



Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Kemi Adetiba's Nigerian Nollywood Movie: "Wedding Party 1"

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Abstract

Code-switching and code-mixing are linguistic phenomena where speakers alternate or blend multiple languages or language varieties within a conversation or text. These practices are prevalent in multilingual societies, such as Nigeria, and are often depicted in the Nigerian film industry, known as Nollywood. This study aims to explore the extent, patterns, and sociolinguistic motivations behind code-switching and code-mixing in Nollywood, with a focus on the movie *Wedding Party 1* by Kemi Adetiba. A qualitative analysis of the script and dialogue from *Wedding Party 1* was conducted to identify instances of code-switching and code-mixing between English, Nigerian Pidgin, and various indigenous Nigerian languages. The study also examined the sociolinguistic factors influencing these language shifts. The analysis revealed three primary forms of code-switching: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. These occurred across English, Yoruba, Nigerian Pidgin, and, to a lesser extent, Igbo. The analysis reveals that the key sociolinguistic motivations for these switches include the creation of humour, assertion of cultural identity, facilitation of intimacy, signalling of social class, and enhancing the authenticity of interpersonal exchanges. Notably, Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba were used strategically to convey familiarity and solidarity, while English was often reserved for formal or status-marked interactions. These findings highlight how *The Wedding Party 1* not only reflects Nigeria's complex multilingual landscape but also positions multilingualism as a resource for narrative humour, cultural representation, and audience engagement. The study contributes to the growing body of work on Nollywood's linguistic creativity, offering insights for comparative studies in global multilingual cinema.

Keywords: Code-Switching, Code-Mixing, Nollywood, "Wedding Party 1", Nigerian Pidgin

Introduction

Nigerian Nollywood films have emerged as a potent medium for showcasing the country's rich cultural diversity and multilingual landscape. Nigeria boasts a wealth of linguistic diversity, encompassing over 500 indigenous languages alongside English, which serves as the official language and primary medium of education. Additionally, Nigerian Pidgin has evolved into Nigeria's most widely spoken language, used by individuals across all social strata (Osoba 2014: 26). Consequently, a substantial portion of the Nigerian populace is bilingual, with many being multilingual, particularly in English and one or more indigenous languages. Language, as a fundamental aspect of human existence, plays a pivotal role in Nollywood productions, which entail the totality of activities taking place in the Nigerian film industry, irrespective of the language(s) deployed in their movies, English, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo or any of Nigerian languages (Anyengbo 2012: 1). Kemi Adetiba's "Wedding Party 1" serves as a notable example of the dynamic interplay of Nigerian multilingual linguistic landscape, switching, and blending of English and Nigerian languages, notably Yoruba, the dominant language of Lagos where the film is set, as well as Nigerian Pidgin, a lingua franca born from the interaction between English and various Nigerian indigenous languages. Pidgin holds particular significance in everyday communication, especially within popular culture. The film not only enthrals audiences with its narrative but also showcases a unique linguistic tapestry that mirrors the contemporary linguistic landscape of Nigeria.

This paper investigates the use of code-switching (CS) and code-mixing (CM) in the film, focusing on their prevalence, patterns, and sociolinguistic motivations. It aims to explore the significance of these linguistic phenomena in depicting the social realities of contemporary Nigeria. The study addresses fundamental questions regarding the extent and patterns of CS and CM in the film, the sociolinguistic motivations driving these language

shifts, their influence on identity construction and cultural representation, and their broader implications for the global film industry.

Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

The term "Code-Switching" (CS) encompasses various interpretations among scholars. While some, such as Kachru (1981:28) and Sridhar (1978:111), assert a distinction between CS and CM, others, including Valdes-Fallis (1978:63) and Haugen (1979:21), perceive no categorical difference between them. For instance, Muysken and Appel (1988:118) view code-mixing as a form of code-switching, specifically as "Intra-sentential code-switching" (1988:118). Sridhar delineates the disparity between the two by elucidating that while CS denotes the alternate usage of languages across distinct social or functional domains, CM occurs more frequently and spontaneously within a single social event or text, even within a single sentence (1978: 111). Accordingly, CS implies a change in language use prompted by situational variations. For instance, a bilingual individual may employ English to discuss politics and then transition to Yoruba for family matters.

Conversely, CM involves the simultaneous use of multiple languages within the same situation. For example, one might alternate between English and Yoruba while discussing a singular topic, such as politics. Notably, code-mixing tends to occur more frequently within a single sentence.

Contrarily, Haugen's definition (1979:21) perceives no distinction between CM and CS, encompassing everything from introducing a single foreign word to incorporating complete sentences from another language into the context of the primary language. Similarly, Muysken and Appel (1988:118) regard code-mixing as "intra-sentential code-switching," thus subsuming it under C-S. This study adopts the convention that treats CM as a subset of CS.

CS and CM manifest in bilingual individuals because they possess multiple languages, allowing for concurrent use or blending in conversations. These terms are closely intertwined, both being characteristic of language contact situations. Structurally, the key distinction lies in the position of the altered elements: for CS, modifications occur inter-sententially, whereas for CM, they occur intra-sententially. Appel and Muysken (2006) identify three types and six functions of CS. The CS types are:

1. Inter-sentential Code-Switching: switches occurring between sentences.
2. Intra-sentential Code-Mixing: switches within the same sentence.
3. Tag Switching: involving an exclamation, tag, or parenthetical in a language different from the rest of the sentence, for example, "Okay, ògá!" (Okay, boss) We have a week to go."

The six functions of CS include:

1. Referential Function: facilitating discussions on topics where one language may be more suitable.
2. Directive Function: Directing communication towards the interlocutor.
3. Expressive Function: Emphasising a mixed identity through language usage.
4. Phatic Function: Using language metaphorically to convey meaning.
5. Metalinguistic Function: commenting on the languages involved.
6. Poetic Function: Employing bilingual language usage for artistic expression.

Furthermore, CS serves to express identity and solidarity, as individuals may resort to their mother tongue to affirm cultural ties. It can also be an interjection or exclamation to convey emotions in different languages (Natalia, 2022, p. 37).

Previous studies have explored CS and CM in various media forms. Anindita (2022) analysed CS and CM in the movie "Luca", identifying different types and functions of code-switching. Similarly, Hendryani, Paramortha, and Juniarta (2021) examined CS in the Indonesian movie "Bridezilla," while Amriani, Sahayu, and Faizal (2023) investigated the use of CS in the Indonesian film "Imperfect". Natsir, Sunrah, and Abdullah (2020) also researched CS in the Trilogy of Haibi and Ainun movies, identifying various functions. Monti (2014) examined CS in British and American films, emphasising its significance in character development and plot progression. Arrizki, Mutiarsih, and Sopiewati (2020) analysed code-switching and code-mixing in the film "Tokyo Fiancee" by Stefan Liberski, identifying the languages used and the functions served. Natalia (2022) conducted a similar analysis of CS in the movie "Ali and Ratu Ratu Queens", emphasising the role of background and setting in shaping code-

switching occurrences. This study is an effort to highlight the significance of this linguistic phenomenon in different contexts, in this case, Lagos, Nigeria, as depicted in the movie "Wedding Party 1".

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). Initially developed as Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT), CAT offers a comprehensive framework for examining linguistic adaptations in both intercultural and interpersonal communication contexts (Dragojevic, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2016). CAT asserts that individuals actively modify their speech patterns, linguistic styles, and communication behaviours to either mitigate or enhance social distance based on their interpersonal and group-level objectives (Giles, 2016; Dragojevic et al., 2016). These modifications are not merely linguistic but are intrinsically tied to social and psychological processes, reflecting speakers' motivations, identities, and relational dynamics (Soliz & Giles, 2014). CAT identifies two principal strategies: convergence and divergence. Convergence involves adapting one's communication style to align more closely with that of one's interlocutors, often to cultivate rapport, solidarity, or social acceptance (Giles, 2016). This strategy is typically underpinned by a desire to augment interpersonal attractiveness or to facilitate effective communication (Dragojevic et al., 2016).

In contrast, divergence accentuates linguistic or communicative differences to reinforce social boundaries, assert distinct group identities, or signal social status (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Divergence is frequently employed to uphold in-group membership, assert dominance, or resist assimilation into the linguistic norms of another group (Soliz & Giles, 2014). Within this framework, code-switching (CS) is interpreted as a strategic form of convergence. When speakers engage in CS, they may do so to forge a connection with their audience, express solidarity, or conform to the communicative norms inherent to a specific social context (Myers-Scotton, 2006). For example, characters operating within multilingual environments might utilise CS to bridge cultural divides, enhance relatability, or indicate a shared identity (Auer, 2005). Conversely, divergence through CS might serve to underscore social hierarchies, assert cultural uniqueness, or reinforce in-group boundaries by adhering to a particular linguistic code (Gumperz, 1982). An extension of CAT, Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT), delves deeper into the motivations underlying linguistic adjustments, including code-switching. SAT posits that speakers' actions are influenced by interpersonal goals and broader social and contextual variables (Giles et al., 2016). Code-switching can be strategically employed to achieve particular communicative effects, such as humour, irony, or formality, or to navigate complex social positioning during interactions (Coupland, 2007). This theoretical expansion highlights the multifaceted nature of code-switching, characterising it as a dynamic tool for managing social identities, power dynamics, and relational outcomes (Dragojevic et al., 2016). By employing CAT alongside its extension in SAT, this study aims to elucidate the nuanced roles that code-switching plays as a communicative strategy within intercultural interactions. This framework provides a robust lens through which to analyse how speakers navigate linguistic diversity, negotiate social identities, and achieve their communicative goals through strategic accommodation or divergence (Giles & Ogay, 2007). In doing so, it enriches the discourse surrounding code-switching as a linguistic phenomenon, illuminating its broader sociolinguistic and psychological implications within multilingual contexts (Myers-Scotton, 2006). In conclusion, Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory, complemented by the insights derived from Speech Accommodation Theory, provides a comprehensive lens for examining the motivations, strategies, and outcomes associated with code-switching in intercultural communication. This study leverages these theoretical frameworks to investigate the interplay between linguistic behaviour, social identity, and communicative objectives, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the role that code-switching plays in shaping interpersonal and intergroup dynamics.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the sociolinguistic features of *The Wedding Party 1*. Qualitative methods are particularly well-suited for discourse analysis because they enable close attention to context, nuance, and meaning. The focus here is on identifying patterns of code-switching and code-mixing as they occur in the film and interpreting their functions within the cultural and communicative setting of the narrative.

Data Source

The primary data for this study is Kemi Adetiba's *The Wedding Party 1*, a 110-minute romantic comedy released in 2016. The film is significant for both its commercial success—becoming the highest-grossing Nigerian film of its time and later streaming on Netflix—and its rich multilingual dialogue. The plot revolves around the wedding between Dunnii Coker, the daughter of Yoruba parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bamidele Coker, and Dozie Onwuka, the son of Igbo parents, Mr. and Mrs. Felix Onwuka. The events surrounding the ceremony reveal diverse

interpersonal and societal dynamics, making the film a rich source for analysing multilingual practices such as code-switching and code-mixing.

Data Collection

The film was accessed through YouTube and carefully viewed multiple times. Relevant dialogues and song lyrics containing instances of language alternation were transcribed verbatim. Transcription included not only the words spoken but also contextual features such as shifts in speaker, speech setting, and audience reactions. From the full dialogue, only scenes where English, Yoruba, Igbo, or Nigerian Pidgin were alternated or blended were selected for further analysis. This purposive sampling ensured that the data reflected the central phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing.

Criteria for Identifying Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

Instances of code-switching were identified when a speaker alternated between two languages across sentence boundaries (inter-sentential) or within the same sentence (intra-sentential). Code-mixing was identified in cases where elements of one language were embedded into another, such as the use of single words or short phrases in Yoruba or Igbo within predominantly English sentences. To ensure consistency, these classifications followed established sociolinguistic criteria (e.g., Bokamba, 1989; Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Data Analysis

The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, transcribed excerpts were coded according to type of alternation (inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, or code-mixing). Second, each instance was interpreted in terms of its communicative function. For example, switches were examined for their role in signalling identity, indexing cultural belonging, conveying humour, mitigating conflict, or reinforcing social hierarchy. This interpretive process combined thematic categorisation with contextual reading of the dialogues. Coding was done manually by reviewing transcripts line by line, highlighting language alternations, and grouping them under functional categories. The qualitative approach allowed attention to both the micro-level linguistic features and the macro-level sociocultural meanings embedded in the film's discourse.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical obligation involved in understanding cultural and linguistic representations is taken into consideration in this study's analysis of Wedding Party 1. Nigeria's rich multilingual and multicultural landscape is reflected in the film, and the study aims to treat these depictions with cultural respect. Care has been taken not to privilege one language or ethnic group over another, but rather to highlight how code-switching and code-mixing foster inclusivity, humour, and authenticity in cinematic storytelling.

Additionally, since the data were drawn from a publicly available film, no direct human subjects were involved, thereby minimising issues of confidentiality or consent. Ethical obligation, however, also includes ensuring that interpretations do not perpetuate prejudices or misconceptions regarding Nigeria's linguistic and cultural diversity. This study honours the agency of Nigerian filmmakers and viewers in creating and understanding their own cultural narratives by placing the language practices of the film within larger sociolinguistic and cinematic trends.

Discussion

Wedding Party I abounds with instances of code-switching and code-mixing, wherein characters seamlessly transition between English, Yoruba, Nigerian Pidgin, and occasionally Igbo. When examined through the lens of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), these linguistic shifts reveal how characters actively negotiate identity, manage social distance, and express emotion by converging with or diverging from their interlocutors. Several motivations underlie this phenomenon:

Social Identity and Group Affiliation

Code-switching and code-mixing operate as accommodation strategies that foreground social identity and group affiliation. Characters adjust their speech to signal ethnicity, class, and solidarity. For instance, elite Lagos circles such as the Onwukas predominantly converse in educated English, aligning with their cosmopolitan identity, while the Cokers frequently code-switch between English and Yoruba, reflecting cultural pride and inclusivity. Nigerian Pidgin typically emerges in interactions involving working-class or less-educated characters, marking social boundaries. Here, convergence is often at play: speakers adjust their codes to be understood and accepted within their immediate group. The playwright employs code-switching and code-mixing as stylistic devices to accurately portray diverse local situations in the film, reserving pure English for formal contexts.

Illustratively, Harrison, the driver, deploys Pidgin in conversations with Yemisi, the Best Lady, highlighting his educational and social background while converging toward a lingua franca that bridges class differences. Additionally, scenes featuring the Onwukas and the Cokers demonstrate distinct language choices based on their social status and educational backgrounds. Similarly, chants in Yoruba or Igbo during significant wedding moments serve as maintenance strategies, reaffirming ethnic identity even in a multilingual space. However, such accommodation may hinder the understanding of non-speakers, suggesting underaccommodation toward audiences unfamiliar with Nigerian languages. For instance, nuances in language choice may be lost in translation, affecting the audience's comprehension of subtle meanings conveyed through code-switching.

The Yoruba song:

Wón ní retí éléya re o
wón kóra jo láti fi ó se yéyé
wón ní e kò mò ju ilé àdúrà ló lójoojúmó
wón ní ó tún ti ní ló...

is an instance of code-switching in a Yoruba song in the movie, serving as a means to slur perceived enemies and express vindication by God. The song highlights the negative hopes and anticipations of enemies who gather to await misfortune to befall the singer, emphasising the singer(s)' reliance on prayer to overcome adversities. The lack of interpretation for non-Yoruba speakers watching the movie prevents them from grasping the messages these code-switched songs convey. To enhance international acceptability, efforts should be made to provide gloss interpretations of such code-switched content.

Additionally, Iya Michael, depicted as a local chef with limited education, communicates in Pidgin to convey her message to the Event Manager, whom she perceives as unfamiliar with the Yoruba language. Her use of Pidgin reflects her social and educational background and is a pragmatic choice for effective communication. It is a convergence strategy because she assumes the Event Manager cannot understand her Yoruba language, and she is unable to speak English. The Pidgin thus serves as a middle ground of communication between them. She declared:

'Wetin you wan make I do? Tell me, wetin you wan make I do?' (What do you want me to do? Tell me, what do you want me to do?)

'The money wey dem give me for food don finish!' (The money they gave me for food has finished!)

Emotional Emphasis and Attitudes

CAT also illuminates how code-switching indexes emotional intensity, heightening the impact of expressions such as anger, frustration, surprise, or excitement, particularly in heated conversations or moments of astonishment. Bilinguals often revert to their L1 when expressing heightened emotions. Tinuade Coker, the bride's mother, exemplifies this in "Wedding Party I," using a combination of English and Yoruba phrases to convey her emotions throughout the movie. In scene 2, at her family house, while preparing for the wedding ceremony with her friends, Tinu's attention is drawn to a Society Wedding glossy magazine featuring her daughter. Upon seeing her daughter's picture, she excitedly exclaims in Yoruba. She repeats the same expression in English: "Wò ó, qmø mi, look at my daughter," only to express disbelief when informed that her name was omitted from the announcement. Her exclamation in Yoruba, "Níbo? Iró ni, láyé" (What do you mean? That cannot be true, never!) is a poignant expression of her disbelief. However, she later consoles herself with the affirmation that her daughter is indeed getting married, a code-mixing of Yoruba and English: "Qmø mi ti fé marry" (My daughter is getting married). This code-switching authenticates emotional states, effectively depicting the character's feelings and enhancing the play's engagement.

Bilingual individuals often express deep-seated emotions in their primary language, and using Yoruba in such contexts aligns with observed conversational norms. Additionally, these linguistic choices offer insight into Tinu's strong connection to her Yoruba background, where emotions are often expressed through elaborate verbal and nonverbal means. When the couple is delayed due to a G-string found in Dozie's pocket, Tinu exclaims, 'Mo kú o, yéé!' (I'm dead! Yeh!) r' Mo da ran' (I'm in trouble). She went further to sit on the floor to express her panic. Seeing this, Uju condescendingly says Tinu is creating a scene. This further aggravates Tinu's anger, wondering why Uju should be more concerned about decorum when their children have been kidnapped! To show her anger towards Uju, though knowing she does not understand Yoruba, Tinu switched to Yoruba in her outburst, 'Kò ì tán, Ó kù' (This is not over! There's more to come). This aligns with a divergent use of CS. Tinu's intention here

is not inclusivity. She, therefore, did not feel the need for Uju to comprehend her. However, to show her happiness at seeing her daughter, she spoke English, 'Dunni, you got me troubled.' She was interested in being understood. She switched again to Yoruba to give thanks to God for the return of her daughter; 'Mo dúpé lówó Olórún' (I give thanks to God). The switch to Yoruba to express gratitude shows how emotionally invested she is in what God has done.

Demonstrating how code-switching is utilised to convey annoyance, Felix Onwuka, the groom's father, who rarely engages in code-switching, reproaches his wife for her rudeness towards Tinu. He expressed his disapproval in Igbo...

'Obianuju, kpachara anya gi,' (behave yourself)

'Obianuju, Obianuju, Obianuju, ugborole ka un kporo gi? (How many times did I call you?). Calling her thrice is a typical way of conveying caution with deep-seated emotion, which can be more effectively expressed in Nigerian languages. Moreover, it appears he code-switched to prevent others from hearing him reprimand his wife. This is an interesting form of CS for convergence. Though the expression was a reprimand, the switch to Igbo, hence the divergent use of CS for others, has a convergence effect on Uju, who was reprimanded because the Igbo language conveys oneness in the context.

The bride, Dunni, also expressed anger when she complained about the change of caterer in scene 9, and her mum was trying to calm her down as she was leaving, saying, 'Dunni, ni súru u' (Dunni, have some patience). She returned and raised her voice in anger; 'Kí ni mo sò?' (What did I say?) 'What did I say?'. Dunni expressed her anger, rhetorically asking her mother if she said anything. Considering that Dunni mostly speaks English, the CS of Yoruba and English in her retort must have been influenced by the need to reach her mother at an emotive level by speaking Yoruba since her mother, Tinu, speaks Yoruba mostly, while, in the same breath, expressing same in English serves to express her deep feeling about the situation. To connect with her friends, Tinu switched to Yoruba, asking her friends to help plead with Dunni; 'E dide, e lọ bè é fún mi' (Go and plead with her for me). 'Mo dáràn' (What have I done? I'm in serious trouble now!). This instance of CS is aimed at convergence. Tinu aims to acquire the support of her friends to calm her daughter down.

Another deep emotion that influences CS is affection. Dunni's parents code-switch to show affection when Tinu complains about the driver's rough driving on the way to the reception venue and accidentally reveals that she has Panla soup in the car. Code mixing Yoruba and English, she says - 'Hà rora rora, kiló de?' (Take it easy! What's wrong with you?) 'Do you want my panla soup to pour?' Surprised, her husband asked if Panla soup was in the car. Tinu insisted that the soup is particularly packed for Dunni, being her favourite. When she assures him that he will be served the Panla soup, he is so pleased that he expresses his affection for her by saying- 'Hàhà iyàwó mi, olorì of the universe' (My wife! Queen of the Universe!). This CS for affection achieves convergence.

Other instances of various emotion-driven CS in the movie include when the driver, Harrison, asks Dunni in Pidgin if they should proceed to the reception venue after the G-sting problem was settled, saying, 'Madam, make we dey go wedding?' (Madame, should we proceed to the wedding?), (Harrison does not distinguish between the wedding and the reception) Dozie, who ordinarily does not use Pidgin, reports in excitement: 'Make we dey go wedding! Drive! Drive!' (Let's proceed to the reception ceremony! Drive! Drive!). Dozie's switch to Pidgin achieves convergence with the driver, enabling him to respond to his directive.

To express her displeasure that the groom's parents would be the first to be ushered in at the reception, Tinu exclaimed: 'Níbo!' (Where on earth!) 'Why is she going in first?' 'Who is paying for the wedding?' To which one of her friends exclaimed, 'àbí o!' (Can you imagine!). The outbursts of emotion expressed in the exclamations' Níbo!' and 'àbí o' are done in Yoruba, establishing convergence between the speakers, with the latter agreeing with the former.

Iya Michael, the local food caterer, expresses deep satisfaction when she realises the guests prefer her food. She taunted the other caterer, saying- 'Iyá Michael local food ló gba ke' (Iya Michael local food wins the trophy) 'Madam Continental food, Iyá Michael food ni wón fé' (Continental food caterer, the people want Iya Michael's food). All said with an air of pride and mockery of the elite caterer, revealing her deep-seated feelings. This achieves divergence between the two caterers.

Lukman, the thief who sneaked into the venue of the event, said with deep resentment in Pidgin while holding the boys at gunpoint, 'Instagram Boys! àwón ti Snapchat. If you see me for road, you go notice me?' (Elite boy! Would you have given me any recognition under normal circumstances?). Lukman's switch to Pidgin is intentional because the movie reveals he is educated. It serves a divergent purpose between Lukman and the elite boys. Using standard English would have portrayed him as less dangerous.

In the last scene, when all issues had been resolved, the groom's father exclaimed in happiness, 'Cha cha cha cha cha Igbo kwenu! (Attention! Igbo voices unite!) 'Igbo kwenu!' (Igbo voices unite) 'Ke Zwenu!' (Unite in agreement) 'Yoruba kwenu' (Yoruba voices unite). The choice to switch to Igbo to express this joy of success also highlights the value of CS in conveying deep emotions. The Igbo traditional way of calling a gathering to order before a speech is used in this scene to show general convergence. The all-inclusiveness is expressed by substituting 'Igbo' for 'Yoruba' in 'Yoruba Kwenu!' In support of this, the Yoruba song of joy and declaration of victory is sung- 'Gbàbòde, Orí mi ò gbàbòde' 'Jesu jòó, má jé kí wón rí mi mí' '**Ka ye mi ni yo ganetc** (A prayer for victory and happiness)

Humour/Playfulness

The film also uses accommodation for comic effect. Characters exaggerate convergence or overaccommodation to generate humour. The film thus employs CM and CS for comic effects. Juxtaposing English with Nigerian language phrases can create humour through wordplay or misunderstandings. For example, Tinuade affectionately told the husband, 'Olówó orí mi, ale nobody' (My legal husband; concubine to nobody). This draws a parallel with the Yoruba saying 'Olówó orí mi, ale ẹlòmíràñ' (My legal husband; concubine to someone else), switching 'ẹlòmíràñ' for 'nobody' in the phrase is both comic and affectionate in a naughty way. Keying into the lively mood, Bamidele called her, 'My wife, the Olori of the universe' (My wife, Queen of the universe).

Overaccommodation is observed in characters like Harrison, the driver, whose failed attempt at speaking standard English sounds more like Pidgin. At the scene where Dunnii's gown got torn, Harrison exclaimed to someone consoling Dunnii that the gown could be managed, saying, 'No o, it's like thunder fire banana tree!' (No! It's as bad as a banana tree struck by thunder). This offers comic relief in the tense situation. He offers to invite his tailor to repair the gown, saying: 'Àbí, I should call my tailor?' (Or..., should I call my tailor?). This is hilarious, considering the wedding gown's quality and the class difference between them. Harrison attempted to speak standard English to achieve convergence with the social class of the bride. He, however, only manages something which sounds more like Pidgin with flashes of English.

Ayanmale, another comic character, also used CM to convey humour, making the movie a delight to watch. When asked to show his invitation card or (access) chip to let him in, he exclaimed- 'Chip! kí ló ní jé béké? Chip?' (Chip? What's so called?). To which the wife said humorously- 'Daddy wa, bó yá plantain chips' (My dear, maybe she means plantain chips). The humour in this exchange lies in the ignorance of Ayanmale and his wife, whose only knowledge of a chip is plantain chips (a popular Nigerian snack made of fried unripe plantain). The wife thus suggests that the chip required as a gate pass is a plantain chip.

When Deardre Winston, a white character, surprises others by accurately naming Yoruba dishes, the humour arises from unexpected convergence across racial and cultural lines. She accurately requests 'Two wraps of Àmàlà, ewédú, pònmó, sàkì, roundabout', creating some humorous surprise, indicating that code-switching into a language assumed to be alien to someone generates amazement and surprise. Such is the amazement she expressed when Iya Michael, the local caterer, realised that the event planner, who had been speaking English with a British accent, suddenly began to speak fluent Yoruba. 'sépé o gbó Yorùbá?' (You do understand Yoruba?) 'Se pe o le so Yoruba?' (So you can speak Yoruba?). This surprising realisation that the event planner has only been pretending to speak the prestigious form of English as a strategy of convergence with the elite society is both humorous and revealing of the value of language in shifting perception.

In the final scene, when the security personnel eventually apprehended Ayanmale, one of those who sneaked into the party and brought him to the event manager, she switches to Pidgin. She replies to the security man- 'Now after work, don finish' (Now, after the job is done?). Then, turning to Ayanmale (Saka) and his wife, she switches to Yoruba, saying, 'E jòó sir, e jòó ma, e ló máá jó dádáá' (Please sir, please ma, you can go and dance to your fill). The Event Manager later says in exasperation- 'Hell of a party!' To which Ayanmale replied- 'Má sò béké mó. igbadun unlimited'. (Don't say that again. This is real-life unlimited enjoyment). These events portray the event planner as a multilingual whose choice of language is determined by its expediency. This is true of most CS in the movie, as choices of language, which are not restricted by the inability to speak them, are determined by the purpose to which the speaker chooses to put them. One could see, though, that the event planner is Yoruba because it is in Yoruba that she speaks to herself, revealing her secret about borrowing the wig she wears. She removes her wig, smells it to reveal an afro hairstyle and says- 'Hùn, wígí oní wígí' (Hmm, borrowed wig).

It is essential to highlight the English spoken by Reverend Leke from Ado-Ekiti. Although he speaks English, his speech is so heavy with a Yoruba accent that it adds humour and realism to the play. One is tempted to consider this as the CM of different levels of two languages. In this case, English is at the lexical, semantic, and syntactic levels, whereas Yoruba is at the phonemic, tonal, and intonational levels. The various forms and functions of CS

and CM, as depicted in the movie, accurately reflect the sociolinguistic reality of Nigeria, ensuring authenticity and realism in the film.

Reflection of Multilingual Realities of the Nigerian Society

Viewed through CAT, the film reflects Nigeria's multilingual environment, where convergence to contextually appropriate codes facilitates smoother interaction. Many individuals are comfortable navigating between multiple languages depending on the context. Incorporating multiple languages and dialects aims to create a more authentic and inclusive representation of society by showcasing the complexities of the contemporary multilingual environment, cultural intricacies, and navigating social hierarchies. Thus, this focus on Nollywood movies sheds light on beliefs, norms, traditions, sensibilities, and cultures, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity.

For instance, in scene one, where a motorcyclist conveying the wedding invitation nearly collides with a truck pusher, we hear the motorcyclist cursing in annoyance, saying, 'Wèrè, kí ló dè?' (Mad man! What is it?). This exemplifies the play's Lagos, Southwest Nigerian setting, where individuals respond to untoward happenings, especially while driving, with cursing and abuse.

Additionally, the best man, Sola, exclaims pitifully, 'Eyaa pèlé, pèlé' (Sorry, sorry), when he sees the looks of the individual initially designated to be the best man after the motorcycle incident. This depicts a normal mode of consoling by a typical Yoruba individual, who naturally feels that the English word "sorry" is not representative enough to convey one's feeling of empathy for someone met by a misfortune.

Furthermore, Uju and her friends, including her husband, use acrolectal English to reveal their social status as the sophisticated, educated elite, the crème de la crème. The incorporation of CS in songs also ensures realism. For example, Flavour's song 'Ada Ada', a mixture of Pidgin and Igbo languages, aptly depicts the cultural background of the groom's parents. Hence, choosing such a song for their entrance to the reception is highly appropriate for the situation. Similarly, the Yoruba song 'A gberé wa dé, awa ló lodù orin tuntun' by Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, a prominent Yoruba musician, is relevant to the bride's parents and depicts their culture.

The context in which the event manager switches from her British English accent to Yoruba is typical of a character's ability to navigate between different languages. The fear of failure and a desire to earn the favour of Iya Michael, the Yoruba speaker, compelled her to switch to Yoruba, corroborating this message with the non-verbal act of kneeling. Interestingly, this represents the play's most extended instance of CS and CM.

Iya Michael, e jòjó, mo ff Olórùn oba bè yín. E şàánú mi. Jòwó, màámi, e şàánú mi, e jòjó. E ún ọmá jé kojú tì mí byíí. Isé mi niyí, e dè mò pé àwọn people yíí, they can do and undo anytime. E kàn ràn mí lówó díè. E má bá mi se oúnje díè tím tím. Ìwòba tí e bá lè şe ni ki e şe. Mo lè wọ kitchen ní sín sín yíí. Màá bá yín sè é. Mo kàn ní manage ara mi ni. Mo wá gbaşé ni, ịyá mi e jòjó. (Please, please, Iya Michael, I beg of you, in the name of the Almighty God, have mercy on me. Please don't put me to shame. Can you hear me? This is the only work I have, and you know these rich people can do and undo anytime. Please just assist me. Help me cook small food? Just a little? If there's anything you can do, please do it. I will enter the kitchen now and cook with you. I'm trying to manage the situation).

She exclaimed further after Iya Michael's surprise statement about her ability to speak and understand the Yoruba language, 'Mo fé promise yín, eni job wey I get eh? Na we get am—London o, US o. (I want to promise you something. Any job I get, we will do it together! London! U.S...) E jé kí n gbé bag yín' (Let me help you carry your bag).

Character Development and Power Relations through Communication Accommodation

Code-switching and code-mixing in the film do more than add linguistic flavour; they become strategies of accommodation that shape character identities and expose underlying power dynamics. According to Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), speakers adjust their language through convergence, divergence, or maintenance to manage social distance, express identity, or negotiate power. The film effectively demonstrates these strategies, utilising language choices to define characters' personalities, social standing, and relationships.

Deirdre Winston, the white lady, illustrates the use of convergence to bridge cultural gaps. Her Yoruba greeting to the bride's father—"E kááró sir" (Good morning, sir)—and her request for Nigerian cuisine are not casual choices. They represent deliberate linguistic and cultural alignment with Nigerian norms. Through convergence, Deirdre positions herself as humble, respectful, and desirous of acceptance in a community foreign to her. CAT highlights this as a strategy to reduce social distance, and in her case, it also constructs her character as open,

adaptable, and endearing. Her statement about waiting for a "Nigerian prince charming" reinforces this self-presentation as someone willing to integrate into Nigerian social life.

In contrast, Iya Michael's consistent use of Yoruba signals maintenance—a refusal or inability to linguistically shift toward dominant codes such as English. This choice reflects her uneducated, working-class background and roots her identity firmly in local culture. However, when challenged by the event manager in Scene 8, she temporarily shifts into Pidgin English. This is a form of downward convergence, where she adapts her language to a perceived shared denominator that allows her to assert her presence and authority. However, her body language—ignoring protocol, slipping into comfortable slippers, and throwing her bag at the event manager—demonstrates divergence, resisting elite social expectations even as she converges linguistically. CAT thus helps us see Iya Michael as both marginalised and defiant: she converges when recognition is at stake but diverges to maintain dignity and autonomy.

These contrasting strategies expose broader power relations in the film. CAT emphasises that accommodation is rarely symmetrical; it often flows along hierarchical lines. Elite characters typically expect others to converge to them, while figures of lower status—such as Harrison or Iya Michael—must shift their speech to gain visibility or legitimacy. Deirdre's convergence is portrayed positively because it is voluntary and stems from privilege, while Iya Michael's accommodation is more constrained, tied to survival within unequal social structures. In this sense, the film dramatises CAT's central insight: accommodation is not merely a communicative act but also a reflection of power, ideology, and social hierarchy.

When questioned about what had brought her to the venue, Iya Michael looked down at the event manager, changed into a pair of slippers that would allow her easy movement, and threw her bag at the event manager. She continued to instruct her workers, not minding the presence of the event manager, by saying—

‘Èé! Ayò, sé gbogbo nkán tó wà ní nu móto lé ti kó sílè?’ (Ayo, have you brought out everything from the car?)

‘Má jé kí gbègìrì yén dà nù o, Sunday’. (Don’t let anything spilt from my bag.)

‘E nìṣó ní ìṣàlè lóhún’. (Keep going. All of you).

Furthermore, to douse the tension created by Tinu's change of caterer, Yemi told the angry bride.

‘Which kain cry be dis wey no get water?’ (What's up with the crocodile tears?)

‘Do you guys remember when your Mum carried panla stew all the way from Nigeria to Southampton?’ This portrays Yemi as an excellent friend to Dunn, demonstrating her ability to curb her excesses and manage any situation wisely, even if it involves street wisdom, as seen in her handling of the ex who came to add insult to injury.

Sola, the best man in his tipsy state, revealed Dozie's philandering character in the pidgin code-switched item.

‘Dozie dons register for this town sa’ (Dozie has registered for many courses in this town). ‘He get like multiple semester’ (He has had multiple semesters). ‘Sometimes including combined lectures’ (Sometimes combined lectures). However, it must be noted that although Nigerian viewers could deduce the meaning of this pidgin expression, it may pose challenges to non-Nigerian viewers, as it employs the register of the university academic calendar to reveal Dodzie's character humorously.

Audience Engagement

Audience engagement is also significantly enhanced through CS and CM, especially for Nigerians familiar with the linguistic interplay. This linguistic phenomenon allows the audience to appreciate the humour, social nuances, and emotional weight conveyed through language choices. A notable example of this is the use of code-switched songs to ensure audience engagement and portray the mood of the scene: 'On Top of Your Matter' by Wizkid, 'Let Them Say' by King Sony Ade, 'Ada Ada' by Flavour and 'Èyín temí báwo ní o' by Yinka Aiyele. These are hit songs in Nigeria. Their choice makes the movie more appealing to viewers. However, the song rendered by Tinuade and her friends during the church service –'Wón á ṣagolo d'Abújá' (They will pick thrashed cans to Abuja) which was interpreted as a 'Praise Worship Song' is actually a song directly rendered as a curse to their perceived enemies, and more precisely, Lady Uju, the groom's mum. The song implies that they will run mad, and this will manifest in the act of picking trash to a far-off place, such as Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria.

Reiterative Function

CS and CM also serve a reiterative function when utterances are repeated across different sentences and languages to convey the same meaning. In such instances, bilingual individuals may intermittently employ both languages in which they are proficient to ensure better understanding for the audience or listeners. Examples of this phenomenon can be found within the movie:

The bride's father says, 'è Káàbò, welcome!'. E Pele. Well done to Deardre Winston and Yemisi when they enter his house. Both languages in the expressions convey the same meaning. Also, while admiring her daughter's picture and beauty, Tinu exclaims, "Wo omo mi. Look at my daughter."

When Tinu's friend reads the wedding ceremony announcement from the glossy magazine, providing information about the couple's parents, she is asked to continue after reading statements from the groom's parents and the bride's father. Tinuade responds, 'Mo í gbó, read on, I am listening.' She concludes with, 'That is the end? Ó ti táń?'. Expressing her frustration over her daughter's indignation towards her change of caterer, Tinu asks, 'What did I do? Kí ni mo se?'. Attempting to control the noisy behaviour of other uninvited guests at the gate, Ajanmale asserts, 'Ariwo yín tí pò jù! You are making too much noise!'. Finally, to ensure a timely appearance at the church, Tinu urges the bride and her friends, saying, 'Come, let's go. Óyá Óyá Óyá'.

Patterns of CS in the Play

The movie is heavily dominated by CS and CM, featuring characters with Yoruba and Igbo backgrounds and varying social/educational levels. The patterns of CS identified are tag switching, intrasentential switching and Intersentential switching. We will examine these three types.

Tag Switching

Tag Switching refers to forms of code-switching that involve an exclamation, a tag or a parenthetical in a language other than the rest of the sentence. Examples in the play include-'Hábà! Let them say'. 'Hábà' is a term of exclamation in the Hausa language, which has become a lexical item in Nigerian Pidgin. This is an exclamatory tag switch. Some samples show exclamations and parentheticals; 'That's the end, Ó ti táń!', 'Uju, I know that woman is responsible for this, Á dè gbà!' (I will show her!) 'Mother of the groom, my foot, Á dè gbà! (I will raise hell!). 'My wife, the Olori of the universe' (The Queen of the universe). 'Kí ni mo sò? What did I say? 'Come let's go, Óyá Óyá Óyá'. 'Béení, ọkọ mi' (Yes, My husband). 'Our own, nkó?' (What about us?). 'Jòó now, be compassionate' (Please! Be compassionate).

Intrasentential Switching

Intrasentential switching refers to switches that occur in the middle of a sentence. Examples in the play include 'Ein o, but, Kí ló dé?' (What happened here?); 'Omo mi ti *marry*.' (My daughter is getting married)'Olówó orí mi àle nobody' (My crown, my dear); 'Dunni, ní sùrù, (Duni, have some patience!); 'Make we dey go wedding, *drive, drive*'; 'Madam Continental Food, Iya Michael food no n fe, let me use your plate!' (Madame Continental, they don't want your food. So I'm going to take your plates).

Intersentential Switching

Intersentential switching refers to switches that occur between sentences. Examples in the play include- 'Why are their pictures bigger than our own? As if they were the ones paying for the wedding. Sé ó dáa béké?' (Is it fair?); 'Which kain cry be dis wey e no even get water?' (What's up with the crocodile tears?); 'Ha han so, you were forming before?' (So what's with the pretence?); 'Hà hà róra róra, kí ló dé?'(Take it easy? What's wrong with you?). Do you want my panla soup to pour?"Where are they? Oya oya oya.' (Come on! Come on!) 'Dunni, you got me troubled. Mo dúpé lówó Olórún' (I thank God* not translated in the movie); 'The money wey dem give me for food don finish.' (The money they gave me for food has finished); 'Se o gbadun?' (Are you well at all?). These different patterns of C-S and C-M further reveal the preponderant usages and proper depiction of sociolinguistic patterns of language use in Nigerian society, thus contributing to the creation of realism in the play.

Conclusion

The manifestations and purposes of code-switching and code-mixing in Kemi Adetiba's Wedding Party 1 were investigated in this study. The results showed that the movie frequently employed inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching, as well as code-mixing, for sociolinguistic functions such as humour, identity formation, cultural indexing, and power negotiation. These linguistic patterns, which reflected the multilingual and dynamic realities of Nigerian culture, were not haphazard.

Beyond the specific cinematic setting, Wedding Party 1's use of code-switching reflects a larger Nollywood trend: the growing acceptance of linguistic hybridity as a means of expressing authentic stories and a symbol of cultural identity. In addition to reflecting standard communication norms, Nollywood films showcase Nigerian multilingualism on a global scale by letting characters switch between English, Yoruba, Igbo, and Nigerian Pidgin with ease. This puts Nollywood in line with broader global film trends, where multilingualism is increasingly admired for its authenticity and capacity to connect with a diverse range of viewers across linguistic and cultural divides.

The implications extend further to the politics of representation. By utilising linguistic diversity as a resource, Nollywood challenges monolingual cinematic norms and asserts African voices in the global film discourse. The success of Wedding Party 1, both at the Nigerian box office and on international streaming platforms, suggests that global audiences are receptive to multilingual cinema when it is seamlessly woven into the narrative and performance.

To determine if code-switching is employed differently in response to the narrative's needs, future research could expand on this study by comparing linguistic patterns across other Nollywood films, particularly within genres such as comedy, drama, and action. Studies on audience response may also help understand how viewers from other countries, including Nigeria, perceive and react to these language changes. The global relevance of code-switching as a cinematic technique can be further clarified by comparing Nollywood to other multilingual film industries, such as Bollywood or the Latin American film industry.

All things considered, Wedding Party 1 demonstrates how Nollywood addresses complex issues of communication, culture, and identity in a bilingual society, while also providing entertainment. Its inventive use of code-switching and code-mixing highlights how language shapes social reality and cinematic art.

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