Hybridized Verbs in Urhobo - English Code-Mixing

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Abstract
One of the outcomes of language contact is the emergence of intermediate forms which cannot be attributed to any of the two languages in contact at the surface structure level. This is analogous to the biological process of hybridization. The focus of this study is an analysis of hybridized verbs that emerge from Urhobo-English code-mixing. Hybrid verbs are intermediate forms that cannot be fully identified with either Urhobo or English. The two types of verbs discussed in this study are: first, the insertion of 'bare' verbs from English to Urhobo grammatical structure. These uninflected verbs correspond to that of native Urhobo verbs since Urhobo is the matrix language and English is the embedded language based on Myers-Scotton's (2002) matrix language frame. Second is the adjoinment of Urhobo helping verbs, as well as Urhobo negative particle, to English main verb in the code-mixed structure. The essay concludes that the bilingual verbs in this study constitute part of the structural basis of Urhobo-English code-mixing.
Keywords:hybridized verbs, code-mixing, code-switching, Urhobo/English, Grammatical aspects of code switching and multilingualism.

Introduction

Language contact has been pervasive within the past half a century and two of the main causes of this phenomenon are migration and colonization. The latter is the main cause of contiguity between European languages, like English, French and Portuguese, and African Languages. Some of the outcomes of language contact include language shift, language creation and code switching. Code switching (hereinafter referred to as CS) and code-mixing are two terminologies that have emerged from this outcome of language contact. Gardner-Chloros (2011:4) observers that code-switching: "refers to the use of several languages or dialects in the same conversation or sentence by bilingual people."Muysken (2005:1) defines code mixing as "cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one clause". He adds that code-switching is: "reserved for the rapid succession of several languages in a single speech event". Linguistic code-switching is the term generally used by linguists for this outcome of language contact. Bullock and Toribio (2012:1) underscore the importance of code-switching thus:

> Of all the contact phenomena of interest to researchers and
> students of bilingualism, code-switching has arguably
> dominated the field.

Code-mixing, which is the term used for this study, is often innovative with regards to the verbal system of the two languages in contact. This paper is a grammatical analysis of the linguistic hybridization of verbs in Urhobo-English code-mixing. Urhobo is a South Western edoid language spoken mainly in Delta Central Senatorial district in Delta State, Nigeria. English and Nigerian Pidgin are the other two prominent languages spoken in the speech community. Urhobo, English and Nigerian Pidgin are regularly code-switched in Urhobo land.

The objectives of this study are as follow: first, it undertakes an overview of the social, conversational/psycholinguistic and grammatical approaches to code mixing. It emphasizes on the grammatical aspect which is the focus of this study. Second, it discusses the types of hybridized verbs in the code mixed structures and they include 'bare' verbs from English and the adjoinment of Urhobo affixes to English main verbs.

Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame (MLF). It is one of theories that explicate the grammatical field of code switching and code mixing. The basic proposal of MLF is that code switching has a dominant language called Matrix Language and a subordinate language called an Embedded Language (EL). This theory was elaborated by Myers-Scotton in a series of articles (1990; 1991; 1992) and in her two textbooks (1993b) and (2002). Gardner-Chloros (2009:8) describes the matrix language as "a grammatical template which can usually be identified with a particular language". Myers-Scotton developed certain principles to highlight how to distinguish between the ML and EL. They are: first, the matrix language determines all the grammatical structures of the code-switched sentence. Second, it highlights the asymmetry of the relationship between the matrix language and embedded language. Third, the ML supplies the system

morphemes whereas the EL supplies the content morphemes.

Myers-Scotton also evolved the discourse oriented criteria to distinguish between the ML and EL. The language of conversation in the code-switched sentence is the matrix language. The use of statistical interpretation is the second discourse oriented criteria and it states that the language with more morphemes is the matrix language. A detailed discussion of occurrence of morphemes in this model is encapsulated in the 4-M model (Myers-Scotton, 2002: 194-196). Myers-Scotton also adds that in psycholinguistic terms, ML is defined as the language most activated for the speaker.

Finally, Muysken (2005) notes that Myers-Scotton employed Chomsky's projection principle of his X-Bar theory in Chomsky (1986). It states that the matrix language is the one where each governing element (verb, preposition and auxiliary) creates a maximal projection; so, all the functional constituents must be from the matrix language. Finally, the MLF contains constraints known as Embedded language Islands and they highlight the fact that code-switching is not a random phenomenon but a structured one.

Some of the reasons why this model is chosen for this study are: first, the theory fits the analysis of the data collected for this study. Second, the asymmetry relationship between Urhobo, the matrix language, and English, the embedded language, is aptly captured in this theory. Thirdly, ML Islands and the application of Chomsky's governing elements illuminate the fact that intra-sentential code mixes are not randomly distributed as shown in the analysis of hybrid verbs in this study.

Finally, the importance of the head in phrase structure in Chomsky's X-bar theory which is also relevant in the Minimalist Program where the head is projected and merged with a complement or a specifier is relevant to the study. This is because the paper focuses on the unique behaviour of some verbs and how they are realised in the Urhobo-English code-mixed variety.

Data Collection Procedure

Oral speeches of competent speakers of Urhobo/English bilingual speakers were tape recorded under naturalistic and informal setting. The ode-switched utterances were identified and the verbs in them were coded for morphological and lexical information relevant for the hybrid verbs. The data were collected mainly from undergraduates and staff in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Sentence judgements were made with a view into identifying the grammaticality of the structures with focus on the hybrid verbs. Secondly, questionnaires were administered on the participants with a view into knowing their personal data which include number of languages spoken, sex, age, level of education among others. The quantitative method was adopted for data collection.

Empirical Evidence

Although a large number of the world's about seven thousand languages are endangered due to economic and globalizing forces, plurilingualism, which is the bedrock of code switching, is still the norm in many parts of the world (Crystal, 2000). The literature of code mixing and code switching abounds with numerous research studies. Wanreich (1953/1963) pioneered the study of code switching. However, the study of code switching accelerated, after about two decades lull, with the publications of Labov,(1972); Gumperz, (1976/1982); Poplack, (1978/1981); and Lance, (1975). It was Gumperz (1972:64) that made linguists realize that "CS was not an isolated quirky phenomenon, but a widespread way of speaking". Milrory and Muysken (1975:21) describe code switching as "perhaps the central issue of bilingualism research".

The difference between code switching and code mixing has generated a lot of controversy; however, Chloros (2010:12) distinction is apt when he states: "when two languages are used in the same clause, I use the term code-mixing, and in two or more clauses code-switching is used". The patterns of CS that have been identified in the literature are: Insertion, Alternation and Congruent lexicalization (SeeMuysken, 2000; Myers-Scotton, 2003; and Chloros, 2010). Muysken (2005:63) opines that Insertion and Alternation are more prolific than congruent lexicalization. He states that the asymmetrical/symmetrical dichotomy of CS is manifest in the difference between Insertion and alternation since the former involves

the insertion of lexical items and entire constituents from an
embedded language into the structure of a matrix language,
while alternation which highlights the symmetry of CS since it
involves so, a complete change from one language to another,
the two languages alternate in an A – B format.

Due to the complexity and wide spread nature of CS as a field of study, the approaches to its study have now been divided into three sub-groups. They are:

(i)   Sociolinguistic/ethnographic description of CS situation. It focuses on factors that are independent of the speakers and particular circumstances of code switched utterances. It is further sub-divided into situational and metaphorical code switching.

(ii)   Pragmatic/conversation analytic approaches. These approaches deal with how language choices of interlocutors are identified through meanings that emanate from CS in conversations.

A peculiar feature of the conversation analytic approach is the 'we code' 'they code' dichotomy where the former is associated with minority language used for informal conversation while the latter is associated with "formal and outgroup relationship". In Anglophone and Francophone African countries, 'we code' constitute the indigenous languages while 'they code' are English and French respectively. This dichotomy is however merged in code switched utterances. Closely related to 'we code' 'they code' is elite closure which Mysers-Scotton, (2002:35) defines as "a strategy by those in power try to maintain their powers and privileges via linguistic choice". The elite close access to power by those who cannot speak English which is the language of socio-economic power. So, the ability of the elite to engage in regular code switching of the indigenous languages and English in Nigeria can aptly he described as a form of elite closure; so, English-Indigenous language(s) code switching is an exclusive preserve of the privilege minority and elite closure is its practical outcome.

iii)   Grammatical or structural approach opines that CS is a patterned rule governed behaviour just like monolingual language. Since grammatical insight is the most prolific of the three approaches, it has been divided into three parts viz:

a)   The variationist approach of the 1970s and 1980s which discuss the universal constraints on where CS could occur in a sentence. The main proponent of this approach is Poplack's(1980, 1981) and Sankoff and Poplack, (1981). The two theories of this approach are: The Equivalence constraint and Free Morpheme Constraint.

b)   The Generative approaches are patterned after Chomsky's (1986, 1995). They are Belazi, Rubin and Toribio, (1994) Functional Head Constraint; and Macswan's "Null" theory which applies Minimalist Program. It is a lexicalist approach which MacSwan (1999:146) postulates that "Nothing constraints code switching apart from the requirement of the mixed grammars"

iii)   Production approaches which focus on the psycholinguistic aspects of C.S. include Myers Scotton's "Matrix Language Frame" (1993b, 2002) and "Blocking Hypothesis" (1993b:120). The MLF also incorporates the generative approach. A peculiar feature of all the theories in the three approaches are that they all had counter-examples that contradict the theories they postulate.

A probable explanation for the inability to have a grammatical theory of CS devoid of counter-examples is given by Boeschotan (1998) who opines that CS is tied up with the emergence of new norms. So, many unpredictable factors affect the outcome of language contact. Gardner-Chloros (2011:113) proffers solution to the present problem when he suggests:

> A productive goal for future grammatical studies of CS would be to look at CS behaviour as essentially creative; to identify the grammatical difficulties which code-switchers face within any given language combination and the means which they employ to get round these difficulties.

So, grammatical constraints on CS is still an on-going research.

Inserted Bare Verbs from English to Urhobo

Since this study is a matrix-based code-mixing of Urhobo-English verbs, the first set of verbs discussed in this section are bare verbs from the embedded language into the matrix language as shown below:

1a)   Ísòjánà*massacre* rẹ́émọ́na.

Soldier the massacre pst children the.

The soldier massacred the children.

b)   Ùvóna*shine.*

Sun the shine.

The sun shines.

c)   Éméraowéna*shine*.

Moon theshine.

The moon shines.

d)   Ọshárẹ́ ná *butcher* rẹ́Ilamana.

Man the butcher pst cow the.

The man butchered the cow.

e)   Mé*slice* rẹ̀ tomato na.
        I slice-pst tomato the.
        I sliced the tomatoes.

f)   Ese*record* rẹ́únèna.
        Ese record-pst song the.
        Ese recorded the song.

Unlike English verbs which are morphologically inflected for tense and agreement those of Urhobo are not expressed morphologically. This is because in terms of morphological typology, Urhobo is analytical while English is inflecting. The code-mixing from English is a clear case of insertion of uninflected alien verbs and it is an apt illustration of Myers Scotton's (1993b, 2002) Matrix-based code-mixing. So, the matrix language is maintained and "the grammar of the matrix language determines the overall structure" (Muysken, 2005:64).
        The sentences above will be ungrammatical if English tense and agreement inflections in (1a – c) above are maintained as shown below:

2a)   Ísòjánà*massacred* rẹ́émọ́na.
        Soldier the massacred children the.
        The soldier massacred pastthe children.

b)   Ùvóna*shines.*
        Sun shines.
        The sun shines.

c)   Éméraowéna*shines.*
        Moon the-shine.
        The moon shines.

The inserted verbs in (1a- e) have gone through hybridization processes for the following reasons. First, they do not have the morphological features of English verbs; second, the English verbs are alien lexical items in Urhobo lexicon although they fit in perfectly into Urhobo grammatical structure in conformity with the matrix language frame. So, this is a clear case of insertion of uninflected alien verbs.

English Adjective as Stative Verb (BE Verb + Adjective) In Urhobo
        A second case of hybridization of verbs in Urhobo-English code mixing involves adjectives from English lexicon which function as stative verbs(BE verb and an adjective) with the adjective functioning as an intensive complement in Urhobo. Below are some examples:

3a)   Émétérávwárè*ugly.*
        Girls of ours *ugly.*
        Our girls *are ugly*.

b)   Imóton*anew.*
        Motor the *new.*
        The car *is new*.

c)   Éránkòna*dangerous.*
        Dog the *dangerous.*
        The dog *is dangerous.*

d)   Ạ́gbáráná*red.*

        Chair the *red.*
        The Chair *is red.*

e)   Éfé*tall.*
        Efe*tall.*

Efe*is tall.*

f)   Óréréri Warri *dirty.*
        City of Warri *dirty.*
        The city of Warri *is dirty*.

The italicized words in (3a-f) are English Adjectives; however, in the Urhobo sentence structure, they are stative verbs which function as BE verbs + adjectives. This fact can be verified with the insertion of the Urhobo intensifier, gángán (very/extremely) into the Urhobo sentence structures above as shown in the examples below.

4a)   Émétérávwárè*ugly gángán.*
        Girls of ours ugly *very/extremely.*
        Our girls *are* very/extremely *ugly.*

b)   Imótónáa*new gángán.*
        Motor the new very/extremely.
        The car *is* very *new*.

c)   Éránkóna*dangerous gángán.*
        Dog the dangerous very/extremely.
        The dog *is*very/extremely *dangerous.*

The intensifier modifies the adjective while the BE verb precedes the intensifier in the translated versions of (4a-c) above in conformity with Urhobo grammatical structure. If the intensifier pre-modifies the BE verb + adjectives, the resulting sentence will be ungrammatical in Urhobo because it has become ungrammatical in Urhobosince it has violated the matrix language frame as shown below.

5b)*   Imótóná*gángán new.*
        Motor the very new.
        The car very is new.

c)*   Éránkóna*gángán dangerous*.
        Dog is very dangerous.
        The dog very is new.

a)*   Emeterávwáré*gángán ugly*.
        Girls of ours very ugly.
        Our girls very are ugly.

Headwork of Noun phrase in English and verbal constituent in Urhobo

        Pure lexical verbs in Urhobo can also occur in code-mixedUrhobo-English sentence structure where English headword is found in the noun phrase constituent.

6a)   Fish nágbórì.
        Fish the rotten.
        The fish is rotten.

b)   Car náyóvwìrí.
        Car the good.
        The car is good.

c)   Itelivisionná Ọkpòkọ̀.

        Television the new.
        The Television is new.

d)   Lady nágrórì.
        Lady the tall.
        The lady is tall.

Although (6a-d) are code-mixed sentences there is no case of hybridization of the verbal constituent; however, the structure of the NP conforms with that of Urhobo which is the matrix language. That is why the determiners

post modifier the head word of the noun phrase.

Urhobo helping Verb Adjoined to English Main Verb

Another case of hybridized verb is an instance where a helping verb from the matrix language, Urhobo, is adjoined to a main verb from English which is the embedded language.

7a)   Jénì*chá marry*nónè̩.
       Jane will marry today.

b)   Ayeí̩*chá mock* mè̩.
       They *will mock* me.

c)   Uncle mè̩ *cha* stingy.
       Uncle me *will* stingy.
       My uncle *will be* stingy.

d.   Mé*sá slaughter*imámáná.
       I *can slaughter* cow the.
       I *can slaughter* the cow.

e.   Mi*sé teach*vwí university.
       I *can teach/lecture* in the university.

The italicized verb phrases are hybrid ones because their respective modal auxiliary verb is from Urhobo and the main verbis from English.

Another category of hybrid verbs is that with a helping verb which is an aspectual marker from ML and main verb from EL has an aspectual marker functioningas the auxiliary verb in Urhobo while the main verb is in English.

8a)   Mi*flog*omona*ré*.
       I *flog* child *Asp*.
       I *have flogged* the child.

b)   Mi*punish*O̩mo̩shárè na *ré*.
       I *punish* boy the *Asp*.
       I *have punished* the boy.

c)   Áyèna*buy*ímótó*ré*.
       Woman the *buy* motor Asp.
       The woman *has bought* a car.

Another instance of hybridized verbs in Urhobo-English code-mixing involves inserted bare verbs from English and both auxiliary verb and negative particle from Urhobo.

9a)   Mé*chá slap*o̩mo̩ náà.
       I *will slap* child the *neg*.
       I will not slap the child.

b)   Eguono*sá grind*egusin*áà*.
       Eguono*can grind*eguisi the *neg*.
       Eguono*could not/couldn't grind* the melon.

c)   Edesiri*sà drive*imótòn*áà.*
       Edesiri*can drive* motor the *neg*.
       Edesiri*could not/couldn't drive* the car.

d)   O̩mo̩mè*chá* travel ódé*é.*

       Child my *will travel* today *neg.*
       My child *will not/wont travel* tomorrow.

In Urhobo, negation is derived from the lengthening of the last vowel of the final syllable in the sentence. Negation also changes the tone of the auxiliary verb from high to low. The lengthened vowels always have low tone as shown below.

<u>**Positive**</u>
10a)   Me*chárhé.*
         I *will come.*
         I will come.
         <u>**Negative**</u>
b)   Me *chárhéè.*
         I *will come not*.
         I *will not come*.

The aspectal marker ré-functions as the last constituent in sentence even it is a transitive clause in conformity with Urhobo sentence structure as shown in the examples above. This is a case of inserted English stem with native aspectal marker.

Urhobo-based Hybridized Verbs
     There are also some bilingual verbs that have their roots in Urhobo, but affixes from English are used to determine the categorical status of the constituent as verbs. Two set of examples are: first, the attachment of participal suffix –en through the derivational morphological process to derive a verb from an adjective. Second, is the attachment of the suffix -ize to an adjective to derive a verb. Below are some examples for attachment of –en suffix to English verbs with Urhobo roots.

11a)   Ísójàna*cha*vwishọbere*flatten* rẹ́uwevwir'ekpe me.
         Soldier the*will* with shovel *flatten* house sand my.
         The soldier *will flatten* my mud house with a shovel.

b)   Mésàvírákò mẹ́*frighten*ómònà.
         I *can* use dog my *frighten* child the.
         I *can frighten* the child with my dog.

c)   Esẹ́*chá* vw'amavìa *slacken* úrúghrẹ́ná.
         Ésé*will* use knife *slacken* rope the.
         Ese*will slacken* the rope with a knife.

The nextset of examples are those of main verbs of Urhobo roots with English verbs that are derived from adjectives through the attachment of the derivational morpheme.
-ize

12a)   Ẹ̀dèsìrì vẃi Oshúnú rọ́yé*terrorize* é f'erákónà.

         Eseriri use gun of hers terrorize dog the.
         Edesiri terrorized the dog with his gun.

b)   Ọsẹ́ mẹ̀v'wẹ́ró rọ́yẹ́*commonize* mẹ́.

         Father my use eye his commonize me.
         My father commonized me with his eyes.

c)   Úhúnná*chá energize* r'Ọmọ́ná
         Medicine the will energize child the.
         The medicine will energize the child.

CONCLUSION
This study has attempted to fill a gap in knowledge by describing the linguistic hybridization of verbs in Urhobo-English code mixing. The two languages are typologically distinct. It is a field based research that focuses on the grammatical approach to code-mixing based on the Matrix Language Frame by Myers Scotton (2002) as its theoretical underpinning. This study highlights the dominant nature of code switching and code mixing in the field of contact linguistics. The essay also foregrounds the creativity of the speakers engaged in code mixing since the hybrid verbs discussed in this study are intermediate to the two languages. So, apart from being abreast

with the grammars of the two languages, speakers engaged in code mixing are also creative.

Finally, the use of bilingual verbs by speakers in this study projects their bicultural identity. In Urhobo land in particular and in Nigeria generally, the elite use code mixing as a form of "elite closure" to underlie their competence in English and to maintain their exclusive preserve as the holders of socio- economic and political power in Urhoboland in particular and in all other ex- colonial countries of Africa in general.

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