Adulteration of the Igbo Language Through Multilingualism in South-Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract: The study seeks to find out the linguistic adulteration of the Igbo language through a sociolinguistic process known as multilingualism. Many scholars are lamenting that the Igbo language is going into extinction just because it is losing its original linguistic structures via multilingualism. Such alteration brings to the limelight of the study in order to address these issues on Nigerian indigenous languages in general and the Igbo language in particular. A descriptive approach is used to harvest some of these language contact issues among the Igbo populace and language. A random sampling is used to ascertain the population of the five Igbo states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States on how communication and written aspects of the language have been dealt with negatively. Participant observation and students' essay writing in the Igbo language are used to collate these sub-standard Igbo grammar structures. The study expounds at a length the intricacy of the proper Igbo written forms and as well as pulling the Igbo language away from the effects of multilingualism. The findings of the study prove that the different types of multilingualism abound among the Igbo language native users. They also exemplify some linguistic related issues on the bold face of multilingualism among the Igbo interlocutors and how they vary among the Igbo speech communities in Nigeria. The study also finds out the effects of multilingualism on the standard Igbo teaching. The study goes further in suggesting some quintessential solutions to recuperate the status quo of the Igbo language.

Keywords: Linguistic adulteration, The Igbo language, Multilingualism, South-east, Nigeria.

About the Author

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1. Introduction

Nigeria is a multicultural, ethnic heterogeneous and linguistic plurality in nature. Nigeria has the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba languages as the major indigenous languages. Other minority languages exist irrespective of the above three major language found in Nigeria.

The Igbo language belongs to the Kwa Niger-Congo language family. It could be densely found in the South-East of Nigeria and sparsely found almost in every locality in the world. The Igbo language has about 45million speakers who live mostly in Nigeria and primarily of Igbo descent (Wikipedia, 2020). The Igbo language like other languages in the world has gone into adulteration. The adulteration here means deviating from its grammatical and communicative rules. This deviation comes as result of language contact.

Language contact brings these sociolinguistic phenomena: code switching, blend, clipping and borrowing from other languages in the world. When two or more languages come into contact, the interlocutors who are using these languages that are unintelligible to simplify those languages thereby making them intelligible. Different speech communities with different languages came into contact through a humanistic determination to achieve their aims on the platforms of social activities like marriage, economic transaction (business), education, political pursuit and cultural diffusion. The assimilation of two or more languages in a communicative transaction is regarded as multilingualism.

Multilingualism is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that allows a speaker to speak and understand many languages or dialects. Cenoz & Jessner (2000) define multilingualism as an act of acquiring and using more than two languages. It could be tagged with so many names, such as linguistic diversity or linguistic plurality. It is very common in most present day nations (Agbedo, 2007). Agbedo (2019:22) classifies multilingualism as "individual and societal multilingualism." Both individual and societal multilingualism occur in almost in all languages of the world. The Igbo language has joined other languages in singing the choruses of multilingualism.

The indigenous people of Igbo derailed the Igbo language from the previous course or direction. The language in question is adulterated by either endogenous or exogenous languages. It is very difficult to engage two Igbo people in conversation without an evidence of linguistic adulteration. In Sociolinguistic platform, they are referred to as code switching or code mixing. Oliver de Coque gave it his own linguistic nomenclature known as *Engli-Igbo.* In the Igbo language, it is known as *égwú ágwàrà ọ̀gwā.* The primary aim of these linguistic contacts is to allow interlocutors to integrate into a particular group for profit making. Though, it has contributed to the death or attrition of some languages which the Igbo language and its users are trying to perceive the odour.

When such adulteration occurs in speech communities, it is called a societal multilingualism. But if it occurs on individuals, it is called an individual multilingualism (Agbedo, 2011). Societal multilingualism exists anonymously among the users in a speech community. It brings about a new variety of language. On the other hand, individual multilingualism exists on a particular speaker and thereby spread in the entire speech community.

In due course of explaining a societal multilingualism, some scholars distinguished between speech community and linguistic community (Bloomfield, 1933; Gumperz, 1982; Romain, 1994; Patrick, 1998; Hudson, 2003). Agbedo (2011) proves that both linguistic community and speech community are used interchangeably. The foregoing indicates that a speech community could be verified on the perspectives of language, communication and shared attitude.

The ample examples where these sociolinguistic perspectives of a speech community could be seen among the Igbo speakers are as follows:

a.   The Igbo speakers having the Igbo language

b.   They are communicating through the Igbo language without being adulterated.

c.   Their shared attitudes toward their core or indigenous language, the Igbo language.

This study explicates a kind of suggested solutions to the adulteration of the Igbo language by the Igbo language users. This new system of communication among the Igbo people leaves a question mark on the real grammar or structures of the Igbo language.

In Nigeria, the Igbo language is one of the major languages that are claimed to be national languages. However, it receives the least prestige among other major languages. The Igbo people have placed their language very low by code mixing and code switching. In most of the village meetings, the members of Igbo communities rarely interact without switching from the Igbo language to English or vice versa. These systems of code mixing and code switching have reduced the status of the Igbo language.

As a result of this negligence, many people are postulating that the Igbo language is going into extinction. A few people have tried to revive Igbo culture without laying much emphasis on the Igbo language itself. No wonder, F. C. Ogbalu and his cohort stood for the Igbo language.

Though, a lecture held in Nnamdi Azikiwe University on the platform of F. C. Ogbalu memorial made it a necessity for all Igbo people to start speaking the Igbo language, *Ndi Igbo! Sụwa Igbo.* This study tries to make it

essential for every Igbo citizen to speak their language without inter linguistic switching or mixing. The major problem is that the Igbo people in Nigeria and also those in Diaspora have adulterated the Igbo language through a sociolinguistic phenomenon called multilingualism.

The common objectives of the study are to determine the degree of adulteration multilingualism has caused to the Igbo language. In order to achieve these objectives, the study seeks to:

i. differentiate the categories of multilingualism operate in Igbo speech community.

ii. examine the status of the Igbo language on the face of all the linguistic adulterations caused by multilingualism.

iii. exemplify the typical effects of multilingualism on the Igbo language.

iv. determine the level multilingualism has taken and how its eradication could help in the Igbo language planning.

Moreover, the epileptic state of the Igbo language caused by multilingualism thereby reducing its quality should be eradicated by exploring the raw Igbo spoken by the native speakers. Schools of Indigenous Languages in the Igbo land should raise the bar to safeguard the Igbo language. The educational institutions in the Igbo land ranging from nursery schools to tertiary institutions should make the Igbo language compulsory in its pedagogical curriculum.

The language planners also take advantages of revising the Igbo language from this language adulteration via multilingualism. It does not mean that the Igbo language is a complete language. It should loan words or expressions from other languages but obeying the Igbo grammatical rules and its phonotactic rules. One of the differences between the English language and the Igbo language is that the Igbo language does not permit consonant cluster.

Recently, studies show that learning many languages simultaneously slow down the lexical processing (Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2008; Luo, Luk & Bialystok, 2010; Gollna, Ferreira, & Salmon, 2010; Calvo, Ibáñez, & Garcia, 2016). More studies are needed to indicate such effects on a typical Nigerian language, the Igbo language. The general linguistic areas such as speech sounds, lexical, sentences and also utterances are strongly affected. Alterriba & Isurin (2013) reports that many multilingual speakers often claim that once they have adopted a new language(s) they have difficulty accessing words in their native language. Engel de Abreu (2011) supports Alterriba & Isurin by saying that multilingualism underperforms on standardised vocabulary assessment. The speaking and writing strength of the Igbo language has been reduced drastically by linguistic plurality.

These unstable linguistic features of African languages arouse the mind of some scholars to carry out researches on the effects of multilingualism on any natural languages of the world. Meanwhile, this study is relatively on the adulteration of speech sounds, grammatical structures and semantics that abound in the Igbo language as a result of multilingualism. In the same vein, this study looks at multilingualism negative effects on the Igbo linguistic studies. To measure the linguistic adulteration incurred on some of the Nigerian indigenous languages, multilingualism should be seen as a parameter for such adulteration. It is very important to review some of these studies.

Hudson (1996:4) says "sociology of language raises issues such as the effect of multilingualism on economic development and the possible language policies government may adopt". Hudson further stated that the choice of language use is based on the convenience of the people concerned. According to Bhatia & Ritchie (2016), multilingualism is becoming a global linguistic phenomenon since it exists almost in every languages of the world. It is increasing geometrically in future. These scholars may be right because in Igbo speech community, children acquire two or more languages depending on the family system. This is why Auer & Wei (2007) regarded language purism as a symbolic battle field for social conflicts. In the same vein, Jessner (2008) had a study on negative and harmful effects on the cognitive development of multilingual children. Agbedo (2011) mentions some sociolinguistic implications of multilingualism in a defined speech community. These include language contact, language attitudes, language choice, maintenance, shift, endangerment, code switching/mixing, pidgin, etc. Multilingualism in Nigeria is a curse and not blessing (Odebamike, 2011). Odebamike is of the opinion that the amalgamation of Nigerian as a nation state does not depict the actual features of a nation.

Another scholar, Dégi (2012) states that multilingualism is considered as the consequences of some kind of disturbance in the language order, such as migration or conquest, which brought language systems into some kind of unexpected and unnatural contact with one another, often leading to structural simplification. Alshenqeeti & Alsaed (2012) carried out research on the effects of multilingualism on social life, such as education, economy, employment and language policy. They concluded that the language related problems in multilingual societies are largely attributable to policy implementation by the government concerned.

Conversely, Aruah (2013) sees multilingualism as the bedrock for national unity, national security and also serves as the watchdog for the defaulters of the law in any nation. He further stated that language maintenance is prior for bringing peace among the Nigerian populace. In the same vein, Egenti (2015) had a research on multilingualism and the ethnic identity of the *Ette* people in *Elugwu Ezike*. The study finds out that *Ette* people have the greatest number of *Igala* and *Idoma* speakers, whereas, *Ette* belongs to Enugu State. Olugbaju (2014) states that multilingual education provisions of National Policy of Education should be implemented to the later Nigerian educational system. The findings of this study reveal that multilingualism motivates foster students learning ability.

2. Methods

This study adopts a descriptive research method. It samples the population of the Igbo people from five Igbo states. The random sampling technique is used to select the respondents from five Igbo states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The sampling helps the researcher to gain precision and knowledge about the population. The study also purposely selects 210 Igbo students from five tertiary institutions in the states mentioned above. The study elucidates data from the sampled population. The data consists of students essay writing in the Igbo language regarding the adulteration of the Igbo writing system. The study also observed the substandard Igbo rules on communication in the Igbo language. The study analyses the data gathered by considering the linguistic areas in the Igbo language. The data are analysed descriptively.

3. Results and discussion

Multilingualism could be typified as individual or societal multilingualism. Individual multilingualism refers to individual using two or more than two languages fluently while societal multilingualism is the linguistic diversity that can be found in a country. An individual multilingualism tends to study the individual usage of many languages within the same sociolinguistic landscape. The sociolinguistic landscape found in Nigeria consists of three language types. Agbedo (2011) mentioned them thus: about four hundred indigenous languages, three exogenous languages (English, French and Arabic) and a neutral language, Pidgin English.

Societal multilingualism exists as a result of many varieties of languages that co-occur in a given speech community. This is why Nigeria is seen as a multilingual nation. Meanwhile, Nigerians have about 510 different languages which are unintelligible to every speaker. It is only language contact that brings these numerous languages and their speakers closer.

3.1 The state of the Igbo language since its adulteration

The Igbo language has experienced many adulterations due to its contact with some other indigenous languages in Nigeria, Pidgin English and some exogenous languages that visited Nigeria.

The language of the Nigerian colonial masters, the English language has affected the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic of the Igbo grammatical structures. The core Igbo language which could be found among the elderly ones in some typical villages in the Igbo land is seriously losing its shape and state. The Igbo speech community could be divided into urban areas, rural areas and satellite towns.

In urban areas, the Igbo language found there is code mixed and code switched. It also adopted linguistic borrowing from many languages since so many people from different linguistic backgrounds came to urban area to make the ends meet. This kind of contact could result to simplification of Igbo lexical and sentential structures.

In the rural area, the Igbo language type obtained from the younger generations is quite different from the one obtained among the elderly ones. The original language structures are achieved on the elderly folks where a study like this will put them into black and white. For examples in Nsukka dialect:

Table 1 Variants of lexical entities in Nsukka dialect of Igbo

S/N	Nsukka Dialect		Standard Igbo	English Gloss
	Elders	**Younger ones**		
i.	*ógódó*	*àkwà/bédì*	*àkwà*	Bed
ii.	*ákpọ́kọ́*	*ósè*	*ósè*	Pepper
iii.	*Ìkérìké*	*únú*	*únú*	Salt
iv.	*ḿgbó*	*ụ́zọ̀/'dọ́ọ́*	*ụ́zọ̀*	Door
v.	*ényékwù*	*Kíchínù*	*úsékwù*	Kitchen
vi.	ákpété	Pavement	*ágbídí ụ́lọ̀*	Pavement

From table 1 above, the two variants of these lexical entities are realised in the Nsukka dialect of Igbo. Though, the younger ones mostly use the English renditions or equivalents in place of original Nsukka lexical entities. The reason for this replacement is that many languages are in contact with the Nsukka dialect and it is as a result of multilingualism. The Igbo people accommodated the alien or exogenous languages which tend to reduce the grammatical strength of the Igbo language.

In the satellite towns, the linguistic status of indigenous languages is being dominated by many new comer languages. New comer languages such as: English, French and some African languages. Sometimes, the original language of the owner of the place is completely denied by both the indigenous ones and the visitors or migrants. For instance, in so many village meetings among Nsukka people, it is common that people made their opinions in the English language. It shows lack of respect to the elders and also to the land. In a satellite community, some Igbo speakers have been using English to bless kolanut. This is the most abominable thing that could happen to the Igbo people and their language. No matter the degree of multilingualism in the Igbo land, the assertion that *ọjị anaghị asụ oyibo/bekee* remains what it is.

3.2 Examples of adulterated Igbo syntactic constructions

Some sociolinguistic features like code mixing, borrowing, coinage, slang and blend abound when a language is adulterated. See examples of code switching between the English and the Igbo languages on the table 2 below.

Table 2 Examples of code switching on Igbo syntactic constructions showing its English gloss

	Adulterated constructions	**English Gloss**
vii.	*Gáá nà bed gáá dínà.*	Go and sleep on the bed.
viii.	*Nsọ́gbù á dị́ too much.*	This problem is much.
ix.	*Nwókē áhụ̀ ná-èrí bribe.*	That man takes bribe.
x.	*Máázị́ Ányáọ́kụ́ bụ̀ ónyé wayo.*	Mr. Anyaoku is a fraudster.

Table 2 showcases code switching among the Igbo bilinguals who interact in the Igbo language and the exogenous language, English. The example x is a mixture of the Igbo language and the Hausa language.

In the vein of language borrowing, the Igbo language borrows from many languages of the world to enrich their inadequacies in language capacity. There is no language that is complete, no matter how global it is. It is as a result of language contact and lack of lexical entities to name things that brought about loan words and also things

that come new in any speech community which made many languages to borrow lexical entities from other languages. Let us exemplify lexical borrowing due to language contact:

Table 3 Linguistic borrowing indicating the Igbo language as the target language

S/N	Igbo	Source languages
viii.	Ásháwó	Yoruba
ix.	Ícháfù	French
x.	Bókwù	French
xi.	Wákà	Hausa
xii.	Ekpéḿ	Efik
xiii.	Osíkápá	Hausa
xiv.	Bóólù	English
xv.	Súkúlù	English

The examples in table 3 show how a language grows rapidly in its morphological structures. Multilingualism brought about borrowing many words from many languages as many languages came into contact through human essence to live. The long stay of the above lexemes in the Igbo land has increases the Igbo lexical entities tremendously. Therefore, multilingualism affects indigenous languages in either a positive or negative ways.

3.3 The exposure of multilingualism to the Igbo language helps in language planning

Language planning could be corpus planning or status planning. It is corpus language planning (CLP) when its aim is to develop the new words or expressions and thereby modifying the old words or expressions. In a nutshell, corpus planning aims to develop the resources of a language to become appropriate for administrative, communicative, discursive and for the pedagogical system use.

Corpus planning helps us to compile dictionary, orthography, grammar and speech presentation in the Igbo language. The spelling checker on the modern technology is as a result of multilingualism. This is why we have multilingualism on Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Using this planning method, the Igbo language will arrive at the point of ICT having every Igbo linguistic feature present on the ICT platform.

The Status Language Planning (SLP) is when functions are allocated to different diverse languages in a country. That is making the Igbo language an official language or national language as it has enriched its features through multilingualism. If the Igbo language is modified properly on the face of multilingualism, it may be promoted to the position of national recognition or at the regional level.

4. Conclusion

The study finds out that different categories of multilingualism exist in the Igbo speech community. Though, individual and societal multilingualism are obtainable in the Igbo speech community. This multilingualism on its arrival in the Igbo land gives the Igbo language another structure and thereby adulterated the former structures of the language in question. Many Igbo examples shown in the analysis prove that multilingualism reduces the linguistic strength of the Igbo language. That is, such sociolinguistic factors adulterate the Igbo language and give the Igbo language another type face. The appearance of multilingualism in the Igbo language paves way to enrich the language and thereby having a feature and functional plan for the language. Without the realisation of multilingual attacks on the Igbo language, the Igbo people would have not gone to different dialects of the Igbo language to harvest some lexical entities rather than Igbonising lexemes from other languages such as English, French, and many more language or code mixing them.

It is shown from the result that multilingualism has some effects on a recipient language, the Igbo language. The Igbo language as a recipient language to other languages like English, Hausa, Efik, French and Arabic has loosed

its originality to a modified form called multilingualism. Multilingualism is structured in the sense that the interlocutors should understand themselves while embarking on interaction affair. It is relevant in pedagogic tasks. The modified form should be used to plan the language for pedagogical purposes and governmental purposes.

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Conflict of interest
The Author has no conflicts of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.