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Language and Ethnic Identity: More Perspectives from Africa

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Abstract

Many studies on bilingual communities have tended to focus on contact between an official/national language and one or more indigenous languages. In contrast this study analyzes data from two unofficial indigenous languages in Kenya. From the analyses carried out, it emerges that when Luo and Luyia languages are in contact there are three possible outcomes: speech divergence, speech convergence and code switching. The Luo respondents in this study are found to employ more speech divergence than their Luyia counterparts. As regards speech convergence, Luyias outscore Luos. Code switching, which is characterized by very low mean scores in the two ethnic groups, is the least preferred mode of communication. This paper also establishes that each of the three strategies serves a different social function. The goal of this paper is therefore to correlate three communication strategies with ethnicity in order to show how language loyalties interplay with ethnicity in a rural bilingual speech community in Africa. It is hoped that this research will shed more light on the relationship between ethnicity and ethnic languages in bilingual speech communities.

Keywords: Speech divergence, Speech convergence, Code-Switching, Ethnicity

1. Introduction

The main purpose of the larger study from which the data for this paper is derived was to examine what happens when two mutually unintelligible languages come into contact. Earlier studies have pointed out the following as effects of language contact: borrowing (Appel & Muysken 2006), code-switching and code-mixing (Kachru 1992, Myers-Scotton 2006), language planning and language choice (Fasold 1984), language shift, maintenance and death (Mesthrie et al 2000), speech convergence and divergence (Giles & Coupland 1991). This study limited itself to only three effects of language contact namely; speech divergence, speech convergence and code-switching.

According to Giles and Coupland (1991) speech accommodation is a linguistic strategy in which speakers adjust their speech depending on the person they are talking to. In speech convergence speakers make their language similar to that of their listeners while in speech divergence speakers make their speech different from that of their listeners. Speakers will, therefore, converge to their addressees when they want to induce them to judge them favourably but when the intention is to assert own-group identity then speakers will diverge from their listeners (Giles and Coupland 1991). Thus convergence involves the adoption of the listener's language by a speaker whereas during speech divergence a speaker will 'exaggerate' or 'accentuate' any linguistic differences between him/her and the addressee.

Proponents of the speech accommodation theory (Giles & St. Clair 1979, Trudgill 1986, Giles & Coupland 1991, Wardhaugh 2010) have linked speech convergence to two processes: similarity attraction and social exchange. Speech divergence, on the other hand, is attributed to social identity processes. These generalisations have been made after studying inter-group interaction involving languages mainly from the West. There appears to be very scanty documentation about the nature and motivations behind linguistic accommodation with regard to non-Indo-European languages in contact. By empirically investigating utterances from speakers, of two ethnic languages, who reside along a linguistic border point in Kenya, this study hopes to fill this gap.

Code Switching, the use of two or more languages in one conversational turn (Myers-Scotton 1993), is the third linguistic strategy that I focus on. In this paper it is shown that when bilingual speakers do not desire to converge to, or diverge from, their addressees they will adopt a 'middle' path, where they alternate between the two contact languages thus; Luo/Luyia code switching. Several taxonomies of code switching have been postulated: situational, metaphorical (Blom & Gumperz 1972), referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, poetic (Appel & Muysken 2006), variationist (Gal 1979), tag switching, inter-sentential and intra-sentential (Myers-Scotton 2006).This research took a variationist approach in analysing code switched utterances in the speech of Luo/Luyia bilinguals.

Finally, this paper looked at the interplay between the three linguistic strategies and ethnicity. Like Fishman (1997) the term ethnicity is used to refer to a cultural grouping that is associated with a sense of linguistic distinctiveness and customs. Two ethnic groups were investigated in this paper: Luos who speak a Nilotic language known as Luo and Luyias who speak the Luyia language classified as Bantu (Tucker 1956, Guthrie 1967). Thus the Luo and

Luyia languages belong to different language families. In addition, Luyias and Luos have distinct customs. For example Luyia males must undergo circumcision at puberty while in the Luo culture no circumcision is practised. However, there are efforts by the Kenyan government to encourage Luos to undergo circumcision in order to reduce HIV/AIDS infection rates. This paper specifically sought to determine the effects of speakers' ethnicity on their linguistic behavior during inter-group communication.

2. The Linguistic Situation of Kenya

2.1 Lingua Francae

The language situation in Kenya is complex. Like many African nations, Kenya is a multilingual community with about forty two indigenous languages being spoken by its citizens. In addition, there are two lingua francae in use in the country namely, English and Swahili. English, the language of former British colonisers, serves as the official language. It serves as the language of instruction and examination at all levels of education (except the lower primary level in rural schools). It is also a compulsory subject at primary and secondary school level. Most affairs in government, parliament, commerce, diplomacy, judiciary and media are conducted in English. It is also the language of elites and the urbanised folks.

Swahili is the declared national language of Kenya but has also recently (in August 2010) been elevated to serve as the second official code. Standard Swahili also referred to as ***Kiswahili Sanifu*** is taught in both primary and secondary schools as one of the compulsory school subjects. However, it is usually 'left' in the classroom as very few people (except Swahili teachers and Journalists) ever use it outside the classroom setting. Most of the time, many Kenyans will be heard speaking non-standard Swahili varieties such as the various regional varieties (for example, Luonised-Swahili, Luyianised-Swahili, Coastal-Swahili) and *Sheng* (a variety of Swahili that is common with urban youths). Many transactions in shops, market-places, hospitals and even taxis are carried out in nonstandard Swahili. Thus, Swahili like English is a language for wider communication, and may be chosen by speakers wishing to mark an extra-group identity. With the continued increase in rural-urban migration it has been predicted that Swahili and English will continue to grow at the expense of ethnic group languages (Myers-Scotton 1993)

2.2 Ethnic Languages

The forty two indigenous languages of Kenya can be categorised into four families namely, Bantu, Nilotic, Para-Nilotic and Cushitic (Whiteley 1974: 27). Bantu languages are the majority and include: Meru, Kikuyu, Kamba, Gusii, Kuria, Taita, Mbere, Luyia, Miji Kenda, Embu and Suba. In the Para-Nilotic group we have languages such as Teso, Turkana, Pokot, Maasai, Njemps, Samburu and Kalenjin. Cushitic languages include Galla, Dahalo, Rendille, Somali and Gabra. In Kenya, there is only one Nilotic language, Luo. Regardless of these language families many Kenyans cherish their ethnic languages. There is a general feeling that these languages give their speakers a means of expressing their ethnic identities which many are proud of. In rural areas ethnic languages are the main mode of communication as

many speakers tend to share a common language and many of them may lack proficiency in English and Swahili.

According to, The 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census, Kenya's total population stands at 38.6 million. The same statistics give the large ethnic groups in Kenya as: Kikuyu, Luyia, Kalenjin, Luo and Kamba in that order. Each of these language groups has a population of more than three million as represented in table 1. The ethnic groups that are of interest to this study are in bold print.

Table 1. The Major Ethnic groups of Kenya

ETHNIC GROUP	POPULATION
Kikuyu	6, 622, 576
Luyia	**5, 338, 666**
Kalenjin	4, 967, 328
Luo	**4, 044, 440**
Kamba	3, 893, 157

In Kenya, ethnic affiliation is closely tied to linguistic affiliation. For example individuals who have a Luyia ethnicity, will also speak the Luyia language as their first language while those who identify with the Luo ethnic group are likely to have Luo as their first language. From the statistical information given in table 1, it is apparent that Luyia speakers comprise of 14% of the Kenyan population while 11% of Kenyans speak Luo. Given that the two groups form a quarter (25%) of Kenya's population it is important to investigate contact between the two languages.

Earlier sociolinguistic research in Kenya has observed that groups residing in linguistic border points tend to have proficiency in the languages in contact (Whiteley 1974). For example, in Kiboswa, a Luo/Luyia border, Matuu, a Kikuyu/Kamba border, and Sondu, a Luo/Gusii/Kalenjin border, bilingualism involving indigenous languages has been reported (Whiteley 1974). It is, however, disturbing to note that we lack precise information on the patterns of language use among the various groups residing in these border points. For instance, it is not clear how Luos and Luyias residing in border areas such as Kiboswa carry out inter group communication between themselves. The same applies to the Luo, Gusii and Kalenjin peoples who occupy Sondu area. Considering that not much has been documented about the linguistic behavior of border residents, this study seeks to find out how speakers from the so-called large ethnic groups in Kenya interact with each other using indigenous languages. In this way it is hoped that the study will fill the existing gap.

Luyia speakers, also known as ***Aba-luyia*** (which may literally be translated to Luyias. **Aba-** is a plural prefix in the Luyia language), inhabit the Western province of Kenya. Western Province, which stretches over eight thousand three hundred and sixty one square kilometers, lies to the north of Nyanza Province. The present study does not use the term abaluyia instead it uses the general term Luyia to refer to both the code under investigation as well as its users. The Luyia language is made up of the following seventeen dialects: Lubukusu, Lukhayo, Lumaraachi, Lusaamia, Lunyala-K (K stands for Kakamega district, thus Nyala-K

is the Nyala dialect found in Kakamega), Lunyala-B (, B stands for Busia district, thus Nyala-B is the Nyala dialect found in Busia), Luwanga, Lumarama, Lukisa, Lunyoore, Lulogoori, Lwitakho, Lwisukha, Lukabras, Lutsotso, Lutirichi and Lutachoni (Angogo, 1980). The Luyia data analyzed in this paper is from the Lulogoori dialect that is spoken by Luyias who reside in Kiboswa.

Luo speakers are spread over twelve thousand square kilometers of Nyanza Province of Kenya, a region that borders Lake Victoria. This province is dominantly occupied by Luos and lies south of Western province. Luo is said to have two dialects namely: Trans Yala which is spoken in Alego, Ugenya, Yimbo and parts of Gem, and South Nyanza dialect which is spoken in Bondo/Sakwa, Kisumu, Migori, Homa bay and parts of Gem (Stafford, 1967). Thus, the Luo data analyzed in this paper is from the South Nyanza dialect, the variety that is spoken in Kiboswa.

3. The Research Site

Kiboswa is a small trading centre located in a rural region of Kisumu district, in Nyanza Province. This region serves as an isogloss; it is here that Western and Nyanza provinces are separated. While in Kiboswa one easily encounters Luo/Luyia bilingualism in different domains. In the home setting, in marketplaces, health facilities, churches, schools, buses and other public places people may be heard using both languages. Important occasions such as weddings, political rallies, fund raising meetings and funerals are often conducted in the two languages. The high incidences of contact between Luo/Luyia in Kiboswa therefore made it a suitable research site. Other areas where the Luo and Luyia languages are in contact are Luanda, Musanda, Yala, Bumala, Sidindi, Uriri, Maseno and Sio Port and it would be interesting to find out the nature of accommodation and code switching in these areas. However due to time and financial constraints only one border point, Kiboswa, was studied. This area of study was randomly sampled from the other eight isoglosses where Luyia and Luo are in contact.

4. The Respondents

The study adopted a quantitative research design. Data was collected using the participant observation method and questionnaires. All observations were accompanied by field notes. The respondents in the proposed study were selected through judgmental sampling procedures. According to Milroy (1987), the respondents in such a sample are 'picked' depending on their ability to fit in the specified social categories such as age, social status, ethnicity and so on. In the case of Kiboswa village, the respondents had to be of Luo or Luyia ethnicity. To determine a respondent's ethnicity the researcher administered questionnaires. Ethnicity is an important variable in the Kenyan society just as it is in many speech communities (Wardhaugh 2010) and it is important that we determine its effect on individuals' language behaviour. The 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya for example, was triggered partly by ethnic tension. This research, therefore, hypothesised that a speaker's ethnicity would influence his/her language behaviour.

A second criterion that the respondents had to fulfil was with regard to their bilingual status.

All speakers had to be bilingual in Luo and Luyia languages. This condition was laid down to ensure that speakers had the linguistic ability to converge to their addressees from a different ethnic group. The study used questionnaires to objectively establish whether or not, a given participant was bilingual.

5. Ethnicity and Bilinguality of the Speakers

One of the tasks in the questionnaire was for the respondents to state their ethnicity. Out of the thirty – eight respondents in Kiboswa, eighteen said they were of Luo ethnicity while twenty said they were Luyias. The information on the ethnic group membership of the respondents in Kiboswa is summarized in table 2 below:

Table 2. Categorization of the Kiboswa respondents by ethnic group membership

Ethnicity	*Frequency*	**Percentage**
Luo	18	48
Luyia	20	53
Total	**38**	**100**

It is evident from table 2 that 53% of the respondents in the study were Luyias while 48% were Luos. These scores show that none of the ethnic groups is 'overrepresented or underrepresented, thereby creating bias of some kind' (Wardhaugh 2010:158).

From the notes obtained during the fieldwork it was further established that six (16%) of the thirty-eight respondents were of dual ethnicities while thirty-two (84%) were of single ethnicity. In section 8, I will show that these two cohorts exhibited different linguistic patterns.

The second item in the questionnaire required the respondents to gauge their linguistic ability in the Luo and Luyia languages. The responses of the thirty-eight speakers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Responses on the respondents' ability in speaking Luo and Luyia languages

What in your view is your ability in speaking Luo and Luyia?	*Frequency*	**Percentage**
Good	38	100
Fair	0	0
Poor	0	0
Total	**38**	**100**

The results in table 3 indicate that all the respondents reported that they could speak the two contact languages well. It is however, interesting to note that while all the speakers in the Kiboswa study claimed to be competent in the two codes hence could be viewed as having the linguistic ability to converge to their addressees during inter-group interaction, some of them chose not to converge at all (see table 5).

6. Data Elicitation

To determine the nature of accommodation and code switching strategies employed by the speakers in the households selected, respondents were required to carry out conversations with other members of their household who were from a different ethnic group. These conversations which took part in the home domain and were tape- recorded. Like Myers-Scotton (2006), we took advantage of naturally occurring contexts. To reduce the effects of the **observer's paradox** (the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed: yet we can only obtain this data by systematic observation, hence the paradox of any observer) the present study adopted Labov's (2006) 'insider' technique. This approach entails using an individual who is a member of the speech community that is under observation to collect data from others in that community. Since people tend to be free with those that are familiar to them, the 'insider technique' has an obvious influence on naturalness of the data obtained. Two research assistants who were 'insiders' in Kiboswa, therefore, accompanied the researcher during the fieldwork.

This study was conducted in a rural African setting where the extended family is the norm. Given this set up, numerous spontaneous conversations were obtained from several family members (i.e. grandparents, sons and their wives, grandchildren) as they engaged in inter-group communication in their homes usually in the evenings. The respondents were aware that they were being recorded but we did not disclose the specific goals of the research; for, doing so might have 'contaminated' the data (Wardhaugh 2010). Respondents were simply told that we were carrying out research on indigenous languages. The data was collected intermittently for a period of four months.

7. Conceptual framework and Coding of data

In order to determine the patterns of language use in the two ethnic groups in Kiboswa this study used an eclectic approach. Data analysis was guided by concepts from the variationist theory (Labov 2006), the Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles & Coupland 1991) and the Markedness Model of Code Switching (Myers-Scotton 1993). In his study of the social stratification of English in New York, Labov (2006) proposed that social factors such as a speaker's social status and sex are responsible for the way people use language. After correlating linguistic and social variables it emerged that high social status groups in New York tended to use standard variants of English more than their counterparts who had a low social status. Female speakers also outscored male speakers in the use of the standard variants (Labov 2006). Using the Variationist approach this paper sought to establish patterns of language variation in the Luo and Luyia ethnic groups in Kiboswa and also to determine how ethnicity as a social variable influenced the linguistic patterns exhibited.

After phonemically transcribing the recordings collected during the field work, corpus amounting to six running hours was obtained. The speakers spoke on a variety of topics: cattle rustling, initiation rites, self-help groups, funeral practices, inter-marriage, politics, naming trends and business ventures. For purposes of confidentiality, all the respondents' actual names were not used in the transcriptions. Instead the study used pseudonyms.

Data was quantified in order to provide information on the patterns of linguistic behaviour of the respondents. Taking the **conversational turn** as the unit of linguistic analysis, the present study like many others involving speech samples (Gal 1979, Myers-Scotton 2006) examined the linguistic structure of each conversational turn in the transcribed data with a view to determining exactly what code was used in a particular turn. To make the data analysis process more concise and orderly these codes were coded as follows:

- Luo was referred to as the L code
- Luyia was referred to as the Y code
- Luo/Luyia code switching was referred to as the L+Y code

Tokens were then counted. Three steps were followed: First, the investigator sifted through each transcription counting frequencies for the L code, as it occurred in the conversational turns that a speaker contributed towards a recording. The researcher once again sifted through the same transcription and checked the frequencies for the Y code. Finally, the same transcription was examined a third time, and the frequencies for L+Y code by that speaker determined. In order to bring out the relative differences in the frequencies (Nwana 1981) all the tokens were converted into percentage scores. These percentage scores are presented in tables 4 to 6.

In view of the proposals in the Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles & Coupland 1991) and those in the Markedness Model of Code Switching (Myers-Scotton 1993), this study made the following assumptions:

Assumption 1a: The use of Y code by Luyia speakers on Luo addressees was treated as speech divergence.

Assumption 1b: The use of L code by Luo speakers on Luyia addressees was treated as speech divergence.

Assumption 2a: The use of Y code by Luo speakers on Luyia addressees was treated as speech convergence.

Assumption 2b: the use of L code by Luyia speakers on Luo addressees was treated as speech convergence.

Assumption 3a: The use of L+Y by Luo speakers on Luyia addressees was treated as Code switching,

Assumption 3b: The use of L+Y by Luyia speakers on Luo addressees was treated as Code switching.

Attempts were then made to correlate divergence, convergence and code switching with ethnicity. The results are summarised below.

8. Results

I will present the results of this study in three subsections (8.1 to 8.3) before accounting for these results in 9.1 to 9.3.

8.1 Speech Divergence Correlated with Ethnicity

Table 4 summarizes the relationship between ethnicity and speech divergence in Kiboswa. The discussions in this sub section are guided by assumptions 1a and 1b.

Table 4. The ranking of percentage scores for L and Y codes for two ethnic groups in Kiboswa

LUOS			**LUYIAS**		
Speaker	**% score of the L code**	**Ethnicity**	**Speaker**	**% score of the Y code**	**Ethnicity**
Mr. Ad	100	Luo	Mrs. Tig	91	Luyia
Sra	100	Luo	Henn	88	Luyia
Leo	100	Luo	Mrs. Sam	87	Luyia
Cj	99	Luo	Guku	79	Luyia
Jos	98	Luo	Pam	76	Luyia
Ach	97	Luo	Ire	75	Luyia
Mic	96	Luo	Md	74	Luyia
Mrs. Ad	96	Luo	Kez	72	Luyia
Ne	96	Luo	Flo	71	Luyia
Nat	91	Luo	Tig	70	Luyia
Nor	89	Luo	Mlk	67	Luyia
Jk	88	Luo	Mr. Sam	67	Luyia
Wil	87	Luo	Est*	63	Luyia
Mrt	83	Luo	Tsl*	60	Luyia
Ser	75	Luo	Cha*	58	Luyia
Anya	66	Luo	Jny	51	Luyia
Wam*	55	Luo	Fes	50	Luyia
Mon*	54	Luo	Mbo	49	Luyia
			Kav	32	Luyia
			Ma*	31	Luyia
Mean Score	**87.2**		**Mean Score**	**65.5**	

According to table 4, the mean score for the Luo ethnic group is 87.2% while that for the Luyia group is 65.5%. From the two mean scores it emerges that Luos used the L code (i.e. the Luo language) 87.2% of the time while Luyias used the Y code (i.e. the Luyia language) 65.5% of the time. Luos therefore outscored Luyias in the use of an own-group language. This implies that in intergroup communication, the Luo group in Kiboswa diverged more than the Luyia group.

However when we consider the linguistic behavior of the speakers in table 4 at individual level rather than group level, three Luo respondents (Mr. Ad, Sra, Leo) scored 100% in their use of the L code. This is an indication that the 17% of the Luo speakers completely diverged from their Luyia addressees. On the contrary, no Luyia respondent scored 100% in the use of the Y code. The highest score for Y was 91% by Mrs. Tig. Thus every Luyia respondent in Kiboswa made some effort to use some Luo during intergroup interaction.

In table 4, speakers with dual ethnicities have an asterisk placed after their names. It is clear from this table that the speakers with the lowest scores are also the ones with dual ethnicities. For example, in the Luo group we have Mon at the bottom while in the Luyia group we have Ma at the bottom. Other speakers with dual ethnicities who are generally trailing their group-mates are Wam, Cha, Tsl and Est. It is therefore possible to assume that in Kiboswa those speakers with dual ethnicities diverged less than those with a single ethnicity. I shall try to account for these observations in 9.1 below.

8.2 Speech Convergence Correlated with Ethnicity

Table 5. The ranking of percentage scores for L and Y scores in two ethnic groups in Kiboswa

LUYIAS			**LUOS**		
Speaker	**% score of the L code**	**Ethnicity**	**Speaker**	**% score of the Y code**	**Ethnicity**
Ma*	69	Luyia			
Mbo	40	Luyia			
Jny	40	Luyia	Mon*	42	Luo
Fes	38	Luyia	Wam*	37	Luo
Tsl*	38	Luyia	Mrt	17	Luo
Mlk	33	Luyia	Anya	17	Luo
Cha*	31	Luyia	Ser	13	Luo
Kez	28	Luyia	Nat	7	Luo
Mr. Sam	28	Luyia	Mic	2	Luo
Est*	26	Luyia	Ne	2	Luo
Ire	25	Luyia	Mr. Ad	0	Luo
Mr. Tig	24	Luyia	Jos	0	Luo
Md	20	Luyia	Mrs. Ad	0	Luo
Pam	17	Luyia	Ach	0	Luo
Flo	15	Luyia	Sra	0	Luo
Mrs. Sam	13	Luyia	Cj	0	Luo
Kav	13	Luyia	Leo	0	Luo
Guku	12	Luyia	Nor	0	Luo
Henn	10	Luyia	Jk	0	Luo
Mrs. Tig	4	Luyia	Wil	0	Luo
MEAN	**26.1**		**MEAN**	**7.6**	

In order to determine the effect of a speaker's ethnicity on the speech convergence process I compared the percentage scores of the L code by Luyias with those of the Y code by Luos. The results are presented in table 5. The discussions in this sub section are guided by assumptions 2a and 2b.

Table 5 shows that the mean score for the Luyia group is 26.1% and that for the Luo is 7.6%. From these scores it is evident that the Luyia group outscored the Luo with regard to speech convergence. In fact ten of the eighteen speakers (55.6%) in the Luo group scored 0% in the use of the Y code. This means that about half of the Luo speakers did not make any effort to converge. On the other hand, the lowest score among the Luyias was 4%, an indication that all Luyia respondents made some effort to converge to their Luo addressees.

In table 5 speakers with dual ethnicities are generally at the top. For example in the Luyia group Ma leads with a score of 69% while Mon (with 42%) leads in the Luo group. These results demonstrate that out of all the Luyia respondents Ma converged the most. Similarly Mon. converged the most in Luo group. In addition, of the nine speakers who had a score exceeding 30%, five (Ma, Tsl, Cha, Mon and Wam) had dual ethnicities. Statistically, 55.6% of respondents with dual ethnicities scored more than 30% in speech convergence. In contrast only 44.4% of those with a single ethnicity scored 30% and above. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that speakers with dual ethnicities converged more than those with a single ethnicity. Attempts will be made to explain these patterns in sub-section 9.2.

7.3 Code Switching Correlated with Ethnicity

Finally I present the patterns of code switching in Kiboswa in table 6. These results were to test hypotheses 3a and 3b.

A look at table 6 shows that the mean scores for L+Y code are very low. The mean score for Luyias is 8.4% and that for the Luo respondents is 5.2%. From these scores it is possible to assume that Luo/Luyia code switching is not a popular strategy in Kiboswa.

In spite of the low scores of the L+Y code, the Luyia group outscored the Luo group in the use of the L+Y code. Therefore, Luyias employed more Luo/Luyia code switching than their Luo counterparts.

When we focus on inter-speaker variation it is evident from table 6 that while 76% of the respondents made some effort to code switch between Luo/Luyia, 24% of them did not. Four speakers in the Luo group (namely; Mr. Ad, Sra, Mrt and Leo) scored 0%, while in the Luyia group five speakers (namely; Ire, Mrs. Sam, Ma, Kez and Mlk) scored 0%. Interestingly, one speaker exhibited a very high score for L+Y code. With a score of 56%, Kav's linguistic behavior is exceptional from the rest.

Table 6. The ranking of percentage scores for the L+Y code for two ethnic groups in Kiboswa

LUOS			**LUYIAS**		
Speaker	**% score of the L+Y code**	**Ethnicity**	**Speaker**	**% score of the L+Y code**	**Ethnicity**
Anya	17	Luo	Kav	56	Luyia
Ser	13	Luo	Fes	12	Luyia
Wil	13	Luo	Est*	11.5	Luyia
Jk	12	Luo	Mbo	11	Luyia
Nor	11	Luo	Cha*	11	Luyia
Wam*	8	Luo	Guku	9	Luyia
Mon*	4	Luo	Jny	9	Luyia
Mrs. Ad	4	Luo	Flo	8.5	Luyia
Ach	3	Luo	Mr. Tig	7	Luyia
Jos	2.5	Luo	Pam	7	Luyia
Ne	2	Luo	Meld	5.5	Luyia
Nat	2	Luo	Mrs. Tig	5.5	Luiya
Mic	1.5	Luo	Mr. Sam	5	Luyia
CJ	1	Luo	Henn	2	Luyia
Mr. Ad	0	Luo	Tsl*	2	Luyia
Sra	0	Luo	Ire	0	Luyia
Mrt	0	Luo	Mrs. Sam	0	Luyia
Leo	0	Luo	Ma*	0	Luyia
			Kez	0	Luyia
			Mlk	0	Luyia
MEAN	**5.2**		**MEAN**	**8.4**	

As regards speakers with dual ethnicities in table 6, five out of six speakers (that is 83%) employed some degree of Luo/Luyia code switching. In contrast 70% of respondents with a single ethnicity code switched. Thus, it emerges that speakers with dual ethnicities code switched more than those with a single ethnicity.

In sub-section 9.3, I will attempt to explain these code switching patterns.

9. Accounting for the Linguistic patterns of Luo and Luyia groups in Kiboswa

To explain the linguistic variations exhibited by the two ethnic groups in Kiboswa this paper is guided by two theories namely the Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles & Coupland 1991) and the Markedness Model of Code Switching (Myers-Scotton 1993).

9.1 Speech Divergence

In table 4 we saw higher levels of speech divergence among the Luo group as compared to the Luyia group. Perhaps one tenet of the Speech Accommodation Theory, the social identity theory may offer an explanation (Giles & Coupland 1991). In this framework, speaking the Luo language to Luyia addressees by Luo speakers is treated as an instance of speech divergence, and is a reflection of the Luo speakers' desire to assert their ethnic group identity when with out-group members. It may be that the Luo respondents diverged more because, unlike the Luyias, they identify more with their ethnic group. Hence speech divergence is a strategy both Luo and Luyia speakers used to dis-identify with their addressees from the other ethnic group in order to assert their ethnic identity during intergroup interaction. However it appears from the scores in table 4, it is the Luos who symbolised this ethnicity more. Probably, these speakers have a stronger sense of loyalty to their ethnic group compared to the Luyias.

9.2 Speech Convergence

It is possible to link the higher scores of convergence in the Luyia group to similarity attraction and social exchange processes (Giles & Coupland 1991). The Luyia respondents in this study adopted their addressees' language more because they wanted to make themselves attractive to their listeners in order to gain social approval and integration from them. Given that people tend to like those who are like them, the Luyia speakers in Kiboswa believed that increased similarity could lead to increased attraction.

Additionally, the Luyia group converged more because of a second socio-psychological mechanism, that of social exchange. After assessing the rewards and costs of alternate codes, Luyia speakers felt that the rewards attending to the Luo language outweighed the costs involved. It may be that gaining social approval and integration from an out-group member was more rewarding for the Luyia respondents. Hence these speakers were willing to incur a 'small cost' (that of temporarily losing their ethnic identity when they spoke the Luo language rather than their own ethnic code) in order to earn their reward.

Socio-historical factors may also be responsible for the high degree of convergence in the Luyia group. By tracing the migration and settlement patterns of the Luo people, Shivachi (2002) observes that Luos have a tendency of dominating other groups that they come into contact with both linguistically and culturally. A similar observation has been made regarding speakers of the English language (Aitchison 1996). The Songa, for instance, were categorized as a Luyia dialect before Kenya's independence in 1963 (Osogo 1966, Shivachi 2002) now they are conspicuously missing from the Luyia dialects. There is a possibility that the Luyias in Kiboswa may end up like the Songa. Too much convergence may lead to language loss (Wardhaugh 2010).

This study found that speakers with dual ethnicities outscored those with a single ethnicity when it came to speech convergence. This linguistic behavior is explainable. It is possible that speakers with dual ethnicities identified more with the 'other' ethnic group than their counterparts who had a single ethnicity. Having one parent from the 'other' group made these

individuals feel that they were half-Luo and half-Luyia. This in turn caused the speakers to want to symbolize the two ethnic identities more or less equitably, unlike the latter group who only had one ethnic identity and therefore wished to symbolize a single identity. Since the expression of one's ethnic identity, in this community, can be done through language, speakers employed either the Luo code or the Luyia code depending on the number of identities they wished to symbolize.

The opposite may also be true. It may be that speakers with dual ethnicities in Kiboswa have an inferiority complex as they "are likely to be… children of 'mixed' marriages and in that respect 'marked' in some way, and such marking is not always regarded favorably" (Wardhaugh 2010, p. 93). Given their low self-esteem these speakers converged more than their counterparts who had a single ethnicity and could categorically identify with either the Luos or the Luyias.

9.3 Code Switching

In is evident from table 6 that a majority (76%) of the respondents in Kiboswa were found to have switched between the Luo and Luyia languages. All the respondents had reported that they had proficiency in Luo and Luyia languages (see table 3). It is therefore possible to assume that switching between these ethnic languages is the norm rather than the exception in this community. Luo/Luyia code switching is therefore the unmarked code in this society. According to the Markedness Model proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993), the linguistic choices made by speakers may be categorised as either 'Marked' or 'Unmarked.' Unmarked choices are those that are considered normal, they are expected while marked choices are those that are unusual. It is therefore possible to conclude that Luo/Luyia code switching is an emblem of the bilingual nature of this community.

A second reason why the bilingual respondents in Kiboswa employed Luo/Luyia switches is that they are not satisfied with either one of the identities; they are not satisfied with the identity associated with speaking Luo only or that associated with speaking Luyia only. Hence Luo/Luyia Code switching is a strategy these speakers use to simultaneously index the two ethnic identities. A strong claim of the Speech Accommodation Theory is that speakers commit themselves to single identities only during inter-group interaction. Thus, when speakers wish to identify with their addressee, they employ speech convergence but when they wish to dis-identify with their listeners, they employ speech divergence (Giles & Coupland 1991). This appeared to be the case when the results in table 4 and 5 were examined. However a look at the scores in table 6 suggests that respondents in Kiboswa did not always commit themselves to single identities. These speakers did sometimes commit themselves to two identities simultaneously. This was achieved through Luo/Luyia code switching. Switching between indigenous codes has, however, been ignored for a long time. Yet, it does take place. The fact that this kind of switching does not occur as frequently as switching between an official language (such as English) and an indigenous one does not mean that this communicative strategy is not important to the speakers involved.

Thirdly, code switching is a strategy of achieving neutrality during inter-group interaction (Myers-Scotton 2006). Through this type of switching speakers in Kiboswa were able to follow a 'middle path.' They neither identified with 'this' ethnic group completely nor with 'that' ethnic group completely. So, speakers code switched whenever they wanted to take a safe path.

Finally, it was evident from table 6 that speakers with dual ethnicities code switched more than (83%) those with a single ethnicity (70%). It is possible that a higher percentage of speakers with dual ethnicities in Kiboswa code switched because they believed that they were a mixed people and it was important for them to signify this and so they mixed the two languages. Given that such speakers perceived themselves more mixed (as they were half-Luo and half-Luyia by blood rather than their counterparts who were half-Luo and half-Luyia by socialization) than speakers with a single ethnicity, this attitude was expressed in their speech.

10. Conclusion and Further Research

From the quantification carried out in this study, it is evident that the Luo/Luyia bilingual speakers in Kiboswa exhibited three linguistic patterns in intergroup interaction. Speech divergence, Speech convergence and Code Switching were adopted by these speakers in varying degrees depending on each speaker's ethnicity. During speech divergence, Luos outscored Luyias, thus were observed to diverge more. This high divergence was attributed to social identity processes. As regards speech convergence, Luyias scored more than Luos indicating that they converged more. Similarity attraction and social exchange processes caused the Luyia respondents to converge more. The third linguistic pattern exhibited by Luo/Luyia bilinguals in Kiboswa was code switching albeit with very low scores. The study found that code switching is a strategy Luo/Luyia bilinguals used to index two ethnic identities simultaneously and also to achieve neutrality especially when they did not wish to commit themselves to a single ethnic identity which could be perceived as either speech convergence or divergence, by their addressees. In this study Luyias code switched more than Luos.

In spite of the low scores of code switching (compared to those of speech divergence and convergence), a majority of speakers (76 %) in Kiboswa were found to switch between the two contact languages. This, therefore, means that this communicative strategy is important to this border community and could not be ignored during the analyses of data. Additionally, speakers with dual ethnicities outscored those with a single ethnicity when it came to speech convergence and code switching. In order to get more insights on this issue it is important that more speakers with dual ethnicities be investigated either on their own or in mixed groups. There is also a possibility that speakers with dual ethnicities in other border areas may exhibit different patterns from those in Kiboswa. My analyses did not consider other speaker variables such as age, social class and sex; it would be interesting to determine the cumulative effect of these variables on language use in bilingual communities.

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