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**ASPECTS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC STRATEGIES OF IGBO-ENGLISH
BILINGUALS IN BWARI AREA COUNCIL, ABUJA, FCT**

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Abstract

This paper examines aspects of sociolinguistic strategies employed by Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory. Using Dell Hymes' (1974) Communicative Competence and the SPEAKING model as the theoretical framework, the study investigates how bilingual speakers navigate language use across different social domains. The study adopted a qualitative research design, drawing on interviews, audio recordings, observations, and relevant literature. The study identifies nine sociolinguistic strategies frequently employed by bilinguals, shaped by factors such as setting, interlocutor, and communicative intent. The findings also reveal that Igbo-English bilinguals strategically alternate linguistic codes to express identity, maintain group solidarity, negotiate social roles, enhance clarity, and achieve communicative efficiency. The study further shows that sociocultural norms, interlocutor relationships, and situational expectations significantly influence these strategies. Overall, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of bilingual communicative behavior in some north-central Nigerian urban spaces and offers insights relevant to the preservation of indigenous languages.

Keywords: Igbo-English bilinguals, sociolinguistic strategies, code-switching, language maintenance, Bwari Area Council

Introduction

Language is fundamental to human communication, acting as the primary medium for expressing thoughts, emotions, and information. As a complex and dynamic system, language is composed of symbols, including words and rules that enable effective interaction and understanding among people. The connection between words and their meanings is often arbitrary, which shows that there is no inherent link between the sound of a word and its meaning. This allows language to create an infinite number of messages from a limited set of elements, sounds, words, and rules. Sociolinguistic

strategies refer to the ways individuals consciously or unconsciously adjust their language use to navigate and achieve specific goals within social contexts. Essentially, they are the "unwritten rules" we follow when communicating, influenced by who we are talking to, where we are, and what we want to accomplish. Looking at language as a social semiotic system, Halliday (1978) explores the relationship between language and society, emphasizing how language functions as a system of social meaning. Language serves as a medium through which we express our views, emotions, and attitudes, but what we achieve with language - the actions we perform - is even more crucial. This is affirmed by Egbe (2019, p.2), who argues that language extends beyond communication to embody the ways in which we act within society. What we can accomplish with language depends significantly on the level of competence and strategies we possess. Foundational studies by Hymes (1974) and Canale & Swain (1980) situate the strategies within communicative competence, highlighting the importance of knowing how to use language appropriately across contexts. In multilingual settings like Nigeria, where about 527 languages coexist (NLP, 2022), sociolinguistic competence is essential. Despite widespread Igbo-English bilingualism in Bwari, limited research has examined how speakers employ strategies such as code-switching, contextual adaptation, and politeness norms. This study investigates aspects of sociolinguistic strategies of Igbo-English bilinguals and the factors influencing their language choice. Bwari, as a heterogeneous society, presents an ideal context for this study. The Igbo language is a member of the Niger-Congo language family, specifically belonging to the Igboid branch of the Volta-Niger subgroup (Manfredi, 1989). This classification situates Igbo among one of the world's largest and most diverse language families, extending across much of sub-Saharan Africa. The English language, on the other hand, belongs to the Indo-European language family within the Germanic branch, and specifically the West Germanic subgroup, alongside German and Dutch. From Old English through Middle English to Modern English, the language developed through centuries of contact, conquest, and cultural change. Within the global sociolinguistic framework, English now exists in diverse localized forms, collectively known as World Englishes (Kachru, 1985). The interface between Igbo and English and how Igbo-English bilinguals navigate communication within certain domains and what strategies they employ in Bwari in North Central Nigeria form the thrust of this paper.

Literature Review

Definitions of bilingualism range from Bloomfield's (1933) maximalist view of native-like proficiency in both languages to Haugen's (1953) more inclusive perspective that recognizes functional but unequal competences. Broadly, bilingualism refers to the ability to use two languages. Contemporary scholarship highlights bilingualism as context-dependent, shaped by domains of use, patterns of acquisition (additive vs. subtractive), and social functions (Grosjean, 2010; Baker, 2011). Igbo-English bilingualism, particularly in heterogeneous settings like Bwari, emerges from sociocultural, educational, and urban dynamics (Nwaozuzu, 2008; Zhang et al., 2023).

Nwagbara (2002) examines the unique characteristics of Igbo-English as spoken in Enugu, Nigeria, focusing on how Igbo speakers use and adapt English within their cultural context. The study explores the linguistic features that distinguish Igbo English, such as specific phonological, lexical, and syntactic patterns that have developed as a result of Igbo language influence. The work is centered on Enugu metropolis, focusing on Igbo-English usage specific to that urban context, while the current study shifts focus to Bwari Area Council of Abuja, exploring how Igbo-English bilingualism manifests in a different sociolinguistic environment. Fariha et al. (2023) demonstrate a strong correlation between sociolinguistic competence and speaking proficiency, emphasizing the need to integrate sociolinguistic components into language instruction to improve communicative performance. In relation to Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council, this perspective supports examining the sociolinguistic strategies they employ and the contextual factors shaping their language choices across church, socio-cultural gatherings, home, and school domains. Nnabuogwu et al. (2024) examined the impact of using the local language (Igbo) versus English as the medium of instruction on primary pupils' science processing skills in Ihitte-Uboma, Imo State, using a sample of 60 learners.

Their findings revealed that pupils taught through Igbo achieved higher post-test scores than those instructed in English. Although situated in different contexts, the study aligns with the present research through its focus on Igbo-English bilingualism and the influence of language choice within educational settings. Nwikpo et al. (2024) present investigation aimed to ascertain the psychological, social, and cultural determinants propelling code-switching behaviors among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria, specifically by students enrolled at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, in Anambra State, and Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, in Imo State, Nigeria. While the study aimed to ascertain the psychological, social, and cultural determinants propelling code-switching behaviors among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates, the current study highlights the aspects of sociolinguistic strategies of Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council, Abuja. Myers-Scotton (1993) delves into the intricate world of code-switching where speakers seamlessly blend multiple languages within a single conversation. Drawing on extensive data from African multilingual contexts, primarily Kenya, Myers-Cotton challenges the notion of code-switching as a mere linguistic deficiency. Nwokedinwoken et al. (2024) analyze the segmental phonology of English and Igbo, identifying both shared features that support accurate pronunciation and differences that lead to phonological transfer from Igbo to English among Igbo speakers. Like the present study, their work applies a sociolinguistic lens to understanding how bilinguals negotiate Igbo-English usage across contexts and how cultural and linguistic factors shape their communicative behavior.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore aspects of sociolinguistic strategies used by Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council, Abuja. It employed a case study approach to gather in-depth data on how bilingual individuals navigate between Igbo and English across different social contexts. The population of this research is made up of Igbo-English bilinguals living in Bwari Area Council with specific reference to churches, schools, cultural gatherings and homes. The demographic variables employed include: age, gender, education, and location in Bwari Area Council because the research required participants with demonstrable bilingual competence and observable sociolinguistic behavior. Based on the 2006 National Census, the FCT had a population of 1,406,239, of which Bwari accounted for 176,514. No updated official figures exist, and so the researcher projects Bwari's current population at approximately 633,011, assuming an estimated annual growth rate of 7.4%. Igbo residents are further estimated at 45,128, with about 85% (38,359) presumed to be Igbo-English bilinguals. From this estimated population, thirty participants were purposively selected to allow for manageable, focused, and in-depth data analysis.

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Dell Hymes' (1974) Communicative Competence theory which extends language analysis beyond grammatical proficiency to encompass the ability to use language appropriately in diverse social contexts. Hymes proposed the SPEAKING model as an ethnographic tool for examining how communicative events are shaped by sociocultural factors. This theory is particularly relevant to the present study as it provides a systematic framework for analyzing how Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council adjust their linguistic choices, code-switching patterns, and interactional strategies in response to varying situational and sociolinguistic contexts.

Data Presentation

Table 1 below delineates the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Category	Number	Percentage
Age	18 – 30	10	33.30%
	31 – 45	10	33.30%
	46 years and above	10	33.30%
Gender	Male	15	50%

	Female	15	50%
Level of Education	Secondary	15	50%
	Tertiary	15	50%
Locations in Bwari Area Council	Bwari Town	18	60%
	Dutse Alhaji	3	10%
	Kubwa	3	10%
	Sabon Gari	3	10%
	Usman Dam	3	10%

Source: Researchers, 2026

Table 1 shows that the distribution of respondents by age was remarkably uniform. Each of the three age categories, that is, 18-30 years, 31-45 years, and 46 years and above - accounted for an equal number of respondents. This indicates a balanced representation across different age groups. In terms of gender, the sample showed an equal number of male and female respondents, while the respondents' level of education was perfectly balanced between both secondary and tertiary education categories. The geographic distribution of respondents within the Bwari Area Council was highly skewed towards one location - Bwari Town. The remaining four locations - Dutse Alhaji, Kubwa, Sabon Gari, and Usman Dam - each contributed a much smaller and equal number of respondents, indicating that the study participants were predominantly drawn from Bwari Town where the researchers reside.

Table 2: Domains and factors influencing language choice among Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council, Abuja, FCT

Domain	Factors
Religious	Orthodox vs. Pentecostal divide
	Age brackets
	Homogeneity vs. Heterogeneity
School	Parental attitudes and aspirations
	National language policy on education vs. Practical implementation
	Linguistic heterogeneity of classrooms and schools
	Perceived prestige and utilitarian value of English
Socio-cultural	Demographics and linguistic proficiency of attendees
	Topic and cultural specificity of discussion
	Role and status of the speaker
	Level of formality and purpose of the gathering
Home	Presence of non-Igbo speakers in the house-hold
	Parental attitudes (explicit & implicit)
	Influence of external domains (school, media, peer group)
	Generational differences in language proficiency and exposure

Source: Researchers, 2026

The data in Table 2 consistently illustrate that the maintenance and use of Igbo among bilinguals in Bwari are under significant pressure from the dominant, utilitarian, and prestigious status of English. While Igbo is retained for markers of cultural identity, tradition, and affective communication, particularly among older generations and in homogeneous/traditional settings, English serves as the primary language for institutional access (school, Pentecostal church, professional advancement, and interaction in linguistically heterogeneous public and private spaces). This pattern suggests an ongoing shift toward English dominance in functional domains, particularly among younger, highly educated bilinguals. In the religious domain, for instance, language practices are fundamentally shaped by the style of worship and the congregation's composition. Pentecostal churches exhibit a higher frequency of English use and code-switching due to their spontaneous worship style and

increasingly heterogeneous congregations, prioritizing accessibility. Conversely, Orthodox and liturgical churches (e.g., Catholic, Anglican) in some parishes tend toward formal, scripted language choices with a greater reliance on indigenous-language liturgies. Language preference is strongly correlated with age. The older bilinguals (46+) are more Igbo-dominant, linking the language to ethnic identity, while middle-aged bilinguals (31–45) exhibit a balanced, strategic use of both languages and the younger bilinguals (18–30), often educated in English-medium schools, are more English-dominant, using Igbo primarily for affective markers. The school domain demonstrates a conflict between language policy and practical implementation, driven by the high prestige and utilitarian value of English. Despite a national language policy that promotes indigenous languages like Igbo at early levels, English dominates classroom interaction in practice. This implementation gap is attributed to parental preference for English for social advancement, perceived academic prestige, and teacher competence. Parental attitudes directly influence children's language behavior, as parents promote the language aligned with their goals (English for achievement, Igbo for culture). Furthermore, the linguistic heterogeneity of classrooms necessitates the dominant use of English as the common medium of communication. With regard to socio-cultural gatherings, language choice is a function of the social context, topic of discussion, and generational dynamics. Language choice is highly sensitive to the demographics and linguistic proficiency of attendees, with speakers adjusting their use based on age and education. Igbo is favored for culturally rooted topics at traditional gatherings, while English is used for modern or formal subjects. The role and status of the speaker also influence the shift, because younger, highly educated individuals use more English, while older educated speakers elicit Igbo. Within the home domain, explicit and implicit parental attitudes continue to shape language use, promoting English for social mobility while maintaining Igbo for cultural connection. Generational differences consistently show older generations predominantly using Igbo and younger generations favoring English due to greater exposure via external domains like school, media, and peer groups.

The table below presents the nine sociolinguistic strategies, their descriptions, illustrative examples within specific domains (Home, Socio-cultural, Religious, and Education), and their frequency of use. The strategies are arranged in ascending order, beginning with the most frequently used to the least frequently used strategy.

Table 3: Sociolinguistic strategies employed by Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council.

Types of strategy	Description	Domains of Use with Illustrations				Frequency of Use/ Percentage
		Home Setting	Socio-cultural Setting	Religious setting (Church)	Education (School setting)	
Borrowing/lexical insertion	Incorporation of English words or phrases into Igbo sentences or vice versa, with their morphological and phonological adaptation	<i>Anyị ga-azuta otu nnukwu echị.</i>	During the <i>ịkpọ oku</i> ceremony, the praise singer used the ofo to invoke the ancestors, a very sacred symbol	During the service, the choir sang a beautiful song, and then the pastor began his <i>nkuzi</i> on forgiveness.	Please wait for me after school, <i>achọrọ m iso gi laa</i>	18 (60%)
Appropriateness	Using acceptable context-specific linguistic codes comprising	Welcome, welcome! Please make yourself at home. <i>Biko, were ihe ọnụnụ</i>	<i>Nwa m</i> , go and find your husband and give him the wine. <i>Ihe</i>	<i>Chineke onye ebere</i> , please guide us through this meeting <i>anyị ji aha</i>	<i>Biko chere m</i> , I want to join you	18 (60%)

	Igbo and English		<i>ukwu na-eme taa</i>	<i>Jizos rịọ, amen</i>		
Politeness conventions	Understanding and using culturally appropriate ways to show respect, courtesy, and consideration for others.	Mama, <i>kee ka i mere?</i> I hope you are doing well today, ma?	<i>Nna anyị, biko</i> , can you please shed some light on this issue?	Good afternoon, Father. <i>Chineke gozie gi maka ozi oma nke</i> today.	Excuse me, ma'am. <i>Biko, a ga m eji obere oge lota</i>	17 (56.6%)
Pragmatic functions	Mitigating or aggravating messages, softening or intensifying the impact of an utterance either in Igbo or English	<i>Ọ dị mma</i> , but you have to be very careful.	<i>Nwa m, jide onwe gi</i> . It's not appropriate to interrupt when your elders are speaking	<i>Chineke m dị mma</i> , you know, He truly works in mysterious ways."	<i>Biko nwannem</i> , can you lend me your pen for a minute?	16 (53.3%)
Code-switching due to lexical gap	Switching languages when an Igbo or English word is not known or remembered	<i>Achọrọ m iga n'ụlọ ahịa izuta ụfọdu</i> fresh produce	The next item is the <i>iwa akwa</i> ceremony	Lord, touch this woman's body and make her whole; let the anointing <i>bata nimeya</i>	A student reporting to his teacher that they have downloaded the file: Anyị ebudatala file ahụ	15 (50%)
Inter-sentential code-switching	This involves switching between either Igbo or English at sentence boundaries	I really enjoyed the new movie we watched last night. <i>Gịnị ka ị chere banyere ya?</i>	The traditional dancers performed with such energy and grace; their movements told ancient stories. <i>Nke a bụ omenala anyị, anyị ga-echebe ya</i>	The children's choir sang so beautifully today; their voices filled the church with joy. <i>Onye mere ihe a, Chineke gozie ha</i>	Please remember to submit your essays by Friday. <i>Ọ bụrụ na ị nwere nsogbu,, bịakwute m</i>	13 (43.3%)
Code-switching due to audience	Language choice involves language choice by the interlocutor	<i>De biko, iga enyerem aka mee</i> this assignment?	We are about to witness the beautiful <i>Igba Nkwu</i> ceremony, where the bride officially identifies her groom	The grace of God is sufficient for us, <i>Ụmụ Nnem, na Umu Nnam sorom kele Chineke</i> .	John is showing significant improvement in his math scores. <i>Nna na Nne John, nwa unu na-agba mbọ nke ukwuu n'ụlọ akwụkwọ</i> now	12 (40%)

Intra-sentential code-switching	Seamlessly switching between Igbo and English with words or phrases from either Igbo or English while maintaining the grammatical structure of both languages.	I was going to the market, but then I remembered <i>na ego m agwula</i>	<i>Umu nnem</i> , we must preserve our rich culture and pass it down to the next generation	Let us lift our hands and <i>kene Chineke anyi</i> for His mercies this morning	Class, for tomorrow's assignment, <i>Onye o bula dee</i> about their personal experiences with climate change	11(36.6%)
Solidarity and group identification	A switch to Igbo to establish or reinforce solidarity with fellow Igbo speakers, indicating shared identity and affiliation	<i>Oge ruru, anyi ga-eme ya</i> , you know?	<i>Nna anyi, ndewo!</i> We are so glad you could make it to this important gathering for the progress of our town	We are God's children, <i>umu Chineke</i> , so let us always show love to one another, because that's what makes us family	That exam was so hard, my dear, <i>eziokwu! Naanị anyi maara ihe anyi huru.</i>	11(36.6%)

Source: Researchers, 2026

Borrowing/lexical insertion involves incorporating English words or phrases into Igbo sentences (or vice-versa) with morphological and phonological adaptations. It is prominently used across all domains. Borrowing/lexical insertion and appropriateness are the most frequently employed strategies, accounting for 60% of the observed strategies. This suggests that integrating words or phrases from one language into the other, and using linguistically suitable expressions for specific contexts, are very common practices among Igbo-English bilinguals. For instance, a parent informing family about buying a "television" or a teacher instructing students to "research" for an assignment. Appropriateness refers to the use of acceptable, context-specific linguistic codes, combining Igbo and English. Examples include welcoming a guest with "Welcome, welcome! Please make yourself at home. *Biko, were ihe onunụ*" or a student asking a classmate, "*Biko chere m*, I want to join you. Politeness conventions involve understanding and using culturally appropriate ways to show respect, courtesy, and consideration. Politeness conventions have 17 instances (56.6%), indicating a strong emphasis on cultural politeness in their communication. Pragmatic functions account for 53.3%, showing that bilinguals frequently use language to manage the impact of their messages. Illustrations include a lady greeting an elder with "Mama, *kee ka i mere?* "I hope you are doing well today, ma'am?" Pragmatic functions involve mitigating or aggravating messages, or softening/intensifying the impact of an utterance in either Igbo or English. An example is a father advising his son: "*Q di mma*, but you have to be very careful." or a student asking a classmate: "*Biko nwannem*, can you lend me your pen for a minute?" Code-switching due to lexical gap occurs when a speaker switches languages because they don't know or cannot remember a specific word in either Igbo or English. For example, "*Achoro m iga n'ulo ahia izuta ufodu* fresh produce" or a pastor praying "let the anointing *bata nimeya*. Three forms were identified: inter-sentential code-switching, code-switching due to the audience, intra-sentential code-switching. Inter-sentential code-switching strategy involves switching between Igbo and English at sentence boundaries. Examples include "I really enjoyed the new movie we watched last night. *Gini ka i chere banyere ya?*" or "Please remember to submit your essays by Friday. *Q buru na i nwere nsogbu, biakwute m.* Code-switching due to audience occurs when language choice is influenced by the interlocutor. Examples include a girl asking her brother, "De

biko, iga enyerem aka mee this assignment?" or a teacher addressing parents, "Nna na Nne John, nwa unu na-agba mbọ nke ukwu n'ụlọ akwụkwọ now." Intra-sentential code-switching involves seamlessly switching between Igbo and English words or phrases within a single sentence while maintaining grammatical structure. For instance, "I was going to the market, but then I remembered na ego m agwula" or "Let us lift our hands and kene Chineke anyị for His mercies this morning. Solidarity and group identification strategy involves switching to Igbo to establish or reinforce solidarity with fellow Igbo speakers, indicating shared identity and affiliation. Examples include a man telling friends, "Oge ruru, anyị ga-eme ya, you know?" or students lamenting, "That exam was so hard, my dear, eziokwu! Naanị anyị maara ihe anyị hụrụ." Code-switching due to lexical gap occurred 15 times (50%), pointing to instances where speakers switch languages to compensate for forgotten or unknown words. Inter-sentential code-switching had a 43.3% occurrence, suggesting that switching languages between sentences is a moderately common practice. Code-switching due to audience, Intra-sentential code-switching, and Solidarity and group identification are the least frequent strategies, accounting for 40%, 36.6%, and 36.6%, respectively. This indicates that while present, these specific forms of code-switching and identity-driven language choices are less prevalent compared to others in the current study.

Discussion

This study examines aspects of sociolinguistic strategies and the factors influencing their use among Igbo–English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council. The findings reveal a dynamic interplay between language choice and social context. On the demographic distribution of respondents, the findings provide insights into the composition of the sample across various demographic variables, such as age, gender, level of education, and location within the Bwari Area Council. The age distribution of the respondents shows an even spread across the three defined categories, which suggests that the study captured perspectives from a balanced representation of different adult age cohorts, ensuring that findings are not skewed towards a particular age group or gender or educational level. The findings related to the factors influencing language choice among Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council reveal that language choice is a complex decision-making process, shaped by a myriad of contextual, social, and attitudinal factors across various domains. This discussion interprets these findings in relation to the theoretical insights provided by Myers-Scotton (1993), Ervin-Tripp (1977), Davies (2003), Ehrlich (1990), and Fariha et al. (2023). The findings clearly demonstrate that language choice is not arbitrary but is influenced by both macro-societal forces and micro-individual considerations. Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model provides a robust framework for understanding the strategic nature of language choice. The observed factors in the Bwari context reflect a negotiation of "unmarked" (expected) and "marked" (uncommon/strategic) language choices. For instance, in the Religious Domain, the distinction between "Orthodox vs. Pentecostal" shows that Pentecostal churches exhibit a higher frequency of English use and code-switching due to their spontaneous worship style and increasingly heterogeneous congregations, prioritizing accessibility. Conversely, Orthodox and liturgical churches (e.g., Catholic, Anglican) in some parishes tend toward formal, scripted language choices with a greater reliance on indigenous-language liturgies. When a speaker deviates from this unmarked choice, it becomes a 'marked' choice signaling specific social or relational meanings. Examples include the assertion of formality, solidarity, or perhaps a challenge to norms. In the Socio-cultural Domain, the "role and status of the speaker" and "level of formality and purpose of the gathering" directly align with Myers-Scotton's emphasis on how language choices express social identities and negotiate power dynamics. Individuals in positions of authority use English as an unmarked choice to signal their status or formality, while switching to Igbo could be a marked choice to build rapport or solidarity with a specific audience. The findings therefore empirically supports Myers-Scotton's theory that speakers consciously or unconsciously weigh the social implications of their language choices. While Ervin-Tripp's work primarily focused on children's acquisition of sociolinguistic competence, the adult data implicitly reflect the culmination of such learning. The factors influencing language choice such as "age profile" (in Church Domain) and "generational differences in language proficiency and exposure" (in Home Domain) -

demonstrate how individuals' sociolinguistic rules evolve. Older generations exhibit different language preferences or proficiencies compared to younger ones, having been exposed to varying linguistic inputs and social norms throughout their lives. The constant negotiation of these factors across domains signifies a high level of developed sociolinguistic competence, allowing bilinguals to adapt their language based on contextual cues that they have learned to interpret over time. The study highlights the significant influence of structured environments like schools and the pervasive impact of external factors on language choice. Davies (2003) emphasis on the crucial role of linguistic input in shaping sociolinguistic development is strongly supported by the "school domain" findings. "Parental attitudes and aspirations" indicate that the language environment created by parents, driven by their aspirations (often for English proficiency), heavily influences the language input children receive and their subsequent choices. The "National Language Policy on Education vs. Practical Implementation" further underscores the formal linguistic input received in schools. While policies encourage mother tongue education, the practical implementation favors English, shaping children's perception of its utilitarian value. The "perceived prestige and utilitarian value of English" within the school context directly connects to Ehrlich's insights on how language constructs identities and shapes organizational culture. As English seems to hold higher prestige, it has become the language associated with academic success and future opportunities, compelling students and educators to prioritize its use. This also applies to the religious and socio-cultural domains where the choice of English by leaders or organizers reflects a particular organizational identity or perceived sophistication. In the Home Domain, the "influence of external domains (school, media, peer group)" directly reflects Davies' argument that learners are shaped by diverse linguistic exposure. Children and even adults are constantly bombarded with language from school, various media, and peer interactions and all of these contribute to their linguistic repertoire and influence their language choices within the home and other settings. This demonstrates that language choice is not solely an internal decision but a product of the broader linguistic ecosystem in which bilinguals operate.

The factors influencing language choice among Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council are diverse and interconnected. From the subtle negotiation of unmarked and marked choices, through the accumulated sociolinguistic competence developed over time, to the profound impact of linguistic input and exposure and power dynamics within institutions, all collectively shape their linguistic repertoires and interactional strategies. Language choice is a highly strategic and context-sensitive process. These findings also align with contemporary understandings that global and demographic shifts continue to reshape local language practices, deciding on which language to use being a constant negotiation of identity, utility, and social context. The findings reveal a dynamic and context-dependent linguistic repertoire where Igbo-English bilinguals strategically navigate two languages to achieve various communicative goals across different social domains. The identified strategies, ranging from borrowing/lexical insertion to complex forms of code-switching, politeness conventions, and pragmatic functions, underscore the multifaceted nature of their communicative competence. The "Domains of Use" directly reflect the influence of 'Setting' on language choice. Strategies like "Borrowing/lexical insertion" and "Appropriateness" were observed across all settings (Home, Socio-cultural, Religious, and Education), indicating their pervasive nature. For instance, the use of "*nkuzi*" (teaching) in the religious setting and "research" or "assignment" in the educational setting demonstrates how lexical choices are adapted to a specific domain. Similarly, code-switching strategies are intricately tied to an environment; intra-sentential switching is observed in academic settings ("Class, for tomorrow's assignment, *Onye o bula dee* about their personal experiences with climate change"). This shows that while some strategies are universal, their precise manifestation is shaped by the situational context. The role of 'Participants' is vividly captured by strategies such as "Code-switching due to audience" and "Politeness conventions." The choice to switch language is based on interlocutors ("*De biko, iga enyerem aka mee* this assignment?"), which directly illustrates the speakers' awareness of their relationship with the hearers and their communicative needs. This confirms Myers-Scotton's (1993) insights into how language choices signify specific social roles and relationships, and Gal's (1991) perspective on language as a tool for negotiation. 'Act Sequence' is

well-represented by the various forms of code-switching identified in the findings, aligning perfectly with Poplack's (1980) typology.

The findings confirm Hymes' (1974) assertion that communicative competence extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include the appropriate use of language in social contexts. The sociolinguistic strategies employed by Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari are not random but are systematically deployed in response to the various components of the SPEAKING framework. The researcher hinged the discussion on Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model because of its close relationship with the current study. SPEAKING model by Hymes simply refers to the following words: Setting, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms and Genre. The current study makes use of Settings such as schools, churches, social gatherings, and homes. The respondents are the Participants; Ends stand for the purpose and goals of the study, which are clearly enumerated in Table 3. The acts sequence is seen in the researcher's interaction with the respondents. Key represents tone and manner, which are well discussed in Table 3, as it deals with sociolinguistic strategies. The consistent and varied use of strategies across domains suggests that Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari have developed a robust sociolinguistic competence, acquired through diverse linguistic input and social interactions, as proposed by Davies (2003).

Conclusion

The study identified some factors that influence language choice among Igbo-English bilinguals in Bwari Area Council. This analysis helps to deepen the understanding of their ability to communicate effectively in both languages and also contributes to the broader field of sociolinguistics by shedding light on the complexities of bilingualism within a specific Nigerian urban context. The findings underscore the adaptive and strategic nature of language use among Igbo-English bilinguals, offering a subtle perspective on linguistic practices in multilingual environments. In sum, nine sociolinguistic strategies employed by Igbo-English bilinguals residing in the Bwari Area Council of Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) were analyzed, which provided valuable insights into how they navigate language use in various social contexts. This revealed the distinct patterns of language use across four different settings, illuminating the dynamic interplay between Igbo and English in their daily interactions.

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