mi dá Má jé ó wo voice mail. Lódò rẹ Baba.</td>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ML – 35</td>
<td>EL – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Olórun mi sí i Òyá sí i Olórun mi sí new chapter Ninú iwé ayó My God open it It is time, open it My God, open a new chapter In the record of joy.</td>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ML – 14</td>
<td>EL – 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Song Title</td>
<td>Matrix Language</td>
<td>Embedded Language</td>
<td>Matrix Language Morphemes</td>
<td>Embedded Language Morphemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 12.  | From the depth of my heart Lèmi ti ń ṣọrunọ ẹ.  
From the bottom of my heart I am glorifying you Father. | English | Yorùbá | ML – 7 | EL – 5 | Total – 12 |
| 13.  | Bàbá show me the way  
Way to my success  
E ọ rí Nelson Mandela  
From prison to president  
Tètè show me the way  
Olùrùn mi jẹkẹ mi lalùyọ.  
Father, show me the way.  
Father, show me the way.  
Can you see Nelson Mandela  
From prison to presidency  
Quickly show me the way  
Let me have a breakthrough. | English | Yorùbá | ML – 20 | EL – 13 | Total – 33 |
| 14.  | Bàbá, I praise your name  
You are worthy of praise.  
Father, I praise your name You are worthy of praise. | English | Yorùbá | ML – 9 | EL – 1 | Total – 10 |
| 15.  | Yahoozee, ijó yá  
Yahoozee, ijó yá  
Yahoozee, ijó yá  
Come and see  
Ará e wá, e wá w’ohun tí Bàbáṣe  
Lord, I know is full of mystery  
I know you are the king  
And no one shall be like you.  
Yahoozee, let us dance  
Yahoozee, let us dance  
Yahoozee, let us dance  
Comrades, come and see what the Father has done.  
Lord, I know is full of mystery  
I know you are the king  
And no one shall be like you. | English | Yorùbá | ML – 19 | EL – 16 | Total – 35 |

Item 12 has 13 morphemes, 7 of which are English and 6 are Yorùbá. English is therefore the Matrix Language, while Yorùbá is the Embedded Language.

Item 13 has 33 morphemes, 20 of which are English, while 13 are Yorùbá. English is therefore the Matrix Language, while Yorùbá is the Embedded Language.

Item 14 has 10 morphemes, 9 of which are English, while only 1 is Yorùbá. English is therefore the Matrix Language, while Yorùbá is the Embedded Language.

Item 15 has 35 morphemes, 19 of which are English, while 11 are Yorùbá. English is therefore the Matrix Language, while Yorùbá is the Embedded Language. The word Yahoozee is an internet register, so it is treated as an English word.
### Table 3: Gospel Artiste – Yinka Ayefele

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>No of Morphemes</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>This is the new dimension in our song. I can use gospel music to sing tungi o. This is the new dimension I am saying.</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>ML – 30 EL – 4 Total – 34</td>
<td>Item 16 above has 34 morphemes, 30 of which are English, while only 4 are Yoruba. This shows that the Matrix Language is English, while the embedded language is Yoruba.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Eyiin temi, se e ni listen si. Eyiin temi, se e ni gbudun mi daadaa. Ko Olorun ma panai ile Kari re barase. My fans, are you listening to it? My fans, are you enjoying me very well? God will not quench our love. We shall celebrate good things together.</td>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ML – 25 EL – 1 Total – 26</td>
<td>Item 17 has 26 morphemes, 25 of which are Yoruba, while only 1 is English. This shows that Yoruba is the Matrix Language, while English is the Embedded Language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Iyin a topé fun Jah Jehovah. Bi mo ba lâhôn to po to one thousand. Ko ti e ti lâti yin o. Akabá ighéga ti mo wa yií ni next level.</td>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ML – 26 EL – 6 Total – 2</td>
<td>Item 18 has 32 morphemes, 26 of which are Yoruba, while only 6 are English. This shows that Yoruba Language is the Matrix Language, while English is the Embedded Language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Gospel Artiste – Esther Igbekele

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>No of Morphemes</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Omo Olorun, are you ready O, ká jumọ gbé Jésù ga, Oba ni. Children of God Are you ready Let us collectively lift up Jesus He is King.</td>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ML – 10 EL – 3 Total – 13</td>
<td>Item 19 has 13 morphemes, 10 of which are Yoruba, while only 3 are English. This suggests that Yoruba is the Matrix Language, while English is the Embedded Language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Gospel Artiste – Bòsè Eboda Gbádébò
Title of Song: Òrò Mi Tòpé

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>No of Morphemes</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Omo Òlórùn, kí ní yòó pa òtá rè? Hypertension. Gbogbo òtá rògbá yí mi ká Òlórùn fún wònlè ogun ayé mi mò.</td>
<td>Yorùbá</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ML – 24, EL – 1, Total – 25</td>
<td>Item 20 has 25 morphemes, 24 of which are Yorùbá while only 1 is English. Yorùbá is therefore the Matrix Language while English is the Embedded Language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CLOSING REMARKS ON FINDINGS

A careful look at the twenty tracks analysed above shows that 13 of them have Yorùbá as the Matrix Language and 7 of them have English as the Matrix Language. This is not surprising, since Yorùbá is the dominant language of the gospel artists selected. English is their second language. So they demonstrated a high level of language loyalty to their mother tongue (Yorùbá). At the same time, they are not unmindful of the importance of English in Nigeria. It is our official language, the language of government business. It is the language of education, science and technology. It is the language of judiciary, commerce and the media. It is a restricted lingua franca that makes communication possible among the over 450 ethnic groups that constitute Nigeria. We use the word ‘restricted’ because, its role as a lingua franca is somehow limited. Limited in the sense that it only makes effective communication possible among the well-educated Nigerians. In summary, it is the language of upward mobility in the country, so, “if you want to get ahead in Nigeria, get an English head.” All these are the motivating factors behind the artistes’ use of English in their songs. In spite of all these, there is hope for the survival of Yorùbá, and by implication, our indigenous languages in the country, since, to some extent, there is evidence of language maintenance.

CONCLUSION

No doubt, bilingualism will remain a feature of human linguistic behaviour, for as long as there is diversity of human languages in the world. It does not appear that the protagonists of Esperanto and other so-called culture-free languages will succeed in foisting a single language on Nigeria as a nation. As an instrument of linguistic accommodation, English in Nigeria is used with varying degrees of competence to facilitate communication between different national ethnic and socio-cultural groups within the country. It allows the more versatile speakers the flexibility of switching from formal to the informal modes of speech and vice-versa without violating the traditional code of conduct.

Code alternation has spread its tentacles to the field of music and Nigerian musicians of different genres now exhibit it in their songs. This affords them the opportunity of reaching a wider audience, especially among the Christian youths who constitute a larger percentage of their fans.

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The artistes and their works are:


Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.


