

Full Length Research

Code Alternation in Nigerian Gospel Music: A Matrix Language Frame Analysis

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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

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Preamble

A tún tí ríre

È wá báwa yò

È 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 (Oluwadoro, 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 Maltese-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

The researcher selected the works of five gospel artistes, two males and three females, who are bilingual in Yorùbá and English. These artistes and their works are: (1) Bùkólá Akinadé (a.k.a. Şewẹleş Jészù) (2004) 'Ògó tó Unique'. (2) Esther Igbékèlé (2005) 'Divine Upliftment' (3) Bòşè Eboda Gbádébò (2005) 'Òrò mi Tópé' (4) Yínká Ayéfélé (2006) 'Next Level'. (5) Lánre Tẹrība (A.K.A. Atórìşẹ) (2007) 'New Chapter'.

The researcher listened attentively to these records and extracted 20 tracks in which code alternation occurs. These tracks were transcribed for analysis. In analysing the data, the researcher employed Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame (MLF). See details of how this approach works under the theoretical framework below.

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 1: Gospel Artiste – Bukola Akinade
Title of song: Ogo to Unique

SN	Songs	ML	EL	No of Morphemes	Discussion
1.	Ìṣẹ̀lẹ̀ tó n ṣẹ̀lẹ̀ ní àgbáyé, <u>terrorist kó, warning</u> ni. Ẹ̀ jẹ̀ ká <u>examine</u> ara wa, <u>thorough examination</u> . The incidents that are happening in the world are not terrorism, but warning. Let us examine ourselves, thorough examination.	Yorùbá	English	ML – 13 EL – 5 Total – 18 morphemes.	Item 1 has 18 morphemes, 13 of which are Yorùbá, while 5 are English. Yorùbá is therefore the ML, while English is the EL.
2.	Orí tí mo gbé wáyé kò ní dààmú mi, mo máa rí bá tí ṣẹ̀, mo máa rónà gbégbà láyé. Màá tún gba <u>glory</u> tuntun. I have not chosen bad luck, I will be successful, I will do well, in this world. I will receive new glory.	Yorùbá	English	ML – 27 EL – 1 Total – 28	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.
3.	Mówó wá. Mówó wá. Mówó wá. <u>Congratulation!</u> Mówó wá. Bring your hand (3ce) Congratulation Bring your hand (3ce)	Yorùbá	English	ML – 12 EL – 1 Total – 13	Item 3 has 13 morphemes, 12 of which are Yorùbá while only 1 is English. Yorùbá is the ML while English is the EL.

Table 1: continues
Title of song: Ogo to Unique

4.	<p>È bámi <u>testify</u> o, pé Jèsù nìkan l'Ọba Gbogbo ayé, ẹ <u>testify</u> sí Pé Jèsù nìkan l'Ọba.</p>	Yorùbá	English	ML – 17 EL – 2 Total – 19	Item 4 has 17 morphemes, 15 of which are Yorùbá, while 2 are English. Yorùbá is therefore the ML, while English is the EL.
	<p>Help me to testify, That Jesus is the only King, All the world testify, That Jesus only is the King.</p>				
5.	<p>Nínú ọdún èyí, èmi á lo mọ̀tò tuntun <u>Tear rubber</u> Màá tún lọ sí ilú ọba, È ò ní bá mi sọkún Isẹ mi á lérè rẹpẹtẹ</p>	Yorùbá	NP	ML – 25 EL – 2 Total – 27	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 mọ̀tò is considered to be Yorùbá. It has
	<p>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.</p>				
6.	<p>Ọpin ayé ti dé tán <u>Christian</u> ẹ má sùn lọ È jẹ ká máa rántí ilé Ayé ò jẹ nńkan kan <u>Vanity upon vanity</u> ni.</p>	Yorùbá	English	ML – 22 EL – 4 Total – 26	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.
	<p>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.</p>				
7.	<p>Mò n sọ tẹmi Mo dẹ n tẹnu mọ wí pé <u>Jesus is the way</u> Kò sọ̀nà mǐràn mọ, Tóo lẹ gbà ní <u>salvation</u> Kò sọ̀nà mǐràn mọ Tó o lẹ gbà délé ológo Kò sọ̀nà mǐràn mọ.</p>	Yorùbá	English	ML – 38 EL – 5 Total – 43	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.
	<p>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.</p>				

Table 1: continues
Title of song: Ogo to Unique

8.	<p>Èè, <u>Angels are singing</u> Iwọ ni ògo yẹ <u>Angels are singing</u> You are worthy o Lord.</p>	English	Yorùbá	ML – 11 EL – 6 Total – 17	Item 8 has 17 morphemes, 11 of which are English, while only 6 are Yorùbá. English is therefore the Matrix Language while Yorùbá is the Embedded Language.
	<p>Eh, Angels are singing You are worthy o Lord Angels are singing You are worthy o Lord.</p>				
9.	<p><u>Alright, we lift your name higher</u> <u>We lift your name higher,</u> A gbé ọ sókè A júbà rẹ o <u>Higher.</u></p>	English	Yorùbá	ML – 12 EL – 9 Total = 21	Item 9 has 21 morphemes, 12 of which are English while 9 are Yorùbá. English therefore is the Matrix Language, while Yorùbá is the Embedded Language.
	<p>Alright, we lift your name, higher We lift your name higher We lift you up We worship you Higher.</p>				

Table 2: Gospel Artiste – Lánre Tẹríba
Title of Song: New Chapter

SN	Songs	ML	EL	No of Morphemes	Discussion
10.	<p>Má fowó <u>flash</u> mi o Baba Má fọmọ <u>flash</u> mi o láyé Gbogbo àdéhùn ayọ tó bá mi ẹ Àwọn ilérí ayọ tó bá mi dá Má jẹ ó wọ <u>voice mail</u>. Lódò rẹ Baba.</p>	Yorùbá	English	ML – 35 EL – 4 Total – 39	Item 10 has 39 morphemes, 35 of which are Yorùbá, while 4 are English. Yorùbá is therefore the ML, while English is the EL. The expressions ‘flash’ and ‘voice mail’ are telecom’s registers.
	<p>Do not flash me with money Do not flash me with children All the good promises you made to me Do not allow them to fail.</p>				
11.	<p>Ọlórún mi sí i Óyá sí i Ọlórún mi sí <u>new chapter</u> Nínú iwé ayọ</p>	Yorùbá	English	ML – 14 EL – 2 Total – 16	Item 11 has 16 morphemes, 14 of which are Yorùbá, while 2 are English. Yorùbá is therefore the ML while English is the EL.
	<p>My God open it It is time, open it My God, open a new chapter In the record of joy.</p>				

Table 2: continues
Title of Song: New Chapter

12.	From the depth of my heart <u>Lèmi ti ñ glóry ẹ Baba.</u> From the bottom of my heart I am glorifying you Father.	English	Yorùbá	ML – 7 EL – 5 Total – 12	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.
13.	Bàbá <u>show me the way</u> Bàbá <u>show me the way.</u> <u>Way to my success</u> È ò rí Nelson Mandela <u>From prison to president</u> <u>Tètè show me the way</u> <u>Ọlórún mi jéké mi làlùyo.</u> 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	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.
14.	Bàbá, I <u>praise your name</u> <u>You are worthy of praise.</u> Father, I praise your name You are worthy of praise.	English	Yorùbá	ML – 9 EL – 1 Total – 10	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.
15.	Yahoozee, ijó yá Yahoozee, ijó yá Yahoozee, ijó yá Come and see Ará ẹ wá, ẹ wá w'ohun tí Bàbá ẹ 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 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 Ayéfélé
Title of Song: Next Level

SN	Songs	ML	EL	No of Morphemes	Discussion
16.	This is the new dimension in our song I can use gospel music to sing t̀̀ngbá o I can use gospel music to sing f̀̀j̀i o. This is the new dimension I am saying.	English	Yorùbá	ML – 30 EL – 4 Total – 34	Item 16 above has 34 morphemes, 30 of which are English, while only 4 are Yorùbá. This shows that the Matrix Language is English, while the embedded language is Yorùbá.
17.	Èyin t̀̀mi, s̀̀e ẹ̀ ń <u>listen</u> sí Èyin t̀̀mi, s̀̀e ẹ̀ ń gbádùn mi dáadáa. K'Ọlórun má paná ifẹ́ Kárí re bára s̀̀e. 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.	Yorùbá	English	ML – 25 EL – 1 Total – 26	Item 17 has 26 morphemes, 25 of which are Yorùbá, while only 1 is English. This shows that Yorùba is the Matrix Language, while English is the Embedded Language.
18.	Ìyin à t̀̀pẹ́ f̀̀n Jah Jehovah. Bí mo bá láhọ̀n t̀̀o p̀̀o t̀̀o <u>one thousand</u> . Kò tiẹ́ t̀̀o láti yìn ọ́ Àkàbà ìgbéga tí mo wà yíi ni next level.	Yorùbá	English	ML – 26 EL – 6 Total – 2	Item 18 has 32 morphemes, 26 of which are Yorùbá, while only 6 are English. This shows that Yorùba Language is the Matrix Language, while English is the Embedded Language.

Table 4: Gospel Artiste – Esther Igbẹ̀kẹ̀le
Title of Song: Divine Upliftment

SN	Songs	ML	EL	No of Morphemes	Discussion
19.	Ọmọ Ọlórun, <u>are you ready</u> O, ká j̀̀m̀o gbé Jésù ga, Ọba ni Children of God Are you ready Let us collectively lift up Jesus He is King.	Yorùbá	English	ML – 10 EL – 3 Total – 13	Item 19 has 13 morphemes, 10 of which are Yorùbá, while only 3 are English. This suggests that Yorùbá is the Matrix Language, while English is the Embedded Language.

Table 5: Gospel Artiste – Bòsè Eboda Gbádébò
Title of Song: Ọ̀rọ̀ Mí Tọ̀pẹ̀

SN	Songs	ML	EL	No of Morphemes	Discussion
20.	<p>Ọ̀mọ Ọ̀lọ̀run, kí ni yóò pa ọ̀tá rẹ? Hypertension.</p> <p>Gbogbo ọ̀tá tó rọ̀gbà yí mi ká Ọ̀lọ̀run fi wọn palẹ̀ ogun ayé mi mọ.</p>	Yorùbá	English	<p>ML – 24</p> <p>EL – 1</p> <p>Total – 25</p>	<p>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.</p>
	<p>Children of God, what will kill your enemy? Hypertension. All the enemies that surround me. Use them to clear all my problems away.</p>				

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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