



Code Switching in Ahmed Yerima's Akudaaya: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the phenomenon of code-switching in Ahmed Yerima's play Akudaaya from a sociolinguistic perspective, utilising the theoretical framework proposed by Poplack in her 1980 theory of code-switching. The study investigates the linguistic motivations and sociocultural factors that influence code switching patterns in the play, shedding light on how language choice serves as a tool for character development and thematic representation. By analysing instances of inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching, and tag-switching within the context of the play, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between language, identity, and sociocultural dynamics.

Keywords: code switching, sociolinguistics, Ahmed Yerima, Akudaaya

1.0 Introduction

Sociolinguistics encompasses the linguistic aspects that are utilised to explore the interrelations between language and society, as well as how language is employed within diverse social contexts. Across various regions globally, people engage in communication using multiple languages, particularly in bilingual or multilingual contexts like Nigeria. Consequently, it's commonplace for a Nigerian individual (be it Yoruba, Igbo, or Hausa) to converse using languages other than their native tongue. This phenomenon of an individual conversing in more than one language when communicating with another person is referred to as code switching. .



Code switching refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or linguistic varieties within a conversation or discourse. Various scholars have explored this phenomenon and offered different perspectives on its nature and functions

Blom & Gumperz (1972) elucidate the phenomenon of code switching in multilingual communities by introducing the concept of "diglossia." They posit that code switching assists speakers in choosing the suitable linguistic form according to the prevailing social contexts.

Gumperz (1982) emphasises the sociolinguistic aspect of code switching. He suggests that it is a communicative strategy used by bilingual speakers to navigate social contexts and establish rapport with different interlocutors. His work introduces the concept of code switching, exploring its functions and significance in multilingual contexts. While it lays the groundwork for code switching research, its focus on spoken language and Western contexts makes it less directly applicable to the present study on code switching in African drama.

Myers-Scotton's (1993) Matrix Language Frame model proposes that code switching occurs due to the interplay of two language systems, where one is the matrix language, that is, dominant and the other is the embedded language, that is, borrowed. This model focuses on the cognitive processes underlying code switching.

Muysken's (2000) typology of code switching includes "tag-switching," where one language is used to provide tags or markers within another language's structure. He also highlights the role of both social and grammatical factors in code switching.

Code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages within a single conversation has been widely recognised as a rich linguistic phenomenon.

Poplack (1980) defines code switching as the alternation between two or more languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent. Her theory of code switching is a systematic linguistic phenomenon governed by grammatical rules rather than random mixing. It identifies three types of code switching viz: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. Her framework for code switching underscores the differentiation between "intra-sentential" and "inter-sentential" code switching. She asserts that code switching can take place within a single sentence (intra-sentential) or at the boundaries of sentences (inter-sentential), with each mode serving distinct communicative objectives.



Ahmed Yerima's play *Akudaaya* offers a fascinating opportunity to explore code switching in an African literary context. Yerima's use of code switching reflects the multilingual nature of Nigerian society, where characters switch between languages to convey social relationships, power dynamics, and cultural identity. This study delves into the use of code switching in Ahmed Yerima's play *Akudaaya*, employing Poplack's theoretical framework to investigate the types of code switching used by the interlocutors and the reasons for their usage in the play, the linguistic motivations, structural constraints, and socio-cultural implications of code-switching in the play.

2.0 Literature Review

Heller (1995) examines language use in multilingual communities, including code switching practices. She explores how language use reflects social identity, power relationships, and cultural norms. While the study offers valuable insights into language contact and social identity, its focus on spoken language and Western contexts limits its direct relevance to the present study on code switching in Nigerian drama. Heller's work, however, demonstrates the significance of language use in shaping social relationships and identity, which is relevant to the analysis of code switching in the present study.

Adegbija (2004), in his study, examines code switching in Nigerian languages, focusing on the sociolinguistic factors that influence language use. He investigates how speakers switch between languages in various contexts, including formal and informal settings. Adegbija's work lays the groundwork for understanding code switching in Nigerian languages, which is essential for analysing its use in literary works. However, while it provides valuable insights into code switching in spoken language, it neglects the literary context, making it less relevant to the present study on code switching in Yerima's *Akudaaya*.

Bamgbose (2005) investigates language use in Nigerian education, highlighting the role of code switching in classroom communication. Bamgbose explores how teachers and students switch between languages to facilitate learning and negotiate meaning. Bamgbose's work demonstrates the significance of code switching in multilingual contexts, which is relevant to the analysis of code switching in *Akudaaya*. The study, however, touches on the educational context but does not explore the literary dimension, limiting its relevance to the present study on code switching in Nigerian drama.



Khairunas (2016) researches code switching and code mixing in *My Stupid Boss* utilising Thelander and Suwito's theory. His research points out that external code mixing is frequently used by the character in the novel with 30 occurrences while internal code mixing is the least used with only 1 occurrence. Characters used more of external code mixing to achieve specific communicative goals, such as to express authority, build rapport, or negotiate meaning. The less use of internal code mixing suggests that the characters relied more on external code mixing to achieve their communicative goals. However, this present study explores code switching as a means of communication, identity expression, and social relationships in a Nigerian dramatic context.

Eyato (2018) describes the types of code switching spoken by the teacher and students in the teaching process. He identifies the type of code switching which was mostly used by the teacher and the students as metaphorical code switching and situational code switching respectively.

Budi, Sili&Asanti (2021) investigate the classification of code switching, types of code switching and the reasons for code switching and code mixing by the characters in the novel they used for their research. They reveal that characters switched between languages to signal a shift in tone, attitude, or audience, demonstrating a strategic use of language to achieve communicative goals. They argue that these language practices add depth, complexity, and authenticity to the characters' dialogue, mirroring the linguistic diversity of the characters' social contexts. Their study focuses on code switching and code mixing in a novel, examining its literary significance and character dynamics while this present study investigates code switching in Yerima's *Akudaaya*, exploring its role in character development, social relationships, and theatrical significance.

These studies provide a foundation for understanding code switching, but their limitations in terms of context (spoken language, Western settings) and focus (education, language use in general) make them less directly applicable to the present study on code switching in Ahmed Yerima's play *Akudaaya*. The present study fills this gap by exploring code switching in an African literary context, specifically in Nigerian drama.

3.0. Research Data and Methodology

This study uses Ahmed Yerima's play, *Akudaaya* as its primary data and random sampling method to gather excerpts from the data. Also, eighteen (18) excerpts were chosen for analysis.



4.0 Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Analysis

The characters in the play were discovered to have made use of code switching when communicating. Instances of the three types of code switching were identified from their dialogues.

4.1.1. Intersentential Code Switching

Intersentential code switching refers to the practice of alternating between languages at the level of sentences or utterances. In this type, each sentence or utterance remains exclusively in one language. Yet, as the conversation unfolds, distinct sentences might be expressed in different languages. This type of code switching typically happens at organic pauses in the conversation, like the completion of a thought or a change in conversational direction. E.g., I am going to the salon, *mi o ni pe*.

a. IYALODE: Mo jeaiye... I answer wise one.
Akudaaya pg. 6

b. AMUSAN-AN: Pa nu re no Tooke. You should have listened...
Akudaaya pg. 21

c. IYALODE: No one knows? Iro nla. Tell me more ojare!
Akudaayapg. 29

d. 1st AWO: Remember that the Dog that hooks it's mouth in a bunch of thorns has a bleeding face. Beware. Iya kereku aye.
Akudaaya pg. 47

e. ALL: Woo Iya Kere... we must leave.
Akudaaya pg. 48

f. IYA AGBA: ... she is both your father and your mother. Obinrin bi okunrin...
Akudaaya pg. 54

4.1.2. Intrasentential Code Switching

Intrasentential code switching, often referred to as "code mixing," takes place within a single sentence or phrase. Within the confines of one sentence, words or phrases from one language are integrated

into another language. This form of code switching can arise due to diverse linguistic or practical considerations, such as instances where a speaker lacks a particular word in one language but possesses an equivalent term in another. E.g. *Mi o fe stress yin fun* dinner.

a. OTELANFA: ... tired with the white osugbo of ObaatalaAwomoweri...
Akudaaya pg. 8

b. IYALODE: I am an Akudaayaabara menu bi Esudara.
Akudaaya pg. 11

c. AMUSAN-AN: This is undiluted eedi.
Akudaaya pg. 14

d. TOOKE: ... Is it true Iya mi?
Akudaaya pg. 22

e. IFAGBILE: ... We shall rooku Bimpe
Akudaaya pg. 63

f. ABORE: I thought my mothers the eye bagebage... live dual lives too?
Akudaaya pg. 77

4.1.3 Tag Switching

Tag switching entails the incorporation of an individual word or phrase from one language into a sentence primarily composed in another language. These introduced components frequently serve distinct purposes, such as enhancing emphasis, signaling a question, or conveying emotion. Tags can function as pragmatic indicators and may even emerge within conversations conducted solely in one language. E.g., Ha! Who tore the book?

a. IYALODE: Haa... already I can see the women in Ijekun Odo...
Akudaaya pg. 18

b. IYALODE: ... Tell me more ojare!
Akudaaya pg. 29

c. IFAGBILE: ... Oba Gbadegesin has turned us all into Parrots. Closet. Eeee!
Akudaaya pg. 65

d. IYA KERE: ... Now you know, abi?

Akudaaya pg. 72

e. IYALODE: ... Haa, what leaves are these?

Akudaaya pg. 85

f. GBADEGESIN: Haa, this must be the work of a trickster god

Akudaaya pg. 91

4.2. Discussion

The analysis reveals a dynamic range of codeswitching patterns, including inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. These patterns mirror the motivations behind the switches, such as establishing solidarity, emphasising emotion, and reflecting social hierarchy. The portrayal of codeswitching in *Akudaaya* offers a glimpse into the fluidity of identity construction. The characters employed the English and Yoruba languages to embody different aspects of their identities. Codeswitching in the play also reflects the intertwining of languages and cultures in Nigerian society, showcasing how language becomes a conduit for shared experiences and collective identity. Also, in the play, characters wield language alternation to assert authority, challenge domination, or negotiate their position within social hierarchies. Codeswitching contributes to the depth of the narrative, adding layers of authenticity and realism that resonate with the bi/multilingual Nigerian context.

In addition, the use of intersentential code switching explores how shifts between languages convey subtle nuances in meaning, emotion, and emphasis; the use of intrasentential code switching reflects the syntactic compatibility of different languages, and the use of tag switching highlights how certain words from another language (Yoruba) carry cultural significance which demonstrates how code switching can serve as a marker of identity and belonging.

5.0 Conclusion

The analysis of code switching in *Akudaaya* through the theoretical framework of Poplack's theory provides insights into the linguistic, sociocultural, and narrative dimensions of the play. This study showcases how language choice is used as a means to highlight identity, cultural interactions, and thematic layers. As a result, it contributes to a deeper appreciation of the intricacies of Ahmed Yerima's work and the broader sociolinguistic landscape in which it is situated.



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