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## Code-Switching in Yoruba Newspapers as A Reflection of The Linguistic Half-Caste Mode in Nigerian Journalism

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**Abstract:** This paper examines code-switching as a language style of Yoruba newspapers, within the larger context of the day-to-day speech mannerisms of Nigerians. This linguistic mode is a result of culture mix and has encroached on the indigenous languages of the peoples, and the style (of the writings) of indigenous language media. The paper analyses the texts of *Alaroye* newspaper to demonstrate the phenomenon. Questions raised concerned the purpose of code-switching, as well as its effects on Yoruba language and influence on respondents' interest in reading *Alaroye*. Survey and content analysis were the research designs used, while purposive sampling was preferred for the selection of seventy-five respondents to the questionnaire and six who were interviewed. Findings show that code-switching simplifies, aids comprehension, increases interest in indigenous language newspapers and accommodates the bilingualism of readers. Respondents agree that code-switching contributes to the linguistic half-caste mode of journalism and society.

**Keywords:** Code-switching, Yoruba, Alaroye, Indigenous language, newspapers

### Introduction

Code-mixing or switching in language usage is prevalent in diverse sectors of society influenced by proficiency, context, and membership of specific institutions. The application of mixed languages in daily conversations has become a common linguistic phenomenon among bilingual/multilingual communities (Bertele 2011, Hamed, Elmahdy and Abdennadder, 2017). A code, according to Robinson & Davidson (1996), is "a system of words, letters or symbols, used in place of those intended for secrecy's or brevity's sake". Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) notes that a code is a rule of conveying a piece of information into another form of representation, not necessarily of the same sort. Nigeria as a country has over 500 languages across the thirty-six states of the federation. (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2019).

### Code-Switching, Code-Mixing and Language Borrowing as Linguistic Half Caste Mode: A Conceptual Clarification

One technique used in bilingual communities is code-switching in which two languages are used within a sentence often occurs between multilingual speakers. Ayeomoni (2006:93) notes that:

*code-mixing is the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes) words (unbound morphemes) phrases and clauses from a co-operative activity where the participants to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand.*

The two concepts occur when two languages are used at the same time in one clause or utterance (Mabule, 2015, Alvanodi, 2018. Akhtar, Khan & Muhammed, (2016, Stelle and Yakpo, 2019) note that code-mixing and code-switching are sometimes used interchangeably. However, Fakete (2015), see CS as inter-sentential and CM as intra-sentential. Neetika, Kaur, and Rani (2017: 592) in differentiating both concepts note that “Code Switching means starting with one language and then switching onto other”, while “Code Mixing means using two languages in an utterance or mixing words of two languages. In Intra-Utterance Code Mixing, mixing takes place in a single sentence as the speaker is proficient in both languages”.

The term "code-switching" is reserved for the phenomenon of changing an entire language in the middle of an utterance" (Kractch and Klein, 2014:14). Akhtar, et al (2016) opine that code-mixing and code-switching are rule-governed phenomena triggered by socio-cultural and psychological motivations. Jisa (2000) adds that the outcomes of language mixing, such as the emergence of mixed languages are a linguistic phenomenon embedded in a social context.

Zhou and Well (2007) opine that bilingual can act in their natural language and their second language and then switch between the two languages. Therefore, code-mixing in the mass media can be effective when readers are bilingual as they would be able to understand the messages. Studies of the nature, extent and practice of codeswitching in educational setting, as well as its syntax and pragmatics abound (Ahmad, 2009; (Kractch and Klein, 2014 Chowdbury, 2012; Kustati, 2014). However, studies that combine contents of print media with audience's perception of codeswitching are scanty though such studies offer important potential for a more robust understanding of the codeswitching phenomenon.

### **Reasons for Code Switching**

Scholars including Bamgbose (1971), Cheng and Butler (1989) cited in Ayemoni (2006) note that language contacts are responsible for code-mixing or switching among societies. Other reasons are status, integrity, self-pride, westernization, professionalism and social advancement (Esen, 2019). Furthermore, speakers use code-switching to indicate nearness to a dialect, language or social group. It serves for continuity rather than interference in language and increases the number of people who make meaning from a communication text.

The effects include undermining traditional values and innovations in the structure of one of the languages used in code-mixing. It may also result in the domination of one language by another. Therefore, Gullberg and Couto (2016:885) opine that “Code-mixing (CM) is a striking example of how two languages are active simultaneously in bilingual production. From the analysis of literature on code switching, and code mixing, these researchers are of the view that the two concepts are used interchangeably by various authors to refer to a situation that a speaker uses two languages at the same time in one clause or utterance.

In Nigeria, English has taken dominant position in all spheres. Therefore, indigenous language speakers find themselves borrowing or switching from indigenous languages to English. The idea of linguistic half-caste mode invariably birthed from the mixture of a foreign language with an indigenous language. In the publication of *Alaroye*, newspaper, a form of hybridization of the Yoruba language, is adapted in writing. This study, therefore, highlights the phenomenon through identifying some use of code-switching in *Alaroye* newspaper, extent and effect of this linguistic half caste mode on audience understanding of the newspaper content.

### **History of Alaroye Newspaper**

The word *Alaroye* in the Yoruba language literally means the explainer. *Alaroye* is a weekly newspaper packaged as a tabloid and published by the World Press Information Agent Limited in Nigeria. Its first edition was published in May 1985 by Alao Musa Adebayo, He suspended the publication of *Alaroye* in October 1985, after only four editions. Other efforts at resuscitating the newspaper were in 1990 and 1994 but were short-lived because of financial crunch (Vanguard, 2011). *Alaroye* returned to the newsstand in 1996 during the military regime of General Sani Abacha, when agitations for the actualization of June 12, 1993, election victory were at their peak. Chief M.K.O Abiola, a Yoruba indigene was the acclaimed winner of the June 12, 1993, presidential poll in Nigeria which was annulled by the self-styled military dictator General Ibrahim Babangida.

According to the publisher, Alao Adedayo, the newspaper aims to sustain the reading and speaking of the Yoruba language and to be the voice of the Yoruba. Fasan (2018:855) citing Nolte (2007) explains that *Alaroye* “drew on the tradition of enlightenment and cultural assertion within Yoruba cultural nationalism recentre the Yoruba nation against the onslaught of the Abacha dictatorship”.

*Alaroye* attracts readership from various segments of the society because of its bold, in-depth reportage, investigative journalism and uncompromising reports on government and other segments of the society (Adedinwa,2000).Salawu (2004), notes that indigenous language newspapers such as *Alaroye* face diverse challenges to break even and continue publication. These include attitude of Yoruba elites to reading newspapers published in the language.Other problems include dwindling reading culture, particularly of print materials in favour of electronic newspapers, poor purchasing power of readers and irregular advertisement .

Oso (2006), cited in Odebiyi (2014) explains that indigenous language newspapers such as *Alaroye* have not sustained readers and advertisements because:

*...the commercialization of the press led to the decline and /or death of indigenous language newspapers. The fact that newspapers are commercial ventures means that, for instance they would be urban-based and oriented in their elitist orientation. The language of communication is English, the language of the urban elite, the main target of advertisers*

It is important that indigenous language newspapers such as *Alaroye*, that are private sector driven, strive to create innovation that would attract advertisers such as focusing on products that are heavily subscribed by the indigenous language speakers, many of whom also belong to the so-called elite class.

### Theoretical Framework

Holmes’s theory of code-switching is anchored on the argument that speakers switch from one code to another, mainly as a signal of group membership and shared ethnicity. Suryawati (1993), explains that code-switching is often motivated by identity and relationship among participants. These include solidarity and social dimensions in terms of interpersonal relationship, social status and the type of relationship between people.

The identifier of metaphorical code-switching is the bilingual skill of the speaker switching codes that enable him to move from one word in a language to another in another language (Mabule, 2015, Esen, 2019).

### Research Methodology

Survey and content analysis were selected as methods to gather data for this study. The newspaper was selected because it is the most widely read indigenous language newspaper in the Southwest of Nigeria (Fasan, 2018). These researchers were of the view that these two methods would provide adequate data that would help reach conclusions that generalizable. Nwosu (1996) notes that analysing the quality the of coverage of an event is as vital as analysing the quantity of coverage. It helps to give a balanced representation of the coverage of reports in the mass media. Frey, Botan, Friedman, and Gary (1991) add that using qualitative and quantitative methods provide a way of evaluating the accuracy of findings.

### Research Findings

Table 1. Extent to which Codemixing Affects Respondents’ Understanding of Indigenous Newspapers

Options	Frequency	Percent
Very Great Extent	18	28.6%
Great Extent	26	41.3%
Little Extent	11	17.5%

Very Little Extent	3	4.8%
No Extent	5	7.9%
Total	63	100.0%

The findings from the questionnaire revealed that majority of respondents were of the view that code-mixing greatly affects the extent to which they understand the content of indigenous language newspapers. This finding might result from the bilingual or multi-lingual environment in which the newspapers publish. For instance, *Alaroye* newspaper is read by indigenous Yoruba language speakers who are also proficient in the use of English. The editors that were interviewed agreed that code-mixing affects the readers' comprehension of the content of indigenous language newspapers. They noted that the use of code-mixing allowed readers to comprehend better because most of them do not understand the deeper structure of Yoruba language syntax. Similarly, another respondent was of the view that code-mixing enhances the readers ability to make meaning of the newspaper content.

Table 2. Effects of Code Mixing on Understanding of Content in Indigenous Newspapers

Options	Frequency	Percent
Hinders comprehension	8	12.7%
Enhances comprehension	39	61.9%
Neutral effect	4	6.3%
Minor effect	2	3.2%
Entertainment	4	6.3%
Others	6	9.5
Total	63	100.0%

Findings from Table 2 show that the majority of the respondents agree that code-switching or code-mixing enhances comprehension of the content of media messages. This was represented by 61.9% of the respondents. A fewer number of respondents were of the view that it hinders comprehension and is used for entertainment. Some of the editors who were interviewed agreed also that the practice helps the readers to comprehend the content of media messages. One of the interviewees Mr. Bayo Akiyefa a producer and presenter in an indigenous language radio station Lagelu F.M Ibadan explained that code-mixing in indigenous language newspapers or broadcast programmes is used to draw the attention of the readers, invariably aiding their ability to understand the content.

Table 3. The essence of Code-Switching in Indigenous Newspapers

Options	Frequency	Percent
Comprehension	25	39.7%
Language prominence	8	12.7%
Entertainment	5	7.9%
Language Simplification	20	31.7%
	5	7.9%

Gain Readers Attention and Followership		
Total	63	100.0%

Respondents agreed that the essence of the practice is to enhance comprehension as well as simplification of language. These were the views of 71% of the respondents (comprehension 39.7 and language simplification 31.7%). The publisher of *Alaroye*; Adedayo Alao, added that the newspaper used code mixing because it is allowed in Yoruba writing, this he described as borrowed language. He noted that “there are some words you use because people understand them easily. For example, *miliki* (milk). It is easier than calling it *Iyefun wara* which is the proper Yoruba name for it”. It is apparent the environment of bilingualism or multilingualism also influences the editors and publisher of *Alaroye* in using codemixing. These findings were supported by Fasan (2018:856) when he stated that:

*In addition to its oral written style, this simplification takes the triple form of a deliberate conversational tone, borrowings from the English language, and minimal use of tone marks – all of which have resulted in a generalized tabloidization of the newspaper and a simplification or ‘dumbing down’ of the standard Yoruba language in which mainstream publications such as Alaroye ought to be written*

According to findings, 33% of the respondents revealed that code-mixing does not have any effect on their usage of Yoruba, 12% noted that the practice enhances good expression while 27% noted that code-mixing leads to the expression of bad language skills.

Findings also showed that 55.6% of the respondents agree that the use of code-switching in indigenous language newspapers influences their reading interest.

Interviewees agreed that code-mixing increases the interest of readers in indigenous language newspapers because it enables them to replace difficult Yoruba words with simpler English words. They added that code-mixing allows readers or listeners to understand and make meaning from mass media content, due to the use of code from English language to simplify uncommon Yoruba words. He noted that code-mixing allows readers who are bilingual or multilingual to understand the content of the newspapers more easily.

Another respondent said code-mixing enhances the ability of readers to comprehend media messages. He explained; “It is permissible because there are some English words that are understood by both literates and the uneducated. E.g., *Minister/Minisita*, *Saturday /Ojo Satide* instead of *Ojo Abameta*. etc. So far the literates and uneducated understand what these words are meant”. This finding agrees with the views of Neetika et al (2017:2): who noted that:

*In a bilingual or multilingual society, people interact with each other using more than one language. Due to various language factors, a situation arises which is known as code-mixing or code-switching. The capacity of code-mixing increases with the number of languages learned by the user. It is commonly used in every area whether marketing, advertising, film industry, teaching, etc.*

The respondents to the questionnaire and interview agreed that code-mixing influences the readers positively to read the newspaper because it replaces some Yoruba words with their English variant that they are familiar with.

Examples of code-switching or mixing in *Alaroye* newspaper:

“Gegebi Inspekito Oriyomi Akinwale se...”; “Airise se lo so mi di ayederu Dokita”; “Babalawo ton soogun aworo fun Pasito ogedengbe”; “...ninu Yunifasiti Ibadan”; “...omobirin naa losi Oteli”; “Awon Lanloodu...”; “Atiku se Misiteeki”; “...ero Kamera”; “Lojo Monday, ojo naani a si de Akure”; “Oluko ba aburo Sodiq wi l'Ede, lo ba ko awon Toogi lo lu Tisa” and “Chinenye pa omo Tenanti egbe e l'Ekoo”;

English words used in *Alaroye* newspaper:

“Inspector (Oga Olopa)”; “Doctor (Onisegun Oyinbo)”; “Pastor (alufa)”; “University (Ile-eko giga)”; “Hotel (Ile-itura)”; “Landlord (Onile)”; “Mistake (Asise)”; “Camera (Ayaworan)”; “Monday (Ojo Aje)”; “Thugs (Omoota)”; “Teacher (Oluko)” and Tenant (Ayalegbe).

In some of the editions of *Alaroye* it was apparent that code-switching or mixing are common features of the content of the reports, columns and other content formats, Therefore, according to Mr. Adedayo, the frequent use of code-mixing is a way of reaching more people who are bilingual and are not very proficient in the use of the indigenous language of publication.

Besides, the editors interviewed all agreed that the practice also aids in the simplification of the language used as well as makes for easy simplification of the content. One of the editors Mr. Olawale Ajao noted that the use of code-switching or code-mixing is based on the absence of Yoruba words that could be used by the newspaper to represent the English word. However, these researchers through an analysis of some of the words are of the view that the editor of *Alaroye* is not vast in the vocabulary of the Yoruba language because some of the English words have Yoruba words that could be used to translate them.

### Overall Discussion of Findings

Findings show that respondents use code-mixing to simplify content of newspapers. This is a pointer to the low proficiency or inadequate word power of Yoruba language that they have. When people do not have a very good knowledge of their local languages, they would code mix and be more comfortable in media content and other forms of communication that are code mixed. This, therefore, points in the direction of language endangerment or outright extinction.

The editors and others interviewed also agreed that code-switching increases the interest in reading an indigenous newspaper. They noted that it allows people who are not proficient in the main language used in the newspaper to understand the content, based on the use of code-switching and code-mixing. This finding agrees with the study by Chowdhury et al (2012) who found in their study that among other roles that code-switching or code-mixing help to facilitate learning. Therefore, it is clear that the engagement of this technique in journalism helps in enhancing comprehension. Fasan (2018:850) writing on the influence of code-mixing in *Alaroye* notes that the:

*genre-blurring innovations Alaroye has brought into the Nigerian newspaper market, with its radical blending of Yoruba oral resources with a written medium and its mixing and/or switching of codes and borrowings from the English language, blazed a trail that several other publications have since followed.*

Some of the interviewees, however, noted that it has negative effects on the listeners because some would like to use language as it is presented in the mass media. This is so, because the media is a veritable tool for language promotion or even their endangerment as the public uses them to learn the current trend in language usage.

These views can be appreciated more when we evaluate the bilingual or multi-lingual communities where many respondents live, and English is used as the main language of education, religion, and commerce. The base on which code-switching, or code-mixing is hinged is the fact that both the senders and receivers of manifest media content are in an environment or language situation where bilingualism, as well as multilingualism, is rife. It is also an attribute of people who do not have a firm grasp of their first or mother-tongue language. The interviewees most of whom are journalists agreed that code-mixing is used to simplify the content of the newspaper and thereby enhances the ability of the readers to comprehend the content. It can be deduced from data generated from this study that the bilingual or multilingual environment where *Alaroye* mainly circulates is a causative factor for the use of code-mixing by the newspaper and the positive response or acceptance the readers have of the use of code-mixing.

*Alaroye's* main customer base is the South-West of Nigeria, where the English language is the major language used in academics, religion and the mass media. As such the people would be favourably disposed to newspapers which straddles between two major languages that they use for daily communication. The findings revealed that *Alaroye* extensively used code-mixing to achieve various purposes such as simplification of language, interest and to accommodate the bilingualism of most of its readers. This finding agrees with the argument of Halman (2004) cited in Aktar et al that code-switching is an attribute of individuals or societies where the people speak two or more languages.

However, it was also apparent that the newspaper purposely used code-switching to simplify content even when there were simple Yoruba words that could be used to explain the content. The application of code-switching or code-mixing is not always a direct influence of the inadequate proficiency of the language. It is sometimes a reflection of the socio-linguistic environment, realities of social and cultural expressions and interest.

### **Conclusion**

This study focused on code-mixing in Yoruba newspapers as a reflection of the linguistic half-caste mode. Findings showed that the selected newspaper *Alaroye* used code mixing extensively for different purposes. Some of the reasons include the simplification of language, to reach the readers who are mainly bilinguals better and because the editors or reporters are not very proficient in the vocabulary of the Yoruba language. It was also discovered that the mass media see the use of code-switching or code-mixing as a way to reach more advertisers, who would be interested in reaching readers outside one particular language group. It was also clear from findings that code switching affects audience understanding of text in *Alaroye* to a large extent. The code switching between Yoruba language and English languages enabled respondents who are not very proficient in the Yoruba language to easily make meaning of the content of the newspaper.

### **Recommendations**

*Alaroye* should aim not only to communicate in indigenous language to the native speakers of Yoruba language but should also strive to serve as a means of deepening the understanding and use of the language among the people. In a context like Yoruba land where many parents want their children and wards to speak in the Queens English, *Alaroye* and other Yoruba newspapers need to serve as veritable means to preserve the Yoruba language, where the public can resort to learn the unadulterated Yoruba language.

Codemixing in *Alaroye* can, therefore, be viewed as not enhancing the readers' proficiency in the Yoruba language. It denies the reader the opportunity of speaking or writing appropriately in the Yoruba language with its use of code-mixing. As an indigenous language newspaper, it should strive to contribute through its content to the promotion of the language, through adherence to the grammatical and other language structure of Yoruba.

It is recommended that further studies be carried out on the impact of code-mixing on viewers' perception or understanding of news reportage in other media platforms such as radio and television. They would allow for better generalization of findings across the general media spectrum. This study thrives on the intersection of media and language studies and provided the theoretical differentiation of linguistic subjects of codeswitching and codemixing. It is also important that further studies explore conceptual issues on language of newspapers- or broadly of the media. That will provide the theoretical base to understand codeswitching in more Nigerian newspaper.

Besides, reporters, editors, producers, and presenters should be exposed to training on indigenous language to enhance their knowledge of the particular indigenous language that they use for their publication. Furthermore, the government should implement policies that ensure that the predominant indigenous languages in a local government or state are taught in primary and post-primary institutions. This would further promote the preservation of these indigenous languages.

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