**CHAPTER** **1**

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 : Linguistics and Language

Linguistics is defined, in several introductory books, as the scientific study of language. It is scientific in the sense that its approach to language is that which focuses on the objective description and analysis of the observed nature and characteristics of a given language. Such an approach does not give any consideration to such views as the beauty, elegance or the ease of learning of one language or another.

Linguistics has as its conventional divisions of study phonetics, phonology, syntax and semantics. Within these traditional areas are sub-divisions as morphology, morpho-phonology and morpho-syntax. Over the years, however, several aspects of language use have become specialized areas of focus of study and have assumed the status of distinct disciplines on their own. They include sociolinguistics; the sociology of language; ethnography of

communication; anthropological linguistics; discourse analysis and pragmatics. Today, there are studies devoted to language and the law or forensic linguistics, language and politics, language and religion (the sociology of language and religion) and language and medicine, among others.

The development leading to the rise in interest in the social and cultural aspects of language came about in the early 1960s, particularly following the debate between Noam Chomsky and others on whether or not the object of linguistic study should include what is referred to as performance; that is, the actual use to which the knowledge of language is put. While Chomsky was of the view that the object of linguistic study should be to discover the underlying human capacity for language from which we can also understand the nature of human language, others thought that the analysis of the use to which humans put language should also be central to that project.

## 1.2: Langue, Parole, Competence and Performance
The debate on the object of linguistics as a science of human language led to the dichotomy between *competence* and *performance*. For Chomsky, language is a rule-governed system which can be defined in terms of a grammar which separates grammatical from un-grammatical sentences (1965). Within this view of language, sentences are like abstract objects that are not tied to a particular context, speaker or time of utterance. In other words,

sentences cannot be affected by these non-linguistic factors and, if they do, their influences are not important for the description of those sentences.

The notions of **competence** and **performance** draw some theoretical analogies from Ferdinand de Saussure's important distinction between **lange** and **parole**. For de Saussure, **lange** represents the system (that is, the language) which is shared by all speakers while **parole** represents what people do in actual process of speaking (language put to use) which may include using variants of the language: accents, dialects and styles. For Chomsky, the **language system** or **lange** is the knowledge the speaker-hearer of a language possesses because it is part of their human nature because the human child is genetically endowed with the capacity to know language, any language. Thus for a speaker, what s/he knows (internalized knowledge of language) is **competence** while what s/he does with that knowledge is called **performance**. In Chomsky's view, competence is the more theoretically rewarding object of study in language while performance contains all kinds of imperfections in speech which are irrelevant to the understanding of the underlying principles of the human language faculty. In doing this, Chomsky's focus has been on the 'ideal speaker-listener' or 'ideal speaker-hearer' in a completely homogeneous speech community. He says:

> *Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.*
>
> *(Chomsky, 1965: 3-4 ).*

The quote above shows Chomsky's lack of interest in any external factor that may impact on human language behaviour. There are many other linguists, like Chomsky, who focus their attention and interest mainly on the formal properties of language. It is this that has also led to the distinction between what is called **grammatical competence** and **communicative competence**. Grammatical competence is defined as the knowledge that a speaker has of the rules and principles of a language that enables him/her to know the speech sounds that are part of a given language and how these sounds are used in that language. It is also the grammatical competence of a speaker that enables him/her to know the meanings represented by a particular sequence of sounds of a given language rather than another. For example, it is the

grammatical competence of a native speaker of Yoruba that enables him/her to accept that *omo naa lo sile* ('The child went home') is acceptable while s/he will not accept *lo omo sile* as a Yoruba sentence where the verb 'lo' comes before the noun 'omo'. Communicative competence, on the other hand, is the knowledge that enables the speaker of a given language to put it into use and achieve several things such as keeping and maintaining relationships (e.g. using greetings). It is the knowledge of how to put grammatical competence appropriately; in contexts and situations.

Those linguists that belong to the strict school of grammatical competence show less concern for the social, cultural and sociological bases of speech and language use while they concentrate on forms of speech sounds and their patterning and the structure of words and sentences. It is important to note that the conventional or traditional divisions of language study mentioned earlier are not the only areas with which linguistic study is concerned today. There are several other interesting questions about language for which students want to seek answers. Such questions include the relationship between a given language and its users; the social functions of particular uses to which a language is put; the social functions of particular patterns of occurrence of a phonetic, morphological, syntactic or lexical form in the speech of a social group and so on. Sociolinguistics and the sociology of language are concerned with some of these

issues. In carrying out studies on them, there have emerged a number of concepts that are considered either theoretically or methodologically useful in providing explanations or in data collection. They include, among others, the concepts of the speech community; social networks and the community of practice.

## 1.3 : The Speech Community

Chomsky's agenda-setting programme that linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely **homogeneous speech community** brought into focus the debate and discussion about what constitutes a speech community first, in order to see, if indeed, it is real or an abstraction. Secondly, the debate is also about its methodological implication(s) for language study. Sociolinguists and the sociologists of language rose to defend their challenge of mainstream linguistics abstractions of 'ideal-speaker-hearer and 'homogenous speech community' by seeking to define the speech community to take into consideration the reality of language use in society. Thus in the works of Gumperz, the speech community has been defined as a group of individuals who share a common language and that whose membership is characterized not only by the similarity in the function(s) and form(s) of the linguistic item(s) they share but also by the belief of the individuals themselves that they belong to this community. However, Hymes (1974: 51 cited in Milroy, 1987: 15) sees

some difficulty in the application of the concept of community:

> *I…acknowledge the difficulty of the notion of community itself. Social scientists are far from agreed as to its use. For our purposes it appears most useful to reserve the notion of community for a local unit, characterized for its members by common locality and primary interaction.*

From the way the notion of community is treated, so far, it seems like a   homogenous entity until when we try to examine the notion of primary interaction raised by Hymes. This is that it is not unlikely that not every member of the speech community engages in primary interaction with one another. In other words, there is the likelihood that members might have different interactional patterns. Therefore the notion of the community as homogenous will be relative as far as behaviour is concerned.

## 1.4 :   Social Network

The motivation for the existence of primary interactional patterns in communities, as noted above, will be very useful in the investigation and understanding of the underlying uniform or divergent language use behaviour of members. That is, it can be used in accounting for differences in language use between individuals and between subgroups

in communities which, in terms of social status, are seen as homogenous.

Early sociolinguistic studies by Labov (1972a, 1972b) Macaulay (1977) and Trudgill (1974, 1978) and so on, have all used such social variables as age, sex, class to analyze language use among speakers from various communities and cities the results of which have shown that language behaviour can be correlated with these social factors. However, it is observed that our use of such groups as social classes or status groups (lower-middle class, working class, age-grade etc) may not necessarily be an important part of a person's definition of his/her social identity because such groups can be fluid (see Trudgill, 1974a: 33 cited in Milroy, 1987: 14). It is thus thought that there could be smaller categories of identity to which people see themselves to belong than classes. For example, the category relating to local identity as 'Vineyarders' in the case of Martha's Vineyard study in New York City by Labov is seen also to be more cohesive and more territorially based than classes. As noted by Milroy (1987: 45-46), people interact meaningfully as individuals, in addition to forming parts of structured, functional institutions such as classes, castes or occupational groups. This interaction, which is primary, is often contracted by individuals at the level of what is called social network.

A social network can be described as a network of ties, contacts or relationships that individuals contract in a given community. It may consist of ties of workplace, neighbourhood, family, marriage, religion/worship centre, friendship and so on. It may be characterized by dense (content) or sparse (content) ties and single-strand or uniplex (single capacity) and multi-strand or multiplex (many capacities) ties.

The function of the social network is that it acts as a mechanism both for exchanging goods and services, and for imposing obligations and conferring corresponding rights upon its members (Milroy, ibid: 47). In relation to language behaviour, the concept of social network can be used both as a field method for data gathering and as an analytical tool for understanding variability in individual language use behaviour in communities. Social networks can cause change in language through change in the behaviour of say one member in a network which can diffuse or spread throughout the whole network.

## 1.5: The Community of Practice

The fluidity in the notion of the speech community in the study of language behaviour also brought into focus the concept of the community of practice which can be described as a group of people who share a craft or a profession. It may be a group that evolved naturally (that is, not formally inaugurated or initiated) due to the fact that its

members share common interests. A community of practice can also be created with the specific goal or aim of sharing knowledge related to their field or profession. In other words, it is a community of people propelled to learning from each other through disseminating information and experiences. Members have ties, they establish norms and collaborate. A community of practice can be found in workplaces, field settings and even in lunch rooms among other places. However, it is observed that, unlike a social network, members of a community of practice do not have to be co-located, that is found in the same geographical location. In fact, there could be **virtual communities of practice;** people collaborating online to share knowledge such as found in discussion boards, newsgroups and platforms. According to Wikipedia;

> *[A] community of practice is a group of individuals participating in communal activity, and experiencing or continuously creating their shared identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities.*

We can relate the activity of a given community of practice also to the practice of a group of speakers in a linguistic activity such as learning and sharing a code, a language or a variant aspect of the structure of a given

language (phonetic, morphological, syntactic or lexical item) within their community. The difference between this group concept and the speech community as earlier defined is that while in the community of practice members learn from each other through practice and participation in the community activity, members of speech communities have no such obligations. It thus seems that the community of practice is a more cohesive community than the speech community. In terms of practical application to studying speech behaviour, it may be easier to locate a community of practice to study and map out distinctly their speech than the behaviour of a seemingly disparate speech community or social networks.

## 1.6:    Macrolinguistics and Microlinguistics

The seeming division between the study of language structures with no concern for external social and cultural factors and the studies which take as critical the effects of external factors has given rise to two major areas of linguistic study referred to as macro and micro-linguistics.

Those aspects of language study that demonstrate interest in the understanding of issues relating to the social or sociological bases of speech and language use come under what is referred to as macro-linguistics. These include, among others, studies like the sociology of language, sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics. On the other hand, studies which focus mainly on the structures of

language such as its phonetics, phonology, morphology and syntax fall within micro-linguistics. Microlinguistic studies are not concerned with how a language is used in its various functions and its relationship to culture.

## 1.7 Sociolinguistics

This is that aspect of language study which attempts to find out the inter-relationship of social structures such as class or status, education, ethnicity, age, gender, and so on, and linguistic structures (phonetics, phonology, syntax and lexis). The works of William Labov (1972a and 1972b); Peter Trudgill (1974); Cheshire (1982); Milroy (1980); Akere (1977); Jibril ( 1982); Awonusi (1985, 1988); Salami (1987, 1991a ); Adeniran (2012) among many others, come under this heading.

In sociolinguistics, we want to know what is responsible for the variable use of language among a group of people sharing the same norms of a language. We also want to know how much external social factors determine or account for change(s) in a language. Are the variable usages within a language and changes traceable, for example, to the differences in the age of members of the given language community or community of practice? It is within the agenda of sociolinguistics to seek to explain these phenomena. Sociolinguistics is that branch of linguistics which studies those properties of language that require

social and contextual explanations. For example, we may want to know why one Yoruba speaker of English as a Second Language (ESL) pronounces the English voiceless inter-dental fricative [ θ ] as the alveolar [ t ] in the word 'thought' while another pronounces the same sound as [ θ ] under the same social situation. The interest of the sociolinguist is to find out whether or not these speakers' different pronunciations are related to their different levels of education, the age or the social differences between them.

As observed by Trudgill (1974), language is more than a means of communication because it also functions as a mirror of what other people are from the way they speak. The way we speak may reveal our social background and the sort of person we are. For example, it may be possible to identify the geographical origin of an Igbo speaker who uses the alveolar lateral liquid [ l ] in place of central [ r ] in a word like /nli/: 'food' as coming from Owerri-Igbo while the Onitsha-Igbo speaker uses /nri/ for the same concept. We can also observe this variation in the name /Ifeoma/: Onitsha (Anambra) and /Iheoma/: Owerri Igbo where /f/ is substituted with /h/. Also, we are able to identify the Yoruba speaker who uses the alveolar strident /s/ in place of the alveo-palatal / ʃ / in the Yoruba word for 'yams' as a Yoruba speaker from Oyo or Ibadan. A Nigerian speaker of English as a Second language who pronounces the voiced inter-dental fricative [ ð ] as voiced alveolar fricative [ z ] as in "zat

goat" for "that goat" is most likely to be Hausa-speaking. It is observed that the Hausa variety spoken in Sokoto town is different (largely in accent) from that which is spoken in Kano city. Furthermore, in Nigeria, educated speakers of our indigenous languages tend to speak their local mother tongues differently from those who have no formal education. In other words, the factors of ethnic or geographical origin and education can determine or influence the way we speak.

## 1.8:    The Sociology of Language

The sociology of language examines and understands society through the study of language. It focuses on the effect(s) of language on society. That is, studying society in relation to language. The sociology of language tries to discover how social structures like class, status, caste, ethnicity, age, and so on within a society, can be better understood through the study of language. It is a way of examining and analyzing society via the role(s) of language. For example, if we look at the use of honorifics in Yoruba language with elders, people of higher status and non-familiars, we can begin to see the significance of age and social status among Yoruba people as we note that they defer to age and status in their use of language. We can also know the social relationship between men and women (gender relations) in Yoruba land from the ways men and women are talked about in Yoruba language usage. This is

also one area in which we can look at the effect of language on society.

The study of attitudes of a particular group of people to a different language from which they speak can tell us much about the social, economic or historical relationship between that group and the speakers of the divergent language. For example, there are so many linguistic stereotypes of Ebira speakers among Yoruba people that can show us that there had been, in the past, some close cultural, social and economic connections between the Yoruba and the Ebira people. There is the joke among Yoruba about the fact that the words for 'father' and 'friend' : *ada* and *ata* (with low tones) respectively in Ebira sound similar to Yoruba *ada* :a 'cutlass' and *ota* (a vowel difference though) :'an enemy'. The joke is that when a Yoruba man was visiting his Ebira girlfriend, the girl's mother, who spoke some Yoruba, asked the girlfriend for her *ada* (father/cutlass)'s whereabout because her *ota* (friend/enemy) was around. The Yoruba man, however, had to take to his heels on hearing what the woman said which to the Yoruba man meant he was to be killed!

Furthermore, the sociology of language may focus on developmental issues. For example, it may be interested in investigating the performance in English language classroom by primary school pupils learning English as a Second Language in order to show whether or not the socio-

economic status of their parents impact on their performance. In other words, it is possible to infer from a child's English performance the class to which s/he belongs. It is also possible that we may use such study forthe purpose of putting in place a remediation educational programme.

The classical example of the concern of the sociology of language is the work of Joshua Fishman (1971): who speaks, what languages, to whom and under what circumstances? The sociology of language can also show interest in the way language can reflect as well as reproduce individual and group identities. In other words, we can understand a people's presentation of themselves through studying their language (their lexical choice, phrases, proverbs, axioms etc). It is thus possible, for example, to study the challenge of social integration in Nigeria through the study of how the different linguistic groups present themselves as reflected in their languages. Also, we can examine this societal challenge of integration through the study of the people's attitudes towards learning each other's mother tongue. Such a study will come under the sociology of language.

The work of Basil Bernstein (1972) on 'Restricted' and 'Elaborated Codes', for example, falls within the scope of the sociology of language (and education) as it tries to understand classes in England in the way language

functions in their education. Other issues of interest such as societal bilingualism or multilingualism, language choice, language contact, linguistic interference, pidginization and creolization of languages, language decay or death, language standardization and language planning are also subjects for the sociology of language

## 1.9:    Anthropological Linguistics

The study of the interplay between language and cultural behaviour is referred to as anthropological linguistics. Language and cultural behaviour are mutually supportive because we require language to carry our culture and our cultural practices help in the growth and maintenance of our languages. It is observed, for example, that the elaborate greeting patterns of the Yoruba-speaking people that are reflected in their language are part and parcel of the Yoruba culture. Knowledge of the Yoruba language, therefore, is considered inadequate if one does not know the various greetings; to whom to use them, under what conditions and in what circumstances.

## 1.10:   The Ethnography of Speaking or Communication

This aspect of language study is concerned with social as well as referential meanings that are carried by our use of

language or communication. An ethnographic study takes language as part of our communicative conduct and social action. Therefore, in doing ethnographic study of speaking we set out to ask questions about the use of a particular kind or bit of speech in a particular situation, with a particular people and so on. This framework or approach to the study of speech or communication is demonstrated in the works of J. J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes.

According to Fasold (1990), ethnography of communication is a framework which relates language to social and cultural values. It covers, for example, how sentences are used to show deference, to get someone to do something, to display verbal skill and so on. Hymes (1974) refers to **ethnography of communicative event** as a description of all the factors that are relevant in understanding how a particular communicative event achieves its objective. He uses the word SPEAKING as an acronym for the factors involved in such an event. These include Setting or Scene (S), Participants (P), Ends (E), Act sequence (A), Key (K), Instrumentality's (I), Norm (N), and Genre (G).   A study of an engagement ceremony (called *itoro* in Yoruba) among the Yoruba using the framework of ethnography of speaking shows that the framework gives a broad understanding of *itoro* as a communicative event in which language plays a very significant and prominent role in its sustainability and success (see Salami, 1994).

## 1.11:  Conclusion

The study of language has grown tremendously in the last four decades or so such that several areas of the application of linguistics to political, theological, technological, legal, psychological, physiological, educational and ecological concerns, among others, have emerged. Most of these areas have become specialized and it will suffice just to mention a few of them for students who may be interested in reading further. They include, among others, discourse analysis, pragmatics, forensic linguistics, theolinguistics, the sociology of language and religion, psycholinguistics, clinical linguistics, neurolinguistics, ecolinguistics and educational linguistics.

### *Questions for Revision*

1.    Differentiate between *langue* and *parole*.
2.    What is competence? Can we really argue for competence that is not measurable by performance?
3.    Consider the view that "language is an autonomous system and has nothing to do with external social factors".
4.    Attempt a definition of ethnography of communication *vis* a *vis* anthropological linguistics.

5.    Do you think there are differences between what sociolinguists do and what is done in the sociology of language?

**CHAPTER** **2**

# LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND THOUGHT

## 2.1:    Language and Culture

Language has been defined as a means of communication which is primarily verbal. Language and culture are

considered to be closely related. The meanings of the words and sentences we utter or make are derived from cultural practices; that is, the use to which we put them and the interpretations we give to them within our society are based on our conventions or cultural practices. Language is considered also to be related to culture in the sense that culture is defined as what one learns or acquires to become a full member of a given society. That is, culture is socially acquired knowledge. This socially acquired knowledge includes, among others, societal language, its religion, art, cuisine, history, lore and so on. The knowledge of all these and more enables one to be a full member of a given society. In the case of language, when we talk with other people, we use our culturally acquired linguistic habits. Thus language is not only learned in cultural context, it is also used in cultural context. Among the Yoruba, for example, someone who is very circumspect or not direct in talking about issues or hedges often is described as an 'Oyo'. This might have resulted from the observation that Oyo-Yoruba speakers are socialized to measure their speech behaviour. The knowledge of a language thus also includes the knowledge of its appropriate usage under different circumstances. Therefore, we can talk of the Yoruba language as being part of Yoruba culture as the Hausa language or Izon is also part of Hausa or Izon culture. In other words, language and culture are related. What this

relationship is like has been an interesting aspect of linguistic inquiry.

## 2.2:   Language and Culture Transmission

Language is culturally transmitted, that is, one learns a language by virtue of one's membership of a particular society. The data with which the language-faculty operates are supplied by the society in which a human child is growing up.  If language is part of culture, it is likely then that culture would be reflected in the language such that from the vocabulary items of a language we can make inferences about a particular community of speakers' religious beliefs, art, myths, and so on.

The lexicon of the Yoruba language show, for example, that there is no word for *ugwu* vegetable but there is a word for onion referred to as *alubosa*. Here, we can infer, perhaps, that in the past *ugwu* , which is an ingredient of Igbo cuisine, never formed part of the ingredients for Yoruba cuisine until contact with the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria. Also, we can note that the word *alubosa* is a borrowing from Arabic through the Hausa language. What this borrowing means is that the item 'onion' was an imported ingredient into Yorubaland and it tells us also that there was some cultural or trade link between the Hausa and Yoruba in the past. It is important to note, however, that language transmits culture as it does not only act as its

repository but it also carries it from people to people and place to place. The relationship can thus be seen as reciprocal.

## 2. 3:   Language and Thought

As language is related to culture, so also it is considered that language is related to our way of thinking (thought). Thinking, which is the apprehension of reality, is expressible in language. Thus to use language is to communicate a thought. In other words, they are related. However, this relationship between language and thought seems to have been considered by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf as deterministic. That is, they claimed that our language structures the way we think and, therefore, our world view. This is what is referred to as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis.

When understood from Sapir and Whorf's perspective, that means that we cannot think or see the world in any other way but the way our language decides for us. For example, if our language does not contain a particular linguistic item or vocabulary to express a thought there is no possibility of us expressing such thought.  In fact, the said thought cannot occur to us. Thus if our language has no word for the planet Jupiter, there is no likelihood that we would have contemplated 'Jupiter'. The consequence is that we will be limited by our language:

> *Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. … We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.*
>
> *(Sapir, 1939, cited in Whorf, 1956: 134 )*

In the opinion of Sapir and Whorf, every language has structures and forms unique to it which are not shared with others. For example, when we examine the structure of 'time' (linear time) in English we will note that it differs from Yoruba where time is not talked about in the linear sense but in block sense. Thus 'morning' is 'before the sun is high in the sky'. Morning is not divided into hours before noon. Thus for the Yoruba culture, before contact with Europe and English, it would have been difficult to express distinct times as they did not exist in their own conception. Therefore, the Yoruba apprehension of time or way of seeing the world time-wise will be limited by the Yoruba language. This perspective of the relationship between language and thought has now become known as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

The hypothesis is considered not only too deterministic but unsustainable for reasons given below:

1. That the speakers of all languages may be aware of all the characteristics of the real world but they are not required to refer to all.

2. That each language tends to refer to certain characteristics; while one language refers to one possible sub-set of characteristics, another language favors a different sub-set.

3. Any attempt to relate language structure to social structure is rather too far-fetched because there is no necessary connection between the structure of a language and the race and culture of its users. This is because people with different cultures speak languages with similar structures. For example, Yoruba and English are SVO in their basic word orders but the Yoruba and English people come from different cultures. In fact, there are people who share similar cultures but speak languages with different structures.

4. The hypothesis is considered to be a-historical because language can change, especially due to borrowings from one culture to another. For example, when two cultures come into contact what one lacks to express a reality it can borrow from the other. The contact between the Yoruba culture and the Arabs, for

example, brought such words as *alubosa* (onion) and *malaika* (angel) which were alien to Yoruba world.

5. The hypothesis is unproved and unsustainable because it is possible to talk about anything in any language provided a speaker is willing to use some degree of circumlocution.

6. It can be argued that bilinguals do not have serious problems with divergent and incompatible world-views as they often claim that they are able to say the same thing in either of the languages they speak. It is also possible for bilinguals to say or write what has been said or written in one language in another. The concept *iyale* does not exist in English but a Yoruba-English bilingual can still express it in English through coinage of word or a descriptive phrase such as 'senior wife'.

Thus, from the points above, the strong view of language as a determinant of our worldview cannot be sustained. Rather it is a relative truth because language, in the main, only influences the way we think. In other words, it is not sustainable to argue that we are imprisoned by our language to see the world only along the way of its structure. In the following section, we will discuss how this conception of the relationship among language, culture and thought plays out in the areas of taboos, politeness, colour terms and kinship

terminology. We will see, for example, that in English kinship terminology a niece is distinguished from a nephew but the Yoruba language has no word for these two terms. Then, should we say that because of this gap the Yoruba people are limited in their thinking about filial/kinship relationships?

## 2.4: Taboos, Politeness, Colour Terms and Kingship Terminology

The fact that language and culture are related as well as that language is not a determinant of the way we think but that the so-called determinism is relative can be further demonstrated from certain universal cultural practices and their linguistic representations. They include, among others, taboos, politeness systems, colour terms and kinship terminologies. When we look at these practices, we observe that, in principle, they are common to all cultures and languages but they may differ in application from culture to culture. These differences do not make the thought of the speakers to either be superior, inferior or limited.

### 2.4.1: Taboos

A taboo is a prohibited action, custom or behaviour based on the belief that it could be harmful, cause embarrassment or shame. It could also be on moral judgment or that it is sacred or forbidden for ordinary individuals to undertake.

Almost, if not all, societies have taboos. But the field of taboos, just as the field of colours or kinship terms, shows the relativity of cultures and thought in the sense that what are considered as taboos in one culture are not taboos in some other cultures. For example, among the Yoruba, it is more or less a linguistic taboo to use the word 'osi' (left) in certain circumstances: *Mo fe ya si owo osi* (I want to turn left) may be rendered *Mo fe ya si apa alafia* (I want to turn to the way/side of peace). In fact, among the Yoruba it is taboo to hand over an item to another person with the left hand. The Yoruba word for needle: *abere* is also forbidden to be mentioned early in the morning among some Yoruba people; rather a euphemism like *okinni* may be used. Also, to utter the Yoruba word for snake *ejo* at night is considered as an invitation to the creeping creature and it would be less dangerous to use the euphemism *okun:* 'rope' or 'string' in the place of the real name. Towns and streets are known to have had their names changed in Yorubaland because of linguistic taboos. A town in Ekiti had to change its name from Ido-Ajinare (Ido-the-far-place) to Ido-Ile ("Hometown" Ido or Ido-that-is-closer-home) due, perhaps, to the seeming taboo in its earlier name.

Areas of taboos in many languages and cultures of the world include sex and sexual relationship, reproduction, killing, hunting, deceased, food, bodily functions among others. Some cultures find ways around these taboos either

by using circumlocutions or metaphors. Modern taboos include the non-use of terms like disable, blind, dumb, cripple etc which are now replaced by euphemisms such as 'physically-challenged'; 'deaf-mute'; 'sight-impaired' and so on.

**2.4.2:   Politeness**

Politeness is another area from which we can look at the relationship between language and culture. Politeness is described by Wikipedia as the practical application of good manners or etiquette. It is an area of culture that demonstrates the relativity of culture and thought or worldview. What is considered polite in one culture can sometimes be considered rude in another cultural context. In other words, politeness is culturally bound.

However, politeness in linguistics is more of a technical term used to explain some ways of balancing interactions between people rather than the question of etiquette. It functions as a framework used to explain what looks, literally, like not wanting to cause offence when people talk to one another in making request, greeting, offering, apologizing and so on. It is a behaviour that is exercised in order to keep or consolidate a relationship and not allow it to be damaged. In speaking, we learn both what to say and how to say. It is part of what one has to learn to be a full member of a society. Politeness can be reflected in

language through the use of modal verbs, use of softeners, question tags, pronouns, honorific, kinship terminologies, hedging or indirect expressions, taboos, euphemisms and proverbs

In several interactive activities, we need to negotiate talk and there are three basic rules called the Rules of Rapport (Lakoff (1975/2004 cited in Fasold and Connor-Linton, 2006) that interactants or interlocutors must take into consideration. They are:

 ***Rule (i) Don't impose***:    People practice politeness in speech when they try not to impose themselves on other people in interaction. Let us examine the conversation below:

> A:   Would you like to have a cold drink?

> B:   No thanks (even though s/he may be thirsty)

In the conversation between A and B above, when B replies to A's offer, what B is doing is not imposing himself or his need on A. In other words, B has satisfied the first rule of politeness. Suppose B replies 'No. I want tea' instead of "No thanks. But could I have tea, please."

***Rule (ii) Give options:*** People practice politeness in speech when they allow the partner in interaction a room to maneuver:

C: Would you like to eat something?

D. I will eat whatever you are eating

In the interaction above, C is making an offer to D who applies the rule: 'give options' to allow C room to maneuver. Assuming, for example, D asked for rice which would have cost C time or money to provide when in fact he has *garri* ready, it means that D would have been impolite as he has violated rule (ii). Among the Yoruba if one's visitor behaves in this manner it would be said of him or her as 'O yan'bo' (S/he is choosy) to criticize his or her impolite action of selecting what s/he should like to be offered.

***Rule (iii) Maintain camaraderie:*** This rule signals a style of politeness where interactants, for example, are good friends or familiars. It signals closeness, familiarity as in the following interaction:

E: Would you like to eat something?

F: Yes, thanks. Let's have pounded yam and bush meat.

In the interaction above, the second part of F's response seems like an order but its tone is an in an expression that shows that E is not a stranger or one socially superior. The 'tone' is of camaraderie. The expression below is even more 'relaxed' or more intimate:

> F: I am famished. What have you
>     got to grub?

So far, we can see that politeness is a way of balancing several competing interactive goals. Rules and (i) and (ii) serve the goal of the need for independence (people's independence) while Rule (iii) serves the goal of the need for involvement. That is, to be connected to others.

In another approach to explaining politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish between negative and positive politeness. They based this distinction on the public self-image that each of us wants to claim for ourselves in our society (Wardhaugh, 2000: 272). Negative politeness, they hold, derives from the desire not to be impeded by others in one's actions. Here the listener desires not to be imposed on, wants personal preserves and rights to non-distraction. Thus in this perspective to  politeness, requests are said to be made indirectly in a way as not to infringe on another's person's negative face. Since each and every one of us

wants to be allowed to be independent, act freely or have a choice in acting, any demand or request that another person makes that does not infringe on our right to act as we wish or choose will be described as Negative Politeness. For example, the following requests in English will be considered as negative politeness because they defer to another person's right to act freely:

> "If you don't mind, please bring the book when coming."

> "If it isn't too much trouble allow me to bring him to you."

Positive politeness, on the other hand, derives from the desire to gain the approval of others. It involves positive consistent personality or self-image. Positive politeness leads to solidarity, offers of friendship, the use of compliments and informal language use (Wardhaugh, 2000: 272). The reciprocal use of T/V is a good example of positive politeness.

There are a number of techniques in language use to show politeness. They include;

(a)     Use of hedging and indirectness
(b)     Use of euphemisms

(c)     Use of tag questions (e.g. modal tag: "You didn't eat the chocolate, did you?
(d)     Use of softeners: Go to bed, could you?
(e)     Use of facilitative tags: Seyi can run, can't she?

It is observed that some cultures seem to prefer one of these two kinds of politeness over the other. While some would choose to use more of negative politeness strategies others select positive politeness strategies. It is in this way that we see also that politeness is culturally bound.

It is important to note that many languages and cultures have ways of showing politeness, respect, deference or the recognition of social status. These can also be shown through the lexicon or vocabulary of a language or its morphology. The Yoruba, for example, can use the following title:

Kabiyesi: to show deference or respect to a king

The Yoruba can also use the pronoun *Eyin* (You pl.) as honorific to show deference on the grounds of age or social status. In French, we have singular 'you' (*tu*) and a plural you (*vous*) where the singular 'tu' is used with familiars while the form *vous* is used as the polite form.

**2.4.3:   Colour Terms**

We can further illustrate the argument of relativity and the relationship between language and culture from colour terms. All human cultures make use of colours. However, not all languages in these cultures represent all the possible range of colours available in the colour spectrum. Each language seems to select from the spectrum only the colours that, perhaps, are needed for the use of members of the given language-community. As noted by Lyons (1981:313), all languages tend to provide their users with words to enable them to refer to certain areas of the colour spectrum. For example, English and Yoruba languages have the words for colours black, white and red, English has the word to describe colour purple while Yoruba does not. In other words, although there may be a universal set or structure of colours, there is a substructure that is not universal. These differences are adduced to cultural as well as biologically based perceptual saliency.

### 2.4.4: Kinship terminology

Kinship refers to how people are related by blood descent and marriage. The languages spoken across the world represent the practice in the various cultures in the different ways these relationships are described and expressed. What is noted is that it is a common or universal practice but within the universe of representation of kin we have differences among cultures and languages. Just as we note about taboos, politeness and colour, it is not all the possible

descriptive terms of kinship that every language uses or that they have in their lexicon. Let us compare, for example, English and Yoruba below:

### *English and Yoruba Kinship Terms*

| English | Yoruba | Remark |
|---|---|---|
| Father | Baba | common |
| Mother | Iya | common |
| Grandfather | Baba (Agba) | Yoruba has no descriptive term |
| Grandmother | Iya (Agba) | Yoruba has no descriptive term |
| Brother | Egbon/Aburo Okunrin | Yoruba has no descriptive term |
| Sister | Egbon/Aburo Obirin | Yoruba has no descriptive term |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Uncle | (Baba) | Yoruba has no descriptive term |
| Aunt | ( Iya ) | Yoruba has no descriptive term |
| Nephew | Obakan | (Yoruba: related on father's side) |
| Niece | Iyekan | (Yoruba: related on mother's side) |
| Cousin | Ibatan | (Yoruba:unspecified: a relation) |

What we can observe from the table above is that English and Yoruba have different ways of describing certain relationships. While English has the descriptive terms for certain relationships Yoruba does not; but it uses phrases or expressions to refer to such relationships. A sister in Yoruba is described using age: 'aburo obinrin': 'junior sister' and 'egbon obirin': 'senior sister' since there is no single term equivalent to the English word 'sister'. It may be of interest to note that 'aburo obirin' may even be used to refer to one's

female cousin or niece. We can also see, for example, the single term 'baba' referring not only to one's father but also to the grandfather (with the qualification 'Baba agba': 'older father' ) as well as to one's uncle (grandfather's, father's or grandmother's or mother's brother).

It is important to mention that it is difficult to begin to find one-to-one equivalences between two languages on kinship system because what one culture focuses may differ from those of another culture. For example, the Yoruba culture seems not to emphasize sex in its kinship system. In all, what can be observed is that the kinship system is a universal practice but while some kinship systems have large terminologies others have fewer, which makes the system an area through which we can also demonstrate the relationship between language and culture as well as the relativity of the view that language is a determinant of our world view.

*Questions for Revision*

1.  How will you explain the relationship between language and culture? Illustrate from your mother tongue or a Nigerian language that you know.
2.  "Our language is a reflector of our culture". Discuss.
3.  What is referred to as Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis?
4.  **How far is it true that the way we see or view the world is determined by the structure of our**

**language?**Write brief notes on the following and illustrate from your mother tongue: (a) Taboo and euphemism (b) politeness (c ) kinship terms

**CHAPTER** 3

# LANGUAGE VARIETIES

## 3.1:    Varieties within Language

In this chapter, we will examine varieties within language. We will try to define and describe such concepts as language versus dialects; standard language and non-standard varieties; regional and social dialects, idiolects, registers and styles. In doing that, we want to find out in what ways does a language differ from a dialect. What is a regional dialect? What is an idiolect? What is a sociolect? What factors make a dialect or variety of language standard and others non-standard?

## 3.2:    Language and Dialect

### 3.2.1:    The Idiolect

All speakers of English, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Kanawuri or Ebira talk to one another and often understand one another. Yet it can be observed that no two speakers in any of these

languages speak exactly alike. Some differences in speech occur due to age, sex, personality, emotional status and personal idiosyncrasies. These individual differences in speech exhibited by every speaker constitute their individual "dialect" which is referred to as idiolect.

Apart from the individual differences in the use of language, the language of a group of people may also show regular variations from that used by other groups. Such variations may be phonetic or phonological, lexical or grammatical and they may be motivated by geographical or social factors.

**3.2.2:   Regional or Geographical Dialect**

It is observed that the features of a given language can vary in their use from one location within the larger language community to another. In other words, while a particular feature may be found used in a given location, this same feature may not be used in another location. Thus the feature can be used to define the location in which it is usually used. For example, the different words used for the rat called cane rat or 'grass-cutter' in Oyo, Ekiti and Ikare Yoruba can be used to create, say, three different dialects of the Yoruba language on the basis of the locations of the words:

|  English | Oyo | Ekiti | Ikare |
|---|---|---|---|

Grass-cutter     Oya     Okuru     Elere

Using just one word to classify the dialects above, however, may be too sweeping. We need to do what is called *mass comparison* and establish *regular sound correspondences* to see if truly these are different dialects or can share words – *cognates* – in common. It is then that we can say whether or not they belong to the same dialect or are different dialects. For example, the word for 'pawpaw' in Oyo Yoruba is *ibepe* whereas in Ekiti and Ikare it is called *ogolomosi* or *ogolomasi*. In other words, if we use just the word for grass-cutter to classify Ekiti and Ikare, we will say they are two different dialects. Although the foregoing factors are important in dialect or language classification, it is also important not to forget that languages as well as dialects do borrow words from one another. That is to say that we should be careful not use a few words to judge the *genetic relationship* of dialects and languages.

What we are saying here is that language features (phonetics, phonology and lexicon/vocabulary) often tend to define a particular boundary or a set of boundaries, usually geographical, to make what is usually described as a regional or geographical dialect. Apart from the examples from words given above, the use of the vowel /u/ in place of the vowel /i/ in Standard Yoruba words like /iná/: 'fire' and /ilé/: 'house' to become /uná/ and /ulé/ respectively in Ikare-Akoko area of Southwestern Nigeria also makes Ikare a

separate dialect area or region from Oyo or Ibolo Yoruba, for example, but it shares this vowel usage with Ijesa, Ekiti and Ondo.

It is important to note that although we can talk about regional or geographical dialects, language or linguistic communities are not largely homogeneous. Thus in a given language community it may be difficult to draw clear and unambiguous boundaries between one dialect and another. In theory, we can isolate different dialects by mapping out common features to particular geographical areas or regions. However, the boundaries we draw are very often based on more or less arbitrary decisions, as features of one dialect tend to shade into or found in the margin of another. These features may be lexical, grammatical, phonetic or phonological. The lines drawn around these shared features are referred to as **isoglosses.** Thus, a bundle of isoglosses can be said to define a dialect area. Usually, these isoglosses define regional dialects.

Apart from the structural features, other commonly used criteria for distinguishing between a language and its dialect are *mutual intelligibility* and the possession of literature. When a variety of a given language becomes unintelligible to other varieties, such a variety can be accorded the status of a separate language. For example, Yoruba and Itsekiri belong to the Kwa group of languages and were, perhaps, some hundreds of years ago, one

language but they have, today, diverged so much that their mutual intelligibility is negligible. Thus they have become separate languages. On the other hand, Ikare, Ife and Ekiti have accents that are quite divergent from Common Spoken Yoruba but an examination of their grammars and lexical stocks shows that, to a large extent, they are not separate languages but are dialects of Yoruba.

We should note, however, that intelligibility is a relative notion and it can also be informed by attitude. There are, for example, varieties of English or even Chinese, which are not mutually intelligible, yet they are not considered as separate languages. The claim, sometime, by some Ekwerre and Ika-Igbo speaking people in Rivers and Delta States respectively that there is lack of mutual intelligibility between their own varieties of Igbo and the Igbo spoken in the Southeast region of Nigeria stems from their rather unfavourable attitude towards the Igbo people of the Southeast arising, perhaps, mainly from the experiences of mutual distrust during the 1967 – 1970 country's civil war.

One other criterion of dialect differentiation is that while dialects have no written literature, languages do have. Several factors may be responsible for the evolution of dialects or language divergence. They include physical barriers (for example, when speakers are separated by say an ocean, body of water or a mountain range), social barriers of a political or religious kind as well as war and

migration among others. The seeming "babel'' that exists in Akoko, Ondo state today, where in Okeagbe, for example, Yoruba is the shared means of communication among three different linguistic groups in the town arose from the civil wars in the Eastern parts of Yorubaland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### 3.2.3    Social Dialect or Social Class Dialect

Apart from the varieties which differ in terms of the regional backgrounds of speakers, there are varieties which derive from the social class or status of speakers. These are called sociolects or social dialects. Different social groups use different linguistic varieties. Compare the following sentences of English:

**SPEAKER A**                              **SPEAKER B** 1.  The boy done it yesterday. The boy did it yesterday.

2. There was two of them There were two of them


There are grammatical differences between the speech of the two speakers A and B which can give us clues about their social (class) back-ground. In other words, what this shows is that the internal differentiation of human societies can be reflected in the ways they use language. It is possible to observe or know social differences in Nigerian languages due to the education of users or their habitation. For example, the Yoruba spoken by educated Yoruba

resident in Lagos is usually different from that which is spoken by uneducated Yoruba rural dwellers. Further examples can be cited from the varieties of English spoken by educated Nigerians and those with little or no education both in terms of pronunciation and grammatical differences.

## 3.3: The Process of Language Standardization

A dialect becomes a standard when it is selected, from among others, for codification through the regularization of its orthography, lexicon (vocabulary) and syntax. It is usually that variety that is elevated to serve the community of speakers in administration, education, legislation and so on.

The process of standardization is an attempt to set norms to which actual usage of a language may conform to a greater or lesser extent. Usually, it is the written language or form that is standardized. Standardization involves the development of writing or spelling system, dictionaries, grammar and probably the literature of the language. Standard languages have fixed conventions to be accepted as 'correct', established meanings of words, word-forms and fixed conventions of sentence structure.

It is worth noting that language standardization is a historical process and that it is always in progress in those languages that undergo it. In fact, it may seem more appropriate to see standardization as an ideology and a standard language as an idea in the mind than a reality.

Standard English, Izon, Yoruba or Efik is that variety which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers learning the language. It is also the variety that is spoken often (formally) by educated people and used in news broadcasts and other similar situations.

## 3.4:    Registers

The term register is used in sociolinguistics to refer to languages or language varieties according to use. Registers are sets of vocabulary usages associated with occupational or social groups. For example, computer scientists, medical doctors, bankers, engineers and so on use different vocabulary items. A computer scientist will talk about "template" while a civil engineer or a design engineer may refer to the same concept as ''frame''. This is not to say that it is not possible for one person to control a variety of registers. One can be both a footballer and an economist. In other words, that may person control the registers of football and economics. The coach of the British football league team – Arsenal –, Mr Arsene Wenger is also reputed to be an economist. There was once a footballer – Socrates – who was also a medical doctor. For a person like him, it is possible to have control of two registers.

## 3.5:    Styles

The situations or circumstances under which a language is used can determine the way or ways in which it is spoken.

Thus formal, ceremonial or public occasions will require formal speech. Public lectures, for example, are formal while conversations with friends are informal situations. It must be mentioned, however, that the level of formality of speech can be related to a number of factors such as the kinds of occasion, social differences between interlocutors, age and sex of speakers. Compare the two sentences below coming from a student to his/her teacher:

(a) Sir, I guess you wouldn't do that to me.

(b) Sure, you ain't gonna do that to me, eh?

While it may seem difficult to characterize absolute levels of formality, it is nevertheless possible to show that native speakers of all languages control a range of stylistic varieties. In other words, there is no single-style speaker. Speakers tend to vary their speech from the most formal as in reading, or word list where maximum attention is paid to speech to the most informal as in casual conversation with a friend over beer or coffee. It is a pattern of behavior wherein speakers change their speech style according to the formality of the speech situation. This variation in styles from formal to informal is referred to as **style-shifting**.

### *Questions for Revision*

1.      "Standard language is an ideology" Discuss.

2.     What is a regional dialect? Mention and describe the criteria for dialect differentiation. Please illustrate your points.
3.     Write brief notes on (i) idiolect (ii) dialect and (iii) sociolect.
   4. Differentiate between registers and dialects? Illustrate.
   5. Describe and illustrate style and style-shifting.

**CHAPTER** **4**

## BILINGUALISM

### 4.1:   Introduction: What is Bilingualism?

Bilingualism is the alternate use of two languages (and more, in case of multilingualism). The individual who has the facility to use two languages is called a bilingual. Bilingualism can be widespread and become a societal phenomenon if most members of a given society are bilingual. In this case, we can talk of societal bilingualism. A whole nation can also be bilingual or multilingual as is the case, for example, with Switzerland where French, German, Italian and Romansch are spoken. Nigeria is a multilingual country with its citizens having varying degrees of

bilingualism and multilingualism. Most educated Nigerians are bilingual in English and their local languages.

Generally, there are varying degrees of individual bilingualism based on the relative competence and/or proficiency of the individual in the use of the languages available in that individual's speech repertoire. This is why we have **co-ordinate bilinguals** who are proficient in the two languages available in their repertoire. They can speak and understand the languages well. They can also be said to be not only linguistically competent but that they are also communicatively competent because they know when, where and how to use the languages.

There are those that can be described as **subordinate bilinguals** who are very fluent in only one of the two languages they speak. This group of bilinguals is not proficient especially in the grammar of the other language in which they are not fluent.

There is another category of bilinguals referred to as **incipient bilinguals**. These bilinguals are able to speak both languages but they understand the second one partially. Unlike the co-ordinate bilinguals, both subordinate and incipient bilinguals cannot be described as possessing communicative competence in their other language.

## 4.2:    Factors Determining the Evolution of Bilingualism

Societal bilingualism or multilingualism may develop as a result of the following factors:

### 4.2.1   Migration

There are two types of migration:

(a)   Migration which occurs when a large group of people expands their territory by moving into contiguous areas and simultaneously taking control over similar socio-cultural groups who are already there. Some of the indigenous populations eventually become nationalized to the larger group and become linguistically and culturally assimilated. Examples are the Catalonians in Spain, the Bretons in France, British colonists in the USA, Arabs in some parts of Africa and the Fulani in Northern Nigeria and the Nupe (referred to as Tapa by the Yoruba) in Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State.

(b)   The other kind of migration occurs when a small number of people from an ethnic group move into the territory already under the control of another nationality. Such people often constitute immigrant minorities who arrives the host territories speaking their own native languages. Examples are European, Chinese, Korean, Cuba and Haitian immigrants in the U. S. A., immigrants from Commonwealth nations in Britain, Igbo and Hausa immigrants in Lagos, Igbo

immigrants in Kano and Yoruba immigrants in Zaria and Jos.

### 4.2.2:   Imperialism

This occurs when a group of people takes control of another nation and also resides there. Imperialism may result from factors such as colonization, annexation and economy. It was imperialism that brought English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and German to Africa, Asia and Latin America. These languages are spoken along indigenous languages in former British, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We can also talk of Arab imperialism in the Sudan and North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia etc.) following thespread Islam in Africa.

Annexation, as a factor of imperialism can also aid the introduction of the language of the imperialist into the annexed society. For example, the introduction of the Russian language into the Baltic Republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia resulted from annexation by the former Soviet Union.

Economic imperialism aids bilingualism when a foreign language makes inroads into a country through its economic power, without the associated nationality ever taking political control. An example is the use of English across many countries in the world, especially in places where English is neither a mother tongue nor a second

language. An example is Thailand. Thailand was never a colony of Britain but it had attempted to teach English to a large segment of its population. Today, English is becoming a language of choice to learn and to use in China not because China was ever a British colony but because of the impact of the American economy on China.

### 4.2.3:   Federation

When people who belong to different nationalities or ethnic groups who speak different languages become united under the political control of one state, bilingualism or multilingualism may result. Examples of multilingual nations include Switzerland (German, French, Italian and Romansch), Belgium (French and Flemish), Cameroon (French, German, English, and indigenous languages), Nigeria (English, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Kanuri, Fulfulde, Efik, Angas & etc.). Many of these countries are made up of federating ethnics or nationalities.

### 4.2.4:   Border   Areas

In many parts of the world, communities made up of people who belong to different ethnic and linguistic groups are often found to be located in contiguous settlements in border areas. This is why many border areas have people who are citizens of one country with its own language but members of a socio-cultural group based in the other country also with its own language. For example, the Yoruba people on

Nigerian-Benin border. The Yoruba on both sides of the border are often bilinguals who speak both Yoruba and French or Yoruba and English. Examples of border area bilingualism abound in Africa particularly as a result of colonial boundaries:

> Benin and Nigeria (Yoruba/French)
>
> Cameroon and Nigeria (Ekoid/Efik/French)
>
> Niger and Nigeria (Hausa/French)
>
> Tchad and Nigeria (Shuwa Arabic/French/Kanuri)

**4.2.5: Trade Contact**

Commerce and trade ties may also lead to the evolution of individual or societal bilingualism. For example, regular interaction, through trade, between Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa kolanut, pepper, onion and cattle and ram traders tend to encourage the learning of Hausa, thus leading to Yoruba-Hausa or Igbo-Hausa bilingualism on the part of the Yoruba and Igbo traders.

## 4.3 Functional and Structural Aspects of Bilingualism

Bilingualism may impact both on the structure of the languages we use as bilinguals as well as on the functions that our utterances perform.

**4.3.1 Code-switching**

Code-switching occurs when a speaker alternates between two different languages or varieties of the same language in an utterance, a sentence or stream of talk. For example;

> *I learnt you were not there. Nibo lo lo?*:

| ENGLISH | YORUBA |
|---------|--------|
| I learnt you were not there. | Ni bo lo lo? |
| I learnt you were not there. | |

WHERE DID YOU GO?

Two major types of code-switching are identified. They are metaphorical and situational code-switching.

### 4.3.2 Metaphorical Code-Switching

This type of code-switching has been defined as a pattern of language behaviour where a change of topic leads the speaker to change the language in use (Gumperz, 1982). The significant point in metaphorical code-switching is that it defines for us that although some topics may be discussed by the speaker in either code or language in use, the choice of one rather than the other encodes some social values. For example, a Yoruba-English bilingual clerical officer in a university in Southwestern Nigeria might use English in discussing official matters with say, the University Registrar who is Yoruba but then the clerk could switch to Yoruba when talking about some Yoruba cultural issues within the same interaction.  This code-switching behaviour thus

defines English as 'official' and Yoruba as 'cultural' or unofficial code.

### 4.3.3: Situational Code-Switching

Situational code-switching takes place when the codes or languages in use change according to the circumstance of talk. Here, situations are defined according to place of talk and the speaker. For example, interactants may speak Yoruba at the market while they speak English in the office or classroom. Here the criterion for the use of either code is, unlike metaphorical code-switching, not topic change. Situational code-switching is considered close to diglossia because it is a situation where one language variety or code is used in a certain set of situations and another variety used in an entirely different set. The change-over from one code to another may be instantaneous. It differs, however, from diglossia because it is less rigidly defined.

#### 4.3.4: Conversational Code-Mixing

While metaphorical and situational code-switching are functional aspects of language or code selection or use, conversational code-mixing demonstrates the structural aspect. It can be defined as a language use pattern in which a speaker switches codes or languages within a single sentence, and may do so many times. Conversational code-mixing does not involve any change in the situation or circumstance of talk and neither is there any change in the

topic. The use of the two codes could be roughly of equal proportion in a given talk or conversation.

Examples:

### Yoruba and English

‘‘*Mo lo síbè yen*, you know but I didn't meet that *yeye* man.

*Kii se èèyàn tó làdéhùn* at all but in any case, *mo máa* run show *yen*’’ .

### Igbo and English

You mean you don't know that Joe *a lara ulo*,

b*iko*, let me drink my *mayan* in peace.

### English, Hausa, Pidgin

That boy, *shege*, im na *dan iska*.

**Efik/Ibibio, Pidgin and English**

My friend *di dia udia* or you no wan *ta* goat meat?

## 4.4:    Diglossia

A diglossic situation is a context or situation where two distinct language varieties or codes have clear and separate functions. That is, diglossia occurs where one code or language variety is used in one set of circumstances while another code is used in an entirely different set.  According to Ferguson:

> Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include standard or regional standard (S), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned   largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sectors of the community for ordinary conversation (1959 cited in Fasold, 1984 : 38-39).

Ferguson gives four examples of language situation where diglossia can be found. They include Arabic (Classical and Colloquial); Swiss German and Standard German; Haitian French and Creole; and Greek (Dhimotiki and Katharevousa varieties). In these situations, each variety has its own specialized functions and each situation has a high variety (H) and a low variety (L) of language. In the Arabic situation, for example, Classical Arabic is (H) while the colloquial variety is (L). The (H) variety is used for the following functions:

To deliver sermons and formal lectures;

To give political speeches;

To broadcast the news on radio and television;

To write poetry and literature; and

 To write newspaper editorials

To use in formal gatherings, especially where people do not share a common  variety (e.g. An Egyptian speaker of Arabic will rather say "*Kaifa haluka*?" to  greet a Nigerian Shuwa Arabic speaker rather than use the Egyptian colloquial "*Iza yak*?" as both of them share only the standard Arabic in common.

In contrast, the L variety is used in the following areas:

To give instructions to workers in low-prestige occupations or

To address or instruct household servants;

To converse with familiars; and

To do popular programs on the radio

Thus one does not use H variety in a situation calling for L (e.g. addressing a servant) and neither does one uses the L variety in a situation where H is required (e.g. for writing a 'serious' work of literature).

The H variety is also considered to be the prestige variety. This feeling derives from the belief that it is more beautiful, more logical and more expressive than the L variety. This is why it is seen as more appropriate, for example, for the writing of serious literary work.  Thus in situations of diglossia, the H varieties have considerable bodies of written literature while the L variety may have none. All children learn the L variety while the H variety is likely to be learnt in some formal setting or in classrooms. What this means is that the H variety is taught while L is learnt informally. The H variety is thus not a first language of any group since everyone speaks the L variety at home.

From Ferguson's characterization of diglossia, it seems that the H and L varieties should belong to the same language. However, Fishman and Gumperz have extended the concept to cover situations where the language(s),

varieties or codes are not related but perform different functions within the same context or situation. For example, Spanish and Guarani in Paraguay, English and Yoruba, Igala and English, Bura and Hausa in Nigeria are distinct languages but they can also be in diglossic relationships. In other words, Bura and Hausa in Northern Nigeria, for example, are, though unrelated, in diglossic relationship as Hausa is the language of education, broadcasting, literary writing etc while Bura does not function in these formal contexts.

## 4.5: Bilingualism and Signage

We have defined bilingualism as the possession and use of two languages while multilingualism is the possession and use of more than two languages. It is important to note that very often when we talk of these concepts we are always thinking of the verbal aspect of language use with little or no consideration for the fact that bilingualism as well as multilingualism occur in writing. One area of sociolinguistics that has given thought to this fact lately is the field of study referred to as *linguistic landscape.* This is simply the aspect of sociolinguistics that studies how languages are used on signs in cities and communities. These signs, which are visual, may include linguistic elements and graphics placed on billboards, commercial adverts, shop names, street names, road or traffic signs and so on. A billboard may contain signs in one, two or more languages depending on context, owner, audience and purpose, among other factors.

In other words, a billboard's signage may be monolingual, bilingual or multilingual. The use of language on signs may also tell us more about the relationship between languages used (e.g. dominant versus non-dominant) and the place or identity of the speakers of the languages within the community of use.

### *Figure 4.1: A Billboard in Osogbo, Osun State*



The figure above shows a billboard containing linguistic and visual signs in Osogbo cityscape. In relation to language use, we can see two languages in use: English and Yoruba. In other words, it a bilingual sign. However, the

Yoruba language is dominant. English occurs in one word ("courtesy") and in a smaller font below to the left of the billboard. The coat of arms of the state of Osun can be seen on the weighing scale which seems to indicate that this might be a top-down sign which, apparently, also shows the importance the state government attaches to the Yoruba language. Although there is a lot we can say about this billboard as a linguistic object of study (using semiotics, discourse or nexus analysis), the focus here, in this book, is only on the sociolinguistics of language use in signage. The study of the other visual signs (the scale, the axe, the caps, the elephants etc) can be remitted to the field of study referred to as semiotics.

## *Revision Questions*

1. What is bilingualism? Describe the three types of individual bilingualism.

2. What factors may be responsible for the development of societal bi/multilingualism?

3. Describe and exemplify the terms code-switching and code-mixing.

4. Differentiate between metaphorical code-switching and conversational code-switching.

5.   What is diglossia? Describe, with illustrations, diglossic situations.

6.   Define linguistic landscape. Attempt to carry out the linguistic landscape study of your town, community or where you are resident.

**CHAPTER** **5**

# INTERFERENCE AND BORROWING

## 5.1:   Interference

When two languages are in contact, there is every likely-hood that the contact may cause some structural overlap. Such overlap may be found at the lexical, phonological and grammatical or syntactic levels. This phenomenon of overlap results in what is referred to in language contact situation as

interference. It refers simply to the overlapping of features of the two languages as a result of their intimate contact within the competence of a single speaker. It could be widespread as noticed in structural interferences between the English language and Nigerian languages. Thus it is a common phenomenon in second language learning.

One major cause of interference is what is referred to as inter-lingual identification whereby a bilingual equates two separate elements or features from the two languages in contact. For example, Yoruba speakers of English as an L2 tend to equate Yoruba high, front, unrounded vowel /i/ as in /igi/: 'tree' with the English /i/ in /sit/ which some Yoruba speakers often pronounce as [si:t].

The major kinds of interference are categorized as phonic, grammatical and lexical.

### 5.2: Phonic Interference
This refers to overlap of the sound systems of one language over another. This can happen in four different ways:

*(a)* ***Over-differentiation:*** This happens when a bilingual imposes the distinctions of an L1 on the L2. For example, the Yoruba language makes a distinction between oral and nasalized vowels as /rá:/ 'disappear' and /rán/ : 'sew' . This distinction is, however, often carried into the pronunciation of English words like '

can', 'man', and 'none'  which many Yoruba-English users nasalize.

*(b)* **Under-differentiation:** This occurs when two sounds are distinguished in the L2 but not in the L1. Here the speaker uses the only available sound in his/her L1 for the two in the L2. For example, [ i ] and [ I ] (two high, front, unrounded vowels) are distinguished in English whereas Yoruba has only one. Thus, the Yoruba speaker of English very often does not distinguish the pronunciation of words like:

(i)           /sit/ and /seat/

Other examples include:

(ii)     /cot/    and /cut/
        /k ɒ t/        /k ʌ t/

In (ii) Yoruba users of English very often pronounce the two words using the mid-low, back rounded vowel [ɔ] because the Yoruba language lacks a distinction of the two vowels.

*(c)* **Phone Substitution:** Here, the bilingual identifies particular sound(s) of L2 with those of L1 because they have some features in common. However, these sounds actually have different pronunciations. For example, /gb/ and /gɓ/ are both labiovelar and voiced but /gɓ/ has a different pronunciation because it  has a different manner of articulation which is implosive. However, it is not uncommon to find some Igbo speakers pronounce the labiovelar plosive /gb/ in

Yoruba words *gbe*, *gba* and *gbin* ('carry', 'take' and 'plant') as implosive [gɓ]; substituting the plosive with an implosive which exists in the Igbo language. Also, among Yoruba speakers, the labiodental fricatives - /f/ and /v/ - are not distinguished such that some Yoruba-speaking users of English often substitute /f/ where /v/ is expected as in the address "Mama Favour" rendered as "Mama Fafor".

*(d)*    **Reinterpretation of Distinction:** Reinterpretation of distinction takes place when a bilingual tries to distinguish the phonemes of an L2 by features which are redundant in that language. For example, if an L2 has nasality as a feature but it is not a phonologically distinctive feature, that is, it plays no role in meaning making (in other words redundant), interference may take place from an L1 in which nasality is distinctive. It has been noted earlier (see (a), above) that nasality is distinctive in Yoruba whereas it is not in English. Thus it is not uncommon for some Yoruba-English bilinguals to place some emphasis on nasality in English which is a phonologically redundant feature of that language. For example, this may take place in the pronunciation of such English words as 'man',

'run', 'done' and so on, where vowels are followed by the nasal consonant /n/.

## 5.3:  Grammatical Interference
This is overlapping at the level of the syntax of the languages in contact. Examples abound in the use of the English language in Nigeria. They include the use of tense, grammatical relations (e.g. dropping of articles and prepositions) and stress. These are illustrated below:

(a)      I am having a headache:   I have a headache.

   In this sentence, a stative verb is used as a dynamic verb as a result of the influence of Yoruba.

(a)      I saw the girl, **he** was on her way to school.
   Yoruba does not distinguish between he/she pronouns

(b)      Let me land:    Let me conclude.
   In Yoruba, one can say 'jé kí n jálè' meaning 'let me land' which means 'allow me to reach a conclusion'.

(c)      He slept on my bed : He slept in my bed
   In Yoruba, one says 'O sùn sí **orí** béèdì mi' meaning 'He slept  on (TOP OF) my bed'

(d)      The book fell down from the table : The book fell off the table
   In Yoruba, the verb 'fell' can be made up of a serial 'já + bó'  meaning 'fall down'.

## 5.4:    Lexical Interference and Borrowing

This group of interference phenomena refers mainly to word borrowing. It is generally known that languages do borrow words and that many languages of the world borrow. This happens as a result of cultural contact between and among language groups. Word or lexical borrowing processes may take place in any of the following ways:

*(a)*    ***Outright   Transfer****:* This process involves taking the item of the lending language but doing some phonetic or phonological modification to them. Examples of outright lexical transfers into Yoruba from English and Arabic are given below:

| English | Arabic | Yoruba | Gloss |
|---------|--------|--------|-------|
| copper | - | kobo | onion |
| labbas | alubosa | | |
| street | - | **t**iti | - |
| | zaman | sanmoni | period |
| - | - | | |
| petrol | - | bentirolu | |

*(b)*    ***Loan   Translation (Calques):*** A word can be borrowed from another language through translating it exactly as what it represents element by element in

the borrowing language. For example, an 'aeroplane' is a vehicle that travels in the sky. As Yoruba does not have a word for it, it has decided to do calqueing by calling it 'oko ofurufu': 'vehicle of the sky' or 'sky vehicle'. Examples are:

| English | Yoruba | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Radio | ero-asoromagbesi | 'machine that talks without receiving a reply' |
| Television | ero- amohunmaworan | 'machine that captures voice and pictures' |
| Computer | ero-ayarabiasa : | 'machine that is fast as the kite/eagle' |
| Mobile phone | ero-alagbeka: | 'machine that is carried about' |

(c)    **Loan    Extension:** This is the borrowing that takes place when the word or lexical item of the donor language is used to conform with the borrower's need. Usually, an extended loan is used to cover a broader range of meaning along the original. For example, the English word 'Hell' was borrowed from Greek 'Hel' which in that language referred only to the goddess that guarded the kingdom of the dead. However, the word 'hell' is now used in English also to cover the abode of condemned sinners. The English word 'devil' is used by a large number of Yoruba speakers to cover the Christian or Muslim 'devil' and the Yoruba *Esu.*

## 5.5:    Interference at Discourse Level

There are certain linguistic practices embedded in discourse that are often culture specific. Some of these practices involve politeness strategies, forms of address, greetings and discourse markers, among others. In many instances these elements carry some cultural undertones which are transferred from L1s to L2s.

Examples are illustrated below:

(a)    The use of 'sorry' as in "I am sorry that you lost your money." This is a common type of expression among Nigerian users of English as an L2 to show empathy. However, we will note that we can only be sorry for

what we have done wrong and therefore the use of 'sorry' here is an interference from, for example, the Yoruba greeting: 'pele'.

(b)     Well done (a greeting): used to appreciate someone who has done a good job; often used in place of 'You have done well.' Again, it derives from our L1s (e.g. 'ku ise' in Yoruba)

(c)     Use of Yoruba discourse markers (small words and phrases e.g. to act as fillers, prompts) as 'ke', 'se', 'abi', ehen etc in English conversation by a Yoruba user of English as a second language:

You did not go there *ke.*

You know him, *sebi*?

He is the boy's father, *abi*?

### *Questions for Revision*

1.     Define interference. Mention and discuss types of phonetic interference.
2.     What is grammatical interference? Describe its forms.
3.     Describe and analyze lexical transfer and loan translation in a Nigerian mother tongue.

**CHAPTER** **6**

# LANGUAGE CHOICE AND LANGUAGE USE

## 6.1    Choosing a Language or Code

In a given speech community, speakers often use different varieties of the same language, separate languages,

different speech styles, registers, pidgin or creole. The use of only one variety of language, dialect, style or register is an uncommon phenomenon in speech communities. Most speakers command several varieties of any language they speak, and bilingualism (and bidialectalism) is the norm for many people in the world. This is why speakers often need to select a particular code (a language or its variety) whenever they speak and they may also decide to switch from one code to another or to mix codes in the course of their speech.

Among educated Nigerians, for example, it is not unusual for a speaker to switch from English to one indigenous language and vice versa. English being the official language and the language of higher education, it is often chosen for use in official situations while indigenous languages such as Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Yerwa or Kanuri, Efik and so on, which are, largely, regional languages are used in informal situations. In other words, the choice or use of one of these languages (technically, codes) rather than another is not arbitrary but patterned. Therefore, we need to ask such questions as;

(a)   Why do people use one code rather than another?

(b)   What brings about such switch from one code to another?

## 6.2:    Analysis of Language Use and Choice

In answering the questions posed above, a number of analytical frameworks have been proposed. These include:

(i)     the domains of language use;

(ii)      the symbolic role of language choice and use;

(iii)    accommodation or convergence in language choice and use; and

(iv)    the cultural values implicated by language choice and use.

### 6.2.1:    The Domains of Language Use

In this framework, it is assumed that the desire to use one language or code rather than another is determined by a number of personal and socio-cultural factors. These include; topic, situation or place, person, solidarity with listeners, perceived social and cultural distance between and among language users and so on.      In the description and analysis of code choice, Fishman (1971) proposes the concept of domains of use. In the framework, he defines the domains of language use as the occasions during which one code, rather than the other of co-available codes, is used. The domains include the family, neighbourhood, governmental, occupational and religious domains. In bi/multilingual communities proper usage of language or codes dictates that only one of the theoretically co-available

languages or varieties will be chosen by particular classes of interlocutors on particular kinds of topics.

The domains influence language use behaviour along what Fishman (ibid.) puts as: who speaks what language?; To whom?; and when? The goal of the domains of language use approach to analyze language behaviour is to show that although the analysis of individual behavior in terms of language choice and topic may seem appropriate at the level of face-to-face (verbal) interactions, the behavior is also related to widespread socio-cultural norms and expectations in the larger society. The domains of language use include topics of interlocution or interaction, role relationship between interlocutors and the locales of interaction.

### 6.2.1.1:    Topic

The topic of interaction between and among speakers is a determinant of code-choice in bi/multilingual settings. Here, interlocutors might use say language X in discussing a technical subject while they switch to language Y in discussing a cultural topic. In a study of code-choice among Ijebu-Ikorodu Yoruba-speakers, Akere (1982) reports that Ikorodu people use more of Ijebu-Ikorodu dialect than Eko (Lagos variety of Yoruba) in discussing local customs of Ikorodu while Eko is used to discuss a 'modern' issue as politics.

It is observed that appropriateness of choice of code depends on other factors like:

(a)    speakers' acquired habit due to their training in the particular language with which to deal with the topic (e.g. English as against Yoruba as the language of computer/technology) ; and

(c)    Speakers' lack of specialized terms for a satisfying discussion of the topic in a given code or language because this language lacks as exact or as many terms for handling the topic as another code.

### 6.2.1.2:    Persons and Role-Relations

The nature of participants in a conversation and the relationship between them can determine the choice of code for conversation. The relationships may be of mother-child, father-child, pupil-teacher, adult-young person, employer-employee etc. In certain societies, varying language behaviors are expected of people vis-à-vis each other. In a study of code selection among Yoruba speakers in the city of Ile-Ife, Salami (1987) reports that non-standard dialects of Yoruba are used predominantly within inter-group communication while standard Yoruba is less employed in this domain. Akere (1982) also reports that Ijebu-Ikorodu speakers use more of Eko-Yoruba with their children than with their spouses.

### 6.2.1.3:    Place or Locale

The place in which communication takes place between interlocutors also forms an important factor in the choice of codes. A locale of interaction can include home, market, school, and work-place. In the two studies by Akere and Salami mentioned earlier, the factor of locale constitutes a determinant of the selection of either Eko or Standard Yoruba in Ikorodu as well as the selection of the local dialect or standard Yoruba in Ile-Ife. Also, the English language can be used, for example, in offices, but not in a market-place or a pepper soup joint between two Yoruba-speaking users of English where either Yoruba or pidgin is expected.

It is important to note that the factors that have been discussed so far interrelate in the configuration of the domains of language or code choices. A mother who is bilingual in Yoruba and English might choose to use Yoruba at home with her children in telling Yoruba folklore (e.g. tales about the tortoise). In this circumstance, it is not only the home or locale that is responsible for the mother's choice of Yoruba but also the topic. Thus it is possible for the mother to choose to use English with the children at home when, for example, assisting them in their school work.

In a much more recent study, Adeniran (2009), using Fishman's framework of the domains of language use, examined language use behaviour in Porto-Novo, the capital of Benin Republic in West Africa. In that study, he reported the existence of twelve languages (including Egun, French

and Yoruba), the language ability of respondents and their language choice behaviour in the city of Porto Novo. The study showed that although Egun and Yoruba are the dominant languages used in the informal domain of the home of respondents, and French in the formal domain of education, the choice of a code(s) in the domains of employment and religion by the respondents was not as clear-cut; even though the French language enjoys institutional support and great prestige in the city and in Benin Republic at large (p. 131).

Table 6.1: Frequency distribution of language use in the home domain by ethnic origin (Porto Novo, Benin Republique)

| Language | Yoruba | Egun | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Spoken | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yoruba | 143 | 81.7 | 21 | 12.0 | 11 | 6.3 | 175 | 100 |
| Egun | 23 | 10.3 | 163 | 73.1 | 37 | 16.5 | 223 | 100 |
| French | 18 | 23.6 | 31 | 40.9 | 27 | 33.8 | 76 | 100 |

*Source: Adeniran (2009: 145)*

## 6.3:   The symbolic role of language or code usage

Another framework for the understanding of language use behaviour is the symbolic role that a language plays when in use. This framework falls within the social psychology of language use. It is worth noting that language often plays some symbolic roles in our social lives. It is thus the goal of the social psychology approach to uncover the 'sentiments' that are hidden beneath the choice a speaker makes of one code rather than another.

Social psychology tries to find out what constitutes an individual's motivation(s) for code choice. Here, it is not concerned with such socio-cultural determinants as locale, topic or person. It is concerned with, for example, a given situation of communication where a language user may feel pulled in different directions by a personal desire to speak

the language they know best and the language expected of them by the social group to which they belong. In doing this, a speaker may want to be seen as a member of some social group that is not present, or may even want to dissociate themselves from that group. For instance, Ebira-Yoruba bilinguals in the midst of Yoruba speakers might reveal that they are Ebira and thereby code-selecting Ebira language in conversation. Here, they may want to do this in order to emphasize their membership of the Ebira group. But suppose they decide not to do this but they go ahead to identify themselves with Yoruba by choosing to speak Yoruba rather than Ebira? What explanation(s) can we give for this behaviour which seems to mean that they want to 'distance' themselves from Ebira? From the perspective of social psychology and the symbolic roles that language plays, there are three possible ways from which we can look at this behaviour:

(a)   the personal needs of a speaker (e.g. what does s/he stand to gain or lose?) jn selecting or not selecting a particular code ;

(b)   the influence of background situation or the larger context (e.g. a threatened situation ) of language use; and

(c)   the influence of the immediate situation (e.g. in intergroup conflict, what to choose to reflect the speaker's true identity).

These three factors do often overlap. However, one of them could be the most salient or most prominent in a given situation of communicative interaction where the speaker needs to select from available codes.

## 6.4 : Accommodation and Language Use

Another explanatory framework for the understanding of the social psychology of language use is that of Howard Giles and associates. This framework, which derives from the theory of accommodation, is assumed to take the form of convergence of perceptions about a given language behaviour or a linguistic practice. It is a situation where a language user chooses a code or a variety of a language that seems to suit the needs of the person with whom he/she is interacting. Under certain circumstances a speaker may diverge rather than converge by not selecting the code of the person with whom they are interacting even when they can. There are a number of social psychological explanations put forward for the possible convergence or divergence. They include:

(i)     Solidarity or identification with an interlocutor or a group;

(ii)    Emphasizing loyalty to an in-group;

(iii)   status relationship (dominant versus subordinate relationship) Here, a subordinate group makes linguistic adjustment, if it will pay to; that is, if there is a reward for convergence; and

(iv)    the view of the code (favourable versus unfavourable) by the language user

## 6.5:    Language Use and Cultural Values

Another approach to the study of language choice is the analysis of code choice in terms of the cultural values that speech communities attach to a specific code(s).

There are a number of studies carried out along this paradigm. Two of these studies include the important work of Susan Gal  (1979) in Austria titled ''Social determinants of language shift in bilingual Austria ''; Blom and Gumperz (on Norway) and Akere (1982) on Ikorodu, Lagos State.

In her study, Susan Gal (ibid), carried out a participant-observation study of language choice in Oberwart, Austria and reports that language choice in that community is related to the dichotomy between the cultures of the peasants and the workers in this community. In Oberwart, the Hungarian language is used as the traditional in-group language while German is the national language of education and official business. Hungarian is associated with traditional rural peasant values like hard-work, ownership of farm animals, and land ownership while German symbolizes urban values that have moved into the community since the Second World War. Thus the choice of one of these languages instead of another is determined also by these

cultural values. In other words, speaking one rather than another could be an important cue to the sociolinguistic identity of a member of Oberwart community.

In the Ikorodu town of Lagos State, Nigeria, Akere observes that members of the city considers the use of the local Ikorodu dialect of Yoruba as identifying with traditional values while the choice of Eko-Yoruba is seen as an identification with modern urban values. Since Ikorodu 'Oga' is now seen as part of Lagos, Ikorodu people see themselves as having higher status than other Ijebu-speaking Yoruba people.

## Questions for Revision

1. Given a multilingual speech community, how can you account for the choice of codes among speakers in that community?
2. What roles do cultural values play in language choice and use?
3. The choice and use of a code may be a reflection of an individual's personal motivation. Discuss.
4. Describe and assess accommodation theory and its application to language use.

**CHAPTER** **7**

# LANGUAGE VARIATION

## 7.1:    Language Variation and Dialect Study

Languages vary in a number of ways. In a given speech community, people differ in their linguistic behaviours - in pronunciation, in grammatical usages and in the choices they make of vocabulary, idioms and language varieties. These linguistic practices interplay with social, cultural and social-psychological factors within the community and individuals. Sociolinguistics, today, is concerned more with social variation in language than with regional or geographical dialects. However, to be able to understand the focus on social variation we need to look at previous works in dialectology because studies of social variation in language grew out of studies of traditional dialectology. In fact, one of the main goals of social dialectology or the sociolinguistic study of dialects has been to widen the limits as well as repair the flaws that were perceived to exist in traditional dialectology.

## 7.2:    Traditional Dialectology

Early studies of dialectology had considered regional differences in language to have been brought about by the same kinds of processes that they thought accounted for

linguistic change in general. Thus, the study of dialects was seen as an important part of work in historical linguistics. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the study of dialects was motivated primarily by the interest in historical and comparative linguistics. It was thought then that we could know the history of a language by the study of its dialects. Therefore, by looking at dialects it was seen as a possible way to reconstruct the proto-forms of a particular language in the earlier periods of its development.

However, since William Labov's works (1963; 1966; and 1972) a number of sociolinguistic studies have been carried out which demonstrate two things about our understanding of the processes of language change. The first is that language change is not only observable but that the observation could also be done from synchronic variation in language use. Secondly, these studies demonstrate that the synchronic variations that we observe in language may be motivated by factors of social diversity.

In the earlier perspective to dialectology and historical linguistics, variable realizations of linguistic items that were not captured by internal linguistic rules were often dismissed as free variation. In generative linguistics, these variations were assumed able to be captured by optional rules. But as noted by Fischer (1958), the term free variation does not explain anything and that, indeed, what is free variation is not free but determined by certain external social forces.

Thus following Fischer and Labov, the study of the social basis of language change puts linguistic variability or language variation at the center of discussion. We may then ask: what is linguistic variability or what is a variable in language?

## 7.3:   The Linguistic Variable

The study of variation in language focuses on a language user's systematic ability to shift from one kind of speech to another. It is the examination of the linguistic behaviour of the individual speaker or a group of speakers within a given language community. It may involve the investigation of the individual or group's pronunciation of certain words, their use of certain lexical items or certain grammatical constructions. These pronunciations, lexical items and syntactic constructions may occur in different forms or ways in their speech but are functionally equivalent; that is, without a change in meaning. These different forms of use determine their description as linguistic variables. They are often correlated with certain social and stylistic factors within their community of use.

A linguistic variable, therefore, is a linguistic item which has identifiable variants butthese variants do not affect its meaning. For example, the pronunciation of the ends of words 'hunting', 'going' with the alternations 'huntin' and goin' in British English or the pronunciation of the word *ìròyìn* in Common Spoken Yoruba (Yoruba koine) with the

alternation *ìròhìn* : 'news';   *èhìn* vs *èyìn* : 'back' and *ihò* vs *iwò* : 'hole' are linguistic variables that can be correlated with social factors. In Yoruba, the set of words pronounced with /h/ and /ɲ/ (irohin ~ iroyin) can have the variable represented by (H) with variants or alternate realizations as [h] and [ɲ]. What the sociolinguist does is to look for instances of the use of the variable and its alternate realizations (variants) in the speech of a group of people (speech community or social network) by carrying out audio-recording of their informal (casual) and formal speech. The different realizations or variants found are then related (quantitatively) to the social and stylistic contexts in which they occur.

A number of studies have reported the relationship of linguistic variables to social parameters like region, class, age, ethnicity, occupation and speech style (Labov, 1963, 1966, 1972a, 1972b; Trudgill, 1974, 1978, Akere, 1977; Jubril, 1982; Cheshire, 1982; and so on). Awonusi (1988) investigated, among other variables, the nature of the phonological variable (h) as in the initial consonant in 'hand' which is either retained or dropped in Spoken (Lagos) Nigerian English. His results showed that the older his informants were, the greater was their consciousness to retain or use (h).

Salami (1991) also studied Yoruba language usage in Ile-Ife from the perspective of sociolinguistic variation. The table below shows part of the results of that study showing

the correlation of the linguistic variables (ma) and (AN) with education.

*Table 7.1: Language and Education in Ile-Ife*

|       | NFE | PRY | SECTEC | UNIV | X2     | P   |
|-------|-----|-----|--------|------|--------|-----|
| (ma)  | 37  | 47  | 36     | 25   | 8.254  | .04 |
| (AN)  | 31  | 32  | 32     | 50   | 10.168 | .02 |

*(Salami, 1991, pg 231)*

The variable (ma) represents the non-standard pronunciation of the Yoruba verbal (habitual) formative /maa/: 'doing'; 'going to' do. The variable demonstrates the relic of the 'Proto-Yoruba' vowel harmony system whereby the vowels of pronominals like /mo/: 'I' and /o/: 'She' or 'He' harmonize with the stem vowels of verbs. In the study reported above there is variability in the harmony rule on the formative /maa/ where it is pronounced as [mɔɔ] to harmonize with the pronominal variants [ɔ] and [mɔ] in some Yoruba variety. The pronunciation [mɔɔ] is stigmatized.

The variable (AN) represents the backing and raising of the nasalized low central vowel [ã] to nasalized low-mid [ɔ] after non-labial consonants. This variable has three variants: [ã], which is more front; [ɑ], which is back and [ɔ] which is low-mid variant. The variable occurs in such words as *akan*:

'crab'; *ikan*: termite, *adan*: 'bat' and *agan*: 'barren'. The results of the study shown in the table demonstrate the variants of these two variables were related to individual speaker's level of education.

It may be pertinent to mention here that some other studies, such as those of Milroy (1980), Russell (1981) and Salami (1991) have also demonstrated that the variable nature of language can also be related to the factor of social networks. That is the network of the social contacts that an individual has may influence that individual's use of language.

## 7.4: Linguistic Stereotypes

Speech may count as a source of value-judgments about speakers. That is, the way one speaks may provide others some opportunity to form opinions about one's personality and social characteristics. In other words, we can be judged or evaluated by the way we speak. Such judgment or evaluation may or may not tally with our true personality. Thus if a piece of information about a speaker's social characteristic is value-laden and has no basis in reality, such so-called information or knowledge is referred to as a **stereotype**. People often use the speech of others as a clue to non-linguistic information about them, such as their social background and even personality traits like toughness and intelligence. This type of linkage is generally referred to as linguistic **stereotype**. For example, it is probably a

stereotype to say that Oyo-Yoruba speakers are the ones who always pronounce the English voiceless alveo-palatal fricative [ ∫ ] as an alveolar fricative [s] because there are many Oyo-Yoruba speakers who pronounce the speech sound appropriately. Often stereotypes are stigmatized. As we note in the 'jab' – *Omo wa ni e je o se* (He is our child let him be) where 'se' replaces the standard pronunciation /∫e/ used often as a jab in reference to Ibadan Oyo-Yoruba speakers.

## 7.5: Linguistic Marker
When we find that variant usages of a linguistic item can be correlated (i.e. when a relationship can be established) with some social characteristics of a speaker such an item becomes a **marker**. In other words, the linguistic item has social significance. For example, the choice or use of one linguistic variant rather than another may be connected to the educational status, sex, ethnic background and social networks of a speaker. That is to say that a marker carries with it some social information. Members of a given speech community are aware of markers, and the distribution of markers is clearly related to social groupings and to styles of speaking.


## 7.6: Indicator

An indicator is a linguistic variable to which little or no social significance is attached. It occurs, for example, where some people distinguish the pronunciation of certain words or speech sounds while others do not. That is, an indicator occurs when we find out that certain linguistic item - pronunciation, lexical or grammatical usage takes on some significance among a sector of the community while it is not so significant in the speech of another. That is to say when the social significance of a linguistic item is not widespread, that item is called an **indicator**. In other words, the linguistic item seems to be just evolving to become socially significant.

## 7.7: Methodology for the study of language variation

In the study of language variation, the focus is on the speech of every-day life. Bynon (1977) is of the view that the major contribution of sociolinguistics towards the understanding of language change has come from the detailed investigations of living speech communities. The concentration on the speech of every-day life is motivated by the need for language corpus which is considered to be a representative speech sample. Unlike structural-generative linguistics, sociolinguistics does not seek to describe linguistic competence of 'an ideal speaker-hearer in a perfectly homogenous speech community' as it does not think such a community exists.

Variation studies consider linguistic practices within speech communities as prone to variability. This is because

language users have different backgrounds and they are often of different social characteristics which can impact on their speech. For example, the speech community may be divided according to castes, classes, age-grades, occupations and so on. People may also differ in the kinds of social networks they have within the community. All these parameters are important in the investigation of the variant realizations of a given linguistic item.

Apart from these social parameters, the investigator might also be interested in whether or not the change in the context or situation of speech affects the choice from among the variant realizations of a given variable. This aspect is often characterized as the style of speech.

## 7.8 :  Social Influences on Language Use

As noted earlier, certain social factors may have impact on the speech of a given individual, a group of individuals or a social network. Such factors may include age, sex, education, occupation among others.

### 7.8.1 Age

Sociological literature shows that age as an identity or status is an institution that is very much influenced by cultural rather than biological factors. Among the Yoruba, for example, certain patterns of social life such as respect, deference, obligation and prohibitions are attached to age. Therefore, for the Yoruba, the use of language by a speaker with an older or younger person may also implicate respect,

deference or obligation. Many studies on sociolinguistic variation demonstrate, however, that patterns of language use do correlate with age differences.

Apart from its social significance, the stratification of language use according to age can also be used as a measure of change taking place in language in apparent time. This is because, theoretically, older people generally use older forms while newer forms can usually be located in the speech of younger people.

### 7.8.2 Sex

Although the question of whether or not there is a relationship between sex and language use is contested, especially on the grounds of gender ideology, (see particularly Cameron, 1985; 1990 and Coates, 1993; and so on), earlier variation studies particularly in Western industrialized societies report that there are differences in the linguistic behaviour of men and women (Labov, 1972a; Trudgill, 1974; Macaulay, 1977; L. Milroy, 1980; J. Milroy, 1981). These earlier studies explain the differences between men and women's speech in terms of prestige-consciousness and solidarity. J. Milroy (ibid.) argues that since language is a social behaviour in the same way as what one wears, it is not surprising that there should be differences in language behaviour between the sexes as there are differences in their dressing habits (p.35). In the study of English spoken in Norwich, Trudgill (1972; 1974)

claims that women use more prestige forms of pronunciation than men because they are more status-conscious than men.

Although Milroy (1980) claims that the relationship of sex, network and language use in Belfast can be complex, she reports that men are generally closer to the vernacular norms than the women because the men show more solidarity within their personal informal social networks. However, in her book - **Feminism and Linguistic Theory**, Cameron (1985) argues that the differentiation of women's from men's speech should be seen more as the product of the different histories and cultures of men and women rather than the product of norm and deviation (p.46). She argues that since women's history and culture are subsumed in men's, it is not surprising that women's behaviour is usually understood from the perspective of men's behaviour. Furthermore, Cameron (ibid) is of the view that earlier findings and explanation of sex differences in language could, in fact, be the result of the artifact of methodology. She argues, for example, that the method of stratifying women (western/British) into socio-economic classes based on their husbands' classes is biased towards men. Also, since those earlier studies were conducted by men, the results they obtained could have been because the women respondents were reacting, in speech behaviour, to the social distance between their male interviewers and themselves.

In a study of variation in English adjective usage among university undergraduates in Nigeria, Salami (2004) showed that sex or gender is an important factor.

Table 3: Sex and Use of English Adjectives among Nigerian Undergraduates

| Sex | Romantic | Non-Romantic | Religious | Physical Attribute | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 29 (15.3%) | 88 (46.3%) | 26 (13.7%) | 47 (24.7%) | 190 (100%) |
| Female | 59 (29.7%) | 75 (37.9%) | 23 (11.6%) | 41 (20.7%) | 198 (100%) |
| Total | 88 | 163 | 49 | 88 | 388 |

In the study, the students were asked to describe the kind of person they would wish to marry, in case they would like to be married. That is, they were to use an adjective that would most qualify their choice of a future spouse. Table 3 above shows the distribution of the respondents according to their sex or gender. The results showed four types of adjectives which we have listed as:

(i)     romantic, e.g. caring, loving, romantic;

(ii)    non-romantic (attitudinal), e.g. respectful, honest, trustworthy;

(iii)   religious, e.g. God-fearing, spiritual and Christian/Godly, and

(iv)    physical attribute, e.g. tall, handsome, beautiful and cute.

It will be observed, from the table, that the women preferred to use romantic adjectives more than the men (almost 30% as against 15%). The men, on the other hand, chose to use more of non-romantic adjectives followed by physical attribute adjectives. Although the differences do not seem large, they are a pointer to the underlying thoughts of the respondents. In other words, the students' language use can be correlated with their gender.

What we have addressed so far is one aspect of the relationship between language and sex or gender. This is that there are differences in the use of language by men and women. The other aspect, which we have not mentioned, is the use of language to talk about men and women. While very often men are referred to, in talk, in positive terms, women are usually presented in some not so complimentary linguistic practices. For example, it is often held that while men talk women gossip! Take a look at any of Nigerian English-medium magazines talking about celebrated women,

the emphasis is either on their marital status or their sexuality. They are often referred to with terms such as 'sexy', 'delectable', single-parents etc as if that is all about women. These references are observed to be sexist. Thus, apart from the fact there are language use differences between men and women, languages are also used to differentiate men and women and very often to discriminate against women. Women are often seen as subordinate to men. Thus we have terms such as 'mankind' and 'he' taken to refer to men and women. Words like 'manpower'; 'man hour'; 'man' a job; 'man-to-man'; etc refer to both men and women. These words, phrases and expressions which are described as sexist are used to discriminate against or denigrate women.. To say that someone is "crying like a " is a sexist expression while "she is as brave as a man" can also be seen as a sexist expression. It is observed that these expressions, words and phrases are, to a large extent, the results of the unequal power relations between men and women and feminist linguists agree that this can be redressed through non-discriminatory or gender-neutral linguistic practices.

### 7.8.3:   Education

In Africa and other developing countries today, education is a major criterion of social class membership. For example, Lloyd (1974: 118) points out that  the speech patterns of the educated Yoruba often serve as the badge of identity of the

educated class because schooling encourages fluency in basic standard Yoruba and tends to eradicate much of the richness of Yoruba phraseology and dialect differences.

In a study of variation in Tehrani Persian, Jahangiri (1980) and Jahangiri and Hudson (1982) report that one main influence on the speech of Tehran Persian speakers is the level of their educational attainment. Russell (1981) also reports that in Mombasa (Kenya), informants who have some formal schooling differ in their pronunciation of Swahili from those without. She observes that generally Mombasa schooled-speakers use more standard forms of Swahili than the unschooled ones.

### 7.8.4:   Occupation

Sociolinguistic studies in Europe and North America show that there is a correlation between social class (measured in terms of occupation, income and house-types) and language use. Labov (1972a) demonstrates, for example, that the use of post-vocalic /r/ in New York correlates with the social classes of speakers. Trudgill (1974) also reports that the grammatical present tense affix '-s' in English varies in use according to social classes in Norwich. He shows that a higher proportion of non-standard usage correlates with lower social classes (p.43). In his Glasgow study, Macaulay (1977) observes that there are significant speech differences between manual and non-manual workers in the city of Glasgow.

The significance of the co-variation of social classes with language use is in the possibility that we could, sometimes, use it to locate initiators of linguistic change socially. Fischer (1958) observes, for example, that innovations in language use often come from the highest class in society.

In Nigeria today, there is a growing specialization of occupations in cities. Occupations are thus becoming salient features of social structure. Professional and White collar workers, for example, as a group usually have different life styles from those of other members of the society. These different life styles are demonstrated by their dressing habits, consumption patterns and the type of houses in which they live. These may impact on their language or linguistic practices too.

### 7.8.5    Social Networks

A number of studies in sociolinguistic variation show that the linguistic behaviour of people cannot be explained solely with reference to their personal social characteristics as age, sex, ethnic identity and so on. It is argued that other social factors as speakers' sense of solidarity, identity or loyalty within a speech community do also count in the determination of their linguistic behaviour. The studies reported by Labov (1972a), Gal (1979), Milroy (1980), Cheshire (1982) and Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) show that we can have illuminating insights into language

use behaviour from the application of concepts like group integration, network membership and acts of identity.

In a study of language use in Belfast, Milroy (ibid.) demonstrates that the sense of solidarity shown via the degree of integration of speakers into local Belfast networks is significant for the understanding of non-standard vernacular speech in three Belfast working class communities. In a series of studies on Creole in the Caribbean (Belize and St. Lucia), Le Page (1968a, 1968b, 1972a, 1980) and Le page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) also show that speakers' sense of ethnic identity is a critical socio-psychological factor underlying the linguistic practices of individuals from these islands. Le Page, in particular, is of the view that, generally, the norms of language use are underlined by individuals' acts of identity.

There has been a lot of work on language variation and change across the world. . Salami (1991a) demonstrates that although there is social stratification within Common Spoken Yoruba (the Koine), the factor of social network also plays an important role in variation within the language.

## 7.9:    The Situation of Speech

In many societies, a number of contexts and relationships carry with them special types of speech. These speech types often form part of the prescribed and appropriate patterns of

language use such that there are situations or contexts in which a particular form may or may not be used. In addition, speech styles or types may mark speakers' sex, age, social class, ethnic group or social networks. In his study of English in New York City, Labov (1972a) demonstrates that speech styles vary socially in a systematic fashion. He observes that these styles reflect on the choice or use made of certain linguistic structures. For example, Labov (ibid.) reports that there is a regular variation in the pattern of use of five selected phonological variables of English in New York in the contexts of interview, reading and word lists (pp. 71-72). For Labov, these styles can be ordered on a linear scale of most formal to informal styles. The formal style is defined as careful style which is used by the speaker when s/he pays more attention to his/her own speech while the informal style is that which is used when the speaker pays less attention to his/her speech. In informal style, the speaker is very much relaxed because "it is the kind of style often heard in casual speech on the streets, in bars, on the subway, at beach, or whenever we visit friends" (Labov, 1972a : 79). Formal or careful speech, on the other hand, can be heard within structured formal interviews. In the interview, there are stylistic constraints in the sense that the situation of speech is that in which questions are being asked by one person and answered by another. Thus, in a situation of interlocution one expects that a shift in the context of speech may also effect a shift in the style of speech.

### *Questions for Revision*

1.  Do you agree that the term 'free variation' does not explain anything? Please illustrate.
2.  "Linguistic practices are prone to variability". Discuss.
3.  Write brief notes on (a) linguistic marker (b) indicator and ( c ) linguistic stereotype. Illustrate your points.
4.  What is a linguistic variable? Itemize five elements each in the phonetics/phonology, syntax and lexicon of your mother tongue that you consider as variable and their variants.

**CHAPTER** **8**

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS LANGUAGE

### 8.1 : Introduction

Attitudes towards language can be described simply as the feeling a speaker has of a language or towards the speaker of the language. Language attitudes study is a significant aspect of sociolinguistics as it does not only help to provide insights into the social importance of language and language use, it also enhances our understanding of the symbolic roles that language plays in our social and cultural lives.

### 8.2: Approaches to language attitude study

In the study of attitudes to language, two basic approaches come to mind. These are the mentalist and the behaviorist approaches. The mentalist approach examines attitudes as a state of readiness: an intervening variable between a stimulus affecting a person and that person's response. In this approach, it is taken that attitudes cannot be observed or studied directly because it is considered to be internal to the organism (i. e. the person that has the attitude). Thus, in

carrying out attitudinal research within this framework, we depend on self-reports of the individual from which we infer behaviour patterns. It is important to mention, however, that very often self-reported data are of questionable validity.

The behaviorist approach, on the other hand, examines attitudes from the responses people make to social situations. Here, we undertake the observation of overt behaviour. This is a more direct method to attitudinal research. Its shortcoming, however, is that it cannot be used to predict other behaviour patterns.

Attitudinal studies of language are important to linguistics for a couple of reasons. First, attitudes towards language can help to explain sound change, language maintenance and shift which are apparently influenced by whether the change or maintenance is favored or disfavored by members of the speech community. For example, researchers could ask subjects if they think one variety of language is 'rich', 'poor', 'ugly' or 'beautiful' and so on.

Secondly, attitudes towards language are often the reflections of attitudes towards members of various ethnic groups (that is speakers of the languages or dialects). Thus questions are asked about other people's (e.g. particular listeners) attitudes towards speakers of a particular language or its variety.

Thirdly, attitudes about language may affect its learning as a second or foreign language as the more positive our attitudes towards a particular language, other than our first language or mother tongue, the more readily we are willing to put our efforts into its learning. Fourthly, attitudes towards a language may influence our response to whether or not we understand it and do speak it. For example, a group of speakers may deny the knowledge of another language or a variety of their own language if they are not favourably disposed to the speakers of that other language or variety.

It is important to note that whenever several languages or dialects of the same appear regularly as weapons of language choice, they form a behavioural whole, regardless of grammatical distinctiveness. These languages and/or their dialects must, therefore, be considered constituent varieties of the same verbal repertoire. The usage of, and attitudes towards languages and/or varieties of the same language implicate social meanings relative to social norms in the speech community. As noted earlier, the investigation of language attitudes can help us in determining some of the underlying motivations for variation in language use and language change.

## 8.1: Methods in Language Attitudes Research

Language attitudes embed a number of sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic functions. Therefore, we need to device

some methods by which we can adequately account for these functions. For example, we need to be able to find a way of looking into how language attitudes help to connect group identity to language use or language choice.

There are a number of established sociolinguistic and social psychological methods to tackle issues emerging from the use of language. These include self-reports, the matched-guise technique and the structured interview methods (see, for example, Giles H. and P. F. Powesland, 1975; Oyetade, 1985 and Adeniran, 2012).

Studies show that we can proceed to investigate attitudes towards a language indirectly through self-reports by asking speakers to evaluate their own speech or language, for example, by asking if they speak a particular language, dialect or use a particular stigmatized item.

In the matched-guise technique, recordings of speech are given to listeners to elicit reactions. For example, a Yoruba person disguises as Hausa by speaking English with Hausa accent. Listeners may then be asked to make comments both on the 'impostor Hausa's accent and personality. They may be asked to mention where the speaker comes from (ethnic origin), the kind of person he/she is (whether educated or not, trustworthy/not trustworthy, urbane/rural & etc) as well as what they think of the accent. In other words, listeners are required to judge speakers along some specific social traits that we like to

measure. It is important to note, however, that the reactions we get about languages are not readily attitudes to the languages themselves but to the speakers. Often such attitudes are based on stereotypes about language users.

Attitudes towards a language can also be studied through the technique of observation and recording of speech behaviour in situated interaction with the aim of investigating the process of speech accommodation or convergence. Thus, for example, when individuals adjust their speech to match the linguistic patterns of a new group (so that those patterns become their normal means of linguistic expression), it demonstrates an orientation or shift towards membership in that new group. This attitudinal behaviour is referred to as accommodation or convergence.

The structured interview method involves the use a questionnaire seeking language users' reactions to a particular language or its variety. This is a method which is capable of directly teasing out language attitudes.

## 8.4: Language attitudes in Southwestern Nigeria: case studies

Salami (1991b) reports a study of attitudes towards the Yoruba language and its varieties by a selection of Yoruba-speakers in the town of Ile-Ife. In that study, Salami (ibid.) takes it that if one wants to take proper account of a Yoruba speaker's competence in an urban situation, one needs first,

to examine the situational motivations for the choice the speaker makes from the available codes in his/her own verbal repertoire. Secondly, one must also consider the speaker's attitudes towards the codes available because the attitudes may also influence the speaker's language usage. The methodological approach to this study was the survey method, using mixed structured and unstructured interviews.

Although the distinction between an accent and a dialect is a fine one to make, Yoruba speakers, like any other language users, whether literate or not, are likely to be able to differentiate what is a local or regional dialect from urban or standard variety of their language. The differentiation that speakers make may or may not be based on any specific criterion of language structure. Rather the differentiation may be based on certain cultural and social perceptions of varieties of Yoruba or even their perceptions of the users of these varieties. For example, when Salami asked a number of Ife-Yoruba dialect-speakers during the survey for his study how they would identify an Oyo-Yoruba speaker, the description he got from them was *tan' m'ajo* ("who took the sieve"). The expression *tan' m'ajo* is a stereotype to characterize Oyo speech. This description derives from the attitude of the Ife-Yoruba speakers to the Modakeke Oyo-speakers (the Ife neighbours) in the town of Ile-Ife. Also, when an Ekiti-Yoruba speaker in the Central Yoruba region was asked how she would describe the variety she spoke her reply showed that she perceived

herself only in terms of her Ekiti sub-ethnic group. In other words, an Ekiti-Yoruba speaker, for example, is likely to see himself or herself first as Ekiti before describing himself or herself as Yoruba (Salami, 1991b: 36). In that same study the respondents were asked to rate their Spoken Yoruba on the scale 'very good' to 'can't say':

*Table 8.1: Percentage of respondents by education to the question of Competence in Spoken Yoruba:*

| | Very Good | Good | Fair | Poor | Can't Say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NFE | 23.5 | 64.7 | 00 | 11.8 | 00 |
| PRY | 50 | 33.3 | 00 | 00 | 16.7 |
| SECTEC | 57.6 | 30.8 | 7.7 | 00 | 3.8 |
| UNIV | 20 | 46.7 | 20 | 6.7 | 6.7 |

$$\text{Sign.} \quad xi^2 \quad 21.345$$
$$P <= 0.05$$

*Source: Salami (1991: 44)*

In Table 8.1 above, the respondents were classified according to their levels of education. The results showed variations in rating of competency in Spoken Yoruba. As noted by Salami (1991:44), there are three probable ways in

which the results can be understood. First, the responses by the Primary and Secondary-technical educated speakers might be some reflections of these groups' belief or attitude that 'very good' Yoruba is what is used in school, that is, 'school' or 'classroom' Yoruba.' The second interpretation is that the speakers with no formal education (NFE) might be reacting to linguistic insecurity which might have arisen from their 'unconscious' interpretation of the root of their 'poor' competence as lack of formal education in Yoruba. The third understanding of the attitudes shown here comes from the fact that most of the university educated speakers did not see themselves as speaking 'very good' Yoruba. This, however, can be explained on the grounds that although these were university educated speakers, they did not consider themselves model speakers. In other words, for them education does not determine who speaks 'very good' Yoruba. It can also be said that the attitude of the university-educated Yoruba speakers could have arisen from their sense of alienation from Yoruba culture and language because it seems that the more formal education a Yoruba speaker has, the more he or she feels alienated from the language and culture.

Akere (1982) reports on the attitudes of Ikorodu Ijebu-Yoruba speakers towards standard Yoruba, Eko (Lagos urban Yoruba) and Ijebu-Ikorodu dialect. The study, which used informants' self-reports on language use, is based on a structured questionnaire approach. Akere shows that

informants' attitudes vary and can be defined mainly along the two major parameters of traditionalism and modernity. Speakers show positive attitude towards Ijebu-Ikorodu in order to demonstrate their attachment to local or traditional values of Ikorodu town while they also tend to favour Eko Yoruba because Eko is symbolic of modern urban values. He observes, however, that the extent to which one language or dialect variety is favoured will depend on a community's perception of the role and status of that language or dialect in the context of the prevailing linguistic attitudes in the society (p. 359).

In his own study, Oyetade (1985) focuses on the attitudes of home selected university students towards standard Yoruba and various dialects of the language. The study, which uses both structured questionnaire and matched-guise approaches to data collection, reports that although informants showed positive attitudes towards their local/regional dialects, most informants favoured the Oyo variety as the variety to be taught to a foreigner. Oyetade observes that most of the respondents equated Oyo with standard Yoruba and he argues that this behaviour is legitimate because the so-called 'standard Yoruba' is based mainly on the Oyo variety (p. 229).

In the study mentioned earlier, Salami (1991b) concludes that Yoruba speakers hold very sociolinguistically interesting views about the Yoruba language. It also tried to

show that the speakers seem not only to be conscious of variations existing in the language but that they also attach some social significance to the variations from their different attitudes towards them. These attitudes are shown to be underlain by factors like the literary culture of Oyo Yoruba, history, respondents' education, sub-ethnic background and social status.

Finally, the study shows that most Yoruba speakers resident in Ile-Ife (that is, both local and non-local) seem to have positive attitudes towards Oyo-Yoruba; accepting it as 'proper' Yoruba (cf. Oyetade 1985). This behaviour contrasts, however, with the report of the language attitudes of Ikorodu-Ijebu Yoruba speakers. According to Akere (ibid.), Ikorodu-Ijebu people see Yoruba varieties spoken in the hinterland (including specifically Ibadan, Oyo, etc.) as 'backward', 'rural' while they have positive attitudes towards EKO (Lagos urban Yoruba variety) to which they accommodate. What these contrasting behavioral patterns show is that there seems to exist now two 'cultural capitals' for the Yoruba in Southwestern Nigeria. These capitals are Oyo and Lagos. We do not know yet what are responsible for the the attractions to these competing cultural capitals. What is clear is that today  Lagos is the commercial capital of Nigeria while Oyo was once the capital of the old Oyo (Yoruba) empire.

### Questions for Revision.

1. "Language attitudes do not only provide insights into the social importance of language and language use, they also enhance our understanding of the cultural and symbolic roles that languages play in language communities." Discuss.
2. Describe and illustrate two methodological approaches to language attitude study.
3. From your personal experience, discuss the claim that attitudes toward a given language are reflections of attitudes towards its speakers.
4. What factors do you think could account for the acceptability of Oyo variety of Yoruba as 'proper' Yoruba among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria? (If you speak any other Nigerian language, replace Oyo with the variety that is considered the 'pure' variety in your language).

**CHAPTER** **9**

# PIDGIN AND CREOLE LANGUAGES

## 9.1:    What are Pidgins and Creoles?

A pidgin language is, by definition, one whose structure and lexicon have been drastically reduced, and which is native to none of those who use it. A pidgin is also described as a contact language, a trade language or an auxiliary language. Because its structure seems like a simplified version of its base language, in Nigeria pidgin is erroneously referred to sometime as 'broken English'. According to Elugbe and Omamor (1991), ''broken English' is a poor mastery of English. While pidgin is systematic and patterned, 'broken English' is unstructured.

A Creole, also by definition, is a pidgin language which has become the mother tongue or native language of a speech community (Hall, 1972: 142 cited in Todd, 1974). Pidgins and Creoles often evolve because of the need or

necessity for people who do not share a common speech or language to interact. Thus pidgins and creoles are also described as auxiliary (helping) languages.

## 9.2: **Evolution of pidgins and creoles**

When two people who do not speak the same language are put together, one or more of the following things may happen:

(a)  They may decide not to talk to each other if their interaction or contact is going to be very brief and limited in scope.

(b)  They may use signs (but if the signs are not shared or have a limited scope, they may not be able to sustain any extensive interaction)

(c)  If there is a third language between them (i.e. which they both understand), then they may decide to communicate in that third language.

(d)  One of the two people may decide to master the language of the other.

(e)  If neither of them can effectively learn the language of each other, they may decide to have an approximation of each other's language. It is this approximation that is described in the literature as a pidginized form of language.

## 9.3: **Theories of Origin**

The scenarios painted in 7.2 (a) to (e) above set the grounds for conjectures on the origin of pidgins and creoles. It is, however, held that the most fertile setting for pidgins and creoles would be an area with pronounced culture contact arising, perhaps, from trade relations and colonization such as was found in the Niger-Delta area of Nigeria where there was a thriving trade between people inhabiting the region and the Portuguese in the 15th century. There are many other theories relating to the origin and/or development of pidgins and creoles. These include:

*(i)*   *Baby-talk Theory*
An early proposition about the origin of pidgins and creoles was that they evolved from the deliberate attempt of European travelers to simplify communication with those with whom they came into contact. This simplified version of their communication is what is referred to as 'baby-talk. It was called baby-talk because it was seen to share structural similarities with children's early language such as the occurrence of relatively few function words and high proportion of content words. Furthermore, it was considered that pidgins and creoles were imitation of the standard languages because the slaves and thepeople the Europeans came into contact with could not learn the language of their masters or trading partners.

In fact, Bloomfield (1933, cited in Wardhaugh, 2000: 71) held that because slaves and tributary peoples could not master the language of their masters, the masters resorted to giving the subjects the jargonized versions of their languages. This theory has been dismissed on a number of grounds among which is that pidgins and creoles could not have developed through Europeans baby-talking to their contacts because pidgins were used more amongst the people than with the Europeans. Also, the fact that many pidgins and creoles that are related to different European languages share structural similarities makes the theory implausible. In other words, the baby-talk versions of the different European languages could not have shared structures in common. Furthermore, this theory does not explain why pidgins and the European languages which they are supposed to be baby-talk versions are not mutually intelligible.

*(ii)* *Independent Parallel Development Theory*
This theory states that because of the apparent similarities among pidgins and creoles they probably had a common origin in Indo-European languages. For example, both the Atlantic and the Pacific varieties use the word 'make' in giving polite orders as in:

Mekim dai faia          (Neo-Melanasia)

Mek  yu  los  faia     (Cameroon  Pidgin)
*(Todd, 1974: 32)*

It is thought, however, that though they arose in common circumstances pidgins and creoles did develop independently of the so-called Indo-European languages. This is why , for example, that the lexical items and structures shared by English-based pidgins and creoles are observed to be absent in Standard English. In other words, if these languages developed from English their structures must resemble those of English which they do not.

*(iii)*    *Nautical Jargon Theory*
There is the theory that pidgins and creoles developed from the form of communication or language used by sailors or crews of ships traveling around the world. It is thought that this jargon must have developed among sailors because they needed a common language as they had different linguistic backgrounds. It was this jargon that they passed on to the people they came into contact with. Examples of such jargons are:

| Nautical Jargon | English |
| --- | --- |
| Hib  (heave) | Push/Lift |

| | |
|---|---|
| Jam | Stalemated |
| Kapsai | Capsize/Spill |
| Manawa/man-o' war | wasp |

_____

It is argued that each linguistic group with which the sailors came into contact developed and expanded on the jargon on the model of their native languages.

*(iv)*    Although the theory is able to explain the presence of lexical items used by sailors or those used in seafaring, it cannot explain the many structural similarities between say pidgin and Creole Englishes and those that are Spanish, French, Portuguese and Dutch based. *Monogenetic/Relexification Theory*

This theory continues with the theory of common origin in the sense that it is of the view that pidgins and creoles developed from a Portuguese pidgin called *sabir* used during the fifteenth century by Portuguese sailors with people they met. It is argued that as Portuguese influence declined, speakers of *sabir* began to resort to expanding the vocabulary of pidgins arising from it from the dominant languages spoken in the different places of contact. Such dominant languages included English, Spanish, French and Dutch. In other words, in each of these

language areas Portuguese items (of *sabir*) were relexified or replaced and thus giving rise to Pidgin English, Pidgin French, Pidgin Spanish and so on.

As argued by Elugbe and Omamor (ibid.), this theory cannot hold water because if all that happened was a replacement of lexical items of *sabir* or Pidgin Portuguese the result, for example, for West Africa would have been anglicized Portuguese pidgin rather than Pidgin English that we have. There is no debate as to the presence of Portuguese lexical items in all pidgins and creoles as well as structural similarities between Portuguese creole and English-based creole as illustrated below:

| Nigerian Pidgin English | Portuguese | English |
|---|---|---|
| Sabi | saber | to know |
| Pikin | pequeno | small/child |

| Nigerian Pidgin | Portuguese Krio | English |
|---|---|---|
| i no sabi anytin | i ka sibi naada | He doesn't know anything |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| una kom | ali kam | you (pls) come |

_____

In other words, it is true that Portuguese elements are common in all pidgins and creoles as a result of the contacts they had in many parts of the world but the Portuguese items would also be replaced by items from the languages of any other dominant group(s) that the pidgin or creole-speaking communities had sustained interaction with when Portuguese influence declined.

Although the evidence of relexification is extensive, Todd (1974) believes that the monogentic theory is not proven because other pidgins and creoles exist in the world which did not derive from any European language. Examples include Pidgin Malay, (Malaysia), Pidgin Hausa, Ewondo Populaire (Cameroon) and Swahili (Kenya and Tanzania).

*(v)    Polygenesis Theory*
This theory contrasts with the idea that pidgins and creoles had one origin in the sense it claims a variety of origins and that any similarities at all must have arisen from shared geographical and social

circumstances such as their being trade languages and also being found around the coastal regions where people of different speech communities had met in the course of trading or commerce. This theory is probable to the extent that it is difficult to argue that pidgin and creoles have one origin. The theory is also able to explain a number of socio-structural features and characteristics of pidgins and creoles as not evolving from one source.

*(vi)    Innate   and   Universal   Process   (e.g.   of Simplification and Accommodation)*

This theory states that the development of pidgins and creoles is a universal process in language contact situations. It holds that there are universal patterns of language behaviour in which humans try to simplify and accommodate when in communicative interaction. In doing this, the human child is not conscious or deliberate about his or her action but it is a process of accommodation or adjustment of speech which is apparently rule-governed. The theory argues further that the structures of pidgins and creoles must have developed through this process also because of the capacity of the human child to cut out redundancies and communicate facts without unnecessary 'embellishments'. It may be pertinent to

mention that in his studies of pidgins and creoles, the Creolist - Derek Bickerton - has tried to expand the 'bioprogram' theory in the sense that pidgins and creoles only show the underlying biological principles of the human mind in the process of language acquisition and development.

## 9.4: Attitudes to pidgins and creoles

A common view of pidgins especially among non-speakers is that they are some bad language forms which reflect the poor mastery of the languages from which they are assumed to have derived. For example, Nigeria Pidgin (English) is by popular conception referred to as 'bad' or 'bastardized English'. Thus those who speak a pidgin are usually regarded as deficient in some way – socially, culturally and sometimes cognitively. It must be noted, however, that such view is quite untenable because linguists have now come to recognize that no language is inferior to another and that no particular group of people is superior to another on the basis of their language. In terms of structure, though pidgins and creoles are broken down and simplified (in relation to the languages in contact), this structural reduction does not make them 'bad ' or 'bastardized' forms. In fact, they are observed to be so different from the contact languages that they could be unintelligible. Let us, for example, compare the following utterances:

(a)     a bi tanap  for kona ana bin di kongosa     (Cameroon
        Pidgin)
(b)     I stood at the corner gossiping  (Standard English)
        (L. Todd, 1974)

(c)     Dis one na awuf chop (Nigerian Pidgin)
(d)     This is free food (Standard English)

Looking at the forms in (a) and (b) as well as (c) and (d), we can see that not only are the English sentences structured differently from Pidgin sentences  but they also do not have all their lexical items in common.

## 9.5:    Characteristics of Pidgins and Creoles

Pidgins and Creoles found in whatever parts of the world share certain features in common. They include the following:

(a)     Pidgins and Creoles are learnt.  We have mentioned that pidgin or creole has simplified syntactic structures but one cannot speak any pidgin by just simplifying the base language because it would be virtually incomprehensible. For example, one cannot speak Nigerian Pidgin by just simplifying the syntax of English. For example; "He eat his food fast yesterday" cannot be a pidgin sentence even with the verb simplified (keeping the tense as present). Rather the pidgin form will be: "He chop im food quick quick

yesterday." All this is to say that pidgin is as systematic as any other language and it is a language that is learnt.

(b) The grammars of pidgins and creoles are not complicated. This characteristic shows that the parts of speech of a pidgin or creole are not only likely to be fewer but also the patterns are less complicated than those of the base languages. Thus there are reductions in the number of grammatical devices employed in pidgins and creoles compared with their base languages. Examples show that;

(i) English-based pidgins and creoles demonstrate virtually no inflection in nouns, pronouns, verbs and adjectives. That is pidgins and creoles have no inflections. Nouns are not marked for number (no man/men or chair/chairs distinction). Instead nouns are invariable. However, in some varieties, plurality can be overtly marked by the post- positioning of 'dem' immediately after the noun: He get the buk dem: He has the books.

(ii) Verbs lack tense markers.

Example:

| Standard English | Nigerian Pidgin |
|---|---|
| He locked the door | He lock door |

He went there                    He go there

(c)     Reduction of gender distinction. Pidgins and Creoles tend to have no gender distinction (masculine/feminine) in nouns and pronouns. For example, the English language has 'He'/She', 'Him'/'Her', 'His'/Hers', 'waiter'/'waiteress', 'actor'/'actress' etc. However, they mark natural gender, for example, by the use of the word 'man' or 'woman' in Nigeria Pidgin:

man pikin     :   boy

woman pikin   :   girl

(d)     Reduction of comparatives. In some languages of the world, comparatives are inflected or marked. In English, we have examples such as 'big/bigger', 'fast/faster', 'long'/'longer' and so on. However, these differences are reduced in Pidgins and Creoles and alternative ways are found to express the same concept of comparison, for example, with the use of the word 'pass'. Examples are:

I big pass you       :     I am bigger than you

The car long pass    :     The car is longer

The woman fat pass the husband: The woman is fatter than her husband.

(i)     No Complex Syntactic Structures.
         As mentioned earlier, pidgins and creoles have simplified structures. It is thus observed that their syntax often lack embedded clauses. For example, relative clauses, are not found in pidgin.

(ii)    Frequent use of Particles

         Pidgins and Creoles exhibit frequent use of particles. For example, to express negation, pidgins and creoles use a simple negative particle "no" as in:

         "i no too hard

         it is not too hard"

         It is NOT too hard

         "Him no go talk

         He is NOT going to talk'

         "i no cost": It is NOT expensive

         Continuous aspect can also be shown with the use   the particle 'dey' as in:

"I dey go work": I am going to work.'

"I dey run for am":   "I am running away from it."

(iii)   Serial verb usage is common.
Pidgins and Creoles use more serial verb structures than their base languages or non-pidginised relations. Compare the following sentences:

  Nigeria Pidgin                              English

I bin carry am waka kom here        I brought it here

| |    | |                                  |
V V    V   V                                V


(iv)   Pidgins use a lot of Reduplication.
Pidgins and creoles use a lot reduplicative devices to show emphasis and intensification. For example;

 long long rope: 'very long rope'   : length

far far place :   'very distant place' : distance

so so wayo:     'untrustworthy'     : habit

      It is also a device used in some cases to distinguish    between    words    whose pronunciations had coalesced. This, in a way,

is to reduce homophony. For example, in Sierra Leone Krio the word 'sun' is rendered as 'san' and 'sand' has to be rendered 'sansan' because if it remains as 'san' the two pronunciations may coalesce and thus create a problem. Furthermore, reduplication is used to express continuity and repetition of an action as in:

tɔk = 'talk'     versus     tɔk-tɔk = 'chatter'

luk =  'look';  versus      luk-luk = 'stare',

krai = 'cry'     versus      krai-krai = 'wail',

(v)    Presence of nautical jargons.
Most pidgins and creoles have a number of nautical (seafaring) words in their lexicons. This is because the first contacts leading to pidgins were often between sailors and other language communities. Examples of nautical jargons in Krio (spoken in Sierra Leone) include words like galli: 'galley' referring to 'kitchen' and 'kago' from 'cargo' referring to any load.

(vi)    Reduction in Phonetic/Phonological structure.

Pidgins and Creoles usually have fewer sounds than their based languages. Nigeria Pidgin, for example, has fewer vowels and consonants than English. Nigeria Pidgin uses no vowel form of English that is not present in Nigerian languages. Examples can be found in the absence of a vowel /ə/ and the absence of contrast between long and short unrounded high front vowels as in the words /sheep/ and /ship/.

## 9.6 : Where pidgins and creoles can be found

According to Todd (1974), pidgin and creole languages can often be found in the equatorial belt around the world, usually in places with direct or easy access to the oceans. This distribution is said to be related to long-standing patterns of trade, including the slave trade.

Todd (ibid.) classifies pidgins and creoles into Atlantic and Pacific varieties. There are about 35 English-based varieties such as Hawaiian Creole, Gullah (spoken in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina), Cameroon Pidgin English, Tok Pisin (Neomelanasia) and so on. There are also French-based varieties which include Louisiana Creole, Haitian Creole, Senegal Creole etc. and Portuguese-based creole referred to as Papiamentu (in Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao). There are German, Dutch and Arabic-based (Swahili) pidgin varieties.

## 9.7: Nigerian Pidgin

It is important to mention that before the implantation of English in colonial Nigeria from 1914, there had been some contact between Europeans and the native African population as far back as the 15th century. That period saw a thriving trade in goods and slaves. During this period the Africans and the Europeans conducted business in the African continent by means of contact languages called pidgins. Although the Portuguese were known to have been the first to have contact with what is today known as the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, Elugbe and Omamor (1991) are of the view that a very limited Portuguese (Pidgin Portuguese) which had probably developed between the Portuguese and the people of the coastal region then must have fizzled out and died when the Portuguese traders were forced to terminate their trade interests in the region, especially following the partition of Africa. The consequence was the emergence of an English-based pidgin in Nigeria. In other words, just like other pidgins and creoles around the world, Nigerian pidgin evolved from the contact between people who spoke no common language but who had the need to communicate.

Apart from trade, the contact between Nigerians and the British (English speakers) broadened to include exploration and colonial conquest. According to Elugbe and Omamor (ibid: 11), for contact to lead to the firm

establishment and the expansion of the contact language into something identifiable, it has to be sustained in time and it has to expand in scope. It is observed that the English did not only have a longer and a more intensive contact with the native population than the Portuguese they also broadened the areas of contact. Thus Nigerian English-based pidgin evolved and expanded especially among the people in the coastal towns of Calabar, Warri and PortHarcourt, serving as the contact language between the natives and the English as well as among the diverse ethno-linguistic groups of the coast.

Nigeria Pidgin seems to have been quite successful in terms of usage and vitality in spite of the poor attitudes towards it. The reasons for the vitality include:

(a)     It is the medium of inter-ethnic communication especially among the less educated majority of people in cities;
(b)     It is used as a language of broadcast in some states in the Niger-Delta region and some cosmopolitan communities like Lagos and Ibadan;
(c)     It is used as a medium of advertising on radio and T.V. stations across the country;
(d)     Nigeria Pidgin is used for informal discussion among educated Nigerians
(e)     It is used for jokes and comedies and drama on television and radio.

According to Jowitt (1991), attitude towards Nigeria Pidgin is ambivalent in that there is increasing respect for its use and adoption as a national language but a consideration for its further development in order to serve more functions does not seem widespread. Akande (2008: 37) has also noted in the following statement;

> *…the sociolinguistic reality in Nigeria today is such that NPE [Nigerian Pidgin English] is spoken by university graduates, professors, lawyers and journalists. Moreover, the domains of its use now include offices.*

Akande and Salami (2010) carried out a study on university students' use and attitudes towards Nigeria pidgin. The results of that study showed that although the attitudes of the students to the code were not largely positive, their use showed that Nigeria pidgin is a language that has vitality.

### *Questions for Revision*

1. Differentiate between a Pidgin and a Creole.
2. Mention and describe the various theories relating to the origin of pidgins and creoles.
3. What characteristics do pidgins and Creoles around the world share in common? Illustrate.
4. Is it, theoretically, arguable that most languages have a pidginorigin?

**CHAPTER** **10**

## LANGUAGE PLANNING, POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

### 10.1: The Concept of Planning

In order that we may understand the processes of language planning and development in different parts of the world, we need also to understand the concept of planning; what it entails and why we make plans for languages.

Planning can be described simply as a way of providing a basis or grounding for some activity. It may involve carrying out some outlining, setting it out, making arrangements, etc. The activity we are planning may be social, political or economic. It may, in fact, involve all these three put together. For proper planning, however, the purpose and goal must be clearly spelt out. There should be a philosophy behind the plan of a given action. In other words, we must have some guiding principle(s). This is what is referred to as the policy.

Language planning involves the process of decision-making about language. As a process, it is a continuous exercise involving the search for techniques of solving language and language-related problems. This means that the language planner will look for, and evaluate alternative techniques and solutions to a given language-related problem at hand.

## 10.2: Can We Plan Language?

Mainstream linguistics seems to have held the view that language is an autonomous system and, therefore, not subject to deliberate modification by external, non-linguistic factors. This view derives from the traditional dichotomy between *langue* and *parole* where *langue* refers to **the language** (a system - something like an abstract entity) and *parole* refers to the use to which the language or system is put. In other words, language, as a system, is not susceptible to deliberate intervention (of the user etc) whereas *parole* is. This dichotomy, as noted earlier, also gave rise to Chomsky's notions of competence and performance where competence is defined as the knowledge of the rules of a language while performance refers to the use to which the rules are put. Competence here also is unchanging; cannot be affected by any non-linguistic factor whereas performance can. Thus, if we say we can plan language, it is not the language that we are planning but

performance – which, to Chomsky, is not critical in the understanding of language (or language faculty).

The developments in sociolinguistics, especially variation studies and ethnography of speaking, have shown that the mainstream dichotomy between competence and performance misses some interesting points about language development. Language and linguistic problems encountered by several developing countries have tended to show that direct and deliberate interventions in language and its use can make a language grow, change or expand its vocabulary items, its grammar and so on. Such an action of intervention involves systematic decision-making.

## 10.3:  What is Language Planning?

Rubin and Jernudd (1971) define language planning as deliberate language change. It is the changes in the systems of language code or speaking or both that are planned by organizations that are either established for such purposes or given a mandate to fulfill such purposes. As such, language planning is focused on problem-solving and it is characterized by the formulation and evaluation of alternatives for solving language problems to find the best option or most efficient decision (Rubin, 1977: 258).

Language planning is the effort to change a particular variety of a language, or a particular language, or some

aspect of how either of these functions in society. It is usually a government authorized, long-term, sustained and conscious effort to alter a language's function in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems (Weinstein, 1980:56). The process of planning may involve assessing resources, complex decision-making, the assignment of different functions to different languages or varieties of a language in a community, and the commitment of valuable resources.

## 10.4   Why Do We Plan Language?

In order to answer this question, we will need to examine those issues or factors which motivate decisions on planning language and the objectives for which the decisions on planning are carried out. That is, what the planners of languages hope to achieve.

There are a number of reasons that may motivate language planning. They include, among others, the following:

### 10.4.1:  The Problem of Varieties

It is a sociolinguistic fact that language users constantly have alternatives available to them. These alternatives may come in the form of language, varieties or variants within a linguistic system and their presence may constitute some impediment to effective communication. The need, therefore,

may arise to select one out of the many languages, dialects or varieties for common use in order to facilitate effective communication.

### 10.4.2 :  Rapid Social Change

Language planning may be motivated by the problems of rapid social change (what is referred to as modernization). This is evident particularly from language planning processes in developing countries. As a result of contact with the more industrialized world and the introduction of new technologies, new products, mass education etc., there may be the need for more efficient means of communication in terms of language. These developing countries are very often not only multilingual; their ex-colonial languages serve as their official languages. Thus they are usually motivated by social and political considerations to either make these official languages available to a greater number of members than it used to be, or develop one or more of their indigenous languages.

### 10.5:  Language Planning Objectives

In language planning, there are certain objectives set in the process of policy formulation and decision-making. These objectives may vary from one society to another depending

on the salient motivating factor(s) for language planning in that given society. These objectives may include:

(a)     to develop a given language that was hitherto undeveloped. This may involve the standardization of its orthography, its grammar and the expansion of its vocabulary. The development of such a language may also involve the elaboration of its use, i.e. broadening the area or context in which it is used. The planning of minority languages in Nigeria (e.g. Efik, Izon, Igarra, Tiv etc.) at some point in their lives has been aimed at developing these languages;

(b)     to promote literary works. A language may be planned in order to promote and encourage the production of literary works such as poetry, folktales, novels and so on. We will note, for example, that one of the major reasons for the interest in Igbo by the Society for the Promotion of Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC) has been to promote writings in Igbo;

(c)     to support and/or directing the utilization of the language, for example, in teaching or education, broadcasting; governance etc., and

(d)     to compile and publish a dictionary/dictionaries of the language; to create appropriate terminologies in the language; and to standardize spelling and pronunciation forms.

## 10.6:  Types of Language Planning

There are two basic types of language planning. These are (i) status, polity or language determination planning type and (ii) corpus, cultivation or language development planning type (Jernudd, 1973, Wardaugh, 1986).

### 10.6.1   Status Planning

This kind of language planning involves making changes in the functions of a language or in a variety of a language and the rights of those who use it. This could take place in either of the following ways: First, one language, usually a minority, could lose its functional status. For example, this can happen if there is a legislation stipulating that the language should not be used by its speakers in the education of their children. Alternatively, a government may decree that henceforth, two languages rather than one of those (two) alone will be officially recognized in all functions. Here, the newly recognized one has gained status (e.g. some Nigerian languages gained in status as more Nigerian languages began to be used for broadcasting on the national radio with the creation of more states from the country's former three regions). With the return of democratic governance, some states (e.g. Lagos and Osun) in Nigeria have encouraged the use of indigenous languages as languages of legislative deliberation on specific days of the week. This kind of effort promotes the status of a language.

Status planning may also involve the selection of a national language or a dialect to be made the standard language of a polity. For example, if Nigeria decides that Bura, Efik, Ibaram or Birom is going to serve as its official language or is to be used as the medium of instruction in all elementary schools, any of these languages chosen would have gained in status. A national language is here understood as that which stands as the symbol of a people's identity as citizens of a given nation. Thus, if Nigeria is selecting a national language, it is creating a symbol of identity with which all Nigerians would be able to identify. One major reason for nations to fashion a national language is communication. If virtually everyone in a country spoke a common language, it is assumed that the life of the nation would be much easier to carry on.

Therefore, language might be planned in order to solve communication problems. Apart from this, language planning can be carried out for unifying, separatist or participatory functions. That is, the goal of planning might be for political unification as well as for the purpose of participation in world-wide cultural development, such as science and technology, international business and diplomacy. In Tanzania, for example, Swahili was developed to function as a national language while retaining English for participatory purposes at local and international levels.

It is worth mentioning that status planning, policy or language determination approach involves slow changes. This is because changes are sometimes actively contested or resisted and often cause strong agitations as we note in the case of the attempt to make Hindu the national language of India. Even in the so-called developed economies, the issue of status planning is not so simple and often resisted on the grounds of identity or ethnicity, political and economic power. In the United States of America, for example, it is particularly challenging to grant a level playing ground for ethnic minorities (e.g. Latinos and Chinese) to have their languages used for the education of their children, especially from English-only advocates (even when it is clear that USA is a multilingual and multicultural country). In Nigeria too, it has not been particularly easy to implement the mother tongue (or the language of the immediate community) education policy as several factors, including parental attitudes, bureaucracy and funding, have been militating against it.

**10.6.2 : Corpus Planning**

Corpus planning involves the development of a language or its variety for the purposes of standardizing it. That is, to provide the language with the means for serving every possible language functions in society. This may involve such matters as the development of orthography, new source(s) of vocabulary, dictionaries, and a literature and the

deliberate cultivation of new uses so that the language may extend its use into such areas as government, education, trade, technology and so on. The development of standard orthography for Yerwa (Kanuri), Yoruba or Igbo is an example of corpus planning.

Ferguson (1968) classifies corpus planning or language development processes into three:

(1)    Graphization

(2)    Standardization and

(3)     Modernization.

**1.    Graphization:** It is the adoption of a writing system and the establishment of spelling and other orthographic conventions.

**2.    Standardization:** It is the process of one variety of a language becoming widely accepted throughout the speech community as a supra-dialectal norm.

**3.     Modernization:** This is the process of making the language become the equal of other developed languages as a medium of communication. The terms modernization and developed language are terms which would have to be taken with caution as it needs further explanation. This is because in the field of linguistics, there is a consensus that the basic grammatical and pronunciation systems of any natural

language are adequate to allow any speaker to say anything. The only problem is that some languages may lack the vocabulary to say certain things. This problem can, however, be overcome by adding new vocabulary to the language either by coinage or by borrowing from other languages. Perhaps, by modernization it is implied that in developing, a language must undergo expansion of the lexicon.

The two types of planning we have treated can co-occur, for

many planning decisions involve the combination of a change in status with internal change. We also need to note that just as planning may either be deliberate or proceed somewhat haphazardly, so its results may be deliberately intended or may be different from what is intended.

### *Questions for Revision*

1. Define language planning. When and why does a language need planning?
2. Differentiate between corpus planning and status planning.
3. Does Nigeria need a national language? What implications will the choice of a particular language have for the country?

4.    Write short notes on (i) graphization (ii) standardization and (iii) modernization. Illustrate your points.

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