The influence of Igbo on Ibaji dialect of Igala

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Abstract
This study investigates the influence of Igbo on Ibaji dialect of Igala with a view to justifying the assertion that no people or language is entirely homogenous and also the recognition that we should concentrate more on those things that bind us together than the issues of diversity. Participatory observation and compilation of relevant wordlists were used for data collection and the method of analysis was mainly descriptive consequent upon the available data. The investigation reveals that a couple of factors like proximity and economic/commercial interest, among others, brought about the contact. Consequently, certain influences were observed of Igbo on the Ibaji dialect of Igala from the cognate/word level to morpho-syntactic level and even the socio-cultural aspects of the people's life. However, the study did not establish any bidirectional influence especially as it relates to the influence of the dialect on Igbo hence the suggestion or recommendation for further intensive research in this area.

1.0 Introduction

Language is a great asset. The possession of it, according to Esland (1972), gives man a range of control over phenomena though he is in turn controlled by his language – an aspect of his culture. Language provides man with a system of interaction which is activated in all new experience(s). As a veritable identity of a people, language serves as a vehicle for the transmission of culture, value system, institutions, nuances and social norms of the people.

The word 'transmission' in this context suggests transfer and influence as a result of language contact. The issue of language contact and influence has been hotly debated; both in Historical Linguistics and Language Contact Studies (see Appel and Muysken 1993). Two opposing views are in contest here: The 'system' view and the 'bag of tricks' view. Whereas the 'system' view prominently

associated with Ferdinard de Saussure, the founder of structuralism holds that language is a system where everything hangs together and therefore does not allow for external influence and or alteration. The 'bag of tricks' view sees languages as primarily complex tools for referring to the world and for communication, and that these tools easily adapt to new communicative and referential needs. With the latter, language contact, influence and even change have become necessary evils. This latter position, it must be noted, was the brainchild of the creolist Huge Schuchardt. Notice that Saussure and Schuchardt were scholars of the early twentieth century. Besides, even though the distinction may not be as clear in modern Linguistics, Appel and Muysken (1993), risk it to associate Chomsky and the generative tradition with the 'system' view while Hymes and other functionalists have been identified with the 'bag of tricks' view. They argue further that even the notion of system itself, has undergone important reviews. For instance, the holistic systems of early structuralism have been replaced by modernized systems in modern grammatical theory.

All said, the obstinate fact remains that language influence and change, which result from language contact, are real in the experiences of languages in contact across cultures. Therefore the thrust of this study is to investigate the what, how and why of the Igbo language influence on the Ibaji dialect of Igala.

It is to be noted that in most cases, when two linguistic systems come together or interact by some forms of linguistic contact, certain degrees of influence may be exerted either monodirectionally or bidirectionally. In other words, the languages involved may influence each other in different ways. The direction of influence may be determined by the nature of the contact, the necessitating factors, and above all, the linguistic statuses of the languages in contact especially their social significance and sophistication (level of development) among languages. Okolo & Ezikeojiaku (1999:226-227) explain this situation more lucidly thus:

> Two culturally different communities may come in contact ... Such a contact may result in a number of things. Their language (sic) may coalesce, or one may supersede the other. Or, the two languages may both exist side by side, influencing each other. Such a phenomenon is also one of the results of individual social behaviour.

In the same vein, explaining the reasons for such linguistic contact(s) Sotiloye (1992) argues that such linguistic relationship could be ushered in by a number of factors: political annexation, the desire to identify with a particular ethnic group or culture, economic/commercial reasons, the quest for knowledge among others. Most linguists (Wardhaugh, 1986; Sotiloye, 1992; Okolo and

Ezikeojiaku, 1999) have identified the offspring of such linguistic wedlock to be bilingualism, in most cases, which in turn culminates into certain effects which could be positive or negative: interference, transfer, borrowing, interlading, backlash, code-switching/mixing and so on. The linguistic contact between Igbo and Igala, particularly the Ibaji dialect is amenable to a couple of factors, which we shall identify vis-avis the influences as this discussion lasts.

2.0 The Igbo-Igala contact: A brief explication

The Igala had a relatively powerful kingdom in the pre-colonial period and formed the Kabba province with some other ethnic groups during the colonial and even post-colonial period. The province it must be observed was part of the Northern Region until 1967 when it formed part of Kwara State, and later became part of Benue State and finally Kogi State, in the 1991 creation of new states. The geographical position of the Igala in Central Nigeria, as pointed out by Okoro (2005), has naturally brought the Igala into contact with a variety of peoples of Nigeria: Edo, Yoruba, Igbo, Bassa, Kakanda, Ebira, Gwari, Idoma, Tiv and Jukun to mention just a few. Worthy of note in the direction also is the observation that the Igala have influenced and have been influenced by the cultures and languages of all these peoples.

Ibaji as a dialect of Igala is particularly situated or located at the extreme South of Idah Local Government Area of Kogi State. It is a Local Government Area of its own and it shares common boundaries with Edo in the West, Enugu in the East, Anambra State in the South and Idah, Igalamela/Odolu in the North. Consequent upon the low level of intelligibility between Ibaji and other dialects of Igala, there has been a lot of debate among some sections of the Igala community whether Ibaji dialect is actually a dialect of Igala language. Researchers in Igala Linguistics have proved that Ibaji and other dialects that have low level of intelligibility with the standard Igala, are no doubt, dialects of Igala (Etu, 2000; Omachonu, 1995; 2000).

Several factors account for the Igbo-Ibaji contact. Apart from the economic/commercial interest of the neighbouring Igbo communities, the location of Ibaji sharing common boundaries directly with certain towns like Ogurugu, Asaba, Iga, Ojo, Enugu-Otu, Eziagulu, Nzam, Innoma and others in both Enugu and Anambra States has made the linguistic influence worthwhile and inevitable. It must be observed that the Akpanya and Odolu dialects of Igala in Igalamela/Odolu Local Government Area of Kogi State have similar Igbo influence consequent upon reasons similar to those given earlier above (See Omachonu, 2000).

3.0 Methodology

The methods of investigation employed in this study were participatory observation and the use of language helpers chosen from the two languages. Precisely, two language helpers were chosen for each of the two varieties under investigation. Two separate wordlists were compiled reflecting both the cognate and the sentence level of linguistic influence. A third was added mainly to cater for incidences of borrowing, code switching and mixing. Whereas the data for Ibaji dialect were collected from Odeke and other major villages in Ibaji, those for Igbo were gathered from Enugu-Otu Aguleri and Eziagulu dialect cluster.

3.1 Presentation of data

Our presentation of data in this study covers three major levels or aspects: cognate/word level, sentence level and socio-cultural aspects. Notice that phonological interference or influence is subsumed under cognate and sentence level as will be shown in our analyses subsequently. Note that the tone marking convention used in this paper is such that only high, low and contour tones, where applicable, are marked. Therefore, any unmarked syllable carries mid tone or down step in Igala and Igbo respectively.

1. (a) **Name of Object/Concept**

Central Igala	Ibaji	Igbo	Gloss
ábịá	*ábịá /ụ́kịta*	*ńkịta*	*dog*
ágbà	*ágbà/ụ̀kàtà*	*nkàtà*	*basket*
àbáchà	*àbáchà /ákpụ́*	*ákpụ́*	*cassava*
èkwù	*èkwù/ụ́kpà*	*ɲkpà*	*want (N)*
òbé	*òbé /ókwù*	*ókwù*	*fishing*
ákáchị́	*ịdịkpà*	*dimkpà*	*strong man*
ónógwu	*òdógwú*	*òdógwú*	*warrior/war leader*
ànùkwù	*òkpúlù*	*òkpúlù*	*strong room*
ọ̀tàjịa	*òtàjịa/òkpú*	*òkpú*	*cap*
ékpo-ọla	*ùdé*	*ùdé*	*pomade*
àládị̀	*úkà*	*úkà*	*church*
ọ̀tákàdà	*ákwọ́*	*ákwụ́kwọ́*	*book*
àjịfụ̀	*ịkpà*	*ịkpà*	*pocket*
èmọ	*ókpètè*	*ókpètè*	*sugar cane*

(b) Personal Name

Igbo	Ibaji Equivalent	
Nwabueze	*ụ́nwábejè*	*'child (offspring) is kingship'*
Ọgugua	*Ọgwọ*	*'a consolatory child'*
Nkiruka	*ùkiru*	*'what is before us is greater'*
Adaeze	*Àdéjè*	*'daughter of king (princess)'*
Obiora	*óbọrà*	*'the mind of all'*
Onyeka	*òyáka*	*'who is greater'*
Umọnyelu	*ùmóyèlì*	*'the ancestors gave'*
Ọgọegbunam	*ògégwune*	*'my act of kindness must not kill me'*
Nwabuncha	*ụ́nwábuchà*	*'child(ren) washes/beautifies like soap*
Ọnwusanya	*ónwúchănyà*	*'death is not afraid/ respecter of any'*
Nwabunwanne	*ụ́nwábàne*	*'one's children are his relations'*

(c) Market Days

Igbo	Ibaji
orie/oye	*èdè*
afọ	*àfọ̀*
nkwọ	*ụ̀kwọ́*
eke	*èké*

(d) Names of Age Grades, Masquerades and Traditional Dances especially in Odeke and other towns .

Age Grades	Masquerades	Traditional Dances
éjíoyìbó	*òbìdà*	*ìgbà-ọlụ*
ụ̀gáná	*ụ́nwọdụ*	*ìjèkwọkà*
ánụ̀ká	*àmálà*	*òkóme*
ákátọ	*ìjélè*	*àkwụ̀nèchényì*
ìgbàmálì	*ịcháto*	*ụ̀kwálăgwu*
òjébà	*àkàgò*	*òjèméníké*
írúgò	*ákwụ̀lákwù*	
òligba	*ịchíkọ́ọdìá*	
ụ̀gbọ̀mà	*óbélémanwú*	
àkwọ́bịchị		
àgbàlà		
àkàgò		

It is to be noted, as this investigation has shown, that the neighboring Igbo communities especially Enugu Aguleri and Eziagulu still have these forms in the examples above.

2. Expressions with Code-mixing

Ibaji	Igbo	Gloss
É né ọ̀mùgọ̀	*Ine omugo*	*'taking care of a nursing mother'*
É gbă ónẹ̀ àmà	*Igba ama*	*'to forewarn'*
É du che ukpà	*Idi mkpa*	*'to use to satisfy want'*
É chè ùgbáliákwa	*Ime ugbaliakwa*	*'to conduct second burial'*
É chè ikpényi	*Ime ikpaenyi*	*'to take feminine title' – (Putting on elephant teeth)*
Ojìgèdè ókọ un	*Oji igodo ndi ya*	*'the keeper of her husband's key'*
É che íyà-ágbàlà	*Igba egwu ndi agbala*	*'staging young women's dance'*
É gbă àjì	*Igba aji*	*'taking breakfast'*

Here, one notices glaringly the striking similarities between words and expressions in these two (Igbo and Ibaji dialect of Igala) e.g. ìgèdè vs ìgòdò, ùkpà vs mkpà among others even with similar tones.

3. Pure Igbo Expressions Used in the Area	Ibaji Understanding of them
Isi ni a(n)yi nwe ... meni/u aka nọnu ...	*'used to applaud best performance*
Onye jide ukeya, onye jide ukeya...	*'let everybody do his very best'*
Umanwu na ta aja	*'the masquerade that eats sands'*
Aji bu odogwu	*'breakfast gives strength'*
Agadi nwanya	*'old woman'*
Ite ego	*'pot of money/wealthy person'*
Akajiakwu	*'the hand that holds wealth'*

4.0 Findings and Discussions

It is clear from the available data that the Ibaji dialect of Igala has borrowed some words and Igbo expressions consequent upon the linguistic contact. It has been observed that the borrowed words undergo certain linguistic interfer- ices or phonetic conditioning such as nativization as shown in the data blow. For example, /ź/ becomes [ʤ] and syllabic nasal consonants are converted into regular vowels:

/nwábuezè/ ⟶ *[únwèbeʤè]*
/dímkpà/ ⟶ [ídíkpà]
/ńkíta/ ⟶ *[úkíta]*

/mkpà/ ⟶ [úkpà]

Sometimes, it goes with vowel insertion as well as consonant deletion. This is because the syllable structures or patterns of the words do not agree with the preferred syllable structure and phonotactics of Igala.

Apart from this cognate/word level influence, even sentences under a lot of code mixing and in some cases, outright production of pure Igbo expressions (see data 2 & 3 above) respectively. Besides, worthy of note is the fact that most speakers of Ibaji dialect use these Igbo words and expressions sometimes without the consciousness of the Igbo origin of such usage, that is, they are or may be ignorant of the fact that the words and expressions emanate from the Igbo language. It is also noteworthy to mention the fact that the Igbo language has influenced Ibaji dialect of Igala not only at the level of phonology and morpho-syntax but also at the socio-cultural level of life of the people. Most inhabitants of Ibaji, irrespective of age and sex, understand the Igbo language to some extent consequent upon their nearness to certain Igbo communities as well as the heavy presence of Igbo settlers in the area. They bear Igbo names and their cultural practices agree more with the Igbo culture than other parts of Igala land. For instance, one of the researchers' has the traditional name, Ọnwuchanya (which is of course, Igbo, although he is Igala). Besides, his mother and father are known by Igbo names: Ọnwukwe 'if death agrees' and Unwekwu 'a child born during festival' respectively. They are both ogbuefi title holders, which equally could be rightly interpreted as a product of the Igbo influence. His father's title name, he could recall, is Ogbuefi Egobuto, which is equally Igbo, meaning 'money is pleasure'. Unwekwu is the son of Ọmachonu while Ọmachonu had his own father's name as Unwọra (Igbo 'a child of the people'), which has been translated as Ọmọja for their Igala identity. Giving Igbo names to children as their traditional or indigenous names has been the practice in Ibaji until recently. Beside the names, their traditional dances, names of masquerades and age grades/groups have something in common with the Igbo as could be observed from the data above. In addition, most serious traditional songs are rendered in Igbo. Proficiency in the Igbo language therefore is an added advantage for song/ music makers in the area, including the use of Igbo proverbs.

5.0 Conclusion

Generally, it is almost an accepted fact that no people or group of people are entirely homogenous historically, linguistically and otherwise; independent of other socio-cultural contacts and influence (Appel & Muysken, 1993; Okoro, 2005). Unlike the 'system view' which considers language contact and influence as impossible and undesirable, the experience in this present study agrees more with the 'bag of tricks' view which sees languages as primarily complex tools for referring to the world and for communication, and that these tools easily adapt to

new communicative and referential needs. With this, language contact, influence and even change have become necessary evils. The linguistic contact between Igbo and the Ibaji dialect of Igala testifies to this natural fact.

Consequent upon the linguistic status of the Igbo language in Nigeria, it obviously and undeniably dominates in the relationship as evident in the available data at the cognate/word level, sentence and even the socio-cultural aspects. These may not be all; it is assumed that further intensive research into some other aspects of this dialect of Igala will betray more footprints of the Igbo language on the linguistic territory of Igala. This should be done in the recognition and acceptance of the fact that those things that bind us together as a people or peoples are far more than the issues of diversity.

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