

ADAPTATIONS AND LINGUISTIC MANIPULATION OF ENGLISH WORDS IN ALAROYE NEWSPAPER

Ajewole-Orimogunje Christiana Oluremi (Ph.D.) (Corresponding Author)
Department of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria
E-mail: remaje2005@yahoo.com
Tel: +2348035063745 +2349081212823

Adewusi Olusegun Nathaniel
Department of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria
E-mail: adewusinath@gmail.com
Tel: +2347034746405

Muwagun Oyeleye Henry
Department of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria
E-mail: crusoedefoe72@yahoo.com
Tel: +2348062893955

ABSTRACT: *Language is an important vehicle of thought and culture and people's cultural identity is embedded in their language. Nigeria is a multilingual nation and English which has become a global language serves various functions in the country. It enjoys dominance in different levels and it is employed in the media as a source of disseminating information to the people. The data for this research were derived from one edition of Alaroye newspaper and analysed using Labov's variability concept which stresses how language systems affect one another within a speech community. A total number of 66 words were identified from the newspaper for analysis. The Alaroye is a weekly indigenous newspaper written in Yoruba language and it has been chosen for this study because of its use of the deviant form and style of writing. The study revealed that many English words have been incorporated into the Yoruba language and such expressions dominate the Alaroye newspaper as journalists modify English words to fit into Yoruba expressions. This paper investigates the usage of these words in preference to their natural equivalents in the Yoruba language to reveal the great influence of the English language; its dominance over the Yoruba language and the attendant effects on the Yoruba language and concludes that English influence on the Yoruba language has greatly affected its orthography as the incursion of these English words will likely, in the nearest future change the normal or natural way in which the Yoruba language is written and used.*

KEY WORDS: English, Yoruba, language change, culture, Alaroye newspaper.

INTRODUCTION

Language performs both linguistic and social functions; hence, we communicate and socialize through language. The use of English language as a global means of communication has paved way for its dominance over some other languages. English language is one imposed on Nigeria by

the colonial masters and it has become the official language; it serves as the language of government, business, education etc. The Nigerian Constitution is written in English while the affairs of the three tiers of government – federal, state and local are conducted in English. Also, a reasonable mastery of the language is required for anyone who wants to serve in the political affairs of the nation; thus, English has become a Nigerian language. The prestigious status of English in Nigeria has made it the language of government and in addition, the language of inter-tribal, domestic and mass media communication. Nigeria is a multilingual society having about 400 languages. The fact that the English language has dominance over the indigenous languages in Nigeria is corroborated by Bamgbose's (2004:3) assertion that "the overwhelming and towering status of English has been characterized in terms of dominance, power, hegemony and linguistic imperialism". The three major languages are spoken by the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria – Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. The Yoruba language as well as the other two is well developed with a standard orthography.

The Yoruba people are located in the Southwestern region of Nigeria and according to Arifalo and Ogen (2003), it is estimated that the Yoruba have a population of over 40 million worldwide. They posit further that they are one of the major and prominent ethnic groups in West Africa. Linguistically, the Yoruba people emerged as a distinct language group between 2000 BC and 1000 BC from the Niger-Benue confluence area (Atanda, cited in Salawu 2004:99). It has been argued that no other language can reflect any people's real language of life than their own (Salawu 2004). According to Nnabuihe (2004:194), "language is one of the tools of creation that human beings alone are endowed with by nature". Language, therefore, is according to Okonkwo (2002:17):

...important not only because of its power over men's minds, feelings, reasons and actions; not just because its command gives leadership to certain individuals in a community, not only because a firm grasp of it helps in the building of a solid personality; but above all, it is the indispensable instrument for the furtherance of group solidarity through effective communication leading to meaning sharing. It creates, among those that share it, a likeness and oneness of mind and purpose, a communion of thought and a communion of will; and thought, feeling, will and action are the basic elements of human and group conduct and of character.

McQuail (2000:79-80) identifies five functions of the media to include – information, correlation, continuity, entertainment and mobilization. The media can be rightly described as the life wire of the society as regards their role in information dissemination and according to Salawu (2001:1), "the language in which a message would be disseminated is a very important aspect of the message treatment". Nigeria's education policy encourages the study of at least one indigenous language at both the primary and secondary school levels and this implies encouraging and supporting the reading, writing and use of the languages. However, less attention is paid to the study of these indigenous languages in Nigerian schools. It has been observed that parents and teachers encourage their children to communicate in English language to the detriment of the indigenous languages. Babawale (2018) rightly observes that Nigerian children are unable to speak the indigenous languages but it is now fashionable for them to speak English and French fluently.

The mass media have the ability to diffuse information to a wide audience and as noted by Salawu (2002), the print media are by nature, vehicles for literacy as they are required to be read for knowledge and information. Salawu (2002) asserts that a true newspaper is one that:

- is published at least weekly;
- is produced by a mechanical printing process;
- is available to people of all walks of life (for a price);
- prints news of general interest rather than items on specialized topics such as religion or business;
- is readable by people of ordinary literacy;
- is timely; and
- is stable over time.

Communication is an important and inevitable tool in any community of human beings and mass communication has been made easier with the growth in technological advancement. Due to their large audience, the mass media play a vital role in the exchange of information and meaning between the government and its citizens.

The role of indigenous languages in information dissemination

The indigenous language is the society's primary instrument for mass communication. It is an invaluable vehicle of interaction and a means of education through which people's culture is passed from one generation to another. In recognition of the importance of the mother tongue as a means of preserving the culture of people, the Nigerian government recommends that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages – Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo – to foster national unity. The socio-anthropologists, according to Okonkwo (2002) stress the communicative function of language and insist that language does not exist in a vacuum adding that the reference system of any language is largely for communicative purposes. Okonkwo (2002) notes that a system of linguistic communication is a necessary condition for the existence of a human group. He states further that it was language that enabled man to achieve a form of social organization which is largely learnt and transmitted verbally through the cultural heritage. According to him, the values and beliefs of any culture are more fully and more naturally expressed by its associated language than by any other language. This means that societal norms, values, traditions and custom are best disseminated through the native language spoken by the people in a particular society.

The indigenous language newspapers in Nigeria

The first indigenous language newspaper – *Iwe Iroyin* in the area known as Nigeria today was founded by the CMS Missionary, Rev. Henry Townsend in 1859. Coker as cited by Oso (2006) observed that the publication of *Iwe Iroyin* helped to prepare the Yoruba for the publication of the first Yoruba Bible in 1862. As noted by Oso (2006:180), "*Iwe Iroyin* was not just an organ of information, education or entertainment; it was part of the ideological superstructure of the British Imperial power". Salawu (2006a:55) observes that in most parts of Africa, communication in indigenous languages has been adversely affected by the choice of colonial language as the official language stressing that in Nigeria, "English and western education remain the vehicles of power and progress in life". According to Olukotun (2006:133), indigenous language media "offer one clear way of bridging the gap between the urban and the rural, in that they publish in the local

language and so, naturally appeal to the literate, rural and urban indigenes to which they are targeted". This corroborates Olunlade's (2006) assertion that Yoruba newspapers like others published in English language are an important segment of the print media in Nigeria.

Nda-Isaiah (2017) notes that there is still no daily vernacular newspaper in Nigeria but adds that the sway of the these vernacular newspapers should not be underestimated as they are the most consequential publications among the masses which makes them very key to any strategy at national development as well as dangerous tool in the hands of trouble makers.

Folarin and Mohammed cited in Salawu (2006b:7) categorise the establishment and appearance of indigenous language press in Nigeria into five 'waves'. *Iwe Iroyin*(1859-67) stood alone in the first wave; the second wave featured two Efik papers – *Unwana Efik* and *Obukpon Efik* and a Yoruba paper *Iwe Iroyin Eko* and covered the period between 1885 and 1892. The third wave started in 1922 with the founding of *Eko Akete* and ended with the death of the paper in 1937 while the entry of *Gasikiya Tafi Kwabo* in 1937/38 signalled the fourth wave and continued till Nigeria attained independence and republican status in the 60s. They note further that the rest of the development till the present time can be subsumed under the fifth and the last wave. It is worthy of note that out of all the newspapers in the first to the fourth wave, only *Iroyin Yoruba* and *Gasikiya Tafi Kwabo* still exist till date. *Iroyin Yoruba* which was established in 1945 by the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo is at present published by African Newspapers of Nigeria. Other indigenous language newspapers published in Nigeria in the past include *Gboungboun* and *Isokan*. The *Alaroye* newspaper emerged in 1996 and it is published in Yoruba language.

The Alaroye newspaper

Whalen and Simons (2012) posit that languages share many common features but each language has its unique features. *Alaroye*, a weekly newspaper written in Yoruba language serves the purpose of informing, educating, entertaining and analyzing issues and events through the Yoruba culture. As rightly observed by Salawu (2006:2), "culture is reflected in the socio-political system of a people and is more predominantly reflected in people's mode of communication". According to Fasan (2013), *Alaroye* is today the best Yoruba language newspaper in Nigeria, adding that it is the most successful indigenous–languages newspaper of all times. *The Fourth Estate* as cited by Salawu (2006:7) has this to say about the newspaper:

The emergence of *Alaroye* newspaper in 1996 marked a milestone in the affairs of Yoruba and, indeed indigenous language press in Nigeria. Within a short time, this newspaper became popular because of its arresting cover design and styles of headline-casting and story presentation. It actually popularized reading of Yoruba newspapers among the folks. It is the largest local language newspaper with a circulation figure of not less than 150,000 per week. It sells in Europe and several West African countries where the Yoruba reside.

The above assertion reveals the popularity *Alaroye* newspaper has gained as an indigenous newspaper in Nigeria and in the Diaspora.

Theoretical framework

In this research work, Labov's (2004) variability concept which seeks to discover how language systems affect one another at different levels within a speech community is adopted. The concept is concerned with the varieties of language and language dynamism, and emphasizes the choice of one as opposed to another in discourse.

The Data

The Alaroye newspaper, Volume 39, Number 13 of November 12, 2013 forms the data for our analysis in this work. Some English words written as Yoruba words on different pages of the newspaper were selected and highlighted to show how the English language has greatly influenced the Yoruba orthography. The words are reproduced below with their English equivalents:

English word	Yoruba adaptation	English word	Yoruba adaptation
account	akaunti	coach	koosi
acre	eeka	captain	kaptan
Africa	Afrika	campaign	kampeeni
barrack	baraki	church	soosi
paper	beba	doctor	dokita
bail	beeli	electric	elentiriki
bed	beedi	engine oil	enjin oili
petrol	bentiroolu	film	fiimu
billion	bilionu	Friday	Fraide
bus	boosi	garage	garaaji
ball	boolu	general	jenera
commando	komando	governor	gomina
court	kootu	hospital	osibitu
caterpillar	katapila	honourable	onarebu
computer	komputa	kilogramme	kilogiraamu
club	kiloobu	lawyer	looya
commissioner	komisanna	Lieutenant-colonel	Lefutenanti-konel
magistrate	majisreeti	minister	minisita
million	milionu	motor	moto
Monday	Monde	Nigeria	Naijiria
paper	beba	progressive	purogiresiifu
phone	foonu	quarter final	kuota-faina
park	paaki	radio	redio
spanner	sipana	steering	siarin
slippers	silipaasi	Sunday	Sannde
Saturday	Satide	shop	soobu
soldier	soja	surrender	sorenda
Tuesday	Tusde	Thursday	Tosde
taxi	taksi	turn	toonu
ticket	tikeeti	television	telifisan

theatre	tiata	thug	toogi
university	yunifasiti	vigilante	fijilante
Wednesday	Wesde		
explain	espleeni		

Incursion of English words in the Yoruba lexicon: *Alaroye's* language use

Alaroye's language use at the lexical level in some occasions features words that are of English origin but written to be pronounced as Yoruba words. Such words are manipulated and adapted to Yoruba. Thus, the Yoruba language as used in the newspaper is replete with English expressions with morphological modifications. As observed by Omole (no date), there exists a relationship between the English language and the Nigerian culture and many English words have been incorporated into the Yoruba language.

The data above reveal *Alaroye's* language use at the lexical level where words that are of English origin are written in Yoruba orthography and pronounced as Yoruba words. As noted by Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2009), language change does not occur in a vacuum and the progression of a change cannot be divorced from the social context in which it is embedded. As rightly observed by Olukotun (2006), limitations of the indigenous language newspapers include socio-linguistic problems of unprofessional translators and the difficulty of rendering certain English words in the local language. Olaoye (2013) also notes that orthography inadequacy and language endangerment constitute the major problems in the utilization of Nigerian mother tongues.

It is interesting to note that most of the words highlighted above have their equivalents in Yoruba, but *Alaroye* reporters prefer writing the words to be pronounced as Yoruba words. For example, the days of the week, i.e. Monday to Sunday all have their Yoruba names as can be seen in the following: Monday (Ojo Aje), Tuesday (Ojo Isegun), Wednesday (Ojoru), Thursday (Ojobo), Friday (Ojo Eti), Saturday (Ojo Abameta) and Sunday (Ojo Aiku). The days of the week are written as *Monde, Tusde, Wesde, Tosde, Fraide, Satide* and *Sannde* in the newspaper as against the original Yoruba names given to these days of the week. This shows *Alaroye's* peculiar style of writing the Yoruba language. As argued by Omole (online), some of these words actually have their authentic cultural equivalents, but they are preferred in usage because they appear morphologically simpler than their native equivalents. This deviant or new linguistic form and style of writing adopted by the newspaper's reporters is eulogized by Adedayo (2006:202) who posits that "with the current orthographic arrangement blended with its own style of writing the language the way it is spoken, it (*Alaroye*) became the pride of all Yoruba".

It should be noted that some of the English words do not have the equivalents in Yoruba and that explains why the reporters prefer to write them in Yoruba orthography. Some words like *billion, office, engine* etc. fall into this category. The ability to translate from English to Yoruba language depends on the translator's ability and competence in the two languages. Adegbite (2003:188) notes that "the dominance of English over the indigenous languages in Nigeria and the attendant positive attitude towards the language can be attributed to elitist interest". This is due to the fact that English language has assumed an important status in Nigeria where the use of the mother tongue is forbidden in schools and parents also discourage their children from speaking the native

language. Joseph and Janda (2003:42) note that “as the members of each identifiable generation recreate language for their own use, language is continuously being integrated into a society that is not uniform in terms of age but still takes in new members...into it”. Majority of those who are literate in Yoruba language find it difficult to read, pronounce correctly and understand the natural Yoruba language and this has encouraged the writing of English words in Yoruba orthography. For instance, it may be very difficult for some people of Yoruba origin to decipher the meanings of some words if such are written in pure Yoruba language. For example, the words *acre*, *garage*, *bus*, *slippers* and *thug* have *sarè*, *ibùdókò*, *okò*, *sálúbàtà* and *jàndùkú* as their Yoruba equivalents. But the problem lies in the fact that an average Yoruba person may not be able to decipher the meanings of these words except they are written using the English versions as much as possible for mutual intelligibility. This is a major problem of Yoruba-English bilinguals. Yoruba is a tonal language with syllables ending in vowels and every syllable must have a tone. This accounts for the insertion of vowels in the English words when pronounced as Yoruba as shown in the following: ‘beedi’ (bed), ‘bilionu’ (billion), ‘paaki’ (park), ‘oili’ (oil), ‘boolu’ (ball), ‘fiimu’ (film), ‘tikeeti’ (ticket) etc. The tonal aspect of the language where tonal marks are used to differentiate the pronunciation to give the words their various meanings is another important feature of the Yoruba language. There are three basic tones in Yoruba language namely – (Do Re Mi). ‘Do’ is the low/falling tone having [`] as the tonal mark, ‘Re’ is the middle/flat tone depicted by the absence of a mark, and ‘Mi’ is the high/rising tone with [´] as the tonal mark. The marks are applied to the top of the vowel with each syllable of a word. Understanding the tonal marks is a necessity for reading, writing and speaking of the Yoruba language and most Yoruba-English bilinguals lack the ability to understand the marks and hence, they find it difficult to read the Yoruba language. For instance, a word can be interpreted to mean different things by the use of the tonal marks as can be seen in these examples using the Yoruba word ‘*ojo*’: (1) *Ojó* (day), (2) *Òjò* (rain), (3) *Òjọ́* (name of a person), (4) *Ójo* (name of a town), (5) *Ojo* (a coward). We have other examples in the word ‘*oko*’ which may mean ‘hoe’ – ‘okó’, ‘husband’ – ‘oko’, ‘sword’ – ‘òkò’, and ‘vehicle’ – ‘okò’. Also, ‘*owo*’ could mean ‘hand’ – ‘Owó’, ‘respect’ – ‘òwò’, ‘name of a town in Southwestern Nigeria’ – ‘òwò’ and ‘broom’ – ‘owò’. Thus, the difficulty in pronunciation and the attendant problem of understanding the usage and meaning of the tonal marks that may be experienced by Yoruba-English bilinguals constitute another major problem faced by writers and readers of the language. It should be noted that many English words have been integrated into the Yoruba language because of lack of Yoruba equivalents of such words and due to this reason, reporters have no choice than to write such words in Yoruba orthography. Also some of these words are translated into Yoruba and are given Yoruba equivalents by the media. For example, ‘television’ is translated as (Ero mohunmaworan), ‘radio’ as (Ero asoromagbesi), ‘thug’ as (janduku), ‘computer’ as (Ero ayara bi asa), ‘electric light’ as (Ina monamona) etc.

Sabir and Lajiman 2019 observe that the use of Yoruba mythical tradition is an attempt to resuscitate the best of the culture of the Yoruba people and redeem their vanishing value systems in an era of globalization. As rightly noted by Nwatok (2016), newspapers published in Nigerian local languages have double threat of the gradual extinction of the mother tongue in which they are published and this further leads to the attendant limitation in readership and by extension market size.

CONCLUSION

English has become a global language and its utility and various functions in Nigeria have made it to gain prominence over the indigenous languages. The Yoruba language has been anglicised such that many English loan words have been integrated into the Yoruba language and this is a fact that the contact of the English language has necessitated the modifications of some Yoruba lexis. The implication is that Yoruba language may go into extinction if the trend continues and it will reach a point at which most Yoruba words will have to be written and pronounced as English words. The English language is displacing the Yoruba language as it can be seen in the way Yoruba words are anglicised. Our analysis has revealed the influence of English over Yoruba language as shown in the language use of reporters of the *Alaroye* newspaper.

Linguistic borrowing and language contact are inevitable in a society due to contacts and interactions as it is not possible for man to live in isolation. The contact of the English language with different languages in the world has brought about linguistic changes in the lexis, morphology, syntax and semantics of the languages it comes into contact with.

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