

Speech Community and Social Language Codes: A Sociolinguistic Study of Mampruli-English Codeswitching in Nalerigu, Ghana

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Abstract : Ghana boasts of a rich linguistic diversity, with around eighty-seven indigenous languages coexisting with English, the official language. Within this multilingual environment, speech communities adopt bilingual code choices as a common practice, as people seamlessly switch between Ghanaian languages and English. Extensive research has delved into this phenomenon from various perspectives, including the role of bilingual code choices in teaching, its implications for language policy, and its significance in multilingual communities. Yet, a noticeable gap in the literature persists, with most studies focusing on codeswitching between English and the major southern Ghanaian languages like Twi, Ga, and Ewe. The intricate dynamics of codeswitching with minority indigenous languages, such as Mampruli spoken in northern Ghana, remain largely unexplored. This thesis embarks on an investigation into Mampruli-English codeswitching, delving into the linguistic practices of educated Mampruli speakers. The data collection methods encompass interviews, recorded radio programs, and ethnographic observation. The analytical framework employed draws upon the Ethnography of Communication, with observation notes and transcribed interviews thoughtfully classified into discernible themes. The research findings suggest that a bilingual's tendency to switch from Mampruli to English is significantly influenced by factors such as the level of education, age, gender, perceptions of language prestige, and religious beliefs. In essence, this study represents a pioneering endeavor, marking the first comprehensive study on codeswitching practices within the Mampruli-English context and making a significant contribution to our understanding of Mampruli linguistics, covering the social language codes reflecting the speech community. In a region where such research has been scarce for the past four decades, this study addresses a critical knowledge gap, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of language use in northern Ghana.

Keywords : codeswitching, English, ethnography of communication, Mampruli, sociolinguistics

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