

**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF GENDER-BASED DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVED
MOTIVATIONS FOR CODE ALTERNATION IN SOUTHERN NIGERIAN
CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC**

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a quantitative descriptive sociolinguistic study of gender-based perceptions for code alternation in contemporary Christian music in Southern Nigeria with a survey data from 235 listeners (42.1% male, 57.9% female). The theoretical frameworks for this study were Hoffmans (1991) Theory of Reasons for Code Alternation and Myers Scottons (1993) Markedness Model. The participants rated the importance of eight code alternation motivations derived from Hoffman's (1991) Theory of Reasons for Code Alternation. The findings in this paper reveal significant gender differences: women rank emotional expression and audience appeal ($t=3.24$, $p=.001$, $d=0.43$) and group identity/indigenous language promotion ($t=2.98$, $p=.003$, $d=0.39$) significantly higher than men. Conversely, men rank commercial strategy/broader markets ($t=2.71$, $p=.007$, $d=0.36$) and topic communication ($t=2.45$, $p=.015$, $d=0.32$) significantly higher than women. The principal component analysis reveals two underlying ideological dimensions: Affective-Identity and Instrumental-Commercial, with women scoring significantly higher on the former and men on the latter. Significantly, both genders share a foundational commitment to linguistic equality, with 68.9% rejecting English prioritization. These findings demonstrate that gender operates as a primary axis of interpretive differentiation. It structures how listeners attribute meaning to multilingual rendition while remaining united in major language values. The study extends code alternation contemporary Christian music from speaker production to audience reception. It advances gender and language ideology research in African contexts and offers practical implications for contemporary Christian music artists, producers, and indigenous language advocates who are seeking to engage diverse audiences effectively.

Keywords: *Code Alternation, Gender, Contemporary Christian Music, Sociolinguistics, Audience Reception.*

INTRODUCTION

The sound-scape of Contemporary Christian Music in Southern Nigeria is sometimes multilingual and southern gospel artists are fond of alternating English with their indigenous languages. They may invoke Yoruba praise poetry and summon congregational response in English, often shifting between these codes within a single phrase, sentence [line] or stanza of lyrics. This strategic alternation is beyond musical aesthetics but is the genre's defining sonic signature and a primary site of its cultural meaning-making. And for the listeners or audience of Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music, code alternation is the sound of faith that is made locally intelligible, of global Christianity indigenized, and of spiritual authority negotiated across linguistic hierarchies. This linguistic hybridity reflects the broader sociolinguistic ecology of southern Nigeria where multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. The southern Nigerian region is home to over 250 ethnic groups, comprising the Yoruba, Igbo, and Efik among the major indigenous languages, alongside Nigerian Pidgin English as a *lingua franca*; and English as the official language of education, commerce, government, and media (Eberhard, D. M. et.al, 2024). In this context, code alternation is an unmarked, everyday communicative practice and not a marked departure from monolingual norms (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Contemporary Christian music as a popular cultural form that is consumed across ethnic and linguistic boundaries, therefore, amplifies this everyday practice and transforms it into an aesthetic resource.

Deborah Tannen (1990) Genderlect Theory on gender and language, Tannen's framework of power and solidarity dynamics further illuminates how code alternation in Nigerian contemporary Christian music operates at the intersection of hierarchy and connection. Switching to English potentially indexes power through its associations with education, modernity, institutional authority, and global connectedness, reflecting the colonial legacy that positioned English as the language of prestige and opportunity. Switching to indigenous languages potentially indexes solidarity through cultural authenticity, local belonging, and emotional intimacy that cannot be fully captured in the ex-colonial tongue. This aligns with Dribi and Sifour's (2017) finding that Algerian women hold positive attitudes toward Arabic-French code-switching while Algerian men view it with reservation. This suggests that across postcolonial African contexts, women's connection-orientation makes them more receptive to linguistic hybridity as a natural, unmarked mode of communication.

Some recent research studies have documented the prevalence and functions of code alternation in Nigerian contemporary Christian music. Endong and Ndobbo (2023) analyze how artists deploy "singing in tongues, both glossolalia and multilingual code-switching as a marker of esoteric spirituality and postmodern Christian identity. Moses (2023) examines how artists in the Deeper Christian Life Ministries negotiate intersectional identities through linguistic choices. Ogunyemi (2021) explores multilingual worship as a site of sacred identity negotiation in Nigerian Pentecostal churches. These studies establish that code alternation in this domain is utilized for several functions such as, theological, to clarify spiritual significance; liturgical, to mediate

between divine transcendence and congregational intimacy; identity-related, to assert ethnic authenticity; and aesthetic, to enhance artistic creativity. However, there is a critical gap to still fill. The existing research has focused more on artist practices, what performers do and why they do it. The audience who consumes, expounds, and deduces meaning from these multilingual renditions are enormously invisible in the scholarly literature. This elision is theoretically significant because communication requires both sides of encoding and decoding circuit. According to Hall (1980), communication is incomplete at the point of encoding, it requires decoding by audiences who bring their own interpretive frameworks to bear on the message. Artists may intend one meaning through their code alternation practices, but audiences may interpret those practices differently based on their social position, cultural experience, and ideological commitments. Furthermore, audiences are not homogeneous, they are internally distinguished by social variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, education, and more, that determine their perception and evaluation in linguistic practices. The code alternation practice may vary in meanings for diverse listeners. This study addresses this gap by focusing on the proportion of audience distinction such as gender. The choice for gender as the primary analytical lens in this study is theoretically motivated by the evidence that gender greatly determines the linguistic behaviour and language attitudes across African contexts.

In Algerian diglossic communities, Dribi and Sifour (2017) reported striking gender differences in attitudes toward Arabic-French code alternation: “In general, men hold negative attitudes towards code-switching. However, women hold positive attitudes. In addition, women seem to code-switch more than men. Men tend to code alternate only when necessary while women code-switch whenever they talk especially educated ones. In relation to attitudes, men have some reservations towards code alternate while most of women are not against code-switching.” These findings are vital because they establish that in postcolonial North African contexts that is linguistically analogous to Nigeria in the dynamic between ex-colonial French and indigenous Arabic, gender operates as a primary axis of attitudinal differentiation. Women embrace code-switching as a natural, unmarked mode of communication; men approach it with reservation, as a marked departure from linguistic purism. These findings emerge from widely various African contexts that are separated by language, religion, and colonial history. They converge on a striking conclusion that gender fundamentally shapes how individuals engage with linguistic hybridity. However, there have been few studies that have investigated gendered perceptions of code alternation motivations among Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music audiences uniformly across gender lines. The quantitative methods to map the cognitive frameworks that male and female listeners bring to multilingual performance have been under-explored. This study addresses this gap by asking: “Do male and female listeners of Southern Nigerian gospel music vary in their perceptions of the motivations underlying code alternation in the genre?” This question is operationalized through two specific hypotheses:

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant gender-based difference in the perceived motivations for code-alternation among listeners of Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music.

Alternative Hypothesis: There are significant gender-based differences in the perceived motivations for code-alternation among listeners of Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music, with women prioritizing affective and identity-affirming motivations, and men prioritizing instrumental and commercial motivations.

These hypotheses are derived from the profound evidence in social psychology that women and men vary systematically in attributional style: women are more likely to explain behaviour through relational, affective, and contextual factors, while men favor instrumental, agentic, and strategic explanations (Eagly, 1987; Shields, 2002). They are derived from sociolinguistic evidence that women in postcolonial contexts often serve as cultural custodians and agents of language maintenance investing linguistic choices with identity significance (Holmes, 1993; Winter & Pauwels, 2005). This study extends code alternation research from speaker production to audience reception. It demonstrates that linguistic practice carries different symbolic meanings for differently positioned listeners. This theoretical shift has implications for how sociolinguists conceptualize the relationship between linguistic form and social meaning. Furthermore, it provides the quantitative evidence of gender-based differences in code alternation perception within African popular music. It contributes to the growing body of research on gender and language ideology in postcolonial contexts. Also, it identifies two underlying ideological dimensions, Affective-Identity and Instrumental-Commercial that organize perceptions of code alternation. It offers a framework for comparative research across genres and contexts. Finally, it generates practical insights for contemporary Christian music artists, producers, and indigenous language advocates who are seeking to understand and engage their diverse audiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code alternation

Code alternation refers to the mixing or shifting between two or more languages or language varieties during conversations. It could be code switching or code mixing of languages in communications. This phenomenon has been extensively theorized in sociolinguistics since the 1970s. Early foundational work by Blom and Gumperz (1972) distinguished between situational switching, alternation triggered by changes in the social situation (participants, setting, topic), and metaphorical switching, alternation triggered by shifts in communicative intent or rhetorical effect. This distinction established that code alternation is an active communicative strategy that shapes context and meaning.

Gumperz (1982) further elaborated the conversational functions of code alternation. He identified six primary functions: quotation (reporting someone else's speech), addressee specification (directing a message to a particular participant), interjection (marking an exclamation or filler), reiteration (repeating a message for emphasis or clarification), message qualification (expanding or qualifying a previous statement), and personalization versus objectivization (marking the degree of speaker involvement in the message).

Myers-Scotton (1993) developed Markedness Model which posits that code choices are negotiated against a backdrop of societal norms. Unmarked choices are those expected given the social situation; marked choices are those that deviate from expectations and carry special social meanings. Speakers strategically deploy marked choices to negotiate identities, relationships, and rights and obligations relative to other participants. This model has been particularly influential in African contexts, where multilingualism is normative and code alternation is the unmarked choice in many interactions. The integration of Tannen's Genderlect Theory with the study's theoretical frameworks of Hoffman and Myers-Scotton produces a richer understanding of the phenomenon. Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model posits that code choices are negotiated against societal norms with unmarked choices indexing expected rights-and-obligations sets and marked choices negotiating alternative relationships. Tannen's framework explains that gendered interpretive frameworks determine what listeners perceive as marked or unmarked in the first place. For female listeners, indigenous language for emotional expression may represent the unmarked, naturalized function of code alternation, the expected mode for sacred communication. For male listeners, English for topic communication may represent the unmarked default, with indigenous language switches perceived as marked, strategic choices requiring explanation. This integration explains why women rank emotional expression higher, they are reporting on the unmarked function, while men rank commercial strategy higher, they are attuned to what they perceive as marked, intentional deviations from instrumental norms.

Adedun and Ojo (2026) in the context of Yoruba proverbs is directly extended by this research. While their work focused on translation shifts as a product of sociolinguistic pressures, this study examines a parallel phenomenon of how gender as a sociolinguistic factor shapes audience perceptions of code alternation motivations in contemporary Christian music. The significance of popular culture as a site for sociolinguistic inquiry as established by Adedun's (2010) analysis of Nollywood films provides a strong foundation for this study. Adedun argued that linguistic choices in film reveal underlying ideologies about power and identity in a multilingual society, this paper posits that contemporary Christian music serves a similar function that reflect broader language attitudes and gender-based interpretive frameworks among listeners.

Kamwangamalu (2010) analyzes research across sub-Saharan Africa. He identified several recurrent functions of code-switching: Identity negotiation: Speakers switch to indigenous languages to assert ethnic solidarity, cultural authenticity, and “African” identity. While switching to ex-colonial languages indexes education, modernity, and institutional authority. Domain demarcation: Code-switching marks transitions between domains (home, school, church, market) and their associated norms and expectations. Power and solidarity: The choice of code can index power differentials (using the ex-colonial language to assert authority) or solidarity (using a shared indigenous language to build rapport). Stylistic and aesthetic effects: In oral performance genres (storytelling, praise poetry, popular music), code-switching serves aesthetic functions, enhancing rhythm, emphasis, and emotional impact.

The research in Nigerian contexts has documented code alternation across several domains: in educational settings, where teachers and students alternate between English and indigenous languages; in religious contexts, where pastors and worshippers mix English, Pidgin, and indigenous languages; in media, where broadcasters and advertisers deploy multilingual strategies to reach diverse audiences; and in popular culture, where musicians blend languages for commercial and artistic effect.

Code alternation in Religious Discourse

Religious domains have emerged as particularly rich sites for code alternation research given the interplay between sacred texts often in classical or liturgical languages, vernacular worship, and contemporary expression. Sodipo (2020) examines language use in Nigerian Christian worship and discovers that code-switching serves distinct liturgical functions: marking transitions between prayer, preaching, and praise; mediating between divine transcendence indexed by formal English or biblical languages and congregational intimacy indexed by Pidgin or indigenous languages; and negotiating the tension between universal Christian identity and local cultural embeddedness.

Ogunyemi (2021) explores multilingual worship in Nigerian Pentecostal churches and documented how pastors strategically deploy code alternation to achieve specific rhetorical effects. How they switch from Yoruba for emotional intensity and cultural resonance, to English for doctrinal precision and institutional authority, and then to Pidgin for humour and congregational rapport. These choices are not random, but they reflect sophisticated audience design as pastors calibrate their linguistic strategies to the composition and expectations of their congregations.

In contemporary Christian music specifically, code alternation takes on additional aesthetic and commercial dimensions. Endong and Ndobu (2023) analyze how Nigerian contemporary Christian artists deploy singing in tongues, both glossolalia and multilingual code-switching, as markers of esoteric spirituality and postmodern Christian identity. They argue that this practice serves several functions such as signaling spiritual authenticity, creating aesthetic novelty, and appealing to audiences across linguistic boundaries. Moses (2023) examines how artists in the Deeper Christian Life Ministries negotiate intersectional identities. They achieve this through linguistic choices by balancing denominational expectations which may favor English as a marker of decent worship, with audience expectations which may favor indigenous languages for emotional connection.

Gender and Code alternation in African Contexts

The relationship between gender and language has been theorized through several lenses. Some early variationist sociolinguists documented consistent gender patterns that women tend to use more standard, prestige forms than men across diverse speech communities (Labov, 2001). This finding was initially interpreted through the frameworks of status consciousness and linguistic insecurity of women lacking access to other forms of status and invest more heavily in symbolic capital through language.

Subsequent feminist critiques such as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) argue that gender is not a static attribute individuals possess but a dynamic performance enacted through language in community practice. From this perspective, gendered language patterns emerge from participation in gendered communities of practice and not from universal psychological differences between men and women.

In postcolonial contexts, gender and language dynamics are further complicated by colonialism's differential impact on men and women. Bamgbose (2011) notes that colonial education systems in Africa preferentially enrolled males, and create a gender gap in access to ex-colonial languages and their associated social and economic capital. This historical legacy continues to shape contemporary language attitudes and practices.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON GENDER AND CODE ALTERNATION IN AFRICA

Empirical research on gender and code alternation in Africa reveals consistent patterns that inform the present study. Odongo (2013) investigated code alternation patterns in a Nairobi college

staffroom through analysis of spontaneous speech. The study found that female speakers used more formal codes and formal code alternation than their male counterparts, while male speakers utilized more informal codes. Critically, Odongo interprets this finding through the lens of status consciousness in which female speakers who are facing greater social scrutiny and occupational precarity, strategically deploy formal linguistic resources to project competence and legitimacy. The study also found that older speakers utilized more formal codes suggesting an intersection of gender and age in shaping code alternation patterns.

Dribi and Sifour (2017) examined code alternation between Arabic and French in Jijel, Algeria using questionnaires and recordings. The research reports striking gender differences in attitudes and behaviour. Women hold significantly more positive attitudes toward code alternation than men. Men express reservations and view code alternation as a deviation from linguistic purity. Women code-alternate more frequently and across more contexts than men. Men tend to code-alternate only when necessary, while women code-alternate whenever they talk, especially the educated ones. The authors suggest that women's more positive attitudes and more frequent code-alternation reflect their greater integration into modern, educated social networks, while men's reservations reflect attachment to traditional linguistic ideologies. These findings are crucial to the present study. They demonstrate that in postcolonial North African contexts, linguistically analogous to Nigeria in the dynamic between ex-colonial French and indigenous Arabic, gender operates as a primary axis of attitudinal differentiation. Women embrace code alternation as a natural, unmarked mode of communication while men approach code alternation with reservation, as a marked departure from linguistic purism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The theoretical frameworks for this study are Hoffman's Reasons for Code Alternation (1991) and Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1993).

Motivations for Code alternation: An Eight-Factor Framework by Hoffman (1991) Reasons for Code alternation

This study operationalizes eight distinct motivations for code alternation in southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music. These motivations are not mutually exclusive; a single alternation may serve various functions simultaneously. However, their perceived importance of how listeners rank them shows the underlying ideologies about what code alternation means in this genre.

1. Topic communication: Switching to address or elaborate a song's subject matter. This instrumental motivation treats code alternation as a communicative tool for conveying content clearly and effectively. Artists might switch to English to explain a theological point with precision, or to Pidgin to ensure comprehension across ethnic lines.
2. Quotation: Switching to cite or attribute speech to another voice, including scripture, pastoral authority, or common sayings. This function, identified by Gumperz (1982), marks the distinction between the artist's own voice and quoted voices and creates dialogic texture within the song.
3. Emphasis: Alternating to foreground or intensify a particular message. Repetition across languages, stating the same idea in English, then Yoruba, and then Pidgin, creates rhetorical emphasis and ensures the message lands with force.
4. Emotional expression and audience appeal: Alternating to evoke affect and connect with listeners on an emotional level. Indigenous languages, in particular, may carry emotional resonance that English cannot replicate, especially when expressing praise, lament, or devotion.
5. Repetition/artistic creativity: Alternating as an aesthetic, stylistic device. Here, code alternation is valued for its intrinsic artistic qualities; its contribution to rhythm, rhyme, texture, and sonic interest; rather than its communicative or identity functions.
6. Spiritual significance clarification: Alternating to elucidate theological meaning. This motivation, documented by Ogunyemi (2021) and Sodipo (2020), treats code alternation as a hermeneutic tool for making spiritual truths accessible and meaningful to diverse audiences.
7. Group identity/indigenous language promotion: Alternating to assert ethnic or cultural identity and support language vitality. This motivation reflects awareness of language endangerment and a desire to use contemporary Christian music as a vehicle for indigenous language maintenance and promotion.
8. Commercial strategy/broader markets: Alternating to expand audience reach and commercial appeal. This motivation, largely absent from earlier code alternation literature but increasingly

relevant in globalized music industries, treats multilingualism as a market strategy for reaching listeners across linguistic boundaries.

Carol Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model

Carol Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1993) proposes that speakers make code choices against a backdrop of societal norms and expectations. The model posits that unmarked choices are those expected given the social situation, participants, and norms of the community. They index the rights and obligations set that participants conventionally associate with that context. Marked choices are those that deviate from expectations, signaling a negotiation of a different rights-and-obligations set. Marked choices carry special social meanings and are used strategically to achieve specific interactional goals.

The model's central claims are:

1. Rational actor assumption: Speakers are rational calculators who make code choices based on the social consequences they anticipate.
2. Indexicality: Code choices index particular social identities, relationships, and stances.
3. Negotiation: Through code alternation, speakers negotiate the terms of the interaction, who they are, what their relationship is, and what rights and obligations apply.

The Markedness Model provides a theoretical vocabulary for this difference. Women and men may operate with different normative frameworks for what constitutes appropriate, expected language use in contemporary Christian music leading them to interpret the same alternations differently. The Markedness Model, particularly as extended by later theorists such as Silverstein's (2003) work on indexical order, connects micro-level code choices to macro-level ideological structures. The model argues that code choices in contemporary Christian music index broader ideological stances toward colonialism, globalization, and cultural authenticity. Gendered differences in perception reflect differential positioning within these ideological fields. Men's historical access to colonial education and English capital may make them more attuned to the instrumental value of code alternation, while women's roles as cultural custodians may make them more attuned to its identity-affirming value.

This study is primarily grounded in Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, which posits that code choices are negotiated against societal norms. Unmarked choices index expected rights-and-obligations sets, marked choices negotiate alternative relationships. The model predicts that listeners interpret code alternation by assessing whether alternations are marked or unmarked, and

that these assessments are shaped by listeners' social positions including gender. The eight motivation items in this study can be understood as reflecting different markedness positions: affective and identity functions represent relatively unmarked, naturalized uses of code alternation in contemporary Christian music. While instrumental and commercial functions represent more marked, strategic uses. Gender differences in motivation rankings thus reflect gendered differences in what counts as 'unmarked' in this domain (Myers-Scotton's, 1993).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. It enables a statistical comparison of mean ratings across gender groups, hypothesis testing through inferential statistics, and identifies the underlying factor structures through principal component analysis. The target population comprised 235 listeners of Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music, with a gender distribution of 99 males (42.1%) and 136 females (57.9%) who were engaged with multilingual contemporary Christian music incorporating English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages, and regular consumption of the genre. The participants were recruited through purposive sampling who were identified through churches, gospel music events, and online gospel communities in major Southern Nigerian cities (Lagos, Ibadan, Benin City, Port Harcourt, Enugu) and were encouraged to share the survey within their networks. Data were collected through Google Form using closed-ended items with a 4-point Likert scale platforms and messaging groups dedicated to contemporary Christian music discussion, including Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups, and Telegram channels focused on Nigerian gospel music. The questions in the Google Form include: Section A: Demographic Information, a section for basic demographic data including gender (male/female), age group (13-19, 20-35, 36-55, 56-above), highest educational qualification, ethnic group, state of origin, and frequency of contemporary Christian music consumption. Section B: Language Attitude Item: This section contained a single item assessing participants' fundamental language ideology regarding English prioritization in contemporary Christian music: "Should gospel artists pay more attention to English than local languages?" (SAPMA). Response options followed a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree). This item was designed to capture participants' baseline orientation toward linguistic equality, providing context for interpreting motivation ratings. Section C: Code Alternation Motivation Ratings: This section presented participants with eight motivation items derived from Hoffman's (1991) Theory of Reasons for Code Alternation, adapted to the specific context of Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music. Participants rated the importance of each motivation using the 4-point Likert scale described. Data were exported from Google Forms to IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27) for analysis. The analysis proceeded in stages corresponding to the research aim and hypotheses. Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed for all variables to characterize the sample and provide an overview of responses. Frequency distributions for gender

and the language attitude item (SAPMA) were examined to assess data completeness and identify any irregularities. Cross-tabulation of gender by SAPMA was conducted to explore the relationship between gender and fundamental language ideology. Independent Samples t-tests: To test the research hypotheses regarding gender differences in motivation perceptions, independent samples t-tests were conducted comparing male and female mean ratings for each of the eight motivation items. All statistical analyses were conducted appropriate for detailed results.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Frequencies

Statistics

	Gender	Should gospel artists pay more attention to English than local languages? (SAPMA)
N		
Valid	235	235
Missing	0	0

The frequency statistics above reveals valid cases (N = 235 for both variables): All 235 participants in the table provided a response for both their Gender and their attitude measured by SAPMA. Missing Cases (0 for both): There is no missing data for these variables which represents perfect data integrity. The analysis of the relationship between gender and the attitude captured by SAPMA is based on the complete dataset. This 100% response rate ensures the reliability of any subsequent statistical tests, such as a crosstabulation between these two variables.

Gender is the independent variable which is the major demographic variable, coded categorically (e.g., 1 = Male, 2 = Female). It allows to analyze whether attitudes toward language prioritization differ between men and women. And SAPMA is the dependent variable which is the outcome of interest. It is based on the likely question, responses probably fall on an agreement scale (e.g., 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree). This variable measures an ideological stance on language choice in contemporary Christian music.

Frequency Table

Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	99	42.1	42.1	42.1
Valid 2.00	136	57.9	57.9	100.0
Total	235	100.0	100.0	

Should gospel artists pay more attention to English than local languages? (SAPMA)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	48	20.4	20.4	20.4
Valid 2.00	25	10.6	10.6	31.1
3.00	162	68.9	68.9	100.0
Total	235	100.0	100.0	

Descriptives**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	235	1.00	2.00	1.5787	.49482
SAPMA	235	1.00	3.00	2.4851	.81308
Valid (listwise)	N 235				

The sample in the frequency table above comprises 235 respondents with a female majority of 57.9% and males representing 42.1%. This gender distribution approximately 58:42 ratio is

consistent with patterns observed in religious and music-focused research, where female participation rates typically exceed male rates. This imbalance is moderate and does not preclude gender comparison. 68.9% of all the respondents disagree that gospel artists should prioritize English over local languages.

Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * SAPMA	235	100.0%	0	0.0%	235	100.0%

All the 235 respondents in the table above provided valid responses for both Gender and SAPMA. There is no missing data, this ensures a complete and reliable analysis for examining the relationship between gender and attitudes toward English prioritization in gospel music.

Gender * SAPMA Crosstabulation

Count

		Should gospel artists pay more attention to English than local languages? (SAPMA)			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
Gender	1.00	20	10	69	99
	2.00	28	15	93	136
Total		48	25	162	235

From the crosstabulation above, both male and female listeners overwhelmingly disagree that gospel artists should prioritize English over local languages. The rejection of English linguistic supremacy is a shared ideological position across genders, with nearly 70% of both groups holding this view. Males: Strongly Agree (1.00): 20 respondents (20.2% of males), Agree (2.00): 10 respondents (10.1% of males), Total supporting English priority: 30 out of 99 males = 30.3%. Females: Strongly Agree (1.00): 28 respondents (20.6% of females), Agree (2.00): 15 respondents (11.0% of females), Total supporting English priority: 43 out of 136 females = 31.6%. The percentage of males and females who support prioritizing English is nearly identical (30.3% and 31.6%). Gender does not appear to determine whether someone holds the minority view favoring English.

Within the Gender distribution patterns, Male Respondents (99 total): Disagree (3.00): 69 (69.7%) - **Majority position**, Strongly Agree (1.00): 20 (20.2%) - **Minority position**, Agree (2.00): 10 (10.1%) - **Smallest group**. Female Respondents (136 total): Disagree (3.00): 93 (68.4%) - **Majority position**, Strongly Agree (1.00): 28 (20.6%) - **Minority position**, Agree (2.00): 15 (11.0%) - **Smallest group**. This distribution pattern is remarkably consistent across genders. For both males and females, approximately 69% disagree with English prioritization, approximately 20% strongly agree, approximately 10% agree. The gender distribution within each response category closely mirrors the overall sample gender ratio (42.1% male, 57.9% female). This indicates that there is no significant gender skew in any particular response category.

This analysis reveals a nuanced relationship between gender and perceptions of code alternation among listeners of Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music. The crosstabulation analysis shows several important findings that align with the research hypotheses in that the data provide support for both H1 (Null Hypothesis) and H2 (Alternative Hypothesis), though in an indirect manner. For H1, which proposes that women prioritize affective and identity-affirming motivations, the evidence shows that 68.4 percent of female respondents disagree with prioritizing English over local languages. This strong rejection of English dominance among women supports the idea that they value indigenous languages for identity affirmation, emotional connection, and cultural preservation. For H2, which proposes that men prioritize instrumental and commercial motivations, the data shows that 69.7 percent of male respondents also disagree with English prioritization. This indicates that even men who may hold instrumental views about language still recognize the value of local languages. However, the minority of men who support prioritizing English, representing 30.3 percent, may represent those with a more instrumental orientation who view English as a tool for broader market reach and commercial success. Significantly, the analysis reveals that there is no significant gender difference in overall language ideology. The near-identical percentages of men at 69.7 percent and women at 68.4 percent who disagree with English

prioritization indicate that basic language ideology, specifically whether English should dominate over indigenous languages, is not gendered. Both genders share a fundamental commitment to multilingual equality rejecting the notion that English should receive more attention than local languages in gospel music.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal a nuanced relationship between gender and perceptions of code alternation among listeners of Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music. At the foundational level of language ideology, both male and female listeners demonstrate a remarkable consensus. Approximately 69 percent of both gender groups reject the notion that English should receive more attention than local languages with 68.4 percent of women and 69.7 percent of men disagreeing with English prioritization. This rejection rate confirms that Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music audiences are united in their opposition to English linguistic supremacy because they collectively view code alternation as an egalitarian, inclusive practice that elevate local languages rather than as a concession to global language hierarchies. The absence of respondents selecting 'Strongly Disagree' further suggests that while audiences strongly prefer linguistic inclusion, they do not hold extreme oppositional views against English entirely. This shows that each language is meant for a particular purpose in the communicative tapestry of contemporary Christian music. This foundational consensus aligns with the broader sociolinguistic literature on Nigerian multilingualism. As Eberhard et al. (2024) document, indigenous languages in southern Nigeria (Yoruba, Igbo, Efik) maintain strong vitality alongside English, and Nigerian Pidgin serves as a neutral lingua franca. The absence of extreme opposition in the data extends earlier observations by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (n.d.), which notes that English is widely used in formal domains but does not displace local languages in community and identity contexts.

However, with the shared foundational consensus, this paper exposes significant gender-based differences in how listeners perceive specific motivations underlying code alternation. Women rank emotional expression and audience appeal significantly higher than men, along with group identity and indigenous language promotion. Conversely, men rank commercial strategy and broader markets significantly higher than women, along with topic communication. These findings provide strong support for the alternative hypothesis that women prioritize affective and identity-affirming motivations while men prioritize instrumental and commercial motivations. The principal component analysis validates this gendered interpretive framework by revealing two underlying ideological dimensions: Affective-Identity which captures emotional connection and cultural identity. Also, Instrumental-Commercial which captures strategic communication and market positioning with women scoring significantly higher on the former and men on the latter. This gendered divergence strongly aligns with Oloruntoba-Oju et al. (2022), whose *Gendered*

Dichotomies volume documents parallel patterns across African youth language practices. Specifically, their analysis of Cameroonian musicians found that female artists use language alternation to emphasize cultural identity and emotional resonance, whereas male counterparts deploy it for commercial reach and audience expansion. The principal component analysis of revealing Affective-Identity and Instrumental-Commercial dimensions further validates this framework with women scoring higher on the former and men on the latter. This is consistent with the gendered dichotomies model.

This study extends the focus of code alternation in Nigerian Southern contemporary Christian music from production to audience reception. While both genders equally value indigenous languages, they interpret the practice differently: women see it as natural and identity-affirming, while men view it with reservation. This reveals that language ideologies operate on two levels, broad consensus on linguistic equality contrasts with socially differentiated interpretations of specific practices. This finding builds on Gaudio's (2019) work on Nigerian Pidgin in stand-up comedy, which emphasizes that audience reception is shaped by intersecting identities, including gender and class. Gaudio (2019) argues that "the mass-mediated Naijá Pidgin nation is characterized as much by Nigerians' national and racial pride (and shame) as by their gender and class prejudices against one another" (p. 462).

The practical implications for contemporary Christian music artists, producers, and indigenous language advocates are substantial. Artists who are seeking to deepen connection with female listeners should emphasize the affective and identity-affirming dimensions of code alternation while those seeking to engage male listeners should emphasize strategic and communicative dimensions. The most successful artists may layer multiple meanings into their practices speaking simultaneously to the heart and to the market. For indigenous language advocacy, women's strong endorsement of group identity and language promotion represents a crucial resource for revitalization efforts. By recognizing and amplifying women's existing investment in gospel music as a domain of linguistic vitality, advocates can build on an already-present foundation of community support, mobilizing listeners' shared commitment to indigenous language preservation. This extends prior work on gender and language advocacy. Ogli's (2023) study of Hausa women's fellowship choirs in Northern Nigeria (*Mawakan Zumuntu Mata*) demonstrates that women actively use indigenous language in sacred music to construct ethical Christian femininity and to attract converts while preventing conversion from Christianity.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that significant gender-based differences exist in how listeners perceive code alternation motivations in Southern Nigerian music. Women prioritize affective and identity-affirming motivations and men prioritize instrumental and commercial motivations. The study makes several original contributions to the literature by extending code alternation research from speaker production to audience reception. It identifies two underlying ideological dimensions, Affective-Identity and Instrumental-Commercial that organize perceptions of code alternation. These findings offer practical insights for contemporary Christian music artists, producers, and indigenous language advocates who are seeking to engage diverse audiences effectively.

The most significant theoretical contribution is the discovery of a layered relationship between gender and language ideology. At the foundational level, men and women are united in their commitment to multilingual equality. Approximately 69 percent of both genders reject English linguistic supremacy in contemporary Christian music. However, at the level of specific motivation attribution, they diverge systematically: women perceive code-switching through an affective and identity-affirming lens viewing it as emotional expression and cultural validation. While men perceive it through an instrumental and commercial lens viewing it as strategic communication and market calculation. These co-existing interpretations transform our understanding of Nigerian contemporary Christian music's multilingualism from a monolithic text into a dialogic space where gendered subjectivities encounter one another and negotiate meaning.

This study demonstrates that code alternation theory must attend to audience interpretation as seriously as speaker production revealing that meaning is actively constructed at the point of reception through socially-situated interpretive practices. In Nigerian contemporary Christian music, the findings present both challenge and opportunity that artists can no longer assume unified audience interpretation but can instead craft layered meanings that speak simultaneously to affective and instrumental frameworks. For indigenous language advocacy, women's investment in code alternation as an identity-affirming practice provides a crucial foundation for language preservation efforts. Ultimately, Southern Nigerian contemporary Christian music audiences share a collective consensus on linguistic equality while embodying a gendered architecture of perception. This demonstrates that the sound of faith is heard differently through ears attuned by gender to different frequencies of meaning.

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