

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC EXPLORATION OF LANGUAGE USE AND IDENTITY IN NOLLYWOOD: A STUDY OF FUNMILAYO RANSOME KUTI



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ABSTRACT

This study explores language use and identity in Nollywood's Funmilayo Ransome Kuti. The study hinges on the theories of Language Vitality and Domain of Language Behaviour. The research obtained data for the study through qualitative (content analysis of the film) method. Findings reveal that the exclusive deployment of English, and/or its code-switched admixture with Yoruba, within the domestic sphere—as evidenced in interactions between the protagonist and her husband, as well as with their children—and its further deployment within the palace setting, is suggestive of an underlying trajectory of language shift and incipient language endangerment. However, the researcher also noticed that the use of Yoruba proverbs, Yoruba in majority of the scenes depicts that the producer identified with his native tongue. This study recommends that other scholars may analyse language choices in Nollywood films about Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti by focusing on some sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender, and education, and how they reflect social stratification.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics; Language Use; Culture; Language Identity; Nollywood.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language exists among humans hence it cannot be separated from the users, their culture and traditions. The language in use in a speech community will always portray the culture of its users. People generally identify with the language they speak. It is almost impossible to sever a community from their language. “Language is implicated in most of the phenomena that lie at the core of social psychology: attitude change, social perception, personal identity, social interaction, intergroup bias and stereotyping, attribution, and so on” (Krauss and Chiu, 1993, p.2). Thus, language is an embodiment of culture.

Language, culture and identity are interwoven. When your language is not recognised, it means your culture and race are not recognised. Parajuli (2021) states that, “language is one of the determiners of understanding people's culture in the world. When a speaker communicates in a particular language, people may speculate about the origin, nationality, culture, religion and ethnicity of the speaker as language reflect embedded cultural identities of people within a language.” Language, according to Hall (1997, p.21), “is the privileged medium in which we 'make sense' of things, in which meaning is produced and exchanged”. It is a medium of communication that is exclusive to human beings. Although, animals communicate, they do not use language to communicate. Language is only used among people.

Again, language is inseparably linked to the culture of any race. We use language to portray our culture. Language reflects culture. For instance, Fishman (1999, p. 69) posits that, “when we take away the language of a culture we take away, “its greetings, its curses, its cures, its praises, its laws, its literature, its songs, its rhymes, its proverbs, its wisdom, and its prayers”. Culture has been defined in so many ways by some scholars. Lee Su Kim (2003) defines it as a set of beliefs, values, norms, customs, traditions, rituals, and a way of life that differentiates one group from another. According to Taylor (1958, p. 400), “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by human beings as a member of society. People hand down their culture from one generation to another through language. Therefore, language and culture are like two sides of a coin. They are dependent on each other. When a language dies, the culture embedded in that language also goes into extinction.

Furthermore, Fishman (1999, p. 921) defines, “identity as who you are; individuality; the condition of being a certain person. In the social sciences, identity is defined as the way that individuals label themselves as members of a particular group; in psychology, it refers to an individuals’ self-esteem or self-image.” Shahrehabaki, (2018, p. 221) rightly puts it that: “the language we learn as children at home is formative of our identity; we cannot quickly change it or replace it. Owing to the fact that language learning serves as a tool for the realization of one’s identity in varying social environments, it is a reflection of our socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, nationality and so many other aspects of speakers’ identities. This shows language is a reflection of which group we belong to. Language reveals our cultural identity. These definitions of language, culture and identity have shown their interconnectivity in relations to every speech community. Human beings express their identity and culture through language and if their language is not recognized, it means the people themselves are not appreciated. This is the major reason sociolinguists try as much as possible to study the maintenance or otherwise of human language from one society to another. The maintenance of a community language is equivalent to the preservation of the people and their culture.

One cannot sufficiently talk about code switching and code mixing without referring to bilingualism and multilingualism. European Commission (2007, p.6), defines multilingualism as “the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives”. This definition shows that multilingualism can occur at individual and societal level. Individual multilingualism occurs when a person can speak at least three languages while societal multilingualism is a situation in which more than three languages are in use in a community. Code switching and code mixing can only occur among bilinguals or multilinguals.

Many scholars have defined code switching in different ways. Ezech, Umehand, Anyanwu (2022, p. 67), posit that, “Code switching is basically the juxtaposition of two languages in a spoken discourse which involves transferring from one code to another in communication; while code-mixing uses two or more codes in a single utterance”. Quay and Simona, (2019, p.548) define it as a “natural phenomenon in many multilingual societies, where speakers use multiple languages within the same interaction for stylistic reasons – to quote, interject, specify addressee and reiterate or explain a message, but also to express a variety of socio psychological affiliations”. Crystal (2003, p.78) opines that code switching is “the transfer of linguistic elements from one language into another: a sentence begins in one language, then makes use of words or grammatical features belonging to another”. Clyne (2000, p.89) also defines it as “the alternative use of two languages either within a sentence or between sentences”. Code-switching is the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of

passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. (Gumperz 1982, p.68).

People code switch because of so many reasons. Trudgill (2000, p.105) mentions that ‘speakers switch to manipulate, influence or define the situation as they wish and to convey nuances of meaning and personal intention’. People also code switch in order to exclude some from their conversation. They also code switch to identify with people from their clan. In a class setting, for example, a teacher may choose to code switch in order communicate efficiently with their students so that there will be perfect understanding of the subject discussed.

Code mixing, on the other hand, has also been defined in various ways. For example, Kachru (1978, p.28) refers to it as “the use of one or more languages for consistent transfer of linguistic units from one language into another and by such a language mixture, developing a new restricted or unrestricted code of linguistic interaction”. Crystal (1997, p.66) also defines it as a linguistic behaviour that “involves the transfer of linguistic elements from one language into another.” Gumperz (1978, p.56) posits that “code -mixing is a type of borrowing, where, depending on various linguistic factors, speakers borrow items of various sizes.”

Poplack (1980) has categorized code-switching into three:

- Inter sentential code switching: Kiaowanich, Intanoo and Prachanant (2003), define this type of code switching as “the practice of switching between languages at the ends of sentences, where a specific point is expressed in the opposite language”.
- Intra sentential code switching: “This is the alternation of single words of phrases to clauses within a single sentence or utterance”. (Kartika, Harida, Arifin, 2020).
- Tag Switching: “Tag-switching entails adding a tag, such as a well-known exclamation or interjection, in a language different from the body of the utterance or text.” (Kiaowanich, Intanoo and Prachanant, 2003).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Language use in Nollywood film is interesting as it reflects the language situation in Nigeria. Most of these films feature the use of different languages such as English, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Nigerian Pidgin English. However, many scholars have criticized Nollywood’s negative representation of the Nigeria cultural value and identity. For example, Asogwa, Onoja and Ojih (2015) criticize Nollywood for portraying the negative aspects of Nigerian culture. They argue that Nollywood’s use of foreign themes and plots have led to a misrepresentation of the Nigeria’s indigenous cultural values. Floribert Patrick C Endong (2022) in his article titled, “Nollywood Films, Foreign Media and the Nigerian Image Crisis: A Systematic Review, also criticized Nollywood films for corroborating foreign films by negatively portraying Nigeria as a place of conflict and poverty.

Nevertheless, the researcher noticed that sociolinguistic implication of language use and identity in Nollywood film is under-explored. The pattern of language use has implications on character development, authenticity of the film and audience engagement. Nollywood producers frequently employ English—a language of foreign origin—or resort to code-mixing and code-switching in contexts where the exclusive use of an indigenous language would conventionally be anticipated. It is therefore imperative to critically examine the extent to which such linguistic choices reflect and construct characters’ identities, as well as to investigate the sociolinguistic implications that filmmakers’ language selections engender for the indigenous languages spoken within the Nigerian context.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to:

- i. Identify the languages and language varieties used in Nollywood's *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti*
- ii Find out the features of sociolinguistics that are prominent in Nollywood's *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti*
- iii discover the pattern of language use in Nollywood's *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti*

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The study is hinged on two major theories, namely; Language Vitality theory and the domain of language behaviour. Language Vitality was propounded by Howard Giles, Richard Bourhis and Donald Taylor in 1977. According to Roach (2017, p.193), "Language vitality is an indicator of a language's sustainability, and of the extent to which intervention is needed for its maintenance. Vitality is not a property of a language itself, nor of a population who speaks a language, but rather a description of the relationship between a language, its speakers, and its wider linguistic, social, and political context". Language vitality is suitable for this study as it speaks to how a community values its language as a marker of cultural identity. The domain of language behaviour as postulated by Fishman (1965, p.2) stipulates that, it is possible to have different language behaviours depending on the topic, interlocutors and the settings. Although, many works refer to Fishman as the source of the use of domain in sociolinguistic contexts, Fishman (2013) refers to Schmidt-Rohr, who in 1932 worked with expatriate Germans in multilingual environments, as the one who first spoke about domains. According to Schmidt-Rohr, there are nine domains of language, namely: the family, the playground and the street, the school (subdivided into language of instruction, subject of instruction, and language of recess and entertainment), the church, literature, the press, the military, the courts, and the governmental bureaucracy. Fishman (1972) stresses that Schmidt-Rohr's domain taxonomy (the family, the playground and the street, the school, church, etc.) was advanced and similar to others which have been put forward during the 1960s. (Lauren, Myking and Picht, 2002, p.24). The domain analysis model is also a suitable model for data analysis in this study since it is based on (character's) speakers' choice of language at different settings (domains) such as home, hospital, school, palace, and market.

5. METHODOLOGY

The analysis of language and identity in Nollywood films was approached through the qualitative research method. The film was viewed and its audio content carefully listened to, following which the researchers transcribed and analysed it using the theory of Domain of language behaviour. The content of *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti* was analysed to provide unique insights into how the film reflects the pattern of language use at different settings (at home, in the market, at the palace, at the hospital between the protagonist and her children) and the portrayal of the Yoruba language, culture, and the sociolinguistic features found in the film.

6. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Data Presentation

6.1.2 Synopsis of the Film

The film on the biography of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was a Nollywood Film, produced by Bolanle Austen-Peters in collaboration with Terra Kulture in May, 2024. The films portrayed the biography of an iconi activist- Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. The film was inspired by true life event that took place from 1900 to 1955 in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

The video began with an elderly woman, (acted by Joke Silva) recounting the invasion by the military men of the house of her son, Fella Anikulapo-Kuti in 1977. During this invasion, she was thrown down from a storey building which later led to her death a year later in 1978. The film also revealed the teenage years of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and how her father instilled in her a bold spirit which later helped her to stand her ground in the fight for the right of the Egba women many years later. When she concluded her primary education, her father insisted that she would further her education despite the fact that the only secondary school in Abeokuta at the time was meant for only boys. The father approached the principal of the school and she was granted admission into the Secondary school. Although, she was bullied by the boys in the school, she remained resilient. At the time she was about to be thrown inside a well by some boys, the head boy- Israel Ransome-Kuti- rescued her. Isreal went to Sierra Leone to further his education and she also got a scholarship to further her studies in a higher institution in London. Despite the fact that they were apart, Israel always sent letter to her every week. Isreal later got married to Funmilayo after the completion of their undergraduate programmes. Although, Funmilayo was among the elite, she impacted the lives of young ones by encouraging their parents to send them to school. On one of her visits to her student's parent, she witnessed the attack of tax collectors (the Parakoyis) on the market women. She confronted one of the tax collectors who maltreated the market women. The women praised her for this and hostilities began. She met with the District Officer called Mr Dundee. She presented the plight of the market women to him but he refused to listen to her. Rather, he told her that the taxes collected were used to pay for the services rendered in the province. She also met with the King, the Alake of Egba land, but he also refused to shift ground and instead increased the taxes levied on the market women. In order to fight against the harassment of the Egba women by the tax collectors, she inaugurated the Abeokuta women's club which metamorphosed into Abeokuta Women's Union. This union eventually organized a protest which lasted for days and led to a measure of freedom for the women.

6.2 Analysis

This section analyses the sociolinguistic features in *Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti*. The deployment of sociolinguistic features such as multilingualism, bilinguals, proverbs, code-switching and code-mixing were prevalent in the film.

6.2.1 Language situation in the Film and the pattern of Language Use

Although English served as the language of narration, three languages and dialects were employed by the characters in the film — English, Yoruba, and the Egba dialect. Societal multilingualism was clearly evident in the film's settings, as most characters employed English, Yoruba, or Egba at various points in the narrative, with code-mixing also prominently featured. At the individual level, bilingualism and multilingualism were equally observable. The incorporation of Yoruba and the Egba dialect served to authenticate the film's setting, given that both languages are predominantly spoken in Abeokuta, where the story is set. As previously noted, Director Bolanle Austen-Peters engages her characters across two languages and a dialect, with language choice largely determined by the need to reach a wider audience. A notable example is the palace setting, where English code-mixed with Yoruba functioned as the dominant medium of communication between Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, the King and the chiefs. The choice of English code-mixed with Yoruba in a Yoruba palace is not context based. The choice here is driven by the need to involve Yoruba non-speakers in the conversation.

Excerpt (1) from the Discussion in the Market Setting (Language use in the market domain)

Sellers: È ra ẹfọ'ẹ sebẹ o
 Buyer: Màmá, ẹlọ' lẹ tàà?
 Seller: Ọkẹ' mẹfà
 Buyer: È jẹ' kí n san ọkẹ' mẹta
 Funmilayo: Kò yajù, kò pẹjù kẹ' ẹ ràn ọmọ yín wá sí ilẹ' iwe'
 Funmilayo: It's not too early, neither is it too late to send your children to school
 Seller: È kaàsán mà o
 Funmilayo: Ẹyin tẹ' ẹ tí' i ràn ọmọ wá. Ẹyin naà ẹ ràn ọmọ wá o
 Iya Supo: Aà, ọga' ilẹ' iwe', ọjù' yín rè e', ẹyin naà wàjà
 Funmilayo: Iya Sùpọ' ẹ mọ ohun to' gbémi wá, mi ò rí Sùpọ'. Ẹyin naà mọ pé, ẹyin ni mo fojú' jọ nínu' ọjà yí.
 Seller: Aà, àwọn Parakoyí ti de' o
 Parakoyi: È wọ bẹ, ẹ da gbogbo ibẹ ru'

Translation

Sellers: Buy vegetable and cook soup
 Buyer: Madam, how much is it?
 Seller: One thousand two hundred naira
 Buyer: Can I pay six hundred naira?
 Seller: Good afternoon, madam
 Funmilayo: You have not brought your children to school. Bring them to school.
 Supo's mother: Oh, headmistress of the school! I am glad to see you. You have also come to the market?
 Funmilayo: Mummy Supo, you know why I have come. Supo has not been coming to school for some time.
 Seller: Oh, the Parakoyis are here!
 Parakoyi: Go into the market, cause commotion, and destroy their valuables

The excerpt above shows that Yoruba only was used throughout the scene in the market. This signifies that Yoruba dominated the pattern of language use in the market. This shows how viable the indigenous language of the people is at the societal level.

Excerpt (2) from the Discussion between Funmilayo and her father at Home (Language Use at Home)

Father: “Gbóná’ o”, Frances, what do you think of your apprenticeship next year?
 Daughter (younger Funmilayo): It will be good for me. At least, “mami” is a seamstress.
 Father: Grateful but not fulfilled. Mo ti yí ọkàn mi padà. Wà a' lọ ilẹ'-iwe' girama, you are going to secondary school and God willing, higher learning.

Translation

Father: “Listen”, Frances, what do you think of your apprenticeship next year?
 Daughter (younger Funmilayo): It will be good for me. At last, my mother is a seamstress.

Father: Grateful but not fulfilled. I have changed my mind. You will proceed to Grammar school. You are going to secondary school and God willing higher learning.

Analysis

The excerpt above brings to light the occurrence of code-switching within the domestic sphere, evident in the exchanges between Funmilayo and her father, while also underscoring the dominance of English as the primary language of communication in the home. A notable observation by the researchers is that the majority of characters exhibited proficiency in at least two of the three languages/dialect employed throughout the film. The character of the younger Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, portrayed by Iyimide Ayo Olumoko, is particularly illustrative of this, having navigated, at least, two languages in her interactions, as demonstrated in Excerpt 2 written above.

The range of language use in her conversations with her father — spanning English only, Yoruba only, and English code-mixed with Yoruba — firmly establishes both characters as bilinguals. Moreover, Funmilayo's command of Yoruba at the age of thirteen is suggestive of a thoroughly bilingual upbringing, classifying her as a compound bilingual. In addition, it is important to highlight that Funmilayo's conversations with her husband were conducted largely in English, a pattern that extended to her interactions with her children both at home and in the hospital during her adult years, as well as to her visits with her in-laws. This consistent dominance of English over Yoruba in the home domain serves as a significant marker of language shift and endangerment.

Excerpt (3) from Funmilayo's visit to Isreal's (her husband's) house (language Use at Home)

Isreal's Father: Hmmm, so uhh what is it that you do?

Isreal's Father: Funmilayo teaches pupils at her own establishment. It is basically an to encourage illiterate parents to train and their children to school.

Isreal's Father: But school is not meant for everyone.

Funmilayo: oh, I am surprised you said so sir.

Isreal's Father: I sent all my offspring to school because I wanted to. Agbẹkọyà decides he prefers that his child tills the ground. Who am I to say that he is wrong?

Funmilayo: But I would like to think that a child's potential matters also.

Isreal's Father: Is that, a child obeys his parent now. Isreal obeys me.

Funmilayo: (speaking to Isreal). So, we are glad that you are favoured with education

Isreal's Father: Exactly and that is why he has joined the clergy because I instructed him. You want to say something?

Funmilayo: (Surprised) No nothing sir!

However, the researcher observed that English was utilized when discussing with her husband and children at home. Even when the adult Funmilayo Ransonme-Kuti was discussing with her children in the hospital, more of English was used. Consider the excerpt below:

Excerpt (4) from the discussion between Funmilayo and her children in the hospital

Funmilayo: Isabel, Good morning

Isabel: Good morning, madam. I did not know you had visitors. I will stay outside

Funmilayo: You will do no such thing. Come in. I thing you already know my daughter Dolupo

Dolupo: I only hope mummy has not been revealing too much. God knows the family cannot afford the publicity that it is getting these days.

Fela: We need that attention. The whole world must know the sacrifices “ma’ami” made for this country. Those mother fuckers must know!

Olukoye: I think what my sister is saying is that we need to be a little bit courteous.

Bekolari: I don’t want to be courteous. I want to go to the top of Olumo rock and scream till those high in the government are made to pay for what they have done. I swear that mother fuckers must know

Dolupo: I only wish mummy’s suffering could have been avoided

Fela: Meaning what sis?

Dolupo: Meaning if mummy was not at Kalakuta that day she would not have been like this- a bag of bones, broken bones!

Bekolari: Aunty, ki le un so lenu?

Funmilayo: Eh eh, wait, should anyone decide where I should or should not be. When did it become a crime for a mother to visit her children? Eh eh, no one should point a finger at Fela.

Translation

Fela: We need that attention. The whole world must know the sacrifices my mother made for this country. Those mother fuckers must know!

Bekolari: My sister, what did you just say?

Analysis

The discussion above revealed that Yoruba was scarcely used during Funmilayo’s discussion with her children in the hospital. In fact, it was used just twice throughout their discussion in the hospital. This is indeed noteworthy, in this context, because one would think that Yoruba, the native language of the characters and also the language major language in use in the settings of the film would be employed but the choice of a foreign language was made. This is a sign of language shift. Here, the reason for the choice of English may be because of the global audience who may not understand the Yoruba language.

Excerpt (5) from the discussion in the Palace (Language Use at the Palace)

Funmilayo: May I rise to approach the King?

Chief (Otun): You can address the king right on your knee. **Oní’igbéraga ò.**

Funmilayo: Kabiyesi, I am here on behalf of the EgbaWomen Union

Chief (Osi): Kabiyesi does not know any Egba Women Union

Funmilayo: **Àwa obìrin Egbà’la jùmò da’ egbẹ̀ yìí silẹ̀**

Funmilayo: **Ọ̀rọ̀ yìí jẹ́ ọ̀rọ̀ tí mo ti kọ̀wẹ́ nípá rẹ̀ ní àìmoye igbà.**

This is concerning the flat tax rate on the Egba market women and the water levy

Funmilayo: the issue is what I have written to the palace about severally. This is concerning the flat tax rate levied on the Egba market women and the water levy

Chief (the chief on the left): Stop right there, taboo, taboo. For you to bring this matter to the palace attention of **kabiyèsí**, ah ah. **Tani ẹ́ gan? Ma’ ranju’ mọ́ mí o, toó ba’ ranju’ mọ́mí, ma’ ranju’ mọ́ẹ.**

Translation

Chief (*on the right hand of the king*): You can address the king right on your knee. You are proud

Funmilayo: Oh King, I am here on behalf of the EgbaWomen Union

Chief (*the chief on the left-hand side*): The King does not know any Egba Women Union

Funmilayo: We, the women of Egba land formed this union.

Funmilayo; It is about an issue I have written letters about to the king severally before now

Chief (*the chief on the left*): Stop right there, taboo, taboo. For you to bring this matter to the palace attention, ah ah. Who are you? Don't raise your eye brow at me, if you raise your eye brow, I will also raise mine.

Analysis

It is also important to note that Code-mixing (English with Yoruba) was employed in the palace when the major character visited the King to discuss the issue of flat rate tax and the water levy on the women with the King. The excerpt above revealed that code-mixing was employed in the palace where one would think Yoruba only should be employed. The reason for the choice of code mixing may be to involve those who may not understand Yoruba language. The excerpt above revealed that Yoruba only was scarcely used during Funmilayo's discussion with the king and his chiefs. This showed that code-mixing dominated the pattern of language use in the palace.

6.4 Code mixing and Code switching

Bilingualism has impact on the way people use language. It may have effect on the structure of the languages as well as the functions the utterances are meant to perform. Some of the outcomes of bilingualism are code mixing and code switching. The study revealed that almost all the characters in the film are bilinguals. This is because almost all the characters spoke Yoruba language, English or Egba at one scene or the other. For instance, almost all the women spoke Yoruba during the protest at the palace, despite the fact that they had earlier used English or Egba at one point or the other.

6.4.1 Code switching Features in Nollywood's *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti*

Features of code switching are numerous in the play. The protagonist, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who was portrayed in three stages code-mixed and code-switched all through the three stages. For instance, code switching was evident during her discussion with her father;

Excerpt (6)

Father: "**Gbońa' o**", Frances, what do you think of your apprenticeship next year?

Father: "Listen", Frances, what do you think of your apprenticeship next year?

Analysis

The type of code-switching used in the conversation above is referred to as inter-sentential code-switching. Here, the character switched from Yoruba to English.

Excerpt (7)

Daughter (younger Funmilayo): It will be good for me. At least, "**ma'ami**" is a seamstress.

Daughter (younger Funmilayo): It will be good for me. At least, my mother is a seamstress.

Analysis

The character in the above sentence also code switched. Tag switching was used since the insertion of the second language was short.

Excerpt (8)

Father: Grateful but not fulfilled. **Mo ti yí ọkàn mi pada. Wà a' lẹ ile-iwe'** girama, you are going to secondary school and God willing, higher learning.

Father: Grateful but not fulfilled. I have changed my mind. You will proceed to Grammar school. You are going to secondary school and God willing, higher learning.

Analysis

At this time, it is an inter-sentential switch. The producer may have adopted this switch in order to show solidarity to his linguistic background.

Excerpt (9)

Father: **Wò o, kòsì ohun to' n' bọ lokè tí ilẹ̀ ọ̀ lẹ̀ gbà.** When there is a will there is a way.

Father: See, absolutely nothing is impossible. When there is a will there is a way.

Analysis:

The inter-sentential code-switch was used in the conversation above. The utterance consists of two different sentences in two different languages. That is, the character started with Yoruba and ended the conversation with English.

Excerpt (10)

Funmilayo: And you are speaking as if you have **kulikuli'** stuck in your mouth

“**Kulikuli**” used in the sentence above refers to a type of snacks made from groundnut.

Analysis:

Code-mixing was employed in the sentence above. The character uses her second language at every slightest opportunity. Here, the character may choose to use the word “something” instead of “Kulikuli” a Yoruba word. Again, it was discovered that the use of English in *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's* Nollywood film is likely to connect with the global audience and nothing more. The protagonist, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti showcases the Yoruba language and culture at every given opportunity.

Excerpt (11)

Fúnmiláyọ: Apparently, every time they say “**àmin**”

Fúnmiláyọ: Apparently, every time they say, “amen”

Analysis

In the sentence above inter-sentential code-switching was employed. It is noteworthy to say that, although the character in this context was discussing with a white man, yet she code-switched. This shows that code-switching is mostly done unconsciously by bilinguals or multilinguals. The researchers observed that the character is proud of her language and uses the language at any minimal opportunity to reveal her ethnic identity.

Excerpt (12)

Fúnmiláyọ: May I rise to approach the King?

Chief Ọtuń: You can address the king right on your knee. **O nǐ igberaga o.**

Fúnmiláyọ: Kabìyèsí, I am here on behalf of the Ègba' Women Union

This means, the King, I am here on behalf of the Ègba' Women Union

Chief Osi: Kabìyèsí does not know any Ègba' Women Union

Left-hand Chief: The King does not know any Egba Women Union

Translation

Right hand Chief: You can address the king right on your knee. You are proud.

Analysis

Code-mixing was employed in the sentences written above. The producer may have decided to code-switch in the excerpt above in order to show his linguistic background and to include a wider audience.

Excerpt (13)

Fuñmiláyò: **Awa obirin Egbà'la jùmò daá egbẹ̀ yí' silẹ̀**

Fuñmiláyò: **Ọ̀rọ̀ yí' jẹ́ ọ̀rọ̀ tí mo ti kọ̀ iwé' nípà rẹ̀ ní àìmọ̀ye igbà.** This is concerning the flat tax rate on the Egbà' market women and the water levy

Translation

Fuñmiláyò: We, the women of Egbà land came together to start this union.

Fuñmiláyò: This issue is what I have written to the palace about severally. This is concerning the flat tax rate levied on the Egbà' market women and the water levy

Analysis

In the conversation above, inter-sentential code-switching was used. The switch occurred at the sentence boundaries

Excerpt (14)

Chief (*the chief on the left*): Stop right there, taboo, taboo. For you to bring this matter to the attention of **kabiyèsí**, ah ah. **Tani ẹ́ gan, ma' ranju' mọ́ mi o, to' ba' ran oju' mọ́ mi, mà ran oju' mọ́ ẹ.**

Translation

Chief (*the chief on the left*): Stop right there, taboo, taboo. For you to bring this matter to the palace attention, ah ah. Who are you? Don't raise your eye brow at me, if you raise your eye brow, I will also raise mine.

Analysis

Both inter-sentential code-switching and intra-sentential were employed in the sentence above. The switch above may have been employed in order to pass the message across to the listeners in a clearer manner and equally in order to connect with the language used in the setting of the play.

Excerpt (15)

Right-hand Chief: **Olufuñmiláyò igbà won ni pé'a fi ẹ́ jẹ́ iyalóde. O ò jẹ́**

nkànkán, ọ̀lá'ókọ̀ rẹ̀ lò n'jẹ́, oò jẹ́ nkànkán rara. Not only the water rate levy, the Alake' is increasing the flat tax rate by 10%. **Alake'** said it and that is all. Your audience is over, **Gbéra.**

Translation

Right-hand Chief: Olufuñmiláyò, when did we appoint you as the head of the women? You are nothing, you are nothing at all, and you only have honour because of your husband. Not only the water rate levy, the King is increasing the flat tax rate by 10%. The king said it and that is all. Your audience is over, stand up.

Analysis

Code-switching was also used in the sentence above. The type of code-switching employed is inter-sentential code-switching

Excerpt (16)

Fuñmiláyò: **Awon ara' Dundee.** Don't worry; your colonized subjects will interpret for you

Fuñmiláyò: Dundee's People. Don't worry your colonized subject will interpret for you.

Analysis

Again, inter-sentential code-switching was also employed in the conversation above. The character must have made the choice of Yoruba to start the sentence above in order to exclude the district officer (who happens to be a white man) from the conversation. This is because the expression is derogatory.

6.5 Proverbs

Proverbs and their use in speech are integral part of the oral tradition of the people of Nigeria irrespective of tribal or linguistic inclination (Dada and Owoeye, 2015, p.5). Some proverbs were used in Nollywood's *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti* to express the Yoruba culture and values also for presenting the truth in a clear manner. Proverbs used in the film are listed below:

Excerpt (17)

Yoruba: **Kò sí ohun to n'bọ̀ lokè tǐ ilẹ̀ ó lè gbà**

English: There is nothing falling from the sky that the earth cannot hold.

Usage: It means absolutely nothing is impossible

Cultural Meaning: The proverb is used by the Yoruba to encourage one another when all hope is almost lost. They believe that no matter the situation there will be a way out. Funmilayo's father used this proverb to encourage his daughter to be optimistic in life.

Excerpt (18)

Yoruba: **Eni to ba fẹ́ jẹ́ oyin inu àpaṭa kò ní wo ẹnu àake**

English: Whoever wants to eat the honey embedded in a mountain will not be fretting about the axe.

Usage: When you are focused on a goal or task, you won't be concerned with the sacrifices that you need to pay

Cultural Meaning: The character (Funmilayo) used the proverb above to encourage other members of the Abeokuta Women's union that they should not look at the momentary resistance from the King and members of his cabinet, but they should pay attention to their goal of winning the battle and the dividends they will eventually receive. This proverb is a means of cultural transmission because the future generation who may not be familiar with the use or the name "axe" may discover its meaning through the use of this proverb.

Excerpt (19)

Yoruba: **Kekere labẹ́rẹ́ kére kǐ í se mími fuń adiyẹ**

English: Although a needle is tiny, it cannot be swallowed by a hen

Usage: It means that the physical appearance of an individual is not an index of worth of that individual

Cultural Meaning: Through this proverb, the producer presented the main character (Funmilayo) and the women folk in Yoruba land as a group that appears small or ordinary but in the actual sense, they are formidable. The proverb was used to express her fearlessness despite the oppositions from male group in her school.

Excerpt (20)

Yoruba: **Ijalọ kò lè wọ̀ ẹ̀kọ̀tọ̀ àmọ́ ọ́ lè bọ́ ẹ̀kọ̀tọ̀ nǐdii'omiran**

English: Little things like soldier ant may be small but it can destroy the mighty

Usage: It means do not underestimate anyone because of their stature because they may be the source of your downfall.

Socio-cultural Meaning: The proverb was used by the producer to reiterate the worth of women in the society. Although, in some cultures in Nigeria and even across the world,

women are portrayed as small and weak, the producer through the use of the proverb warned against such an assumption.

Excerpt (21)

Yoruba: **Akin to'ba'mọ̀jà tí ọ̀ ba'mọ̀sa'yoò ba'akin ibòmi lọ ni o**

English: He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day

Usage: A courageous man who knows how to fight but does not know when to run will be defeated by another valiant man

Socio-cultural Meaning: It seems the producer used this proverb to warn the king to run for his life in the face of the riotous women who were increasing day by day in the front of the palace. The proverb brings to fore one of the Yoruba's values on the preservation of life in every situation. The Yoruba maintain that no matter how strong one is, one must know when to disengage from a battle instead of stubbornly persevering when victory appears uncertain.

6.6 Slangy Expressions in *Funmilayo Ransome Kuti*

Excerpt 22

Mr Dundee: Mrs Ransome-Kuti, please have your sit

Fúnmiláyò: O jẹ̀bi

Mr Dundee: Excuse me

Fúnmiláyò: Nothing

Mr. Dundee: How can I help you?

Fúnmiláyò: Mr. Dundee, I am not here for my benefit. I am here because of the plight of the Ègbà' women

Mr. Dundee: So the Ègbà' women had a plight. I can't just see how you connect to these Ègbà' women.

Fúnmiláyò: Mr Dundee, where did you go to school?

Mr Dundee: It's none of your business

Fúnmiláyò: Dundee united

Translation

Fúnmiláyò:

Analysis

Generally, slangy expressions are used for informal conversations. Slangy expressions or words originate from students, artists, films and political events. Sometimes, it can be difficult to pinpoint the origin of slang. Here, the use of the word, "Dundee" and the phrase, "Dundee United" has connotative meaning. The word and phrase are used as slang terms in Nigeria. Dundee is used when the speaker is making reference to one person, while Dundee united is used for a group of people. As such "Dundee United" is the plural of Dundee. Research showed that the word stems from the poor performance of Dundee United Football Club (a Scottish Football Club) during their pre-season games with five Nigerian local teams. History had it that they played five games but could only win one. After the game, in 1972, Nigerians were surprised at their performance and overtime, the word "Dundee" has been used to refer to a foolish person and it has become linguistically embedded in the linguistic repertoire of some people. It is often used for anyone who makes silly mistakes or acts foolishly.

Furthermore, the word "Dundee" was used to refer to the name of the District Officer; in the context above (see excerpt 22) the main character used the word to insult him. In addition, the word 'Dundee United' was also used to insult everyone associated with Mr Dundee, because the word 'Dundee United' is used for more than one person.

In the Nigeria setting, the word “Dundee” is used to insult people. Therefore, in the context above, Fuṣmilayọ Ransome-Kuti, used the word to refer to the district officer as a foolish person because he refused to reason along with her concerning the plight of the Egbá women.

6.7 Pattern of Language Use in the Film

The table above shows that there are fifty-five scenes in the video. English (only) was used for conversation in fourteen scenes, Yoruba (only) was used in 29 scenes, and alternate use of Yoruba with English (English code-switched with Yoruba) was used in ten scenes while Egbá mixed with Yoruba was used thrice. This result shows that the use of (Yoruba only) during conversation dominated the pattern of language use in the film.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research identified the languages and language varieties used in the film. It also studied the sociolinguistic features that are prominent in the film. In addition, the study discovered the pattern of language use in Nollywood's *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti*. English, Yoruba and Egbá languages/dialect were used in the film. This result confirmed that Nigeria is a multilingual nation. The study revealed some salient sociolinguistic features such as code-mixing and code-switching, language use, proverbs and slangy expressions that were employed by the producer of the film. The use of English only, English code-mixed with Yoruba by the protagonist and her husband, with their children at home raise questions about the implications of Nollywood's evolving linguistic landscape for indigenous language maintenance. This result has implications for language maintenance, its choice in the film brings to fore the true nature of bilingual/multilingual communities. This result confirms the words of Jogbodo, Dada and Ogunlade (2025) that, “English language is the most used language among the exogamous marriage families in South-Western Nigeria in both formal and non-formal domains. The children of all the exogamous marriage families have language socialization as they acquired at least one of the languages spoken by their parents easily, but lack the use of it in everyday dialogue rather they prefer to use English. The result mirrors the language situation of the country. For instance, the use of code mixing in the palace, especially during exchanges involving Funmilayo, the chiefs, and the King has a negative implication for the indigenous language of the people.

Furthermore, Yoruba dominated the pattern of language use in the film, appearing as the sole language of conversation in 29 out of the 55 scenes, compared to 14 scenes where English alone was used. The 14 English-only scenes may point to language shift pressures, where English encroaches on domains traditionally reserved for indigenous languages because of the need to reach wider audience. Overall, the researcher's findings further revealed that the alternate deployment of Yoruba and English, manifested through code-switching between both languages, was recorded in ten scenes — a trend that signals an underlying level of language endangerment. In the Nigerian context, multilingualism exist therefore individuals navigate multiple languages which natural leads to code-mixing and code-switching. Producing this film without the use of code-mixing, code-switching, the indigenous language/dialect and English misrepresentation of the communication practices multilingual communities like Nigeria. No doubt Funmilayo Ransome Kuti highlights Nigeria's multilingual nature through its deliberate choice of multiple languages/dialect, including English, Yoruba, Egbá, English code-mixed with Yoruba. This linguistic diversity reflects the nation's sociocultural landscape, which necessitates language blending and alternation to facilitate effective communication with broader audiences.

More so, the researcher discovered that the use of Yoruba only dominated the pattern of language use especially by the protagonist in almost all the domains of language use. This result corroborates the work of Adedun (2010, p.10), on Nollywood film and their language of production. His study discovered that out of the six languages used by Nollywood for production, Yoruba had the highest score between 2007 and 2008. The result showed that the choice of Yoruba and Egba only above English only in most of the scenes in the film by the producer has to some extent substantiated the setting of the incidence narrated in the film and also unveiled his interest to project his language, traditions and culture.

Furthermore, this discovery corroborates the saying that language, culture and identity are closely linked. The producer's choices of the languages used in the film reveals his language background. No doubt the use of proverb and slangy expressions in some scenes in the film together with the use of some cultural artefacts has also helped to project the Yoruba language, values and traditions.

This study recommends that other scholars should analyse language choices in Nollywood films about Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti by focusing on some sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender, and education, and how they reflect social stratification.

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