“He brought some kokonte and ntampe into this country and the Customs and Immigration people maso am”

Avoidance and Obliqueness through Code-switching

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INTRODUCTION

Code: Different languages or quite different varieties of the same language (Saville-Troike, 2003: 58)

Code-switching:

a) Change in languages within a single speech event (Gumperz, 1976)

b) The use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction (Saville-Troike, 2003: 58)
INTRODUCTION CONT.

Other Related Terminologies

- Style Shifting
- Code Alternation
- Situational Code-switching
- Metaphorical Code-switching
INTRODUCTION CONT.

WHY CODE-SWITCHING?

• To redefine an interaction by moving it to a different social arena (Symbolize change):
  a) identity; b) power; c) transaction

• Association of specific codes with specific purposes:
  i) politeness; ii) solidarity, iii) importance of speaker’s need

• Ability to speak more comfortably about certain topics with more fluency in one code than in the other
AIMS

Examine:

• The reasons behind CS.
• When speakers code-switch.
• Whether CS is employed to redefine an interaction as appropriate to specific social arena(s)
• Whether interlocutors employ CS to ‘speak’ the unspeakable
DATA AND METHOD

• Transcripts of interactions among Ghanaians at home and in the Diaspora
• Consist of commentaries on articles posted on:
  – Ghanaweb
  – MyJoy Online
  – Peace FM
  – Internet radio talk shows.
• Literal & Idiomatic translations
• Fifty-Six (56) excerpts were scrutinized for this study.
INSTRUMENT

Four main questions:

i. Which languages are involved in the CS?

ii. Which words and expressions are involved in the CS?

iii. At what syntactic boundaries does CS occur?

iv. Why do speakers CS?
RESEARCH PROCEDURE

• Closely and systematically examine texts
• Identify instances of CS
• Identify the linguistic markers of the switches
• Identify and discuss discursive functions of the linguistic markers of CS.
• Have another colleague examine and verify instances of CS.
• Support analytical claims with excerpts drawn from the data to ensure authenticity.
THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

• *Indirectness* (Searle, 1979; Obeng, 1994)

• *Acts of identity* (Le Page, 1985), and

• *Language and power* (Fairclough, 1989).
DATA ANALYSIS

• Quantitative and Qualitative.

• Quantitative: Basic descriptive statistics
  1. Number of languages involved in the CS
  2. Category of words and expressions switched
  3. Syntactic boundaries where CS takes place
  4. Number and type CS that take place.

• Qualitative:
  1. Subject excerpts to empirical inspection within *indirection, acts of identity, and language and power*.
  2. Determine implications for *law enforcement, juridical discourse, and political communication*. 
RESULTS

Languages Involved in the CS

• Of the 175 instances of CS:
  – 41.7% (n=73) English-Akan
  – 26.9% (n=47) English-Pidgin Eng
  – 8.3% (n=32) English-Ga
  – 10.9% (n=19) English-Akan-Ga
  – 2.3% (n=4) English-Other
RESULTS CONT.

Category of Words and Expressions Involved in CS

- a. 11% whole sentences
- b. 39% noun phrases (NP)
- c. 30% verb phrases (VP)
- d. 10% adjective phrases (Adj.P)
- e. 9% adverbial phrases (Adv.P).
- f. 1% other (especially, conjunctions, determiners & interjections).

- **Directness and indirectness**
  - a) 89% directness
  - b) 11% indirectness (such as idioms and aphorisms).
RESULTS CONT.

*CS Syntactic Boundaries*

I. 11% at sentence boundaries
II. 37% at NP boundaries
III. 33% at VP boundaries
IV. 7% within an NP
V. 10% within a VP
VI. 2% elsewhere
RESULTS CONT.

Reasons for CS (Common Themes)

a) Narcotics (38%)
b) Travel and Immigration (26%)
c) Politics (17%)
d) Lampooning (9%)
e) Illegal/Fake Marriages (5%)
f) Sports (2%)
g) Education (2%)
h) Other (1%)
DISCUSSION OF EXCERPTS

Excerpt 1
Context: Ghanaweb -- Ghana’s Member of Parliament by USA Custom and Immigration on charges of Drug trafficking.

A: We have to wait for the facts to come out before we soil the Honourable MP’s good name and hard earned reputation.

B: The facts are out. He brought some Kokonte and ntampe into this country and the Customs and Immigration People Maso Am. I no be watch wey he dey come buy. He is kokonte and ntampe exporter. He is azaaman.

C: You Ewe man, are you happy that they caught him?

D: They say he built schools and churches for his people.

E: Enti yEnyE no dEn? Big Brong kokonte man. They should jail him for life!
Excerpt 2
Context: Two people talk about a Ghanaian who had been deported from Canada. Collected in NJ, USA.

A: OkOO Canada na wObOO no kOtoo Ghana. EyE embarrassing.
B: We ti happen wai dem depOt am?
A: I goo di aduro we dem see say I bi konkonsaman. I tell dem say I go for Ghana, dem go sa am because I no wan be a chief.
B: This guy is not cruways. He is johnbu.
DISCUSSION OF EXCERPTS

Excerpt 3
Context: Two siblings converse about a friend whose attempt to obtain German residency paperwork through an illegal or false marriage fell through.

A: Na Sistser AAD deE no nso EkOsii sEn?
B: EkonkOn hO oo.
A: AdEn wankO sukuu no? SE Okaa sE Oreba hO abEkO sukuu.
Excerpt 4

Context: Posted on April 26, 2011. at 08:32:57. Contributors comment on an article about the detainment of a Ghanaian Public Official.

Guy: NPP coke dealers must have made a fortune. No wonder they were splashing money **Waa Waa, Waa** and shagging young girls **Nyafu, Nyafu, Nyafu**.

Belgium Slave Kayakaya Beleh: Your Brain They Die Fast Like Prof Mills. Your ShoeBox Room They Affect Your Thinking...you need some fresh food and fresh Air...come **home orga boye boye**

Nana Junky: Come home. Your ShoeBox Room They Affect Your Brain...Your Brain They Die Fast Like Prof Mills...come home for some fresh soup, beer and a good laugh **orga !!!**

Ras: You are right .The title was scary only to read and find out that the amount of $1bn include Ghana. This is sensationalism by a journalist."**NO KO FIO NI GBOMO BA YE"**.........LOL
Excerpt 5

Context: Posted on Tuesday, 17 January 2006. at 08:32:57. Contributors comment on an article about the majority in parliament defending a Ghanaian MP detained on drug charges in the USA.

Kofi: He lied to recluse himself. Didn't he say he was going to visit the sick daughter and later changed his story to say he was rather going to buy watches? Sorry, in a well run society, if an employee lies to absent himself from work and his boss finds that he is doing something else to his own benefit at the expense of the boss's time, the boss has a right to sack him. Why is it that to you NPP chaps a lie becomes truth. You guys are unbelievable! 

_Nkontompo fuohene! Yaka Gbemei!

Yaw: Sorry, I am not part of the "fama Nyame" gang. I am always shooting ahead. If you've been around as long as I have you'd have an idea that Amoateng is likely going to jail. If Amoateng's involvement in the case was only tangential a judge would have considered granting him bail.

Danso: I am with you against the _fama Nyame_ principles. No way we should be forgiving criminals any longer. Let Parliament consider the law and replace him and it will be unfortunate incidence of life for him if he is ever found not guilty. However the people of Nkoranza definitely deserve a rep.

Sakyi: Fellow Ghanaians, let's keep our calm. The NPP majority can even decide to make Amoateng the majority leader in absentia. 2008-_Ebaa fee gbeyee!!!!!!_

Ideas: Amoateng has done nothing to disgrace Ghana. Is it the first time something of this sort has happened in the world? We hear more disgraceful things everyday. _Monni mo fie asem._
CONCLUSION

• CS impacts and is impacted by the social domains or arenas of a discourse (Myers-Scotton & Ury, 1977)
• Speakers switch codes to show their political, social, or ethnic affiliations.
• CS indexes and is indexed by power (Fairclough, 1989) and by solidarity (Brown and Oilman, 1968).
• Speakers engaged in CS in non-congruent interactions
• Close connection between language (CS) and social identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) — group membership, political affiliations, among others.
• Indirectness finds expression in CS
• CS provides protective façade.
IMPLICATIONS FOR LAW AND DIPLOMACY

• Speakers find it safer & more comfortable to discuss issues that are illegal, face-threatening, embarrassing & untruthful in a ‘guest’ code, or in a different style or register given the protective façade provided by such codes.

• Discourse participants communicate indirectly when the subject-matter or content can put them in legal or communicative jeopardy.