

An Assessment of Contact Linguistic Features of Nigerian Languages in Fuji House of Commotion (A Popular Nigerian Soap Opera)

Afolasade D. Ipinmoroti
The Federal Polytechnic, Ile-Oluji

Abstract

This study explored the various contact linguistic features that were present in a typical popular Nigerian Soap Opera titled Fuji House of Commotion. The study adopted the use of the Matrix Language Framework (MLF) by identifying the Matrix Language as Standard English (SE) and the Embedded Language as Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE). Seven episodes of the Soap Opera, which comprised the data for this study, were collected and downloaded as videos following which the speech were transcribed and analysed. The various forms of linguistic contacts such as borrowing, interference, coinages and code-mixing/code switching were identified from the data collected. The results of the study showed that almost all characters had one form of interference or the other; at the grammatical level, phonological and lexical level while code mixing was also adopted at both inter-sentence and intra sentence levels in the collected data. The study concluded that a collection of people of various linguistic backgrounds communicating was more likely to influence language contact.

Keywords: *Contact Linguistics, Pidgin English, Nigerian Soap Opera, Matrix Language Framework*

Introduction

While it has been a major focus of sociolinguists to study languages across the world, so far, not every language existing across the vast majority of the world has been fully identified and explored. According to Anderson et al. (2002), the Holy Bible had been translated into over 2500 different languages. Also, De Swan (2010) asserted that there are over 6000 groups of human species each with their own individual language however with the existence of members of these groups who understand the language of other groups thus facilitating communication between members of different groups. More so, language has been asserted to change without outside interference however majority of the changes in languages are associated with contact with other languages (Jacomine, 2009). Contact linguistics involves the study of how languages come in contact with one another alongside the consequence of such contacts. Thus, whenever two or more languages are spoken alternatively by an individual, the languages are said to be in contact (Weinreich, 1970). However, Thomason (2001) later emphasized that languages can be used alternatively by a speaker only if contact has been established between speakers of the different languages or speech communities.

Matras (2009) further that language contact takes place whenever speakers of different languages interact and the languages influence each other also called language mixing. According to Olaoye (2007), when two or more languages come in contact, some socio-linguistic phenomena take place, such as bilingualism, multilingualism, code-switching, code-mixing, calquing, borrowing, language interference and sometimes creolisation and pidginisation. The intensity of the contact between two or more languages has a way of affecting contact-induced language changes thus if the languages contact themselves

mildly then there may likely be no changes involved (Taiwo, 2010). However, if the contact is strong or extreme then these changes are likely to occur in which case there is likely to be a more dominant and less dominant language in the contact situation.

Language purists claim that the concept of language contact is actually an aberration of the correct use of language stating further that such is deviant or corrupt (Winford, 2003). A lot of languages have been influenced by one language or the other based on contact which do not always usually require direct social contact between native speakers. One can consider lexical borrowing which can be accomplished through literature, religious texts, and dictionaries or by teachers, writers and lexicographers. Today, Language contact has gone beyond looking at individual language users but rather focusing on the properties that the languages have in common (Siemund, 2008). The contact situations can be classified as language maintenance, language shift and creation of new language however this study focuses on language maintenance which includes areas of borrowing, code-switching, coinage, code-switching and interference. In Africa, Nigeria has been identified as the country with the most extreme linguistic diversity with over 250 ethnic groups and a population close to 200 million (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2015, Akande, 2015). The three majorly spoken languages in Nigeria include Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo which have received substantial attention for development and use in education and other areas of national life.

According to Awonusi (2007), scholars have classified Nigerian languages based on various indices including population of speakers, constitutional legitimacy and prestige with languages showing different orders of hierarchical relationships; which has revealed contrasting and overlapping characteristics. Therefore, indigenous languages in Nigeria include Edo. Efik,

Fulani, Hausa, Idoma, Igbo, Ijaw, Kanuri and Yoruba alongside over 500 additional indigenous languages. Also, non-indigenous languages include English recognized as the official language, Arabic which accompanied Islam and Trans-Saharan trade and French which is taught as a foreign language in schools. An additional language in Nigeria referred to as neural language originating from Edo and Delta State, is the *Nigerian Pidgin English* (NPE) which is spoken by virtually every Nigerian and gradually turning into a lingua franca in informal domains. Furthermore, NPE is also used for various advertisements on bill boards, in newspapers and on radio and television all over the country.

A soap opera is a continuous or serial narrative in which a story is played out through connected episodes. Traditional soap operas are usually open-ended leaving loose ends with the premise that they will continue in future episodes. Thus, a soap opera is a television or radio program about the lives and problems of a particular group of characters which continue over a long period of time and are broadcast several times a week or in some cases as weekly episodes. In Nigeria, various soap operas are being broadcast on different television stations like AIT (African Independent Television), NTA (Nigeria Television Authority), OSRC (Ondo State Radiovision Corporation), etc. Some of these operas are *Super Story*, *Dear Mother*, *No Pain No Gain*, *Papa Ajasco*, *Clinic Matters*, and *Fuji House of Commotion*. But for the purpose of this study, *Fuji House of Commotion* will be examined.

Several scholars have engaged in scholarly activities in the field of Contact Linguistics, addressing its features in naturally occurring conversations made in different languages like Anglo Romani and Singapore

Colloquial English (Thomason, 2001, Winford, 2003). Winford (2003) examined the form of Pidgin English used as a lingua franca among ethnic groups of different linguistic backgrounds (English, Hawaiian, Japanese, Chinese, and Portuguese), focusing on the loss of inflectional morphology, absence of grammatical categories such as tense and aspect and overall simplification or reduction of grammatical apparatus as well as vocabulary. However, little attention has been paid to contact linguistic features in Nigerian soap operas. This study explores more insights into contact linguistic features in Nigerian soap operas and foreground the multilingual nature of the Nigerian society through the media. Therefore, this study examines the patterns of contact linguistic features adopted in a popular Nigerian soap opera.

Literature Review

Most of the communicating languages adopted worldwide are usually multi-lingual as a result of linguistic globalization (Musau, 2003). As a result of this contact language has become very important in the everyday lives of people and societies at large. Language contact occurs whenever and wherever two or more groups of people with different languages – and in most cases, different cultures and worldviews as well, encounter one another and attempt to engage in linguistic communication.

Language Contact

According to some studies language contact was identified as the alternative use of languages by the same person however this definition was more suited to describing the art of code switching/mixing (Weinreich, 1970). Appel & Muysken (1987) believed that language

contact can lead to bi/multilingualism however on the long run interactions may further lead to speaking each other's language. According to Thomason (2001), language contact is the use of more than one language in the same sentence, place and time. Also, Matras (2009), asserted that language contact exists when speakers of different languages interact and their languages influence each other. Thus, the relevant locus of contact is the language processing apparatus of the individual multilingual speaker and the employment of this apparatus in communicative interaction.

There are a number of factors which lead to language contact. One is the process of reading literary works by writers who infuse their traditional and ethnic arts in their writings. Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian writer includes Igbo language within the texts of his writings such as *Things Fall Apart* with names of Igbo characters such as Okonkwo, Ezinma, Ikemefuna, Uchendu, Unoka and Chielo, among others. A non-Igbo reader would easily grasp the use of Igbo words after reading the novel and employ them for everyday use. Although, the reader may not be fluent at speaking the Igbo language, the Igbo language may in one way influence the reader's language (Akindele & Adegbite, 2005). Migration can also lead to language contact as a result of famine, war, slave trade etc.

According to Thomason (2001), the original inhabitants of the Republic of South Africa called the Khoisan were used as interpreters and nannies by Europeans during their early conquest of South Africa. Trade also led to language contact such as when the Portuguese traders made their trade in West Africa whom were the first Europeans to set their eyes on West Africans. The need to effectively communicate with their

customers in West Africa led to the discovery of Nigerian Pidgin English. Another reason leading to language contact is marriage, which includes exogamous or intertribal marriages between two domestic ethnic groups such as between Hausa and Yoruba or Edo and Igbo. Colonialism can also lead to contact between two or more languages which is referred to as coercive and detrimental since it does not occur natural but as a result of force (Garrett, 2006).

The Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE)

The Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) originated due to the contact established between Portuguese Merchants and Nigerian customers living along the coastal regions of Nigeria. Nigerians first encountered Portuguese and Dutchmen in 1469 and 1553 respectively (banjo, 1997; Bamgbose, 1995; Egbokhare, 2001). According to some works, the birth of NPE can be traced to contact between British and their trading partners in 1553 while others claim that it was due to contact with Sierra Leone. These disparities have led to a non-conclusion on the origin of the NPE in Nigeria (Faraclas, 1996). Today, various forms of the NPE has evolved from the Standard English (SE) in Nigeria such as Warri/Sapele pidgin, Benin pidgin, Port Harcourt pidgin to mention a few.

A number of writers have expressed their varying opinions about NPE. Some proposed that in light of the popularity of NPE among various tribes hence the need for adoption as a national language instead of the SE (Awonusi, 1990; Elugbe & Omanor, 1991). NPE is the most popularly spoken language in Nigeria by both educated and non-educated indigenes (Faraclas, 1996; 2004). NPE has also been adopted in various Nigerian sectors which include political campaigns, marketing

campaigns, media, education and sports. NPE has filled a big communication vacuum in Nigeria which can unite Nigerians and eliminate ethnic segregation (Ehugbe, 1995).

Consequences of Contact Linguistics

There are three major kinds of contact situations such as, those involving language maintenance, language shift and creation of new languages to which language contact can be categorized under (Matras, 2009). Language contact does not always give rise to the creation of new contact language however there are varying opinion by writers based on their perception (Garrett, 2006). The various features of contact linguistics are presented in the following sections.

Language Borrowing

Language borrowing is the act of taking a word from one language and been used in another language. It may also be as a result of regular contact between people speaking different languages thus the adoption of certain terms from the foreign language. Thomason and Kaufman (1988) referred to borrowing as *the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language*. Therefore, whenever languages come in contact, this is one of the features that can occur in the speakers' linguistic repertoire. Because of a speaker's inability to speak a second/foreign language fluently, it is almost impossible not to borrow few items from another language. There is no language that is sufficient in itself, and this is not to say that such language has no prestige, it is the level of borrowing that varies. Thus, a lexical item is taken from a donor language and combined with bound morphemes from the recipient language (Sabec,

2009). Thus, the donor language is the language lending out a lexical item (giver) while the recipient language is the one borrowing the loaned lexical item (receiver). Consider the following examples:

- a. "You like **tatafo** too much"
- b. "My fine **bobo**, love of my life"

In the examples, *tatafo* and *bobo* were borrowed from the NPE by an English speaker. Thus, the recipient language is SE while the donor/source language is NPE. It is also important to note that borrowing is a function of the user making use of the lexical term in a sentence. This is because another speaker can just easily repeat the same sentence by using the actual SE terms *gossip* and *boy* in place of the NPE terms used. Therefore, it can be inferred that it is the speakers that are borrowing and not the language. Types of borrowing which occur in language contact include lexical and cultural borrowing. Lexical borrowing involves the borrowing parts of speech such as nouns, adverbs and verbs from one language to another. For instance, English words have been derived from French, Latin, Greek and German such as words like *physics* and *butter* (from Latin), *albino* and *banana* (from Portuguese) to mention a few (Crystal, 2003). Cultural borrowing fills gaps in the recipient language's store of words because they stand for objects or concepts new to the language's culture (Myers-Scotton, 2006). A number of words have been adopted from areas such as the Sciences or Law (Crystal, 1997).

Interference

Inference is the influence of one language on another in terms of speech of bilinguals who use both languages. The instances of deviations from their normal use occur

as a result of their familiarity with more than one language (Weinreich, 1970). The influence of a language on another in the speech of bilinguals is very relevant in understanding second language acquisition which may lead to positive/negative transfer (Ellis, 1998) or in historical linguistics. In course of communication, two languages can rub off on each other and in no time detect an interference trait. In Nigeria for instance, a Yoruba man is more likely to pronounce the word *egg* as *h3g* as a result of the syllabic structure in Yoruba which is a consonant (C) followed by a vowel (V) or CV for short thus an unintentional insertion of *H* (Ellis, 1998).

Grammatical interference involves the instruction of the target language by the mother tongue (Akindele & Adegbite, 2005). For instance, one can consider the competence of primary school pupils with secondary school pupils. Examples include: *My stomach is very sweet* – “I am very happy”, *They are calling you* – “He/She is calling you”, *I am coming* – “I will be right back” etc. Lexical interference involves the use of linguistic and cultural factors of lexical terms (Akindele & Adegbite, 2005). Some lexical terms in NPE may have equivalence in SE but with a wider meaning. For example, *father* does not refer to a male parent alone in NPE but to a male adult of comparable age to one’s biological father. Examples include *Open the tap* – “Turn on the tap”, *Tight friend* – “Close friend”, *On the light* – Switch on the light etc.

Coinage

Coinage is the invention of new terms in which a new word is created either deliberately or accidentally (Yule, 2006). Certain words exist in NPE but denote experiences that are not present in SE. For example, *long leg*

(nepotism), *go-slow* (dense traffic), *cash madam* (wealthy woman), *kobalise* (implicate) etc. Some new words ate functions of name of place or person such as *sandwich* (name of Earl of Scotland who had his bread together with meat), or as a function of technical terms or name of inventor such as *Fahrenheit* (German inventor of temperature scale), *volt* and *watt* etc. (Yule, 2006).

Code-Switching

Code switching (CS) is the practice of alternating between two languages in any given conversation (Myers-Scotton, 1988; Woolard, 2006). CS could also exist between two dialects or two closely-related languages however there is a varying level of awareness regarding the similarities and differences between code mixing and code switching. According to Poplack (1981), code-switching occurs between two sentences while code mixing occurs within the same sentences (Benson, 2001). CS is adopted by multilingual speakers who can speak two or more languages which however writers claim is as a result of lack of proficiency in the language adopted. Today, CS is seen as a skilled code, used most effectively by individuals that have a high degree of mastery in multiple languages. In other words, code-switching is now thought to be an indicator of bilingual ability, rather than a mere demonstration of language deficiency (Becker, 1997). Ihemere (2007) gives an example of the 'we' and 'they' code, using a case study of Ikwerre and Nigerian Pidgin English switching in Port Harcourt:

- a. 'Anyi nde na asu asusu anyi(.) ma ha na e yuzu
Pidgin for skul.'
- b. 'We' [their parents] speak our language (the Ikwerre language), but 'they' [the younger generation] speak NPE at school.'

According to Ithemere (2007), ‘the switch from Ikwerre to NPE stresses the boundaries between ‘them’ (the younger generation) and ‘us’ (the parent generation).’ This distinction shows some negativity on the part of the ‘parent generation’ in the sense that, there is a clear separation/distance and disapproval by this speaker, making it obvious that they do not belong to the same school of thought. Akande (2011) observed that apart from bilingual or multilingual setting, monolingual speakers do portray themselves as belonging to a particular group through the use of their language. The various languages spoken differentiate people from others who speak completely different languages. Through the languages spoken, people can be grouped into ethnic groups or speech communities thus people are associated by the language spoken. Reasons for code switching may include deficiency in a particular language, solidarity with a particular group of people, by conveying one’s attitude to the listener or for political reasons during political campaigns.

Theoretical framework

The Matrix Language Framework (MLF) model lays emphasis on the identification of the matrix and embedded language in the utterance of a speaker (Myers-Scotton, 2001). According to the model, the matrix language (ML) plays the main role in setting the sentence frame where code-switching arises while the embedded language (EL) is thus inserted to achieve a purpose. The first premise satisfied by this model is that both ML and EL do not participate equally since they do not perform the same function neither do they have equal standards or participation. Thus ML has more participation than the EL. The second premise is that not all morpheme

types are equal in the sense that not all types can come equally from the ML and EL. The third premise is that both ML and EL are always *on* when a speaker engages in code-switching although the ML is always active.

In a sentence containing code-switching, since the language do not have equal participation then the ML is the dominant language while the EL is the subordinate language. Thus, the ML is the language meeting the requirements of the speaker while the other language is the EL. Thus, this theory is applicable in this study for the following reasons:

- a. Identify the embedded languages in different contexts of use in the Nigerian soap opera *Fuji House of Commotion*.
- b. Analyze the different roles played by the languages in the various contexts of use.
- c. Justify the use of the language in the context they appear.

Materials and Methods

This study focuses on the identification of contact linguistic features existing in a Nigerian soap opera called *Fuji House of Commotion*. The study employed the use of both primary sources of data. The data collected consists of seven episodes which were purposely selected and downloaded from *youtube.com*. The episodes contained characters from various ethnic groups in Nigeria. The data collected contained various linguistic resources which were mixed together without causing harm to the discourse. The topics of the soap opera addresses all manner of issues in the everyday life of Nigerians however restricted to episodes focusing on cultural and social matters.

The descriptive research approach was used in this study to analyse the instances of borrowing, coinages, interference, and code-switching patterns in the selected episodes. The analysis focused on the frequencies of these mentioned patterns and their interpretation in the context they appear. After the collection, the data were carefully examined by being listened to, and were transcribed subsequently. The purpose of this transcription is to enable the ease of analysis and to bring out the various instances of the patterns of contact linguistic features present in the data. The analysis of data was carried out using the *Matrix Language Framework* proposed by Myers-Scotton (2001).

Results and Discussions

The instances of borrowed words from different indigenous languages in Nigeria were identified and explained according to the context of use. In addition, the various instances of interference like phonological interference and grammatical interference were also identified and analysed. Some lexical items that were wrongly-spelt and pronounced due to mother tongue interference were identified, analysed, and their correct pronunciations given accordingly. Furthermore, the various instances of code-switching and code-mixing patterns were analysed and grouped into inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching respectively.

Borrowing

Based on the data collected, the Matrix Language is Standard English (SE) while the Embedded Language are the local Nigerian ethnic languages. According to the data collected for this study, a number of words were

borrowed from various ethnic groups in Nigeria such as Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa and Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE). Peace is one of the characters who speaks Igbo as her native language and naturally expected that she would borrow mainly from Igbo Language when speaking English Language. Below are some experts showing lexical terms borrowed from the Igbo language.

Excerpt 1

Peace: Ehn ehn. Is like the beating I gave to you the last time was not enough for you, Caro.

Caro: Like I told you, if you want to have a control of your husband put him on a leash. But from the several additions to the family, I see that your leash couldn't hold him.

Peace: If I touch you ehn Caro.

Caro: Try it.

Peace: Eh Caro, it is your otmuokpo? (*Eh Caro, is this your charm?*)

The word '**otmuokpo**' was borrowed from Igbo language and means 'charm'. In the Eastern part of the country, when two women are fighting, they tend to tie a piece of clothing around their waist (charm) which enables them to win the fight. In this context, the charm was signified by the black belt of a taekwondo fighter worn by Caro hence why Peace asked if that was her charm.

Excerpt 2

Chief: Ehn, you know, like the fight that happened to you and that man.

Peace: Ehn, ehn, well, I will kill her, I will kill her, leave me, leave me.

Chief: I will leave you O and she will kill you.

Caro: Chief, leave her now.

Peace: Don't hold me O, don't hold me

Ireti: Ahn ehn, what is happening here?

Peace: Ah, where have you being, ***Nwaochicha?***
(Ah, where have you being, small woman?)

The word '**Nwaochicha**' means a small person in the Igbo language and was used as a nickname and slang to describe the physique of Ireti who is slim and short. Peace was surprised that Ireti was just getting involved in the discussion and that was why she exclaimed 'ah', asking her where she had been that she had not come earlier to witness what had been happening.

Apart from Igbo language, linguistic terms were also borrowed from the Yoruba Language. They are identified and assessed in the following paragraphs.

Excerpt 3

Chief: I give you insurance the other time, you appeared with twins. This time no insurance so that it can be one child, you hear?

Peace: But ehn chief, she said that the doctor said that he saw two heads and that he will need scan to confirm.

Chief: When mama ibeji my wife had Isiaka and Ismaila... *(When twins' mother my wife had Isiaka and Ismaila...)*

In the Yoruba language, the compound word '**Mama Ibeji**' could mean a pregnant woman which is a form of goodwill greeting for her as well as a woman who has a set of twins. In this context, the woman really had a set of grown up twins, so, she was referred to as 'mama ibeji'. Chief was talking about his first wife, who did not require a scan when she had her set of twins. So he saw no reason why Ireti should demand money for scan to know if she is also having a set of twins.

Excerpt 4

Peace: No wait, let me bring your own food.

Uncle: Don't worry, this one is okay. Peace, do you still have salt and pepper in the house or you have put everything in the food?

Peace: But I told you that you should wait.

Jumoke: God saved that yeye taxman. (God saved that funny taxman)

In Yoruba language, the word '**yeye**' could mean funny, joke or unserious, depending on the context of use. Here, this word means an unserious person. Jumoke called the taxman unserious because he was demanding 5% of her mother's pot of soup, which is actually not right. Then, the mother, Peace, decided to pay the tax, but in a vengeful way by adding so much pepper and salt in the soup she served him. But unfortunately, their uncle came in and challenged the taxman as he was about eating the food. The uncle sent him away and then settled down to eat the food instead. The uncle's reaction on eating the food made Jumoke to pass the comment because the food was actually meant for the taxman.

Apart from Igbo and Yoruba language, linguistic terms were also borrowed from the Hausa Language. They are identified and assessed in the following paragraphs.

Excerpt 5

Nike: Is this not all this everlasting product?

Ireti: Bee ni

Nike: Ha, so these wayo people have gotten into Fuji house. (Ha, so these tricky people have gotten into Fuji house)

The word **'beeni'** is a Yoruba word meaning Yes however the word **'wayo'** is used to refer to tricky people in the Hausa language. Nike referred to the product marketers as 'wayo' because they were tricky people, who deceived others into going into a pyramid sales business in which the only person that smile to the bank is the producer of the product.

The use of Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) was also observed in the collected data. Below are some of the examples of such borrowing.

Excerpt 6

Chief: My son will stay under my roof for as long as he wants.

Christo: Yes! Thanks dad

Chief: Ehn Ehn

Caro: Christo... Baby

Peace: Hey Caro. Dint you hear what Chief said? Key soap can stay, you Caro...

Christo: Hey yellow pawpaw, don't you ever call my mum names. *(Hey fair woman, don't you ever call my mum names)*

The compound word '**yellow pawpaw**' is a borrowed term that has its origin from Nigerian Pidgin English derived from a fruit; pawpaw, which happens to be yellow in colour when it is very ripe. It is used to refer to people with very fair complexion in Nigeria which could come either naturally or via bleaching. It could be derogatory or otherwise, depending on the context of usage. In this context though, it is a derogatory term considering the fact that it was directed by a young boy to an older woman, which is quite disrespectful. Peace was generally called yellow pawpaw in the family because she was the fairest of them all.

Excerpt 7

Musa: Oh, kisses honey. Yes, I love you too.

Peace: Let us go before they finish chopping our phone. *(Let us go before they finish eating our phone)*

'**Chopping**' in the right sense is a SE word however it may also be used as a NPE word depending on the context of use. In SE, it means to cut into pieces however in NPE, it means the act of eating. Peace asked the rest of the family to excuse Musa whose act of kissing over the phone seemed as though he was trying to eat the phone.

Excerpt 8

Jumoke: Maami, what is it, sorry eh

Rabiu: Choi choi choi what is happening here.

Jumoke: Happening where, tatafo? (*Happening where, gossip*)

The term ‘tatafo’ is used in NPE to refer to the act of gossiping about other people’s affairs behind their backs. It means the same in all context of use. Jumoke called Rabiū ‘tatafo’ because he was asking a question that is obviously not his business. Rabiū came in and saw that Jumoke’s mother’s mouth was swollen, and then asked what was happening. Meanwhile, Rabiū was aware that it was Chief that gave Peace a swollen face, but because he wanted to make fun of her, he decided to ask again what happened. Generally, when people want to make fun of the situation or the person, they ask some questions the answer of which they already know in order to have a good laugh.

Interference

The data collected also contained linguistic terms affected by mother tongue interference since the mother tongue of the bilingual interfered with the target language. Such instances include phonological, grammatical and lexical interference stated in the following paragraphs.

The various excerpts within which phonological interference are identified as stated thus.

Excerpt 9

Titi: Ehn, and you’re still in this building. Biliki, come here, come here. How could you allow someone you don’t know keep a bag here?

Biliki: Weti o, na wetin be una own with this bag sef? Se the bag dey disturb una work?

Titi: What did you say?

Abigail: You don't even know whether it is bomb that is inside the bag

Biliki: Ehn Bombu [bɔmbu]

In Yoruba language, the syllabic structure is CV and it does not allow consonant clusters unlike SE. So, Biliki decided to emphasize because her mother tongue the Yoruba language, does not allow a word to end with a consonant since every syllable in Yoruba must end with vowel. Thus, the word 'bomb' [bɔm], was pronounced as [bɔmbu] in the excerpt. She inserted the half-close back rounded vowel /u/ at the end of the word 'bomb' [bɔm]. Moreover, in StdE, a voiced bilabial plosive /b/ is not supposed to be pronounced after the bilabial nasal. However, Biliki inserted the sound [b] in the word [bɔm].

Excerpt 10

Alika: Isi that notu.. Chineke? What kind of jagbajantis food are you people eating? Is it from the wonder medicine.

Bolaji: Now, it is cookery book food from culinary expertise

Alika: Culinary expert? Sorry, you hear. Bia, trouble Komoko, where is ya mother? Carton full of trouble, is it not you I am talking to, where is ya mother?

The speaker, 'Alika' is an uneducated Igbo man who inserted the **i-epenthetic** vowel at the end of the word 'is' as *isi* and the **u-epenthetic** vowel at the end of the word 'not' as *notu*. Furthermore, he replaced the half-open back vowel /ɔ/ with the open back vowel /a/ in the word 'your', pronouncing it as [ja]. The vowel /ɔ/ is often

replaced with the vowel [a] Igbo. This accounts for the pronunciation of 'your' [jɔ:] as [ja]. In the excerpt above, Alika also replaced the voiced alveolar plosive /d/ with the lateral liquid sound /l/ in the word 'medicine'. This replacement could be as a result of his illiteracy because the sound /d/ exists in the consonant inventory of Igbo language however the word 'medicine' [medisən] was pronounced as [melisine].

Excerpt 11

Chief: I don't want wahala o. This one that eh, they allow their daughter to be living with a man without proper marriage.

Mama: Shief, they lof each other well well.

Mama is a Yoruba woman who pronounced the word 'love' [lʌv] as [lɔ:f] by replacing the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ with its voiceless counterpart /f/. This was as a result of the non-existence of the consonant sound /v/ in Yoruba language, so the nearest sound to it was the half-open back rounded long vowel /ɔ:/.

The various excerpts within which grammatical interference are identified as stated thus.

Excerpt 12

Chief: Who is this girl that Musa wants to marry?

Mama: Chief, she's a nice girl

Chief: Ehn eh, you know her?

Mama: I meet her in Musa house when I go to Kaduna the last time – Incorrect (Mo ba ni ile Musa igbati mo lo si Kaduna nigba ikeyin) - Yoruba

(I met her in Musa's house when I went to Kaduna the last time) – Correct

Mama's level of competence was seen where she used present tense in place of past, and where she did not mark possession in the proper noun 'Musa'. As explained earlier, in Yoruba language, there is no overt tense marker. The adjunct Mama used here is **'the last time'**. Her use of this adjunct showed that she was referring to a past event. 'Meet' is used in place of 'met' and 'go' is used in place of 'went'. The absence of tense markers in Yoruba language does not mean that all Yoruba speakers speak in this manner; however, this shows Mama's level of education.

Excerpt 12

Peace: Enter now instead of standing there

Ireti: Maami is inside

Peace: So, leave them alone

Ireti: Senior, is my week and I just hope Mama is not planning to take over - Incorrect

(Senior, it is my week...) - Correct

The above grammatical interference is a very common one, even among Nigerian university undergraduates. The personal pronoun **'it'** is usually omitted when it precedes the predicator **'is'**. The omission could be as a result of fast speech, shorthand or grammatical incompetence. In addition, Ireti used the lexical item **'Senior'**, which means **'egbon'** in Yoruba language, to show that she is a younger wife to Peace and acknowledged Peace as the older one.

The various excerpts within which lexical interference are identified as stated thus.

Excerpt 13

Chief: Caro, ah ah, what are you doing here

Caro: I came to collect my son.

Mo wa gba omo mi – Yoruba

(I came to pick up my son)

In the excerpt, the mother tongue interference can be seen where Caro used the lexical item ‘**collect**’ in place of ‘**pick up**’; the words ‘collect’ and ‘son’ do not collocate. Caro’s son had been with his father, Chief, since the holiday began but she wanted him back in her house in order for him to prepare for resumption. But the son is not an inanimate object that can be “collected”; the choice of the lexical item is wrong because she did a direct translation from Yoruba to English. More so, looking at the Yoruba version critically, she really meant ‘collect’ (**gba**), and her choice of this lexical item could be as a result of the situation of things; she and Chief did not live together, so she wanted to take her son back to her house before Chief claimed custody of the child. In the Nigerian society today, when a child’s parents are separated, each parent would want the child to spend more time with him/her, and also try to win the child to his/her side.

Excerpt 14

Mama: Irete what is the matter

Irete: Maa mi, you know it is my week?

Peace has taken chief.

Peace ti gba Chief – Yoruba

(Peace has taken my place)

Mama: O ti o! What you do?

Ki lo se? - Yoruba

What have you done?

In Chief's home, there was a roaster indicating when each of the wives would sleep with him such that each wife was entitled to one week of sleeping in Chief's room and cooking his food. When it is one wife's week, it is wrong and unjust for Chief to have another wife in his room. In a Nigerian polygamous home, this type of tacit agreement exists to ensure peace, equality and stability. Here, Ireti expressed her dissatisfaction with Peace, saying that she has '**taken**' Chief because she (Ireti) ought to be the one in Chief's bedroom, since, it is her week. She intended to say that Peace has snatched Chief from her or Peace has taken her place. Her mother tongue, Yoruba, is seen to interfere in the statement 'Peace has taken chief'.

4.3 Coinages

Certain words in the NPE are usually coined and as time goes by gain currency within the NPE however they are not peculiar to any ethnic group rather used by all and sundry. Some examples of lexical terms of such a manner are presented in this section.

Excerpt 15

Rabiu: Hunger will just kill someone here o in this house

Child 1: I wonder

Jumoke: When will this medemede that catering practical cooks stop? (*Rubbish/junk*)

Child 1: I wonder.

Child 2: You are always wondering, are you a wonderer?

The word '**wonderer**' has no definite meaning and was coined by Child 2 as a result of overgeneralization: if he who writes is regarded as a *writer* and who speaks is a *speaker*; for Child 2, it then follows that he who *wonders* must be a *wonderer*.

Excerpt 16

Caro: Do you like it?

Chief: Yes ooooo

Caro: My fine bobo. Love of my life. Oh, honeybunch, all this for me... look at it. So lovely, it looks so pretty. Hmn honey, such a lovely meal deserves a lovely dressing. Go and change into something comfortable while I set the table outside.

Chief: My own crimicious Caro (Sweet)

The word '**crimicious**' was coined from the word 'cream' which is used to describe a type of sweet that is soft inside. In this context, Caro sashayed in front of Chief and asked if he liked her dress. He answered in the affirmative and then called her 'crimicious' which could mean sweet, beautiful or attractive. Chief described Caro as 'crimicious' here because she looked gorgeous and sexy in the dress she was putting on.

Code-Switching/Code mixing

There are also instances of code-switching and code-mixing in the data. These instances were classified under inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching. Some examples of inter-sentential code switching are presented in the following paragraphs.

Excerpt 17

Ireti: Ehn, but I'm not so sure yet.

Peace: But your time vanished for more than two months na.

Ireti: Were you the one that took it away?

Peace: Please, give us space.

Ireti: Ehn Ehn, okay.

Peace: Biko nu, lekwenụ mechi chi o. || What is this nonsense about? (Igbo | | English)

Please, see me seeing trouble – English Translation of Igbo

(Please, see me seeing trouble o. What is this nonsense about?)

The excerpt shows an instance of inter-sentential code-switching involving the use of Igbo and English languages respectively. After Chief's refusal to dismiss Peace and allow Ireti take her rightful place in his bed, she got angry and decided to join them both in bed. Ireti and Peace struggled for space on the bed, but in the process, Peace fell off. In a reaction to this, Peace said '**Biko nu, lekwenụ mechi chi o**' which means 'please, see me seeing trouble o'. She was surprised and unhappy with Ireti's action, wondering why she should react that way.

Excerpt 18

Mama: Eku ile o

Bolaji: E kabo ma mi. || You are welcome ma.
(Yoruba || English)

Welcome my mother - English Translation of
Yoruba

(Welcome my mother. You are welcome)

Mama: How are you?

Bolaji: Hungry

Bolaji responded to Mama's Yoruba greeting by switching from Yoruba to English. She said '**e kabo ma mi**' and then switched to 'You are welcome'. The two sentences mean the same thing, but Jumoke employed this method of greeting because she wanted to pass a message across. Jumoke communicated with Mama in Yoruba language most of the time, but because she was trying to draw her attention to a situation, she decided to greet Mama again in English after using Yoruba language. And of course, Mama immediately understood that there was an issue, and then inquired what the problem was.

Excerpt 19

Mama: Oga abeg na, no cut the wire please.

Nepa Man: Madam, I wan help you, if you get five hundred naira, make you bring am

Mama: Look, I get two fifty naira

Nepa Man: Abeg, no dey waste time. || Bring down everything (**NPE || SE**)

Please, stop wasting time – SE translation of NPE
(Please, stop wasting time. Bring down everything)

The excerpt shows an instance of inter-sentential code-switching involving the use of NPE and SE languages respectively. Here, Mama and the NEPA official negotiated in order not to disconnect their line as a result of unpaid bills. The official was not satisfied with the amount Mama offered, he then ordered his assistant not to waste any more time but to disconnect the wire from the pole. In the process, he switched codes; he first spoke NPE '**abeg, no dey waste time**' which is interpreted as '**please, stop wasting time**' before he switched to SE. This switch might be as a result of his anger because of Mama's negotiation. Here, the official will rather disconnect the line, than collect two hundred and fifty naira from Mama. In Nigeria, this is a common phenomenon with NEPA officials; they demand bribe when they ought to just disconnect the line and reconnect when the bills are fully paid. But when offered a ridiculous amount, they get angry and disconnect. And when the bills are paid in full, one will have to pay them extra money for reconnecting the lines.

Some examples of intra-sentential code switching are presented in the following paragraphs.

Excerpt 20

Ireti: Olowo ori mi, || it is my week (**Yoruba, SE**)
Money owner of my head – SE translation of Yoruba sentence
(My dear, it is my week)

In this excerpt, there is an intra-sentential code-switching where there is the occurrence of two different codes: Yoruba and English, within the same sentence. The Yoruba phrase '**olowo ori mi**' is a way of addressing one's husband in Yoruba culture. It could mean 'my lord',

‘my husband’ or ‘my dear’. It is a term of endearment. The interpretation in English language is ‘the one who paid my dowry’. In Yoruba culture, before a man is allowed to marry a woman, he must pay her bride price alongside some other gifts that the man and his family will give to the bride’s family. Doing this gives the man an authority over the woman; he becomes her lord and she becomes his responsibility forever. Ireti acknowledged Chief as a husband who followed a due process and performed all the marital rites; she regarded him as her lord. Often times, women use this endearment as a praise singing act for their husband when they want to seek their favour. The matrix language here is English, ‘**it is my week**’ which served as the dominant language, while the embedded language is Yoruba, ‘**olowo ori mi**’, a phrase inserted within the English sentence.

Having considered all the excerpts given, the data showed that there are instances of borrowing from the three main languages in Nigeria; Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, and also Nigerian Pidgin English. In addition, there are instances of interference at the grammatical level, lexical and phonological level. Words were also coined to achieve certain purposes in the data. More so, codes were mixed at the inter-sentential level and intra-sentential level. All these indicate the patterns of contact linguistic features present in the data. These features were used in this data to exhibit the peculiarities of these Nigerian languages for humour and other effects.

Conclusion

Various lexico-grammatical features such as borrowing, coinages and interference were extensively used in the data. Almost all participants had one form of interference or the other; at the grammatical level, phonological and

lexical level. Also, codes were mixed both at intra-sentential and inter-sentential levels. Borrowing and interference appeared to occur more than coinages in the data. However, while the lexico-grammatical contact features have varying degrees of appearances; their uses are common to all the participants and also to Nigerians at large.

Thus, the findings from the study can be summarized as follows:

- a) The lexico-grammatical contact features abound in the Soap Opera considered.
- b) Borrowing appeared more commonly than other linguistic features. Also, borrowing from other indigenous languages apart from the three majorly spoken languages and NPE was not attested in the data.
- c) The mother tongue of the participants interfered with the language spoken by native bilingual characters.
- d) Characters made use of both intra and inter-sentential code-switching and the switches between English and either one of the three indigenous languages or Nigerian Pidgin English.
- e) In some cases, certain linguistic features were used to achieve comic effect.

The study concluded that there were uneven appearances of contact linguistic features in the soap opera. Also, the features were used to reflect the linguistic and cultural diversities in Nigerian soap opera. The study also concluded that a gathering consisting of people from various linguistic backgrounds tends to be a mixture of their languages as was identified in the collected data.

References

- Akande, A. (2011). Codeswitching and identity. In I. Udofot & J. Uduodom (Eds.), *English Usage in Nigeria since 1842: Patterns and Changes* (pp. 218-231). Ikot Ekpeke: Devconsort.
- Akindele, F, & Adegbite, W. (2005). *The Sociology and Politics of English in Nigeria*. Ile-Ife: OAU Press.
- Anderson, Stephen R. & David W. Lightfoot. (2002). *The Language Organ: Linguistics as Cognitive Physiology*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.
- Appel, R & Mysken, P. (1987). *Language contact and bilingualism*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Awonusi, S. (2007). *Linguistic Hegemony and the Plight of Minority Languages in Nigeria*. A paper delivered at the ACAL 38/ALTA 11 Conference University of Florida.
- Ellis, R. (1998). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bamgbose, A. (1971). The English Language in Nigeria. In J. Spencer (Ed.), *The English Language in West Africa* (pp. 35-48). London: Longman.
- Central Intelligence Agency (2015).
https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print_ni.html
- Crystal, D. (1987). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- De Swaan, A. (2010). Language Systems. In N. Coupland, *The Handbook of Language and Globalization* (pp. 56-57). Wiley- Blackwell.
- Egbokhare, F. (2001). The Nigerian linguistic ecology and the changing profiles. In H. Igboanusi (Ed.), *Language Attitude and Language Conflict in West Africa* (pp. 105-124). Ibadan: Encrownfit Publishers.

- Musau, M. (2003). Linguistic human rights in Africa: Challenges and prospects for indigenous languages in Kenya. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 16(2).
- Elugbe, B. & Omamor, A. (1991). *Nigerian Pidgin: Background and Prospects*. Ibadan: Mosuro, pp. 284-299.
- Faraclas, N. (1996). *Nigerian Pidgin*. London: Routledge.
- Garett, P. (2006). Language Contact and Contact Languages. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* (pp. 47-72). USA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Jacomine, N. (2009). *Loan words: A kind of code-switching*. <http://www.multilingualliving.com/2011/06/23/loan-words-and-borrowing-a-kind-of-code-switching/>
- Matras, R. (2009). *Language contact*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (2006). *Multiple voices; An Introduction to Bilingualism*. USA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Poplack, S. (1981). Syntactic structure and social function of code-switching. In E. R. Duran (Ed.), *Latino Language and Communicative Behaviour* (pp. 169-184). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Sabec, N. (2009). *Slovene-English Language Contact and Language Change*. Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana Press.
- Siemund, P. (2008). Language Contact: Constraints and common paths of contact induced language change. In P. Siemund, P & N. Kintana, *Language Contact and Contact Languages* (pp. 14-28). Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Taiwo, R. (2010). The dynamics of language mixing in Nigerian digital communication. In R. Taiwo (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Discourse Behaviour and Digital Communication* (pp. 179-190). Pennsylvania: IGI Global Publisher.

- Thomason, S. and Kaufman, T. (1988). *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Weinreich, U. (1970). *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Winford, D. (2003). *An introduction to contact linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Woolard, K. (2006). Code-switching. In A. Duranti, (Ed.), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* (pp. 73-94). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.