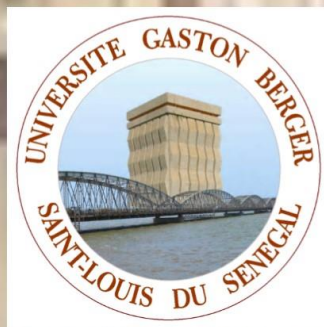




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## Code mixing in Tunji Ogundimu's *The insiders* ( Rissikatou MOUSTAPHA-BABALOLA & Marcel KAKPO )

Université d'Abomey-Calavi (Bénin)

### Abstract

Code mixing is a process which is characteristic of African literary creation. It is represented by the use of at least two languages (a mother tongue and a second or foreign language) in a literary work. This quasi generalisation of this technique of writing in African literature, being it in French or English, arouses many questions that can enrich linguistic analysis. Whatever the reasons why African novelists choose to "mix" two languages in their literary works, it is evident that they have some difficulties to describe African realities in a European language. Code mixing plays thus an important role insofar as it has a sociolinguistic, referential and discursive value. The purpose of this paper is to study the use of code mixing as linguistic choice by Tunji Ogundimu, a Nigerian writer, to provide certain linguistic pragmatic functions in his novel entitled *The Insiders*. This study has also discussed the situations in which this process is used.

Keywords : Code mixing, African literature, linguistics, culture, identity

### Résumé

Le mélange de codes est un procédé caractéristique de la création littéraire africaine. Il est représenté par l'usage d'au moins deux langues (une maternelle et une seconde ou étrangère) dans une œuvre littéraire. Cette quasi généralisation de cette technique d'écriture dans la littérature africaine, qu'elle soit d'expression française ou anglaise suscite chez le linguiste que nous sommes un certain nombre de questionnements. Quelques soient les raisons pour lesquelles les romanciers africains choisissent de « mélanger » deux langues dans un même ouvrage, il y a quand même une évidence : la difficulté pour eux de faire ressortir des réalités africaines dans une langue européenne. Le mélange de codes joue donc un rôle primordial dans la mesure où elle a une valeur sociolinguistique, référentielle et discursive. L'objectif de cet article est d'étudier l'emploi, par un auteur africain d'origine nigériane, Tunji Ogundimu, du mélange de code comme choix linguistique afin d'assurer certaines fonctions pragmatiques dans son roman *The Insiders*. Cette étude élucidera aussi les situations dans lesquelles ce procédé est utilisé.

Mots-clés : Mélange de codes, littérature africaine, linguistique, culture, identité

## **Introduction**

Language and culture depends on each other. This interdependency between language and culture makes language be the major means of identifying a set of people, nation or country. Hornby defines language as the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by a people of a particular country. It is often said that man is a social being; and what, perhaps, makes man to act as a “social being” is his ability to use language for communication. The importance of language in human’s life is not then to be demonstrated.

Sellers thinks that “language is intrinsic to the way we think, to the way we construct our groups and self-identities, to the way we perceive the world and organize our social relationships and political systems.” According to Whitman, it “[...] is not an abstract construction of the learned or of dictionary-makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its basis broad and low close to the ground.” From these different points of view, language can be perceived as a tool for social interaction through which human conveys, informs and shares ideas.

The multilingual nature of a country and some individuals’ multilingual or bilingual competence and the inter-language relationship existing between European and African native languages led to code mixing in conversation, discourse and communicative competence.

Code mixing is an expression, which in linguistics, refers to a multilingual’s or a bilingual’s use of two or more languages in a single unit of discourse, such as a word, an utterance, or a conversation (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). O’Numan and Carter (2001) define it as, “a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse.” African writers are confronted to multilingualism because, as every literate African citizen, they master at least two languages: their mother tongue and the official language of their country. This bilingualism appears clearly in their writings as the expression of their biculturalism. This is the case in Chinua Achebe’s *Things fall apart*, Wole Soyinka’s *The interpreters*, Olympe Bhêly Quenum’s *Un piège sans fin*, Jean Pliya’s *L’arbre fétiche*, Mariama Bâ’s *Une si longue lettre*, Ferdinand Oyono’s *Une vie de boy*, etc. just to quote some.

This generalisation of the use of mother tongues in writing in English or French can lead to two hypotheses. The first is that African novelists use their first language in addition to French or English because they do not know how to depict African

realities in their second language (French or English). The second interpretation can be the desire to make the readers be into contact with the natural community of the writer.

Whatever be the reason, there is undeniable evidence in the use of two or more languages by the majority of African writers: the necessity to make their novels available to a wide international readership in a colonial language in which it is not easy to express African socio-cultural reality.

To cope with this dilemma, African novelists employ various writing techniques to convey the various facets of African society everyday life. Code mixing appears then as the ultimate solution. Code mixing has a social, discursive and referential significance in a text.

This is the choice made by Tunji Ogundimu, a Nigerian novelist in writing *The Insiders*, a novel firstly published in 1995. In *The Insiders*, Tunji Ogundimu has mixed up Yoruba and English languages to convey the message. Using an African language in a novel that is supposed to be in English has certainly some advantages and disadvantages.

The main objective of the study is then to point out the implication of such bilingualism on the readers' understanding of Tunji Ogundimu's *The Insiders* and the situation in which the author has used code mixing in the novel. To reach the said objective, a qualitative research method, which consists in identifying code mixed extracts in the novel and analysing them has been applied. Before going to the findings, it is important to point out what code mixing is.

### **Literature review and theoretical framework**

Code mixing is an important feature and well studied speech process in multilingual communities. So many definitions of this term have been provided by linguists.

#### **What is code mixing?**

Wardhaugh (1992), defines code mixing as a phenomenon that occurs when speakers "use both languages together to the extent that they shift from one language to the other in the course of a single utterance". It is a mixing of two languages, usually

without a change of topic. As for Berthold et al. (1997), code mixing occurs when speakers shift from one language to the other in the midst of their conversation.

The term code mixing is sometimes used interchangeably with code switching which is defined as the alternation between different varieties used by the bilingual during the conversational interaction. For Bokamba (1989), it is a term referring to “the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event.” As far as Gumperz is concerned, he defines code switching as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (1982:59).

Poplack (1980:605), identifies three types of code switching: tag switching, inter-sentential switching and intra-sentential switching.

Tag-switching involves inserting a tag or short phrase in one language into an utterance that is otherwise entirely in another language. This type of code switching occurs the most easily for the reason being that tags typically contain minimal syntactic restrictions thus not violating syntactic rules when being inserted into monolingual sentences. Common English tags such as *I mean, you know* and *I wish* are some of the examples given by Poplack (1980).

Intersentential switching happens at clausal or sentential level where each clause or sentence is in one language or another. Occurring within the same sentence or between speaker turns, this type of code switching requires its speaker to be fluent in both languages in order to conform to the rules of the languages.

Intra-sentential switching, possibly the most complex type among the three, can take place at clausal, sentential or even word level.

As can be seen, tag switching and intra-sentential switching are very close to code mixing when one takes into account their definitions. Code mixing is then a kind of language hybridisation. It often occurs within one sentence, one element is spoken in language A and the rest in language B. There are three different types of code mixing: insertion, alternation and congruent lexicalisation.

Insertional mixing involves the the incorporation of lexical items or entire constituents from one language into a structure of another language. This is a form of unidirectional language influence. Muysken (2000) adds that in insertion, the process of code mixing is conceived as something akin to borrowing.

Alternation is defined as the switching between structures from separate languages. The boundary of the switches may be a clause, or some peripheral element such as a discourse marker or tag form. The grammars of two languages are being used in an autonomous or independent way.

As far as congruent lexicalisation is concerned, Muysken (2000) defines it as the combination of items from different lexical inventories into a shared grammatical structure. What is the place deserved to code mixing in African literature?

### **Code mixing in African literature**

Bandia (1996) thinks that code mixing and code switching are used to signal social, discourse and referential meaning in a text. African writers use them to express certain specific functions in a social interaction situation and some community specific ways of communicating. African writers code mix by using vernacular language and the European language and this is the case in Tunji Ogundimu's *The Insiders* in which Yoruba and English have been used to convey the message.

The usage of African language words or expressions in a novel that is written in French or English constitutes a problem for the readers because it is not always easy to infer the sense of the indigenous words or expressions. This difficulty is not only for non-African readers; even African readers that do not belong to the linguistic group of the author share it. Most of the time, footnotes and glossaries are provided to explain the vernacular words and expressions; but we are all conscious that reading a text with having a look to the footnotes and/or glossaries can become annoying. This is surely the reason why some authors prefer to give an in-text translation just after the text in the indigenous language. This form of translation has been used by Tunji Ogundimu to help the readers to have an idea about the songs and the incantations in *The Insiders*.

### **Code mixing in *The Insiders***

In *The Insiders*, I have identified fifty-two (51) examples of code mixing that can be classified as follows:



Types of code mixing	Number of occurrence	Percentage (%)
Insertion	43	84.32
Alternation	5	9.80
Congruent lexicalisation	3	5.88
TOTAL	51	100

Table 1: Classification of code mixing in *The Insiders*

From the table above, it is noticeable that the majority of code mixed extracts in *The Insiders* are insertion of Yoruba words or expressions in English sentences. All the insertion examples drawn from *The Insiders* are nouns or noun phrases related to clothes, foods and tradition. As for the alternational code mixing, five examples have been found in the novel (extracts 6, 8, 21, 28 and 33). The alternation examples in *The Insiders* are set expressions and common idioms used in Yoruba community. As far as the congruent lexicalisation is concerned, it can be found in three different extracts in Tunji Ogundimu's novel (extracts 9, 32, 44) and are used as adjectives modifying English words and share the grammatical structure of the sentence. What are then the functions of these code mixed extracts in *The Insiders*?

#### **Functions of code mixing in *The insiders***

The functions of code switching and code mixing have been thoroughly discussed by many scholars. Based on Jakobson's (1960) and Halliday's (1964) concept of functional specialisation, Appel and Muysken (2006) listed six main functions for code switching and code mixing: referential function, directive function, expressive function, phatic function, metalinguistic function, and poetic function.

The referential function involves lack of knowledge or facility in a language. Hence, bilingual speakers switch or mix codes when they do not know the word or when a certain concept is not available in that language. Appeal and Muysken define the directive function as a participant-related function that aims to include or exclude a person from a part of a conversation such as by using a familiar or foreign language to that person. As for the expressive function, they think that speakers use it to stress their self-identity or feelings to others in the conversation.

Code mixing has a phatic function when it is used to show a change in tone and emphasises parts of a conversation that are of importance. As far as the metalinguistic function is concerned, Myers-Scotton (1993) asserted that speakers use it to mix codes in order to comment on another language. Finally, code mixing has a poetic function when words, puns and jokes in one language are mixed to another language for the purpose of amusement or entertainment. After studying *The Insiders*, the functions of the code mixing extracts found in the novel can be classified as follow:

Functions of code mixing	Number of occurrence	Percentage (%)
Referential function	40	78.43
Directive function	5	8.80
Expressive function	6	11.77
Phatic function	0	0
Metalinguistic function	0	0
Poetic function	0	0
TOTAL	51	100

Table 2: Functions of code mixing in *The Insiders*

As can be seen, the table 2 shows clearly that the majority of the code mixed extracts drawn from *The Insiders* play a referential function in the text. This means that Tunji Ogundimu has been confronted to how to find lexical items to represent some concepts related to Yoruba identity because neither these concepts nor their equivalent meanings exist in the English language.

As for code mixing having a directive function, five (5) examples representing 9.61 % have been identified. The five code mixing examples are inclusive to show how close some characters of the novel are. This low use of directive function of code mixing shows that almost all the interactants in *The Insiders* share Yoruba culture and it will be difficult to try to exclude some from the conversation.

Six (6) examples of code mixing playing an expressive function have been found in Tunji Ogundimu's novel. This means that Yoruba people need sometimes to do things or to express themselves in such a way that point out their identity.

### **Referential code mixing in *The Insiders***

The referential code mixing use in *The Insiders* is of four kinds: the first is related to words and expressions related to Yoruba people ways of dressing, the second is about eating habit, the third deals with Yoruba music and the fourth is about Yoruba's religious belief. As can be seen, Tunji Ogundimu has used code mixing to paint Yoruba sociocultural realities in *The Insiders*.

The code mixing extracts related to the Yoruba people ways of dressing can be also divided into four different categories: clothes worn by women, the ones worn by men, the tissues these clothes are made of and the material in which the clothes are stocked. The said extracts are sixteen (16) over the forty (40) covered by the referential code mixing in *The Insiders*. Five (5) of the extracts are related to women's way of dressing and can be found in the extracts 1, 11, 34, 36 and 44.

In the first example drawn from page 13 of the novel, "Alaba was wearing a worn-out headgear to match her yellowish *iro* and *buba*..." In the second example found on page 30, the "*iro* and *buba*" belong to Kudi's mother. As far as the ones of the extracts 34 (p.92) and 36 (p.94) are concerned, the said "*iro* and *buba*" have been found in Mrs Kudoro's (Bayo's mother) trunk. The "*iro* and *buba*" of the last extract is worn by Ranti. From these examples, it can be concluded that "*iro* and *buba*" represent the major way of dressing of Yoruba women.

As far as the men's way of dressing is concerned, it has been found on pages 66, 75, 162 and 179 through the extracts 22, 26, 27, 45 and 46 and are related to "*dansiki*" (p.66) and "*agbada*" (p. 75 and 179). The extract 45 is about "*sokoto*" meaning "trousers." In this extract, Tunji Ogundimu is quoting a common Yoruba proverb which means that it is no use to go far to search something you can find near. This proverb opposes the homonym Sokoto (a town in Nigeria) and "*sokoto*" (trousers). The sentence following the extract on page 162 has summed up this proverb: "why must he [Bayo] go for Kudi when Ranti has always been there waiting for him"?

Some references about traditional tissues with which clothes are made have been pointed out by the author of *The Insiders*. For example, we have *sabojo* on pages 30

and 31, *adire* on pages 33, 92 and 123. In the extract 43 on page 140, the author has listed the different kinds of tissue we can find in a Yoruba community: “*aso oke, aso ebi, adire, ankara, sabojo, pooku lowoe.*”

Yoruba people keep their clothes in a traditional trunk called *bembe* (extracts 35 and 37 on pages 92 and 94).

The code mixing having a referential function *The Insiders* are also related to Yoruba people eating habit. Fourteen (14) extracts related to foods have been identified in the novel. Some examples can be found in extracts 2, 3, 4, 5, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 30, 31, 39, 40 and 41.

Apart from eating and dressing habit, Tunji Ogundimu has also made references to Yoruba music on pages 30 and 73 through the extracts 10 and 24.

As can be seen, the Yoruba words and expressions used in referential code mixing by the author do not have equivalents in the English language. Even a description cannot fully express Tunji Ogundimu’s intention. These words, beyond helping to fill a gap give the readers the possibility to be into contact with Yoruba community and to share their culture.

### **Directive code mixing in *The Insiders***

As far as directive code mixing is concerned, five (5) examples has been identified in *The Insiders*. In the extract 6 drawn from page 28, we have a Yoruba popular saying “*Ara la mon.*” In fact, in the novel, it is used as a radio programme title. It is the reduced version of the complete though which is “*Ara la mon, a o m’ore*” meaning that you only know the ones who are close to you not the ones who really bear you in their heart. Bayo has put this saying to mean to Kudi that he cannot understand how she loves him and is hesitating to marry him.

The word “*Ewi*” in the seventh extract (p.28) is also a radio programme and its means poetry. As far as, the extract 21 is concerned, a friend has put Bayo’s father’s nickname “*Iwa Lẹwa*” to show how close they were and to tell Bayo that he can be confident to him. In the extracts 47 and 48 (p.183), the word “*oga*” meaning “boss” has been put by the police inspector to include Bayo and his aunts who have never gone to school in the conversion.

All the examples of directive code mixing in *The Insiders* are inclusive and show the closeness between the interactants in the novel. What about the expressive code mixing?

### **Expressive code mixing in *The Insiders***

As it is said above, expressive code mixing is used to stress self-identity or feeling in a conversation and that is the case with the extracts 8, 20, 28, 32, 33 and 52 respectively found on pages 28, 52, 75, 89, and 234; the extracts 32 and 33 being on the same page (89). In the extract 8, Kudi by inserting the Yoruba clause “*jare*” in the sentence “give me a taxi fare, *jare*, I’m going” wants to tell Bayo that what he thinks about marriage and her is not her concern; for she is a free mind woman. Bayo’s uncle (Baba) wanted to remind his nephew what can be the consequences to not respect the elders in Yoruba community when he put that Bayo is “[...] like the senseless snail that insulted the *Orisha*.” Every Yoruba knows that the fetish named *Orisha* in Yoruba should be feared of and if you do not fear it, you will surely be punished.

The Yoruba identity of the characters in *The Insiders* has been stressed on when in the extract 28, Bayo screamed “Ahh! *Mo gbe!!!*” after his parents’ death, meaning “I am lost” and when Bayo thinks that there is no difference whether he had an *Iyabode* (mother has returned) or a *Babatunde* (father has come back).

It is important to point out that we also have two extracts referring to code switching in *The Insiders* through the extracts 25 and 48 and are songs which translation has been provided by the author. These code switching examples also play an expressive function in the novel for they are culturally-bound and self-identity items. All these examples show that one of Tunji Ogundimu’s intention in writing the novel was to point out Yoruba ways of living and reacting in real situation; in a word, he wanted to expose to the readers the Yoruba identity.

### **Conclusion**

Beyond being considered as an interactional and socio-political linguistic phenomena, resulting from obvious historical and ideological forces, code mixing

and code switching should also be viewed as conversational tools that maintain or change ethnic group boundaries and personal relationships (Gal 1988, p. 247). This study has shown that *The Insiders* is a bilingual text in which English and Yoruba has been used together to convey the message. Far from being annoying for the reader, code mixing in the studied novel has been used as an enrichment tool which deliver a message in English by showing the different facets of Yoruba culture. By using code mixing as a writing technique, african novelist shape Afriacn culture and identity. African writers seem to have understood this fact very well, and have sought to embellish their works with this writing technique. They have tried to capture some aspects of African oral tradition in European languages.

In the studied novel, *The Insiders*, the non translation of the Yoruba words and expressions apart from the songs and incantations can seem to hinder the non native reader's understanding but it can also sharpen his/her curiosity to know more about the community which life is painted in the novel.

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**Annex**

Code mixing and code switching extracts in *The Insiders*

Alaba was wearing a worn-out headgear to match her yellowish *iro* and *buba*... (p.13)

Then I'll get some *ojojo* for you(p.14)

An inviting aroma of *dodo* and fried eggs pervaded the room as Bayo returned from having his bath. (p.23)

Kudi struck a match, lit the kerosene stove, warmed the *egusi* soup and began to fry some plantains(p.23)

In between mouthfuls of fat *dodo* and fried eggs Bayo remarked... (p.24)

Ara la mon (p.28)

Kudi jumped up as she heard the jingle of the *Ewi* programme on the local radio.

Give me a taxi fare, *jare*, I'm going (p.28).

I wonder how I will now buy my *sabojo* cloth (p.30).

The *fuji* music was excellent but the chief who took me was disappointed. (p.30)

Kudi gazed at the designs of her mother's *iro* and *buba*.... (p.30)

What do you need *sabojo* for? (p.30)

Isn't this lace on you superior to any *sabojo* stuff? (p.31)

With one corner of her *adire* wrapper she mopped Kudi's eyes dry. (p.33)

To him, nothing else mattered beside *eba* and *amala*. (p.33)

Does a decent person live on *gari* alone? (p.33)

He had borne fire-wood in exchange for a bowl of *gari*... (p.42)

She went back in and brought out a plastic with *gari* (p.43).

Then, she produced four finger-like pieces of *kuli-kuli* (p.43).



You are like the senseless snail that insulted the *Orisha* (p.52).

Iwa Lẹwa (p.62)

The young man....in his white *dansiki* (p.66)

The traditional *akoko* (p.66)

...into a *waka* song 73

Kuro l'aye mi! Mi o d'aye re!

Kuro l'aye mi! Kii s'aye re!

Bi iku ba pa alaye, Aye di ofo

Bi iku ba pa alaye, Aye di ofo o

Bi iku ba pa onija, Aye di ofo

Bi iku ba pa onija, Aye di ofo o

Bi iku ba pa onija, Aye di ofo o (pp.73-74)

He saw his father's favourite *agbada* dangling helplessly on a hook. (p.75)

This *agbada* had suddenly become ownerless... (p.75)

Ahh! *Mo gbe!!!* (p.75)

...bags of *gari* and *lafun* had been supplied about midday...(p.76)

Bayo asked his guests, "*eba* or *amala*?" (p.77)

....they all settled for *amala*. (p.77)

...You hear? *Yeye* man! (p.89)

*Onigbese!* (p.89)

The trunk contained two shabby head gears and a few faded *iro* and *buba* bought in those days when fashionable *adire* attracted the exotic name of 'Kampala'. (p.92)

Nike came out with Mrs. Kudoro's iron-sheet made *bembe* and Rasaki with Mr. Kudoro's tool-box. (92)

Kudoro's tolerable *iro* and *buba* because, as Baba aptly put it... (p.94)

In the end, the *bembe* was left empty... (p.94)

Unless you trim the *Iroko* while it is still young, it will grow out of reach. (p.96)

If pounding or selling *lafun* is your business, you would do better to go and face it... (p.100)

Already, to keep her distance; she had bought and eaten *akara* and fried yam... (p.107)

Then, you will buy me another *akara* ball? (p.116)

Meanwhile, Kudi had slipped into a dirty pair of *adire* knickerbockers. (p.123)

Do you mean I shall not see my clothes again? All my *aso oke*, *aso ebi*, *adire*, *ankara*, *sabojo*, *pooku lowoe*, lace, Kampala?... (p.140)

Ranti stood prominently among them wearing an all-white *iro* and *buba*... (p.149)

Why does Bayo need to travel all the way to Sokoto to search for something which is already on him, in his *sokoto* pocket? (p. 162)

Tijani got to the station dressed in a tree-piece flowing *agbada* of imported satin lace. (p.179)

It has become complex only because our *Oga* knows about it. (p. 183)

In any case, if you will need to see my *Oga*... (p. 183)

Dake omo, omo dake

Iru re ti sele leekan

Dake omo, omo dake

Oti sele ri

Oti se mi ri (p.221)

So let your *ilepa* serve its purpose (p. 233)

== Rissikatou MOUSTAPHA-BABALOLA & Marcel KAKPO ==

If any one of your murderers or their accomplices drink from this *ilepa*, let them perish. (p. 233)

This is *ilepa* from Liadi's grave... (p. 234)

So what difference did it make whether he had an *Iyabode* (mother has returned) or a *Babatunde* (father has come back)?...260