LANGUAGE CONTACT AND LANGUAGE ALTERNATION IN A YORUBA SUBURBAN TOWN

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This paper is an in-depth analysis of the process of language alternation involving three languages, Erushu, Yoruba and English, in Erushu, Akoko. Language alternation or code-switching/mixing is one of the sociolinguistic approaches to language change in a bilingual community. Structurally, code-mixing takes any of the following forms: Erushu/Yoruba, Erushu/English, Erushu/Yoruba/English, in the community under study. In addition, the social functions of code-mixing in Erushu evident in the data include the following: a referential function, the directive function, and the expressive function. Our findings have revealed that the processes of change are typically much more complex and variable than we had earlier been inclined to assume. The phenomenon of language alternation can have profound consequences for the development of these languages and even for their very existence. It therefore requires a conscious intervention in language use by the community of users. Indeed, this empirical research has once again established that code-mixing is a characteristic of language use in bilingual communities when all the participants in a speech situation share a bilingual background.

Le présent document est une analyse approfondie du processus de l'alternance linguistique associant trois langues: Erushu, le yoruba et l'anglais, à Erushu Akoko. L'alternance de langue ou mélange de code-switching est l'une des approches sociolinguistiques pour changer de langue dans une communauté bilingue. Structurellement code-mélange se présente comme l'une des formes suivantes: Erushu / Yoruba, Erushu / anglais, Erushu / Yoruba / Anglais dans la communauté sous étude. En outre, les fonctions sociales du code-mixing in Erushu évident dans les données incluent la suite d'une fonction référentielle de la fonction directive et la fonction expressive. Nos résultats ont révélé que le processus de changement sont généralement beaucoup plus complexe et variable que l'on avait tendance à penser auparavant. Le phénomène de l'alternance des langues peut avoir des conséquences profondes pour le développement de ces langues et même pour leur existence. Elle nécessite donc une intervention consciente de l'utilisation des langues par la communauté des utilisateurs. En effet, cette recherche empirique a une fois de plus établi que le changement de code de mélange est une caractéristique d'utilisation des langues dans les communautés bilingues lorsque tous les participants discutants sont bilingues.

0. INTRODUCTION

The multilingual nature of most Nigerian communities makes them a ready choice for sociolinguistic investigation since change is inevitable when languages are in contact. According to Egbokhare (2004:511), 'the linguistic ecology of any multilingual setting is always in a state of change, even if insignificantly.' The Erushu community typifies a truly multilingual setting. It is believed that certain sociolinguistic concomitants of the language contact situation such as bilingualism, language choice, language attitude, language alternation, borrowing and so on would be evident in this community. The foregoing therefore informs the decision to investigate in concrete terms the process of language alternation otherwise known as code-switching/mixing in Erushu community.

Language contact is such a common, age-long phenomenon that it would be naive to describe it as a relatively recent development in human history due probably to colonization. According to Millar (2007:380):

> only very rarely, if ever, does a language find itself spoken in a completely isolated environment, with no contact at all between its speakers and the speakers of other languages….Indeed, for the larger part of human existence, the normal situation was probably for

everybody routinely to learn and use two, three, even four different languages.

The foregoing simply reveals the fact that bilingualism or multilingualism has been the norm all over the world right from time immemorial. What is more, the outcomes of languages in contact, the world over include any of the following sociolinguistic phenomena: bilingualism, language shift, loss, and death, borrowing, pidgins and creoles, code-switching/mixing, linguistic interference and semilingualism.

1. BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Erúshú is a village with a pattern of linear settlement along Ikare-Kabba road in Akoko North-West Local Government Area of Ondo State of Nigeria. This Local Government happens to share a common boundary with three states in Nigeria viz. Kogi, Edo and Ekiti. This, therefore, explains the heterogeneous nature of the community. The Erúshú language is the native tongue of the people of Erúshú. However, the lingua franca of these people is Yoruba and they also regard themselves as Yorùbá by tribe. The written accounts before the 20th century of this settlement are very scanty. However, we were able to gather good information through interview from Chief Osunla, the Oba of the village and Mr. Olugboja (the Balogun i.e. High Chief of Erúshú and a retired principal) that the people actually came from Ife.

The two indigenous languages that are predominantly spoken in Erúshú are Erúshú and Yoruba. English, the official language in Nigeria, is also used as a medium of expression in schools. Other languages found in this community which, however, are of minor use are: Ebira, Hausa and Igbo. It is needless to say that the domains of the routine use of these languages differ considerably. From mere observation, it was discovered that there is no indigene, young or old, in this community that cannot speak the two major indigenous languages in use here. Meanwhile, an educated indigene invariably speaks the three predominant languages (Erushu, Yoruba and English) under investigation in this study.

The Erúshú language is one of the minority languages in Nigeria with speakers spread over five villages-Arigidi, Erushu, Iye, Okeagbe and Igaasi. Available published materials on the Erúshú language include Greenberg (1963), Williamson (1973), Akinkugbe (1978), Capo (1989), Williamson (1989), Hoffmann (1994), and Adeniyi and Ojo (2005).

The Erúshú language is a member of a group of languages referred to as the Northern Akoko cluster: Williamson (1973). Hoffmann (1994), following Williamson's suggestion, has classified this group of languages as sub-group 'b' of the Yoruba group while Yoruba, Itsekiri and Igala constitute the sub-group 'a'. Subsequent studies, however, caused the claim to be revised. Capo (1989) and Williamson (1989) argue that the relationship between the languages is not close enough to justify calling them a cluster. Thus, the term Northern Akoko cluster is no longer in use. A very recent genetic classification done on the Benue-Congo phylum in Akoko, by Ohiri-Aniche (2006) says the phylum contains five language groups: The Yoruba group, The Edoid group, The Ukaan group, The Akpes group and The Akokoid group. In this sub-classification the Erushu language belongs to the Akokoid group.

2. THE LANGUAGE CONTACT SITUATION

Language contact can be described as a situation whereby people speaking distinct languages are in contact with one another. According to Yusuf (1999) language contact should be seen in the broad sense of contact between two cultures resulting from conquests, wars, migration, colonization, etc. Languages in contact are often languages in competition and there is no language contact without language conflict. See Igboanusi and Ohia (2001) and Egbokhare (2004).

However, as evident to this researcher, there could be language contact without language conflict, Oyetade (1990). That is, that languages are in competition does not imply that the languages are necessarily in conflict. The revolutionary cause of change (language usage) in any speech community is the force encountered between one culture and another which need not be violent. Indeed, it may well be co-operative. However, whatever brings two speakers of different languages into contact and makes them communicate with each other counts as a force for change. Languages compete for roles when in contact, whereas language conflict has to do with one language dominating the other in a contact situation. As stated already, the many products of languages coming into contact include: bilingualism, language shift, loss, and death, borrowing, pidgins and creoles, code-switching/mixing, linguistic interference and so on. In what follows, some of these phenomena will be placed under examination.

Bilingualism has been described as a product of language contact, a consequence of economic, political, and social interdependence existing among different peoples and societies, Oyetade (1995). A by-product of bilingualism is language alternation or code-mixing, the focus of the present paper. The study of languages in contact has always been approached along three dimensions namely: the social, psychological and linguistic aspects of the contact situation. The social aspects examine issues like language choice, language and ethnicity; the psychological aspect deals with language attitude; while the focus of linguistic aspects is code-switching/mixing, interference, and so forth. Each aspect is an area of investigation in itself. That is, they represent different orientations and research agenda. Thus, an in-depth discussion of only one of these is engaged in here.

2.1 CODE- SWITCHING VERSUS CODE-MIXING

Code-switching (CS) is an informal behaviour that involves shifting or alternating between two or more languages when the addressee has access to the codes involved. Code-switching is a universal linguistic phenomenon. Indeed, when two languages are in permanent contact a number of linguistic phenomena which are social and psychological are expected. The general impression of many non-linguists is that a person who is permanently in contact with two tongues does not speak either of them correctly. It is unfortunate that some of these bilinguals themselves hold on to this assumption. A sociolinguist, however, knows that a compound or balanced bilingual is different from a co-ordinate bilingual.

Code-switching or code-mixing owes its development to the coming in contact of two or more languages. Code-switching and code-mixing had been researched by linguists, socio-linguists and psycholinguists as well as educators. It has become a topical and important field of research today, because of its communicative import. Although previous studies on it have emphasized its sociolinguistic aspect (see Blom and Gumperz 1972; Scotton and Ury 1977; Kachru 1978; Scotton 1979; Gumperz 1982; Songh 1983; Auer 1984), more recent studies have shown that code-switched languages are rule-governed (see Pfaff 1979, Poplack 1980, 1981, Sridhar and Sridhar

1980, Bentahila and Davies 1983, Joshi 1985, Gardner-Choloros 1987, Savic 1995, Essien 1995, Banjo 1996, Myers-Scotton and Jake 2000, Lamidi 2003, among others). As to the major claims of these studies, it is argued that while grammatical processes designate permissible forms of code-switching, social processes regulate selection among the range of permissible forms. However, social factors have their most important contribution in that they impinge upon choice from a set of structural options, and they can become central in language change. Socially motivated choices may suppress other options over time (Myers-Scotton 1993a).

It need be stated that in spite of the new focus (i.e. morphosyntactically based code-switching research), the social and discourse motivations for code-switching continue to attract many researchers in the 1990s (cf. Myers-Scotton 1993b, 2004, Foley 1998, Fakuade et al., 2003, David et al. 2003). Indeed, some studies do explore at once both the social and structural motivations for code-switching (e.g. Myers-Scotton 1993a, 2002, Dada 2006).

In the sociolinguistic literature, code-switching is distinguished from code-mixing. Code-switching involves switches of large structures (usually sentences) while code-mixing entails switches of smaller structures within the same sentence or stretch of speech (see Banjọ 1983; Wardhaugh 2000). The two concepts are essentially the same except that some researchers regard intra-sentential code alternation as code-mixing, while an intersentential code alternation is regarded as code-switching. For instance, a discussion can be started in Yoruba and concluded in English.

Since the distinction is sometimes made in literature, between code-switching and code-mixing, we make the domain of code-switching here as that of a complex sentence or the discourse, whereas that of code-mixing is the simple sentence. Furthermore, in intra-sentential code-mixing, the grammar of bilingual clauses is constrained by that of the matrix language, the mother tongue of speakers. In inter-sentential code-switching, well-formed clauses from the respective languages are merely conjoined into bilingual sentences and there is no talk about a matrix language (see Myers-Scotton 1993a, 2002). In line with this distinction the data analysed here are essentially those of code-mixing. Next we consider, as presented below, how code-switching has been defined in literature.

- Appel and Muysken (1990:120) say ‘code-switching is the use of several languages in the same discourse’.
- Crystal (1987:362) says ‘language mixing, language switching, or simply code-switching involves changes from one language to another in the course of the conversation’.
- Myers–Scotton (1993a:480) says ‘CS is the selection by bilinguals/ multilinguals of forms from two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation’. She states further that stretches of CS material may be intersentential (switches from one language to the other between sentences) or intrasentential (within the same sentence, from the single morpheme level to higher levels).
- Ahukanna (1990:175) sees code-switching and code-mixing as ‘intra-sentential switching in language, which characterizes the speech behaviour of bilinguals’.

Ahukanna’s definition falls short of the standard definition of code-switching.

What is however evident in this definition as in all others is that code-mixing is a common experience among bilinguals the world over, the Erúshú/ Yoruba/English

data present yet another opportunity to test for this basic assumption about the speech of a bilingual.

Again, virtually all the definitions above point to the fact that code-mixing is an intra-sentential use of two languages and code-switching is an inter-sentential use of two languages which characterize the speech behaviour of bilinguals.

The study of code-mixing in Erúshú community is the major engagement in this work. With empirical data it is hoped that insights will be provided into how this phenomenon operates across languages and how the three languages under investigation here merge structurally.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study is on the dynamics of language contact and multilingualism in a multilingual community. The study is out to discover those changes that are taking place in the structures of Erushu and Yoruba as a result of the contact of these indigenous languages with each other and with English. As it is evident, when languages come in contact with one another they exert certain influences on one another at two major levels, namely, social and structural. The work intends to explore the structural implications of the contact situation between Erushu, Yoruba and English.

The specific objective of the present study is to examine the linguistic implications of the co-existence of these languages (Erushu, Yoruba and English) with a view to determine the extent of influence being exerted on one another by these languages. Thus, an examination of code-mixed structures in Erushu forms the main thrust of the present investigation.

4. METHODOLOGY

Since code-mixing is a bilingual language use option opened to bilingual interlocutors, the data for the study were gathered through various techniques which include anonymous observation through the use of the tape recorder and the participant observation technique. The tape recorder was used to collect spontaneous utterances of a number of Erushu-Yoruba and Erushu-English bilinguals in a natural setting. That is, the recordings were conducted openly and naturally in the presence of the respondents while the completion of the questionnaires given to them lasted. It is observed that that data gathering is equally problematic in an African setting due to what Labov (1972:209) called ‘observer’s paradox’ or ‘the principle of formality’ according to Wardhaugh (2000:18). These authors point out that the aim of linguistic research is to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed, but the data are available only through systematic observation. Somehow speakers must have their attention diverted away from the fact that they are being observed so that the genuine speech form desired can emerge. Thus, ingenuity is required in an African setting where the population is predominantly that of illiterates.

The reason for using a combination of these techniques was to enable the researcher obtain a fairly large, objective and varied sampled data. The data collected were given a descriptive analysis so as to highlight the discourse functions of code-mixing in the community of study.

Again, since the investigation actually had a twofold concern, the questionnaire was also used to elicit information from respondents on their language use and language attitude with respect to the languages under investigation in this community.

All the 300 copies of the questionnaire given to participants were returned. The questionnaire was the multiple choice type, thus to fill and return immediately was not too difficult. Those who could not write were assisted by the researcher and his assistants to complete their copies. Besides, the researcher's intimate knowledge of this village since 1966 was also a contributing factor to the hundred percent return of the copies of the questionnaire.

Although, the respondents were selected based on their accessibility and cooperation, to ensure representativeness, the researcher went round schools, homes and playing grounds to meet with participants. Again, this afforded us the opportunity to observe first hand the language behaviour of these respondents in a natural setting.

On language use, participants were asked to indicate their choice of codes with respect to different interlocutors in the home domain. The remaining part of the questionnaire, which was on language attitude, sought to know the respondents' feelings or attitude towards their mother tongue, Erushu, the Yoruba language and the English language.

Finally, our respondents' output was assessed using simple frequency distributions and percentages. Thus, the data analysed here is the self-report of our respondents on language use, language attitude and language alternation with respect to Erushu, Yoruba and English languages.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion in this section is grouped into two sections. The first section is on the patterns of code-mixing among the Erushu-Yoruba bilinguals. The section centres on the social functions of code-mixing in this multilingual community.

5.1 PATTERNS OF CODE-MIXING

The code-mixing data in Erúshú community among bilinguals can take any of the following forms;

a. Erúshú + Yoruba
b. Erúshú + English
c. Erúshú + Yoruba +English

In other words, it could be a mixture of the two major indigenous languages in this community or a mixture of Erushu and English or of even the three main languages here namely: Erúshú, Yoruba and English

5.1.1 Examples of type (a): (Erúshú + Yoruba)

The italicized words are the Yoruba words incorporated into Erúshú expressions.

(1) **Deni** **keke** ***ìdanwo*** **ni?**
How do examination you
How did you do your exam?

(2) **Á** **sì** ***yemi*** **si**
I not understand it.
I didn't understand it.

(3) **Wa nì ran *ìwe* gan**
They Be.AUX[1] understand book very much.
They are very brilliant

(4) **A mì ve ùwà eshu *dandan***
I FUTURE go farm tomorrow compulsorily
I will go to the farm compulsorily tomorrow.

(5) **Òwo po *maalu***
We kill cow
We killed a cow.

In consistence with our objectives here, the English words incorporated into Erushu-based expressions have been italicized in the following examples.

5.1.2 Examples of type (b) : (Erúshú + English)

(6) **Òho wa *set* a ha**
What they give it difficult
What they gave (as questions) was difficult.

(7) **Vá à da *material***
They not buy material
They did not buy the material.

(8) **Boda *Accord* á à getì eje**
Brother Accord (a nickname) he that got himself
Brother Accord is confused.

(9) **Wo gba *range* va**
Go bring range come
Go and fetch the range.

(10) **À ve *school***
He go school
He has gone to school.

On the data in the following section, English items are simply italicized in lower case while the Yoruba ones are capitalized and italicized. The Erushu ones have been written in ordinary font.

5.1.3 Examples of type (c): (Erushu- Yoruba- English)

(11) **Omumu de ni o ke G*BÌYÀNJÚ* de a *gain anything***
all as FOC. VERB[2] we do try much we gain anything
Hard as we tried, we did not gain anything..

(12) **Ma *FE* ta o da *magí***
I want to go buy magi
I want to go and buy magi.

[1] BE – auxiliary verb/grammatical category.
[2] FOC. VERB – A focal verb marking the focused element in the construction.

(13) **Á *YE* tí omumu o ve *school***
It necessary that all us go school
It is necessary for all of us to be educated.

(14) **Àyafi *graph* ma a ke *DÁADÁA***
except graph I not do well well
Except the graph which I didn't do very well.

(15) ***Age YÀTÒ SI* eje**
age different from one another
Their ages are different from one another.

People in Erúshú community are generally in the habit of code-mixing in informal conversations. Such conversations or discussions take place at home, at ethnic or village meetings, at parties, etc. In these situations, participants speak Erúshú with Yoruba and some English, if need be. It is remarkable that the same people who code-mix on such informal occasions resist code-mixing on more serious or formal occasions. If they practise this at all on such occasions, they do it so minimally. Essien (1995) reported this same situation among the Ibibio of Nigeria with respect to Ibibio-English code-mixing.

The manifestation of code–mixing in our Erúshú data has once again established the fact that code-mixing is a characteristic of language use in bilingual communities when all the participants in a speech situation share a bilingual background (cf. Savic 1995, Myers-Scotton 1993c, 1999, 2004, Nsawir 1999, Oyetade 2004).

The Erúshú community, no doubt, has remained consistently multilingual, while the individual members have tended towards mono-or bilingualism. That is, the findings show that the community is shifting to Yoruba (i.e. participant observer's point of view) and / or using a mixed code that consists of three languages. This same situation was discovered among Punjabi Sikh community in Malaysia by David et al. (2003). Their study reported the fact that the use of stand-alone Punjabi at home increases with age, the use of stand alone English at home increases as the age of respondents decreases; and that there is a language shift from Punjabi to either English or a mixture of three languages –Punjabi, English, and Malay. Fakuade et al. (2003) equally reported this same situation of language shift from mother tongues towards Fulfulde in Adamawa state of Nigeria.

5.2 SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF CODE-MIXING

The question on the social functions of code-mixing touches on the comparative ability of these languages in contact to express new concepts in a developing modern society such as Nigeria in general and Erúshú in particular. Sybil-James (1979) opines that one can hardly discuss language activity without taking into consideration the relationship between those who must communicate and the circumstances that give rise to the communication.

Using the functional model suggested by Appel and Muysken (1990) for why people switch between languages in the course of a single conversation, Code-mixing in Erúshú can be said to have the following functions:

5.2.1 The *referential* function

The *referential* function often involves lack of knowledge of one language or lack of facility in that language on a certain subject. The examples are presented from recording sessions conducted in Erushu Community Secondary School. It should be noted that schools in Erushu teach only two (Yoruba and English) of the languages under examination here. Thus, no form of literacy is taught in Erushu, let alone its use in the teaching of any subject. The Erushu language is acquired only informally at home. It was in that type of climate that we went to Erushu community to carry out a number of empirical probes to discover the social functions of code-mixing in this multilingual community. This recording was done outside the classroom setting with students gathered in groups discussing the day's activities (a maths lesson). Thus, English items without equivalents in the indigenous languages under consideration, such as maths set, assignment, class, etc. featured prominently in the discussion.

(16) ***Maths*** ***set*** **nì** **sì** **rí?**
Maths set your is where
Where is your maths set?

(17) **Ma** **mì** **ke** ***assignment*** **ran**
I not do assignment my
I have not done my assignment.

(18) **Na** **wo** **da** ***mattress***
You go buy mattress
You should go and buy mattress.

(19) **Ma** **rí** **ve** ***class***
I Be.AUX go class
I am going to the class.

(20) **Á** **hen** **pe** **ẹna** **a** **o** **da** ***radío***
He said that he Be.AUX go buy radio
He said that he was going to buy radio.

The English words code mixed here are not often-used loans in the wider society, they are a specialized vocabulary. The result is that when combined with an acceptable educated pronunciation of English in Nigeria, the interlocutors are able to project a formidable image of themselves as students. This pattern, reported above, is found in discourse about technical subjects in many languages of the Third World (cf. Appel and Muysken, 1990). The list includes Scotton (1979), Nsawir (1999), Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai (2001), Lamidi (2003) among others.

For instance, Bentahila and Davies (1983), cited in Myers–Scotton (1993c), studied two different groups of Moroccan Arabic / French bilinguals, who differ demographically mainly in age and they reported that the conversation of the older group is neither mainly in Arabic nor French, while that of the younger group is basically Arabic. But the topics are fairly technical for the younger group (a biology lesson and a secretarial studies course) and the speakers use some French. We now consider the next function.

5.2.2 The *directive* function.

Another function is the *directive* function in that it involves the hearer directly. This participant- related mixing can be seen as markers of some sort of familiarity as well as a kind of distancing device (i.e. a verbal strategy for purposes of solidarity or vice versa). The setting of the data used here is that of a village square meant for relaxation for the various age grades after the day's work. Here, people (male and female; young and old) discuss any topic just to while away time. Thus, as the youths engage in discussion of social events with their elders who are not as knowledgeable as they are in English, certain common but foreign lexical items like mistake, problem, boda (i.e. brother) get slotted into their discussion. This form has the potentiality of accommodating both literate and non-literate interlocutors, e.g.

(21) ***Mistake*** **wa ke *IJÓSÍ* a *general***
Mistake they do that time be[3] general
The mistake committed then was general.

(22) **Ma sì *dictate* ine fe ta ke, *problem* va kan beni**
You should dictate what want done problem you have this
You should dictate what you want, this is your problem.

(23) **Á ke egírí deni *ÒBO***
He do head like monkey
His head resembles that of the monkey.

(24) **À í rara *ENU***
He Be.AUX 'stupid' mouth
He is joking /not serious or stupid.

(25) ***BÒDÁ*** ***Accord*** **á à *GÉTÌ* eje**
Brother Accord he not get himself.
Brother Accord is confused/ foolish.

The data above are directly related to the accommodation theory developed by Giles (1973). The process of adjustment between speakers to each other is called accommodation. A pattern similar to the one above was reported by Myers-Scotton (2004) with respect to Tamil/English code-mixing (in Canagarajah 1995). In this example from Sri Lanka, a young job applicant uses code-mixing to level inequalities between himself and a professor in an interview for a university position. English has no official status in Sri Lanka, but it is known by the highly educated. Thus, the professor opened the interview in English. The job candidate replied in code-mixing pattern of Tamil as the source of the morphosyntactic frame, with English content word insertions. It is noteworthy that after several turns in which the professor spoke only English, he switched to Tamil /English code-mixing, as well. In effect, he accommodated to the job candidate.

5.2.3 The *expressive* function.

Another reason worthy of note here as given by respondents for code mixing borders on *expressive* function of code mixing (Poplack 1980). That is, for fluent bilingual speakers, conversation full of code mixing is a mode of speech by itself, and individual switches no longer have a discourse function. Moreover, speakers emphasize a mixed identity through the use of two languages in the same discourse.

[3] This is a verb, as it is also in Ex.26.

Again, the examples presented here were tape-recorded in a village square in the community of study. People of various ages were simply gathered here after the day's work to relax. The kind of code-mixing evident here is essentially that of Erushu/Yoruba (the few English words employed here are already assimilated either segmentally or suprasegmentally into Yoruba)

Examples:

(26) ***ÀWON*** ***ÀRA*** **amo wọn mi sì**
PLURAL people 'amọ' be I be
I am from Amọ quarters (in Erúshú).

(27) ***ÒGÁ*** **ran an gan berin**
Boss my is particularly this
This is my real boss.

(28) ***Sé*** ***ÀLÁÁFÍÀ*** **mé si?**
Hope good health you are
Hope it is well with you?

(29) **Vá á da** ***material***
They not buy material
They did not buy the material.

(30) ***But*** **wa** ***TÍRÁÌ*** **na**
But you try even
Indeed, you have tried.

(31) **Wa rí** ***MÓTÒ*** **ve aja**
They see mọtọ go market
They couldn't get vehicle to the market.

In the first place, it is observed that this kind of usage implies some degree of competence in two or more languages. Meanwhile, Erushu people claim to also be a part of the Yoruba race (dual identity), hence, the tendency to use the two languages interchangeably as if they actually own the two. Secondly, the Erúshú bilinguals cannot really completely distinguish Yoruba vocabulary items from that of Erúshú since they have a mixed identity. Thirdly, in such circumstances, code mixing serves to facilitate communication since people can easily and readily find a word or expression in Yoruba or even English to say whatever they mean to say. Fourthly, a follow up to the last point, is that instead of groping about for appropriate words or expressions to discuss an experience or concept in the mother tongue, bilinguals tend to substitute patterns from Yoruba or English as the case may be, since either of these is seemingly "richer" than Erushu in terms of vocabulary items. Code-mixing is used to index a speaker's self-perception here as a multidimensional person who is a member simultaneously of the Erushu group as well as the Yoruba group (cf. Myers-Scotton 2004, Oyetade 2004). Both Ahukanna (1990) and Essien (1995) reported this same pattern among the Ibibio-English bilinguals and Igbo-English bilinguals respectively.

The last point on this is that the pattern may however be used as a bid for solidarity with the other tongue or the tongues involved. For instance, Myers-Scotton (2004) cited the use of Fanakalo / Afrikaans (South African) by a white to bid for solidarity with the common people. The language (Fanakalo) was used in colonial South Africa in asymmetrical master-servant relationships. However, when Fanakalo

is used between peers, especially outside of the work setting, it can index shared group membership. The example (Myers-Scotton 2004:7-8):

> Four middle-class white males are playing tennis double at a private club. Three of the players immigrated to South Africa earlier from Europe, and the fourth, a younger man, was born and brought up in South Africa. These are men whose unmarked language in this interaction would probably be English One of the older residents (of British Origin) checks on the score by asking:
>
> **Ini lo telling?** 'What's the score?'

According to Myers-Scotton what makes this example especially interesting is that a white speaker uses Fanakalo to other whites in a tennis match at a private club outside the South African city of Durban. In this example, the speaker combines Fanakalo (ini lo 'what's the') with Afrikaans (*telling* 'score). In doing this, he is using the two "indigenous" South African languages that all the participants would be likely to know, at least in part. But note that he himself would be a native speaker of English. Adendorff (1993) comments that the speaker is indexing an assumed common South African identity among a group of status-equal white South Africans.

5.3 LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDE

The analysis done here is in accordance with provisions made on the questionnaire namely that of language use and language attitude sections.

Demographically, the sample is made of 300 respondents of varied educational background (i.e. primary school certificate holders to degree holders). The males amount to 55.3% (166), while the females constitute 44.7% (134). The ages of the respondents range between 10 and 80 years. However, for the purpose of the present analysis the respondents were categorised into two groups (parents versus children) .

Domains of language use vary from one community to the other. In the present investigation, the focus is on the home domain because the home domain is a major factor in matters of language use, language attitude and language maintenance. Six code possibilities were recognized here since any two of the three codes being examined here could be alternately used within an informal discourse. Thus, we recognize in addition to Erushu, Yoruba or English options, a mixture of Erushu and Yoruba, Yoruba and English, Erushu and English.

5.3.1 Language choice at home

A hundred and thirty (130) respondents who were parents reported on their language use with their children, wives/husbands, relations, neighbours, friends when discussing important family matters at home. Table 1 presents the self-report of these parent respondents.

Table 1: Parents' self-report on Language Use at home (N=130)

Context	Erúshú	Yoruba	English	Erúshú + Yoruba	Yoruba+ English
Talking to children	34.6	31.5	0.8	33.1	-
Talking to spouse	21.5	51.5	2.3	22.3	2.3
Talking to relations	26.9	33.1	0.8	35.4	3.8
Talking to neighbours	12.3	49.2	0.8	32.3	5.4
Talking with another Erúshú speaker (friend)	11.5	53.8	2.3	27.7	4.6
Discussing family matter	26.9	33.9	0.8	37.7	0.8

The table above presents Yoruba as the major code used in communicating with various interlocutors by the adults at home in this data. 21.5 percent of married subjects agreed to use only Erúshú in talking with their spouses at home, while 51.5 percent claimed the use of only Yoruba. Thus, Yoruba is of a higher use than Erúshú, even in this domain.

In the data analysis, a mixture of Erúshú + English was never reported at all by any of our respondents, and very low percentages were recorded in the column for the mixture of Yoruba and English. This is a pointer to the fact that communication at home between adults and their interlocutors is done principally in this community either in Erúshú or Yoruba or a mixture of the two. This again, has implications for language alternation in this community.

It is however observed that parents' language use at home when talking to their children is Erúshú with 34.6 percent followed by Erúshú + Yoruba with 33.1 percent, while Yoruba only is with 31.5 percent. It is interesting to note that Erúshú still tops the list in this domain in spite of the fact that the children themselves are not favourably disposed to the use of Erúshú language itself at home. Yoruba is also highly used when this set of respondents (parents) is talking with their neighbours.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the above analysis is that adults in this community communicate mostly even at home in Yoruba, although Erúshú is also highly used here by these adults, which is a reflection of the fact that people in this community are truly bilingual. Moreover, Yoruba seems to be gaining dominance at home among even the adults.

To be able to assess fully the present situation, we now examine language use pattern at home among the youths to discover if the same pattern above exists in their language use with their interlocutors. The youths' language use at home is presented below as Table 2.

Table 2: Children's self-report on language use at home (N=170)

Contexts	Erúshú %	Yoruba %	English %	Erúshú + Yoruba %	English + Yoruba %	English + Erúshú %
Talking to Parents	21.8	61.8	2.9	12.9	0.6	-
Talking to grand- parents	58.8	34.1	-	0.9	1.2	-
Talking to other siblings	21.8	55.3	8.3	9.4	4.7	0.6
Talking to other children in the neighbourhood	13.5	67.7	8.8	7.7	2.4	0.6

The pattern of language use among the youths in this community is not too different from that of their parents. A very high percentage of Erúshú youths claimed to use exclusively Erúshú in holding discussions with various interlocutors. However, when Yoruba is compared with Erúshú, it is discovered that the use of Yoruba is higher in percentage to that of Erúshú. This again, is a pointer to the fact that: (1) our respondents are truly bilingual in the two languages under study since the percentage of their use of the two languages is high, that is, when compared with the percentages recorded in the other rows; (2) Yoruba has dominance over Erúshú also among the youths.

For instance, the youths reported to use Erúshú mostly when talking with their grandparents, this is not surprising since these old people are the custodians of culture. The influence of education is also noticeable among this age group. It is noteworthy that few respondents communicate either in Yoruba and English (4.7%) or English (8.8%) exclusively with their interlocutors. Indeed, the Erúshú + English column that had nothing in the parents' table has a few percentages now, however minimal. This is a true reflection of the group we are analysing – students.

5.3.2 Code-switching a sign of positive attitudes

In the Erúshú community, as evident in the foregoing, language alternation is a common occurrence. This linguistic phenomenon re-affirms the claim that code-mixing and code-switching are inevitable phenomena in bilingual or multilingual society (Scotton 1979, Gambhir 1983, Ahukanna 1990, Essien 1995, Banjọ 1983, 1996, Myers-Scotton 1993a, 2004, Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai 2001, Lamidi 2003, David et al, 2003, Fakuade et al 2003, and Oyetade 2004 among others). However, this is not always the case in all bilingual communities. The present result is at variance with Fakuade's (1997) analysis where code–mixing between Mbula and Bachama, in Adamawa state, Nigeria was highly resisted. According to his report, code-mixing was viewed also as a possible indicator of the social relationship between languages, and hence, of language attitude. Moreover, only 13% of Mbula respondents do code-switch between Mbula and Bachama which was seen as indicative of a negative attitude towards Bachama. This situation is, however, an exception rather than the rule. Thus, that code-mixing is 'unrestrained' between Erushu and Youba or

Erushu and English is indicative of a positive attitude of respondents towards Yoruba and English.

6. CONCLUSION

Code-mixing has implications for language use and language maintenance. The attendant effect of this is that the diglossic situation as advanced by Ferguson (1959, 1966) does not exist in Erúshú community in spite of the linguistic pluralism existing here. That is, the roles of the English language, the Yoruba language and the Erúshú language have not been kept functionally apart. If in the home front where the mother tongue is expected to have an edge over any other language in the community, Yoruba is holding sway, it therefore means that both the Erúshú language and the Yoruba language did not have any distinctive or opposing role as both were used for similar roles. Again, code-mixing as being practised in this community, is an indication of the fact that our respondents are not ambilinguals i.e. balanced bilinguals, hence, they find it difficult to keep apart their two or three languages in all informal situations. Based on the present picture of linguistic realities in Erushu community, the Erushu language is already endangered since the people are shifting to Yoruba or Yoruba/English code-mixing or even Erushu/ Yoruba/English code-mixing.

From a non-linguistic angle, the culture as well as the language of this community is gradually being eroded since Erushu people are quite unlike the Mbula (see Fakuade 1997) in this matter. The study of code-mixing in its socio-cultural context however reveals one major way in which the language and culture of a speech community can enrich and enhance the development of another, that is, if the borrowed items are viewed positively. This view is however very difficult to develop because once code-mixing is left unchecked it may escalate to pidginization.

The present study details the dynamics of language alternation and touches language use in an African community – Erushu, Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. The findings of this study corroborates Essien's (1995:272-273) assertion that 'code-mixing is a sociolinguistic phenomenon and is observed so far *between two languages* with differing levels of development, with one clearly more statusful than the other (italics mine). It is needless to say that the data examined here revealed a case of three languages being code-mixed. The findings here, however, positively attest to some sociolinguistic universals as follows: (1) code-mixing is a sociolinguistic phenomenon observable all over the world in a bilingual or multilingual setting. (2) code-mixing occurs within languages with differing levels of development, with one clearly more statusful than the other as rightly observed by Essien (1995). Examples include English versus Spanish in the United States and English versus Nigerian languages in Nigeria or Hindi in India. As we conclude, it is observed that code-mixing has been viewed in a positive light here. The study makes no pretensions to have exhausted all relevant issues in mixing. Indeed, code-mixing normally starts as interference (cf. Fakuade, 1999), therefore, there is the need to examine the interface between code-mixing and linguistic interference in another research.

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