Psycho-Sociocultural Determinants of Code-Switching among Igbo- Speaking English Language Undergraduates in Southeastern Region, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

The present investigation aimed to ascertain the psychological, social, and cultural determinants propelling code-switching behaviours among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria, as perceived by students enrolled at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, in Anambra State, and Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, in Imo State, Nigeria. Employing a quantitative descriptive survey research design, the study comprised the

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entire population of regular Igbo-speaking English language students from the aforementioned region, with a sample size of 735 participants selected through a multi-stage sampling technique. Guided by four research questions and two null hypotheses, data were collected utilizing a 34-item researcher-structured questionnaire entitled the Psycho-sociocultural Determinants and Code-switching Questionnaire (PDCQ). The validity of the instrument was established through extensive use of relevant literature and also peer-reviewed by experts in English, Research Methods, and Psychology all from the Faculty of Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.76$). Analysis of the research questions relied on measures of central tendency and dispersion, while Simple Linear Regression was employed to test the hypotheses. Findings unveiled a prevalent pattern of code-switching among undergraduates, attributed to a complex interplay of psychological, social, and cultural incentives, including the desire to foster solidarity and belongingness within diverse social circles, the conveyance of bilingual prestige, and the authentic expression of personal identity and ideas. In light of these findings, recommendations were proffered for governmental, policy-making, and university administrative entities to collaborate in formulating inclusive language policies that acknowledge and respect the cultural diversity of students, thereby fostering an educational milieu that is both inclusive and culturally attuned.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language, heralded as the epitome of intelligent interaction, is uniquely attributed to the most advanced entities in the universe, humans. While various living organisms utilize vocalizations to express themselves, such as dogs barking, cats purring, birds chirping and warbling, cows mooing, elephants growling and trumpeting, goats bleating, hyenas howling and whooping, and tigers snarling and roaring, these actions are not categorized as language communication, as the emitted noises and interactions do not constitute genuine language communication [1]. Thus, no other living creature engages in verbal communication that can be further refined into a written form, distinguishing human beings with language as the pivotal component that sets them apart from other existing creatures.

Language has been conceptualized in various ways by different scholars. For instance, Alshami [2] views language as a medium of communication through which individuals transmit ideas, emotions, feelings, and thoughts to others. According to Blosch and Trageer [3], it is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols that foster cooperation among social groups. Similarly, Weireich [4] perceives language as the articulation of ideas through speech, where sounds form words and words combine into sentences, reflecting the organization of coherent thoughts. In essence, language is a multifaceted construct encompassing not only conventional spoken and written symbols but also reflecting the intricate interplay between psychological, social, and cultural elements [5]. It serves as a medium through which individuals convey their thoughts and engage in cultural expression, shaping their psycho-sociocultural existence.

In all human endeavours, proficiency in the art of oratory represents the threshold between conceptualizing a goal and realizing it, regardless of opposition. Through adept employment of language, individuals possess the capacity to sway opponents and catalyze the attainment of their objectives. The power and impact of language on political actions are emphasized by Wiredu [6]. Politicians heavily rely on spoken words, text, videos, and audio to effectively communicate, inform, mobilize, and influence citizens and followers regarding the benefits of their leadership [7]. Thus, in analyzing Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's presidential inaugural speech as the first female president in Africa, Katamba [8] observed how language was utilized to persuade and convince the people of Liberia about political, social, and economic policies, thereby consolidating her power. Despite instances of poor leadership and dictatorial governance arising from the desire to overstay in power [9], African presidents succeed in persuading their citizens to support them through the use of language in their speeches. This underscores the pivotal role of language in achieving dictatorial governance and constitutional amendments that enable presidents to rule for life.

Language is intricately designed to meet the communication needs of communities, with each language possessing distinctive characteristics that reflect the culture, psycho-social dynamics, economic conditions, and political attributes of its community [10]. The assertion that each language encapsulates unique features reflecting the culture, social dynamics, economic conditions, psychological nuances, and political attributes of its community underscores the significance of proficiency and fluency in that specific language among its members. However, Alshihry [11], in a study, revealed that proficiency and fluency in one's language are integral components of cultural identity and significantly contribute to effective communication and the preservation of cultural heritage. Alshihry's study also found a significant correlation between people's sense of belonging and their level of fluency in their ancestral language. This was evident among the pre-colonial Igbo community of the Southeastern region of Nigeria, with their language, also known as the Igbo language.

The Igbo language, as a mother tongue, is acquired rather than learned in early childhood through interactions with parents, family members, peers in the neighborhood, and in worship centers, among other contexts. It serves as a foundational element that encodes early concepts, significantly influencing the identity and pride of the Igbo community members. Proficiency and fluency in the Igbo language confidently express the thoughts, emotions, and ideas of individuals, particularly children who use their mother tongue for communication in various contexts such as at home, in the neighborhood, with peers, during religious activities, and in daily transactions without interference until the advent of colonialism.

During the colonial era, the imposition of the colonizers' language on the indigenous population led to the suppression of native languages, resulting in a linguistic scenario described as language in contact [12]. It was during this period that the British introduced English as the language of instruction in schools and the official language of administration. This policy aimed to facilitate communication and exert control over the Nigerian population, thereby making English the medium of instruction in schools.

The southeastern region of Nigeria was not exempt from this influence. Inuwa, Christopher, and Bakrin [13] observed that the colonial legacy of English as the primary medium of instruction and its dominance in education and administration within Nigerian schools fostered a linguistic hierarchy where English is imbued with power and prestige, while indigenous languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and others are often marginalized and perceived as less prestigious. Nnadozie [1] corroborates this, indicating that the elevated social status associated with English proficiency incentivizes individuals to attain fluency and proficiency in English, alongside their first language, Igbo (L1). They maintain their L1 for familial, social, and cultural interactions to preserve their heritage, while mastering L2 (English) for broader communication, academic endeavours, and professional pursuits. This phenomenon is notably evident in the context of undergraduate English language classes, where the reinforcement of English language proficiency is customary. However, the efficacy of English as the language of instruction in these courses is crucial for equipping students with the necessary communication skills for professional settings. In this bilingual milieu, instances arise where the two languages, the mother tongue (L1) and the language of instruction (L2), intersect in speech communication, highlighting the intricate interplay between linguistic influences in diverse contexts. Consequently, code-switching between the contact languages (Igbo and English) becomes inevitable.

Code-switching, also known as language alternation [14], is a widespread phenomenon observed in bilingual societies, where individuals utilize two or more languages for communication. It is regarded as one of the most extensively studied language contact phenomena [15], given its frequent occurrence in various formal and informal contexts within a single speech or utterance [13]. This linguistic practice is commonly employed in educational environments that emphasize instruction in English as a foreign language (EFL). Examples of countries with such educational settings include Nigeria [13,1,16], Pakistan [14], Turkey [17], Indonesia [18], and Ethiopia [19].

Within the scholarly discourse presented by Gumperz in Zhou, Wei [20], the juxtaposition of segments of speech from disparate grammatical systems or subsystems within the same communicative exchange is a common feature in educational environments where English is the

language of instruction. This linguistic phenomenon is particularly pervasive in multilingual and multicultural nations, as exemplified in the case of Nigeria. Bilingual individuals' ability to proficiently switch between languages serves as a linguistic resource, facilitating more nuanced and effective expression of meaning. The prevalence of code-switching is especially notable in metropolitan areas worldwide, characterized by linguistic diversity. In Nigeria, for instance, Usman [21] and Inuwa, Christopher, and Bakrin [13] assert that in a nation actively promoting multiculturalism, linguistic expressions intertwining English and various Nigerian languages are commonplace.

Code-switching is a dynamic and multifaceted linguistic phenomenon that enriches our understanding of language use in diverse social and cultural contexts. This study contributes not only to linguistics but also to fields such as communication, education, and sociolinguistics. Embracing the complexity and functions of code-switching enhances our appreciation for the fluid nature of language and the richness it brings to human interaction.

Furthermore, scholars have diligently focused on delineating the advantages and drawbacks of code-switching. Ezeh, Umeh, and Anyanwu [16] underscored that the incorporation of code-switching and mixing yields significant benefits for language acquisition, extending beyond mere language content acquisition to nurturing the appropriate emotional mindset (affective mode) and establishing a linguistically supportive environment (psycho-motive domain). They elaborated that the cultivation of affective skills fosters readiness for learning, while the psycho-motive dimension fosters mental equilibrium, enabling learners to engage in critical and positive thinking. Accordingly, Ezeh et al. posit that code-switching is an indispensable tool for language learning in second language scenarios, particularly in the instruction of language tasks such as vocabulary development, reading comprehension, word formation, meaning, and affective development.

In another study conducted in Turkey, Ataş et al. [17] observed that both teachers and students employ code-switching in classrooms for educational and communicative purposes, particularly to enhance communication, deliver content effectively, and address classroom management issues. Similarly, Temesgen and

Hailu [19] investigated the functions of code-switching practices among English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in the Ethiopian context, revealing that teachers code-switch for academic, managerial, and social functions. Additionally, research indicates that students engage in code-switching behavior to express their social identity, improve communication, convey meaning effectively, and influence perceptions while also enhancing prestige.

Conversely, Bukhari et al. [22], in a study comparing code-switching and immersive approaches as tools to enhance the spoken language skills of ESL undergraduate learners, highlighted the negative impact of code-switching on English students' active participation and effective language learning. Their findings demonstrated that the immersive approach led to greater fluency, improved grammatical comprehension, substantial vocabulary expansion, and increased self-confidence among students, whereas code-switching exhibited limitations in inhibiting fluency and independent speaking abilities.

In examining the motivations behind code-switching practices among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, the literature elucidates that students' limited proficiency in English, teachers' beliefs, and the types and natures of language skills constitute the primary influencing factors for their engagement in code-switching. These studies operate under the premise that code-switching is contingent upon speaker intentions [19]. However, other scholars have identified additional factors that may prompt individuals to switch between languages or dialects, including social contexts, linguistic competence, identity, and cultural affiliation [1]. Moreover, considerations such as topic or subject matter, in-group solidarity or out-group distinction, power dynamics, and emotional or pragmatic functions have been identified as further motivations for code-switching [18]. These diverse factors underscore the intricate and multifaceted nature of code-switching, highlighting its susceptibility to various contextual, social, and psychological influences in conjunction with speaker intention [23-26].

In summary, from a sociolinguistic perspective, code-switching is intricately interwoven with social contexts, power dynamics, and cultural identity, suggesting that individuals may strategically select a particular language or code

to assert dominance, express intimacy, or navigate social hierarchies. Meanwhile, psycholinguistic research delves into the cognitive processes underlying code-switching, investigating how bilingual speakers manage and access multiple linguistic systems [1].

An exploration of the background of this study reveals diverse scholarly perspectives on code-switching and the established facts therein. Firstly, literature indicates that code-switching is commonly utilized in educational settings focusing on English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction. It further indicates that proficiency in the mother tongue, herein referred to as the heritage language or L1, and the contact language (bilingualism) often result in the interchangeability of two languages within a single communicative interaction. The educational, managerial, and social functions served by code-switching among teachers and students in countries where English is the medium of instruction, including Nigeria, are underscored. Moreover, the drawbacks of code-switching in comparison to immersion, such as inhibiting active participation and effective language learning among English students, are highlighted. This implies that educational institutions may vary in their attitudes toward code-switching, with some endorsing it as a beneficial tool and others regarding it as an impediment to language development. The motivating factors for employing code-switching in communicative interactions are examined. However, the present researchers are specifically interested in investigating the concept from the perspective of psycho-sociocultural factors that drive this linguistic practice, commonly referred to as code-switching (CS).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In verbal communication, each statement typically serves a specific purpose, with exceptions found in individuals with mental disorders or children. During speech, it is common for individuals to blend two languages, resulting in complexity within the utterance. Some linguists do not categorize code-switching as a conventional mode of speech, viewing code-switched statements as grammatically unacceptable. However, code-switching has become commonplace within educational settings, spanning primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. Although the phenomenon of code-switching, defined as the practice of alternating between two or more languages or language varieties within a single conversation, has garnered significant attention in sociolinguistics, with numerous researchers exploring it from various perspectives, there remains a limited understanding of the psycho-sociocultural determinants influencing code-switching behaviour among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria. This study aims to investigate those psycho-sociocultural factors contributing to code-switching within this specific population.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the psycho-social determinants influencing code-switching behaviour among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria. In particular, the study aimed to ascertain:

1. The common contexts in which Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria code-switch.
2. The psycho-sociocultural factors that influence code-switching behaviour among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the Southeastern region of Nigeria.
3. The perceptions and attitudes of Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates towards code-switching in academic settings.

2.2 Scope of the Study

The study focused on exploring the psycho-sociocultural determinants of code-switching among a specific cohort—namely, Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria. The research narrows its scope to students enrolled in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka in Anambra State and Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, in Imo State, Nigeria, emphasizing the unique linguistic context of this group. This specificity is deliberate, as it is hypothesized that students pursuing English language studies possess a heightened proficiency and fluency in English compared to their counterparts who are studying other disciplines. By homing in on this

targeted population, the study aimed to provide nuanced insights into the intricate dynamics of code-switching within a more linguistically adept subset of Igbo-speaking undergraduates. Further, in this study, mother-tongue and heritage language are used interchangeably and meant the same as the participants' L1.

2.3 Research Questions

1. What are the common situations/contexts in which Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria code-switch?
2. What are the psychosocial factors that influence code-switching behaviour among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the Southeastern region of Nigeria?
3. How does sociocultural identity impact the patterns of code-switching in communication among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the Southeastern region of Nigeria?
4. What are the perceptions and attitudes of Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates towards code-switching in academic settings?

2.4 Research Hypotheses

1. The frequency of code-switching among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria code-switch is not significantly influenced by psycho-social factors.
2. Socio-cultural identity does not significantly impact the patterns of code-switching in communication among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria code-switch.

3. METHODS

The present study employed a descriptive survey research design, chosen for its suitability in contexts where variables are not manipulated or controlled. This design facilitated the examination of a cohort of individuals through data collection and analysis, focusing on a subset considered representative of the broader population. Specifically, the study targeted select groups of Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates from two public universities, aiming to investigate the psycho-sociocultural factors motivating code-

switching behaviour among this demographic. This deliberate focus stemmed from the hypothesis that students majoring in English language exhibit a heightened proficiency and fluency in English compared to peers in other disciplines.

Conducted in the Southeastern region of Nigeria, the study encompassed the entirety of second, third, and fourth-year regular undergraduates at the time of data collection. A sample size of 1000 was determined through a multi-stage sampling procedure. Initially, two public universities were purposively selected from the region. Subsequently, students were stratified based on their academic year (200, 300, and 400 levels), with an emphasis on including only regular Igbo-speaking students in these cohorts. This decision was informed by the researchers' belief that first-year students may not have developed comparable language proficiency or code-switching patterns, potentially compromising the depth and quality of collected data.

Stage three involved the application of a convenience sampling technique to select 500 undergraduates from each of the two chosen public universities, namely Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka in Anambra and Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri in Imo state. Gender considerations were omitted by the researchers, hence the adoption of a convenience sampling approach. The aggregation of 500 students from each of the designated public universities within the two Southeastern states culminated in a total sample size of 1000 undergraduates for the study. The data collection instrument utilized was a researchers-constructed questionnaire comprising 34 items, denoted as the Psycho-sociocultural Determinants and Code-switching Questionnaire (PDCQ). This questionnaire comprised two sections, labeled A and B, with Section A designed to capture demographic information while Section B contained items tailored to address the research questions and analyse the hypotheses. Section A was further subdivided into parts A, B, C and D.

The questionnaire was structured around a four-point rating scale encompassing: "Strongly Agree" (SA-4 points), "Agree" (A-3 points), "Disagree" (D-2 points), and "Strongly Disagree" (SD-1 point) options. The instrument's validity was established through an extensive review of

relevant literature and peer evaluation by experts in English, Research Methods, and Psychology drawn from the Faculty of Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient subsequent to data collection from a sample of 100 undergraduates sourced from a distinct university not involved in the primary study. The pre-test phase of the instrument yielded an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.76, indicating a high level of reliability and thus affirming its suitability for the study.

The research team, alongside their assistants, employed a direct delivery method to administer the questionnaires to the 1000 undergraduates within the designated study areas. Research colleagues from the aforementioned university of interest and Graduate Assistants (GAs) working under their supervision constituted the team of research assistants tasked with questionnaire administration and data collection. Of the 1000 questionnaires distributed, 867 were returned, resulting in a return rate of 86.7%. Subsequently, returned data were further vetted at the point of entry into the software and invalid data from 132 questionnaires were not used in the final analysis. Data obtained from 73.5% of the sample size were subjected to analysis in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses. The researchers presented the collected data in tabular format to enhance comprehension. The administration of instruments and data collection spanned a duration of 9 weeks. Research questions were addressed through mean value and standard deviation, while hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULT

Data from Table 1 revealed the demographic characteristics of the respondents 78 (10.6%) of the respondents are below 18; 489 (66.5%) are between ages 18 and 25; 138 (18.8%) of the respondents are between 26 and 30; while 30 (4.1%) of the respondents are above 30. On gender 354 respondents, representing 48.2% are male, while 381 (51.8%) of the respondents are female. Data on academic level of the respondents indicated that 218 (29.7%) of the respondents are Year Two students; 301 (41%) are Year Three students; while 216 (29.3%) of the respondents are Year four students. Also, 385 (52.4%) of the respondents were selected from Nnamdi Azikiwe Awka, while 350 (47.6%) of the respondents were selected from Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri.

Research Question 1: What are the common situations/contexts in which Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria code-switch?

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics showing Respondent's Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Data	Frequency	Percentage (%)
AGE		
Below 18	**78**	10.66
18 – 25	489	66.5
26 – 30	138	18.8
Above 30	30	4.1
Total	**735**	**100**
Gender		
Male	354	48.2
Female	381	51.8
Total	**735**	**100**
Academic Level		
Year Two	218	29.7
Year Three	301	41
Year Four	216	29.3
Total	**735**	**100**
Universities		
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	385	52.4
Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri	350	47.6
Total	**735**	**100**

Source: Researchers' field work (2024)

Table 2. Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the common situations/contexts in which Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria code-switch (N=735)

S/N	Common situations/contexts in which Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern region of Nigeria code-switch	X	SD	Decisions
1	I frequently code-switch between Igbo and English in my daily conversations	2.78	1.01	Agreed
2	I typically code-switch more in informal social settings such as with family and friends	2.79	1.04	Agreed
3	Expression of emotions is a common reason for my code-switching	2.67	1.03	Agreed
4	Certain topics or subject matters often lead me to code-switching more frequently	2.86	0.96	Agreed
5	I tend to code-switch less in formal academic settings such as classrooms or during examination	2.02	1.02	Disagreed
6	I feel societal pressure to code-switch in specific situations	1.87	0.97	Disagreed
7	Code-switching is more prevalent among my peers especially in certain instances like need for peer acceptance	3.01	0.77	Agreed
8	I code-switch when I meet students from other academic disciplines	2.81	0.89	Agreed
9	The need to maintain my cultural identity makes me code-switch	2.76	0.82	Agreed
10	Code-switching significantly influences communication dynamics between my social circles	3.76	0.74	Agreed
	Grand Mean	2.73		Agreed

Data presented in Table 2 reveals that items 5 and 6 with their respective mean scores of 2.02 and 1.87 were rated disagreed while the remaining items 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9 with their respective mean scores of 2.78, 2.79, 2.67, 2.86, 3.01, 2.81, 2.76 and 2.76 were rated agreed because the mean scores are above the 2.50 benchmark. The cluster mean of 2.73 summarized that respondents agreed on the common situations /contexts in which Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern region, Nigeria code-switch. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.74 – 1.04 means that that the respondents' mean scores were closely related.

Research Question 2: What are the perceived psycho-sociocultural factors that influence code-switching behaviour among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the Southeastern region of Nigeria?

Data presented in Table 3 revealed that item 13 having mean score 2.42 was rated disagreed while items 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 with their respective mean scores of 3.41, 2.88, 3.07, 3.18, 2.98, 3.01, 3.12, 3.24 and 3.47 were rated agreed. This is because these mean scores are above 2.50 mean score benchmark. The cluster mean of 3.08 summarized that respondents to a great extent rated that psycho-social factors influenced the frequency of code-switching among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in southeastern region, Nigeria. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.54 – 1.04 means that the respondents' mean scores were closely related.

Research Question 3: How does sociocultural identity impact the patterns of code-switching in communication among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in southeastern region, Nigeria?

Data presented in Table 4 revealed that item 22 with mean score 2.33 was rated disagreed by the respondents. Also, items 21, 23, 24, 25 and 26 with their respective mean scores of 3.28, 3.16, 3.09, 3.81 and 3.83 were rated agreed because they are above the 2.50 mean score benchmark. The cluster mean of 3.25 summarized that sociocultural identity impacted the patterns of code-switching in communication among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the southeastern region, Nigeria. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.91 – 1.20 means

that the difference between the standard deviation scores were not much, therefore this shows that the items are homogenous.

Research Question 4: How do individual attitudes and perceptions towards code-switching affect its usage among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in te southeastern region, Nigeria?

Data in Table 5 revealed that all the items (27 – 34) with their respective mean scores of 3.31,

3.14, 3.17, 3.05, 3.16, 3.09, 3.22, and 3.65 were rated agreed because the mean scores are above the 2.50 benchmark. The cluster mean of 3.22 summarized that respondents agreed that socio-cultural identity impacted the patterns of code-switching in communication among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern, Nigeria. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.76 – 1.01 means that that the respondents' mean scores were closely related.

Table 3. Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the psycho-social factors that influence the frequency of code-switching among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in Southeastern Nigeria

S/N	English Language undergraduates of Igbo descent code-switch between Igbo and English languages for the following Psycho-sociocultural factors:	X	SD	Decisions
11	Desire to express cultural identity and sense of belonging	3.41	0.54	Agreed
12	Authentic expression of self and ideas to aid understanding	2.88	0.69	Agreed
13	Establishment and maintenance of social connection and acceptance across different communities	2.42	1.04	Disagreed
14	Expression of pride in one's linguistic and cultural background	3.07	0.88	Agreed
15	Expression of emotions in ways that align with their psychological and emotional experiences	3.18	0.89	Agreed
16	Identification with family and close social relationships	2.98	0.91	Agreed
17	Maintenance of my psycho-social comfort level with code-switching	3.01	0.66	Agreed
18	Perception of social norms regarding language use	3.12	0.78	Agreed
19	Effective communication in social interactions	3.24	0.74	Agreed
20	Means of expressing my identity and belongingness	3.47	0.62	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.08		Agreed

Table 4. Respondents' mean ratings on sociocultural identity impacting the patterns of code-switching in communication among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in southeastern region, Nigeria

S/N	Items on sociocultural identity impacting the patterns of code-switching in communication among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates	X	SD	Decisions
21	I strongly identify with my Igbo cultural heritage	3.28	1.08	Agree
22	I feel a strong connection to the English language and Western culture	2.33	0.97	Disagree
23	I often engage in activities that promote Igbo cultural traditions (e.g., festivals, language events)	3.16	1.20	Agree
24	I frequently participate in English-speaking social gatherings or activities	3.09	1.09	Agree
25	I code-switch between Igbo and English languages depending on the social context (e.g., informal vs. formal settings).	3.81	0.98	Agree
26	I feel more comfortable code-switching when interacting with individuals who share similar sociocultural identities	3.83	0.91	Agree
	Grand Mean		3.25	Agree

Table 5. Mean ratings of the respondents on the perceptions and attitudes of Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates towards code-switching in academic settings

S/N	English Language undergraduates of Igbo descents' perceptions and attitude to code-switch in educational settings:	X	SD	Decisions
27	I believe that code-switching is an acceptable linguistic practice in academic settings	3.31	1.01	Agree
28	Code-switching enhances my ability to express complex ideas and thoughts in academic discussions	3.14	0.79	Agree
29	I perceive code-switching positively as a tool for effective communication with instructors and peers	3.17	0.87	Agree
30	Code-switching is valuable for me in conveying cultural nuances during academic interactions	3.05	0.92	Agree
31	I believe that code-switching is a way to bridge cultural gaps and promote understanding in academic settings	3.16	0.87	Agree
32	I feel confident and comfortable using code-switching during class discussions and presentations	3.09	0.80	Agree
33	Code-switching contributes positively to the overall experience for Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates	3.22	0.84	Agree
34	I view code-switching as a means to foster a more inclusive and culturally diverse academic environment	3.65	0.76	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.22		Agree

4.1 Test of Statistical Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The frequency of code-switching among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in southeastern Nigeria is not significantly influenced by psycho-social factors.

Table 6 revealed that the t-test associated with simple regression is given as35.71. the hypothesis is rejected as the probability value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. this implied that there is a significant prediction of psychosocial factors on code-switching among undergraduates in South East, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Socio-cultural identity does not significantly impact the patterns of code-switching in communication among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in the southeastern, Nigeria.

Table 6. t-test associated with Simple Regression analysis on the extent of influence of Psycho-social Factors on frequency of Code-Switching among Undergraduates in universities in South East, Nigeria

Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	7.15	.876		6.97	.00	
Psychosocial Factors	.87	.05	.892	35.71	.00	Significant
P < 0.05						

Table 7. t-test associated with Simple Regression on the extent of influence of Socio-Cultural Identity on patterns of Code-Switching among Igbo-speaking English Language undergraduates in universities in South-East, Nigeria

Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	11.05	1.05		10.14	.00	
Psychosocial Factors	.98	.06	.871	27.81	.00	Significant
P < 0.05						

Table 7 reveled that t-test associated with simple regression is given as 27.81. the hypothesis is rejected as probability value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. this implied that there is a significant impact of sociocultural identity on the code-switching patterns of Igbo-Speaking English Language undergraduates in South East, Nigeria.

5. DISCUSSION

The study findings unveiled a variety of situations in which undergraduates in southeastern Nigeria engage in code-switching between their L1 (Igbo) and L2 (English). These contexts include daily conversations with family members, friends, and peers, as well as within social circles where cultural identity maintenance is essential. Additionally, code-switching occurs when expressing emotions, explaining certain topics, and engaging with peers from other academic disciplines. This finding aligns with previous observations by Inuwa, Christopher, and Bakrin [7], indicating that code-switching occurs across various formal and informal contexts within a single speech or utterance. Similarly, Ezeh, Umeh, & Anyanwu [9] noted similar contexts for code-switching, emphasizing its role in fostering emotional engagement and creating a supportive linguistic environment. These findings are consistent with Nnadozie's [1] research, which demonstrated that Igbo-speaking English language students code-switch in interactions with family members, peers, within educational environments, and during transactions. Furthermore, the study finding that the need for improved daily conversation and the preservation of cultural identity motivate code-switching aligns with Alshihry's [6] observation. Alshihry noted that immigrant youth who frequently hears their heritage language spoken at home, despite exposure to the language of instruction in school, benefit not only linguistically but also in terms of cultural and ethnic identity development. Additionally, Ataş and Sagin Simsek [10] highlighted the use of code-switching by both teachers and students in classrooms for educational and communicative purposes, such as enhancing communication, delivering content and managing classroom dynamics. These findings are in line with the outcomes of the present study, reinforcing the multifaceted nature of code-switching and its varied functions in educational and social contexts.

The study also revealed that code-switching among Igbo-speaking English language students in the southeastern region is driven by psycho-sociocultural factors. These factors encompass a desire for adaptation to diverse social environments, the expression of identity, and the establishment of a sense of belonging within the Igbo-speaking English language community. Additionally, motivations such as the desire for social acceptance, social interactions with peers, perceptions of societal language norms and expectations, and the aspiration to demonstrate proficiency in both languages were identified as drivers of code-switching behavior, collectively constituting psycho-sociocultural factors. These factors collectively play a significant role in the prevalence of code-switching among Igbo-speaking English language students at universities in the region. This finding is consistent with the perspective of Crystal and Robins [3] that language serves as a medium through which individuals convey their thoughts and engage in cultural expression, shaping their psycho-sociocultural existence. Furthermore, it emphasizes that code-switching is influenced by a variety of contextual, social, and psychological elements, in addition to the speaker's intention. This finding aligns with Mohammad Kaleem's [8] assertion that code-switching is related to the social grooming of second language learners. Additionally, it resonates with the observations of Hilda Cahyani, Michele de Courcy, & Jenny Barnett [11], who suggested that managing students' behavior and engaging in interpersonal and affective interactions with students motivate teachers to code-switch.

Furthermore, the study found that Igbo-speaking English language students in southeastern Nigeria perceive code-switching as an unacceptable linguistic practice in academic settings, despite engaging in it both in academic and non-academic settings for various purposes, including productive communication and the need to bridge cultural gaps and promote understanding. This finding is consistent with that of Bukhari et al. [13], who, in their research comparing code-switching and immersive approaches to enhancing spoken language skills among ESL undergraduate learners, highlighted the negative impact of code-switching on English students' active participation and effective learning in language education. Their results indicated that the immersive approach resulted in greater fluency, improved grammatical understanding, substantial vocabulary growth, and increased self-confidence among students, whereas code-switching exhibited limitations in

inhibiting fluency and independent speaking abilities.

However, Kaleem [8] partially aligns with the current finding, strongly advocating that code-switching should not be elevated to the status of a strategy or technique to be applied in second language learning classes but rather viewed as an additional resource. In contrast, Temesgen and Hailu [12] as well as Ezeh, Umeh & Anyanwu [9] did not agree with the current finding, describing code-switching as an inseparable part of classroom discourse and something that should not be avoided. They proposed that teacher training programmess should incorporate code-switching as an effective teaching strategy. This discrepancy highlights the variation in attitudes toward code-switching among educational institutions, with some regarding it as a valuable tool while others perceive it as a hindrance to language development.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study concerning the psycho-social determinants of code-switching among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates in the Southeastern region of Nigeria, it is concluded that a context interplay of psychological and sociocultural factors underpins code-switching behaviour. Code-switching fosters an inclusive and culturally sensitive environment that acknowledges and appreciates the cultural diversity inherent among Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates, thereby enhancing their academic experiences, sociocultural identity, and overall well-being.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The implications of the study include a more profound comprehension of the psycho-sociocultural factors that shape code-switching behaviour, their repercussions on sociocultural identity and cultural values, the imperative for inclusive language policies that accommodate cultural diversity, and the necessity for the development of efficacious instructional strategies and support services that respect diverse cultural backgrounds.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended to develop language programmes aimed at addressing the psycho-sociocultural determinants of code-switching. These programmess should prioritize the enhancement of language proficiency, cultural identity, adherence to social norms, and the preservation of cultural values.
2. Curriculum developers should incorporate sociocultural aspects of code-switching into the English language curriculum. This integration aims to foster cultural preservation, promote respect for cultural diversity, and acknowledge students' cultural backgrounds.
2. University authorities should establish support services tailored to the needs of Igbo-speaking English language undergraduates. These services, such as language clinics or tutoring programmes, should demonstrate sensitivity to students' cultural backgrounds and values. By doing so, they can assist students in navigating code-switching challenges and ultimately contribute to their academic success.
3. Policymakers and government agencies are encouraged to formulate inclusive language policies that acknowledge and respect the cultural diversity of students. Such policies should aim to create an educational environment that is inclusive and culturally sensitive, thereby promoting a conducive atmosphere for learning and growth.

9. STUDY LIMITATIONS

During the course of this study, the research team encountered several constraints. As a result, a deliberate decision was made to concentrate on a smaller sample size extracted from the larger population. Despite efforts by the researchers to encourage participation, certain respondents exhibited hesitancy in completing the questionnaire, necessitating additional time allocated for clarifications and assistance in understanding the questions.

Identifying all languages and their respective variations utilized within the universities under investigation presented a challenge, leading the researchers to restrict the study's focus exclusively to English-speaking students proficient in the Igbo language. This decision was influenced by the researchers' proficiency limited to the Igbo and English languages.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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DOI: 10.54132/akaf.1188791.

<i>Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/117570</i>