

## Code-Mixing in Selected Plays of the New Generation Yorùbá Playwrights

Bólánlé Kíkelomo Osoba (Mrs)<sup>1</sup> & Gabriel A. Osoba<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

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This paper is an attempt to examine code-mixing as a striking feature in the style of the new generation Yorùbá playwrights. The new generation Yorùbá playwrights in the context of this study are those who wrote Yorùbá plays in the first twelve years of this new millennium, that is from (2000-2012). The data for this work are excerpts from three selected plays of the new generation Yorùbá playwrights: Abraham Adéoyè's *Oge Ìwòyí* (2001), Akínyelé Adétúnjí's *Alàrédè* (2004) and Olúwagbémiga Akínbámi's *Ìpinnu Lánlèyìn* (2004). This study employs Communication Accommodation Theory developed by a psychologist, Howard Giles and his associates in (2006). The theory postulates that "what speakers say is not a product of who they are in terms of group membership but a product of what they wish to accomplish. This is found relevant to this paper's investigation of code-mixing and the purpose it serves in the style of the new generation Yorùbá playwrights. The analytical approach is based on the process of (a) Insertion (b) alternation and (c) congruent lexicalization order under which code mixing can be examined. The paper reveals that the new generation Yorùbá playwrights are bilinguals who employ code-mixing as a result of their competence in both English and Yoruba languages to reflect contemporary issues in the society. The code-mixing portrays the plays as relevant to the present age, creating a kind of style that is already in vogue in the modern Yoruba society. The paper recommends that the new generation Yorùbá playwrights exercise caution in the use of code-mixing of Yorùbá with English; so as not to compromise the purity of the Yorùbá language which may lead to language endangerment.

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**Keywords:** Code-mixing; style: new generation Yoruba playwrights; English

### 1.0 Introduction

Code-mixing is a socio-linguistic phenomenon in any multilingual setting, such as Nigeria. It is a communicative strategy used for convenience as well as for social interaction. An average Nigerian is either bilingual or multilingual, and in few instances, a monolingual.

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Yoruba, School of Languages, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto- Ijanikin, Lagos, Nigeria.  
E-Mail: [bolosoba009@yahoo.com](mailto:bolosoba009@yahoo.com), Tel: +2348035771410

<sup>2</sup>PhD, Correspondence: Department of English, Lagos State University, P.M.B 0001 LASU Post Office, Badagry Expressway, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria.  
E-Mail: [gabosoba002@yahoo.com](mailto:gabosoba002@yahoo.com), Tel: +2348033248685

Among the elite in Yorùbá society, the use of code-mixing is a common phenomenon. Individuals code-mix while talking in informal discussion. It is common in urban and rural settings but it is more common in urban areas owing to the complexity and density of such areas. Code mixing is popular and unconsciously utilized among bilinguals. Ayéòmoni (2006) supports the point by stating that “code-switching and code-mixing are well known traits in the speech patterns of the average bilingual in any human society the world over”. The new generation Yorùbá playwrights are mostly bilinguals. They are preoccupied with writing on contemporary issues in the society such as love of money, infidelity, religion, and politics in a style that involves occasional mixing of lexical items from both Yoruba and English.

This paper examines the feature of code-mixing in the plays of the new generation Yorùbá playwrights. For the purpose of this study, Yorùbá plays are classified into three generations. The criteria for demarcating the generation are the year of publication of the plays and the themes treated by the playwrights. The first generation is between 1923 and 1959, the second generation, 1960-1999 while the third generation which is 2000 to date, is the new generation or the millennium playwrights.

The first generation comprises playwrights like Olympus Moore's *Asikà Bì Àparò*, I. B. Akínyelé's *Àwọn Ìwàréfà Mefà*, Emmanuel Awóbò Akíntán's *Pamí N Kú Obinrin* (1923), Adébóyè Babalọlá's *Pàsán Sìnà*. However, according to Ogundeji (2014), “the first written play did not come into being until 1946 despite an early attempt in 1923”. The second generation (1960-1999), consists of J. F. Odúnjò's *Agbàlówómèerí BaalèJontòlo*, Olàònípèkun Èsan's *Ká Sòtò Ká Kú* (1964), Adébáyò Fálétí's *Wón Rò Pé Wèrè Ní* (1965), Afọlábí Olábímtán's (1968) *Olúwa Ló Mejó Dá*, Akínwùnmi Ìsòlá's *Èfúnsetán Aníwùrà* (1967), Olú Dáramólá's *Ilé Tí A Fi Itó Mọ* (1967).

In 1973, the first remarkable protest play, entitled, *Réré Rún* came into the limelight. It was written by Oládèjò Òkédijí.

There were also *Kò-See-Gbé* by Akinwùnmi Ìsòlá in 1981 and *Ayé yẹ Wón tán*. From year 2000 to date, there have been many written plays in Yorùbá language and many more authors are emerging. The new plays include: Oládélé Sàngótóyè's *Adákédájó* (2000), Abraham Adéoyè's *Oge Ìwòyì*(2001), Bólánlé Oládiméjì's *Igi Eleèrà* (2003), Bólánlé Dòsùnmu's *Ìyá Yáadi* (2004); Akínyelé Adétúnjì's *Aláredè* (2004), Akínbámi Olúwagbémiga's *Ìpinnu Lánlẹ̀yìn* (2004), Dèbò Awé's *Àpótí Alákàrà* (2004), Doyin Abégúndé's *Yínúsà Dókítà Náà* (2004) and Hamid Akínládé's *Erù Amúkùn-ún* (2004); Gbadé Akíntókun's *Gbamugbamù* (2006); Fólórúnsó Adéníyí's *Ìyàwó Òlèlè* (2007); Bólánlé Oládiméjì's *Ebi Mi Kó* (2007); Dèbò Awé's *Àjo Dá* (2007) and Adéníyí Akàngbé's *Ayégún* (2007); Y.A.B. Olátúnjì's *Ikú Erù Omo Òjẹjẹ* (2008); Àrìnpé Adéjùmò's *Afàgò Kéyin Àparò* (2010); Lékan Babatúndé's *Òbe Èyìn* Olúfemí Adéyemo's *Àpótí Òran*, Dèbò Awé's *Lágídígba* (2010) Adéribígbé Morónmùbò's *Òrè Mì* (2010), Koláwolé Ládókè's *Ilé Ariwo* (2011) etc. This study is an examination of three works of the new generation Yorùbá playwrights.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Code-Mixing, Code Switching and Language Transfer

Many researchers have investigated code-mixing. Some use the term code-mixing and code switching interchangeably, especially in the study of syntax, morphology and other formal aspects of languages. Both terms are used to refer to utterances that draw from elements of two or more grammatical systems. Code switching and code mixing deal with insertion of lexical items of one language to another and it is always common to bilinguals.

Bello (2007) opines that "Code mixing and code switching have become a common day-to-day linguistic behaviour. Code mixing could become 'code-mix up' if it is not done appropriately". Even though bilinguals are free to code mix in their discourse, they should be sociologically and psychologically motivated. They are to be careful not to mix their codes abruptly.

Code mixing can come as a result of realization of group solidarity. Code-mixing comes as a result of languages in contact, (Ansre, 1971; Bokamba 1989; Bámgbósé, 1971).

Adetóyè (2002) posits that "It is inserting varying chunks of English into the performance of the West African languages and it is a common feature among Nigerian bilinguals who are competent in English and one or more Nigerian languages". He expresses that the influence of English on Nigerian languages can be most felt in the areas of loan words and code mixing. Ansre (1971) is of the new that West African bilinguals are fond of mixing English with their West African languages.

According to Poplack (2001), "Code-switching refers to the mixing, by bilinguals or (multilinguals) of two or more languages in discourse, often with no change of interlocutor or topic". It is an essential part of language acquisition, especially for children that are learning languages; they can code switch in order to express themselves fluently. As with any aspect of language contact phenomenon, research on code switching is plagued by the thorny issue of terminological confusion. Not all researchers use the same terms in the same way, nor do they agree on the territory covered by terms such as code-mixing, code-switching, borrowing, code alternation and mixed speech. Labels like language shift and language transfer have been used. Language Shift sometimes refers to language transfer, language replacement or assimilation. Language shift occurs when the people in a particular culture or sub-culture change the primary language that they use for communication. This can happen in two primary ways. The first is by indigenous languages being replaced with regional or global languages and second by the language of immigrant population. When a speech community shifts to speaking another language the language perceived to be "higher status, stabilizes or spreads at the expense of other languages perceived by their own speaker to be "lower status".

Language transfer is also known as linguistic interference or cross meaning: it refers to speakers or writers applying knowledge from their native language to a second language. Anukawa (1990:175) opines that code-mixing refers to "the inclusion of a single lexical item from one language into the structure of an utterance made in another language". Other scholars always equate code-mixing with language interlarding. This is also the interspersing of two languages which may be between English and Yorùbá.

## 2.2 Style

The term, style, has multiple applicability as it relates not only to literature but also to sculpture, architecture, fashion etc. The main reason for applying style to literature is that, in literature, the writer uses style to adorn his work of art and beautify his language use.

Olóruntóba-Ojú (1998) states that

The perspectives from which style has been defined and analyzed include those of the writer's point of view, the characteristics of the text analyzed, and the impression of the reader. Correspondingly, style has often been described as the shell of thought, the choice between alternative expressions, a set of individual characteristics, a deviation from a norm, a set of collective characteristics and also as the relationship between linguistic entities beyond the sentence level.

Crystal and Davy (1969: 9-10) relate style to the distinctive language habits of an individual, a group or a period and also, in a restricted sense, to the effectiveness or otherwise of an expression. The concept of style as choice is predicated upon by the fact that every phenomenon has many possible alternatives. This view is held by linguists such as Todorov (1971) Ullmann (1959), Enkvist (1964). What actually constitutes style "as choice is the choice which a writer makes among the grammatical, lexical and phonological resources of his language. The new generation Yoruba playwrights make their deliberate choice, of code-mixing from the pool of language resources available to them, for the purpose of creativity. There could be no question of style unless the speaker or writer has the possibility of choosing between alternative forms. The writer's choice, therefore, is largely determined by the purpose he hopes to achieve. The choice concept is related to new generation Yoruba playwrights in the sense that they deliberately chose code-mixing as a kind of style to portray the modern Yoruba society.

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the "Communication Accommodation Theory" formerly called "Speech Accommodation Theory". It was developed by the social psychologist Howard Giles and his associates in (2006). The theory considers adjustment that speakers make toward the speech of their listeners.

The basic premise for this theory is that speakers tend to accommodate their speech to persons whom they like, or whom they wish to be liked by, and they tend to diverge from those persons whom they don't like. (It revolves around the choice of accommodation or divergence). The theory is applicable to this work because the playwrights or speakers in this sense are not only a product of "who they are" (in terms of their group membership) but also a product of what they wish to accomplish. The new generation Yorubá playwrights are familiar with the society, and through their written plays enlist the interest of their audience by making their plays to accommodate what is operational in and relevant to the community at large.

Speakers do not talk just to convey information but to express their own views about who they are as individuals and about their relationship with their listeners. The speakers in this sense are the playwrights, while the listeners are the targeted audience. Accommodation theory is audience-centred. The playwrights understood the experiences of the audience through and weave their plays around these happenings. The new generation Yorùbá playwrights present their style to suit what is operational in the society.

The analytical framework for the examination of code-mixing in the selected plays is based on the view that code-mixing could be examined under the process of (a) insertion (b) alternation and (c) congruent lexicalization. For this purpose of this paper, one of the three terms i.e. insertion is adopted while the other two processes of analysis are at the intra-sentential and sentence levels.

### 3.0 Excerpts and Analysis

#### 3.1 Code-mixing: Excerpts

All the playwrights under study employ code-mixing in their plays in varying degrees. The code-mixing at the intra-sentential level involves the using of two codes in discourse and it is by insertion. In *Aláradè*, the playwright uses code-mixing in some conversations. For example, when Joké and Agboólá discuss in his room, they spice their conversation with code mixing.

- Agboólá: *Láìgbórí sókè*  
*Agbo (Yees!, onítòhún wọlé, Jọkẹ!*  
*Ìwọ tiẹ ni, báwo ni? O ma tọjọ métaa?*
- Olújoké: *Jọkan pẹlúẹ, mo mà mọ ọn rìn lóní kẹ ẹ*
- Agboólá: *Kín lo "mean"?*  
*... sebí "visitors book" wà lẹnu ọnà?*  
*Aláradè p.17*

(Yes, let that person enter, Jọkẹ you are the one, how is everything? It is quite a long time I see that, my visit today is good enough What do you mean?... my visitors book is at the door).

The discussion is about one visiting the other. The discussion continues when Jọkẹ accuses Agboólá of going to a cinema house with another girlfriend.

- Agboólá: *Toun Amósùn, to n' teach ní ile ìwé gíga.*
- Olújoké: *... Abí àbúròrẹ rẹ lo fẹ yan ní*  
*'girlfriend'? o dáa, a gbọ ti Tóun na.*  
*Bísíomọ àlúfàà n' kọ? ẹ àbúròrẹgbọn*  
*'sister' rẹ tún niyẹn?*

Agboolá: *Sóo mọ̀, ọ̀dun yìí lo pari H.S.C.*  
*Òkan lára àwọn ẹ̀ka ẹ̀kọ̀ rẹ̀ ni*  
*'Econs' ko sàà ye mí bo se mọ̀*  
*Pé 'Economics' ni mo se ní Yunifasitì ...*

*Aláradè p. 18-19*

Agboolá: That Toun Amosun who is teaching in one secondary school

Olujoké: Do you want to befriend the sister of your enemy? Will you choose that one as a girl friend?

Alright, let us leave Toun's issue for now, what of Bisi, the Pastor's daughter? Is she your sister's child?

Agboolá: You know, she has just finished her HSC, and she studied Econs. I don't know how she got to know that I am studying Economics in the University

When Joké visits another boyfriend, whose name is Demola, code-mixing is evident in their discussion as captured below:

Olujoké: *'Demore'*

Olúkòyà: *Joks, o mà 'fine' si Kẹ̀ẹ̀*

Olujoké: *Ẹ̀see o, níbo ló dà bá yíí?*  
*Tóo dẹ̀ dì kakaaka bí akòwé kóòtù*

Olúkòyà: *Mo rí lẹ̀tà mà má Tolú níbi isé lósàn-án yíí ...*  
*Bá bá onílé wa lóhùn-un lo fẹ́ ẹ́ máa se mọ̀na mọ̀na*

Olujoké: *Ó yẹ kí o lo yanjú rẹ̀ lóòótọ̀.*  
*Mọ̀ pe ẹ́ lórí 'phone' tí tí láàárọ̀ yíí*  
*se 'line' yín yẹn, ò tún dáa mọ̀ ni? Àbí*  
*àwọn òsìse 'bank' tiyin ló bajé tó bẹ́ ẹ́?*

Olúkòyà: *Ma bíinú, bí mo bá ti jáde. se*  
*Ni mo máa n' ti 'office' mi pa ...*  
*ọ̀dun yíí naà lo ma máa 'finish'*

Olukòyà: *Kò sí 'problem then'*

Olujoké: *Jẹ́ kó di ọ̀jọ̀ mọ̀ndè koo tó síwọ̀ ni*  
*'bank' mo ti máa débí (Aláradè p. 29-31)*

Olúkóyá : Demore  
Joks, you are very fine

Olújoké: Thanks, where are you going?  
That you dress like a court staff  
I saw mama Tolu's letter this afternoon ...

Olúkòyá: Our landlord over there is behaving in a funny way.  
You have to go and settle it at once  
I called your number this morning  
Is that line of yours not good again or your  
bank staff are not performing their duties well?

Olúkòyà: Don't be offended, I always lock  
my office door any time I am going out of  
office. Hope you are finishing your  
course this year?

Olúkòyà: There is no problem then

Olújoke: Let us make it on Monday  
Before you finish the day's job, I will be around

The use of code-mixing also continues on pages 32, 36-40, 49-51, 58-62-63, 65-78, and 80-81 of the play.

In *Oge Ìwòyí*, the use of code-mixing is also pronounced. An instance is when Şadé is reluctant to go for lunch and her other friends are making jest of her that she is naïve and uncivilized.

Bisi: *Máa da lóhùn jàrè, ọmọ ti ò rókán yẹn*  
*ẹgbé ajá lásán làsàn, 'shit' ...*

Bisi: Don't mind her, a naïve and barbaric  
Girl, 'shit' ... *(Oge Ìwòyí p.3)*

The code-mixing still continues when Ìyábò, Bísí and Sadé discuss their night appointment with their boyfriends.

Ìyábò: ... *Se o rò pé irú awa*  
*Lè ma 'deceive' ẹ ni?*

Bísí: *Tí o bá jé nípa ìyẹn ni,*

*Wàá wá rí wa nílé láti 'discuss'  
 ẹ 'fully', a ni 'appointment' pèlú  
 àwọn 'guys' kan báyii, 'so' awa  
 ní jayé lẹ nìyẹn, só o gbó?*

*Oge Ìwòyí p. 5-6*

Iyabo: ... Did you think we can be  
 deceiving you?

Bísí: If it is about that issue, you will see  
 us at home to discuss it fully,  
 We have an appointment with those guys,  
 So, we want to go on giration, did you hear that?

Ìyábò and Bísí code-mix when conversing with their boyfriends.

Akin: ... o deturn up mo, kí ló sẹlẹ?

Ìyábò: *Mo ní 'headache' lánàá ni, mo  
 tí sọ wí pé wa a máa retí mi  
 Jòwó má binú 'dear'*

Ìyábò: *'Excuse me' Sade mo fẹ́ ríẹ  
 Ohun tí mo máa ní sọ fún ẹ nìyẹn,  
 a ni ko 'join company' wa ...  
 Akin, Sẹgun, Sade ọrẹ wa nìyí,  
 ọmọ 'school' kan nàà ni wá.  
 Sade, Akin àti Sẹgun nìyí,  
 'accountant, Union bank' àti 'UBA'  
 Ni àwọn méjèjè*

Akin: *Jòwó ma binú, ọkan mi ló 'escape' ẹ  
 Gba eghèrún méjọ náirà yíí nàà,  
 Kí o sì máa 'manage' ẹ dí òpin ọsẹ*

*(Oge Ìwòyí p. 6-7)*

Akin: What happened? You did not turn up again

Ìyábò: I had headache yesterday, I thought as much that you would be expecting me. Don't be offended, dear.

iyábò: Excuse me, I want to see you Sade  
 That is what I have been telling you  
 That you should join our company,  
 Akin, Sẹgun, this is our friend Sade  
 We are in the same school,



Sade, here is Akin and Segun; they are  
 Accountant at Union Bank and 'UBA'  
 Don't be offended, it escaped me.  
 Take this eight thousand Naira and  
 manage it till week-end.

### 3.2 Code-mixing: Analysis

Code-mixing in the plays is analyzed under the following subheadings: (a) insertion, (b) code-mixing at intra-sentential level and (c) at the sentence level. Insertion is of paramount use in the selected plays. Alternation and congruent lexicalization are not prominent in the selected plays. Insertion has to do with the occurrence of single lexical items from one language into a structure from the other language. English lexical items are integrated into the Yorùbá sentences as nouns, noun phrases, verb/verb phrases and as adjectives for creative purposes. Alternation, on the other hand, entails a true switch from one language to the other and involves both grammar and lexis, while congruent lexicalization refers to a situation where the two participating languages share a grammatical structure which can be filled lexically with elements from either language. It could be deduced that code-mixing has to do with the linguistic typology of the languages involved.

(a) Code-mixing by Insertion has to do with the occurrence of single lexical items from one language into a structure from the other language. Below are examples of English words that stand as nouns being code-mixed in some sentences.

<i>Àbí àbúròrè rẹ lo fẹ yàn nígirlfriend?</i> (Noun)	(Aláradè p. 19)
<i>Mo ní headache lánàá ní</i> (Noun)	(Oge Ìwòyí. P. 7)
<i>Omo school kan náà ní wa</i> (Noun)	(Oge Ìwòyí. P. 7)
<i>Mo máa n ti office mi</i> (Noun)	(Aláradè p. 29)
<i>Kóo to síwo ní bank, mo ti máa dé bí</i> (Noun)	(Aláradè p. 29)

Various verbs 'teach', 'deceive', 'escape' and 'discuss' are used in the following examples:

<i>Tabí Amósun, to n teach (verb) ní ilé iwé gíga</i>	(Aláradè p.18)
<i>Şé o rò pé irú àwa lè ma deceive (verb) rẹ ni?</i>	(Oge Ìwòyí p.5)
<i>Jòwó ma bínú, o kan mi lo escape' (verb) è</i>	(Oge Ìwòyí p.6)
<i>Wàà wá rí wa nílé láti discuss' e fully' (Adv. Phrase)</i>	(Oge Ìwòyí p.6)

#### (b) Code-mixing at the intra sentential level

This involves the use of two codes in a discourse.

*Sebi 'visitor book wà lenu ọnà* (Aláradè p. 17)

*Kò sàà yé mi, bó se mò pe Economics ni mo se ni Yunifasiti-*

(Aláradè p.

19)

*Joks, o mà 'fine' si kèe* (Aláradè. p. 29)

*Sé line yí yen ò tún dáa mó ni ?* (Aláradè. 9. 30)

À ní kó wa join company" wá, ò n se bí elégbe – (Alárèdè : p.7)

O dè so wí pé ó máa wá lánàá

O ò de 'turn up' mo kí lo sèlè?

(Ogé Ìwòyí p. 6)

Jé kí a keep promise' yen pèlú àwon guy yen – (Ogé Ìwòyí p. 8)

Òré, Thompson 'sì wà ní "school", kò í de fún 'holiday' – (Ìpinnu Lán lèyin.p.3)

No ma'. Mo ní rará àti rará –

(Ìpinnu Lán lèyin p. 25)

### (c) Code mixing at the Sentence Level

In essence, the morpho-syntactic frame in this research is the Yorùbá language which supplies or dictates consistently the clauses in which the English language is embedded. According to Scotton (2009) "that code-switching can occur in which the source of the morpho-syntactic frame of the bilingual clause clearly and consistently is only one of the participating languages'. At the various levels of the insertion at the sentence level according to the Matrix language frame model, Yorùbá is the language supplying the morpho-syntactic frame of the clause. For example, in simple sentences that express a single thought, the embedded word which is English can only follow Noun Phrase (NP) in Yorùbá, and such word must be a 'Noun in English'.

- (a) Mo ni headache lánàá ni  
 ↓  
 (NP) (Noun) (Ogé Ìwòyí, p. 6)
- (b) O sé dear (Ogé Ìwòyí, p. 7)  
 ↓  
 (NP) (Noun)

It was also observed that when the Yorùbá negator is at the beginning of a sentence the English word that can follow it must be a verb or a verb phrase.

- (a) O ò lè believe pe Segun náà fún mi ní '5g'  
 (b) Ma bínu, okan mí lo 'escape' e (Ogé Ìwòyí p. 8)  
 (c) O ò de 'turn up' mo kí lo sèlè?

In example (a) o ò (full meaning is (o kò) but due to elision the 'k' is no more there, resulting to (o ò), then followed by the verb 'believe'

Example (b) in Maa bínu (ma) (don't) is the negator, followed by 'escape' the English embedded word, which is a verb.

Example (c) is just like (a) in (o ò) followed by (turn up) which is a verb.

In some instances, in interrogative sentences, if the interrogative marker like “sebi”, “àbí”, “báwo”, “kín ni”, is at the beginning of the sentences, the English embedded word must also be a noun.

- |                                       |                                    |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) <u>Báwo</u> ni <u>baby</u> ?      | ( <i>Oge Ìwòyí</i> ).              |
| (b) <u>Kín ni</u> mo se, bàbá God?    | ( <i>Ìpinnu Lánláyìn</i> . p. 47). |
| (c) <u>Níbo</u> lo n lo <u>baby</u> ? | ( <i>Oge Ìwòyí</i> . p. 15)        |

In the various examples above, the English embedded words which are nouns can only come in after the Yorùbá interrogative words like, abi, báwo, kìn ni, níbo. It is glaring that Yorùbá language provides the morpho-syntactic frame, and also dictates where the embedded words can come in during code-mixing.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

Code-mixing, as examined in the selected plays, is not an evidence of internal mental confusion, or the inability to separate two languages sufficiently or a linguistic sabotage directed against the indigenous language but a kind of style brought about by modernization, westernization and globalization. To some scholars, code mixing has proved not to be interference but to be a natural consequence of bilingualism and even the highest level of bilingualism.

The new generation Yorùbá playwrights are bilinguals that demonstrate their competence in both languages by mixing the codes while writing. The major reasons are ‘to carry their targeted audience along’, to make their written plays relevant in this new millennium both thematically and stylistically and to create a kind of style that is already in vogue among the educated elite in the society. The use of code-mixing is, therefore, for communicative and aesthetic effects. Nonetheless, this paper recommends that the new generation Yorùbá playwrights exercise caution in the code-mixing of Yorùbá with English to safeguard the purity of Yorùbá language.

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