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Ogba Language: An Exploration of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Ogba Speakers' Linguistic Behavior

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Abstract: ***This paper investigates the phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing among the Ogba people in Rivers State, Nigeria, who speak the Ogba language. The study examines Ogba speakers' linguistic behavior in multilingual settings, as well as the sociolinguistic factors that influence their language choices. The study utilized quantitative methods, and Myers-Scotton's (1993) Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model guided this work. The results show that the study of code-switching and code-mixing among Ogba speakers provides valuable insights into the dynamic nature of language use and identity construction. In conclusion, the work provides a comprehensive analysis of how and why speakers switch and mix codes, as well as the implications of these practices for the Ogba language and identity.***

Keywords: Code-Mixing, Code-Switching, Ogba Language, English.

1. INTRODUCTION

Code-switching and code-mixing are pervasive linguistic phenomena observed in multilingual communities worldwide. These practices involve the alternation between two or more languages or dialects within a single conversation or even within a single sentence. The goal of this research is to comprehend code-switching and code-mixing in the context of the Ogba language, which the Ogba people in Nigeria speak. Code-switching and code-mixing among Ogba speakers are complex phenomena shaped by sociolinguistic factors and communicative needs. Ordu and Odukwu (2021). Ordu and Odukwu (2022). This study contributes to an understanding of these practices in a lesser-studied language and emphasizes the importance of preserving linguistic diversity in a multilingual society.

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The Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State primarily speaks Ogba, a language belonging to the Niger-Congo language family. Like many other indigenous languages in Nigeria, Ogba speakers frequently engage in code-switching and code-mixing, especially when they are bilingual or multilingual. These linguistic practices' dynamics offer a rich field of study, shedding light on the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic aspects of language use in this community.

This study aims to provide a detailed analysis of the patterns and functions of code-switching and code-mixing in Ogba. The study aims to investigate the impact of various factors on these practices, including social context, speaker identity, and communicative intent. This research, by examining the structural and functional aspects of code-switching and code-mixing, will contribute to a deeper understanding of language interaction in multilingual settings and the role of indigenous languages in contemporary Nigeria.

Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including field observations, interviews, and analysis of recorded conversations, this study will document the instances and contexts in which Ogba speakers switch or mix languages. We expect the findings to shed light on the linguistic strategies Ogba speakers employ to navigate their multilingual environment and underscore the significance of preserving linguistic diversity amidst globalization and language shift pressures.

Ultimately, this research aims to enrich the field of sociolinguistics by offering a comprehensive examination of code-switching and code-mixing in the Ogba language, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on language contact, bilingualism, and the preservation of minority languages.

2. RELATED WORKS

Various languages and sociolinguistic contexts have widely studied code-switching and code-mixing. According to Poplack (1980), code-switching involves the alternation between two languages at sentence boundaries, while code-mixing occurs within a sentence. Myers-Scotton (1993) introduced the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model, which distinguishes between the matrix language (the dominant language) and the embedded language (the less dominant language) in code-switching instances. Researchers have extensively studied code-switching and code-mixing across various languages and contexts. In the context of the Ogba language, researchers have explored how these phenomena manifest and what factors influence their occurrence. Eze (2017) discusses the sociolinguistic aspects of code-switching in the Ogba language, highlighting its prevalence in different social contexts and its role in identity construction among speakers. According to Eze, code-switching in Ogba serves pragmatic functions such as politeness and emphasis, reflecting the community's social norms and values. Okafor (2018) concentrates on the syntactic aspects of code-mixing in Ogba, scrutinizing the integration of elements from various languages within Ogba sentences. Okafor posits that grammatical constraints govern code-mixing in Ogba, and language contact phenomena with neighboring languages can influence it. Nwaozuzu (2019) explores the discourse functions of code-switching in Ogba, emphasizing its role in facilitating effective communication in multilingual settings. According to Nwaozuzu, situational factors such as language proficiency and topic continuity are determinants of code-switching patterns among Ogba speakers. Okoro (2020) provides a cognitive perspective on code-switching in

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Ogba, proposing that bilingual speakers employ different cognitive strategies when switching between Ogba and other languages. Okoro's study suggests that cognitive factors such as language proficiency and context familiarity play a significant role in the frequency and patterns of code-switching in Ogba. Overall, these studies contribute to our understanding of code-switching and code-mixing in the Ogba language by examining various linguistic, sociolinguistic, syntactic, discourseal, and cognitive dimensions. They underscore the complexity of language use among Ogba speakers and highlight the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and identity in multilingual contexts, especially Ogba.

Sociolinguistic Perspectives
Sociolinguistic research by Gumperz (1982) highlighted that code-switching can serve various communicative functions, including signaling group identity, accommodating interlocutors, and negotiating power dynamics. Auer (1998) further suggested that code-switching can create conversational coherence and facilitate topic shifting. In African contexts, scholars like Kamwangamalu (2010) and Bamgbose (1991) have explored how colonial languages like English and French interact with indigenous languages, affecting linguistic practices and societal perceptions.

African Context
In the African context, code-switching and code-mixing are prevalent due to the continent's multilingual nature. Studies by Kamwangamalu (2010) and Bamgbose (1991) indicate that colonial languages, such as English and French, often serve as prestige languages, while indigenous languages are used in informal and intimate settings. Igboanusi (2002) examined code-switching among Nigerian bilinguals, highlighting its role in negotiating social identities and reflecting societal bilingualism.

Ogba Language
Despite its significance, the Ogba language has received limited attention in linguistic literature. Nwachukwu (1995) provided an overview of Ogba grammar and phonology, but little has been done to explore sociolinguistic phenomena such as code-switching and code-mixing. This study aims to fill this gap by examining these practices among Ogba speakers.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. We selected participants through purposive sampling, concentrating on Ogba speakers in both urban and rural settings. We collected data through audio recordings of natural conversations and in-depth interviews. We transcribed and analyzed the recorded conversations using the MLF model and discourse analysis techniques. Matrix Language Frame Model (MLF): Proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993), this model suggests that one language serves as the matrix language, providing the grammatical structure, while the other language (the embedded language) contributes lexical items. To fill speech gaps, bilingual speakers can use words or phrases from another language. We refer to this as the embedded language (EL). The embedded language contributes words, expressions, or even grammatical features that may be lacking in the matrix language. MLF explains how bilinguals seamlessly

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switch between their languages during speech. Code-switching occurs when a speaker shifts from the matrix language to the embedded language, or vice versa, within a single conversation or even sentence.

MLF helps researchers identify typical patterns in how bilingual speakers use their languages. For example, in a conversation where English is the matrix language and Spanish is the embedded language, a speaker might start a sentence in English and then switch to Spanish to express a concept for which they find English inadequate. Researchers use MLF to study language dominance, language mixing, and how bilinguals manage and control their languages in different contexts. It's a tool to understand the fluidity and complexity of bilingual speech. In essence, the Matrix Language Frame Model provides a structured way to analyze how bilinguals navigate and use their languages in everyday communication, shedding light on the dynamic interplay between their linguistic repertoires.

Key Concepts of the MLF Model

Matrix Language (ML): This is the dominant language in a code-switched utterance, providing the grammatical framework. In the case of Ogba, the ML would be Ogba itself if the community predominantly uses Ogba grammar structures in mixed utterances.

Embedded Language (EL): This is the secondary language that provides lexical items or content morphemes within the ML structure. In Ogba, this could be English, Pidgin English, or any other language that influences Ogba through borrowings or code-switching.

Content Morphemes vs. System Morphemes: Content morphemes are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that carry the core semantic load of the utterance. System morphemes are grammatical markers like tense, pluralization, and prepositions. According to the MLF model, the ML provides most of the system morphemes.

Application of MLF Model to Ogba

Structural Analysis

To apply the MLF model to Ogba, one would need to analyze the code-switched sentences produced by Ogba speakers. The analysis would involve:

Identifying the Matrix Language: Determining whether Ogba or another language provides the grammatical structure in mixed utterances. For example, if an Ogba speaker frequently uses Ogba syntax while incorporating English nouns and verbs, Ogba would be considered the ML.

Identifying the Embedded Language: Noting which language's lexical items are being inserted into the ML framework. Commonly, this might be English or Pidgin English.

Examining Morpheme Types: Differentiating between content and system morphemes to see how they align with the ML and EL. For instance, if the pluralization markers and tense markers are predominantly in Ogba, it further supports Ogba as the ML.

Applying the Matrix Language Frame Model to Ogba allows for a systematic analysis of code-switching phenomena, highlighting the interplay between grammatical structures and lexical borrowings. This approach can reveal how Ogba integrates elements from other languages while maintaining its grammatical integrity, providing insights into the dynamic nature of bilingualism in Ogba-speaking communities.

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4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Patterns of Code-Mixing and Code-Switching
Preliminary analysis indicates that Ogba speakers frequently switch between Ogba and English, especially in urban areas where English is the language of education and administration. Code-switching often occurs at sentence boundaries, while code-mixing is common in informal conversations among peers.

Code-Mixing: Code-mixing is the practice of blending elements from two or more languages within a conversation or discourse. This can involve mixing words, phrases, sentences, or even entire sections of speech from different languages. Code-mixing is commonly observed in multilingual communities like Ogba where speakers have proficiency in multiple languages and switch between them fluidly depending on context, audience, or topic.

1) Informal Conversation/ Setting
Code-Mixing
(1) Ogba/English: "Osima, ime bia the party tomorrow? It will be fun!"
Translation: "Osima, are you coming to the party tomorrow? It will be fun!"
(2) **Ogba/English** Person 1 Ajie
Person 2 Akum
{Person 1} "Akum, Inu la that Mazi zuru mala the land di la village finally"
{Person 2}" Ehn, Ajie is true anu la ma. Oku cha pu la ugwo"
{ Person 1} "That is great news and O ne me for ko ka village kie bulebuli"

Translation:
{Person 1} "Akum, have you heard that Mazi has finally bought the land in the village?"
{Person 2} "Ehn, Ajie is true and has finished paying."
{Person 1} " That is great news, and it will bring development to the village."
(3) **Ogba/English:** "Ka iye je Ogumabri market for the fresh fish"

Translation: "Let's go to Ogumabri market for the fresh fish"
(4) **Ogba Speaker 1:** "Nda la kpi di ? Did you finish your assignment?"
(5) **Ogba Speaker 2**: "Ee, mala, it was very difficult. I had to call my friend for help."
Translation: Speaker 1: "How are you? Did you finish your assignment?"
Speaker 2: "Yes, but it was very difficult. I had to call my friend for help."
2) Classroom Setting:
(6) Ogba/English: "Today, we will learn about photosynthesis. Ọ bụ process nka plants use to make their food."

Translation: "Today, we will learn about photosynthesis. It is a process that plants use to make their food."
3) Market Setting
(7) Ogba/English: "How much is this tomato? Ọ bụ chni azo , please reduce the price for me."

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Translation: "How much is this tomato? Next time, please reduce the price for me."
Family Setting (at home):
(8) **English-Ogba** "Biko, bring that thing come for me."
Translation: "Please, bring that thing for me."
Explanation: "Biko" is an Ogba term meaning "please," used widely in Nigerian English. "Come" is used here in a Nigerian Pidgin English way to indicate completion of the action.
Media or Entertainment:
(9) **English-Ogba (in a song):** "I go praise the Most High, Osa."
Translation: "I will praise the Most High, God."
Explanation: "Osa" is a term used in Ogba to refer to God.

Advertisement or Public Announcement:
English-Ogba (in a flyer):"Join us for the Igwu iji (New Yam Festival) on August 10th."
Translation: "Join us for the Igwu ji (New Yam Festival) on December 10th."
Explanation: "Igwu iji" is an Ogba/Igbo term for the New Yam Festival, used in an English context to promote a cultural event.

Code – Switching: Code-switching refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation. It can occur within a single sentence, phrase, or even word. Code-switching is a common phenomenon in multilingual communities where speakers have proficiency in multiple languages or dialects and choose to switch between them based on context, audience, or social setting. In code-switching, speakers switch between languages at sentence boundaries or during different parts of the conversation. Let us look the following examples:

4) **Informal Conversation/ Setting.**
(1) Ogba Speaker 1: "Nda la kpi di?"
English Speaker 1: "I'm fine, thank you. How about you?"
Ogba Speaker 1: "Adim nknoma. La utune , I went to the market."
English Speaker 1: "What did you buy?"
Ogba Speaker 1: " Aznụrụ m iji, ụknwa, and some vegetables."

Translation:
Speaker 1: "How are you?"
Speaker 2: "I'm fine, thank you. How about you?"
Speaker 1: "I'm fine. This morning, I went to the market."
Speaker 2: "What did you buy?"
Speaker 1: "I bought yam, breadfruit, and some vegetables."
This conversation illustrates a basic exchange where the Ogba speaker shares information about their recent activity (going to the market) and what they purchased, while the English speaker responds with questions to understand more about the Ogba speaker's experience.
(2) Ogba: "A dim lo kle , how are you?"
English: "I'm fine, thank you. How was your day?"
Ogba: " A dim koma, I had a very busy day at work."

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Translation:
Ogba: "Hello, how are you?"
English: "I'm fine, thank you. How was your day?"
Ogba: "It was fine, I had a very busy day at work."
The structure of the conversation indicates an initial greeting and inquiry about well-being, followed by a response and a brief discussion about the day's events.

(3) **School Setting:**
Teacher (English Speaker): Did you finish your homework?
Student (Ogba Speaker): Ee, eme ko la ma. But I had trouble with question three.
Translation: Yes, very well.
Teacher (English Speaker): Okay, let me help you with that.
Student (Ogba Speaker): Mbana, Miss. Thank you.
Translation: Thank you.

"Ee" typically means "yes" in Ogba. "Eme ko la ma" in Ogba can be interpreted as "very well" or indicating that the task was completed satisfactorily. Thus, "Ee, eme ko la ma" translates to "Yes, very well."The student is affirming that they completed their homework satisfactorily but is also indicating that they encountered difficulty with question three. The translation "Yes, very well" captures the essence of the Ogba response but omits the additional context about the difficulty with a specific question. "Mbana" means "Thank you" in Ogba. Thus, the student is expressing gratitude in both Ogba and English, reinforcing their appreciation for the teacher's help.

(4) **Market Setting:**
Customer (English Speaker): How much for these tomatoes?
Vendor (Ogba Speaker): Nye, ọ bụ iri la uku naira. They are one hundred naira.
Translation: My friend, this is hundred naira.
Customer (English Speaker): Can I get a discount?
Vendor (Ogba Speaker): Ị bụ onye ezukoma ahịa kem, m me ni gi ya la iri naira. Because you are our good customer, I will give it to you for ten naira.
Translation: You are our good customer; I will do it for ten naira.
In the conversation, the vendor initially quotes the price of the tomatoes as one hundred naira. When the customer asks for a discount, the vendor offers to sell the tomatoes for ten naira, highlighting the customer's status as a valued customer.

5. Religious Setting:
Context: A pastor delivering a sermon in church.
Ogba and English: Pastor: "Osa ni ga-enye ndu ọhụrụ osa ụbọchị. Let us always give thanks to Him."
Translation: "God gives us new life every day. Let us always give thanks to Him."
The pastor uses both Ogba and English to cater to a diverse audience. The pastor's message is about acknowledging and appreciating God's continual blessings, using a blend of Ogba and English to effectively communicate with the entire congregation.

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6. Healthcare Setting:
Context: A doctor speaking to a patient in a hospital.
Ogba and English: Doctor: "Ị di la-ira ọgwụ nde eni dị ka m kwuru? It's important for your recovery."
Translation: "Are you taking those medications as I prescribed? It's important for your recovery."
The doctor is asking the patient if they are adhering to the prescribed medication regimen, and emphasizes that doing so is crucial for the patient's recovery. This statement underlines the importance of following medical advice for effective treatment and healing.

7. Social Gathering:
Context: Friends chatting at a social event.
Ogba and English: Friend 1: "Ị di la-eme hne di nk'ọma la di hnia. I'm proud of you!"
Translation: "You are doing well over there. I'm proud of you!"
In this context, **Friend 1** is expressing their admiration and pride for the accomplishments or progress of their friend, acknowledging that they are performing well in whatever they are engaged in, possibly in a different location or context ("over there"). The use of both Ogba and English indicates a bilingual conversation, which is common in multilingual societies.

8.Workplace Setting:
Context: Colleagues discussing a project in an office.
Ogba and English: Colleague 1: "Okrikiti, kiye ene mne meeting la ụtụne. Make sure ị kwadela."
Translation: "Okrikiti, we will have a meeting in the morning. Make sure you are ready."
In this context, Colleague 1 is informing Colleague 2, referred to as "Odogwu," about a scheduled meeting the next morning and emphasizing the importance of being prepared for it.

9. Family Setting:
Context: A parent talking to their child at home.
Ogba and English: Parent: "kini la mere ka ikwụsịri ije ụlọ ekwụ? You know you need to focus on your studies."
Translation: "Why did you stop going to school? You know you need to focus on your studies." This indicates the parent's worry about the child's academic commitment and the need to address any issues that might have led to the child discontinuing their school.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the study of code-switching and code-mixing among Ogba speakers provides valuable insights into the dynamic nature of language use and identity construction. Through examining how Ogba speakers navigate between languages in different contexts, we have observed a complex interplay of cultural, social, and linguistic factors at play. This phenomenon not only enriches our understanding of linguistic behavior but also underscores the significance of language as a medium for personal expression and social interaction. As we continue to explore these phenomena, it becomes increasingly evident that languages like

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Ogba are not static entities but living, evolving systems that adapt to meet the communicative needs of their speakers in diverse and evolving environments.

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