

Beyond Linguistic Borders: Exploring Code-Switching among Igbo Bilinguals

Emmanuel Chinonso Nwachi

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the linguistic complexities and sociocultural dynamics of code-switching among Igbo-English bilinguals in Nigeria. It seeks to answer the research question: How does code-switching between Igbo and English reflect linguistic and sociocultural dynamics, and contribute to the nativization and evolution of language in post-colonial, multilingual settings, specifically in the Igbo linguistic environment? The study also examines Igbo bilinguals' attitudes towards code-switching behaviours and its implications for cultural identity. Guided by Kachru's Nativization Hypothesis, this mixed-methods research employs qualitative and quantitative approaches, including pre-recorded interviews and questionnaires. Findings reveal systematic patterns in code-switching, such as shared syntactic structures and verb conjugations, and emphasise how this practice facilitates the integration of English into the local linguistic context. Participants generally perceive code-switching positively, associating it with linguistic adaptability and sociocultural belonging, though some express concerns about language purity. Additionally, the study uncovers significant insights into Igbo-English bilinguals' linguistic features, including word order, pronouns, and sentence starters, and their role in shaping a hybrid linguistic identity. These findings reveal the importance of understanding code-switching as both a linguistic strategy and a sociocultural phenomenon, contributing to broader discussions on bilingualism, language contact, and post-colonial linguistics. By illuminating the relationship of language and identity, this research offers valuable perspectives on the evolution of language in multilingual societies.

Keywords: Code-switching, Bilingualism, Nativization, Sociolinguistics, Igbo-English

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, a linguistically and culturally diverse country, is home to over 500 indigenous languages, spread across six geo-political zones. Despite this remarkable linguistic diversity, English, a colonial inheritance serves as the country's official lingua franca. The prominence of English in Nigeria, rooted in its colonial history, presents an intriguing case for examining the ongoing interaction between indigenous languages and a dominant foreign language. This peculiarity is particularly relevant to the study of bilingualism and code-switching, two phenomena that emerge naturally in multilingual contexts such as Nigeria. Bilingualism, as defined by Weinreich (1953), refers to "the alternating use of two languages" (p. 120), a practice that often results in the fluid switching between linguistic codes within conversation, commonly known as code-switching (Kavak & Gül, 2020). Code-switching is a widespread linguistic practice among Nigeria's multilingual speakers, especially among those fluent in both their indigenous language and English (Chukueggu, 2010). This study investigates the relationship between Igbo, one of Nigeria's major indigenous languages, and English in the context of bilingual interactions. Code-switching as a phenomenon is more than a mere linguistic occurrence; it reflects broader sociocultural identities, power dynamics, and the ways in which speakers navigate both global and local linguistic landscapes. Furthermore, this research addresses the sociocultural implications of code-switching in a post-colonial, multilingual context. In Nigeria, where English serves as the language of formal education, governance, and wider communication, code-switching reflects not only linguistic competence but also cultural adaptation. The interaction between English and indigenous languages like Igbo contributes to the nativization process, in which English is adapted and transformed to fit the local linguistic ecology. By nativization (Kachru, 1992 as cited in Essossomo, 2015, p. 96), refers to the process whereby a language that is appropriated by a group is tuned to the requirements of that group so that it fits their socio-cultural needs. This phenomenon describes the evolution of English as it is shaped by contact with indigenous languages, leading to new linguistic varieties that bear traces of both global influence and local culture.

Through an approach that combines both linguistic theory and sociolinguistic analysis, this study seeks to answer key research questions, such as: How does code-switching between Igbo and English reflect both linguistic and sociocultural dynamics in Nigeria? How does this practice contribute to the nativization and evolution of language in post-colonial, multilingual contexts? By investigating these questions, the study contributes to broader discussions in the fields of

bilingualism, multilingualism, and sociolinguistics, offering perceptions into the ways in which language structures and behaviours evolve in societies shaped by both indigenous traditions and colonial legacies.

Ultimately, this research will contribute to our understanding of the role of code-switching in language development, identity construction, and cultural expression within Nigeria. In doing so, it contributes to the ongoing scholarly discourse on the linguistic and sociocultural implications of code-switching in multilingual, post-colonial environments. Through a comprehensive analysis of Igbo-English code-switching, this study offers valuable insights into the broader processes of language contact, nativization, and evolution in Nigeria, shedding light on the interactions between local languages and global linguistic forces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bilingualism and code-switching have been central topics in sociolinguistic research for decades, given their relevance in understanding language use in multilingual communities. Code-switching, defined by Hymes (1974) as the “alternate use of two or more languages, varieties of a language, or even speech styles” (p. 103), reflects the vitality of interaction between languages in bilingual speakers. Poplack (1979) further refines this, defining code-switching as “the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent” (p. 7). As a result, code-switching has become an important area of investigation for understanding how bilingualism functions in various social and linguistic contexts.

Code-Switching and Language Acquisition

The relationship between code-switching and language acquisition is an interesting and developing area of research. Zhou and Wei (2007) argue that code-switching can emerge during language acquisition or after a speaker has achieved a certain level of proficiency in a second language. Their research aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the process of language learning. By allowing learners to participate in conversations with more fluent speakers, code-switching enables them to fluidly integrate both languages, thereby scaffolding their learning. This suggests that code-switching is not merely a

reflection of a speaker's bilingual proficiency but a tool that actively accelerates the acquisition process. Consequently, the research into this phenomenon provides an introduction into the broader relationship between language acquisition and bilingualism.

Bilingualism and Code-Switching

Weinreich's (1953) definition of bilingualism as the alternating use of two languages lays the foundation for understanding how code-switching operates. Bilingualism supplies the linguistic flexibility necessary for code-switching, while code-switching itself represents the practical manifestation of bilingual language use. Grosjean (2010) expands on this by defining bilinguals as individuals who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their daily lives, shifting the focus from fluency and equal proficiency to actual language use in varying contexts. This more inclusive view acknowledges that bilingualism exists on a spectrum, where individuals employ different languages for different purposes and at varying levels of competence. Grosjean (1982, as cited in Jalil, 2009), further elaborates on bilingualism by stating that when a bilingual speaker interacts with a monolingual speaker, communication typically occurs in the language both parties share. Variations may arise in terms of style or formality; for instance, shifts may occur from an informal to an intimate tone, or from an informal to a formal one, among other possibilities. However, when considering bilinguals with a shared linguistic background, this phenomenon becomes significantly more intricate, encompassing aspects beyond mere language choice; it may also involve practices such as code-switching. This reinforces the argument presented in this paper that code-switching functions as a vital instrument of cultural identity. By navigating between languages, individuals can express aspects of their heritage, community ties, and social affiliations, making code-switching an essential marker of cultural expression and belonging.

Code-Switching in the Nigerian Context

In the context of Nigeria, the study of code-switching between English and indigenous languages like Igbo is particularly significant. Previous studies, such as Udemmadu and Laurretta (2017), have focused on contrasting between the Igbo and the English structures, with the objective of examining the structural differences between the two languages, specifically focusing on morphology and syntax, to identify challenges faced by Igbo speakers learning English as a second language. Through a contrastive analysis, the study aimed to reveal how these structural differences lead to

learning difficulties and errors. The study found that the structural differences between Igbo and English significantly hinder Igbo speakers in mastering English. These challenges are mainly due to some contrasting morphological and syntactic structures like word order, pluralisation, pronouns, verb conjugations, which lead to common errors in English among Igbo learners. In addressing this issue, as shown in this study, code-switching can be employed to mitigate these differences raised in this study, whereby English words, phrases, clauses are alternated or inserted in Igbo linguistic environment without erroneously affecting the structure or meaning. On the other hand, the book by Ozo-Mekuri Ndimele and Jibril (2016), a compilation of various studies documenting language contact phenomenon in Nigeria appears crucial in understanding results of language contact like mixing, intonation, and pidgin, with the latter seen as a necessary consequence of language contact in Nigeria. These works explore the spread of English in Nigeria, highlighting how the convergence of English and Nigerian languages has resulted in distinct linguistic phenomena, indirectly brushing upon the emergence of code-switching. The spread of English due to globalisation, as noted by Ozo-Mekuri Ndimele and Jibril (2016), and its dominant status in Nigeria because of language contact, has greatly influenced language use in the country. Their studies are arguably rooted in Kachru's (1986) nativization hypothesis which offers a framework for understanding the linguistic impact of language contact, especially in post-colonial societies like Nigeria. Nativization occurs when English, transplanted into non-native settings, acquires new forms and meanings aligned with the local linguistic and cultural contexts (Kachru, 1986). This process involves the adaptation of English with respect to the linguistic and discoursal features of the traditional language or languages that are available to the members of a particular group. In nativization, the cultural presumptions of a group may not be fully addressed by previous understandings of English and thus require a reinterpretation through the lens of the local socio-cultural premise (Essossomo, 2015). This process is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where English coexists with indigenous languages such as Igbo. Code-switching, in this case, becomes a mechanism through which English adapts and integrates into the local linguistic ecology, with possibilities of resulting in the emergence of new varieties. By analysing Igbo-English code-switching patterns, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of how nativization occurs through language contact and bilingual language use.

Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Code-Switching

The analytical framework of this study is grounded in Muysken's (2000) typology of bilingual speech, which categorizes code-switching into three primary processes: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. Each of these processes offers insights into the structural patterns of code-switching. For example, insertion refers to the insertion of material (lexical items or entire constituents) from one language into a structure from the other language, while alternation is alternating between structures from languages (Muysken, 2000, p. 3). This offers a comprehensive lens through which to examine how speakers alternate between languages in multilingual environments. However, in this study's data, congruent lexicalization, where different elements of the languages share a lexical inventory is not fully realised due to the distinct separation between Igbo and English and as such, the data analysis will focus mostly on 'insertion' and 'alternation'. The research also draws on Poplack's (1980) code-switching constraints which suggested two syntactic constraints that govern code-switching: the free-morpheme constraint and the equivalence constraint. The free morpheme constraint states that "no switch can occur between a lexical form and a bound morpheme unless that lexical form is phonologically integrated into the language of the bound morpheme", while the equivalence constraint predicts the occurrence of code-switching at points where the surface structures of both languages map onto each other without violating the grammatical rules of either (Poplack 1978/1981, as cited in Jalil, 2009, p.5). This framework is useful for understanding the grammatical and pragmatic factors that shape bilingual speech. The Matrix Language Frame model, as developed by Carol Myers-Scotton, was considered for this study. However, due to the scope of the research, only the two frameworks mentioned above were applied.

In conclusion, despite the rich theoretical landscape, there is a notable gap in research specifically focused on the dynamics of code-switching in post-colonial multilingual settings, particularly in Nigeria, where indigenous languages like Igbo interact with English. While some studies have shed light on Igbo grammar, language contact and the spread of English in Nigeria, few have deeply examined how code-switching in this context contributes to the ongoing nativization of English or the linguistic innovations that emerge from such interactions.

This study seeks to address this gap, not deeply but as an introduction, by focusing on the sociolinguistic and grammatical factors that shape Igbo-English code-switching, with particular

attention to how this practice may influence the development of new linguistic varieties. By showcasing Kachru's nativization hypothesis using Poplack's syntactic constraints and Muysken's typology of bilingual speech as analytical frameworks, this research will introduce a novel analysis of code-switching as both a linguistic strategy and a mechanism to display language change. In doing so, it will contribute to the broader understanding of how language contact in multilingual societies like Nigeria not only sustains bilingualism but also facilitates the evolution of languages in dynamic cultural environments.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of code-switching between Igbo and English within the Nigerian context. A central focus is on examining the structure. By analysing the structural interactions between Igbo and English within individual utterances, the study seeks to uncover whether such alternations follow identifiable linguistic rules and whether both languages retain their grammatical integrity during the switch.

Additionally, this research will touch upon but will not focus on assessing the influence of code-switching on language acquisition, specifically within the context of Igbo-English bilinguals. It explores how the practice of switching between two languages affects linguistic proficiency, vocabulary development, and grammar retention. The study investigates whether code-switching facilitates or hinders bilingual communication, contributing to broader discussions about the challenges and benefits of bilingualism in post-colonial, multilingual environments. The findings are intended to showcase some ideas into the cognitive and linguistic processes involved in language use for bilinguals navigating two linguistic systems.

Another key aim of this study is to investigate the sociocultural implications of code-switching. The research examines how code-switching functions as a tool for identity formation and cultural expression among Igbo-English bilinguals. In analysing the perceptions behind code-switching, the study sheds light on how individuals use language alternation to negotiate their cultural identities, foster community interactions, and assert belonging within their linguistic groups. Understanding the social factors that drive code-switching helps to contextualize the phenomenon

beyond its purely linguistic dimensions, situating it within the broader cultural practices of Nigeria's multilingual society.

Furthermore, this study hopes to contribute though minimally, to the understanding of language evolution, specifically the process of nativization, in which English is adapted and transformed through its contact with indigenous languages like Igbo. This is further explained by Bamgbose, (2000, p. 1), that where an exoglossic¹ language becomes a second language with an official role in a country, the second language is bound to be influenced by the linguistic and cultural environment of the native language. By analysing the ways in which code-switching reflects the indigenisation of English, the research seeks to illuminate the ongoing linguistic changes that arise from language contact in post-colonial settings. This exploration shows how languages evolve in response to local cultural and linguistic environments, resulting in the emergence of hybrid linguistic forms that reflect both global and local influences.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis of this research is structured to present the research design, participant selection, data collection procedures, and analytical frameworks utilised to interpret the findings. The research adopts a dual approach of qualitative and quantitative methods, focusing on discourse analysis to examine natural conversations between bilingual speakers, and a questionnaire to gather Igbo bilinguals' perceptions on code-switching. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how code-switching occurs in real-life interactions, reflecting both linguistic and sociocultural dynamics. The study specifically employs Muysken's (2000) typology of bilingual speech and Poplack's (1980) constraints on code-switching as the analytical frameworks. Muysken's model proposed three processes which the analysis of this research's data will follow: The Insertion and the Alternation.

It is imperative to state that analysing the code-switched speech of a single individual presents several limitations that may affect the generalisability and richness of the findings, but it should serve as a gateway to broader research. Consequently, while the analysis presents adequate

¹ An exoglossic language is a language used as a foreign or second language in a particular country or community and not as a first language. (Oxford Learner's Dictionary)

understanding of the individual speaker's language practices, it may not fully capture the diverse dynamics of code-switching across different bilingual individuals and communities.

DATA COLLECTION

The primary data source for this study consists of naturally occurring conversations among the selected participants. Specifically, a recorded interview featuring a bilingual speaker, Maria, serves as the focal point of the analysis. The interview was transcribed verbatim to capture the instances of code-switching between Igbo and English. The data for this research is collected from two sources, Interview recording by the BBC (see reference section for link) and a questionnaire (see appendix for link) targeted at Nigerians who speak both Igbo and English with preference for Igbo natives. The goal of the speech analysis is to detect code-switching in form and structure, and subsequently examine the social implications. In support of this, additional data is collected by means of a questionnaire to understand perceptions of code-switching by Igbo bilinguals, with the aim to probe various aspects, including the frequency of code-switching usage, participants' attitudes to code-switching, ease and/or challenges of usage and potential influence on the proficiency of foreign language acquisition.

The participants in this study consist of bilingual speakers of Igbo and English. The qualitative data is sourced from the speech data of one bilingual, while 45 respondents participated for the quantitative part of the data collection which was carried out by means of a structured questionnaire which was designed to suit the research objectives and the demography as well. The study seeks to include a diverse range of participants, considering various age groups, educational backgrounds, and social contexts to provide a holistic understanding of code-switching phenomena in Nigeria. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was sought for recording and analysing their responses. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time before a possible publication.

ANALYSIS

The analysis of the conversational data is guided by Muysken's (2000) typology of bilingual speech and Poplack's (1980) constraints on code-switching. These frameworks offer a structured approach to examining the mechanisms of code-switching and the grammatical and pragmatic factors governing language choice. As mentioned earlier, the former identifies three primary mechanisms of bilingual speech: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization but only two is utilised in this study. The analysis involves categorising instances of code-switching in the conversation according to these mechanisms to understand how the speaker navigates between languages. While the latter's free morpheme constraint, equivalent systems constraint, and syntactic constraint is deployed to analyse the instances of code-switching in the conversation. Each line of dialogue is scrutinised to determine whether the code-switching adheres to these constraints, which govern the syntactic and grammatical structures of both languages.

Maria Chike Benjamin, a prominent Nigerian socialite, gained widespread attention following her participation in one of Africa's prominent reality television shows, *Big Brother Nigeria*. Her participation in the show sparked major debates within the country regarding her nationality, as her physical appearance led some to question her Nigerian heritage. In response to these debates, Benjamin granted an interview to the BBC, seeking to address and quell any doubts regarding her nationality and affirm her Nigerian identity. Maria is biracial, her father is from Imo state, Southeastern Nigeria, which is evident in her Igbo dialect, which is spoken only in Imo state, and differs slightly from the standard dialect while her mother is a white woman from the United Kingdom.

A detailed line-by-line analysis of the conversation is conducted to identify specific instances of code-switching and evaluate their compliance with the established frameworks. Each line of the dialogue is categorised based on its language components, and the switches were examined for their grammatical and syntactic compatibility. The analysis also incorporates critical commentary on the implications of the findings in relation to existing theories on bilingualism and code-switching, contributing to a more in-depth understanding of these phenomena.

Maria:

Ndi Igbo ekenem unu

Thank you for having me on here

Chineke gozicha unu

Ya shi daddy m diri ndu as of today o ga gba mu akanti

Ọ na aju m gi ebolekedu ebe m na-aga na TV niile ara o chala gi

So, ma gwa ya, amadi m ihe nkwe ejega Big brother, but it's something that imala na obi m ncho i try

O si hmm... ihe a awukwa nsi hu gi. I wu gi a very open person

Amaghikwa m ma i ma ihe Big brother bu I kputa

Your life is no longer....everybody ga mara ihe gbasara gi

Arighi mi ime o, o digi possible, not yet

Before i bughị onye ala beke

Interviewer: I wu onye ocha wu onye Nigeria

Maria:

Awum kwa onye ocha oh

Kelo m kpa m chaga?

Ndi Igbo thank you

Apparently, most of my supporters were ndi Igbo

So, thank you for emm... nagba am as... In fact, yawu a nagba m okwa war o

Because a wum nwa afor, so, you people have to nagba m

So, thank you for all the love

(Excerpts from Maria's interview with BBC Igbo correspondent)

English Translation

Maria:

I greet you, Igbo people

Thank you for having me on here

God bless you all

If my daddy was alive as of today, he would slap me

He would ask me where am I going to with all the TV, are you mad?

So, I told him I don't know why I want to go to big brother, but it's something I know in my heart

I want to try

He said hmm... that's not how I see you, you're not a very open person

I don't know if you know what big brother is after you leave

Your life is no longer...Everybody will know things about you

I won't do it, it is not possible not yet

Before you're not a person from abroad

Interviewer: you are a mix of a white person and Nigerian

Maria:

I'm not a white person oh

Is it because of my complexion?

Thank you, my Igbo people,

Apparently, most of my supporters were Igbo people,

So, thank you for emm accepting me as... ah ah...in fact if you had not accepted me

It would have been war,

because I am a native, so you people have to accept me,

So, thank you for all the love

Word/Phrase/Syntactic level

1. *Ndi* *Igbo* *ekenem* *unu*
 People- PL.NOM Igbo I- 1SG.SUBJ greet you- 2PL.OBJ
 'I greet you Igbo people'

[This line is in Igbo with no code-switch]

Here, the speaker starts with an Igbo greeting, "Ndi Igbo ekenem unu," which translates to "Igbo people, I greet you." The phrase uses the Igbo lexicon but does not incorporate an English structure.

2. Thank you for having me on here
[This line is in English with no code-switch]

In this line, the speaker speaks entirely in English, indicating her comfort with this language. It is straightforward insertion where a complete English sentence is used within the discourse, allowing for a seamless transition. This sentence is fully in English and adheres to the rules since it does not involve code-switching. It follows the syntax of English without any code-switching.

3. *Chineke gozicha unu*
God bless you all
'God bless you all'

[This line is in Igbo with no code-switch]

This is representing another instance of insertion where a complete Igbo sentence is used, reflecting the speaker's cultural context. It is entirely in Igbo, adhering to the same principles as the previous lines, with no code-switching occurring.

4. *Ya shi daddy m diri ndu as of today*
if(assuming)- COND daddy my- 1SG.POSS was-PST alive as of today
o ga gba (mu) akanti
he- 3SG.MASC.NOM would (me)- 1SG.OBJ slap
'If my daddy was alive as of today, he would slap me'

['gba mu akanti' – This is a cluster of words that always appear together with 'me' in between the act-slap (gba akanti).

This sentence includes both Igbo and English elements, but primarily functions within Igbo grammatical structures. It reflects a familial context while incorporating English expressions, which aligns with the insertion mechanism. It conforms to the equivalent systems constraint as it

combines phrases from both languages, allowing for a switch as the structure is grammatically compatible.

5. *Ọ* *na* *ajụ* *m* *gi ebolekedu ebe*
 He- 3SG.MASC.NOM would ask me-1SG.OBJ where- WH.LOC
 m na-aga na TV *niile* *ara* *o chala gi?*
 I am going to- PRS.CONT TV all mad are you- 2SG?
 ‘He would ask me where am I going to with all the TV, are you mad’

[‘O chala gi’ – this is an expression that mostly goes with ‘ara’ usually as a rhetorical question to inquire into the unusual behaviour of a person]

This sentence primarily uses Igbo structure and lexicon, again showcasing insertion as the dominant mechanism. The use of English would violate the free morpheme constraint as it doesn’t contain any elements from the other language.

6. So, *ma* *gwa* *ya,* *amadi* *m*
 So, I-1SG.NOM told-PST him-3SG.MASC.OBJ don’t know-NEG I-1SG.NOM
 ihe nkwe ejega Big brother, but it’s something that
 why I want to go to- INF Big brother but it’s something that
 imala na obi m *ncho* *i* try
 know in-PREP heart my- 1SG.POSS I want to try

‘So, I told him I don’t know why I want to go to big brother, but it’s something I know in my heart I want to try’

The utterance starts in English with "So," transitions to Igbo, and then back to English. This reflects alternation as the speaker shifts languages within a single utterance, indicating a fluent bilingual proficiency. The insertion of "So" at the beginning follows the equivalent systems constraint, as it starts a new independent clause. The switch back to Igbo afterward is syntactically appropriate, allowing code-switching.

7. *O si hmm... ihe a awukwa nsi hu gi. I wu gi* a very open
 He- 3SG.MASC said hmm... that's not how I see you are not you-2SG.NOM a very open
 person
 person

‘He said hmm... that’s not how I see you, you’re not a very open person’

This line shows alternation as it moves between Igbo and English, demonstrating the interplay of both languages. It begins in Igbo and incorporates an English phrase, possibly to add emphasis or convey a particular sentiment more effectively. English terms can sometimes carry specific subtleties or emphasis that might not translate directly in Igbo, particularly for concepts that may feel more neutral or “polite” in English. By switching languages, the speaker may be reinforcing the intended meaning or tone of “a very open person”. The switch occurs at a grammatical juncture, so it aligns with the equivalent systems constraint, allowing for code-switching.

8. *Amaghikwa m ma i ma ihe Big brother bu I kputa*
 don't know- NEG.CONT I if you know what big brother is-COP you leave
 ‘I don’t know if you know what big brother is after you leave’

[This line includes the English word "Big brother" within an Igbo sentence]

The alternation reflects how bilingual speakers navigate language use according to context. It demonstrates a successful switch between languages without violating the syntactic structure of either. It adheres to both constraints, allowing for a seamless transition.

9. Your life is no longer....everybody *ga mara ihe gbasara gi*
 your life is no longer...everybody will-FUT know things-PL about-PREP you
 ‘Your life is no longer...Everybody will know things about you’

[The second part of the conversation resumes in English after a pause, with the English word “everybody” and ends with Igbo words. This combination fits well into the syntactic structure of both languages without any alteration.]

This shows how she fluidly alternates between languages depending on the concept she wishes to convey. The English phrase precedes the Igbo clause and conforms to the equivalent systems constraint. The sentence structure is compatible between the two languages, allowing for this switch.

10. "Arighi mi ime, o digi possible, not yet
won't-NEG I -1SG.NOM do it-3SG.NOM is not possible not yet
'I won't do it; it is not possible not yet'

[This line is primarily in Igbo with the introduction of "possible, not yet" (English) to end the sentence]

This sentence combines Igbo and English, demonstrating how alternation can express a complete thought across language boundaries. It illustrates code-switching as it moves from Igbo to English without disrupting the sentence structure. The transition occurs between phrases, adhering to the equivalent systems constraint.

11. Before i bughị onye ala beke
before you are not person land white
'Before you're not a person from abroad'

[This line is in Igbo language, starting with an English word]

This sentence uses an Igbo structure with English influence, signifying that the speaker's choice of language is context dependent. The switch from English to Igbo does not violate any constraints. The structure allows for this switch as it follows the equivalent systems constraint, allowing for a coherent transition.

12. I wu onye ocha wu onye Nigeria
you are person white are person Nigeria
'You are a mix of a white person and Nigerian'

[This line is in Igbo with no code-switch]

The interviewer states, "You are a white person, you are a Nigerian," entirely in Igbo. This conveys meaning and maintains its integrity without any code-switching.

13. Awum kwa onye ocha
I'm not person white
'I'm not a white person'

[This line is in Igbo language with no code-switch]

This again uses Igbo and indicates cultural identity. It is a complete statement in Igbo with no switching. It adheres to the constraints as it contains only Igbo phrases.

14. *Kelo m kpa m chaga?*

how I look

‘Is it because of my complexion’

[This line is in Igbo language with no code-switch]

This remains entirely in Igbo, showcasing the use of the language in everyday conversation. The phrase is entirely in Igbo, showcasing no code-switching and adherence to the linguistic constraints.

15. *Ndi Igbo* thank you

People Igbo thank you

[This line is an equal distribution of both languages]

This is an Insertion. A mix of Igbo and English. The statement uses both Igbo and English. The shift to English does not violate constraints as it marks a new clause where both languages coexist.

16. Apparently most of my supporters were *ndi Igbo*

Apparently, most of my supporters were people Igbo

[This line includes the Igbo phrase "ndi Igbo" within an English sentence]

Here, Maria switches to English but includes "ndi Igbo," demonstrating the coexistence of both languages in her speech. It contains both English and Igbo elements. "Ndi Igbo" is used in a way that adheres to the constraints, as the switch occurs at the end of the sentence.

17. So, thank you for emm... *nagba am* as... In fact, *ya wu*

So, thank you for emm accepting me-1SG.OBJ as... in fact, if-CONJ you

a nagba m o kwa war

had not- PST.NEG accepted me-1SG.OBJ It is war

‘So, thank you for emm accepting me as... ah ah...in fact if you had not accepted me

It would have been war’

[This line includes a mix of English and Igbo languages like the use of "thank you for emm..." (English) and "nagba am..." (Igbo)]

This sentence shows alternation with a mix of English and Igbo, highlighting a casual speech style, with multiple code-switching instances. Each switch adheres to the equivalent systems constraint, allowing for seamless transitions between languages.

18. Because *a wum nwa afor*, so, you people have to *nagba m*
because I am child native so you people have to accept-ASRT me
because I am a native so you people have to accept me

[‘nwa afor’ is an expression in Igbo to show identification with the Igbo ancestry. This line contains a mix of English and Igbo languages like the use of “a wum nwa afor” (Igbo)]

Here, the statement combines Igbo and English, indicating an alternating style of communication, showcasing how the speaker can navigate between languages without violating syntactic rules, adhering to the equivalent systems constraint.

19. So, thank you for all the love

[This line is in English with no code-switch]

The final statement is entirely in English. There is no code-switching occurring here, and it follows English syntax rules.

Throughout the interview, the speaker shows off her fluency in both Igbo and English, switching between the two with ease and largely maintaining the grammatical patterns of each. She does, however, occasionally halt and quickly return to English when speaking in Igbo, which is particularly obvious when she is hesitant, this can be attributed to her language environment growing up. Ma et al. (2021), argues that a child’s home language environment is a strong predictor of early language skills. She grew up in the United Kingdom and relocated to Nigeria in her later years where she acquired the Igbo language skills which clearly explains her setbacks in speech fluidity. This can also be interpreted as a compensatory strategy for her limited vocabulary in Igbo, where she switches a lot from Igbo to English, which may be attributed to language attrition, with English showing subtle dominance in her speech.

Results of Analysis

Influences on both language structures:

The analysis of code-switching between Igbo and English in the interview reveals significant influences on the linguistic structures of both languages, particularly in terms of syntax, phrases, word order, sentence starters, verb conjugation, and pronouns. The syntax of Igbo generally follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order, which is like that of English. This similarity facilitates code-switching between the two languages, as seen in sentences such as "everybody ga mara ihe gbasara gi" (sentence 9). In this sentence, the placement of the verb "ga mara" aligns with English verb placement, making the switch linguistically and structurally accurate within the sentence.

Furthermore, the blending of phrases from both languages is prominent throughout the conversation. For example, in sentence 17, the phrase "So, thank you for..." retains the English structure while being embedded in an Igbo sentence. This blending demonstrates the flexibility of both languages to merge seamlessly, allowing the speaker to construct meaningful sentences without breaking syntactic rules. This fluid blending of phrases is a recurring feature in the conversation, indicating a high level of bilingual proficiency.

One of the more intriguing observations from this analysis is the difference in word order between Igbo and English, particularly in relation to noun phrases. While English follows a Head-Final structure, where qualifiers typically precede the head noun (for example, "white person"), Igbo is a Head-Initial language, where the head noun precedes the qualifying elements (for example, "Onye ocha" which translates to "Person White"). This structural difference between the two languages is evident in sentences like "Ndi Igbo" (sentence 15), which literally translates to "People Igbo" but would be rendered in English as "Igbo people." Despite this structural divergence, the speaker navigates between both languages with ease, maintaining grammatical correctness in both linguistic systems.

The influence of English on Igbo sentence structure is also evident in sentence starters, such as "Before i bughị onye ala beke" (sentence 11), where the English word "Before" initiates an Igbo sentence. This syntactic borrowing from English into Igbo reflects the fluid interaction between the two languages and illustrates the speaker's familiarity with both grammatical systems. Verb

conjugation further demonstrates this, with the Igbo use of "ga" to indicate the future tense, as in "ga mara" (will know) in sentence 9. This future tense marker is an example of how Igbo verb structures are integrated into English sentence frameworks, reflecting the nativization of English within the local Igbo context.

Another fascinating aspect of this bilingual speech is the use of pronouns. In Igbo, there are fewer pronouns than in English, and they do not express gender. For instance, "O ga gba mu akanti" (sentence 4) and "O digi possible, not yet" (sentence 10) both use the pronoun "O," which refers to different subjects ("he" in the first case and "it" in the second). This lack of gender differentiation in Igbo pronouns contrasts with the English system, where distinct pronouns are used for masculine, feminine, and neutral subjects. The absence of gender-specific pronouns in Igbo can present challenges for speakers of English when learning Igbo, as it requires a conceptual shift in how subjects are referenced.

The blending of languages in the conversation is particularly striking in sentences like "Because a wum nwa afor, so, you people have to nagba m" (sentence 18). Here, the speaker begins the sentence in English, switches to Igbo, reverts to English, and then ends the sentence in Igbo. This type of seamless transition between languages showcases the speaker's bilingual competence and the ease with which they navigate both linguistic systems. Such instances of linguistic blending exemplify the smooth and vibrant nature of code-switching in bilingual speech.

Several observations emerge from the analysis of this code-switching interaction. First, the speaker balances effective communication with adherence to the syntactic rules of both languages. The goal appears to be conveying meaning clearly and maintaining the structure of both Igbo and English. Second, the blending of languages is grammatically correct, suggesting that the speaker is highly proficient in both languages and uses code-switching regularly. However, the pauses that occur before certain switches may (not absolutely) indicate that the speaker may be experiencing some degree of language attrition, perhaps due to reduced use of Igbo in favour of English due to her linguistic environment. Finally, the syntactic mixing observed in the conversation does not lead to grammatical errors, but instead reflects the speaker's adeptness at manoeuvring within and between two linguistic systems.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates how the speaker employs code-switching as a strategic tool, drawing on the strengths of both Igbo and English to express ideas efficiently and meaningfully. The fluidity with which the speaker alternates between the two languages reveals the rich sociolinguistic landscape in which this bilingual communication occurs, as well as the linguistic creativity that emerges in multilingual contexts like Nigeria.

Analytical results from the frameworks utilised

The analysis of the speech data, examined through Muysken's (2000) typology of bilingual speech and Poplack's (1980) constraints on code-switching, reveals several key patterns and strategies in the bilingual's code-switching behaviour. The results demonstrate a sophisticated use of code-switching, which adheres to established linguistic models and constraints, thus offering various viewpoints into bilingual speech situation in Nigeria.

Following Muysken's typology of bilingual speech, in the speech, insertion is one of the most frequently observed types of code-switching. This involves embedding English lexical items, such as nouns and phrases, into Igbo grammatical structures. For instance, in the sentence "Ọ na aju m gi ebolekedu ebe m na-aga na TV niile ara o chala gi," the word "TV" is an English noun embedded into an Igbo sentence without disrupting its grammatical structure. Similarly, in "Because a wum nwa afor, so, you people have to nagba m," the items "Because" and "so, you people have to" is inserted within a largely Igbo conversational flow, illustrating how the speaker effortlessly integrates English phrases into her speech without altering the underlying Igbo syntax.

Alternation, another of Muysken's typologies, occurs when the speaker switches between languages at clause or sentence boundaries, often signalling a shift in focus or topic. The speech frequently alternates between Igbo and English, as seen in the sentence "Ndi Igbo ekenem unu" (Igbo) followed by "Thank you for having me on here" (English). The switch happens between complete syntactic units, allowing for a seamless transition between the two languages. Similarly, in "Ọ na aju m gi ebolekedu ebe m na-aga na TV niile ara o chala gi" (Igbo) followed by "So, ma gwa ya" (English/Igbo), the alternation is evident at clause boundaries. This switching often reflects the speaker's fluency in both languages and her ability to shift between them depending on the context or the intended purpose.

Turning to Poplack's (1980) code-switching constraints, the speech generally adheres to the free morpheme constraint and the equivalence constraint. The free morpheme constraint posits that code-switching cannot occur between a bound morpheme and a free morpheme unless the free morpheme exists in both languages. The speech data shows no violations of this constraint. For instance, in "Ya shi daddy m diri ndu as of today o ga gba mu akanti," both "daddy" and "as of today" are free morphemes inserted into an Igbo sentence without disrupting the grammatical structure. Similarly, in "O si hmm... ihe a awukwa nsi hu gi. I wu gi a very open person," the insertion of the English phrase "a very open person" respects both Igbo and English grammatical rules, maintaining the syntactic integrity of the sentence.

The equivalence constraint, which suggests that code-switching occurs at points where the syntactic structures of both languages align, is also evident in the speech. For instance, in "I wu gi a very open person," the switch between Igbo and English occurs without violating the grammatical rules of either language, as both syntactic structures are equivalent at the point of the switch. This is further exemplified in "Your life is no longer... everybody ga mara ihe gbasara gi," where the switch from English to Igbo occurs at a point where the sentence structures in both languages are compatible. These examples show that the speaker's code-switching behaviour consistently adheres to the equivalence constraint, demonstrating her ability to maintain grammatical accuracy across both languages.

In terms of frequency, insertion is the most dominant code-switching strategy observed in the speech. This suggests that English words and phrases are often embedded into Igbo discourse, reflecting the sociolinguistic reality of bilingualism in Nigeria, where English often holds a more formal or global status while Igbo remains the dominant language in local and cultural contexts. Alternation also plays a significant role, allowing the speaker to fluidly switch between languages depending on the conversational context or topic.

Overall, the bilingual's speech displays a sophisticated use of code-switching, adhering to both Muysken's typology and Poplack's constraints. The predominance of insertion and alternation, alongside the consistent observance of syntactic rules in both Igbo and English, emphasises

bilingual competence. This analysis not only sheds light on the individual language use but also contributes to the broader understanding of code-switching practices among bilingual speakers in Nigeria. Her speech illustrates the complex interaction between Igbo and English in everyday communication, reflecting larger sociolinguistic trends in bilingualism and language contact.

In addressing the research question, the linguistic dynamics of code-switching in the speech data show the complexity and fluidity of bilingualism in Nigeria. The predominance of insertion as a code-switching strategy highlights the integration of English lexical items into the Igbo grammatical structure. This insertion pattern reflects the sociolinguistic reality of post-colonial Nigeria, where English, as a global language and colonial language, has a strong influence on everyday communication. By inserting English words like "TV" or phrases like "Thank you," the speaker demonstrates how English has become embedded in local speech, even in conversations primarily in Igbo. This reflects a linguistic shift that is characteristic of nativization, where English is adapted and recontextualized within the local linguistic environment. The presence of alternation between Igbo and English in her speech, where the speaker seamlessly shifts between languages, further reveals the fluid bilingual nature of her communication. The ability to switch languages at sentence or clause boundaries signals a high level of bilingual proficiency, common among Nigerians who navigate both local and global spheres.

In terms of sociocultural dynamics, the speech also opens a window into the cultural significance of code-switching in Nigerian society. The speaker's use of Igbo when addressing the community with phrases like "Ndi Igbo ekenem unu" (Greetings to the Igbo people) reflects her cultural identity and affiliation with her local ethnic group. However, she switches to English to express formal gratitude or engage in topics like popular culture (Big Brother reality TV), which suggests that English is used in more formal or cosmopolitan contexts. This linguistic behaviour mirrors the broader sociocultural divide in Nigeria, where English often symbolizes modernity, education, and social mobility, while indigenous languages like Igbo are associated with local identity, tradition, and intimate or communal contexts.

The analysis also supports my opinion that code-switching contributes to the evolution of language in Nigeria, particularly through the process of nativization. By embedding English words and phrases into Igbo discourse, the speaker is participating in a form of linguistic innovation where English is adapted and localised to fit Igbo linguistic patterns. This process is consistent with Kachru's (1986) nativization hypothesis, which suggests that English, when transplanted into new linguistic ecologies, undergoes transformations in form and meaning to align with local languages and cultures. The speech exemplifies how bilingual Nigerians contribute to this linguistic evolution, blending two distinct linguistic systems to create a hybridized form of communication that reflects both the global influence of English and the local relevance of Igbo.

Furthermore, Poplack's constraints on code-switching, particularly the equivalence constraint, demonstrate that the speaker's code-switching follows grammatical rules of both languages, maintaining syntactic integrity while allowing for fluid transitions between Igbo and English. This indicates that code-switching in the Igbo-English context is not random or chaotic but rather governed by linguistic rules that enable smooth communication across both languages. This alignment of syntactic structures in bilingual speech further contributes to the gradual merging of linguistic systems, supporting the evolution of a more integrated, hybridized language that reflects the post-colonial, multilingual reality of Nigeria.

In conclusion, the results of the analysis answer the research question by showing that code-switching between Igbo and English in Nigeria is both a linguistic and sociocultural phenomenon. Linguistically, it reflects the ongoing nativization of English as it becomes embedded within Igbo speech patterns, contributing to the evolution of a new, localised linguistic variety. Socioculturally, it highlights the fluid negotiation of identity, where English is used to signal participation in global or formal contexts, while Igbo is employed to assert local and ethnic belonging. Together, these linguistic and sociocultural dynamics showcase how code-switching plays a critical role in shaping the evolving language landscape in post-colonial, multilingual Nigeria.

PERCEPTIONS OF CODE-SWITCHING

The participants in this study consist of bilingual speakers of Igbo and English who reside in Nigeria. The study seeks to include a diverse range of participants, considering various age groups, educational backgrounds, and social contexts to give a comprehensive understanding of code-switching phenomena in Nigeria. In this phase of analysis, this research aims to collect diverse opinions from bilinguals regarding the phenomenon of code-switching through the administration of a questionnaire. The questionnaire is self-formulated and structured to elicit specific responses from participants, particularly regarding their attitudes toward the use of Igbo and English.

Perceptions of code-switching can exhibit notable variation contingent upon sociolinguistic and cultural determinants (Stell & Yakpo, 2015, p. 13). Within some social groups, code-switching is acknowledged and accepted as a conventional and culturally affirming practice, a symbol of identity blending. In such environments, the occurrence of code-switching is not necessarily an indicator of linguistic limitations but rather reflects adherence to prevailing sociolinguistic practice.

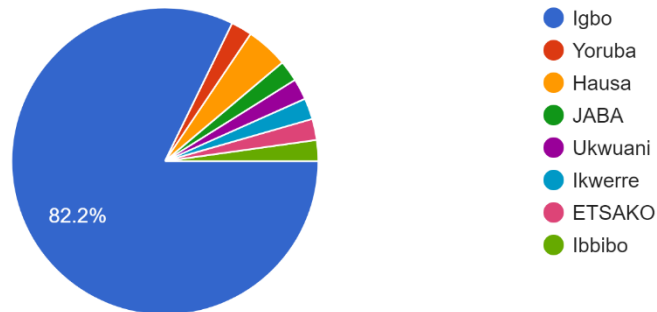
On the other hand, opinions of code-switching may vary from ideas of linguistic competency to linguistic inadequacy in some societies, especially those that were formerly under colonial rule and where a foreign language is enforced rather than adopted. This viewpoint could stem from the conviction that the ability to consistently produce unadulterated English represents a higher degree of linguistic competence and mastery. Thus, it becomes important to be aware that attitudes towards code-switching within linguistic discourse are subject to contextual variation, as well as historical circumstances.

The provided data and interpretations reflect the perspectives of Igbo bilinguals. It becomes imperative to understand how code-switching is perceived in a bilingual environment, and the responses obtained are vital in guiding the direction of future research within the field of code-switching, particularly within an Igbo linguistic environment in Nigeria.

Figure 1. *The distribution of ethnicity of the participants*

What ethnicity are you?

45 responses



The data on ethnicity is crucial to this study as it provides information on participants' linguistic background, which includes their language proficiency levels and exposure to different linguistic influences. A thorough examination of the data indicates that 17.8% of respondents identify outside the Igbo ethnicity, with 5 respondents showing no sign of proficiency in Igbo, while 4 non-Igbo respondents declare proficiency in Igbo language. This is significant in contextualising the findings within cultural and linguistic settings of the Igbo community. The prevalence of Igbo ethnicity among respondents, accounting for 82.2% of responses, is an indication of the targeted demography, ensuring the relevance and applicability of the study outcomes to the specified linguistic community.

Year of Birth

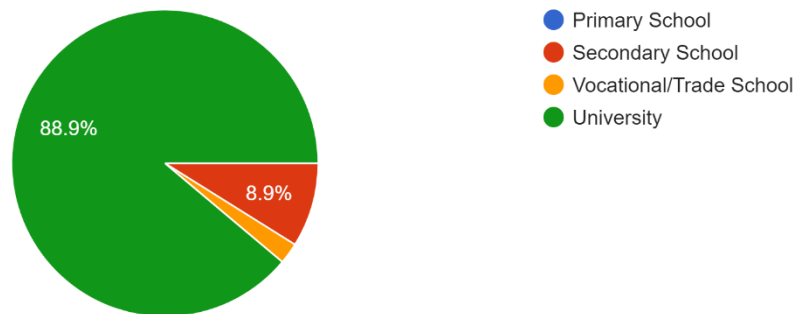
45 responses

Year of Birth	Number of Responses	Percentage
1993	4	8.9%
1994	4	8.9%
1995	2	4.4%
1996	1	2.2%
1997	3	6.7%
1998	1	2.2%
1999	1	2.2%
2000	1	2.2%
2001	1	2.2%
2002	1	2.2%
2003	1	2.2%
2004	1	2.2%
2005	1	2.2%
1992	1	2.2%
1991	2	4.4%
1990	1	2.2%
1989	3	6.7%
1988	2	4.4%
1987	3	6.7%
1986	1	2.2%
1985	3	6.7%
1984	1	2.2%
1983	3	6.7%
1982	1	2.2%
1981	1	2.2%
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1868	1	2.2%
1867	1	2.2%
1866	1	2.2%
1865	1	2.2%
1864	1	2.2%
1863	1	2.2%
1862	1	2.2%
1861	1	2.2%

Based on the respondents' birth year distribution, it is calculated that a significant proportion of the sample, namely 57.78%, were born between 1991 and 2014, making them a particularly youthful group. Compared to the 42.22% of respondents born between 1969 and 1989, this group likely experienced a different language environment growing up than those born later. As a result, they may code-switch less frequently, potentially due to a stronger preference for or greater exposure to one language over the other. According to Alfonzetti, (2015, p. 22) age has been observed to affect code-switching patterns, with younger bilinguals demonstrating higher rates of code-switching than older bilinguals. This distinction is significant for code-switching studies. This is important since birth year and exposure to cultural influences on language use and proficiency are correlated. According to studies, young bilinguals use code-switching more frequently to communicate their growing language proficiency and to interact with others (Smolak et al., 2019, p. 501). Participants from various age groups may therefore exhibit differing degrees of language use and code-switching behaviours.

Figure 3. *The level of education of the participants*

What is your highest level of education?
45 responses



Higher education levels have been linked to a higher frequency of code-switching, according to Palmes, (2023, p. 1). Numerous research has linked education to code-switching. According to one of them, a Pew Research Centre study, 48% of black individuals in the US, with at least a four-year college degree say they sometimes or occasionally feel the need to code-switch, compared to 37% of those without a college degree (Dunn, 2019). Educational levels play a crucial role in analysing code-switching perspectives and habits. Individuals with low or no formal education may code-switch less and not adhere to the grammatical rules of languages used. On the other hand, those with high level of education pay attention to the grammatical rules of the languages used and as a result, demonstrate their awareness of code-switching norms. These findings suggest preference for code-switching among the highly educated.

Figure 4. *The frequency of spoken Igbo by the participants*

How often do you speak Igbo in your daily life?

45 responses

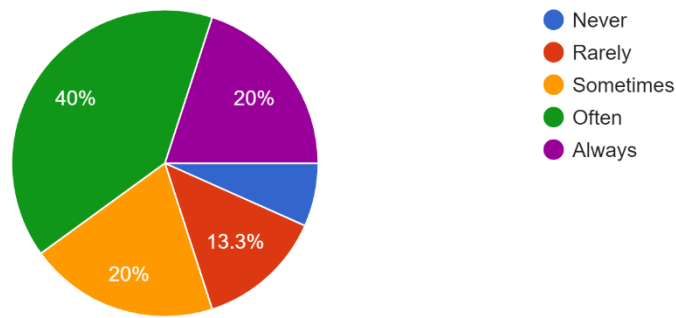
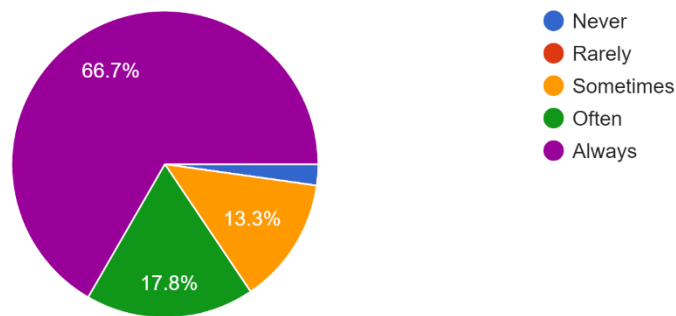


Figure 5. *The frequency of spoken English by the participants*

How often do you speak English in your daily life?

45 responses

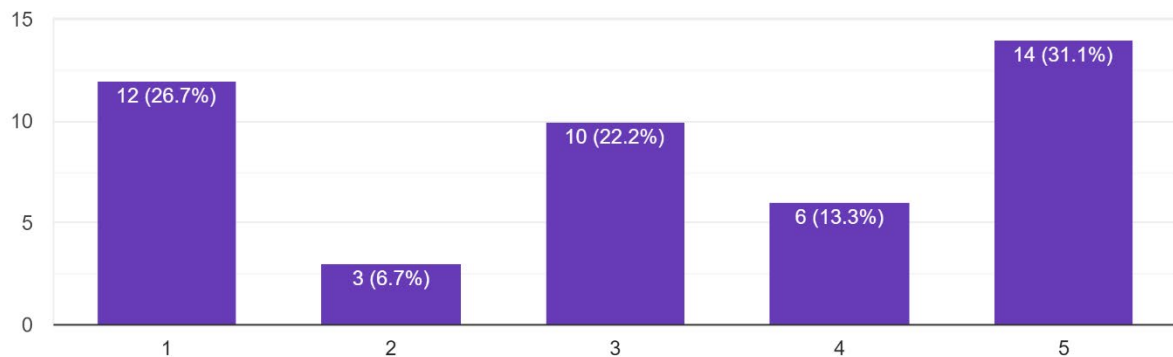


Frequency of language usage has been associated to code-switching tendencies. Khalid, (2022, p. 315) argues that the frequency of speaking two different languages can influence the likelihood of code-switching, which is the practice of alternating between languages in conversation. 66.7% reported speaking English consistently in their daily life, compared to just 20% for Igbo, this imbalance in language use helps to understand why code-switching is inevitable in such a linguistic

community. Khalid, (2022, p. 320) further argues that bilingual individuals with higher levels of proficiency in both languages tend to engage in more code-switching, particularly within sentences. The outcome of this is the phenomenon of language dominance - the tendency for one language to be used more than the other. The concept of language dominance in code-switching is explained by Wu & Struys, (2021, p. 13) that a dominant bilingual may code-switch more frequently when speaking in their non-dominant language. The data certainly reflects a dominance of English over Igbo. This can be attributed to various factors, including geographical location, proficiency levels, and societal attitudes towards each language.

Figure 6. *The distribution of difficulty in speaking Igbo by the participants*

I find it difficult to speak entirely in Igbo
45 responses



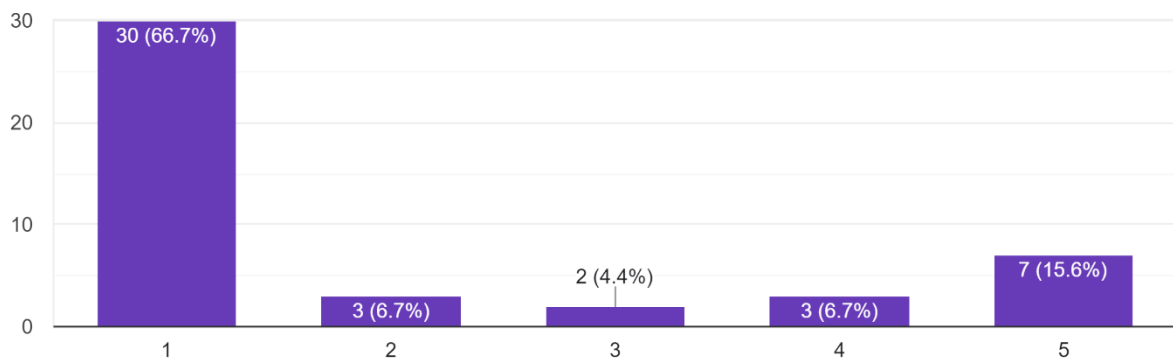
Based on the data, the statement is "I find it difficult to speak entirely in Igbo." Here is the distribution of responses based on the scale provided, with 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree)

- Strongly Disagree (1): 12 responses (26.7%)
- Disagree (2): 3 responses (6.7%)
- Neutral (3): 10 responses (22.2%)
- Agree (4): 6 responses (13.3%)
- Strongly Agree (5): 14 responses (31.1%)

Many respondents strongly agreed with this statement, indicating that they find it difficult to communicate fully in Igbo. This implies that those who strongly disagreed or disagreed (potentially having a strong command of Igbo and preferring to speak it predominantly) might exhibit minimal code-switching. In contrast, those who agreed or strongly agreed may experience linguistic interference from English, prompting them to resort to code-switching as a coping mechanism to overcome interference. Hofweber et al., (2023, p. 4) in their study of bilingual children stated that a common concern of caregivers of bilingual children is that code-switching could delay or negatively affect the children's proficiency in each language. But they concluded on the contrary that children who were dominant (and therefore more proficient) in the majority language were found to code-switch most frequently, ruling out the possibility that code-switching could be associated with poor skills in the majority language. Those who are neutral might be comfortable with code-switching, seeing it neither as a challenge nor a necessity, they switch languages based on context or convenience.

Figure 7. *The distribution of difficulty in speaking English by the participants*

I find it difficult to speak entirely in English
45 responses



Based on the data, the statement is "I find it difficult to speak entirely in English." Here is the distribution of responses based on the scale provided, with 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree)

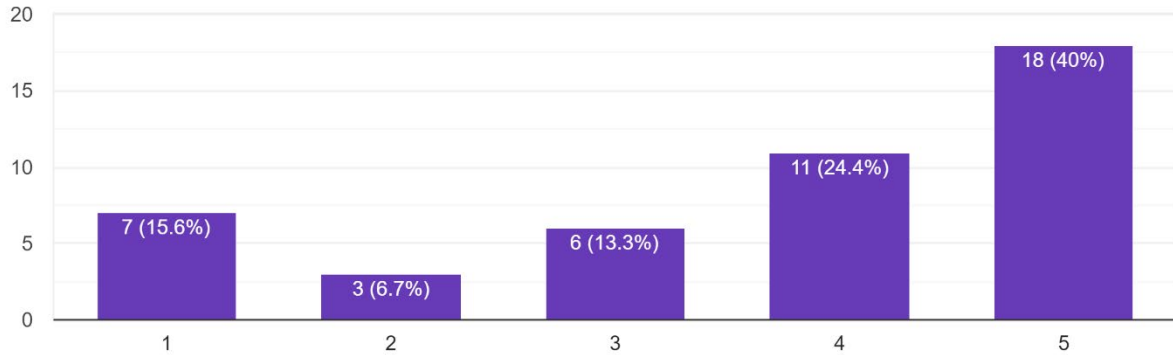
- Strongly Disagree (1): 30 responses (66.7%)

- Disagree (2): 3 responses (6.7%)
- Neutral (3): 2 responses (4.4%)
- Agree (4): 3 responses (6.7%)
- Strongly Agree (5): 7 responses (15.6%)

Crystal, (1987, as cited in Skiba, 1997), explains that one of the possible reasons for the switching from one language to another is the notion that a speaker may not be able to express oneself in one language so switches to the other to compensate for the deficiency, and as a result, the speaker may be triggered into speaking in the other language for a while. The data shows an interesting contrast. When asked about difficulty speaking only Igbo, responses were spread out, with 26.7% strongly disagreeing and 31.1% strongly agreeing. This suggests a variety of experiences with Igbo fluency. However, the responses to the question about difficulty speaking only English are quite different. A large majority (66.7%) strongly disagreed, while only 15.6% strongly agreed. This significant difference can be explained by language dominance. Research on heritage language acquisition uncovered that language dominance may undergo a shift from the heritage (native) language to the majority language, influenced by factors such as input quantity and quality (Arnaus Gil & Jiménez-Gaspar, 2022, p. 1). Among multilingual speakers, code-switching is frequent and frequently associated with age and language dominance. The data indicates that English has risen to prominence among the Igbo population in Nigeria, and that this would necessitate the use of code-switching when speaking Igbo, the native tongue.

Figure 8. *The distribution of the mixture of Igbo and English by the participants*

I often mix Igbo and English when speaking
45 responses



Based on the data, the statement is "I often mix Igbo and English when speaking." Here is the distribution of responses based on the scale provided, with 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree)

- Strongly Disagree (1): 7 responses (15.6%)
- Disagree (2): 3 responses (6.7%)
- Neutral (3): 6 responses (13.3%)
- Agree (4): 11 responses (24.4%)
- Strongly Agree (5): 18 responses (40%)

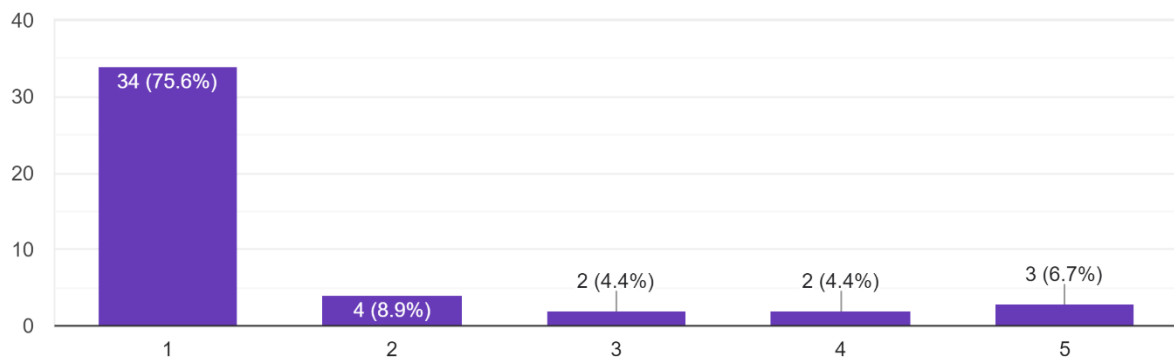
The study of respondents' level of agreement with the statement reveals separate groups within the sample population that strongly disagree or disagree with the statement. They are prone to value blending Igbo and English over linguistic integrity. The topic of linguistic purity should be closely studied especially in code-switching. Malik, (2019, p.1-2), made a compelling argument, that the major problem with code-mixing ²is "a highly dangerous disease that can easily damage the purity of any language and is a serious matter to take into consideration for everyone because code-mixing sometimes leads to the death of a language whenever one language becomes dominant over the

² Grosjean, et al., (2012, p. 19) elucidate that both code-switching and borrowing have been fused into one to what we now know as "Code-mixing".

other. The excessive use of terms of one language into another lowers the prestige of that language”. Although just a fraction of the respondents holds such views, it is important to understand why and how this could be addressed. It could be assumed that their inclination towards using each language separately reflects a desire to uphold linguistic boundaries and demonstrate mastery and linguistic awareness in the usage of both languages. However, we have more respondents who agree that fluidity in language use suggests that both languages complement each other in communication, although it may also imply a lack of mastery in either language.

Figure 9. *Participants' Perception of the Influence of Igbo on Their English Proficiency*

I think my English would be better without my knowledge of Igbo
45 responses



Based on the data, the statement is "I think my English would be better without my knowledge of Igbo." Here is the distribution of responses based on the scale provided, with 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree)

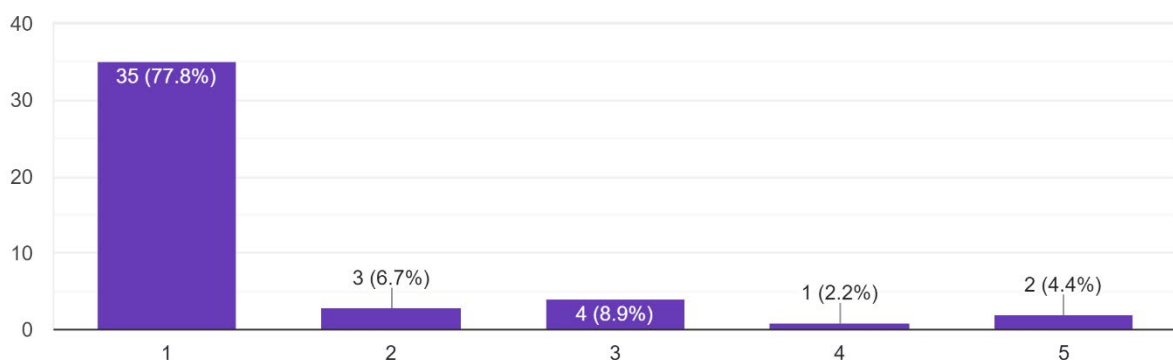
- Strongly Disagree (1): 34 responses (75.6%)
- Disagree (2): 4 responses (8.9%)
- Neutral (3): 2 responses (4.4%)

- Agree (4): 2 responses (4.4%)
- Strongly Agree (5): 3 responses (6.7%)

This study sheds light on the relationship between bilingual proficiency, how languages influence one another (cross-linguistic impact, notably interference), and participants' knowledge of their own code-switching (metalinguistic awareness). By analysing how participants responded to the statement, we acquired extensive insights into how Igbo proficiency influences their English skills and how they perceive this relationship. Surprisingly, a vast majority (75.6%) agreed with the widely held belief that learning one language does not inevitably impair one's ability to learn another. This is consistent with the findings of Khalid, (2022, p. 320), who investigated language proficiency in Saudi female students and discovered that the participants had good attitudes towards adopting codeswitching. Based on the outcomes, he concluded that codeswitching is not an indicator of language incompetency.

Figure 10. *Distribution of Participants' responses to the usage of verbs in Igbo and English*

Igbo verbs affect how I use English verbs.
45 responses



Based on the data, the statement is "Igbo verbs affect how I use English verbs." Here is the distribution of responses based on the scale provided, with 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree)

- Strongly Disagree (1): 35 responses (77.8%)

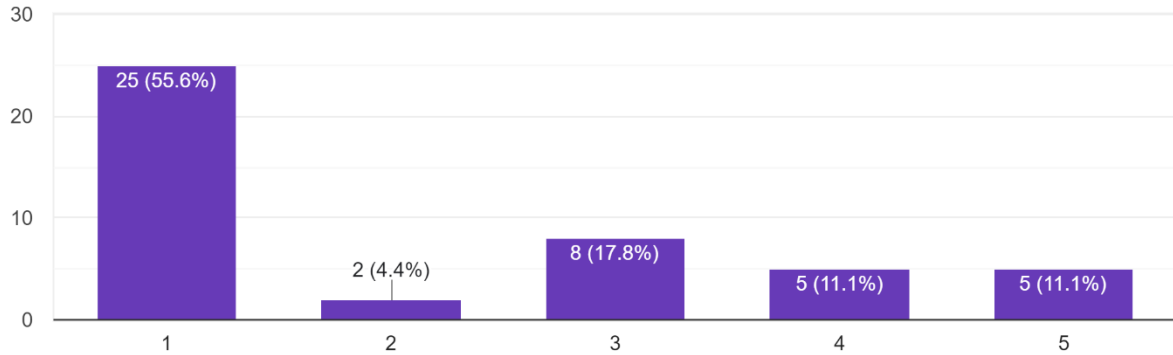
- Disagree (2): 3 responses (6.7%)
- Neutral (3): 4 responses (8.9%)
- Agree (4): 1 response (2.2%)
- Strongly Agree (5): 2 responses (4.4%)

The distribution of responses, with a large majority (77.8%) strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with the statement that Igbo verbs affect English verb usage, is quite telling. This suggests that a significant portion of the respondents might have achieved a level of proficiency where the verb structures of their two languages remain distinct. Those who agreed or strongly agreed (around 6.6%) might experience cross-linguistic influence, where their knowledge of Igbo verb structures subtly affects their English verb usage. (Grosjean, et al., 2012, p.18) gave a comprehensive explanation of this in their book *The Psycholinguistics of Bilingualism*. They claim that borrowing and code-switching differ but complement each other, meaning that though code-switching involves the alternate use of two languages, borrowing on the other hand is the integration of one language into another. In the earlier analysis of the interview excerpts, an explanation was given on how the interviewee integrates the Igbo verb 'ga' into an English clause and the statement maintains its grammaticality (see line 9). The similar sentence structure between English and Igbo may play a significant role in the positive perception of verbal usage in both languages.

Figure 11. *Distribution of Participants' responses to the usage of pronouns in Igbo and English*

Using the right pronouns when switching between Igbo and English is challenging.

45 responses



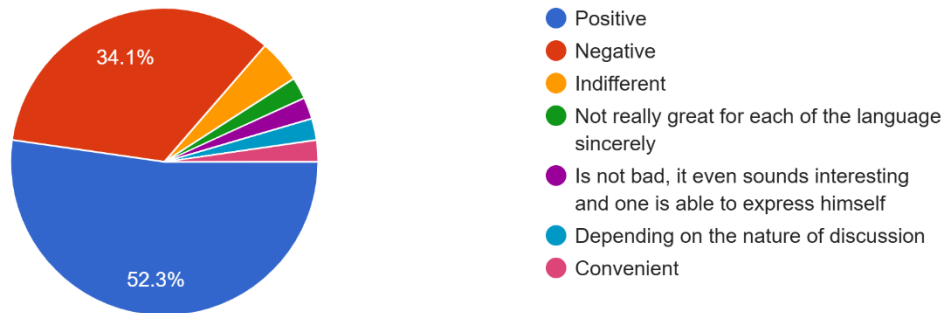
Based on the data, the statement is "Using the pronouns when switching between Igbo and English is challenging." Here is the distribution of responses based on the scale provided, with 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree)

- Strongly Disagree (1): 25 responses (55.6%)
- Disagree (2): 2 responses (4.4%)
- Neutral (3): 8 responses (17.8%)
- Agree (4): 5 response (11.1%)
- Strongly Agree (5): 5 response (11.1%)

The response from the data is quite interesting because the English and Igbo pronouns differ immensely. For example, Igbo has just one pronoun which represent all genders and things. The Igbo pronoun 'O' is void of gender and operates a multifunctional role in Igbo linguistics. Ideally, it should be a challenge distinguishing its usage when code-switching, but most of the respondents seem to be well-educated in the unique nature of the Igbo pronouns and do not perceive it to be a problem when code-switching. The results of this will be useful in understanding how Igbo bilinguals separate grammatical aspects of their language particularly in the crucial area of pronouns.

Figure 12. *Participants' perception to language mixture*

Using Igbo and English in the same sentence is
44 responses



This study results revealed that most people have good attitudes regarding code-switching. The suggestion of mixing Igbo and English in the same sentence elicited a mixed response, with 51.1% positive and 33.3% negative. Those with a positive outlook may see code-switching as a method to better self-expression and add a new layer to communication, whereas others with a negative attitude may be concerned that combining languages may undermine each language individually. A neutral group also emerged, stating that their perspective may vary depending on situations such as cultural matters, emotional expressions, and language proficiency of the other speaker. These many perspectives address the communicative effectiveness and social implications of code-switching in Nigeria. Positive opinions dominate, suggesting that participants frequently switch between codes. They may do so to adapt to their conversation partner's preferred language or to express cultural identity or special meanings. But it's crucial to remember that code-switching might cause problems like interference with phonological (sound), syntactic (sentence structure), or lexical (vocabulary) elements. While code-switching, it might be challenging to adhere to each language's distinct rules. Combining Igbo and English vocabulary could cause linguistic norms to change. Conflicting grammar can also lead to uncertainty or impede communication when two languages are mixed in a statement. It takes almost native proficiency in both languages to use code-switching efficiently.

RESULTS

The questionnaire reveals the various perceptions of code-switching among Igbo bilinguals. Overall, positive attitudes toward code-switching were prevalent, with many respondents viewing it as a natural and effective communication strategy. However, there were varying opinions on linguistic purity, with some respondents expressing a preference for maintaining clear boundaries between languages, while others embraced code-switching as a normative practice in their daily interactions.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic analysis of respondents revealed certain trends in language usage and code-switching patterns. Most participants identified as Igbo, emphasising the relevance of the study to the Igbo linguistic community. Younger respondents tended to switch between Igbo and English more frequently, suggesting a potential connection between age and language use. According to Poulin-Dubois (2016), as children age and their vocabulary grow, the switching from one to the other language accelerates and these switching become more frequent (Poulin-Dubois, 2016 as cited in Kavak & Gül, 2020). Furthermore, higher levels of education were associated with increased code-switching behaviour, indicating that formal education may play a role in facilitating bilingual language use. Additionally, the frequency of language usage influenced code-switching patterns, with English often dominating over Igbo in everyday communication.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal the relevance of code-switching in bilingual communities and raise several important questions for further research. One key area of inquiry is the factors that contribute to the smooth integration of Igbo and English within sentences during code-switching. The role of language dominance in shaping code-switching patterns and language development is an area that remains underexplored. The study also points to potential differences in language acquisition strategies between beginners and more proficient bilinguals. Beginners may face more difficulties navigating code-switching, while proficient bilinguals appear to handle the transitions between languages with greater ease. This raises important questions about how second language acquisition processes differ across varying levels of first language proficiency.

Furthermore, the research stresses the need for educational curricula in Nigeria to better address the linguistic and cultural needs of bilingual learners. The relationship between language and identity in multilingual settings like Nigeria suggests that education systems should consider the cultural and linguistic heritage of learners to promote more effective bilingual education. Finally, the cultural attitudes towards language purity and linguistic heritage may influence code-switching practices, as seen in the varying opinions of respondents regarding the importance of maintaining distinct language boundaries.

In conclusion, the study has provided vital information into the linguistic and sociocultural dynamics of code-switching between Igbo and English, as well as its implications for language acquisition and identity formation in Nigeria's multilingual context. Future research should continue to explore these complex interactions to develop a more comprehensive understanding of code-switching and its role in the nativization and evolution of language in post-colonial settings.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated the dynamics of code-switching between Igbo and English in Nigeria, particularly in the context of bilingual speakers. Through an analysis based on Muysken's (2000) typology of bilingual speech and Poplack's (1980) constraints on code-switching, we have shown that code-switching serves not only as a linguistic mechanism but also as a marker of sociocultural identity and interaction. The bilingual speaker analysed in this study exhibited high levels of bilingual competence, switching between Igbo and English seamlessly and maintaining grammatical integrity within both languages.

From a linguistic perspective, the study highlighted several areas where code-switching had a significant influence on language structure, including word order, verb conjugation, and sentence formation. The analysis revealed that code-switching does not occur randomly but follows systematic rules and reflects deep bilingual proficiency. Based on the speech analysis, Igbo-English bilinguals are assumed to use code-switching strategically, often switching at points where the structures of the two languages align. This aligns with Poplack's constraints, particularly the

equivalence constraint, which suggests that switches tend to occur where the syntax of both languages match, minimising disruptions to grammatical flow.

Socioculturally, code-switching in this context is a means of navigating multiple identities—both personal and communal. It functions as a form of linguistic nativization, enabling speakers to assert their cultural heritage while engaging with the broader global influence of English. The patterns observed suggest that bilingualism in Nigeria is not simply a matter of language proficiency but is intertwined with deeper issues of identity, social interaction, and community belonging. Importantly, this study has also uncovered both the benefits and challenges of code-switching for language acquisition. While frequent switching between Igbo and English promotes metalinguistic awareness and vocabulary expansion, it can also complicate language learning for beginners by introducing incomplete structures and linguistic interference. These insights into language acquisition can be useful for educators in multilingual settings, where bilingualism is both a linguistic and educational reality.

Perceptions of code-switching among Igbo bilinguals were generally positive, with respondents viewing it as a natural and effective communication strategy. However, opinions on linguistic purity varied, highlighting the tension between maintaining distinct language boundaries and embracing fluid linguistic practices. This reflects broader sociolinguistic debates about the role of bilingualism in post-colonial contexts, where languages interact dynamically, shaping and reshaping each other.

In conclusion, code-switching in Nigeria's Igbo-English bilingual community reflects both linguistic and sociocultural dynamics that are central to understanding language evolution in post-colonial, multilingual contexts. The practice of code-switching contributes to the ongoing nativization of English, while also preserving the cultural identity embedded in the Igbo language. Future research should continue to explore the implications of this phenomenon, particularly in relation to language acquisition, identity formation, and the broader evolution of languages in multilingual settings. By deepening our understanding of code-switching, we can gain further knowledge into how languages adapt and coexist in diverse linguistic environments, particularly in the face of globalisation and cultural exchange.

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APPENDIX

https://drive.google.com/file/d/17rXt9lxnuCEdmVdLUico3SUBiGr0P_pU/view?usp=drive_link (Questionnaire)

Nwachi, Emmanuel Chinonso

Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary

Institute of English Studies

Department of Linguistics

emmanuelnwachi39@gmail.com

2025.01.11