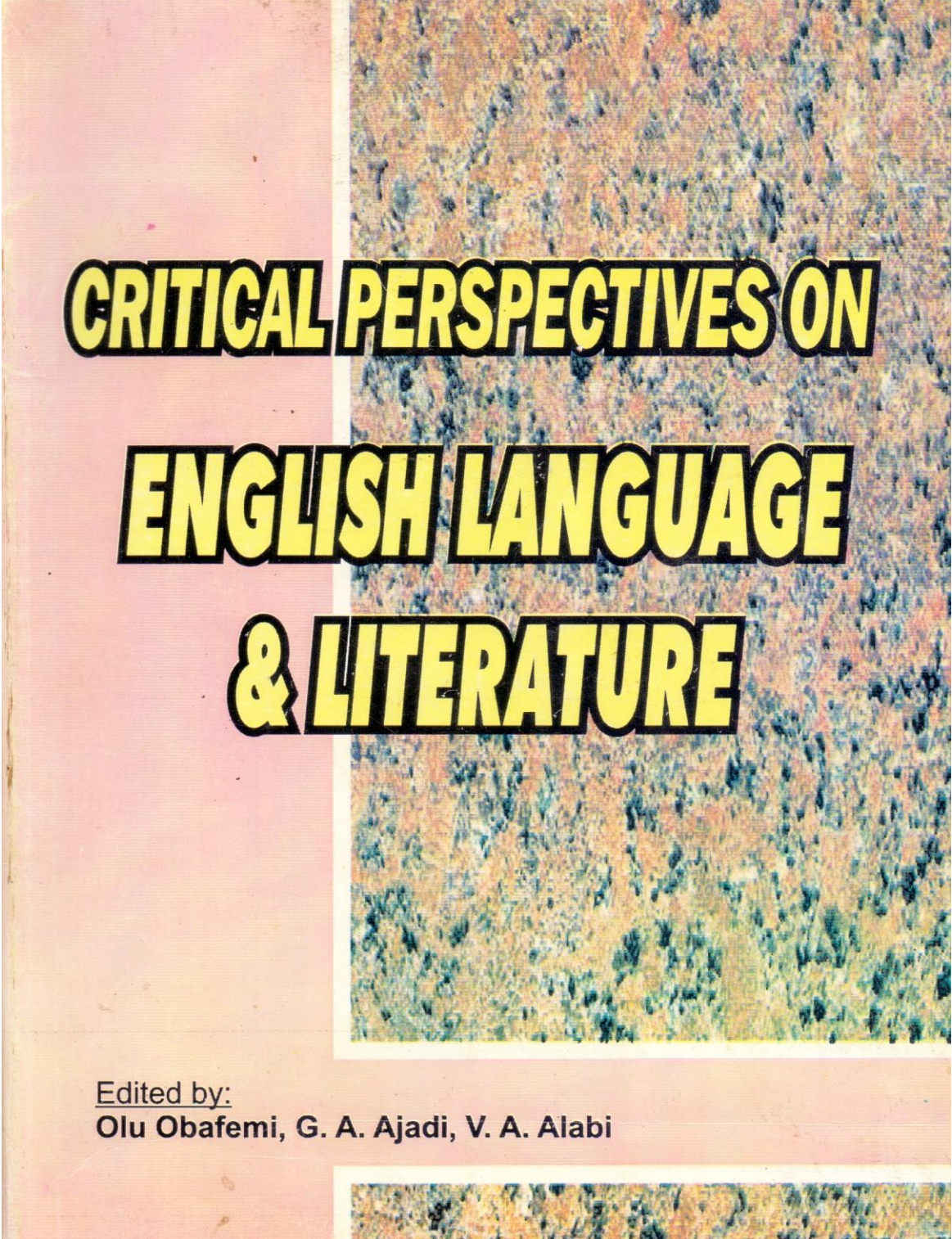




CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE

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Chapter Five

LANGUAGE CONTACT: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE WITH ENGLISH

Taofiq Adedayo Alabi

Introduction

Over the centuries, there has been progressive expansion of the speech community and speech fellowship of the English language. Initially, its native source was England. Later, it spread across the borders of the Great Britain and even beyond the continent of Europe to America, Asia, Australia and Africa. By the 1950s, the English language has become so widespread that it is often considered the world language. The fast spread of English was facilitated by a number of factors, including the dominance of the United States as a world power and the remnants of British colonial power around the world. Nowadays, the English spoken around the world is quite different from that spoken in the UK where it originated; with many different varieties existing and evolving across the globe.

Majority of World English speakers use English as a second or third language, and live in an environment where, in the least, bilingualism is the norm even though English may be the official language. In many countries, including Nigeria, English is the main language of instruction in schools (especially after primary education level) and is used in business and other official transactions. Just as UK English differs from US English, each of Indian English, Singaporean English, Nigerian English, and others is a variety of English in its own right that has individual syntactic, lexical, and phonological systems, and it is often influenced by the other language(s) in daily use. In fact, some of these varieties are so distinct that some linguists suggest that they are separate, although related, languages.

The advent of English in Africa cannot be separated from the incursions of trade, missionary and colonial activities. Although the primary purpose of the missionaries was not to make Christian converts speak English, nevertheless, it was to make the populace literate enough to read the bible in their own languages. Some indigenes were able to learn and use the language after which they became catechists and teachers in the mission schools. Later, the British colonized Nigeria and, of course, used their language – English – for administration. English became more prominent in the educational system and was used for official purposes. It then became an elitist symbol used by a few privileged Nigerians who were the civil servants and who served as models for no less

enthusiastic indigenes who sought after formal education.

Consequently, the use of English in Nigeria survived the departure of the colonial administrators as the language of governance. Now, several years after independence, English still survives and assumes a more important status in Nigeria. It is a medium of social and inter-ethnic communication. It is a national language and it is used as a medium of instructions in schools: primary, secondary and tertiary. There is no gainsaying that ultimately, a variant of English tagged Nigerian English has become an inevitable language in the country. The language has become an invaluable legacy which Britain has bequeathed to Nigeria (Bamgbose, 1971).

In this wise, the adventure of English language from one culture to another brings about various varieties/dialects. The numerous social, political and economic functions of the English language as we have pointed out have also made it to acquire some local textures which differentiate it from the native English variety used in England or America. Some of these features are evidence of the interlanguage which has resulted from the contact of the English language with indigenous languages in Nigeria.

English language has become an important second language (SL) in Nigeria and the rate at which it is accorded importance cannot be over-emphasized. It is an official language being used to conduct legislative, executive and judicial functions at the three tiers of government: Local, State and Federal. The role of English language in the social lives of Nigerians has forced the language to adapt itself to the local environment. Eventually, English language became entrenched as a second language (in addition to the languages spoken in the society). Thus, Nigeria became an inevitably 'bilingual' society.

Mother Tongue / First Language (L₁)

One of the chief characteristics of human beings is the ability to communicate effectively. A normal human being achieves this exchange of information mainly by means of two types of sensory stimulation which are auditory and visual stimulations. A child begins to learn an auditory function from the environment in which he belongs. He responds to the sounds and tone, which his mother, father and elders habitually use in sending different messages to him. This acquired speech is what we call the mother tongue (MT), the first language (L₁), or the native language. This is simply the language acquired in one's native environment and which meets all the linguistic needs.

The mother tongue (MT) is usually, sequentially the first language of a bilingual or multilingual person. It can also be said to mean the language which a bi-/multilingual person uses to conduct his everyday activities and of which he has the greatest linguistic facility or intuitive knowledge. In most cases, the MT is the language acquired unconsciously and naturally early in life. Later, a child learns its conventional visual version which is writing.

English as a Second Language in Nigeria

The form and status of English as a second language in Nigeria have attracted the interest of scholars both in Nigeria and in other parts of the world. Though there are many areas of disagreement among scholars on the issues of form and status of English in Nigeria, it is generally held that English, as it is in Nigeria today, is the product of an interplay of factors, ranging from socio-cultural to linguistic, arising from the contact between English and the Nigerian languages in Nigeria's multilingual environment. It is now an established fact that English, which initially came to the Nigerian environment as a foreign language was later shaped and transformed by subsequent developments into a second language with an official status.

Consequent upon this development, "contact English" (Bamgbose, 1995: 63) emerged. For instance, Nigerian Pidgin English which was developed much earlier between English traders and Nigerians resident in the coastal areas to cater for the urgent needs of the two linguistic groups for transactional communication became extensively patronized in different versions. As Nigerian Pidgin was developing as a 'common' language in Nigeria, various forms of English were also developing among Nigerians who had the opportunity to learn, and to speak the language. In the absence of an acceptable indigenous language with the status of official/national language, the adoption of English for formal and transactional communication became imperative. English has, today, become the principal lingua franca of educated Nigerians, the principal medium of instruction in Nigeria's educational system, of wider communication and of literary expression. More importantly, it has come to stay as the language of official business and a vital link among the various ethnic groups.

It must be remarked that the variety of English that performs these tremendous functions in Nigeria is not the same as the native speakers' varieties spoken in Britain or America. The variety of English used in Nigeria has been indigenized to suit the Nigerian environment. It is this acculturated variety that is now popularly referred to as "Nigerian English", and Bamgbose (1995) describes it as having distinctive Nigerian flavours. It is this Nigerian flavour that distinguishes it from all other varieties of English across the globe.

Overview of English in Nigeria

Though English in Nigeria has generated a lot of controversies especially from the standpoint of the variant features it presents at the basic levels of language analysis, it is generally believed that the English which has emerged in the Nigerian environment is a new English having a distinctive Nigerian flavour. Many of the renowned scholars in this field believe that the English language has undergone an inevitable process of modification in the Nigerian environment which has subsequently transformed the language into a nativized variety. Bamgbose (1995), for example, is of the view that English has witnessed tremendous changes in the Nigerian environment. He notes that

English in Nigeria has been nativized, acculturated and twisted to express unaccustomed concepts and modes of interaction.

Jowitt (1991: 191) opines that the English which is used in the Nigerian environment is something other than a replica of native speakers' varieties. He warns, however, that English in Nigeria with all its 'Nigerianism', should not be seen as evidence of the imperfect learning of the language but rather, as possible signs of healthy acculturation, and of the creative capacity normally associated with learning and use of a mother tongue.

Kujore (1985), one of the greatest contributors to the debate on English as a second language in Nigeria, sees the indigenization of English in Nigeria, not as a surprise, but as an expected development. He argues that English, as a living language, is bound to undergo changes in such a foreign environment as Nigeria's whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds are different from that of English in mother tongue (EMT) environment. Kachru (1982) believes that Nigerian English is a vital component of world Englishes which has been indigenized to suit local conditions, to express local experiences and to cater for the local Nigerian environment. Okonoda (1990: 24) submits that language learnt in contact may often exhibit some kinds of language mixing, such that two languages mix up either in the same stretch of speech or at different times.

The evolution of local varieties of English is an illustration of the adaptation of an overseas variety of English to meet the requirements of a second language context. In its use as a medium of both formal and informal communications, it needs to be 'fine-tuned' to be capable of expressing the socio-cultural realities of that country. Some of these realities are expressed through modification of the phonological and grammatical systems of standard overseas English. The generation of new lexical and grammatical extensions to either reduce some of the local culture which cannot be covered by existing uses of English, are reflections of this interlingual creativity. The lexis of a language may be extended by process of elaboration while the process of reduction in the meaning of a lexical item is simplification (Wigwe, 1981: 72).

Studies in contrastive linguistics reveal that when a learner moves from his first language to the second language, the linguistic skills he has already internalized in the first language will be carried over into the second language situation (Weinreich, 1968; Lado, 1958). This is equally true of Nigeria where English is a second language. For instance, Oyeleye (1988: 19) paints the picture of the Nigerian's bilingual situation clearly when he says that "it is not unlikely therefore that the Nigerian user of English may have transferred this linguistic habit of his first language to the second language". Naturally, an L₁ speaker has acquired some amount of competence in the language such that all the working systems of the language have been internalized. As a result of this, the learners' rooted knowledge of the two languages is not similar, and this inhibits the learning of the L₂.

The Nigerian English has characteristics which deviate markedly from 'Standard

English'. This is because just as there are differences in the phonology and syntax, there are lexico-semantic differences between English and the indigenous Nigerian languages. Nigerian speakers of English therefore transfer the thoughts on their minds directly from their mother tongue into English.

At the lexical level of interference – because of the differences in cultural patterns and world view – certain lexico-semantic differences are introduced into the L₂ to express all these. For instance, age is important; the society is arranged according to age grades. In the British culture, the family is of the nuclear type; father, mother, brother, sister. Such a family, according to Adetugbo (1979: 42), is a 'conjugal one', while in the Nigerian society, the concept of the family is that of 'consanguine group'. This is what is known as the extended family which is not just made of the spouse and offspring (British). Because of this broadly-based kinship system, the use of 'brother', 'sister', 'father', 'mother', in the Nigerian society differs in concept and references from what they express in British English (just as we now have instances where people talk about elder/senior brother). For extensive reading on this subject, see Odumuh (1987), Adegbija (1989), Jowitt (1991) and Bamiro (1994) among others.

Attitudes to Nigerian English

The discussion in the last section points to the fact that English in Nigeria has developed some Nigerian features which, as Jibril (1982) asserts, distinguish it from all other varieties of English in the world. The fact that a Nigerian variant of English having identifiable distinctive features exists can, therefore, no longer be denied. Various shades of attitudes have, however, been developed towards this Nigerian variety. Generally and among scholars, attitudes to those varieties, in particular, whose distinctive features are yet to be thoroughly investigated, are both positive and negative, ranging from outright condemnation of the supposedly emerging standard, through caution and skepticism, to enthusiastic acceptance. At one extreme are those who consider the departures from the model as a bastardization of the standard (in terms of linguistic deviation), and at the other extreme are those who welcome the departures as an enrichment of the common core (in terms of linguistic variation).

To the group of people who see Nigerian variety of English as a 'bastardization' of the standard model, the British are the owners of the language, the American variety is a crude imitation of it, and that the Nigerian variety is a 'deformed creature' which ought not to be mentioned in a good society. This group of people refuses to accept the view expressed by the likes of Hymes (1974) and Hudson (1996) that the owners of English are as many nations or regions as those who validly claim to have viable varieties of the language. However, those who are at the other extreme of the controversy strongly believe that Nigerian English, though a departure from the British model, is a welcome development. They see English as a child of necessity in the sense that it is the only variety that can cater for the local needs of the local Nigerian environment since Nigerians cannot use the native-speaker varieties due to inadequacy of its existing lexical

stock to express 'new worlds' in its 'given words'.

Therefore, English in Nigeria, though a departure from the native-speaker varieties, should not only be seen from the perspective of its intelligibility or acceptability outside Nigeria but also in terms of its appropriateness and acceptability within the Nigerian sociolinguistic terrain. This is the position of many renowned scholars in this field like Bamgbose (1971, 1995), Banjo (1971), Adekunle (1979), Adetugbo (1979), Kujore (1985), Adegbija (1989), Jowitt (1991), Babatunde (1999) and Awonusi (2004), just to mention a few.

Bilingualism and Proficiency

In the history of the study of bilingualism, various definitions have been proposed. There are two extreme positions to this. According to Bloomfield (1933), a bilingual should possess native-like control of two or more languages. At the other extreme is the proposition that a person has some second language ability in one of the four language skills (speaking, listening, writing, reading), in addition to his first language skills. From the perspective of Gregory & Kerstin (1996), a bilingual society is a linguistic community where more than one language is spoken. From the foregoing, bilingualism is the native-like control of two languages and a bilingual is a person that makes use of more than one language.

Scholars like Hymes and Fishman have proven that bilingual speakers do not attain equal proficiency in the languages they speak at a point in time. The languages interfere with each other. If at a point in time, a language is not frequently used, it 'recedes' towards its loss and eventual death (Crystal, 1994). On the other hand, there is a situation where both languages are used interchangeably as the context or situation requires. The speakers of English in Nigeria have their different mother tongues which equip them with communicative ability within their regions. Learning English in a foreign context actually promotes bilingualism. However, the individual competence and performance in English depend largely on his educational and social backgrounds. The social structure that indicates the type of bilingualism a speaker uses includes age, level of education, sex, etc.

The effect of two languages in the Nigerian society results into bilingualism. This is so because most individuals who make up the larger society are able to communicate in, at least, English and any of the three major languages in Nigeria – Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa – in spite of the fact that these Nigerian languages and English language belong to different sociolinguistic contexts. Although the official language spoken in the Nigerian society, apart from the mother tongue, is English, the possibility of lexico-semantic variations in some aspects, if not all, cannot be ruled out in English language.

There has also been interference due to supplanting of the second language structure by the mother tongue which becomes habitualised and established. Most often, this depends on the individual and the context of usage. The Nigerian English speakers

tend to transfer the word-order in their mother tongue into English. The phonology of the mother tongue is also transferred. For instance, instead of using the normal stress-timing in English, they use syllable-timing which is peculiar to tone languages. Interaction may be directly keeping the two languages separate or allowing both to mutually influence each other. This also depends on the context of usage. The former is known as complementary distribution while the latter is an 'overlapping distribution'.

The variety resulting from complementary situation will have almost all the essential characteristics of such native speakers' dialect as British, American, or Australian English. The syntactic component of this variety is the native speaker's dialect in many ways. The idioms, proverbs, and slang are also similar. Conversely, the language pattern of overlapping situation is constrained essentially by the sociolinguistic environment of use. Therefore, some psycholinguistic factors which result in English adapting some of the elements of its surface and deep structures to meet the challenges of local communication needs are of paramount consideration.

From the foregoing and based on a synthesis of Banjo (1971), Adesanoye (1973), Jibril (1982) and Fakuade's (1998) parameters, three broad varieties of English in Nigeria can be deduced. The first is the 'near-native variety', the second – 'local-colour variety', and the third – 'incipient bilingual variety'. But for the purpose of this study, we are more concerned about the second variety which is the local-colour type while our focus shall, however, be how English responds to the local linguistic influence on it.

Contact Phenomenon

Language contact is seen as a situation when two or more languages co-exist in the same environment. This results into some phenomena such as borrowing, code-mixing, code-switching, interference, transfer, language shift, language loss, etc. Language contact is a natural occurrence which is occasioned by the presence of two or more linguistic heritage. Whether in a case of individual or societal bilingualism/multilingualism, it is expected that the speaker(s) have an appreciable level of spoken competence in the languages involved. Pragmatically, there appears to be no single language which had not come in contact with another; hence, it can be posited that no single language is devoid of linguistic interference especially in a second language context. The idea of a second language presupposes the existence and use of another prior to it in the context in question. Therefore, transfer of linguistic features of a language, whether wholesale or in bits into another, becomes inevitable. This is what is technically referred to as interference.

Appel and Muysken (1987: 2 – 5) highlight the fact that varieties of the same language may be in use in a given situation; the idea of language contact transcends dialectal frontiers. It is an issue which concerns two or more distinct and 'independent' languages. This stance is represented in the following words:

When we turn to linguistics itself, the study of language contact has

developed into a paradigm for sociolinguistics as a whole. Sociolinguistics as a discipline has stressed the diversity in language use. The study of diversity leads of course, to a focus on the clearest example of diversity: multilingualism (Appel & Muysken, 1987: 5).

In essence, interlingual transfer is what is foregrounded in the extract where elements are carried from one language into another. This transfer occurs virtually at all levels of language. This transfer can either be positive or negative. It is positive where the imported structures and codes are similar to what is obtainable in the host language. This facilitates competence and proficiency in the target language/second language. However, where disparities abound between the systemic constituents of the languages involved, inhibition to desirable absorption is created. Such 'uncompromising' traits culminate in interference. Since language is an inseparable element of culture, interference of cultures can equally result in linguistic interference.

This assertion is predicated on the basis that the worldview and social construct in its totality exert tremendous influence on how a language is structured to mean on a given occasion of use. And since it may not be possible for a foreign language to express a people's culture in all ramifications, certain kinds of interference, most especially borrowing, become inevitable.

Linguistic Interference of English with Nigerian Languages: An Overview

A multilingual or, in the least, bilingual who uses more than a language in an extended form tends to have this linguistic phenomenon staring him at the face. Usually, when two or more languages are brought in contact via an alternating use by the same person, the tendency to transfer linguistic features of the more grounded code – usually the first language – into the second is higher. This arises owing to the differences in the two languages in contact.

English, obviously, is the language of communication in our classrooms in Nigeria. Some pupils have acquired communicative competence of the language right from home while some had their first contact with it in the classroom. When some Yoruba speakers of English language speak for instance, it is noticed that 'received' rhythm as well as some phonological features are not present. Instead, some features of the mother tongue (MT) are manifested in the speech. This phenomenon is simply called INTERFERENCE. This is the instance of deviations from the features of either language, which occurs in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with the two languages. The term implies a re-arrangement of patterns that results from the introduction of foreign elements into more highly structured domain of a language such as (bulk of) phonology, syntax as well as some areas of vocabulary, culture and discourse (Weinreich, 1968). In other words, interference is a term which refers to situation whereby two different languages overlap in the speech of a bilingual.

To some linguists, interference is seen as errors in the learner's use of a foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue. Interference is an automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language into the surface structure of the target language. However, interference may not be perceived wholly as errors in themselves. Error is simply a confusion of the rules in the target language. Interference is definitely not. Error may be instigated or triggered by interference. Hence, even though researchers attribute about 50 – 60 per cent of errors to interference, interference does not necessarily coincide with error. This is because apart from over-extension of analogy of the mother tongue and transfer of structures into the target language, intralingual error also occurs due to confusion of rules in a (single) language. In the light of the focus of this chapter, we shall use interlingual error in its various forms to illustrate the effects of interference.

Interference occurs virtually at all the primary levels of language description most especially phonology, lexis and grammar.

Phonological Interference

This occurs in six major ways following Weinreich's (1968) identification of four. These are: Under-differentiation, Over-differentiation, Re-interpretation of sound, Phonemic substitution, Hypercorrection, Epenthesis and simplification.

Under-differentiation occurs where two or more phonemic segments which are acoustically contrastive but appear similar are confused. Here, one sound in the MT, for instance, is used for many sounds in the target language (TL). A case in point is the English vowel system which is more elastic than those of the Nigerian languages; for example /ə/, /æ/, /ɜ:/ and /ɑ:/ as in the words father, cat, birth and star respectively may all be replaced with the cardinal /a/ by the Nigerian speakers of English.

Over-differentiation ensues where a language speaker pronounces a single phoneme in many different ways which are not in any way allophonic. An example is when a typical Hausa man pronounces "current" /kʌrənt/ as */kwɔrɛnt/.

Re-interpretation coincides with a case where a speaker gives a totally different sequence of phonemic cues in the target language. This is otherwise perceived as a consequence of error of re-ordering. An example is a case where */æks/ is used in place of /æsk/ (for the word "ask").

Substitution is a major type of phonological interference triggered by language contact phenomenon. Owing to the differences in the phonostructural rudiments of languages, substitution becomes a handy resort when a given speaker is confronted with an 'alien' segment in his speech. What he does is to look for the closest approximation of the sound in his mother tongue with which the 'alien' sound is replaced. This case abounds in Nigeria. For example, the absence of the inter-dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ in major Nigerian languages calls for their replacement with /t/ and /d/ (with /z/ for /ð/ in some

cases), as in the words:

"theme" being realized as */ti:m/ instead of /θi:m/

"they" being realized as */deɪ/ instead of /ðeɪ/ and /zə/ (as in Hausa English) for "the" /ðə/.

Hypercorrection arises as a result of over-sensitivity to contrasting features in the target language. A typical illustration of this is characteristic of a Nigerian who is prepared at all cost to learn an alien sound in the target language. Such an individual may over-generalize or over-do it to the extent that certain segments he is already familiar with in his mother tongue are now misrepresented. For example watch for "wash", viver for "fever" and zoak for "soak" as in:

The cloth belongs to the yellow *viver patient; *watch it thoroughly with disinfectant after you have *zoaked it for 15 minutes.

Epenthesis is a superfluous insertion of vowel segments as a way of alleviating the complexity of consonant clusters which characterize English. This unfamiliar segmental patterning is indigenized by infiltrating it with the phonemic peculiarities of the Nigerian languages. For instance, /rɪðɪm/ for /rɪðm/ (rhythm) in hurried speech. Simplification occurs when clusters with up to three or four consecutive consonants are reduced to two or three for 'accommodation' reasons, e.g. *sixth's* /sɪksθs/ is reduced to */sɪks/ or */sɪkθ/; and *twelfth* /twelfθ/ to */twefθ/.

Lexical Interference

Weinreich (1968) describes this as a transfer of meanings in language most especially through borrowing. However, owing to the fact that language varies in alignment with contact with new ideas and development, with meaning being shifted or extended in new contexts, "lexical" may not be adequate enough to describe this phenomenon. "Lexico-semantic" is a more recent coinage which has become established as a concept which encapsulates, in functional terms, 'mutation' and permutation of meanings of lexical items conveyed on a given occasion of use. Adebija (1989) and Bamiro's (1991) theses on lexico-semantic variations in Nigerian English are formidable essays on lexico-semantic variation (interference) of English as a second language in Nigeria.

Grammatical Interference

This implies a transfer of the grammatical system of one language into another. This is noticeable in the areas of pronouns; for instance, in relation to politeness phenomena in Yoruba where "they" is used to refer to singular "won" as we have in B's response below:

A: Where is your father?

B: They have gone to the farm.

(Notice the implication of the plural subject on the auxiliary verb too)

Morphological generalization (as in affixation like suffer-*“ness”* for *suffering*, *“un”*-appropriate for *inappropriate*) is another major area of concern that is instigated by a carry over of the analogizing process (Wilkins, 1990) in the L₁ into the use of the L₂. Question tag (and answer) in expressions of even the educated users of English in Nigeria reflects MT-constrained variations. This idea is captured in the example that follows:

*He is your friend, *isn't it? – instead of “isn't he?”*

You mean she is not your mother?

**Yes, she isn't – instead of “No, she isn't”.*

See Odumuh (1987) and Jowitt (1991) for details.

Other Resultant Effects of Language Contact Situation

Code-Mixing and Code-Switching

Code-mixing and code-switching are two important aspects of sociolinguistics given their use in the society. Different reasons have been advanced by various writers or scholars as to why people code-mix and code-switch. In any case, it is obvious that they both have positive and negative effects closely associated with them. It therefore becomes imperative that these concepts which are directly related to human society and our educational institutions are given adequate attention so that they are known and used effectively where necessary.

In a society where every individual speaks more than one language, there is usually a language naturally influenced by the other one(s). Some of the effects of this state of bilingualism are code-mixing and code-switching which are features of language contact and bilingualism. When a speaker has come in contact with two or more languages, he or she may begin to use them together, though not with equal proficiency. However, these languages affect one another. Some of the effects are code-mixing and code-switching. The two concepts look alike but they are different in some ways. Code-switching is the alternation of two languages or codes within a conversation. A speaker may wish to code-switch at various points in a stretch of speech: between sentences, clauses, phrases and single lexical elements while code-mixing on the other hand occurs when lexical or phrasal elements of two or more languages are blended within a given sentence.

Hamers and Blanc (1989: 35) say code mixing is “the use of elements of one language in another language” (for example, the use of English lexemes in a Yoruba conversation). Hudson (1996: 53) says the purpose of code-mixing is “to symbolize ambiguous situations... to get the right effect, the speaker takes words from one language and mix it with few words from the other language.” Oloruntoba-Oju (1999) asserts that code-mixing occurs when elements of two or more linguistic systems are

randomly mixed. It is often an unconscious illocutionary act in naturally occurring conversation. Though no norm guides the level of code-mixing, different communities and people maintain, consciously or unconsciously, their levels of code-mixing which is constrained by competence.

Code-switching refers to a change-over from one semiotic mode to another in order to accommodate other kinds of variety dialects and registers. Code-switching is governed by different norms in different bilingual communities, although the norm may differ, and the reasons for the switch are diverse. There is some evidence of constraints imposed by differences in structures of the languages involved. Code-switching is therefore more problematic when typologically different languages are involved than when the languages are typologically similar. Code-switching is the inevitable consequence of bilingualism (or, more generally, multilingualism). Anyone who speaks more than one language chooses between them according to circumstances. The first consideration of course, is the language/code which will be comprehensible to the person being addressed. Generally speaking, speakers choose a language which the other person understands.

In multilingual communities different languages are always used in different circumstances, and the choice is always controlled by social rules. For example, according to Denison cited in Collinge (1991: 62), everyone in the village of Sauris, in Northern Italy, spoke German within the family; Saurine (a dialect of Italian) informally within the village, and Standard Italian to outsiders and in a more formal village settings (schools, church, work). Because of this 'linguistic division of labour', each individual could be expected to switch codes (i.e. languages) several times in the course of a day's interaction. More precisely, this kind of code-switching is called situational code-switching because the switch between languages always coincides with changes from one external situation (for example, talking to members of the family) to another (for example, talking to the neighbours). The choice of language is controlled by rules which members of the community learn from their experience.

In code-switching, there is a complete switch from one mode or language to the other. The switch may be a language switch or a variety switch. In the former, the switch is to a different language entirely, while in the latter it may be essentially a style-switch. Code-switching can occur in both spoken and written texts. Traugott & Pratt (1980) are of the opinion that code-switching in literary texts provides an interesting field for analysis, both in terms of social reality and manipulation of literary device.

Borrowing

Crystal (1980: 47) refers to borrowing as "linguistic forms being taken over by one language or dialect from another language". Borrowings are also called loanwords. Busmann (1996: 55) defines borrowing as "the adoption of linguistic expression from one language into another language, usually when no term for the new concept exists in the dominant language". Borrowing involves the direct transfer of linguistic elements from

the secondary language into the primary (major) language. For example, French words, Latin lexemes and so on are found in English. Loanwords become part of the dominant language with time but they do not lose their background origin and import so easily.

Borrowing is fundamental to the development of languages. For example, Latin language was initially the world language but because it would not accommodate words from other languages, it became almost extinct and is now restricted to liturgical use. English has been able to maintain its autonomy as the world language due to the fact that it allows other languages of the world to infiltrate into it. Factors such as political, cultural, social and economic influences like the Scandinavians, the Romans, French, Kentish, Northumbrian and so on are crucial landmarks in the trend of the development of English.

It is true that borrowing enriches and sustains a language. Care should be taken not to allow borrowed words dominate the major language because by so doing, the primary language will lose its prominence to the borrowed language (language shift); and where the trend continues unchecked, the probability of the 'major' language being threatened by loss, decay or extinction (language death) is higher.

Pidgin

Just as a language may develop varieties in the form of dialects and argots, languages as a whole may change (Latin, for example, evolved into the different Romance languages). Sometimes rapid language change occurs as a result of contact between people with different linguistic backgrounds. In such circumstances, a new language, called a pidgin may arise. Pidgins are based on one language from which they take much of their vocabulary (this is, in sociolinguistics, referred to as the *superstrate*) but are also influenced by at least one other language (technically called *substrate*). Pidgins have relatively small sound systems, reduced vocabularies, and simplified and altered grammars, and they rely heavily on context in order to convey meaning. They often arise as a result of different peoples' contact at trading posts. Pidgin is created for practical and immediate purpose of communication. Thus, pidgin is used to suit emerging situations where there is a need for contact between/among communities or people with different socio-cultural backgrounds. Pidgin is a language of specific purposes and it is often influenced by travelers and traders.

Holmes (1988: 16–19) says "Pidgin arose when Africans with different languages were working together on plantations during the slave trade and chose to communicate using what they learnt of the colonial master's language". In the development of a pidgin language, the superstrate language, which is the socially, economically and politically dominant group, provides most of the vocabulary and the pidginized language is often named after the dominant group (for instance, Pidgin English, Pidgin French and the likes). Pidgin is, thus, regarded as an inferior and corrupt version of donor language (Romaine, 1988: 6). In Nigeria, English-based Pidgin is what we have as an ex-British colony. It is widely used in the country today even though it started around the coastal areas. Its structure is a reflection of the multilingual situation in the country. Thus, in some

quarters, it is seen as a working alternative in lieu of a national language in the Nigeria.

Creole

Holmes (1988:6) defines Creole as "a language with jargon or pidgin in its ancestry; it is used by natives of a community often, whose ancestral ties, geographical and socio-cultural identities are broken". Romaine (2001) says "Creole is a nativized pidgin, expanded in form and function to meet the communicative need of a native society". The undertone of these postulations is that Creole is a pidgin native to a speech community. It should be noted that when speakers of a pidgin have children who learn the pidgin as their first language, that language is then called a Creole. Once the Creole has enough native speakers to form a speech community, the Creole may expand into a fuller language. This is the case with Krio, a language with many speakers in Sierra Leone in West Africa (Encarta, 2005). Krio arose from what was originally an English-based pidgin and has influences from Yoruba among other languages. In the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria, the English-based pidgin is fast evolving into a 'creolized' state as young individuals are acquiring it in place of their native languages especially as L₁.

Diglossia

Diglossia was introduced into English from French by Ferguson (1959). Ferguson, (cited in Hudson (1996: 49 – 50), defines diglossia as stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialect there is a highly codified super-imposed variety, learned by formal instruction for formal transaction. Consequently, diglossia refers to specialized functions of language or variety. For example, in Egypt, the colloquial Arabic is used in informal settings, while the standard Arabic is used in formal contexts for official transactions. Ferguson identifies the H (high) and L (Low) varieties which differ in dialect, prestige, acquisition and stability. The L is acquired as the first language used throughout the lifespan of the speaker and usually enjoys little or no prestige. The H is learned by formal education, it is the standard variety and used within a defined period. Initially, Ferguson used diglossia to refer to varieties of a language with distinct roles but some scholars like Fishman (1971:74) extend the term to include varieties of a language and languages. For example, in Paraguay, Spanish is the H language and Guaraní (an Indian language unrelated to Spanish) is the L language.

In a multilingual or multi-ethnic community where there is a desire for the adoption of a standard national language, for instance Nigeria, Ferguson describes the conflict that can ensue:

The proponents of H argue that H must be adopted because it links the society with its glorious past... and it is unifying factor... the adherents of L argue that L must be adopted because it is closer to the natives... and it is more effective for communication (Ferguson 1959: 247-248).

A similitude of diglossic situation is what obtains in Nigeria where English exists

side by side with indigenous languages (and Pidgin English in some quarters) with each being functionally significant in certain domains.

Language Shift, Loss and Death

Language shift is used to describe a change from the habitual use of a language to another. This situation arises when a given language is disused, not given priority or in the sociolinguistic sense, not maintained over a period of time owing to a switch to another for status, demographic, institutional, political or religious reasons. On the other hand, language loss is consequent upon language shift. Appel & Muysken (1987: 42) write that:

As a language loses territory in a given community, speakers will become less proficient in it. In linguistic minority groups children will often speak the language of the group less well than their parents... the loss of lexical skills in the minority language goes hand in hand... words in the dominant language are replacing words in the minority language.

The foregoing implies that a shift from use of language 'A' for instance to another instigates loss on the part of language 'A' owing to a recessive impact arising from its disuse. Where this trend continues ceaselessly unabated, death would be staring the language in question at the face. It is however arguable that while language shift and loss are realistic phenomena, language death; as in its total extinction is quite uncommon. Even though there appears to be zero speaker of the language in the native environment, speakers who have migrated to other territories still carry on the linguistic legacies of such a language.

In the Nigerian case, language shift and language loss are noticeable especially with respect to indigenous languages which have suffered serious backlash effect from the ever-increasing premium placed on English at the expense of local languages. This explains why borrowing, code-mixing, code-switching and interlarding have come to stay in our day-to-day use of indigenous languages in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, in as much as we appreciate the laudable roles which English plays as a second language in Nigeria, we should equally rise up to the challenge of enforcing the maintenance of our local languages. This can be done by a constitutional endorsement of diglossia where English is made to co-exist in the life of an individual Nigerian with his native language. This would uplift these languages being relegated to a dysfunctional status as a way of keeping them alive. By so doing, certain vital aspects of our cultural heritage being eroded away would equally be brought under control.

Conclusion

In both formal and informal contexts of language use, we may not be able to make a conscious use of something that we know consciously. This affects the way a bilingual would naturally respond to situation requiring his competence in both directions.

So, based on the acquired competence in L₁, he goes ahead to improvise and this culminates in what Selinker (1972) referred to as interlanguage. Here, borrowings from the mother tongue or L₁ as the case may be, into the target language (L₂, L₃, etc.); extension, interpolation and drift of structures in the TL at a point become stabilized through what Wilkins (1990: 532) calls an analogizing process.

This chapter is an overview of language contact phenomenon which is characteristic of a bilingual or multilingual society. In its own little way, it has discussed the status of English as a second language in Nigeria. It dwelt on the contact it had with the indigenous languages and the seemingly endless impact this has generated on the Nigerian sociolinguistic terrain. Emphasis has been placed on interference as a natural consequence of language contact situation with its attending contribution towards the indigenization of English language in Nigeria as a reference point. The crux of the entire exercise has been to ensure a functional maintenance of the local languages in Nigeria alongside English.

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