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THE GUILD SYSTEM AS AN ETHNOLINGUISTIC MARKER OF IDENTITY IN EDO

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Over the last four decades, several studies have originated on the premise of social identity, ideology and discourse structure. Based on the pioneering efforts of Tajfel (1974), Giles et. al. (1977), Tajfel and Turner (1986), Gumperz (1982), the different dimensions of situated talks and social constraint on language use have been explored. The present paper demonstrates some aspects of these linguistic situations in the Edo society through the social institution of established crafts (trade professions) which we refer to as the {otu igun} in this study. This institution of the guilds have hitherto been under-represented due to a series of cultural restrictions and general misconception about their activities in the society. The guilds represent an extension of the Edo socio-cultural and linguistic establishment serving as a mediator between the various symbols of social life and the populace. It is also the premier institution for the purity of Edo language and cultural practices and as such its constitutions in terms of all these socio-cultural and linguistic features are imperative for a proper understanding of the Edo language from an ethnolinguistic perspective. The paper employed primarily the qualitative method of data collection and analysis due to the nature of the objects of investigation. The method of content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained through interviews (with a view to portraying the linguistic identity and ideology characteristic of the guilds) while the performative translation methods were employed to analyze the data obtained through the non-participant observation. The study revealed that the guild system as practiced in the Edo society constitutes a viable social group with its own variety of the Edo language employed in the course of group interaction/discourse.

Keywords: Linguistics; socio-cultural practices; Eethnicity; Iideology; Vvariation; Performative Linguistics; Translatology.

Introduction

This study investigates the ethnolinguistic features of the Edo guild system as a marker of social identity within the Edo speaking community. The study seeks to examine and illustrate the use of language by the group of craftsmen referred to here as 'the guild' in the course of communicating with their members and other members of the Edo society. This paper therefore presents a general overview of the preliminary components of the study such as the settings, objectives of the study, the research problems and significance of the study. Since the advent of Anthropological Linguistics or Linguistics Anthropology, more attention has been given to the roles of culture in the treatment of language and languages-related phenomena.

The overwhelming place of culture in linguistic orientation can be grasped from the famous Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Linguistic Relativity) in the 1950s. Previous studies on the guilds (Egharevba 1956, 1966; Osagie and Ikponmwosa 2015; Plankensteiner, 2008 amongst others) have treated the guild system from a purely historical and cultural perspective.

It has also been variously treated as an association of craftsmen and artists (Osagie and Ikponmwosa, 2015), social institution within a society responsible for the protection of cultural aspects of the economy (Plankensteiner, 2010) and as an offshoot of a socio-political institution (Egharevba, 1966). It is obvious from all these positions that this institution has a lot of influence on the socio-cultural, political and economic values of a group of people (society).

The Edo society is highly structured and compartmentalized in a hierarchical with the Omo Ne Oba (Monarch) at the centre of political, socio-cultural and economic administration. The Omo Ne Oba and his chiefs constitute the principal administrative organ at the centre based in the Ogbe quarters of Benin City (the setting of the present study) while other towns and villages are administered by Enogie (Duke). Sometimes in the absence of an Enogie, an Odionwere (eldest man) becomes the administrator of such a village or town. These people owe allegiance to the Omo Ne Oba and his chiefs in Benin City. Politically, the Edo society which centres around the Omo Ne Oba and his palace, is organized into three major departments or palace societies as they are popularly called as follows: Iwebo, Iweguae and Ibiwe. These are powerful political, economic and social organs whose services ensure the effective administration of both the palace and the kingdom (Eweka, 1992:12).

These societies which also represent the major divisions in the palace (ugha) and the members known as (otu) are highly revered and their activities not open to the public as it is only the Omo Ne Oba that has free access to all of them. They are also institutions for the recruiting and training of personnels for specific assignments in the palace and the Edo society at large. It is to these palace societies particularly those of Iwebo, Iweguae and Ibiwe that the guilds in the Edo society are affiliated. These guilds were initially set up to administer craftsmen who before then were scattered all over the ancient Benin Kingdom. So by organizing and situating them in different quarters in the City, it became easy to protect their trade and services to the palace with non-members firmly 'fenced out' (Plankensteiner, 2010). This act also helped the palace to maintain good standard of craft as a leadership hierarchy was introduced to supervise production. The different products from the guilds remained royal property and production only takes place through royal permission or decree.

The guilds held a monopoly of their products and services and membership was and is still hereditary (Egharevba, 1956). Their specialized services ensured that membership is not accessible to all. The rules of secrecy concerning their skills apply and tradition limits the exposure of details and restricts interference by non-members. There are several accounts and hence controversies surrounding the actual number of guilds that exist in the Edo society. For the purpose of the present study, we will adopt the position of Plankeinsteiner (2010) which placed the total number of all the guilds under the three palace societies at forty-six (46).

Methodology

In line with the recommendations of Gumperz (1982) method for conducting research in social identity studies and Emerson et. al. (1995) model for conducting an ethnographic research, this study employed the research instruments of interview and Direct Non-Participant observation. A semi-structured interview was adopted in the study as a bridge between the structured and the unstructured interviews. The essence of this is to obtain a general structure that can be subjected to modifications at any point in time in the course of interaction with interviewees. This was also done to provide an avenue for insights into the socio-cultural world and orientation of informants. As a result of the nature of the present study and in the light of this research instrument, the population of persons interviewed therefore consist of four (04) principal Benin Chiefs (three of whom also doubles as the heads of the guilds being described) and twenty (20) other informants affiliated to these guilds in different capacities (4 supervisors, 3 elders and 13 apprentices). These informants were selected based on their wealth of experience in the affairs of the palace societies and the guilds in particular. The setting for the data collection was in the residences of the three (03) principal Chiefs who are heads of the guilds being studied. These residences also housed the workshops where the main activities of the guilds are carried and a collective point for the different members of the guilds.

The direct non-participant observation method was also used in this research through which, we were able to collect a substantial amount of data reflecting the different registers of the guild in the course of group interaction and functions in the guild's workshop which is a natural setting for the appraisal of their ethnolinguistic characteristics.

The interview conducted were analysed following a three-step procedure of: data reductions data display and conclusion (amalgamation of facts and discussions). The data transcript s a reflection of the first two steps as action was taken to remove superfluous and irrelevant details. The resultant information after the operation was then displayed as presented above. Haven presented the data transcript, we move on now to an appraisal of the information contained therein. It should be noted that the presentation of data on a paragraph by paragraph basis was a reflection of the level/extent of response to the different questions asked by the researcher. A paragraph therefore is a representation of a response to a research question on a question by question basis. The analysis that will now follow has its base on the ethnolinguistic identity theory with appraisal geared towards unveiling the ideological and identity components of the Edo Guild discourse.

This paper is driven by two main theoretical precepts: that of 'Performative Linguistics' (Uwajeh, 2002) and the 'Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory' Giles and Johnson (1987). Performative linguistics was chosen due to its foundation on the tenets of Ferdinand De Saussure's Synchronic Linguistics Approach in the early twentieth century. The whole essence of this theory is to portray language as a doer of something with the ability to alter or affect a social state.

The translation model of Uwajeh (2007) 'Performative Translatology' was also employed in conjunction with the performative linguistics model (Uwajeh, 2002). This was done to represent

and analyze the discourse data with a view to portraying the differences between the Guilds' expression and Common Edo used by the general populace. To Uwajeh translation occurs when a communicator and the corresponding communicatee are assumed to, in addition to sharing the language of the communicator and a third party called the translator must be proficient in the use of both the language of the communicator and that of the communicatee.

One of the earliest references to the guild system was Egharevba (1956) where he wrote about the titles and chieftaincy affairs of the Benin Kingdom. The author in his work gave a brief account of the traditional honours and offices of the Edo people and the socio-political structure of the Edo society in general. He presents the different societies that exist within the palace (Iwebo, Iwegua and Ibiwe) along with the different Chiefs that head them and the guilds affiliated to them. He was able to show that the hierarchy of socio-political responsibilities in the Edo society starts from the Omo Ne Oba (King) down to the head of the village structure (Enogie and Odionmwere) which is the base of the political institution. In all, he identifies ten (10) guilds in the Edo society associated with the different palace societies.

This work by Egharevba though very insightful as to the cultural and political structure that gave rise to the guilds in the Edo society, did not give us any information as to the existence or not of a special communicative code employed in communication. The work also had some shortcomings in properly identifying the palace societies that regulate the activities of the guilds as well as the different guilds that exist in the Edo society.

Plankensteiner (2010) records one of the most comprehensive accounts of the Edo guild system and associated palace societies in the course of examining African Arts and Craft Culture. She identifies the different palace societies in Benin and the guilds affiliated to them on a chronological basis with detailed annotation of their duties, functions and headship. Her account shows that there are a total of forty-six (46) guilds in the palace distributed as follows:

2.

- a) Iwebo = twenty-five (25)
- b) Iweguae = fifteen (15)
- c) Ibiwe = six (06)

The sum of all these shows that this indeed was a more comprehensive account of the numerous guilds found in the Edo society. This is really impressive as the different accounts of the Edo guild normally range between eight (08) to ten (10) guilds in the society. This can easily be seen as the most up to date account of the Edo palace societies and guild system save for a few shortcomings that necessitated the emergence of the present research.

Ethnolinguistics

A lot of the investigations involving the ethnography of communication (ethnolinguistics) tend to center on the question of identity, ideology, nationalism, ethnicity and race relation. This term which has its root on the interdisciplinary link between ethnology and linguistics seeks to

account for the impacts of cultural practices on languages. It also involves investigating the question of language maintenance, vitality, endangerment and social distinction as the case may be. Yağmur and Extra (2005) for instance investigated the ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions and language revitalization in Bashkortan (a former Soviet territory). They examined the relationship between ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions and the language revitalization process of Bashkortan. They were able to observe the perception of Russian and Bashkir languages through the administration and analysis of a total of 250 questionnaires on Bashkir's informants. They observed from their investigation that the vitality of Bashkir is very high despite the perceived overwhelming influence of the Russian language as the predominant language during the Soviet era. It was finally observed that there is a strong revitalization movement in the Bashkortan.

Ethnographic researches have contributed greatly to studies in identity as it has moved from the traditional conception of it as a marker of such social categories as: class, age, ethnicity and others to some other category which in the words of Eckert (2000), "is what people do and not what they have (social action)". So it is not sufficient to say that identity is the social positioning of people in a particular setting based on age, sex and status but on what people are doing or the activities they are embarking on at that point in time. In other words, language use other than social or biological factors is therefore responsible for creating group identity. This is a reflection of the position of the present study which views the guild as an ethnolinguistic marker of identity by virtue of their functions as professional craftsmen whose activities have created a variation in the use of the Edo language.

This is an example of an ethnolinguistic investigation which in the light of the present study represents the attitude of the members of the different guilds to the activity and importance of their guilds vis-à-vis other guilds and the general public. Since it has been established here that ethnolinguistics deals with issues of language identity, ideology, vitality and others, more insight will be given in the subsequent evaluation of researches within the domains of ideology, identity and variation. These are different aspects of the scope of ethnolinguistics which are discussed in the sub-sections below.

Language ideology

The concept of language ideology has its origin in the North American Linguistic Anthropology as a framework within which to explore the "mediating links between social forms and forms of talk" (Johnson and Milani, 2010:4). This concept has gained a wider audience in linguistics investigation and a few of these are examined here as follow:

Stromberg (1990:42), sees ideology as an 'organized system of symbols which when one comes in contact with leads to a transformation of identity'. In other words, ideology as a manifested behavior of an individual as a result of the adherence to some set of organized symbols in a society, organization or groups, (Stromberg, 1990). He based his observation on the conversation analysis of actual symbols with the goal of showing how ideological language functions as a resource, which in enabling believers to come to terms with enduring problems of meaning in their lives, brings about the sense of having been transformed (Stromberg, 1990:43).

Simpson (1993:5), treats ideology as the ‘socio-political context in which a language functions’. That is, the sum total of the discourse contexts and social systems and institutions in which a language operates. He went on to say that a dominant ideology operates as a mechanism for maintaining asymmetrical power relations in the society. It is a common sense assumption of the way things are and the ways things should be which are ingrained into everyday discourse.

Schieffelin et. al. (1998:3) defines language ideology as the mediating link between social forms and forms of talk. According to them: “representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world are what we mean by (language ideology)”. They also argue that “language ideology is of anthropological importance not simply because of its ethnographic variability but because it is a mediating link between social forms and forms of talk (ibid). Ideology of language is not about language alone, rather it is about the ties of language to identity, to aesthetics, to morality and epistemology. Based on this, language ideology not only involve linguistic forms but also the idea of a person and a social group, and such fundamental social institutions as religious rituals, child socialization, gender relations, the nation-state, schooling and law. This is partly in line with the scope of the present study as our own conception of the guild ideology is one of religious rituals as a social group with direct link to the centre of the socio-cultural existence of the Edo people (palace societies).

Language identity

The impact of language on social identity has been examined in different domains over the world. For example in such domains as classroom, , in nation building, in the market place, in the refugee camp (Nwagbo, 2014), in the workplace in the online community. There exist an intricate relationship between language and identity which reflects the social division of individuals or groups in a community. There are several literatures devoted to this concept due to its relevance in the fields of interactional sociolinguistics, (Gumperz, 1982) and discourse analysis (Chew 2014). Some of these literatures on Identities and Social Identities are reviewed below:

In the conceptualization of national identity in the Arab Middle East, Suleiman (2003) links identity to the pervading cultural ideology of nationalism in the Arab world. He equates the question of language to the marking of national identity. He also advocates for the importance of symbolic meaning in the study of nationalism necessitated by the national identity question and makes a case for the use of the qualitative method as a tool for the analyzing issues of ideology and identity. He says this is as a result of the fact that “interest in quantitatively based analysis can easily be dismissed as bias and pseudo-scientific” (ibid:4). He goes on to say that identity is a collective thing with such variables as: genealogy, age, gender, sect, ethnicity, nationality or citizenship. All these factors in one way or the other evokes a sense of identity in a state or a society. His focus was on the Arabic national identity as defined by: race, religion and nationalism based on the following fundamental features:

- 1) A historical homeland or terrain
- 2) A common mass public culture
- 3) A common myths and historical memories

- 4) A common legal rights and duties for all members, and
- 5) A common economy with territorial mobility for members

The present paper agrees with Suleiman's position that the question of identity and ideology is not one to be subjected to a survey based investigation method (quantitative) but rather a descriptive one (qualitative). This is due to the issue of bias as many persons may not be forthcoming or enlightened enough to provide the appropriate responses. The present study though concerned with the creation of identity based on ideology sees identity as not restricted to age, gender, ethnicity and citizenship but also involves such group division as 'profession'. So this is a clear departure from the position of Suleiman on the collectivity of identity based on shared historical and religious heritage.

3.4 Ethnolinguistic identity, ideology and variation

The connection between ideology and identity can be seen from the perspective of Stromberg (1990) who examines the conversion experiences of Christians. He argues that this conversion is an ideological and identity transforming experience. He posits based on this that ideologies indeed create a sense of self-transformation because the subject (converted Christian) is able to use the ideological language to resolve enduring problems of identity. To him, ideology is an organized system of symbols and this can be used to change a people's identity when they come in contact with a particular group like Christian missionaries. He demonstrates this with ample illustration from the experiences of converted Evangelical Christians in a contemporary American society. In this case, the doctrines of the Christian faith conveyed by the bible represent the ideology while the membership of a Christian body constitutes the identity (Christ-likeness) of the group. While we agree with this position, evidence from our studies have shown that not all ideologies influence identity especially when multiple ideologies are at play. For example, many of the informants for the present study confessed to being baptized Christians but that this does not in any way affect the rites and rituals performed in the guilds.

We opine here based on the review of literatures so far that an invariable link exists between identity, ideology and variation in ethnolinguistic investigation. The study of the cultural values and policies of a society for instance portends the investigation of the identity structure of these people since identity and ideology are linked to language with the distinction between different social group in the course of communication constituting variation in ethnolinguistics.

Analyzing the language used by the Guilds

The data in the paper are presented on a guild by guild basis centered on the three guilds: Ematoṅ, Eṛoṅmwọ and Ogbelaka in that order. These data are presented against the background of the interactions in the different guilds workshop in the course of performing a specific task for the palace or other Benin traditional institutions. The data are presented in such a way as to reflect the variation in the register of the guilds and that of the Edo (thereafter referred to as common Edo) used on a day to day basis by other members of the society.

In line with the ethnolinguistic identity theory, this extract represents a collection of ideological opinion of these guilds. The opinion subsists by placing these guilds as one with the products

that sustain the Edo society, group whose services are indispensable to both the palace and the general society at large. In the first instance, the respondents went on and on about the fact that his guild ‘**ugboha**’ was one of the original guilds in the Edo society basing this on the fact that the discovery of iron ore (the basic ingredient of iron works) led to the formation of different professional social groups of craftsmen in the Edo society. Appraising this position is the complex of ideological superiority and supremacy as this guild on the other hand strives to maintain a leading position which unfortunately is occupied by the bronze casters (**igun eronmwọ**) guild. This is what referred to as ‘Psychological distinctiveness’ as a group strives to assert itself from others by placing itself at the head of others. In other words, this guild regards her profession as a dimension of comparison to others which we call ‘outgroup’. As claimed by Oakes and Turner (1981), seizing an opportunity to adopt strategies of differentiation in an intergroup situation allows one a more positive self-concept as a result. We can therefore say that this group (**ugboha**) has a positive self – attitude and hence of vitality.

Igun Ugboha (The Guild of Blacksmiths)

This is the guild of all iron and steel workers in the Benin society who in the pre-colonial era manufactured all the instruments of war, farming and other palace and households utensils that were extensively used then. Their activities are highly ritualized and organized due to their perceived role in the protection, defense and sustenance of the Edo people and society then and even to some extent in contemporary times.

These craft associates in their professional activities also have a habitual variety of linguistic communication peculiar to their guilds which are used in special senses pragmatically with sentential constructs wherein meanings of such utterances are deduced contextually. Such lexical data include the following:

3(a). Gima ya rri ***itaemwi*** vbe eguae.

[Lets us go eat gisting in palace-----→ Lexical Translation N.J

[[Let us go and work in the palace]]-----→ Literal Translation. G .I

[Let us go and eat gist in the palace]-----→ Free Translation. C. I

[itaemwi]-----→[work]-- ----→[interpretation of special sense in context A

R3

R2

[itaemwi]-----→[gist] -----→[interpretation of common sense in context B.

R3

R2

(b). Ye ***afian*** ya fien ematon ni yi eva.

[USE CHISEL TO CUT IRON THAT IN TWO] -----→Lexical Translation:

[[Use that chisel to cut the iron in two places]]----→ Literal Translation:

[Use the chisel to cut that iron in two]-----→ Free Translation:

[*Afian*]-----→[*Chisel*]-----→ interpretation of special sense in context

[*Afian*]-----→[*To cut*]-----→ interpretation of common sense in context B

(c). Idehen kakabo *kpe ekwe* nii.

[IDEHEN VERY WELL HIT BELLOWS THAT]-----→ Lexical. Translation:

[[Idehen *hit* that bellows properly]]-----→ Literal. Trans :

[Idehen wash that bellows very well]-----→ Free Trans:

[*Kpe*]----→[*Hit*]----→ Interpretation of special sense in context

[*Kpe*]----→[*Wash*]----→ interpretation of common sense in context

[*Ekwe*]-----→[*Bellows*]-----→ Interpretation of special sense in context A

[*Ekwe*]-----→ [*Lexical Gap*]-----→ Interpretation of common sense in context B

This is an excerpt of one of the conversations that normally ensue between the sole proprietor ‘master’ and his apprentice, instructing him during the performance and preparation of a piece of art work. The words in bold are the special codes used by the guild when carrying out an assignment in their workshops to prevent people who are not members of the guild and are present during such activities from knowing what is going on.

4(a). Eben rre odo oghe isekpokin, iran khian *se* ohian yo.

[SKIMETER IS THERE AT LEATHER WORKER, THEY WANT *FIX* LEATHER HANDLE]--→ Lexical Translation:

[[The skimeter is at the leather worker place they want to *fix* the leather handle on it]] Literal Translation:

(The skimeter is at the leather worker place they want to sew the leather handle on it)-----→ Free Trans:

[*Se*]-----→[*Fix*]----→ Interpretation of special sense in context A

[*Se*]-----→[*Sew*]----→ Interpretation of common sense in context B

(e). Ye ava ya *dia* ematon nii.

[Use spactular to shape iron that]-----→ Lexical Trans:

[[Use the spactular to shape that iron]]-----→ Literal Trans :

(Use the spactular to stay that iron)-----→ Free Trans :

[Dia]-----→[Fix]-----→ Pragmatic sense of interpretation in context A

[Dia]-----→[Stay]-----→ Interpretation of conventional thought in context B.

The use of language by this guild, ‘igun ematon’ is seen to comprise of certain lexical items such as: iron, bellows and other steel-related activities prominent in their work as represented above. Such acts like hitting and fixing with tools such as tong, bellows and spatula base on the metallic nature of the job and due to some tedious aspect in their art of iron smithing.

Igun Eronmwọ (The Guild of Bronze Casters)

These guilds refer to the association of the brass and bronze casters and are organized and located at Igun Street off Sokponba road in Benin City. Their activities are deeply rooted in the ritualisation of bronze casting through the system of loss wax. The tools and materials used during bronze casting include: wax which is used for designing and beautifying, fire which is meant for melting in two different stages, chisel, file, iron brush which are meant to clean the object after the concentration and also for brighter look, anwa ‘tung’ which is used for picking the object from the fire, ukpe ‘spatula’ for designing and carving of shapes like the eyes, nose, ears or any structure or core of an object etc, other tools include ekwe ‘bellows’, fire wood, charcoal, kerosine, ughamwa ‘axe’, oha ‘a kind of a pincher’ and san paper.

5(a). [Osaze mue onwon nii ye oven nu gbe.

[OSAZE CARRY HONEY THAT IN SUN TO SPREAD]---→ Lexical Translation

[[Osaze carry that honey and spread it in the sun]] ----→ Literal Translation

(Osaze carry that honey and beat it in the sun)-----→ Free Translation

[gbe]-----→[SPREAD] -----→ For the guild’s interpretation in context A

[gbe]-----→[BEAT/KILL]-----→ For the commoners interpretation in context B.

(b). Efe ye onwon nii ya rue akpa nii.

[EFE USE HONEY THE TO FOLD COIL THAT] -----→ Lexical Translation

[[Efe use the honey to fold that coil]]-----→ Literal Translation

(Efe use that honey to make it)-----→Free Translation

[rue]-----→[Fold]-----→ Pragmatic sense of interpretation in context A

[rue]-----→[Make/Do]-----→ Conventional thought of interpretation in context B.

(c). Ya suen eken na ya gue ere.

[GO MIX SAND THE TO COVER IT] ----→ Lexical Translation

[[Go and mix the sand to cover it]] -----→ Literal Translation

(Go and start the sand to cover it)-----→Free Translation

[sue]-----→[Mix] ----→ For the guild's interpretation in context A

[suen]-----→[start] ----→ For the commoners interpretation in context B

(d). Do mue ona na ya khion ye erhen.

[AUX CARRY ATRWORK THIS IN HEAT PUT FIRE] -----→ Lexical Translation:

[[Aux carry this artwork and heat it on the fire]]------→ Literal Translation:

(Aux carry [LG] and [LG] in fire)-----→Free Translation:

[khion]-----→ [Heat] -----→ For the guild's interpretation in context A

[Ona]-----→[Artwork] -----→ For the guild's interpretation in context B.

[khion]-----→[LG] -----→ For the commoners interpretation in context A

[Ona]-----→[LG] -----→ For the commoners interpretation in context B.

(e). Osagie mue iwina ne o rre uwe erhen rre ovien ne.

[OSAZE CARRY WORK THAT IS INSIDE FIRE BRING COOKED HAS]----→ Lexical Translation:

[[Osaze bring the work that is on the fire it is already cooked]]----→ Literal Translation:

(Osaze carry the work that is on the fire [LG] already):-→ Free Translation:

[Ovien]-----→[Cooked] -----For the guild's interpretation in context A

[Ovien]-----→[Slave]-----For the commoners interpretation in context B.

(f). Mue iwina nii ye uvun na **sai**.

[PUT WORK THAT IN HOLE SO CASTED] -----→ Lexical Translation:

[[Put that work in the hole so we can cast it]]-----→ Literal Translation:

(Put that work in the hole so we can burst it)-----→ Free Translation:

[sai]-----→[Casted] -----→ Pragmatic sense of interpretation in context A

[sai]-----→[Bust]-----→ Conventional thought of interpretation in context B.

(g). Etinosa ye olima do ya suen ya **nwien** ona na.

[ETIOSA USE FILE TO DO START THE ARTWORK]-----→ Lexical Trans:

[[Etinosa use the file to start scraping or shining the artwork]]---→ Literal Tran:

(Etiosa use the file to start and squeeze the artwork)-----→ Free Trans:

[nwien]--→[Scraping & Shining] --→ For the guild's interpretation in context A

[nwien]-----→[squeeze] -----→ For the commoners in context B.

(h). Ya mue ***ona*** ni ne rre evba nu **kaloi** erhan ne rre vba kua.

[GO CARRY ART THE THAT IS THERE AND REMOVE WOODEN THAT IS THERE AWAY]-----→ Lexical Trans:

[[Go and carry the artwork that is there and remove the wooden rubbish therein away]]-----→
Literal Translation:

(Go and carry the [LG] there and [LG] the wood therein away)--→ Free Trans:

[kaloi]-----→[remove] -----→ For the guild's interpretation in context A

[kaloi]-----→[LG]-----→ For the commoners interpretation in context B.

[Ona]-----→[Artwork]-----→Pragmatic sense of interpretation in context A

[Ona]-----→[LG]-----→Conventional thought of interpretation in context B.

(i). Wa guooghoe eken ne ore rhoo na mie eke na beghe emwi na sai.

[SUBJ+PL BREAK SAND THAT IS THERE SO THAT WE SEE THING WE CASTED] -

→Lex Translation:

[[Subjs+Pl break the sand that is there so that we can see the casted object]]:- --→Literal Translation:

(Subj+Pl break the sand that is there so that we can see the thing that we bursted): Free Translation:

[sai]-----→[casted] ----→ For the guild's interpretation in context A

[sai]-----→[burst]-----→ For the commoners interpretation in context B.

(j). Vue Ona nii ladian vbe oto.

[EXUME ARTWORK THAT OUT IN GROUND]-----→ Lexical Trans:

[[Exhume the artwork from the ground]] -----→Literal Translation:

(Rootout the artwork from the ground)-----→Free Translation:

[vue]-----→[exume]----→ For the guild's interpretation in context A

[vue]-----→[rootout]-----→ For the commoners interpretation in context B.

(k). Ze eken rre vbe vba ni ya gbe akpa.

[TAKE SAND COME IN THERE TO BEAT/KILL COIL]-----→Lexical Trans:

[[PICK SAND FROM THERE TO SPREAD THE COIL]] -----→Literal Trans:

(Pick Sand From There To Beat The Coil) :-----→ Free Translation:

[gbe]-----→[spread] -----→ For the guild's interpretation in context A

[gbe]-----→[beat/kill] -----→ For the commoners interpretation in context B.

This communications are used in special senses pragmatically, though in different contexts patterned in line with the particular activities engaged in by the guild at any point in time. These constructs which are evidence of the bronze casters line of linguistic communication are variants of the common Edo used by other people and contextual in nature. This is because the real meaning of the thought conveyed in the text is external to the text itself so the text is just a physical envelope conveying the thought or idea expressed by the members of the guild.

Igun Ogbelaka (Guild of Royal Musicians/Dancers)

This guild consist of professionals in the performative art of singing, drumming and dancing, it is made up of active men who are the royal musicians. They perform only for the Oba ‘King’ in his palace during event or ceremonies as well as annual festivals which are usually marked in the palace like: Ugie Emọbọ, Ugie Iguọba, Ugie Odoodua and Ugie Urhoo. This guild is thought to perform in these festivals alongside another guild (not considered in the present study) ‘Ihogbe’ who are also present in these festivals except that of Odoodua. This last festival is performed by the Ogbelaka guild alongside the Osa and Osuan (two palace chiefs that normally holds the hands of the Oba during ceremonies. Chief Obamwonyi is the head of this guild, the guild is made up of sixteen groups including Eleha, Eso Izegbo, Ewa, Ikpewini, Nekighudu, Oghagua and Igbe uzu, comprising the following Chiefs: Ohoba, Agbomwonba, Oyarioba, Obamẹdo ne Ogbelaka and Efesoghọba as a collective effort. Such pragmatic use of language which is functional to their profession is in line with the following linguistic expressions shown below:

6 (a). Wa ***fie emwi***

[hit drum]-----→ LXT

[[Hit the drum]]-----→LT

(Drive the drum)-----→ FT

[Fie]-----→ ***[Hit]***-----→ Pragmatic sense of interpretation in context A (Guild Edo)

[Emwi]-----→ ***[Drum]***-----→ Pragmatic sense of interpretation in context A

Fie]-----→ ***[Drive]***-----→ Conventional thought of interpretation in context B (Common Edo)

[Emwi]-----→ ***[Something]***-----→ Conventional thought of interpretation in context B.

(b). Wa ***de obo yi***.

[subj+pl stop drum]---- -----→LXT

[[Subj+Pl stop the drum]]-----→LT

(Subj+Pl hold your hands)-----→FT

[De obo yi]--→ ***[Stop the drum]***--→ Pragmatic sense of interpretation in context A (GE)

[De obo yi]→ ***[Hold the hands]***→ Conventional thought of interpretation in context B (CE)

(c). Ovbie ***obo*** ne ***oguan***.

[praises effect efficacy of drums]-----→ LXT

[[Praises of effect and efficacy of the drum]]-----→LT

(The child of the speaking hand)-----→FT

[Obo ne guan]---→ ***[Effective drum]***--→ Interpretation of special sense in context A (GE)

[Obo ne guan]--→[Speaking hand]--→Interpretation of common sense in context B (CE)

(d). Gię ima do se ode ọghe**ogbe**.

[letsus come go road of house] -----→LXT

[[Lets go to the house]]-----→LT

(Lets us go to the inner section of the palace)-----→FT

[Ogbe]-----→**[House]**-----→Pragmatic sense of interpretation in context A (GE)

[Ogbe]→**[Inner section of the palace]**→Conventional thought of interpretation in context A

This conversation involves a guild supervisor and some apprentices after getting an assignment involving a particular iron work from the palace. It will be observed that in some instances there is no direct equivalence of the guild term in the common Edo thereby constituting what is known in lexical semantics as a ‘Lexical Gap (LG)’ as in b-e. It is believed that these lexical items and the resultant LG in the corresponding common Edo version is an aspect of functional variation between the guild and the common Edo usage as these items are parts of the lexicon of the Ugboha guild practitioners. While these expressions are generally used to obscure the activities of the guild from the eyes of the general guild, they also represent a demonstration of the professional outlook of their work.

As mentioned before now, the overriding reason for this usage is the cultural constraint on the activities of the guilds being disclosed to other members of the society (Edo and non-Edo alike) who are not members of the guilds.

There was a special emphasis on the fact that the guilds are distinct social groups in the Edo society who are directly responsible to the **Omọ Ne Oba**. In line with this therefore a positive ethnolinguistic identity is being portrayed as the monarchy to who the guilds are affiliated is held in high esteem by the Edo people thereby giving the guild the reverence they get from the populace. The respondents also went on to say that the guilds’ products are only for the Oba and not for the public as this will constitute a breach of tradition hence the ideological constrain of the group.

Conclusion

We have shown in this study the creative use of the Edo language by the guilds of Ugboha, Eronmwọ and Ogbelaka as illustrated. It was also shown that the lexical variation between the guilds interaction and the average Edo discourse is one of professional variation which is necessitated by the need to mystify the activities of these professional bodies in the society as units of the socio-cultural and political institutions in place. It has also been observed that the existence of the guild is a case for the presence of a variety of Edo language since the guild as a professional social group disguise their activities from the members of the public and one of the

ways to do this effectively is to employ a means of communicating that is not comprehensible to others who are not members of the guild.

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