

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF CODE-SWITCHING IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF TESHIE DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study investigated the sociolinguistic act of code-switching in congregations of the Teshie District of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. It determined the types of code-switching used and established the patterns and frequency of code-switching during sermons, prayers, and announcements. It also identified the factors that influence code-switching as well as the roles of age, gender, and education in code-switching during sermons, prayers, announcements. The study involved 9 Presbyterian Ministers and 12 church members from 3 Presbyterian churches in the Teshie District. The research methodology was purely qualitative which deployed instruments such as interview, observation and audio recordings of natural sermons, prayers and announcements. The results of the study showed that the ministers use inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag-switching as the three main types of code-switching. Inter-sentential code-switching was the most frequently used, followed by intra-sentential code-switching and then tag switching. The study found out that the overarching factor that influences the switching of languages during preaching, prayers or announcements is the desire to build and deepen the understanding of the audience. Other factors that influenced code-switching between mother tongue languages such as Ga or Twi and English language was the need to create intimacy, sense of belonging and cultural rootedness among the audience. The study establishes that age, gender and educational level of the congregation influence code-switching during sermons, prayers and announcements.

Key-words: Sociolinguistic Study, Code-Switching, Case Study

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is indispensable and inevitable in the existence of humans and serves as a means through which individuals communicate with one another (Ifechelobi, 2015). Languages

are powerful cultural assets of a people that are generally passed over from one generation to another. Communication in a language enhances the relevance of the language and shapes up the cultural co-existence and identity of its users. Language has been dynamic as language users change and adopt different communication styles and preferences depending on several factors including the audience, subject and social context.

Languages coexist in many countries and in many instances. Lewis (2009) indicates that Ghana is an example of such multilingual countries as it has 79 indigenous languages used in the country. Over the years, bilingualism and multilingualism have empowered code-switching which is the focus of this study.

Code-switching describes the process of shifting from one linguistic code (a language or dialect) to another, depending on the social context or conversational setting (Morrison, 2025). It is a common practice in multilingual communities, where speakers alternate between languages within a single conversation. This practice serves various functions, such as clarifying meaning, expressing identity, and negotiating social relationships (Kipchoge, 2024).

Code-switching provides a communicative alternative for bilingual members of a speech community that have the ability to communicate by using code-switching. Instead of being the exception, code-switching has become the norm in Ghana and other parts of the world. Since it is a common occurrence in any setting where multiple languages are spoken, it has come to represent linguistic response and change. Code-switching may have its advantages and disadvantages to the audience. When a person or group of people in the audience do not understand the minor (switched) language they are excluded from the conversation. Forson (1988) called code-switching the “third

tongue” of bilinguals, that is, beside their local language and English.

Since the 1970s, there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in the practice of code-switching by educated Ghanaians, which involves using both English and a Ghanaian language (Amuzu, 2012). Code-switching has come to be used extensively in the classroom (Asilevi, 1990; Amekor, 2009; Ezuh, 2009; Brew, 2011), in students’ academic discussions (Obiri-Yeboah, 2008), in radio discussions (Yevudey, 2009), in radio and television advertisements (Anderson, & Wiredu, 2007; Amuzu, 2010; Vanderpuije, 2011) and in sermons and other church activities (Andoh, 1997; Albakry & Ofori, 2011; Asare-Nyarko, 2012). The Presbyterian church of Ghana has its fair share of code-switching practices in communication during services.

The Teshie District of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana is within the Ga Presbytery, Accra. The church was planted by the Basel Missionaries in Teshie, a typical Ga community. The land was offered for building the church which was then started in 1827 at a place called Salem. It is currently the largest District in the Ga Presbytery with 13 churches. The Teshie District PCG has congregations with varied multilingual settings and yet there is lack of research study on their language use at church to unearth how they communicate in such a multilingual setting.

Teshie District of the PCG under study, is composed of nine Congregations and four Preaching Points each of them with an Agent. The dominant languages used in the congregations are Ga, Twi and English. The Congregations are:

1. Peniel Congregation
2. Paolo Mohenu Memorial Congregation
3. Bethlehem Congregation
4. Bethany Congregation
5. Grace Congregation

6. Emmanuel Congregation
7. Victory Congregation
8. Ebenezer Congregation
9. Mt. Zion Congregation

The Preaching Points are:

1. Hebron Preaching Point
2. Manhean Preaching Point
3. Okpoigonno Preaching Point
4. Northern Outreach Program (NoP)

The PCG represents a harmonious blending of several traditions, primarily through the Basel Mission and the Scottish Mission (World Council of Churches, 2025). World Council of Churches recounts that in 1828, the Basel Mission commenced the work. By 1854, after a challenging start, the mission was well-established thanks to the assistance of Christians from the West Indies. The war situation in Europe forced the Basel missionaries to depart in 1917. A request for assistance was answered by the Church of Scotland. According to the World Council of Churches (ibid), this explains why the Presbyterian organisational model was chosen by the Reformed Church in Ghana. The church expanded its activities to the country's northern regions in the 1940s. The general assembly method of church governance was endorsed in 2000 (World Council of Churches, 2025).

People are sensitive to language and this sociolinguistic study can contribute to a deeper understanding of code-switching in church setting and enhance its usage and implications for individuals and societies. Code-switching involves alternating between two or more languages and/ or dialects within a conversation. Ghanaians may be monolingual, bilingual or multilingual and most educated Ghanaians speak both English

and their native tongues. Darko (2016) explains that a speaker may resort to code-switching in order to fill a lexical gap, for lack of appropriate expression or word. Code-switching may also be used to exclude someone from a conversation, to indicate confidentiality or express emotions (Darko, 2016). Tobbi (2024) highlighted that switching serves linguistic needs (like filling lexical gaps), stylistic ones (emphasis and habitual expressions), and social ones—addressing specific audiences and navigating cultural/taboo topics.

Forson (1988, p. 180) described Ghanaians as having a “love-hate affair” with code-switching; that is, they hate it because they are convinced that it has the potential to undermine their competence in local languages but love it because of its socio-pragmatic and discursive functions. As much as code-switching is a feature of proficient bilinguals (Grenoble, & Osipov, 2023; Darko, 2016). Researchers such as Singh (1995) and Winford (2003) believe it could be a sign of incompetence in one of the languages. Grenoble and Osipov (2023) stated that bilingual practices, such as frequent mixing and switching, are intertwined with processes that undermine the use of minority/local languages across generations in communities experiencing language shift. Code-switching is frequently indicative of changes in language prestige and domain loss, and when coupled with socioeconomic pressures, it may hasten attrition.

Despite the significant contributions of these studies, there remains limited research on code-switching specifically within the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Most existing studies have focused on Catholic and Pentecostal churches in Accra, leaving a gap regarding language use and code-switching practices in Presbyterian congregations. Moreover, previous studies have concentrated largely on identifying forms and functions of

code-switching without extensively examining how sociolinguistic variables such as age, educational background, language preference and church tradition influence code-switching patterns in Presbyterian worship contexts.

Code-switching is prevalent in churches and other human environments. Existing literature on code-switching often highlights code-switching studies on educational institutions (Darko, 2016). Code-switching studies on churches that establish the patterns, frequency and factors that influence switching from one Ghanaian language or dialect to another and its implications for the individuals have on the other hand, been under explored. The types and ways in which individuals use code-switching to navigate complex identity landscapes in multilingual settings such as the church are yet to be fully understood. There is a need for more studies that investigate how different demographic factors, such as age, gender, and education affect code-switching behaviors. This study aims to fill these gaps by determining the types of code-switching used in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Teshie District; identifying the factors that influence code-switching; and establishing the patterns and frequency of code-switching during sermons, prayers, and announcements.

To be able to achieve the aim of the study as stated above, the following objectives were set to be achieved by the study:

- To determine types of code-switching employed in the Teshie District of PCG
- To establish the patterns and frequency of code-switching during sermons, prayers, and announcements.
- To identify factors that influence code-switching in the Teshie District of PCG

- To identify the roles of age, gender, and education in code-switching during sermons, prayers, announcements. The study sought to provide answers to the following questions of code-switching as used in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Teshie District:
- What types of code-switching occur during church service?
- What patterns and frequency of code-switching are used during sermons, prayers, and announcements?
- What factors influence code-switching at the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Teshie District?
- How do age, gender, and education influence code-switching during sermons, prayers, announcements?

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON CODE SWITCHING

Code-switching has become a significant area of sociolinguistic inquiry in multilingual societies such as Ghana, where speakers frequently alternate between English and indigenous languages in various domains including education, media, politics and religion. Within the religious domain, churches in Ghana have increasingly become multilingual spaces where language alternation serves communicative, social, cultural and spiritual purposes. Several scholars have examined the phenomenon of code-switching in Ghanaian churches, particularly with respect to its forms, functions and sociolinguistic implications.

One of the earliest studies on code-switching in religious settings in Ghana is that of Andoh (1997), who examined language alternation in church discourse. The study established that code-switching is pervasive in sermons, prayers and other liturgical activities due to the multilingual nature of Ghanaian congregations. Andoh observed that pastors and church leaders

strategically alternate between English and local languages such as Akan to enhance comprehension, emotional appeal and audience participation. The study further indicated that code-switching in churches reflects the sociolinguistic reality of Ghana where English functions as the official language while indigenous languages remain central to identity and everyday interaction. Andoh's work laid the foundation for later studies on language use in religious institutions in Ghana.

Albakry and Ofori (2011) expanded the discussion through their study titled *Ghanaian English and Code-Switching in Catholic Churches*. Their sociolinguistic investigation focused on language use during Catholic Masses and informal interactions among worshippers in Accra. The study employed participant observation as its method of data collection and revealed that English dominates Catholic worship in urban churches despite being a second language in Ghana. However, English frequently alternates with indigenous languages such as Twi, Ga and Ewe during sermons, prayers, announcements and other liturgical activities.

Albakry and Ofori further observed that code-switching in churches serves communicative and social purposes. According to the researchers, priests and congregants draw on their multilingual resources to meet the communicative demands of worship. The study also highlighted the existence of "linguistic hybridity" in Ghanaian churches where English competes and coexists with indigenous languages. Their findings suggest that code-switching in church settings is not random but purposeful and context-dependent.

Similarly, Asare-Nyarko (2012) investigated Akan-English code-switching in selected churches in Accra. The study focused on the types and patterns of code-switching used during

church activities. Through audio recordings of naturally occurring speech events in churches such as Ringway Assemblies of God and Pentecostal Fire Ministry, Asare-Nyarko identified three major forms of code-switching: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching and tag-switching.

The study revealed that code-switching occurs frequently in preaching, testimonies, prayers and interactions among church members. Asare-Nyarko argued that pastors and worshippers switch codes to clarify messages, emphasize key spiritual concepts, establish solidarity and accommodate linguistically diverse congregations. The study also demonstrated that Akan often functions as the matrix language while English serves as the embedded language in many church interactions.

A major theme emerging from these studies [Andoh (1997), Albakry and Ofori (2011), and Asare-Nyarko (2012)] is the role of code-switching as a communicative strategy in multilingual church environments. The studies collectively indicate that churches in Ghana use code-switching to ensure comprehension among congregants with varying linguistic backgrounds. English is often used for formality, modernity and official communication, while indigenous languages convey intimacy, emotion and cultural identity.

Another prominent theme is the sociocultural and identity function of code-switching. The studies suggest that language alternation in churches reflects broader social identities and linguistic realities in Ghanaian society. Congregants and church leaders use both English and local languages to negotiate religious identity, educational status and ethnic belonging. Code-switching therefore becomes a marker of inclusiveness and social interaction within the church community.

The studies also reveal the structural patterns of code-switching in church discourse. Inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag-switching appear frequently in sermons and church interactions. This confirms that code-switching in Ghanaian churches follows identifiable linguistic patterns rather than occurring randomly. Furthermore, the studies indicate that Akan-English switching is the most dominant pattern in urban churches due to the widespread use of Akan and English in Ghana.

Scholars and linguists who have conducted studies on code-switching have conceptualised it in different ways. Auer (1998 cited in Mensah 2015, p. 11), stated that Hans Vogt was the first person to have used the term “code-switching” in an article published in 1954, followed by Roman Jakobson who succeeded in using this term in linguistics. Some works on code-switching have been done in Ghana to reveal deep understanding about the concept, usage, reasons and other topics of code-switching (Forson, 1988; Amuzu, 2012; Yevudey, 2013; Mensah, 2015; Darko, 2016; Tefeh, 2020; Abban, Mensah, & ResCue, 2023). These studies largely focused on code-switching education. Forson (1988, p. 192) indicates that code-switching was not a code choice in Ghana until after the early 1950s when English was introduced as the medium of instruction in the elementary schools.

Akmajian et al. (2003, p. 209) defined code-switching as “a situation in which a speaker uses a mixture of distinct language varieties as discourse proceeds”. This notion of Akmajian et al. (ibid) is supported by Kipchoge (2024) who indicates that code-switching, the practice of alternating between two or more languages or dialects within a conversation, is a linguistic phenomenon observed in multilingual communities worldwide. During a formal or informal communication, the language of communication can be switched to another language or dialect

for different reasons. Code-switching is a communication strategy and could be traced to language dominance and pride, where one language is the dominant language (Ifechelobi, 2015). Code-switching, used in all human environments, involves a dominant language and minor language(s) (Ifechelobi, 2015). The minor languages are usually used on purpose.

It is the phenomenon of bilinguals shifting between languages “in an unchanged setting” and “within the same utterance” varying from a one-word switch to whole sentences (Bullock, & Toribio, 2009, p. 2). Language users are at liberty to choose any of the codes they want to employ in their conversation depending on the setting for instance, church, school, home etc. (Ifechelobi, 2015).

The definitions of code-switching vary in expressions but they convey key understanding which involves alternating between two or more languages within the same conversation and are used by speakers who are either bilingual or multilingual. Regardless of the existing ambiguities, today, educators and learners worldwide have embraced the idea of CS, either as an observed linguistic practice or as a compensatory language mechanism, especially among second language (L2) learners, (Osei-Boateng, 2024).

2.1. Types of code-switching

People use a variety of code-switching techniques in daily life namely, “tag switching”, “intra-sentential switching”, and “inter-sentential switching” (Ruba, Prabhu, & Samayan, 2023, p. 1). According to Ruba, Prabhu and Samayan (2023, p. 2), the three common types of code-switching: “intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag switching, occur during a conversation, narration, or picture description assignment”. Code-switching may be used in different forms. Forson (1988, p. 186) revealed

that “code-switching can occur in two forms: inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching”. Similarly, Asare-Nyarko (2012, p. 21) mentions the types of code-switching to be: “intra-sentential”, “inter-sentential” and “tag-switching” in the various conversations which took place in two churches in Accra.

Myers-Scotton (1989) explains that in inter-sentential code-switching, the speaker uses a group of sentences in one language and then switches to utter another sequence of sentences in the second language. Inter-sentential switches usually do not require grammatical proficiency in both languages, whereas intra-sentential switches show higher proficiency in the two grammars involved (Ruba, Prabhu, & Samayan, 2023). Inter-sentential switching is when “a switch occurs at a clause or sentence boundary where each clause or sentence is in a different language” (Romaine 1995, p. 122). The speaker uses one or more sentences in one language and then switches to speak other sentence(s) in the second language. This type of code-switching was the most commonly used during sermons and announcements according to Romaine’s study.

In intra-sentential code-switching, elements in the second language are integrated with those of the first language in the same sentence. For this type of code-switching, one of the languages is retained as the base language [also called seed language (SL)] while elements (words or phrases) of the second language [known as Feed language (FL)] are fed into it to generate a linguistic mixture (Myers-Scotton, 1989, p. 347). In intra-sentential code-switching, switching of language occurs within the same sentence. Intra-sentential switching allows for an impression that speakers are inadequately proficient in a language to finish what they want to say (Kasim, Yusuf & Ningsih, 2019). Darko (2016) explained that intra-sentential

code-switching involves switches which occur within the sentence; a mixture of lexical items from two languages within the same sentence while Inter-sentential code-switching involves switches that occur between sentences.

In tag switching, the switch is merely an interjection, a tag, or a sentence filler in the other language that functions as an ethnic identity marker (Poplack, 1980). Tag switching is when tags are integrated in different parts in an utterance. Poplack (1980, p. 589) explains that tags have “no syntactic constraints, they can be moved freely, and they can be inserted almost anywhere in a discourse without violating any grammatical rules”. Tag switching is when tags are put in different parts in an utterance. This is because tags have “no syntactic constraints, they can be moved freely, and they can be inserted almost anywhere in a discourse without violating any grammatical rules” (Poplack, 1980, p. 589).

2.2. Reasons for code-switching

Different studies have identified several reasons for switching from one language to another. Adjei (2010) underscored that teachers employ repetitive inter-sentential code-switching due to the pupils' low comprehension of concepts introduced in the L2 (English) by translating the same ideas into the L1. The study showed that teachers usually translate into the L1 to enable pupils to follow and participate in the class discussions. Code-switching is used to capture the attention of the students, clarify words, and enhance understanding. As stated by Tefeh, the phenomenon is employed to explain concepts and give instructions and sometimes, to create humor in the classroom (Tefeh, 2020). Another reason for code-switching identified was that bilingual speakers switch code to correspond with the persons involved in the communication, the reasons for the

communication, the setting, and/ or topic of the communication (Tefeh, 2020).

According to Clegg and Afitska (2011), reasons why teachers use code-switching in the classrooms include explaining and elaborating on concepts, increasing classroom participation, establishing good classroom relationships, ensuring the smooth running of the lesson, and making connections with the local culture of learners. The authors therefore recommend teacher-education systems that would factor in the importance of bilingual pedagogy and various language practices that teachers could adopt to facilitate pupils' understanding and participation in the classroom.

2.3. Patterns of code-switching

Dzameshie (1997) identified speaker identity and role patterns of code-switching. Speakers may switch languages to construct or perform identity such as educated, modern or traditional and in Ghana, educated speakers often mix English with local languages to demonstrate intellectualism or cosmopolitanism (Dzameshie, 1997). Teachers switch between English and local languages to align with students' needs and maintain authority while being relatable (Dzameshie, 1997).

Similarly, Obeng (1997) indicated that frequency and habitual use patterns of multiple languages lead to habitual switching, even without specific communicative needs. According to Gumperz (1982) code-switching patterns often reflect pragmatic functions such as: giving clarification, doing a direct quotation, showing irony or humor and shifting levels of politeness.

On the other hand, Bell (1984) highlighted that speakers adjust their language to suit their converser's linguistic proficiency, status, or relationship. For instance, a student may speak English to a teacher but switch to Twi or Ga with classmates.

Similarly, certain topics create patterns of code-switching and encourage particular language choices (Holmes, 2013). Holmes (ibid) studied that technical/academic topics require more English while personal/emotive topics require more indigenous language.

Dako (2012) revealed the social context patterns of code-switching in formal and informal situations. He indicated that in formal situations which include classrooms and business meetings, speakers often use English and minimize switching. However, in informal settings such as home and peer conversations, code-switching is more frequent.

2.4. Effects of age on code-switching

The role of age in code-switching and language learning has been a subject of extensive inquiry within linguistics (Alfonzetti, 2014). Understanding how individuals of different age groups engage in code-switching and acquire languages has significant implications for language development and educational practices (Osei-Boateng, 2024). Kaushanskaya and Crespo (2021) found that age-group cognitive factors moderate how exposure to switched input relates to language outcomes: younger or lower children showed different susceptibility to negative/neutral effects than older/higher peers. They studied that age interacts with language proficiency, cognitive control and communicative context to shape switching frequency, direction, and function.

Kaushanskaya and Crespo (2021) revealed that the type of switching and the child's developmental stage affect immediate word learning and retention; some younger children show higher processing/learning costs when switches occur near novel labels. They stated that age moderates whether code-switching aids or hinders lexical learning.

When comparing children with developmental language disorder (DLD) to their peers who are typically developing, Gross and Kaushanskaya (2022) found that language proficiency and age influence both switching frequency and control. Younger DLD children exhibit unique cross-speaker and intra-sentential switching patterns, which suggests that control is influenced by developmental maturation. Tulloch and Hoff (2023) report that as speakers move into adolescence and young adulthood, they increasingly use code-switching for identity construction, peer group signaling, and creative expression. Studies of 18–25-year-olds show functional shifts compared to younger children (Tulloch & Hoff, 2023).

Today, age-related variation in CS analysis is essential for two main reasons: (i) from a theoretical standpoint, it helps determine the relative importance of sociolinguistic and syntactic factors underlying CS patterns; (ii) from a sociolinguistic perspective, when observed dynamically, it is a crucial tool for comprehending an ongoing language shift (Gal, 1979, cited by Alfonzetti, 2014). The observed frequency of code-switching by young bilingual children varies substantially from study to study, and the factors that influence the rate of code-switching are not entirely clear (Tulloch, & Hoff, 2023).

2.5. Effects of education on code-switching

Education serves as a catalyst for bilingualism and multilingualism (Dako, 2002). Darko studied that many Ghanaians become bilingual (or multilingual), with a high level of proficiency in English and one or more Ghanaian languages. This bilingual competence empowered by education naturally fosters code-switching. According to Anderson (2012), teachers in the educational sector mostly switch between English and a Ghanaian language (such as Twi, Ewe, Ga) to enhance comprehension, especially in rural or lower-performing schools.

He explained that this use of code-switching is both strategic and pedagogical, enabling students to bridge gaps in understanding complex concepts. It is common in subjects like Mathematics or Science, where abstract terms are better understood when explained in a mother tongue language.

Education has intensified the use of code-switching and students may switch to English to display academic competence or to align with the perceived social prestige of educated individuals (Obeng, 1997). Education affects how students view the different languages they speak. English is often perceived as more modern or official, while indigenous languages are considered informal or emotional (Bodomo, 1996).

According to the Ministry of Education, Ghana (2003), education is the key driver of the promotion of code-switching in Ghana. The Ministry asserted that while some educators see code-switching as beneficial for learning, others worry it might hinder English fluency or confuse students about language boundaries. The above research studies show that code-switching plays a part in classroom communication, language proficiency, social identity, language attitudes and it is a powerful teaching tool.

2.6. Effects of gender on code-switching

There are many studies that indicate that gender can influence why individuals code-switch. For instance, Gal (1979) found that women were more likely to switch languages in order to conform to shifting social or economic standards. Agreeing to Gal (ibid), Holmes (1992) indicates that women are more likely to use code-switching as a solidarity strategy, aligning with conversational partners. In a similar study, Heller (1992) emphasized the role of institutional settings in shaping how

gender and code-switching intersect. The study indicates that in patriarchal societies, women may code-switch to more dominant languages to gain acceptance or social mobility.

Gender affects motivations and social functions. Thus, women use code-switching for expressive, affiliative or polite purposes, whereas men may do so for assertiveness or status assertion (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Women are said to use code-switching to maintain or negotiate group identity, especially in multilingual communities (Romaine 1995).

On the contrary, Finnis (2014) challenges the assumption that gender is an influential factor in the rate of code-switching. Instead, she believes that gender plays a minor role in terms of the frequency of code-switching, while indicating that the discourse type is a more influential factor affecting the code choice of individuals. In her study, males produced more speech and, hence, more instances of code-switching in the discourse of the narration of obscene jokes. The studies discussed indicate that the type of discourse as well as gender is likely to influence the rate of occurrence of code switching.

2.7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research used two theories namely, Matrix Language Frame Model (Myers-Scotton, 1993) and Accommodation Theory. The selection of these theories is based on their relevance to the linguistic and sociolinguistic dimensions of code-switching in multilingual religious settings.

The Matrix Language Frame (MLF) Model is appropriate for this study because it explains the structural organisation of code-switching in bilingual and multilingual discourse.

According to Myers-Scotton (1993), in every code-switched utterance there is a dominant language known as the Matrix

Language, which provides the grammatical structure of the sentence, while the other language functions as the Embedded Language, supplying lexical items or expressions. The theory is therefore useful in analysing the forms and patterns of code-switching that occur in church discourse, including inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag-switching. It also helps to explain how pastors and congregants maintain grammatical consistency while switching between languages during communication. This theory is relevant to the present study because code-switching in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana often involves the alternation between English and Ghanaian languages such as Akan, Ga or Ewe during sermons, prayers, scripture interpretation, announcements and church interactions.

The MLF Model enables the researcher to identify:

- the dominant language used in church discourse,
- the embedded language elements,
- the patterns of code-switching, and
- the structural relationship between English and indigenous languages in worship communication.

Accommodation Theory is also suitable for this study because it explains the social motivations behind language choice and language alternation in interaction. The theory posits that speakers adjust their speech patterns, language and communication styles either to reduce or increase social distance between themselves and others. Such adjustments may take the form of convergence, where speakers adapt to the language preferences of their audience, or divergence, where speakers maintain linguistic distinctiveness. It enables the researcher to understand why speakers alternate between English and indigenous languages during worship and how such

language choices foster inclusion, identity and interpersonal relationships within the church community.

2.7.1. *Matrix Language Frame Model*

The Matrix Language Frame model theory of code-switching was developed by Myers-Scotton in 1993 (Wakasa, 2004). Myers-Scotton (1993) formulated a theory of intra-sentential code-switching which she named the “Matrix Language Frame Model” of code-switching, and which she proposed could work in analyzing code-switching data from any language.

Myers-Scotton (ibid) indicates that the proposed Matrix Language Frame Model (MLF Model), is built on the hypothesis that the two languages involved in code-switching do not participate equally. One language is dominant and the other is subordinate and the word structure of the dominant language determines the outcome in the subordinate language. Kamwangamalu and Nkonko (1999) agrees with Myers-Scotton that there is a matrix language for code-switching discourse. It is the basic word structure of the Matrix Language (ML) that determines what happens to words in the embedded language.

The Matrix Language Frame Model is the first model chosen for this study which shows that Ga is usually the matrix language in Teshie District with English as the embedded language in Ga/English code-switching. A key principle of this model is that in bilingual speech production a frame is built and the framework reorganizes two inter-related oppositions below (Mensah, 2015):

- a. *The Matrix Language vs. The Embedded Language opposition:* The more dominant language is the matrix language (ML) and the other one is the embedded language (EL).
- b. *The system vs. content morpheme opposition:* The difference between content and system morphemes is crucial in

identifying the ML. Content morphemes, for example nouns, verbs, adjectives and some prepositions, express semantic and pragmatic aspects and assign or receive thematic roles. These are essential to convey messages in communication. System morphemes, for example function words and inflections, express the relation between content morphemes and do not assign or receive thematic roles. They are essential in building grammatical frames (Mensah, 2015).

2.7.2. Accommodation Theory

According to the theory of accommodation, people modify their language and communication styles to fit those of others. The idea has been applied in the disciplines of sociolinguistics and social psychology since its inception in the 1970s (Gumperz, 1982b). Gumperz (ibid), for instance, investigated the relationship between linguistic variety and socioeconomic rank. He noted that as language is a social practice, it connects people to their community, time, and place of residence.

There are mainly four assumptions that guide Accommodation Theory:

- Assumption 1: All conversations have speech and behavioral similarities and dissimilarities (Turner, & West, 2010). This assumption states that the degree of similarity or difference between two persons determines their willingness to accommodate. Accommodation is determined by the beliefs and attitudes of the people involved in the communication as well as their associations with the situational context. This is because communication is influenced not only by the situational context but also by the individuals involved.
- Assumption 2: This assumption holds that people listen to, analyse, and assess a discourse before making decisions about it. Depending on whether they want to blend in or stand

out, they first notice what is happening in every situation they enter, make a judgement, and then either change the way they speak or not. They will probably adapt their speech if they enjoy what they are seeing, but they will not adapt and will remain separate if they do not wish to participate in the discourse (Gumperz, 1982b)

- Assumption 3: People in a conversation convey social status and group belonging through the use of language and behaviors (Turner, & West, 2010). In the third assumption, the role of language and behavior is emphasized. The speaker's social standing can be inferred from their language use. When people try to communicate, they both agree on the linguistic standards of the higher status individual, according to Natale (1975). Natale (ibid) gave the example of a new teacher speaking to the headmaster of the school, which shows that the teacher is more likely to try to modify their language to fit the headmaster's language.

- Assumption 4: The accommodation process is guided by norms (Turner, & West, 2010). The last assumption emphasizes social appropriateness and norms. These standards typically refer to appropriate speech patterns, registers, and behaviors in society. Speaking to an elderly person, requesting permission, greeting neighbors, and other situations all need the individual to decide whether the register, style, and behavior they use are acceptable.

In order to do so, three strategies to accommodate an interaction partner were identified: convergence, divergence, and over-accommodation.

Speakers converge so as to belong and integrate to a certain group or individual. Convergence is driven by two factors: communicative efficiency drive and affective incentive (Giles et

al., 1987). Giles et al. (ibid) claimed that the more similar one is to another, the more attractive they will be, and that one must adjust their posture, speaking patterns, and even attitude to win someone over. They clarified that asking an elderly person how they are doing is more suitable, while asking a youngster "what's up?" and giving them a "high five" is informal but okay.

In divergence the speaker differentiates themselves from the group or communication partner. According to Giles and St. Claire (1979), in order to remain distinct and dissimilar to the out-group, specifically when the individual's identity and affiliation to a group is being endangered, the speaker diverges in speech style and/or language. An instance of divergence is seen in the use of 'How do you do?' by a member of the royal family and 'How are you' in a context where the royal meets the common, (Giles, & St. Claire, 1979, p. 6). Another instance of divergence could be a person speaking a dialect that is thought to be of better status because they do not want to be associated with a certain area. Divergence involves the desire for speaker A to remain distinct from the speaker B although speaker A can speak the dialect of speaker B.

Kemper (1994) observed that older adults did not make any speech adjustments as opposed to young adults who adjusted their fluency, content, and style to accommodate their communication partners. Older adults' divergence was reported to be a result of their age-related weak memory and had nothing to do with a wish to be distinct.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

For the study, interpretivism was used as the research philosophy. According to Saunders et al. (2012), interpretivism is a continuous process of comprehending the social environ-

ment through the analysis of other people's behavior, which results in changes and the evolution of one's own meanings. According to Rahman (2016), the interpretivism research approach can understand the voices, meanings, and experiences of various people.

Since qualitative research methods are the foundation of interpretivism, the qualitative research approach was implemented as explanatory research (Tipi, 2018). Qualitative study relies on non-numerical data to present insights into people's experiences, behavior, beliefs, attitudes and motivation (Oranga, & Matere, 2023). Any type of study that yields results that cannot be achieved using statistical procedures or other quantification approaches is considered qualitative research, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998). The inductive method was the research strategy used in this investigation.

The sample of the current study was selected from three out of thirteen (13) Presbyterian churches in the Teshie District of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The participants were selected because they were children, youth and adults who practiced code-switching during church services. The study used purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling technique to gather the sample. Yin (2011, p. 311) defines purposive sampling as "the selection of participants or sources of data to be used in a study, based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the study's research questions". Patton (2015) explains that purposive sampling is uniquely applicable to qualitative research.

The sample size of the study was twenty-one respondents and they were as follows:

- Nine (9) ministers who used code-switching during sermons in three congregations of the Teshie District.

- Four church members each selected from the three congregations were selected for the study. The participants had equal numbers of the different age groups, different genders and different educational levels to help answer how these different factors play a role in code-switching.

The study involved 9 ministers whose number of years as ministers in the Presbyterian Church range from 2 years to 26 years. Twelve (12) church members (6 males and 6 females): 6 adults, 3 youth and 3 children were interviewed from 3 Presbyterian Churches. The number of years they had been members of the church ranged from 3 years to 61 years. Six (6) of the members spoke Ga as their mother tongue language and also spoke Twi and English as a second language. Four (4) of the participants spoke either Twi, Dangme, Fante, or Nzema as their mother tongue language plus English as a second language. Also, two (2) of them were monolinguals who only spoke Fante or Twi.

Table 1: Church members interviewed from 3 Presbyterian churches

	Gender		No. of Respondents	Age	No. of years of church fellowship	Levels of education
	Male	Female				
Adults	3	3	6	36 – 75 years	11 – 61 years	Senior High School and University

						graduates
Youth	2	1	3	18 – 35 years	7 – 10 years	Senior High School and University graduates
Children	1	2	3	15 – 17 years	3 – 6 years	Junior High School graduates
Total	6	6	12			

Table 2: Ministers interviewed from 3 Presbyterian churches

	Gender		No. of Respondents	Age	No. of years of church fellowship	Levels of education
	Male	Female				
Adults	9	3	12	36 – 80 years	40 – 55 years	Bible School and University graduates

The concept of theoretical saturation and the type of research determined the sample size. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation occurs when further coding is no longer

practical and there is sufficient information to repeat the study following the acquisition of fresh information (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss, & Corbin, 1998).

The primary data are first-hand, authentic and are analysed for the first time. The research involved the following primary data collection methods:

- **Observation:** Observation enabled the researcher to understand how the conduct, (including comportment, silence, noise/voices, countenance depicting misunderstanding) and other gestural actions of the members of the congregation influence the minister to switch between languages. It helped to understand and gather data which could not be gathered through interviews and audio-recordings.
- **Audio recordings:** Existing preaching videos on the churches' Facebook page were collected and analysed. Audio-recordings of the sermons, prayers and announcements during church services were also done to understand the types, patterns and frequency of code-switching. The audio-recordings were manually transcribed for better analysis of the data.
- **Interview:** A semi-structured interview framework was used for data collection. The semi-structured interview allowed participants the freedom to express their views and also enabled the interviewer to ask follow up questions which were not captured on the interview guide. It helped to deepen the understanding of factors that influence code-switching. Two semi structured interview guides were developed for the study: one for the ministers and the other for church members. The oral interview provided material for gathering data about factors that influence code-switching, identification of the roles age, gender, and education play in code-switching and the patterns and frequency of code-switching.

3.2. Data Analysis

The audio recordings were played and listened to before transcribing into text using a transcription software called TurboScribe. The transcribed texts were verified by reading the text while playing the recorded interviews and few corrections were made relating to the spelling of certain Ghanaian language words. The texts were categorized under the thematic areas of the study: types, patterns and frequency of code-switching and factors influencing code-switching. Relevant portions of the preaching videos were manually transcribed into text.

4. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

4.1. Types of code-switching

Three languages used during sermons, prayers and announcements in the Presbyterian Churches at the Teshie District were Ga, English, and Twi. These were the dominant languages which were widely spoken in the Teshie District. While majority of the churches code-switch in the three languages; few of them code-switch in two languages. Table 1 below shows the languages used and their percentages of use.

Table 3: Languages used and their percentages

Church Service	Dominant language	Minor languages	Percentage (% of language usage during church service)		
			Ga	English	Twi
General Church Service	Ga	English and Twi	70%	25%	5%
Ga Church Service	Ga	English	90%	10%	
English	English	Ga	90%	10%	

Church Service					
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Time-based measurement method was used. Three audio recordings which include sermons, prayers and announcements were selected for General Church Service, Ga Church Service and English Church Service. In determining the percentages of languages used during the General Church Service, the total speaking duration was recorded for the three audio recordings. Time durations for Ga, English and Twi were also noted in each audio recording. To calculate the percentage of language usage for Ga:

$$\text{Audio Recording 1} = \frac{\text{Duration (Ga)} \times 100}{\text{Total speaking duration}}$$

The percentage of Ga used in the General Church Service 1 (Audio Recording 1), with 88 minutes for Ga language and 120 minutes total speaking duration, using the formula above was 73%. The same method and process were used to determine the languages used in the selected audio recordings. The percentages of Ga used in the three different audio recordings were 73%, 70% and 67%. The average percentage of Ga from the three results was 70%. The percentages of English used in the three audio recordings were 29%, 25% and 21%. The average percentage of English used was 25%. The percentages of Twi used during sermons, prayers and announcements in the three audio recordings were 7%, 5% and 3%. The average percentage for Twi language used was 5%.

The same method and process were used to determine the Ga and English languages code-switched during Ga and English Church Services. Three different audio recordings were used for each of the Services. The percentages of Ga used in the three different audio recordings of the Ga Church Service were 94%,

91% and 85%. The average percentage for Ga language used was 90% whereas the average percentage of the English language used was 10% from the following percentages: 13%, 9% and 8%. The same results were recorded in the English Church Service.

Similar to Asare-Nyarko (2012, p. 21) the study identified three main types of code-switching used during sermons, Bible studies, prayers and announcements in the selected Presbyterian Churches at the Teshie District:

- Inter-sentential code-switching
- Intra-sentential code-switching
- Tag switching.

4.1.1. *Inter-sentential code-switching*

Extracts 1 and 2 are some of the examples of inter-sentential code-switching from Ga to English used during sermon. The embedded language is shown as bold font while the matrix language is not bold. In extract 1, main language happens to be English language while the Ga language was embedded. In the case of extract 2, Ga, English and Twi languages were used across sentences. Extract two showed translations mostly.

Extract 1: Ga-English inter-sentential code-switching

We should occupy ourselves with something. Nyekahaa wɔfee wɔhe gbemei ahiankwelɔi ni wɔtao akɛ wɔsa gbɔmei ahie (We shouldn't be men pleasers). Nyehaa wɔsɔlemɔ afaa (let us pray more) and We should abide always in God. Let your action draw others to Jesus. Nyehaa wɔhia shi yɛ Nyɔnmɔ wiemɔ lɛ naa be fee be ni wɔdara yɛ wɔhemɔkeyeli lɛ mli (let us abide in the word of God always and grow in our faith). Let us not remain infants in the faith.

Extract 1 shows switching between English and Ga. The minister, being a Ga native at a mostly Ga congregation showed solidarity with the natives and affirms his lineage as a Ga by choosing to speak Ga in order to communicate the message. In this example, the strategy was to converge with the congregation to augment the message. In the same manner, the minister reveals his identity as an educated person in order to connect with the educated class among the congregants.

In the sermon, the language that occurred more often was the Ga language with occasional switches into English language. Hence, the Matrix language was identified to be Ga. The relationship between the Matrix and the embedded language is reflected especially in the intra-sentential code-switching exemplified in the statement: “*Wɔye hienɔkamɔ ye Yesu Kristo mli wɔbaana eternal life*” from extract 2.

Extract 2. Ga-Twi-English inter-sentential code-switching
*Yesu Kristo baaba ekonɔ (Jesus Christ will come again). **Yesu Kristo bɔba bio** (Jesus Christ will come again). **This hope stems from the faith that makes us good Christians. Can we exhibit this faith without believing in the word of God? No that is not how it works.** Wɔye hienɔkamɔ ye Yesu Kristo mli ake wɔbaana eternal life (We have hope in Christ Jesus that we shall have eternal life). This means that **yen anidasoɔ wɔ Kristo Yesu mu no ma yen nkwa** (Which means that our hope in Christ Jesus gives us salvation).*

It was observed that inter-sentential code-switching was used between Ga and English or English and Twi or Ga, English and Twi to create emphasis, to deepen understanding and to mark that sentence or message as a key takeaway by the congregation. This trend is so interesting as the preacher fluidly used the three languages to communicate the message to the congregation.

4.1.2. *Intra-sentential code-switching*

It was observed that when the word in the main language was not forthcoming, it was quickly switched to another language or replaced with a word in another language. In extracts 3, 4 and 5, we see examples of intra-sentential code-switching. The extract was taken from announcements after the sermon. The embedded language is indicated in bold font. As explained by the Matrix Language Framework, the code-switching grammar follows that of the Matrix language in the communication.

Extract 3:

Church'ε (the Church) baabua (will gather) **special contributions**'ε (the special contributions) anaa kēha (together for) **brethren** ni nɔ enyɔ aməhiŋmēi mli lε (that are bereaved). (literally: the church will collect special contributions the together for the brethren who are bereaved).
(The church will collect the special contributions for the brethren who are bereaved)

Extract 4:

Nyɛfainε, mēi ni miitao (Please, those who want) **scholarships** lε (scholarships the), nyε **applya** (you apply) ketsɔ **scholarship fund committee** lε nɔ (through scholarship fund committee the on). (Literally: Please, those who want scholarship the, you apply IMP through scholarship fund committee the on (through scholarship fund committee the on).)
(Please those who want the scholarships should apply through the Scholarship Fund Committee.)

Extract 5:

Wɔ miikai (we are reminding) **church members** fεε (church members all) **ni fee pledges** lε (that made pledges the) ni amε pay kəwo church'ε **Momo account**'ε mli (that they pay into

church the Momo account the in). (literally: we are reminding church members all that made pledges the that they pay into church the Momo account the in).

(We are reminding all church members who made pledges that they should pay into the church Momo account)

4.1.3. **Tag switching**

It was observed that the tag switching was mostly used when the speaker was more informal in communication, when they wanted to create humor and lighten the atmosphere. The ministers used tag especially to include youth speech. The tag switching also served as an interjection, a tag, or a sentence filler in the other language that sometimes defines the mannerism of the speaker. It involved the insertion of a tag phrase or word from one language to another. Tag switching is the least used type of code-switching by the ministers. Extracts 6 and 7 are some examples:

Extract 6

Many people think, ntsəə (I mean), when you are humble you are not wise but don't worry, ole? (you know), the foolishness of God is wiser than men.

Extract 7

When Saul who became Paul had an encounter with the light of Jesus, oobo toi ojogbanj? (are you listening well?), he became blind.

The tag switches in extracts 6 and 7 did not actually contribute to the explanation of the sentence. The speakers interjected them as a way of creating humor in the instance of extract 7 and as a way of showing identity and solidarity with the listeners in the case of extract 6.

4.2. Patterns and frequency of code-switching during sermons, prayers, and announcements

The study revealed that frequently, the ministers code-switch during sermons, prayers, and announcements. As and when switching is needed, the ministers did so on purpose.

The most dominant language used was Ga, while the ministers switched to English and Twi. Twi was the least spoken language in the Presbyterian Churches included in the study. When the service was in English, English became the dominant language while Ga or Twi became the embedded language. The common code-switches were Ga – English and English – Ga. Table 2 below shows the patterns and frequency of code-switches identified in the study.

Table 4: Patterns and Frequency of Code-switching used during sermons, prayers and announcements

Types of Code-switching	Presbyterian Church (Teshie Congregation 1)	Presbyterian Church (Teshie Congregation 2)	Presbyterian Church (Teshie Congregation 3)	Total Frequency (Occurrences)	Percentage (%)
	Frequency 1	Frequency 2	Frequency 3		
Inter-sentential code-switching	124	130	118	372	54%
Intra-sentential	90	70	85	245	36%

code-switching					
Tag switching	30	24	18	72	10%
Total	244	224	221	689	100%

Three audio recordings from three Presbyterian Churches in the Teshie District were analysed and the frequency of each type of code-switching identified in the study was recorded. From the above table, column 2 titled Frequency 1 lists the number of times, Inter-sentential code-switching, Intra-sentential code-switching and Tag switching occurred in one church audio recording from one church service. There was a total of 244 code-switches which involved the three types of code-switching.

For frequency 2 in column 2, another audio recording from a different church was used and 224 code-switches were recorded whereas the third audio recording from another Presbyterian Church involved 221 code-switches. From the analysed data, inter-sentential code-switching is the most commonly used code-switching of Presbyterian Churches in the Teshie District. Tag switching was the least used code-switching.

Code-switching is less frequent at the youth meetings and more frequent during adult meetings. All the members indicated that the act of ministers switching languages during church service is becoming increasingly common.

4.3. Factors that influence code-switching

Table 1 provides analysed data of languages, namely Ga, English and Twi within which sermons, prayers and announcements are code-switched at the Presbyterian Churches

in the Teshie District. Table 2 also analysed the patterns and frequency of the types of code-switching used during sermons, prayers and announcements. The following factors influence code-switching data highlighted in the tables and the extracts:

4.3.1. Cultural Identity

The ministers believe that switching the English language to the mother tongue languages such as Ga or Twi creates intimacy, sense of belonging and cultural rootedness. For instance:

We should occupy ourselves with something. Nyekahaa wɔfee wɔhe gbemɛi ahiankwɛɔi ni wɔtao akɛ wɔsa gbɔmɛi ahie (We shouldn't be men pleasers).

Listen to this announcement. *Mo adwene wɔ ha?* (Are your minds here?).

Responding to why they varied the languages in their speech, the following extracts (Extract 8, Extract 9, Extract 10) show responses of Minister J. A., Minister E. V. and Minister M. A. T. Extract 8 (Minister J. A.)

My congregation is made of members with different cultural identities as you have seen already and it is necessary to make them feel cherished and at home. In so doing I also need to feel comfortable in showing who I am. Then everyone will be equally satisfied.

Extract 9 (Minister E. V.)

Though I speak Ga, I am half Akuapim and I know there are some Akuapims in my flock and that is something we cannot hide.

Extract 10 (Minister M. A. T.)

Well, I think we cannot hide the fact that there are others who are from other regions in our congregation and the fact that we are very accommodating makes us want to include them in our communication. I for one even unconsciously portray that

Ghanaian culture which is warmth and welcoming in all my communication especially where I can speak other languages to be understood by my flock.

4.3.2. Audience Composition and Retention

Another factor that influences code-switching from Ga or English to Twi language is to retain some of the Akan members who do not speak Ga or English in the church by meeting their language needs to some extent. Thus, code-switching became a choice in order to keep the membership of the church. Extracts 11 and 12 below shows the responses of Minister R. A. D and Minister M. A. K. which hinted of retention of church membership as a factor for code-switching.

Extract 11 (Minister R. A. D)

There are instances where some of the church members, especially the Akan people left the church because they could not understand Ga or English language. When my elders realized this, we decided that it is time to be more accommodating with the language use.

Extract 12 (Minister M. A. K.)

I believe that if we accept all ethnic groups to join the church and we speak only Ga, some of the church members would leave to other churches where Twi would be spoken. Some people still moved to other churches because of limited Twi used in preaching or communication.

The ministers made deliberate efforts to accommodate their congregations by converging toward languages understood by most members, thereby reflecting the principles of accommodation while also expressing their cultural identities through their language choices.

4.3.3. Level of congregational focus

According to the study, code-switching is also used by ministers to establish the concentration of the congregation. Code-switching according to the Ministers is a powerful communication style which creates variety in communication to stimulate communication and engagement. Examples are:

*When Saul who became Paul had an encounter with the light of Jesus, **oobo toi ojogbany?** (are you listening well?), he became blind.*

As shown in extract 13 below, Minister R. A. D indicated that code-switching from Ga to Twi keeps the attention of the congregants throughout her sermon and that is a strategy to communicate the word of God.

Extract 13

My reason for using two Ghanaian languages is that I want to have the full attention of everybody, both those who understand Ga and those who do not understand Ga. Since Twi is a language understood by many people, I use it to complement the Ga language.

4.3.4. Lexical Gaps and Ease of Expression

The ministers stated that when a term or expression cannot be easily conveyed in one language, they switch to another language. For instance, expressions like ‘special contributions’, and ‘brethren’ were more readily available to use than their Ga equivalence while communicating in Ga as in: “**Church’e** (Church the) baabua (will gather) **special contributions’e** (special contributions the) anaa keha (for) brethren ni no enyo amehinmei mli le (that are bereaved)”. (*The church will gather the special contributions for the brethren who are bereaved*). Thus, the Minister could not easily pronounce the Ga equivalence of *church*, *special contributions* and *brethren*, so he embedded the English words. This is an instance of intra-

sentential code-switching which was used for lack of vocabularies in the Matrix language.

Similarly, “the” in the utterance, “*Nyefaine, mei ni miitao (Please, those who want) scholarships le (scholarships the), nye applya (you apply) ketsɔ scholarship fund committee le nɔ (through scholarship fund committee the on)*”, we have an intra-sentential code-switching whereby ‘scholarships’ and ‘scholarship fund committee’ were embedded in the Matrix language (Ga) for lack of equivalent Ga expression in the Ga vocabulary of the minister.

The study found that the Presbyterian ministers and members derive some benefits when they use code-switching and these benefits also serve as factors that encourage its continued usage.

4.3.5. Solidarity and Desire for Inclusion

Code-switching was found to be a tool for motivating the members of the church especially those who are not Ga natives, to feel comfortable as members of one family in the church. It is found that the ministers and members used code-switching for solidarity and inclusion of every member of the congregation. It was observed that the use of code-switching was to accommodate the language needs of members with different language backgrounds, especially Twi. The ministers used such switches as:

Wo wɔ ha wɔ botaeɛ (You are here for a purpose), When God created Adam, He gave him some work to do.

Nyekahaa wɔfee wɔhe gbemei ahiankwelɔi ni wɔtao ake wɔsa gbɔmei ahie (We shouldn't be men pleasers). let us pray more and We should abide always in God.

Let your action draw others to Jesus. Nyehaa wɔhia shi ye Nyɔnmɔ wiemɔ le naa be fee be ni wɔdara ye wɔhemɔkeyeli le mli (let us abide in the word of God always and grow in our faith). Let us not remain infants in the faith.

The ministers chose to code-switch in order to reach a broader spectrum of listeners and to enhance understanding of the people and to eliminate language barrier.

4.3.6. Clarification and Emphasis

As indicated in extract 14, Presbyterian ministers code-switch during preaching or church communication to improve the clarity of the message and enhance responses from the audience.

Extract 14

Minister N. J. O

I often use two or three languages: Ga, Twi, and sometimes English during sermons mainly to make myself clear to the listeners. I believe the use of different languages to preach the sermon helps with understanding of the message.

Thus, switching the between languages brings more clarity to what is being said.

4.3.7. Congregation Role

It was observed that sometimes the demeanor of some of the church members communicates misunderstanding to the minister and this influences the switching from one language to another. This is expressed in the response of minister N. J. O below:

Extract 15

Minister N. J. O

I look at my members and per their body language sometimes, I could read that they need more clarification and then when I use other languages to explain, their responses show that the message has gone down well.

4.4. The roles of age, gender, and education in code-switching during sermons, prayers, announcements

Data from interviews and observation demonstrate the roles of age, gender and educational level of the congregation play to influence code-switching during sermons, prayers and announcements.

Age of the congregation

The age of the audience influences the languages to use and how to use them. The study demonstrated that younger congregants in the Presbyterian churches frequently engage in code-switching and also enjoy code-switching to reflect modernity, social identity, and group solidarity. Youth-oriented church programmes contain extensive switching between English and indigenous languages, especially during preaching, worship leading, and announcements. English expressions were used to sound modern, educated, or spiritually sophisticated, while local languages are used to maintain emotional connection and clarity.

Older church members prefer indigenous languages during communication, especially preaching. The study established that elderly congregants are more comfortable with sermons and prayers delivered predominantly in Ga (local language) because they communicate spiritual messages more directly and emotionally. Pastors switch codes to accommodate both younger and older audiences within the congregation. For instance, some ministers preferred to speak more English with occasional switches to Ga or Twi when talking to the youth and children. However, Ga dominated as the Matrix language in adult sessions with switches to Twi in some instances, with little or no English.

Gender of the congregation

Interviews and observation in the congregation indicated that there were more instances of code-switching during meetings

with the women than during meetings with the men in the church. The study showed that female church members use code-switching to express empathy, politeness, emotional intensity, and communal solidarity, especially during testimonies, prayer meetings, and women's fellowship activities.

Male pastors use code-switching more strategically to establish authority, theological emphasis, or persuasion during sermons. The study revealed that in the men's fellowship meetings, members expressed themselves more in Ga and less of code-switching in the deliberations. In the women's fellowship however, the situation was quite different with more switches from Ga to Twi or English.

In mixed congregational settings, female speakers switch codes to ensure inclusiveness and relational bonding, whereas male speakers do so to demonstrate leadership and communicative control. From the study, gender in the Presbyterian churches affects communicative intentions, style of sermon delivery, emotional expression, and interactional strategies during worship.

Educational level of the congregation

Education is one of the strongest determinants of code-switching in church communication. From the responses of the ministers, it was shown that the age of the congregation correlates to their educational level in Teshie district. The understanding is that when the audience is youth based, their educational level is high (that is, they have the ability to speak English). Therefore, English is mainly used, Ga and Twi are used as minor languages. In this case, code-switching reduces. The study revealed that educated congregations preferred to use more English than the Ghanaian languages during church service. However, adult gathering with lower educational level

increased the switching of languages during sermons, prayers and announcements in Presbyterian Churches. From the study education influences bilingual proficiency, confidence in English usage, prestige-oriented language choices, and the balance between accessibility and sophistication in church communication.

5. Conclusion

The congregation of the Presbyterian Churches at the Teshie District is multilingual and three main languages: Ga, English and Twi are used during church service. inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching and tag switching are the types of code-switching used but inter-sentential code-switching is the most commonly used.

The study found out that the overarching factor that influences Presbyterian ministers to switch languages during preaching, prayers or announcements is to build and deepen the understanding of the audience. That is the main objective of all speakers – to get down their messages to the listeners. Code-switching to the mother tongue languages such as Ga or Twi creates intimacy, sense of belonging and cultural rootedness among the audience.

The study demonstrates that age, gender and educational level of the congregation influence code-switching during sermons, prayers and announcements. Most of the church members agree that the age, gender, and education of the listeners affect code-switching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, these recommendations are made:

- i. Preachers should use code-switching intentionally to clarify complex theological ideas to maintain message coherence.
- ii. Incorporate awareness of code-switching patterns into preacher training by highlighting when and how to use language alternation for maximum communicative effectiveness.
- iii. Encourage consistency across church departments, giving church members from different language backgrounds to follow messages easily, regardless of the preacher's personal switching habits.
- iv. Use code-switching strategically to sustain attention and reinforce key messages, especially when addressing mixed-language congregations

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