

# Facilitating Communication by Promoting Bilingualism Among Products Of Intermarriages In Nigeria.

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## Abstract

In a survey to determine how many students on the National Diploma programme of the Federal College of Animal Health and Production Technology who had parents from different language-speaking backgrounds, had acquired those languages and learned English in addition; and how many others acquired pidgin English instead, for communication, interesting discoveries were made. Out of the 113 students that registered for Pre-National Diploma (Pre-ND), 87 had parents whose first languages were different. 29 out of this number could not communicate in any of the languages of their parents. 101 out of the 135 students that registered for the National Diploma One (NDI) programme had parents who originated from different language speaking backgrounds but could hardly speak the languages of their parents for lack of exposure to the codes.

**Key words:** Language, Thought, Communication, Fossilisation, Bilingualism, Nigerian, English, Pidgin.

## Introduction.

A group that must absorb the attention of the communication lecturer is the one comprising products of intermarriages because they are opportune to be bilingual by nature. Nigeria is a multilingual nation and this has provided an enabling environment for bilingualism.

The paper advocates a positive parental attitude towards the language development acquisition and learning process of their offspring, especially in a situation where the mother and father have different linguistic backgrounds. It is our position that those who are exposed to the languages of their parents and are encouraged early to acquire them rather than employing pidgin English as a medium of communication in the home, end up learning more effectively and communicating more efficiently in school. These become bilinguals who have a wider perception of important concepts and phenomena necessary for academic success because as one manipulates more languages, the world view or horizon is expanded and this in a remote sense is essential for positive learning and communication.

In a survey to determine how many students on the National Diploma programme of the Federal College of Animal Health and Production Technology who had parents from different language-speaking backgrounds, had acquired those languages and learned English in addition; and how many others acquired pidgin English instead, for communication, interesting discoveries were made. Out of the 113 students that registered for Pre-National Diploma (Pre-ND), 87 had parents whose first languages were different. 29 out of this number could not communicate in any of the languages of their parents. 101 out of the 135 students that registered for the National Diploma One (NDI) programme had parents who originated from different language speaking backgrounds but could hardly speak the languages of their parents for lack of exposure to the

codes. Pidgin English was rather acquired and it has become a functional code permeating every sphere of communicative need for the students (who find it difficult to differentiate between it and formal English). 23 students could speak Hausa which they acquired at leisure with peer group since it was a language remotely common to the community.

In National Diploma Two (ND11), which is a terminal or graduating class, only 44 students registered. 41 out of the 98 students expected to make up the class for the first and second semesters, dropped out voluntarily following a record of poor performance in NDI semester examinations. All the 11 students who were found repeating ND1 either had Pidgin English acquired as street code or a remote form of Hausa acquired from peers in the event of socialization, as the first language. Though their parents could communicate in different languages, the candidates had no exposure to them.

Languages spoken by the parents of students under survey include: Berom, Taroh, Izere, Mupun, Idoma, Ngas, Yoruba, Challa, Tiv, Nimzo, Igala, Goemani, Fulani Duguza, Hausa, Pyem Kwella, Igbo, Buji, Rom, Jaba, Ijaw, Mada, Gbajyi, Tangale Bogghom, and Nungurama.

It is possible to trace target students' poor performance and communicative inefficiency to so many other factors outside the realm of this survey. However, it is a colossal waste that these languages are not passed on to offspring, by parents who though are in a position to enrich their children's communicative efficiency, fail to be productive.

### **Language Development and Communication**

Language is the key to cognitive development. With the exception of aphasiacs and the hearing impaired, all humans acquire their language maturationally (as long as there is an environment where language is available to accompany the

child's development from the onset). As early as the age of (two and oftentimes, a little earlier for the precocious child), the overwhelming impact of language is felt in the devolvement process. Cognitive mechanisms of language make this possible. The mental activities for this state of affairs demonstrate that language is rule-governed.

Behaviourists (whose mentor was J.B. Watson but who are usually represented by B.F. Skinner, because the latter popularised behaviourism,) have put forward, *learning theory* as an explanation for this language development in children. Learning-theory proposes that children are able to use language, as a result of straight conditioning or shaping. Babbling, a feature of normal infants for instance, is an operant conditioned by adult reinforcement. Children thus, acquire ideal language behavior through shaping, modeling and imitation of adult speech conventions. Consequently good models are archived through positive reinforcement (by both adults and self), while bad ones are dissuaded through negative reinforcements or punishment.

But this standpoint has generated some controversy. Active psycholinguists find the idea of shaping to produce increasingly precise speech in children (learning theory) rather a naïve and inadequate explanation for what happens in children at this time. Language development at this phase happens swiftly that by the time the child is due for exposure to the primary school curriculum, (generally taken as age six in Nigeria,) the thinking, learning and communication ability are as linguistic as the linguistic behavior, is communicative. In other words, at this level of development, the spontaneity with which the child handles communication in his/her mother tongue or (L<sub>1</sub>) will portray the presence of a well-developed language competence and usage ability. Thus, an analysis of this overt language behavior (performance) must in essence trace the propelling

variables, which though, are non-observable but are present in the language user. Knowing a language means first of all being able to use its grammatical rules since without rules, the native speaker or even the second language user, can only imitate what she/he hears. Moreover, if language development and our own source of learning languages were principally based on modeling, we may perhaps never learn to use language correctly or creatively, neither would there be real native speakers. Besides how are children supposed to cope under the circumstances, what with the bewildering number of highly variable and inexact models (ever there to imitate) during language acquisition!

The behaviorist-conditioning model of language development therefore, does not fit with the fact. Chomsky (3) instead, proposes a linguistics theory that is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a company of a homogenous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions such as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random and characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. This is basically the ideal native speaker whose knowledge and abilities set her/him apart from a non-user.

Noam Chomsky suggested a linguistic acquisition device (LAD) or enabling language competence as a viable explanation for language development. The human brain according to him is pre-wired or pre-programmed for language acquisition. This enabling competence is the underlying tacit knowledge of rule and structure of the language. In other words this knowledge is usually not consciously deployed or available for one to spontaneously claim its concrete presence, but inferentially, it is there as the form of grammatical knowledge in the user's

linguistic repertoire.

Competence includes such things as the user's judgment about which sentences are grammatical correct or otherwise are ambiguously presented amidst those ones whose meaning or clarity are not in question. It is competence that makes it possible for one to generate an infinite number of sentences from a finite set of rules. This ability enables the user to use language creatively. Competence also covers the knowledge of appropriate sound and sense in usage and therefore, is what makes overt language behavior or performance possible.

Dell Hymes and J.J. Gumperz (both ethnographers of speaking who have contributed greatly to sociolinguistics), agree with Noam Chomsky on linguistic theory, but opine that competence, ought to include other things such as the ability to use and understand communication values within specific sociolinguistic and universal contexts. This knowledge of sociolinguistic and cultural parameters of performance, makes it possible for one to weigh what one says or to make appropriate choices of synonyms or diction, in the face of particular interlocutors, contexts, etc. Hymes (64) thus contends that it is not the case that anyone can say anything in any manner to anyone else for any purpose, on any occasion and by any means.

Sociolinguistic matrices such as interlocutors, their status, age, gender, relationship, mood, attitude, topic, motivation, function, medium or channel and mode of discourse, time, occasion, socio-political and economic atmosphere, context, purpose of the discourse and indeed, other apparently minute variables that come to play when people interact, all help the language user to select appropriate diction. This facilitates effective communication, which is never complete until the receiver perceives it, attributes meaning to it, and is affected by it, leading to a change in behavior.

## **Language and Thought**

Efficient communication is a product of clear thinking and perception. People of different cultures, reason in multifarious patterns and they approach issues peculiarly, view problems differently and engage in mental activities in patterns, which demonstrate that cultural differences abound; otherwise everyone will be found to be thinking or reasoning alike! How then is language related to thought? Language is a powerful and essential means of communication. It performs a two-fold function. First it enables people communicate with one another, when the interlocutors share a common meaning of words. Secondly, it provides a system of symbols and rules that facilitate thinking. Thought- a cognitive process, like language is a major component of communication. The mental processes, forms of reasoning and approaches to problem solving that are prevalent in a community, are culture- specific.

Culture or linguistic entities follow different patterns of thought. For instance, Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Kanuri, Idoma, Berom, Efik, Edo, Igbira, Kalabari, Tiv and the English man from London or the United States of America, do not think in the same way. As noted by Samovar, Porter and Jain (112), there are cultural differences in aspects of thinking, so that specific things or activities often have denotative and connotative qualities that differ from culture to culture. Thought patterns prevalent in a culture, affect the way individuals in that culture communicate and respond to others from a difference culture.

There is no one metaphysical pool of universal human thought. Everyone therefore, (the L<sub>2</sub> learner and the native-speaker) cannot be expected to employ exactly the same pattern of thinking. An understanding of the fact that thinking is relative to language, will enable one appreciate that language is developed to meet the experiences and problems of their

speakers. Linguistic competence, a mental ability to control structures of the language, is linked with this, and so is communicative competence (which involves the use of language in extended discourse, using knowledge of sociolinguistic variables such as rules of appropriacy, conventional and interactional usage, etc.). Central to these competencies is analytic competence, which is the ability to use language for thinking and solving problems.

Language influences the way of thinking of different linguistic communities, but not the quintessence of thinking itself. Consequently, one is led to grasp what Whorf had done in what is probably, the most prominent study of the relationship of language, culture thought and reality. The hypothesis of linguistic relativity is well known in Ethno-linguistics. Edward Sapir (1884-1939) , and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941), North America scholars, initially held this hypothesis in the 1920s , when they reckoned that a community's language is what organises experience and configures the words and social reality of that group.

According to Whorf's study, the Navajo Indians who speak Hopi use one word to denote a plane, an insect and even an aviator (which are all capable of flight), but not a bird. The logic here is that each language is a different structure, a different word, because the experiences, ambience, and knowledge and social group are different. While an exert denotation or synonym for snow does not exist in any Nigeria language, a traditional Eskimos has more than a dozen words to designate 'snow' ( e.g. falling snow, drifting snow, snow on the ground, melted snow, snow squall, etc.).

Among the Igbo speaking people of Nigeria, a myriad of names designate the staple food, 'yam' (e.g. ji-ocha, ji-abi, ji-akiri, ji-abala, ji-okwakenenu, ji-okuko, ji-akoroako, ji-osisi, ji-esiriesi, ji-ohuhu, ji-ahuruahu, ji-osusu, ji-asuruasu, ji-

eghereghe, ji-oriri, ji-rurueru, ji-okike, ji-aruruaru, aka-ji, akpu-ji, awa-ji, mkpuru-ji, etc.). Yam from different places and farming people, are referred to according to the names of the farming people and places, for instance, ji-lafia (lafia-yam), ji-zaria (zaria-yam), ji-buruku/Gboko (Benue State-yam), ji-mopa (Mopa-yam from Kogi State), ji-eluooha (upland people's-yam), ji-mbammiri (riverine area-yam), ji-Aguleri (Aguleri-yam), ji-Oru (Oru-Delta State-yam), etc. Sweet potato is designated as ji-nwannu (salt-containing yam), while Irish potato, which is produced on the plains or tableland of Plateau State in Nigeria, is referred to in some part of Igbo land as adu-ndocha or ji-ndocha, ie, white man's yam (whether the English or American farmer has yam in his environment is another matter.)

A non native user of Igbo language, can hardly conceive all of these denotations of yam (in the sense that the Igbo man knows it), unless 'yam exists in his/her world, and therefore, in his thought and linguistic repertoire. This illustrates the fact that language is used to designate things in a way to shape, configure, colour and reflect to some extent, the way the linguistic community or particular society thinks. In using English as a second language, in Nigeria, the learner will be found to be organising his/her experience through it, and to be subjecting it through a clime of uses, which in turn, will mirror the thought pattern of the user. The implication of this on the society, which has already been introduced as heterogeneous, can be imagined.

It is much easier to understand while English language is as it is, while it displays certain idiosyncrasies and while that appears so natural to the English native-speaker, may be unthinkable in the structure and use of a Nigerian second language (L2) learner and vice versa. The way the L2 speaker thinks, will reflect in his or her communicative use of English because of cross-cultural variance, language and thought. This

has implications for effective language teaching. While this seems a part of the explanation for the evaluation of local varieties for English present in L2 settings, it makes a demand on language teachers to seek context specific strategies to facilitate language learning and use.

In tertiary institutions where students of different cultural and linguistic identities come together to learn through the medium of English, an appreciation of the relation between language and thought, mental processes underlying communication, or indeed their concept of linguistic relativity, would help in arriving at pedagogic practices that would equally enhance the training of target heterogeneous learners for communicative efficiency.

### **Fossilisation in Language Development**

One of the strongest influences on the child's perception as he/she develops is the increasing ability to use language and this is preemptive of the fact that the human brain is 'pre-wired' for language acquisition and learning. Language is the key to cognitive development. Children acquire it maturationally at home as long as there is a language present to accompany their development in an environment that is conducive.

Language ability is composed of two separate processes – comprehension (understanding words), and expression (speaking them) – which seem to be controlled by different areas of the brain. Comprehension is the first of the skills to develop. The average child can understand 3 words at the age of one, 22 words at eighteen months, 272 words at two years, and 2000 words at the age of five (Kagan and Havemann 546). Precocious children exceed these. The ability to express or speak words also develops rapidly so that by the age of four, the average child is constructing sentences that are quite accurate grammatically. Intellectual development proceeds in

an orderly and predictable fashion, partly through maturation and partly through learning, especially the learning of concepts.

At about the age of sixteen, the process of language development seems to have waned because as observed by neuro-linguists, the part of the brain which is responsible for this function seems to atrophy. When this happens, the fossilisation process in language development sets in making it difficult, and sometimes impossible for the individual to acquire or learn a new language effectively.

Those who have failed to acquire their first language(s) at home or to learn English, (which is the second language in Nigeria) effectively in school, by this time, experience a myriad of problems in communication. It is pertinent therefore, that children be exposed to the language of their parents in the early years to enable them acquire them before fossilisation sets in, since age and other factors which may be sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, attitudinal, etc. could impede learning, starting from the early adolescent years.

### **Bilingualism**

The multilingual nature of Nigeria, the role of English language in education and other spheres, as well as other motivations that may be social or personal are strong foundations for bilingualism.

Our linguistic environment is such that makes it possible for the child to acquire her mother tongue while Standard English is learned in a formal setting. The child is not only to acquire the rules of grammar and those of semantics of both languages, but also rules of usage. This is in order to build up the ability to interact socially by generating and interpreting speech acts. In this process of communicative development of the child, the M.T. or the language of the immediate surrounding comes into contact with the language of instruction. Linguistic

and socio-cultural influences are felt.

Normally, speakers of the languages in a bilingual situation are expected by sociolinguistic norms (set up by the speech community and that of the target language), to be fair users of the languages in question, in order to enhance communication. Hence, they either learn the languages in a formal setting or acquire one /or learn the other.

By bilingual language acquisition, writes Oksaar (189), is meant the process of achieving a linguistic and communicative competence through an environment, in which two languages are available to accompany the child's development from the onset. Some linguists propose broadly, that one can use two languages alternately, Makkai (117) considering the term in its strictest sense as "meaning an individual who speaks two or more languages with true native fluency" presumes that the two or more languages "are kept entirely distinct by the speaker" such that "there is no interference between the languages, the phonology of each is flawlessly reproduced".

However, while certain authors categorise someone who 'knows' both languages equally and include polyglots as bilinguals, there are others who feel that certain levels of students learning a second language can be called bilinguals. There are some who focus on equal passive competence namely: listening and probably reading equally well in both languages. And yet, others exist who focus on equal productive competence namely; speaking and perhaps, writing also. But a desirable factor is that fluency should be considered for the various skills namely: aural/oral, reading, understanding and writing. This is because reading and auditory perceptions are not necessarily interdependent, nor are writing and speaking. However, it is likely that the abilities to speak and write a language are dependent respectively on the abilities to understand and to read.

Theoretically, 'a balanced bilingual' has native-speaker proficiency in both languages but in our milieu, most students at the tertiary level of education are 'dominant bilinguals'. The term 'dominant bilingual' describes someone who is more fluent in one language than she/he is in another. As second language learners, the sub-group mentioned above are to a large extent, actively involved in improving their second language skills as they ascend higher cadres of education.

There are individuals that can be categorised as semi-bilinguals. A semi bilingual individual is "the person who has perfected his command of the syntax and semantics of his second language but who still communicates with an accent". She distinguishes a bilingual individual in the setting of an entire speech community of bilinguals, all or many of whom control the same two languages with true native fluency, from an isolated bilingual individual in the setting of an entire speech community of bilinguals, all or many of whom control, the same two languages with true native fluency, from an isolated bilingual individual who must reproduce faithfully the phonology and the rest of the grammar of both language to the satisfaction of non-bilingual speakers of each language. This is because the non-bilingual speech community, the individuals are judged by the standards set up by the community of bilinguals. And these standards in so far as they differ from standards set up by the monolingual speakers of the language, can be said to constitute a new dialect of that language or a variety of it. This is the situation of English language in multilingual Nigeria.

### **Interference or Influence?**

Kessler (178) claims that "languages are in contact situation if the same person uses them alternately", or indeed if a community of speakers does the same for social, educational, official or whatever purposes. Gumperz (23) elaborates on

collective or societal bilingualism. According to him:

Bilingualism is a linguistic term referring primarily to the fact that linguists have discovered significant alterations in phonology, morphology, and syntax in studying the verbal behaviour of a particular population.

And from the linguistic standpoint, instances of deviation from the norms of either language resulting from language contact are defined as interference or influence when viewed negatively or as influence when considered optimistically.

Interference is sometimes loosely referred to as mixing, a process which may or may not involve a conscious shift from one language to another, within the same discourse. For those instances in which the speaker is conscious of the shift, the term code switching is frequently used. And it essentially entails making a successive alternate use of two language codes within the same discourse. The speaker is thus, conscious of this shift.

The speech of a bilingual will often manifest influences of one language on the other, at the phonological level (or accent), the lexical level (or word borrowings), the syntactic level, (or inappropriate phrase translation or the use of grammatical morphemes). Since bilingual interference involves unintentional usage of one language in the course of using the other, the existence of the phenomenon raises the question of interdependence or compounding of storage of the two languages. Some linguists consider this phenomenon of interference at the phonological level and view interference between the two languages as a type of "antagonism" (difficulty) in learning the accent of a new language resulting from phonological inhibition of the mother tongue. This argument carried further can apply to writing, where syntactical interference would be that in the application of rules pertaining to ideas and their organisation (e.g. false cognates and

overgeneralisation on the basis of analogy).

Some linguists have identified what is termed the “double tragedy”, as a feature of some bilingual individuals. This is a situation when the bilingual fails to manage his separate competence well. Macnamara reporting his survey results on this subject in 1966, claims a “firmly grounded evidence indicating that bilinguals have a weaker grasp of language than monoglots” or monolingual speakers. A lecturer in Educational Psychology, in Dublin then, Macnamara’s hypothesis was that a general language deficit of bilingual students was due to a “balance effect”, meaning that one language interferes with another, so that the more of one language a child speaks or a learner uses, the poorer his knowledge of the other and vice versa. It is the worst effect of this syndrome that is called ‘double tragedy’ in the bilingual individual, implying that the dominance configuration has got to a ridiculous state when the bilingual loses his mother tongue proficiency or even that of the target language.

We wish to observe that all these assumptions notwithstanding, bilingualism is an enriching experience. Nigerian English is a product of bilingual communication.

### **Nigerian English**

We have established that the active presence of English language in Nigeria is a strong foundation for ‘collective bilingualism’. As discovered in the preceding literature, those who use a language, shape its use (by their usage) be they monolingual speakers or bilingual users (e.g. second language speakers). In a *bilingual/multilingual* speech community, the individual is judged not by the standards of non-bilingual speakers, but rather by the norms of usage set up by its community of bilinguals. And these standards, in so far as they differ from standards set by the monolingual speakers of

the language, can be said to constitute of *new dialect* of the monolingual input. Nigeria would be a striking exception if this is not the case prevalent with the use and status of English namely that: the standard of the native-speaker would continue to be the standard recognised and nothing else.

African scholars of repute such as Chinua Achebe, Ayo Bamgbose of Nigeria, Brajkachru of East Africa, etc, advocate ‘nativisation’ or the Nigerianisation of the English language to serve sociolinguistic communicative priorities. Another eminent scholar who has made groundbreaking contribution in the ‘new dialect’ phenomenon and the teaching of communicative English in general, is Munzali Jibril. He delved into full-scale empirical analyses of varieties differentiation to justify the existence of a Nigerian variety of English. This and other developments in the evolution of Nigerian English are presented and discussed here.

Adejare, (153) posits that Nigerian English is not based on errors nor is it an interference variety. Thompson (iv) contends that:

A language has a life of its own and goes on its own way, little affected by the attempt of grammarians and handbook writers to improve it or influence it. It is constantly changing, adding new expressions, dropping others, and regarding as a mistake one year what will be perfectly acceptable next year... some of the grammatical forms and construction deemed correct by the writers of excellent guides to English are outdated and rarely used, even by the educated people and the setters of examination papers....

Even recent trends cultivated at G.C.E. (marking) co-ordination sessions and unanimously accepted and applied in the actual scoring of students’ examination answer scripts, go on to justify the above contention. As the case has been especially from the 90s, some of what was scrutinised and

rejected in candidates' scripts or 'dummy' sheets on grounds of they being inappropriate, unacceptable or wrong some few years ago, are now being viewed as appropriate, acceptable or correct under similar circumstances of use. For instance, academic or academican, or awaked, etc, are all considered acceptable, which was not always the case. This is because language is dynamic.

From these developments then, one can deduce that all languages are subject to processes of change, no matter how slow change may be. The language of Shakespeare or that of the Victorian era is notably different from Standard English or the received pronunciation of this century. For instance, interjections like, "Fie for shame!" used by Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, "Hark! Huzzah! Hah! Hump! Pshaw! Lo and behold! All-hail! Adieu! Phew! Zounds! Tartar", or expressions like: "This is the sort of English up with which I will not put," (often accredited to Sir Winston Churchill- one of Britain's Greatest Prime Ministers and writer cum speaker, renowned for his prose style in his time), are no longer functional expressions of the twenty-first century English speaker or writer. Thus Mitchel (66) notes that:

Around the World, close to a billion people use the queen's mother tongue every day, continually enriching it with imaginative additions and enlightened emendations.

As language change occurs, varieties evolve. A variety of the English language that has caught the attention of intellectuals in recent times and in which there is an upsurge of research in Nigerian tertiary institutions, is Nigerian English. Granted that languages change, resulting to varieties (of the same language); Nigerian English can be called an indigenised variety of English-as- an- International-Language.

Munzali (51) after a thorough empirical investigation into varieties differentiation, describes Nigerian English as: a cluster of regional and social varieties which interact sufficiently in a sociolinguistic continuum to qualify for a common term

The situation as he illuminates it is that at the impressionistic level, an unsophisticated Igbo speaker of English may appear to be using a variety totally unrelated to that of an unsophisticated Hausa user of English. But a careful analysis of the corpus of speech of the different speakers would reveal many consonantal, vocalic and rhythmic which are different from those of Received Pronunciation (RP) which both speakers share; but which are concealed behind the façade of intonation. This intonation it is, which gives away ethnic affinity or kingship speech patterns through the length and breadth of Nigeria.

The differences mentioned however, do not end on the vocalic or auditory level since they often times permeate other levels from the lexical to the syntactic, resulting in unprecedented distortion of what others wish, would have made meaningful communication. The situation is even more pathetic considering our socio-cultural circumstances and the slow pace of education or assimilation of learning even at the tertiary level. For instance, Dunton (58) laments how "in Africa to be able to read is still a minority preoccupation, the question of reading habits is still controlled".

This connotes that even among the purportedly educated, exist partial literates (who sometimes flood into schools by pressure, to satisfy some employment requirement, etc, at the undergraduate level). The phonetico-orthographical divergences that do occur in the process of writing can hardly come under the cover term "Nigerian English", without attracting raised brows from sound teachers of English at tertiary institutions, but they do occur as problems in L2 teaching set-

ups. Instances are when a Taroh (Tarok) or Afizere student of English consistently writes: checked, baked or wept as though he has not quite grasped the tense system of English as in, "I check him two times yesterday". Moreover, words like: reflect, respect, inspect, affidavit, affect, expect, react, effect, contact, etc, are further disarmed of their terminal 't' sound in speech and writing. Speech habits are transferred to writing because as the supposition often is, the latter is a derivative of the former and must be shown to reflect so. Be this viewed as blatant display of naivety, M.T. influence, or error making 'prowess', the far-reaching implication for curriculum development and material production is obvious.

The interactional sociolinguistic history of a people must be seen as the functional truth where fruitful learning can be hatched, and developed. Perhaps this is the reason why Kachru (19) talks of:

a need for change in the methodology and in the collection of appropriate empirical data. One has also to change the attitude towards the varieties of English and their users.... since as teachers we are concerned with language – using human beings, and not merely with figures and percentages.

In other words, such hypothetical stands should ideally influence our decision-making in the production of materials for EAP teaching.

Spencer (iii) who happens to be a native speaker reflects on varieties of Nigerian English in these words:

The point about English in Nigeria is not just that it is different from British or American English. It is rather that there are several varieties

of English ranging from something very near Standard English to the patois of the market place.

Among the principal disseminative factors in developing a Nigerian variety of English, Spencer includes "... the hundreds of cheap booklets published in Onitsha, Aba ...." in the early rupture of creative writing. But the question remains; how much of the code and context specific 'stuff' in such novelettes as *Veronica, My Daughter; How to write Love Letters; How Ochonganoko meets Ikpeamanacort*, etc, qualify as Nigerian English? Are Tutuola's works (e.g. *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts, The Palmwine Drinkard*, etc,) to be termed earnest carriers of models of Nigerian English? Can pidgin be categorised as such a sample? Kachru (vii) however argues, that

"... such discourse types which presuppose a bilingual or multilingual competence, from our sociolinguistic history ... are the contextual linguistic and functional realism."

Ikara (18) points at today's principal disseminator (apart from varieties provided by those in tertiary education, in the more populated productive language skills) the national dailies thus:

Nigeria's new English is for local, intimate communication at the Official, Inter-personal and inter-ethnic levels of contact. But the Nigerian dailies certainly Provide a melting pot for written interactive discourse that would appear to be characteristically Nigerian, ranging from the best standard English of some Editorials and academic articles, to the humorous, and gibberish.

The Nigerian Television Authority and other media are also disseminators. English is in contact with other cultures and ways of perception embodied in those local languages, since it is a second language. It is to be expected that the kinds of

English found will be different in some way from the varieties of English spoken in countries where English is the mother tongue.

...the choice of which variety of a foreign language it is proper to teach is no longer always self-evident, being much influenced by the growth of national, ethnic and regional feeling towards English overseas. There are some areas it is appropriate to set the goal of speaking English like an Englishman (or an American), but that elsewhere, such a goal is unacceptable and must be modified in the direction of for example, speaking educated West African English.

Educated West African English is the type of English one finds in research reports, learned journals, quality government papers and sophisticated works written for instance, by Chinua Achebe, Chinweizu, Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Munzali Jibril, seasoned University lecturers, etc. These works are hardly different from standard English in any such way that makes the reader see features or provocative evidences of languages coming in contact.

Achebe (59), the originator of the expression "colonise the English language the way the English colonised us" far from advocating deviation from standard norms of English or propagating the use of erroneous or deviant forms of expression, has this to say on the subject in *The African Writer and the English language*.

*....my answer to the question: can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing? Is certainly yes. If on the other hand you ask: can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker? I should say, I hope not. It is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so. The price a world language must be prepared to pay is*

*submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost....*

### **Pidgin**

This is another variety of the English language in Nigeria. Its use is tacitly institutionalised. This use outside official setting or recreational purpose is enhanced by the dire need to adopt a lingua franca for mutual understanding among the multiethnic groups that make up Nigeria and who already have English as official, national language of education and the media.

Further enhanced by other factors that may be perceived as attitudinal, economic, linguistic and indeed circumstantial, majority of Nigerians are able to get on at play-socially, can communicate invectives, their frustrations and joys, transact business, etc, using pidginised codes. Pidgin has thus, become an institutionalised code used by members of diverse speech communities for certain restricted functions of communication, to ensure mutual intelligibility when they perceive an apparent lack of a code either physically or psychologically under the circumstance.

Structurally, a pidgin may be related to some source language but as often contested; it is no one's mother tongue in particular. It is often a form shaped or moulded accordingly to urgent local needs. In ethnically heterogeneous areas, such as Warri, Sapele, Port-Harcourt, Lagos, Abuja and virtually all the large cities, in Nigeria, pidgin enhances inter-ethnic communication. Since colonisation which led to the use and spread of English, Nigerian English has evolved, survived and flourished by generally being readily available, thus filling a veritable social interaction vacuum. Some students will no doubt use it at will to interact at the higher education level.

Muzali (239) presents Nigeria pidgin, "which functions as the language of the masses", on a two dimensional continuum. First, is the horizontal axis on which are: Various original varieties of Nigeria pidgin, such as those of Warri-Sapele, Port-Harcourt and Lagos. These varieties usually reflect the strong influence of the local language or languages of the relevant region. On the vertical axis, we have various sociolects of Nigerian pidgin which are marked by increasing proximity to English, depending on the subject matter and the user's level of education. Thus, both the educated elite and the non-literate masses make use of pidgin as a facility for interaction and the sharing of experiences.

A great deal can be written about Nigerian pidgin if this paper was on the topic. But what is of direct bearing to this survey is the attitude of the educated elite towards Nigeria pidgin as a medium. As recorded in Elugbe (288), the educated elite feel that "Nigerian pidgin sounds like bad English because the bulk of its vocabulary is acquired from English" and that "It contains lexical items from Nigerian languages". It is true that a big percentage of its vocabulary is English. It is also true that the widespread use of Nigeria pidgin for communication under multilingual circumstances is justified. Some scholars argued that the status of pidgin should ideally penetrate academic or former context of use. But part of the sociolinguistic reality of the Nigerian, is that formal education is conducted, in formal English. The spontaneous use of pidgin to communicate with a formal audience, in setting requiring that one uses formal language, questions both the learner's communicative competence and the whole process of teaching. But outside these settings, and when appropriately used, Nigerian pidgin shares with English the unique feature of being the only ethnically neutral code for easy communication among the diverse groups that live in or visit Nigeria, for purposes such

as commerce, industry.

### **The Role of Parents in Bilingual Language Acquisition.**

Many students in higher education are the off-springs of parents who come from different language-speaking backgrounds. As parents, we may interfere, but we cannot really stop the process of change which makes it possible for off-springs to marry from, or into other ethnic cultures, for that is motivated by social change, which, is indispensable. But we can certainly influence their future positively, by providing them with an enriched, conducive learning environment where they can acquire the first language. We must as argued here make our languages available to accompany our child's cognitive development in order to facilitate thought, communication and education. Parents who communicate with their children in pidgin English are not supportive but hinder effective communication, especially when they need to function in higher education setting. Spouses who speak different languages can influence their child's communicative effectiveness and performance at school by encouraging them to listen and speak the language even in the cradle. Any contrary attitude that is often amplified could be detrimental. English, which is the second language and not pidgin, should also be an effective tool of communication as well, both at home and in school. This will not only help the child to be bilingual but expand the child's world-view and enhance academic success.

Questions people have been prompted to ask include; 'Won't the child be confused when he/she has up to three languages to acquire and learn?' 'Why should a child be bothered with her mother's language in an intermarriage situation when traditionally, the man it is, who owns the wife, the children and the surname?' Or 'why even border the child so early when he/she is in no position to take such personal

decision as; why do I want to acquire my father's or mother's language or both? Do I really want to be saddled with bilingualism when I can be identified with English language in future?'

A cue to answering such myriad of questions is the fact that children who are denied access to their parent's first language jeopardise their chances of being bilingual off-springs. The pertinent question is: what educational feat are students who have no first language to even think in except pidgin English, expected to perform? Bilingualism would no doubt enhance effective communication and subsequently good performance.

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