

CODE-MIXING AND CODE-SWITCHING AS FOREGROUNDING TECHNIQUES IN OJO-ADE AND SANUSI SELECTED NOVELS

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Abstract

In academic writings and literary creations, code-switching and code-mixing are writing techniques used in all fields of human learning and literature, with holy books such as the Bible and Qu'ran leading the way. These are writing techniques used to highlight specific sections of a text that the writer wishes to highlight. Over the years, critics have studied Ojo-Ade's "*Les paradis terrestre*" (*Paradis*) and "*Les rêves d'une jeune fille*" (*Rêves*), as well as Sanusi's "*Le bistouri des larmes*" (*Bistouri*), with less attention paid to the role code-mixing and code-switching as writing techniques play in the presentation of the writers' thematic concerns. As a result, the purpose of this research is to investigate the role of code-mixing and code-switching as foregrounding techniques in the novels chosen by Ojo-Ade and Sanusi. Close reading is used to collect data that has been interpreted by Arnold's twentieth-century theory of foregrounding, which serves as methodology for the study of data subjected to linguistic analysis. The study contends that in the creation of the text, English and Yoruba single linguistic units and expressions, which also appear in proverbial forms, act as forms of code-mixing and code-switching by emphasising socio-cultural, socio-economic, and socio-political realities. The study concludes by arguing that foreign language insertions at the level of code-mixing and code-switching not only serve as stylistic tools in ensuring cohesion and foregrounding of thematic concerns, text milieu, and the author's socio-linguistic exposure but also contribute to the aesthetics of the texts in general.

Keywords: Code-Mixing, Code-Switching, Foregrounding, Technique, Aesthetics

Introduction

The phenomenon of code-mixing and code-switching, otherwise known as code alternation (CA), is a powerful language strategy existing in all linguistic communities of the world, especially in bilingual communities. The roles of language in code alternation as documented by Ohia & Adeyinka (2016) include interaction as an instrument of thoughts, the creation and keeping of records, and the seeking and giving of information in a particular social setting. Code-mixing involves the use of two or more linguistic codes (languages) in a sentence or an utterance, whereas code-switching involves moving from one language (linguistic code) to another in an utterance or a discourse (Ogundokun, 2013). Amuda (1986) opines that code-alternation is one of the literary features that many bilingual African writers employ to narrate their stories and dramas. He further stresses that writers and speakers switch from their language of narration to another for reasons of stylistic or literary effect.

Code-switching and code-mixing have also been perceived in different ways by writers and have attracted a lot of critical attention in recent times, especially in socio-linguistics, owing to their foregrounding effects as cohesive elements in meaning projection. While Grosjean (1982) defines code-switching as the use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation, Araromi (2016) defines it as communicators using more than one language when performing speech acts. According to Bello (1999), it is a complete shift or change from one language to another. Switching of codes in speech is also classified as tag switching (insertion of a tag of one language in an utterance that is entirely in another language), inter-sentential (a switch in the level of a sentence where each sentence is in one language or the other), and intra-sentential (switching of different types occurring within the sentence boundary). Ogunsiji (2004) maintains that "code-switching therefore takes place intra-sententially while code-

mixing takes place inter-sententially." These are verifiably manifested in the selected texts.

Ojo-Ade's *Les paradis terrestres* (*Paradis*) and *Les rêves d'une jeune fille* (*Rêves*) as well as Sanusi's and *Le Bistouri des larmes* (*Bistouri*) are replete with code-mixing and code-switching in meaning projection. Whereas code-mixing involves the insertion of foreign registers into the French texts in the context of this study, code-switching involves a complete abandonment of the language of expression in the texts. When used with the African language, it also takes the form of proverbial expressions to emphasise a specific thematic thrust. Three languages are essentially deployed in the texts of the writers: Nigerian official English, French, and Yoruba. The usage of these languages goes further in identifying the implication of these languages in meaning projection and the role of language in general in communication processes as foregrounding tools.

Textual Analysis

There are instances of code-switching as well as code-mixing in the selected texts. In *Les paradis terrestres* and *Les rêves d'une jeune fille*, Ojo-Ade's use of code-switching and code-mixing through the insertion of English and Yoruba lexemes and expressions in the French narratives following the exposure of the writers to these languages is evident. The use of the English expression in *Paradis* serves as a point of identification in the context, depicting the narrator as an Anglophone who has studied English literature prior to his arrival in Concorde. In *Rêve*, code-mixing is found mainly with French and other closely related languages such as English and pidgin, while code-switching is often done in Yoruba (the mother tongue of the writer), where the author has a mastery as his L1 (first language), and interpretation in the form of transliteration is carried out.

In Ojo-Ade's *Paradis*, there is a mixture of Yoruba and English words and expressions that serve stylistically in the form of code-switching and code-mixing to establish the polyglot nature of the author. The insertion of English expressions "Ladies and Gentlemen" (p. 27) and Yoruba "Pékélé-Pékélé" (p. 70) are very instructive from a stylistic point of departure. The use of "Ladies and

gentlemen" by the narrator before making an allusion to Shakespeare in *Paradis*, foregrounds the writer's exposure to and influence of English literary works in his writing. The expression foregrounds the audience addressed by the speaker in the texts as well as depicts the speaker as a bilingual linguist in the French text. In Ojo-Ade's *Rêves*, code mixing is carried out with the insertion of Nigerian pidgin. Among the various examples that abound in the text is "cest ton wahala" [it's your wahala] (p. 30). Wahala in the context of the French text is a Nigerian Pidgin word used as a noun with the French impersonal expression "c'est." The use of these two lexemes from different languages to construct a single sentence brings to the fore the use of code mixing by the writer, a Nigerian who grew up in Lagos, an area where Pidgin is easily accessible to all and sundry.

Ojo-Ade's *Rêves*, in terms of code-switching, highlight some socio-cultural realities in everyday Nigerian Yoruba society. Among the various switches are "Ro ile to ti jade o" (p. 45), which literarily means "think about the home you came from," but is translated by the author as "think about your root." The expression was used by the narrator's parents when instructing her before her departure the following day to boarding school. This is often the case in Africa when children are about to leave home to learn a trade in a particular place or go find greener pastures. Expressions like the one recorded in the proverbial expression are often used as parting words from parents to their children. In the case of *Rêves*, the use of the expression "Ro ile to ti jade o" has dual meanings. Literally, the expression addresses moral issues concerning the African child's behaviour. It also emphasises the need for prudence and a constant remembrance of one's humble home and beginning. This becomes relevant as it helps to mold one's character and behaviour to avoid all forms of embarrassment capable of bringing disrepute to the family name. For the adult who is successful, expressions of this nature help keep one in check to avoid all forms of pride and arrogance as a result of contemporary success. This is often used by the elderly to address and call to order an erring child of a community who is on the verge of becoming a law unto

himself or herself. Thus, as a reminder of one's root and origin, the expression also foregrounds the futility of fighting against one's own kin.

Code-switching in the texts is not done in isolation. Some of the identified instances of code-switching are discovered to have been characterised and interchanged with proverbial expressions. Proverbs are the palm oil that lubricates African conversation. The use of proverbs in the Yoruba language establishes the Africanity of the text and the author while strengthening various arguments from time to time in various situations. One of such verifiable examples is recorded below:

Aisi nile ologbo, ile dile ekute. p.56
(Yoruba)

Le chat sorti de la maison, les souris
viennent jouer sans faire attention
p.56 (French)

When the cat is away, the mouse
comes to play without paying
attention. (English)

In the excerpt above, code-switching is used by the author to underline important information concerning disorganization in the absence of constituted authority. This code-switching is informed by the theft of the Chemistry teacher, Mrs. Ewele, following the corresponding destruction of properties and disruption of academic activities for the day by the final-year students. The speaker's choice of the local equivalence of the proverb, which is to serve as a foregrounding tool, is of stylistic importance. The use of "Aisi nile ologbo, ile dile ekute" underlines the condemnation of such vices in the indigenous culture of the African people. This deliberate attempt to insert the African manner of condemning such vices reveals the African stand against all forms of corruption and manipulation perpetrated by Miss Ewele, the chemistry teacher. As the author emphasises and admonishes African academics about the importance of arriving at their duty posts on time, it reveals the state of lawlessness made possible by the absence of constituted authority. This also underlines the fact that the unavailability of concerned administrators in African schools will not only result in the undue exploitation of students by corrupt teachers like Miss Ewele but also a disaster through protests that are capable of destroying the greater good of

African schools' images, academic structures, and amenities. More so, the deployment of the local version of the proverb, which is later interpreted by the author, embellishes the richness of the indigenous language in condemning vices. Underscoring this vice in society through the use of code-switching from French to Yoruba is a matter of cultural values as far as the context of culture is concerned. Also, the vehement condemnation of corrupt practices with the appropriate proverb further depicts the African people as enlightened on issues concerning morals. Such condemnations reveal the African continent as a promoter of good morals as enshrined in the culture of the African people.

The Yoruba lexicons *Awonajatisa!* (Chien de Prof: the teacher's dog) (p. 100), *Tooto* (en vérité: truly) (p. 101) are another example of code-switching used in the text to underline verbal insult and smearing between students in school. The Yoruba lexicon used in the above was necessitated by the need for a derogatory utterance in the text. The expressions were used during a heated argument between the narrator and her colleagues. The argument resulted as a result of the narrator's intention to correct her colleagues, who decided to apply makeup after the reprimand of the teacher. Using such a derogatory comment on the narrator by her colleagues was intended to humiliate and smear her for trying to behave like a good child from a goodly home, heading to the advice of her parents before her departure from school. The dog of the professor calls the narrator and depicts her as a domestic pet who will do the bidding of her master like a regular puppy, such as defending her owner in the midst of trouble and assaulting anyone who poses a danger to her owner.

Contrary to the above example where Yoruba lexicon is simply used for verbal insult and passing of derogatory comments, another important code switching in the text is *omoale!* [bastard] (p. 131). The Yoruba linguistic lexicon in the context above has a dual meaning in its usage within the Yoruba linguistic community. The lexicon "omoale" is often used as a playful statement among peers during interaction to foreground their satisfaction with the behaviours and actions of one another in an informal setting. However, apart from the informal, playful usage

among peers, the meaning of the Yoruba lexicon is often used as a derogatory remark to spite people whom others believe are acting contrary to the general norm and expectation of the society. This kind of expression is often popular when interests clash among people from the same Yoruba language community. A typical example is the recent usage of this expression to designate Yoruba-speaking people believed to be working against the interests of the Yoruba community.

The usage of the foreign Yoruba lexicons in the French text (*rêves*) reflects the writer's socio-linguistic background, which manifests in the creation of the text by adding aesthetics to the text in the form of introducing local colour. This method can be said to have been used to accommodate the thoughts of the writer in his local language as well as stretch the colonial language in reflecting socio-cultural, ethical, and moral issues as realities among Africans on the African continent. This method is used intentionally, as exemplified by the author, to further capture the African continent as a place where high moral standards are maintained, contrary to the colonialist perspective of Africa as a dark continent where no good can be found except cannibalism and savagery (Le Clézio, 2004). Also, the use of Yoruba expression as code-switching marks the text out as unique as it adds aesthetics to the work and also depicts the writer's origin as a Yoruba.

Unlike Ade-Ojo's code-switching, which entails the usage of Yoruba lexicon stylistically used to foreground the Yoruba cultural milieu of the text, Sanusi's selected text, Bistouri, varies with respect to the concept of code-switching and code mixing. Capitalization as a technique of foregrounding in literary text is combined with English lexicons that make up phrases and clauses in French text. A typical example of such a combination is recorded in the excerpt below.

Un général, c'est fait pour défendre le pays mais au Nigara les Généraux sont fait pour amasser illégalement les derniers publics et c'est ce qu'ils font le mieux. Ils ne savent pas combattre et comment sauront-ils le faire quand ils ont des ventres pleins comme des margouillats prêts à poudre ? Les

femmes, les boissons, le jeu de polo, c'est à leurs domaines compétences. Un musicien africain, que l'on traitait de drogué et de fou à l'époque, disait bien sur la vérité quand il appelait ces généraux : VAGABONDS IN POWER. *Bistouri*, p.135

A general is made to defend his country, but in Nigara the generals are made to amass public funds illegally, and that is what they know to do best. They do not know how to fight, and how would they, when they have gecko stomachs about to drop down? Women, drinks, and polo games, are their areas of expertise. An African musician that we considered a drug addict and a fool of the decade, spoke well concerning the truth when he called these generals "VAGABONDS IN POWER."

The conscientious use of code-switching by the author at the end of the long description of African dictators in the context above stylistically contributes to the aesthetics of the text while foregrounding the theme of corruption and dictatorship. The English expression VAGABONDS IN POWER gives a comprehensive summary of the effect of African dictators over the years and explains the overwhelming cause of retarded development on the continent. The leadership of the country captured in the excerpt above is described as aimless, with no sense of direction for the country they preside over as leaders. The leadership is described as lacking a sense of direction and a coordinated plan of action that will create progress. In the above context, code-mixing and code-switching act as cohesive elements and as a foregrounding tool in the text, highlighting the writer's unusual thematic concerns as the writer deviates from the thematic thrust of female genital mutilation to dictatorship and corruption, the two destructive identical twins on the African continent, responsible for the woes and slow development of the African continent. Thus, through the foregrounding of linguistic elements in the phrase in the excerpt above, the ills of dictatorship that developed into a norm on the

African continent immediately after independence from colonialism are condemned and brought to the attention of the readers.

The discourse of dictatorship in Africa is not independent of itself. Transferable dictatorship is also underlined in the text of Sanusi through the technique of code-switching and code-mixing. An example of this reality is portrayed through the English expression ON THE PLATTER OF GOLD (p. 137). Though the expression underlines the electoral process, it depicts a rigged system where the recipient of a government position made little or no effort in acquiring power in a normal democratic electoral process. The expression suggests that the political successor in this context is a recipient and partaker of the spoils of corruption and dictatorship. Also, from a linguistic point of departure, the English expression inserted in the French text goes a long way to underline the writer's socio-linguistic exposure and his interaction with the English language in his immediate milieu. This is emphasised further by a breakdown of their activities, which include amassing public funds, womanising, and playing games for fun.

Conclusion

The authors' use of code switching and code-mixing in the selected texts analysed in this study underscores the fact that the technique serves as a foregrounding cohesive tool in meaning

projection. Three languages are used in the creation of the texts. These include French, the official language in the writing of the text, English; and Yoruba, used as borrowed languages serving as code-mixing and code-switching, respectively. The use of code-mixing involves the insertion of singular linguistic units or groups of words that constitute phrasal expressions in the selected texts.

The usage of the borrowed words and expressions foregrounds the thematic thrust of the writers at particular junctions of the text as the readers' attention is drawn to that particular section of the text, especially when proverbial expressions are used. The usage of the techniques in the selected text is also significant in foregrounding the milieu of the texts. The insertion of Yoruba lexemes and expressions is mainly used among African audiences in the African milieu to foreground the milieu of the text in *Les rêves d'une jeune fille* and *Le bistouri des larmes*, whereas the use of English words and expressions is used to reflect the English milieu of Concorde in *Les paradis terrestre*. They also aid the reader in understanding the socio-linguistic background of the writers of the texts. These insertions of foreign languages thus serve not only as stylistic tools in ensuring cohesion and foregrounding of thematic thrust, the text milieu, and the author's socio-linguistic exposure, but also contribute to the aesthetics of the texts in general.

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