

*English Language Vocabulary Usage of Indigenes of Ede:
A Predominantly Yoruba Speech Community*

Adebola Oyediran, The Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria
Adebola Michael, The Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The presence of an institution of higher learning in an indigenous town has impact on the social, political and economic lives of the people of such a community. More importantly, the language use of the people is very much impacted upon since one of the linguistic outcomes of the sustained contact of a target language (L₂) with a source language (L₁) in the course of history is the adaptation and integration of words from the former into the lexicon of the latter. The predominantly Yoruba language speech community which also has educated people who are bilingual in Yoruba and English Languages has witnessed and is still experiencing introduction of words such as Poly, Lecturer, Rector and other terms adapted into it. The paper discusses the impact a higher institution of learning, the Federal Polytechnic, Ede has on the language of the small community of Ede, the way the second language grows and gets adapted and adopted into the day to day language use, the factors that are responsible for borrowing and convergence as well as the linguistic consequences of loanwords in the Yoruba expanded vocabulary of this community. The paper considers the implication of the study for English language teaching and learning in Ede environment.

Keywords: indigenous, target language, source language, vocabulary, Yoruba, second language, speech community, bilingual

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Introduction

Ede town is an ancient and largely indigenous Yoruba community situated in Osun State, South West of Nigeria in West Africa. It is one of the older towns of the Yoruba people and is situated on the banks of Osun River near Ibadan. It is one of the towns that uphold the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba people. Traditionally, it is said to have been founded about 1500 by Timi Agbale, a hunter and warlord sent by the King of old Oyo "Alaafin Kori" (Katunga), of the then Oyo empire, to establish a settlement that was to protect the Oyo caravan route to Benin. Historically, Ede was an important town in Yorubaland and is still very relevant in upholding the Yoruba culture. As a result the people speak predominantly the Yoruba language. The Yoruba language is mainly spoken in West Africa with millions of speakers mainly in Nigeria and Benin with some in other parts of Africa. The traditional ruler is known as the Timi Agbale, the most prominent Timi in recent history is Oba John Adetoyese Laoye who made the "talking drum" popular. He was reputed to have entertained the Queen of England with his group of skilled drummers and poets when she first visited Nigeria and thereafter in her palace in England before he died in 1975. The present King of the town is Oba Munirudeen Adesola Lawal (Laminisa 1).

The Ede speech community being a largely indigenous Yoruba community uses the Standard Yoruba dialect which is also known as the Oyo dialect. The Yoruba language has been classified as one of the major languages in Nigeria simply because of the population that speaks it. In recent times certain factors such as the economy and location of schools has brought the people in contact with other languages.

The town of Ede parades an array of Elementary Schools, Middle Schools, High Schools, a Federal Polytechnic and two universities. One of them Adeleke University already has members of staff and students in the various faculties while the second university, The Redeemers University is under construction and when completed will become the permanent campus for the university which is presently situated at the Redemption camp Ground on the Lagos-Ibadan express way, South West Nigeria. With the myriad of educational institutions in Ede town the indigenes who predominantly speak Yoruba language are having frequent contact with students and staff of the various institutions who are mostly bilinguals of Yoruba and English.

A situation of language contact is presented and the impact is more on the indigenes as they have had to use English words and expressions in order to sell their goods and services to the staff and students of the various institutions highlighted above. Language as defined by Oluga (2006) is a systemic means of expressing ideas, facts, views, thoughts, opinions or a means of passing meaningful messages or information by the use of appropriate signs, sounds, symbols and gestures generally understood by all the users within a speech community.

Statement of the Problems

Nigeria being a multilingual society has adopted English Language as its official language with the resultant effect of bilingualism and multilingualism even in a predominantly indigenous community like Ede. It is of a fact that when more than one language is in regular use in a community certain things happen linguistically, sociologically, educationally, politically in that society. Thus the co-existence of

English and Yoruba languages in Ede community has produced various hybrid forms in terms of nativized or domesticated variety of English, characterized by interference, code-mixing and code-switching, on the part of the second language speakers (L2). This paper therefore aims to find solutions to the following research problems:

- a. What influence does the adoption of English language as the second language have on the people of Nigeria and Ede people in particular?
- b. What are some of the obvious issues posed by the co-existence of English and Yoruba languages in Ede?
- c. Do the differences, pose any learning problem?
- d. How are these learning problems solved?

Language and the Society

Language is a social phenomenon which is closely tied up with the social structure and value system of society. Society is a term that is used to cover a whole network of human relationships which results from individuals coming together in response to their basic urges towards self-preservation. Language is the basis of this network of human relationships and the vital force which holds society together. Thus we can reasonably conclude that language and society are inseparable. To study language without reference to the society that uses it is not only an incomplete exercise, but also an exercise that would yield little or no dividend according to Adeyanju (1998). Since Linguistics is merely interested in accounting for the structure of language at various levels such as lexis, syntax, phonology, etc without taking into consideration the social contexts in which such linguistic structures are used such a study cannot be complete, hence the relevance of sociolinguistics. In Nigeria, many language communities have had to master another language in addition to their mother tongue for their day to day interaction and official purposes.

There is a double relationship between language and society in the sense that society has an influence on language and at the same time language has an influence on society. That language and culture are inseparably linked is widely recognized. Since each language is a vehicle for expressing a particular culture, cultural influences and presuppositions can be observed in Nigerian English which are not found in the native English environment. As a dynamic phenomenon, language is readily adaptable to encode new experiences and cultural developments. Sapir (1929) explored the relationship between language, culture and personality and his submission is that language interpenetrates society and also a guide to social reality. He observed further that language powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes and that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language group. For instance the Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria have an elaborate greeting system which the educated elite among them carry into their use of English Language. To an English man "Good morning" is a formal impersonal way of greeting each other while to a Yoruba man "Good morning" only initiates greetings. He then goes on to ask of the well-being of the individual's wife or husband, the children and other members of the household. Greetings can also extend to official duties performed the previous day and if it is a festive period like Christmas or 'Ramadan' there are greetings for those too. In essence the L1 greetings pattern of the Yoruba educated elite who has English language as L2 is carried over to his use of

English language. The greeting pattern above is practiced among the staff and students of The Federal polytechnic and other educational institutions in Ede town. From the foregoing on the influence of language on the society and the influence of society on language we can summarize that language and society are mutually indispensable.

The Status of English in the Nigerian Multilingual Setup

The fact that bilingualism is widespread among Nigerians is not unusual for a country with over four hundred indigenous languages. The number of languages in Nigeria has been variously classified (Hansford, et al, 1976; Adekunle, 1976; Agheyisi, 1989; among others). Although the number varies from one to another, it is obviously clear from the different classifications that Nigeria is extremely linguistically diverse. Elugbe (1991) puts the number of indigenous languages in Nigeria between 394 to 400 while Bamgbose (1982) puts it at 513. It was because of this multilingual set up there was the need to adopt English as an official language through which tribes could interact.

Its status as the official language in Nigeria contributes to the promotion of the language in Nigeria. Today, in Nigeria as in other countries where English was implanted as a colonial legacy, it has become the language of politics, judiciary, mass-media, trade and economic transactions. It is indeed a prestigious language in Nigeria (Bamgbose et al 1995). As the official language it is used by government functionaries in carrying out instructions and functions in government offices. Indeed it is the language of internal communication among Nigerians of differing language backgrounds and the language of international communication. English also plays a key role in the educational system. A credit pass is necessary in the subject for transition from one level of education to another. It is the medium of instruction. Its importance as a medium of instruction is inevitable in a multilingual set up as ours.

Bilingualism in Nigeria and in Ede Community

Akindele and Adegbite (1999) describe bilingualism as a situation where two languages constitute the speech repertoire of members of a society and where the two languages are assigned similar or different functions within the society. Agbedo (2007) notes that, language contact occur when people from different linguistic backgrounds converge at a particular place for whatever reason or reasons to interact. In Nigeria several bilingual communities exist because of the over four hundred indigenous languages that the country is blessed with and when two languages meet, two cultures also meet resulting in lots of changes in that society. Such changes will necessarily affect the culture and the language of the speech community, and the entire recipients' society and this happens to be the case in Nigeria. Where there is bilingualism or language contact the result usually involves lexical borrowings and mixture of English and mother tongue expression. Akere (1977), Ayoola (1998) affirms this in their investigation of the causes, functions, characteristics and effects of code-switching and code-mixing. The investigations on the causes of the phenomena revealed sociolinguistic and psycholinguistics factors such as bilingualism. We have Yoruba and English bilingual communities as in the case of Ede, Hausa and English bilingual communities, Igbo and English bilingual communities and so on. With this type of scenario some of the types of bilingualism

identified by linguists are observed in the Nigerian linguistic environment in various patterns and in varying degrees. Types of bilingualism referred to here are:

i. Societal bilingualism- This is a situation whereby two languages exist and function within the society. In many bilingual communities in Nigeria, English Language and at least one indigenous language are assigned similar roles in some contexts and also distinct roles in other contexts.

ii. Individual bilingual- In this situation the bilingual individual has knowledge of and makes use of two languages though his competence in this two languages may be in varying degrees. The varying degrees of individual bilingualism has been described as

(a) Coordinate bilingual- This is the notion of an individual having equal proficiency in two languages across a range of contexts such that if the need arises for him to use any of his two languages in different situations he can effectively coordinate the two languages well. This is the case of ability to master the use of two languages. Fromkin, et al. (2003) and Afolayan, A. (1968). There are a handful of such bilinguals among lecturers and students in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria in general and in Ede town in particular.

(b) Compound bilingualism- For the compound bilingual he learnt his two languages at the same time under similar circumstances and he uses them in the same situations. The compound bilingual is not very common in Nigeria.

(c) Subordinate bilingualism- The subordinate bilingual is proficient in one of his languages and he therefore uses it more often and operates with it more effectively than his other language. In Nigeria, subordinate bilingualism is in various scales. Some illiterate bilinguals have the knowledge of the spoken forms of two indigenous languages.

Ede town, our focus for this study was predominantly a Yoruba speaking town until its contact with English. Thus, English and Yoruba, as languages, have co-existed in the discourse of the bilinguals in the town for some time now but not without its problems. Language contact in the broad sense should be seen as contact between two cultures that can be as a result of conquests, wars, migration, colonization, etc.' Whenever two languages come in contact within an individual or a community such an individual or host community inevitably becomes bilingual. Yusuf (1999). The growth of Yoruba - English bilingualism has not been without problems being a contact language in Nigeria, and in a situation such as this, the point of contact is usually the bilingual who code-mixes and code-switches in his utterances with some other language learning difficulties. The term *code* refers to a language or a variety of a language (Wardhaugh, 1992). Code-switching has been an interesting area of discussion in relation to bilingual or multilingual speech communities with various definitions by experts. Some have defined it as the alternating use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation (Milroy and Musyken, 1995; Gardner-Chloros,(1997). Oyetade (2001) exploring Code-Switching, Code-Mixing and Borrowing adopts the label "mixed speech" for a conversation that involves the use of two codes or languages. Interference is another issue due to the differences in the two languages.

The Federal Polytechnic, Ede and its Impact on the Community

The Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun state, Nigeria is a technological institution engaged in education, research and training targeted at sustainable development of the nation. The institution was established as a tertiary educational institution for the provision of courses of instruction, training and research in areas of science, technology, management and other fields of applied learning relevant to the human resource needs of the nation. The institution came into existence in February 1992 via Decree No. 33 of 25th July, 1979 as amended by Decree 5 of 1993. With the arrival of the Pioneer Rector, Chief Jimi Bamgbose from the United States of America, the Polytechnic took off properly in January, 1993 and this subsequently paved way for the admission of 847 Students (pioneer students) on 13th April, 1993. The differences in language are tied to so many factors like education, class, age sex, ethnic, background, culture and perhaps style which Yule (2006) calls 'social dialects'. The factor of education came into Ede environment with the establishment of the Polytechnic because the atmosphere of Ede changed. The otherwise sleeping town came alive and one of the effects of the academic community on the town is contact of the people with the academicians in the use of English in addition to Yoruba Language.

The linguistic inclination of the institution therefore began to impact its environment and still is. Some of the effects on the society is demonstrated in the fact that speakers of Yoruba Language in Ede town borrow words like "lecturer", omo poly" (meaning a student of the Federal Polytechnic Ede), "Baba security" (meaning a male security officer in the service of the Federal Polytechnic), "Iya casual" (meaning a female casual employee of the Federal Polytechnic) in their speech when they make reference to such individuals. The second aspect is the influence of language which being flexible has the capacity to describe both the natural and social environment of a community. It is not unusual to see elderly students attending the part-time programmes because they are challenged to enjoy a better life style as ability to speak English is a status symbol and opportunity to get white collar jobs which invariably is expected to lead to a better lifestyle.

Method of Data Collection

This paper investigates the influence of an academic environment in Ede, the issues arising from its bilingual setup and the effect on teaching and learning. The first set of subjects who participated in the case study were made up of forty five (45) market women and skilled workers such as drivers, most of whom had little or no education. It was not easy getting more of these people because many were skeptical as to the reason for so much questioning. They are mostly people that work or trade within The Federal Polytechnic, Ede or in the town. The second set of subjects who participated in the case study were made up of one hundred and twenty (120) ND 1 students of the Department of Office Technology Management and Quantity Surveying of The Federal Polytechnic, Ede in their natural school setting. The choice was ND 1 because these were still fresh from the environment and not yet properly groomed in the correct usage of the language. This is expected to help quickly identify the problems. Data was collected through observations, interviews and recording of discourse with the market women and through questionnaires and observations for the students. The data generated were subsequently analyzed and discussed. The analysis is limited to

selected aspects of issues affecting English language in Nigeria interference and code variation.

Discussion

The results of the study showed that there were lots of code –alternation and borrowing in the speeches of the respondents. As mentioned earlier, speakers of Yoruba Language in Ede town borrow words like “lecturer”, omo poly” (student of the Polytechnic), “Baba security” (male security officer), “Iya casual” (a female casual employee) etc. in their speech. The second aspect is the influence of language which being flexible has the capacity to describe both the natural and social environment of the community. The use of conjunctions such as ‘*but*’, ‘*and*’ etc within Yoruba texts to portray the ability to speak in English is observed. This is because of the value placed on the language.

EXAMPLE 1: Researcher and a Driver

Researcher ___ E melo ni e man hun rin l’ojo jumo? (How many trips do you make a day?)

Driver ___ A man nlo bi e meji abi meta **but** ojo ti business ba wa, o to emarun.

EXAMPLE 2: Researcher and a Waiter

Researcher ___ Ohun je wo lowa loni? (What is the menu for today.)

Waiter ___ **We have ‘Amala’ and ‘Gbegiri’ soup**

EXAMPLE 3: Observation of a customer and a Salesgirl

Customer ___ E lo ni noodles (How much is noodles?)

Sales girl ___ Muri meta ni Indomie *sugbon* fifty naira ni Chiki (Sixty naira

for Indomie noodles but Chiki noodles is fifty naira)

Customer ___ *Se eni* Nescafe

Sales lady ___ O wa

Customer ___ E lo ni

Sales lady ___ Twenty twenty naira (instead of saying twenty naira each).

Customer ___ Bring three and change

Sales lady ___ E se o mama *lecturer* (thank you madam lecturer)

In the discussions we note that there are lots of indigenous names in their responses such as *amala*, *ogunfe*, *oga*, *nama* etc taken from the Yoruba vocabulary. Nonetheless the indigenous language also impacts on the use of English language as a lot of words are borrowed from the native language when a suitable replacement is not found by the user or in a bid to express oneself more appropriately as we see in some of the examples.

When asked when they learnt English, most of the respondents said it was after the acquisition of the mother tongue. Thus, there was linguistic interference of the forms and meanings of structure of the native language to the target language. ‘Soup’ for instance has been adopted from English language but Nigeria soup has a broader semantic meaning than the British English of same. Rather than an appetizer, in

Nigeria it is used as an accomplishment to eat the main meal such as eba, amala, fufu, iyan etc. Nigeria English words have been influenced by sociocultural elements in the Nigeria environment, which have brought about innovations in its forms such as (a) borrowing, i.e. direct transfer of it from indigenous languages to English structures, (b) semantic extension (the extension of meaning of English words used to express various aspects of the Nigerian indigenous culture) etc. Several previous studies have observed some of these innovations (e.g. Bamgbose, 1971, 1982, 1995; Akere, 1977; Banjo, 1970).

The ESL Learner/User

Some notable areas of differences between Yoruba and English languages such as sounds, words, and grammar which results in the transfer of the features from one language to another were noticed. The ESL learners and users face certain communication problems in English because of this. Learners and users may find it difficult to express their thoughts because of gaps in their linguistic repertoire and cultural differences between English and their mother tongues. In their bid to cope with such communicative situation, they resort to alternative ways of getting the message across. Hence new lexical innovations, borrowing, code-switching and code-mixing, syntactic devices, discourse/ pragmatic transfer from mother tongue to second language.

Borrowing

A number of Yoruba words appear in the speech of Ede people and indeed Nigerians which can be termed as Nigeria English in the form of borrowings:

We have such words as *akara* 'beancake', *egusi* 'a type of soup', *bolekaja* 'bus with tightly packed seats', *amala* 'yam flour' etc. Learners feel comfortable with these words because it is closer to what they originally know. Also it makes communication easier at all levels.

Code Alternation

Students in The Polytechnic, Ede like other Nigerian speakers of English as a second language code - switch or code - mix at intervals when engaged in discourse even in the classroom. Different terms have been used like interlarding, code alternation, loans and borrowings. The students use the two codes in communication interchangeably and at times moving from one language to another and yet at others substituting words in one language for another in the same stretch of speech. Here are some examples of code -switching:

EXAMPLE 1:

Student A ___ Is the lecturer on the coming today?

Student B ___ Lecturer '*ti mbo*'.

EXAMPLE 2:

Student A ___ Assignment '*wa nko*'?

Student B ___ 'Oga' said I should come with the assignment

The students code – switch in the above examples from English to Yoruba: (1) Lecturer ‘*ti mbo*’ (The lecturer is on the way and from Yoruba to English in (2) ‘*Oga*’ said I should come with the assignment (The Lecturer sent for the assignment).

Also, some words from Yoruba make appearance in Nigeria English, in form of code mixing especially the borrowed words. For example:

EXAMPLE 3:

Student A ___ Let’s go and eat

Student B ___ I already ate *akara* and bread this morning.

EXAMPLE 4:

Student A ___ How do I get to your place in the evening?

Student B ___ ‘You either take *okada* or board *tuketuke*’

‘*Akara*’ is a type of food made from beans while *okada* is a motorbike and *tuketuke* is a bus –both are forms of transportation.

Semantic Extension

Certain words take on new meaning in relation to the culture and environment of the people. For instance:

‘*wrapper*’ – refers to a cloth that a woman wraps round her body and not necessarily wrapping paper for gifts.

‘*Father*’ – denotes a range of kinship terms of an older male relative such as uncles, in-laws not just one’s biological father.

‘*sorry*’ - expressions of sympathy or politeness for someone’s misfortune or discomfort without a sense of blame on the part of the speaker.

Lexical Innovations

Compounding is a major process of creating new words which involves combining two or more free morphemes. For example, medicine-apron, medicine-girdle, medicine-broom, horse-tail, and mother-witch. These are culturally influenced. There are others found in various contexts —such as yam-paste, cash-madam, town-crier, long-leg, bride-price, bean-cake and yam-flour.

Implications for Language Teaching

Teachers are encouraged to carry out a comparative study the languages involved and to effectively teach any language to a non-native speaker the teacher himself must be a bilingual so as to spot the areas of differences and address them.

The teacher of English requires thorough grasp of the principle of Contrastive Analysis. Language teachers should draw the attention of the students to the areas of differences and spend more time teaching learners of second language the correct usage so that they can become more proficient in the language.

It is suggested that the knowledge and principles of contrastive analysis can be used in planning and designing teaching materials.

Since culture in the language classroom is an area of ESL pedagogy, it should be explored in addressing the problem of culture in the classroom. The teacher must be a good model who displays no cultural biases or is ethnocentric. In handling the teaching of vocabulary, grammar and meaning in English, he should take into cognizance the areas of cultural differences using the principles and practices of Contrastive analysis.

Conclusion

The findings in this study have shown that the academic environment in Ede has changed the linguistic situation of Ede. The issues arising from its bilingual setup such as new lexical innovations, borrowing, code-switching and code-mixing, syntactic devices, etc has been looked at and the effect on teaching and learning. Also the need for the teacher to do a comparative study of English and Yoruba so as know the similarities and differences between the two languages in order to help solve his students' learning problems.

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