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ZO-MEKURI NDIMELE (Ed.)



Language Policy, Planning & Management IN NIGERIA:

A Festschrift for Ben O. Elugbe

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Sociolinguistic Realities in Multilingual and Multicultural Settings

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In the multilingual and multicultural developing countries of Africa and Asia, language often acts as a criterion for ethnic identity and consciousness. Because of the role that English and the other languages have been playing in the various sectors of the speech community, people have developed different attitudes to each category of languages. Distinctive among these attitudes are those expressed about the role of English and those of the indigenous languages. This study investigates the sociolinguistic behaviour of inhabitants of a multilingual and multicultural community – Lagos State. Precisely, it is a survey of the languages used and the language behaviour of the people. The linguistic situation in Nigeria is so complex that efforts should be geared at carrying out investigations to ascertain who speaks what language and where. This study contributes its own quota to this search by identifying the languages spoken in multilingual and multicultural Lagos. It also identifies the minority languages in the State towards the development of concrete plans to document and preserve them. It provides language planners with the necessary data for planning and for national development. In short, it serves as a one-stop documentary evidence for researchers, the government and other people who are interested in the linguistic profile of Lagos State.

Introduction

Sociolinguistics can be defined as the study of language in relation to society. It aims at determining how social institutions affect language and how the varieties of language affect social groups. It is also concerned with the relationship between languages and culture, language and society, languages in contact, bilingualism, language interference, language attitudes and planning. The inter-relatedness of language and society plays significant roles in the education of the child. It is largely responsible for the assignment of functions to various languages which exist in a community – mother tongue, second language and foreign language. Some languages also function as official, national, lingua franca and regional languages.

Consequently, sociolinguistics recognize the term 'speech community'. This is defined by Gumperz (1968) as social groups which may be either monolingual or multilingual, held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from surrounding areas by weakness in the lines of communication.

We can look at multilingualism and multiculturalism from at least three different perspectives: from the perspective of languages and cultural systems, from the perspective of the individual and from the perspectives of a group or society. However, it must be taken into consideration that there are language as well as culture contacts and that the medium of these contacts is the acting individual who not only takes part in language and culture, but is also creative in both of them.

In the multi-lingual and multi-cultural developing countries of Africa and Asia, language often acts as a criterion for ethnic identify and ethnic consciousness. In respect to Nigeria, Odey (2002) has directed attention to the emotional and socializing role of the mother tongue (L1) and the working tool function of English (L2). Generally speaking, there is a distribution of work between them and a number of social and psychological facts play an important role as a source of this distribution. The mother tongue thus usually belongs to the individual sphere and the second language, English to the official and socio-cultural one.

At the social level, language use is determined by the decisions of government concerning the functional distribution of language varieties and the functions allotted to them within the society. This translates to policy formulation and implementation.

As noted by Emenyi (2002), Nigeria being a multi-cultural and multilingual society adopts a pluralistic approach to the presentation and formulation of policy statements with a view to enhancing social integration and national unity. This is clearly visible in the distribution of languages in the National Policy (2004:8) which states that:

In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and as a means of preserving the people's culture, the Government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the Government considers the three major languages to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

Government's position on language use is understandable given the status of English as an official language in Nigeria and the existence of hundreds of local languages "competing for roles within the macro Nigeria culture" (Otagburuagu 2002:196). Adekunle (1991) observes that the phenomenon of multilingualism with English as a major language is situated in the urban centres. Outside the towns and cities, communities tend to be monolingual since the population is homogenous.

As at today, there are many uncertainties regarding the numerical strength of the speakers of the various languages as well as the number of languages. Bamgbose (1971) puts it at 400 Hardsford (1976) puts it at 394, while Jowitt (1995) believes that the tally may actually be as low as 250. In the absence of an officially and authentic published survey of languages and within the context of the controversial issues of

the national language debate, it is necessary to find out what the language realities actually are in Nigeria. It is also pertinent to find out the impact the policy guidelines actually have on community language behaviour and the implications for the future of indigenous languages in Nigeria. This is the intent of this study. It focuses on Lagos State because it is a typical Nigerian multilingual and multicultural community – a microcosm of the Nigerian speech community. The objectives are to:

- i. Investigate the profile of languages among Lagosians (indigenes and non indigenes).
- ii. Reveal the pattern of settlement in Lagos State.
- iii. Investigate the peoples' preference of languages for personal and official matters.
- iv. Determine the state of the languages and assess their future in view of observations and the *National Policy on Education*.
- v. Discuss the implications of findings for language teaching.

Methodology

The sample consisted of 300 subjects randomly selected from 10 Local Government Areas of Lagos state. This consisted of 30 respondents from each local government area. They were made up of 5 each of Civil Servants, Hotel Managers, Traders, Teachers, Artisans and Students. They represent the different strata of people within the community.

The following Local Government areas were covered

Ikorodu, Kosofe, Badagry, Ojo, Ikeja, Oshodi – Isolo, Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland, Epe, Ibeju – Lekki.

Instrumentation

The data for the study were collected using a Researcher Developed Questionnaire: Survey of Languages in Lagos State (SLILAS). The questionnaire was divided into two sections, A & B. Section A sought information on demographic data such as: Sex, Age, Residential Local Government Area, Level of Education, Native Language, State of Origin, Local Government Area of Origin, Occupation.

Section B consisted of items designed to investigate the use of languages by people of different strata in Lagos state. Specifically it assesses the frequency of language use among peers, acquaintances, and officials.

The face and content validities of the instrument were determined by 3 Language Education Experts.

The test of validity revealed an outcome of 0.84. The reliability test using Pearsons product moment correlation analysis produced a score of 0.96

Analysis and Findings

Data gathered were analysed using percentages and the results are hereby presented in the order of the Research Questions guiding the conduct of study.

Table I: Showing the profile of language use among Lagosians

<i>Languages</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Ogu	49	16.34
Hausa	07	2.33
Yoruba	182	60.67
Igbo	46	15.33
Others – Efiki, Ibibio, Edo, etc.	16	5.33
Total	300	100%

Table 1 reveals that the Yoruba language is more dominant with 182 (60.67%) users, followed by Ogu spoken by the Aworis 49 (16.34%), Igbo (46) (15.33%), Hausa 07 (2.33%), and others including Efik, Ibibio, Edo, Isoko, Idoma, Ebira 16 (5.33%).

Table II: Showing the pattern of settlement in Lagos State and the Languages

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Divisions</i>	<i>Local Govt. Areas</i>	<i>Dominant people/Languages</i>
1	Ikorodu	Ikorodu, Kosofe, Somolu	Yoruba, Hausa, Ebira, Isoko, Edo, Igbo, Efik, Idoma
2	Badagry	Badagry, Amuwo, Odofin, Apapa, Ojo, Ajeromi, Ifelodun	Ogu, Yoruba, Hausa, Ebira, Edo, Igbo, Isoko, Efik, Idoma
3	Ikeja	Ikeja, Agege, Oshodi, Isolo, Ifako-Ijaiye, Alimoso, Mushin	Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Ebira, Isoko, Efik, Ibibio, Idoma, Ffulde,
4	Lagos	Lagos Island, Mainland, Surulere	Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Ebira, Isoko, Efik Agatu, Idoma
5	Epe	Epe, Eti-Osa, Ibeja Lekki	Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Ebira, Idoma

The table above shows that there are five divisions in Lagos State known as Ibile. These are further divided into twenty Local Governments Areas as shown. A survey of languages revealed that almost all Nigerian languages are represented in Lagos state. However, the more dominant ones are Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Ebira, Isoko, Efik Ogu, and Idoma. It is also worthy to note that the majority of Lagosians are either bilingual or multilingual. Yoruba can safely be regarded as the language of the environment in many local government areas, although this is not easily discernible in some areas like Badagry and Ojo where Ogu is dominant. The majority also speak pidgin.

Table III: Showing the Percentage Responses on Language Preference among People in Different Centres of Community

Language Preference	Hau-sa	%	Igbo	%	Yoru-ba	%	My Dialect	%	Pidgin English	%	English	%
Preference	4	1.33	12	4	26	8.87	0	0	37	12.33	241	80.33
In discussing personal matters with family	7	2.33	10	33.3	28	9.33	238	79.33	0	0	36	12
With acquaintances	2	0.67	4	1.33	19	6.33	0	0	11	3.67	264	88
For official interaction	7	2.33	2	0.67	9	3	0	0	1	0.03	28	93.67
In day-day business interaction	1	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	8.67	273	91
For official matters	6	2	10	3.33	15	5	0	0	20	6.67	249	83
As medium of instruction in education	0	0	0	0	11	3.67	0	0	0	0	289	96.33
In religious houses	7	2.33	10	3.33	72	24	0	0	0	0	213	71
In hotels and beer parlours	2	0.67	10	3.33	72	24	0	0	0	0	213	71
In discussing personal matters with intimates	0	0	0	0	0	0	211	70.33	16	5.33	73	24.3

The reality of language use as can be interpreted from the table above for Lagos state is that English Language assumes a very significant status in the communicative network of Languages. It is the preferred language for formal and transactional communication with 241 respondents (80.3%). 264 respondents (88%) also prefer to use it with acquaintances. 281 (93.7%) would rather use it for official matters; 273 (91%) prefer to use it for their day-to-day business interactions, 298 (96.3%) believe it should be used as medium of instruction in schools. It also functions in areas supposedly reserved for the indigenous languages if only marginally. For instance 36 (12%) prefer to use it in discussing personal matters with immediate family members.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for the successful implementation of the National Policy on Education and Language Education in Nigerian schools. It is ascertained that:

- Diverse languages and cultures compete within the system.
- The language of communication of home differs from that of the school resulting in incompetence in the teaching and learning of mother tongue and English.
- The language of immediate community in Lagos state cannot be easily identified in some local government areas.
- The status of Pidgin English in the speech community may hinder the teaching and learning of Standard English.
- The preponderance of Pidgin English has almost eroded the place of Yoruba as the language of immediate environment in Lagos state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are advanced:

- a. Stakeholders in the field of linguistics should recognize the pivot role of the indigenous languages for the growth and development of the state.
- b. Government should endeavour to develop orthography in as many indigenous languages as possible.
- c. Government should be able to give a clear cut directive on the meaning of 'Language of Immediate Community' in pluralistic states like Lagos.
- d. Government should introduce the teaching of the tenets of the National Policy on Education as part of social studies in Basic Education classes.
- e. Bilingual Education should be formalized and structured in the school system.
- f. Government should endeavour to print the NPE in all Nigerian languages whose orthographies have been developed.

Conclusion

Lagos state as revealed by this study in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual community. The phenomenon of multilingualism with English as a major language is situated in both urban and rural settings. The administrative, commercial, industrial and political activities which bring together people with different linguistic backgrounds take place in both settings. Even outside the city of Lagos communities tend to be multilingual, since the population is a conglomeration of different ethnic groups. This study has identified just about 10 languages *Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Ffulde, Isoko, Idoma, Ogu and Ebira*. This is quite a small number when compared with the previous figures cited by Blench and Crozier (1992).

The figure derived from this study was determined by the speakers of the languages in the study sample. There are some varieties often classified as separate languages which are clear groups of the dominant languages. This study did not attempt any linguistic classification as this is outside its scope. It should also be noted that this figure is tentative, given the size of the sample used. The three major Nigerian languages are indeed dominant in Lagos state with Ogu competing

favourably with them in some local government areas like Ojo and Badagry. Although other indigenous languages compete with Yoruba and are also growing, it may be safe to conclude that Yoruba can be used as language of the immediate community because majority of the other ethnic groups speak Yoruba while the reverse is the case in most localities. Since the growth of a language depends on a combination of institutional, communal and individual efforts, it is expedient that the orthography of other indigenous languages be developed so that the mother tongue can be used for early literacy.

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