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BEYOND LINGUISTIC BORDERS: EXPLORING CODE-SWITCHING AMONG IGBO BILINGUALS

Kulcsszavak: *code-switching; bilingualism; nativization; sociolinguistics; Igbo-English*

This study investigates the linguistic complexities and sociocultural dynamics of code-switching among Igbo-English bilinguals in Nigeria. It seeks to answer the research question: How does code-switching between Igbo and English reflect linguistic and sociocultural dynamics, and contribute to the nativization and evolution of language in post-colonial, multilingual settings, specifically in the Igbo linguistic environment? The study also examines Igbo bilinguals' attitudes towards code-switching behaviours and its implications for cultural identity. Guided by Kachru's Nativization Hypothesis, this mixed-methods research employs qualitative and quantitative approaches, including pre-recorded interviews and questionnaires. Findings reveal systematic patterns in code-switching, such as shared syntactic structures and verb conjugations, and emphasise how this practice facilitates the integration of English into the local linguistic context. Participants generally perceive code-switching positively, associating it with linguistic adaptability and sociocultural belonging, though some express concerns about language purity. Additionally, the study uncovers significant insights into Igbo-English bilinguals' linguistic features, including word order, pronouns, and sentence starters, and their role in shaping a hybrid linguistic identity. These findings reveal the importance of understanding code-switching as both a linguistic strategy and a sociocultural phenomenon, contributing to broader discussions on bilingualism, language contact, and post-colonial linguistics. By illuminating the relationship of language and identity, this research offers valuable perspectives on the evolution of language in multilingual societies.