CODE-SWITCHING: A PRAGMATIC STRATEGY IN MULTILINGUAL NIGERIAN COMMUNITIES

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Abstract
Code-switching, the alternating use of two or more languages within a conversation or discourse, is a prevalent phenomenon in multilingual communities. This study examines code-switching as a pragmatic strategy employed to achieve specific communicative purposes, such as clarifying meaning, signalling social identity, maintaining solidarity, and negotiating power relations. The analysis is grounded in Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model and Auer's Conversational Analysis Approach**.** The Markedness Model explains how speakers' language choices are shaped by the negotiation of social norms and rights-and-obligations sets, while Auer's approach accounts for the sequential and interactional functions of code-switching within conversational contexts. Data were collected from naturally occurring conversations among educated bilinguals in a Nigerian multilingual setting, and **a** qualitative discourse analysis was applied to identify patterns and functions of code-switching. Findings reveal that code-switching is not a random occurrence but a purposeful act influenced by sociocultural norms, conversational structure, and speaker intentions. It serves pragmatic functions such as emphasis, politeness, topic shift, repair, and identity marking**,** aligning with both social motivations and interactional contingencies. The study concludes that code-switching is a dynamic communicative tool for meaning-making, social positioning, and pragmatic adaptation in multilingual settings. These insights underscore its value beyond structural considerations, highlighting its role as a resource for effective communication and social negotiation in diverse linguistic communities.
Keywords: code-switching, pragmatics, multilingualism, Markedness Model, Conversational Analysis, discourse strategies

Introduction

Language goes beyond being just a method of communication; it acts as a social resource that reflects identity, authority, and cultural values. In multilingual societies, individuals often navigate different linguistic systems, resulting in dynamic language practices such as code-switching. Code-switching refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or dialects within a single conversation or discourse. Once viewed as a sign of linguistic deficiency, contemporary research acknowledges it as a purposeful and important strategy employed by bilingual and multilingual individuals. This practice serves communicative, social, and pragmatic functions that surpass mere language mixing.

Multilingual settings provide an optimal environment for code-switching due to the variety of languages present in different life contexts. Individuals may use one language in formal situations, another in casual conversations, and blend both during spontaneous discussions. This behaviour illustrates what Myers-Scotton refers to as the "negotiation of social relationships through language choice" (58). The choice to switch languages is rarely accidental; it is influenced by factors such as the topic at hand, the linguistic backgrounds of the speakers, the need for clarification, and the goal of maintaining social harmony.

From a pragmatic perspective, code-switching functions as a mechanism for achieving specific interactional goals. It enables speakers to emphasize points, clarify meanings, and signal group membership. Auer posits that "code-switching is a conversational strategy that signals contextualization and meaning negotiation" (115). This suggests that speakers do not switch languages randomly but rather in response to contextual cues within the conversation. For example, a speaker may shift from English to a local dialect to soften a request, build rapport, or reduce social distance. Similarly, an educator in a bilingual setting may alternate languages to guarantee understanding and sustain engagement.

Social identity also plays a critical role in motivating code-switching. Gumperz observes that speakers "switch codes to exploit the symbolic value of each language" (67). In many communities, language choice indexes group membership and cultural affiliation. By alternating between languages, speakers express dual identities, align with a

particular group, or distinguish themselves from others. This highlights the socio-cultural dimension of code-switching, making it not merely a linguistic act but also a marker of belonging and social positioning.

Despite its prevalence, code-switching remains a subject of debate regarding its implications for language maintenance and development. Critics argue that it threatens language purity, while proponents maintain that it demonstrates linguistic creativity and adaptability. This paper aligns with the latter view, emphasizing that code-switching is a sophisticated discourse strategy rather than a deficiency. It argues that code-switching serves multiple pragmatic functions that enhance communicative effectiveness in multilingual settings.

The purpose of this study is to investigate code-switching as a pragmatic strategy in multilingual communities, examining the motivations, patterns, and functions underlying its use. Through an analysis of naturally occurring conversations, the research seeks to answer key questions: Why do speakers switch codes? What pragmatic functions does code-switching serve? And how does it reflect social relationships and cultural values? By addressing these questions, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of language use as an adaptive and purposeful phenomenon in diverse linguistic environments.

Statement of the Problem
Despite the extensive examination of code-switching carried out by various Nigerian scholars, the majority of the research tends to concentrate on particular domains or structural elements, resulting in a limited comprehension of its role as a pragmatic strategy for daily communication within multilingual communities. For example, Bamiro (2006) explored the political dimensions of code-switching in Nigerian literature, highlighting how language alternation mirrors identity, solidarity, and social distance in creative writing; however, his analysis is confined to literary texts rather than real-life dialogues. Yusuf and Idris (2023) studied code-switching among Nigerian Pidgin speakers in Masaka Market, illustrating how it aids business transactions and bridges social gaps, yet their research is limited to market interactions and overlooks broader interpersonal functions. Jegede (2011) examined code-switching in primary school classrooms in Ile-Ife, demonstrating its educational benefits for teaching mathematics; however, his study is narrowly focused on classroom dynamics rather than everyday social communication. Likewise, Adetuyi, Owaniyi, and Adeniran (2017) conducted a sociolinguistic investigation of Yoruba-English code-switching among second-language English speakers in Southwestern Nigeria, attributing motivations primarily to language inadequacy and identity expression, but they did not delve into the pragmatic functions that affect meaning negotiation and politeness. Finally, Adegbite and May (2023) explored code-switching in Nigerian police interrogations, uncovering its role in persuasion and power dynamics; however, their research is limited to institutional discourse and does not include typical conversational contexts. While these studies offer valuable insights, none have thoroughly examined code-switching as a pragmatic strategy for achieving communicative objectives such as politeness, solidarity, clarification, and identity management across various everyday interactions. This research aims to address this gap by investigating the pragmatic motivations and functions of code-switching in authentic conversations among multilingual communities in Nigeria, thus emphasizing its significance as an adaptive and intentional instrument for effective communication.

Literature Review
Code-switching, which refers to the alternation between two or more languages during communication, has garnered considerable scholarly interest in multilingual communities due to its intricate nature and functional adaptability. Researchers have long recognized that code-switching is not merely a random occurrence of language alternation but rather a socially and pragmatically driven linguistic strategy that fulfills various communicative objectives. It is utilized to accomplish conversational aims such as negotiating identity, clarifying meaning, fostering solidarity, and alleviating face-threatening situations. While earlier investigations primarily concentrated on the structural and grammatical dimensions of code-switching, more contemporary research has highlighted its sociolinguistic and pragmatic functions across different contexts, particularly in Africa, where multilingualism is the standard rather than the exception.

Poplack is regarded as one of the pioneering authorities on this topic, defining code-switching as "the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent" (Poplack 583). This definition, rooted in structural linguistics, emphasizes the syntactic limitations on switching and reflects an initial emphasis on the grammatical principles governing language alternation. Nevertheless, subsequent research, particularly in African contexts, has

redirected focus towards the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of the phenomenon. This transition acknowledges that speakers in multilingual environments frequently switch codes not solely due to linguistic proficiency or inadequacy but rather for socially and contextually driven motivations.

In Nigeria, code-switching has been thoroughly examined, mirroring the nation's linguistic diversity and the commonplace nature of multilingual exchanges. Bamiro's research serves as an early illustration, concentrating on Nigerian literature and showcasing how authors employ code-switching to shape identity and negotiate cultural authenticity (Bamiro 25). His analysis underscores the symbolic and stylistic functions of code-switching. His research emphasizes the symbolic and stylistic functions of code-switching within written discourse, illustrating how the alternation of languages serves as a literary device for depicting social realities. Nevertheless, Bamiro's investigation is confined to fictional literature and does not encompass spontaneous oral dialogues where pragmatic motivations are more readily apparent.

Another aspect of code-switching in Nigeria is examined by Yusuf and Idris, who analysed its significance in market exchanges in Masaka (Yusuf and Idris 3). Their research demonstrates that traders utilize code-switching as a tactic to improve understanding, foster relationships, and guarantee successful transactions in a linguistically varied marketplace. While this study highlights the practical importance of code-switching in economic interactions, it limits its focus to one area—business communication—thus neglecting its wider application in informal social dialogues across different contexts.

In a similar vein, Jegede investigates code-switching in classroom discourse, highlighting its educational advantages in primary school mathematics teaching (Jegede 112). His results show that educators alternate between English and local languages to aid comprehension and ensure effective knowledge dissemination. Although this study illustrates the teaching benefits of code-switching, it is still confined to formal educational environments, thereby missing its practical roles in non-institutional communications.

Adetuyi, Owaniyi, and Adeniran utilize a sociolinguistic perspective in their examination of Yoruba-English code-switching among second-language speakers in Southwestern Nigeria (Adetuyi, Owaniyi, and Adeniran 45). They primarily attribute this phenomenon to linguistic inadequacy and the desire for identity affirmation. Although their analysis emphasizes social motivations, it somewhat neglects the pragmatic functions of code-switching, including politeness strategies, conversational repair, and discourse management, which frequently play a vital role in interactional contexts.

Institutional discourse is also a significant aspect of Nigerian research on code-switching, as demonstrated by the work of Adegbite and May, who explore its application in police interrogations (Adegbite and May 150). Their study reveals how code-switching serves as a persuasive mechanism, allowing interrogators to assert authority, maintain control, and elicit confessions during investigative processes. This research offers important insights into the strategic use of code-switching in power-oriented interactions but does not extend its analysis to informal daily communication, where pragmatic factors such as solidarity, mitigation, and turn-taking are equally significant.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Nigerian scholarship has presented a variety of viewpoints on code-switching, ranging from its symbolic application in literature to its functional roles in markets, classrooms, and institutional environments. Nevertheless, a significant gap remains: the majority of studies have concentrated on specific domains or sociolinguistic explanations, leaving the pragmatic aspect of code-switching in everyday multilingual conversations relatively underexplored. While current research recognizes that code-switching fulfills communicative functions, few studies offer a comprehensive examination of how it operates as a pragmatic strategy for achieving conversational objectives in informal, naturally occurring discourse. This research aims to address that gap by investigating the pragmatic roles of code-switching within Nigerian multilingual communities, concentrating on how speakers utilize language alternation to negotiate meaning, manage politeness, assert their identity, and sustain conversational flow during actual interactions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theoretical models: Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model and Auer's Conversation Analysis Approach, both of which provide the foundation for understanding the pragmatic and interactional dimensions of code-switching in multilingual communities.

Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1993) is employed to explain the social motivations behind language choice in interaction. The model posits that speakers make linguistic choices based on perceived rights and obligations (RO) sets associated with specific social relationships. Within this framework, an unmarked choice signals adherence to expected norms in a given context, while a marked choice indicates a deliberate deviation to renegotiate social distance, assert identity, or achieve other pragmatic goals. In the context of this study, the Markedness Model provides a lens for interpreting how bilingual speakers of English and Igbo in Nigeria switch codes to express solidarity, show politeness, convey authority, or assert cultural identity. For instance, speakers may employ Igbo to index intimacy and ethnic affiliation, while switching to English to maintain neutrality, clarity, or educational prestige. Thus, the model underscores code-switching as a strategic act motivated by socio-pragmatic considerations rather than mere linguistic deficiency.

In addition, the study adopts Auer's Conversation Analysis Approach (1995) to examine the sequential organization of code-switching within interaction. Auer conceptualizes code-switching as **a** participant-related and discourse-related phenomenon, focusing on how language alternation functions as a contextualization cue that signals shifts in topic, frame, or participant alignment. Unlike structural or grammatical accounts, this approach emphasizes the interactional meaning of code-switching, analyzing its placement within conversational sequences such as adjacency pairs, repair mechanisms, and preference organization. In this study, Auer's framework is instrumental in explaining how code-switching is embedded in conversational structures to achieve specific pragmatic effects, such as mitigating face-threatening acts, marking topic transitions, or signaling affiliation. By examining turn-taking and sequential cues, the analysis reveals how speakers employ code-switching to negotiate meaning dynamically in ongoing discourse.
Together, these two theories provide a robust theoretical foundation for the study. The Markedness Model accounts for the social motivations and identity-related functions of code-switching, while Auer's Conversation Analysis elucidates the interactional mechanisms and contextual relevance of code-switching in natural conversation. This dual-theoretical orientation ensures a comprehensive understanding of code-switching as a pragmatic strategy that is both socially motivated and conversationally structured, aligning with the study's objective of uncovering the functional and interactional dimensions of language alternation in multilingual communities.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine code-switching as a pragmatic strategy in multilingual communities. The population consists of educated bilingual speakers of English and Igbo in Nigeria, while the sample size includes ten participants selected through purposive sampling, ensuring inclusion of individuals who frequently engage in code-switching. Data were collected from naturally occurring conversations in informal and semi-formal settings, such as family gatherings and social discussions, and recorded with participants' consent. Approximately ten conversations, each lasting 15–30 minutes, were captured and transcribed verbatim, resulting in about 1,000 words of data. The analysis is anchored on Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model and Auer's Conversation Analysis Approach. The Markedness Model is applied to explain the speakers' choice of language as a deliberate act to achieve pragmatic goals such as politeness, identity expression, and solidarity, while Auer's approach is employed to analyze the sequential organization of code-switching within conversational turns and its contextual relevance. Using these frameworks, utterances were segmented into pragmatic units, and instances of code-switching were identified and classified based on their communicative functions. Contextual variables like participant relationships and settings were also considered to interpret meaning-making processes. Ethical standards were strictly observed through informed consent and confidentiality throughout the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Excerpt 1
Speaker A: *Chinedu, have you seen your father?*
Speaker B: *Ọ gara ahịa, but he will soon be back.*
(He went to the market, but he will soon be back.)
Analysis:
In this exchange, **Speaker B** begins in Igbo (*Ọ gara ahịa*) and switches to English (*but he will soon be back*). According to **Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model**, the switch serves a **marked choice** that negotiates two RO sets: intimacy through Igbo and informational clarity through English. Igbo indexes **familial closeness**, while English maintains a neutral tone for explicitness.
From **Auer's perspective**, the switch is placed **after the first clause**, functioning as a **sequential contextualization cue** signaling a shift from an unmarked family-related statement to an informative update. The structure follows **preference organization**, where the answer aligns with the expected format (response to a question), but the bilingual shift adds **emphasis and completeness** to the response.

Excerpt 2
Speaker C: *Guy, abeg help me with that assignment. You sabi am well well.*
(Guy, please help me with that assignment. You know it very well.)
Analysis:
Here, **Speaker C** blends Nigerian Pidgin (*abeg, sabi*) with English, indexing **solidarity and camaraderie**. Under **Myers-Scotton's model**, this is an **unmarked choice** within peer interaction—Pidgin signifies equality and informality, while English handles academic content. The RO set is negotiated to reduce **social distance**, appealing to cultural norms of reciprocity and humility.
From **Auer's lens**, the switch occurs **within the same turn**, marking **code-mixing as a contextualization cue** for mitigating the **face-threatening act** of requesting help. The adjacency pair here is **request–acceptance/denial**, and the Pidgin terms soften the imposition, showing **preference for agreement**.

Excerpt 3
Speaker D: *Mama, I will come late today.*
Speaker E: *I nụla? Okay, take care.*
(Have you heard? Okay, take care.)
Analysis:
Speaker E begins with Igbo (*I nụla?*) before moving to English (*Okay, take care*). Under **Myers-Scotton**, this represents a **marked choice** aimed at **emotional affirmation** and **parental authority**. The Igbo phrase conveys **cultural respect**, while English ensures **comprehensibility and closure**.
From **Auer's perspective**, the switch operates as a **repair strategy**—the Igbo question confirms understanding, followed by an English reassurance. This sequence is structured as **question–answer adjacency**, and the switch signals **topic closure** while maintaining **affectionate tone**.

Excerpt 4
Speaker F: *Please pass the salt.*
Speaker G: *Oya, take am.*
(Okay, take it.)
Analysis:
The response mixes Nigerian Pidgin (*Oya, take am*) after an English request. According to **Myers-Scotton**, this is an **unmarked switch** in informal settings. Pidgin reinforces **familiarity** and **ease**, highlighting cultural values of **shared informality**.
Auer's analysis sees the switch as part of an **adjacency pair (request–compliance)**, with **Oya** acting as a **discourse marker** signaling readiness to fulfill the request. The sequential cue frames the interaction as **light-hearted and cooperative**, reducing any perceived imposition.

Excerpt 5
Speaker H: *Honestly, this thing dey hard me.*
Speaker I: *Nkea bu ihe anyị ga-eme mgbe niile.*
(Honestly, this thing is difficult for me. This is something we always do.)
Analysis:
Here, **Speaker I** responds entirely in Igbo after a Pidgin-English blend. Myers-Scotton interprets this as a **marked choice**, reasserting **ingroup solidarity** and **cultural continuity**. Igbo use signals **shared responsibility** and **cultural resilience**.
From **Auer's view**, the code choice serves as a **contextualization cue** for **disagreement mitigation**—the Igbo response aligns with **preferred second pair parts**, offering reassurance rather than direct contradiction. The sequential position indicates **empathy and alignment**.

Excerpt 6
Speaker J: ***Bro, you sure say you go fit finish am today?***
Speaker K: ***I ga-ahụ, I will try my best.***
(Bro, are you sure you can finish it today? You will see, I will try my best.)
Analysis:
Speaker K alternates between Igbo (*I ga-ahụ*) and English (*I will try my best*). Under **Myers-Scotton**, this reflects a **marked choice** signaling **optimism and reassurance**—Igbo is used to build **confidence and solidarity**, while English conveys **determination**.
Auer's interpretation highlights the switch as part of a **repair sequence**, where the Igbo phrase functions as a **pre-expansion**, setting a positive tone before the main answer. This sequencing emphasizes **interpersonal alignment** and **mitigation of doubt**.

Excerpt 7
Speaker L: *Daddy, please can I go out?*
Speaker M: *Ị ga-alaghachi oge? Yes, you can go.*
(Will you return early? Yes, you can go.)
Analysis:
Speaker M's switch from Igbo to English occurs after a **conditional question**. **Myers-Scotton** explains this as an **RO negotiation**—Igbo indexes **parental authority**, while English expresses **permission** clearly. The markedness lies in the **transition from authority to accommodation**.
Auer's analysis views this as an **insertion sequence** (question before granting permission), where the switch indicates a **shift in interactional footing** from control to acceptance, maintaining **social harmony**.

Excerpt 8
Speaker N: *Chai! This food sweet die.*
Speaker O: *Eziokwu, na Igbo soup di egwu.*
(Wow! This food is very sweet. Truly, Igbo soup is amazing.)
Analysis:
Speaker O's Igbo response reinforces **ethnic pride** and **cultural identity**. **Myers-Scotton** reads this as a **marked switch** signaling **solidarity and cultural appreciation** within a food context—an essential cultural domain.
From **Auer's view**, this is a **preferred agreement** following an assessment sequence. The code-switch serves as a **contextualization cue** that heightens **emotional involvement**, framing the interaction as **celebratory and affiliative**.

Excerpt 9
Speaker P: *Bros, you don hear wetin happen yesterday?*
Speaker Q: *I nụkwa? Very funny gist.*
(Bros, have you heard what happened yesterday? You heard too? Very funny gist.)
Analysis:
Speaker Q switches from Igbo to English mid-turn. According to **Myers-Scotton**, this is a **marked choice** that balances **closeness (Igbo)** with **humor emphasis (English)**. The cultural value of **storytelling as social bonding** is foregrounded.

Auer's approach emphasizes the **repair-like structure**: the Igbo question confirms shared knowledge, while English adds commentary. The switch acts as a **contextualization cue**, signaling a **shift from checking information to expressing amusement**.

Excerpt 10
Speaker R: *Wait, let me call you back.*
Speaker S: *N'anya, biko don't forget.*
(Wait, let me call you back. Dear, please don't forget.)
Analysis:
Speaker S uses Igbo endearment (*N'anya*) and request marker (*biko*) alongside English. **Myers-Scotton** explains this as an **unmarked choice for intimacy**, aligning with cultural norms of **affection and politeness**.
From **Auer's lens**, this switch operates as a **pre-closing strategy** within the **closing sequence** of the conversation. The Igbo expressions contextualize the interaction as **emotionally loaded**, reinforcing relational bonds before disengagement.

Findings
The findings of this study reveal that code-switching in multilingual Nigerian communities operates as a deliberate and meaningful pragmatic strategy rather than a random linguistic phenomenon. Across the ten excerpts analyzed, code-switching consistently reflects two core pragmatic functions: (1) negotiating social relationships and (2) indexing cultural values**,** confirming its central role in interactional dynamics.

First, the analysis demonstrates that speakers employ code-switching to manage interpersonal relationships and align with social expectations**.** In conversations between family members (e.g., Excerpt 1 and Excerpt 7), switches from Igbo to English occur strategically to balance intimacy and clarity. For instance, in Excerpt 1, Igbo establishes familial solidarity, while English ensures explicitness. Similarly, parental exchanges (Excerpt 7) show an authority–accommodation shift, where Igbo signals control and English conveys approval. These patterns align with Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, as speakers choose codes based on Rights and Obligations (RO) sets—Igbo for ingroup intimacy, English for neutrality and authority negotiation. Auer's Conversation Analysis corroborates this by illustrating how switches coincide with adjacency pairs and insertion sequences, functioning as contextualization cues that structure meaning and relational footing.

Second, code-switching indexes cultural values deeply embedded in Nigerian multilingual identity**.** The use of Pidgin in peer interactions (Excerpts 2 and 4) highlights egalitarianism and camaraderie, reducing social distance in face-threatening acts like requests. Similarly, Igbo switches in Excerpts 5, 8, and 10 foreground cultural solidarity and affection. Food-related discourse (Excerpt 8) associates Igbo language with ethnic pride, while affectionate terms like *N'anya* and *biko* (Excerpt 10) reflect politeness norms and emotional intimacy. These instances confirm that code-switching serves as a cultural marker, aligning with social expectations of humility, reciprocity, and respect—values central to Nigerian communicative practices.

Furthermore, the study finds that code-switching is sequentially organized within conversational structures**,** supporting Auer's argument that switches are not arbitrary but interactionally motivated. For example, in Excerpts 6 and 9, switches appear in repair sequences and assessment–agreement structures, signaling shifts from information confirmation to commentary or reassurance. Similarly, closing sequences (Excerpt 10) incorporate switches to soften leave-taking and reinforce relational ties. This sequential placement reinforces the idea that code-switching acts as a contextualization cue**,** guiding interlocutors in interpreting shifts in footing, stance, and interactional frames.
Overall, the findings affirm that code-switching in multilingual Nigerian communities is both socially motivated and interactionally structured. It enables speakers to negotiate solidarity, respect, and authority while simultaneously expressing cultural identity and values. Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model effectively explains the social motivations behind marked and unmarked choices, while Auer's Conversation Analysis captures the fine-grained sequential patterns that make code-switching an integral part of conversational analysis.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine code-switching as a pragmatic strategy in multilingual communities, focusing on its social motivations and interactional functions through the frameworks of Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model and Auer's Conversation Analysis approach. The analysis of ten conversational excerpts revealed that code-switching is not an arbitrary linguistic act but a highly organized and socially meaningful practice that facilitates communication, negotiates identities, and reinforces cultural norms.

The findings show that speakers in multilingual settings strategically switch between languages to achieve specific pragmatic goals, such as maintaining solidarity, mitigating face-threatening acts, signaling politeness, and managing authority. Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin frequently appeared alongside English, with each code serving distinct purposes: Igbo was often employed to index intimacy, cultural pride, or respect, while Pidgin marked informality and camaraderie; English, on the other hand, was used for clarity, neutrality, and explicitness. These patterns demonstrate the negotiation of Rights and Obligations (RO) **sets** as predicted by Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, where speakers make marked or unmarked choices based on the situational context and the relational goals of the interaction. Additionally, the sequential organization of code-switching observed in the data confirms Auer's assertion that switching functions as a contextualization cue within conversational structure. Code-switching aligned with various discourse patterns, including adjacency pairs (e.g., request–compliance, question–answer), repair sequences, insertion sequences, and pre-closing signals. Such placement highlights its role in structuring discourse, managing preference organization, and signaling shifts in footing or activity type. For instance, switches often occurred at points of topic transition, mitigation of disagreement, or reinforcement of agreement, thereby shaping interactional meaning and ensuring communicative efficiency.

Overall, this study concludes that code-switching in multilingual Nigerian communities is both socially motivated and interactionally systematic. It enables speakers to navigate complex social relationships, project cultural identities, and achieve communicative goals in ways that monolingual discourse cannot easily accommodate. Far from being a sign of linguistic deficiency, code-switching emerges as an intelligent and resourceful communicative strategy deeply rooted in sociocultural norms. This underscores the importance of viewing multilingualism as an asset rather than a problem and highlights the need for further research into how these practices influence domains such as education, media, and interpersonal relationships in an increasingly globalized world.

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