

Chapter Twelve

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN ADVERTISEMENT: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Thecla Udemmadu

Abstract

Indigenous language is one of the veritable implements for advertising businesses in Nigeria particularly in the South-East Geo-Political Zone. This research piece attempts to explore the relationship between language (particularly Igbo language) and promotion of enterprises information dissemination in Nigeria. Some local jingles from Radio Nigeria Purity F.M. Awka, and some billboard advertisements displayed around Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka Permanent site and Arroma round-about would be analysed so as to discover some linguistic features that help in promoting businesses and information. The findings of this research were that illiteracy in the mother tongue is a major factor militating against achieving desired goals of advertising in indigenous language, that if indigenous languages are accorded their appropriate status the masses and advertisers would benefit more. It is hoped that the result of this academic exercise would help our political leaders to re-order their priorities in order to promote sustainable development in Nigeria through indigenous language.

Introduction

Indigenous languages are those languages spoken by the natives of the language. Indigenous language possesses all the qualities of a natural language and performs all the functions of a language. According to Owens (391), A language is a complex and dynamic system of conventional symbols that is used in various modes for thought and communication. Language evolves within specific historical, social, and cultural contexts. Language, as a rule governed behaviour, is described by at least five parameters- phonologic, morphologic, syntactic, and pragmatic. Language learning and use are determined by the intervention of biological, cognitive, psychosocial and environment factors. Effective use of language for communication requires a broad understanding of human interaction including such associated factors as nonverbal cues, motivation, and socio-cultural roles.

The Concept of Advertising

According to Okoro (93), the term advertising “originated from the Latin word ‘ad vertere’ which means, ‘to turn the mind towards’.” Quoting Bovee and Arens (1982), “Advertising is the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually identified with a sponsor through various media.”

Advertising is a form of communication through media about products, services or ideas paid for by an identified sponsor. (APCON code of Advertising Practice 1993)

Department of Igbo, African and Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

It is any printed, written or spoken pictured representation of a person, product, service or movement, openly sponsored by the advertiser and at his expense for the purpose of influencing sales, use, votes or endorsement (according to Advertising Age 1932, in Okoro 2005)

In his own words Cook (9) defines advertising as “the promotion of goods or services for sale through impersonal media…… the crucial feature which distinguishes advertisements from relate genres is their function, which is always to persuade people to buy a particular product.”

Crystal (63) says that the world of advertising make a great use of the economical impact and freshness of pun. (e.g. the slogan for n new kind of adhesive, ‘Our word is your bond’)

Importance of Advertising

Advertising is very important for the growth of any economy and for public awareness. It helps to expose, publicise and promote the sales of products. It helps to create awareness and to enlighten the populace to catch up with government’s new programmes and innovations on self reliance. There is no gain saying that the world economy would grind to a halt if advertisement ceases to exist. More so, the governed would be ignorant if they are not keep in abreast of the government earmarked programmes. Cook (1) remarks, “In a world beset by social and environmental problems, advertising can be seen as urging people to consume more by making them feel dissatisfied or inadequate, by appeal or greed, worry and ambition.”

Therefore advertising, to a great extent, helps in selling commodities and ideas to the public, thereby enhancing the individual’s wealth in particular and the nation’s economy in general.

Language and Advertising

It is merely stating the obvious to mention that enlightenment cannot be devoid of language. The language can be written, body language or spoken language. according to Crystal (390-391), The aim of advertising is to draw people’s attention to a product, service, or idea in order to sell it. Whether we are shopping, reading the paper, going to work, watching television, or simply having a leisure time, we cannot avoid coming in contact with advertisement. They come in an extraordinary range of forms and contexts. The largest and most noticeable group belong to commercial consumer advertising; but there are also such categories as trading advertising (from manufacturer to retailers), retail advertising (from shops to consumers), prestige advertising (e.g. by government department), classify advertising (wants ads, house sales, etc.), and direct mailing. This activities involve posters, signs, notices, showcards, samples, circular, catalogues, labels, wrapping paper, price tags, tickets, footballers shirts, and other devices. The ears can be assailed as well as the eyes, with slogans, jingles, street cries, loudspeaker messages, and the range of auditory effects heard in

radio and television advertising. In most cases, it is the visual content and design of an advert that makes the initial impact and cause people to take notice of it. But in order to get people to identify the product, remember its name (or at least make them feel that it is familiar), and persuade them that it is worth buying, adverts rely almost totally on the use of language. Both elements, psychological and linguistic, are essential: they combine to produce a single ‘brand image’ of a product.

Since advertisements rely almost totally on the use of language, it is very crucial to consider the target audience in the process of selecting the language for an advertisement. The language must be palatable and acceptable to the audience for effective and productive communication.

Raman and Sharma (2) define communication as, “The exchange of information, ideas and knowledge between sender and receiver through an accepted code. It is effective only when the receiver receives the message intended by the sender in the same perspective. Otherwise, it is miscommunication.” Below is an illustration of how message moves from a sender and gets to the receiver:

sender	<i>Message encoded</i>	Sent message	receiver	<i>Channel</i>	Received message	<i>Message decoded</i>	response
--------	------------------------	--------------	----------	----------------	------------------	------------------------	----------

The *sender* encodes the *message* and sends it through a *channel*. This channel is nothing but the **language used** – words, actions, signs, objects, or a combination of these. The *receiver* receives the message, decodes it, and acts on it. If the message received is the same as the message sent, there will be a *response*; if not, there has been a breakdown communication.

This shows that the channel in the illustration is of paramount importance. The channel, which is the language used must, be very adequate for the audience or receiver of the message to respond positively.

The transmission of the receiver’s response to the sender is called the feedback. Feedback is essential as it is the barometer of effective communication. If you are sending a message to somebody, your communication cycle is complete only when you get a response from the recipient of your message. (Raman and Sharma, 3)

Therefore, the language of the audience or addressee in question will be properly harnessed. Most of the citizens dwell in the rural areas/communities. If this is the case, there is no gain saying that the advertisers of businesses devise the use of indigenous languages of the audience for the promotion of their products.

On this note, Goddard (4) mentions two important things to be considered when advertising, “first is what is being advertised- a product, an idea, an image. Second, who is being addressed? One major aspect which should be given some detailed thought to your collection of advertisement is the notion of audience.”

It is a well established fact that effective communication is made possible with the help of appropriate language. All the messages of advertisement is passed across to the people through the use of language. The use of foreign languages to communicate ideas most of the time does not yield enough fruitful result considering the fact that most rural dwellers are illiterates /semi illiterates and might not comprehend exactly the ideas being communicated. This might be why Sambe (87) notes,

There is a very high rate of illiteracy in most communities of Nigeria. This obviously hinders the rural newspapers from performing their role of rural development. The language used by the papers, which is often foreign, has also not helped matters. There is need to use local languages as much as possible when and where possible.

Majority of the rural dwellers do not fancy reading national dailies. The problem newspaper is having in the rural areas is also applicable to advertising with foreign languages for the rural dwellers. Still more, most of the adverts are carried in newspaper. So, one who cannot digest news in the national dailies cannot equally decode the information of the advertisements.

One should not lose sight of the fact that language is an embodiment of the people’s culture. Language can never be detached from culture. So, the belief, norms and values of the target community must not be violated in advertisements.

According to Adekunle (240), “There is no doubt, however, that there is a correlation between the form and content of language and beliefs, values and needs present in the culture of its speakers. The vocabulary of a language provides us with a catalogue of things to import to the society.”

For an advert to be well registered in the minds of the addressee, the language must be well understood. Goddard (3) has this to say, “Although advertisements are ephemeral in that each one is short-lived, their effects are longstanding and cumulative: they leave traces of themselves behind, which combine to form a body of messages about the culture that produced them. For adverts to work, they must use our commonly shared resources of language in ways that benefit us and mean something to us.”

Understanding a message is very vital for proper reaction/ response because meaning is a matter of encoding and decoding. By making appropriate choices and combinations a person

who knows the system (the language) encodes his or her thoughts into words and transmits them to another person (in possession of the same language) who decodes them, thus recovering the original meaning. (Cook, 67)

For an effective communication and for a positive impact, the language of imparting the message must be addressee centred.

The intricate social relevance, deep cultural involvement, and human relatedness of language as the basis of social action could be seen in its role in interpersonal and inter-group cooperation. It is in this context that we become conscious of the fact that language is not just merely a mistress of its users, it is undetachably married to us in a way one side of a coin is married to the other. In other words, language is part and parcel of the social man, and his many varied interests, aspirations and activities.... This is why a native endoglossic or local, or an alien exoglossic or external language has to adapt to the socio-cultural context in order to serve the community. (Adekunle, 240)

The use of language cuts across all facets of life. Every discipline makes use of language. Adekunle (241) points out that “The potentials are available and are frequently exploited, most of the time, unconsciously by every user of language including the engineer, and the media man, the scientist, and the philosopher, the military as well as the manufacturer, the farmer as well as the **advertising agent, the salesman** as well as the truck driver.” Advertisement and language go hand in hand because adverts cannot exist in isolation without language. This is why there is advertising language. Bussmann (8) says that advertising language is a persuasive use of language aimed at influencing people’s behaviour in politics, business, and especially in consumption. Pragmatic features of advertising language includes its persuasive intention, its communicative distance to various addressees, and its distinctive use of certain expressions such as elliptical comparatives (25% less car-that what?), complex comparatives (more car less money), and adjectivizations (money taste). Owing to its characteristic register, advertising language is readily recognizable as such by consumers. Advertising language is innovative (e.g. in the formative of new words) on the one hand and functions as a means of language distribution between different language groups (technical language becoming standard language). On the other hand, it confirms and reinforces existing social norms and social stereotypes.

This is because language is part and parcel of man’s daily activities. The cultural background of a people is so intertwined with the bases of their existence. The above elements of culture are embedded in language. So, what in practice language does in any cultural context is to mark among other things the system of usage.

Indigenous language in Advertisement

Indigenous language can be said to be the language of a particular locality. In most cases the inhabitants or the language community have it as their mother-tongue. And the language is pre-dominantly part and parcel of the culture of the community.

Indigenous language is synonymous with mother tongue. In other words it is the speech form of the natives within a speech community. The language must emanate from the inhabitants and must not be alien to them.

According to Chumbow (63), "The mother tongue is also the means by which orientation in the cultural environment is made. When it is considered that language is closely related to culture in that it is an expression of common cultural experience of the members of the linguistic community who speak it, this point underscores the socio-cultural value of language to man. Given the psychological and socio-cultural importance of language to man, it follows that the mother-tongue, as the first language learned by the child to express his ideas about himself and about the world in which he lives, will tend to have a certain psychological and socio-cultural effect on the child." Owens (453) sees language as a socially shared code or conventional system for representing concepts through the use of arbitrary symbols and rule-governed combinations of those symbols. Each language has its native speakers. To the native speakers the language might be the language of the immediate environment or their mother tongue. Malmkjer notes that mother tongue is "the stronger language at any time of life; the 'mother tongue' of the area or country; the language most used by a person; the language to which a person has the more positive attitude and affection".

Suffice it to say that when one is talked to in the language he understands, the message makes more impact. This is why it is very expedient to use the indigenous languages in advertisement.

The long and short of the argument is that for advertisement to be meaningful and yield fruitful result, the target audience must be considered. In considering the addressee, his aspiration, belief, norms and values must not be at stake. And these cultural values are encompassed in his language. And the language must be the one he is at home with; the one he understands with ease.

Indigenous language is also very important in advertisement because the words and details of adverts often come to people's mind readily. People can easily recall and recite those adverts consciously and unconsciously.

Cook (10) states, "There are instances of genres, such as poems or songs, which become ads by being used in a particular way (a process which may be reversible,

di gi nakwa enyi gi, ezinaulo gi dum ihunaanya·	18
A dighikwa akwu geeti fii obula· Nne Ngozika	19
kulie ka anyi gaa Toristi Gadin Hotelus Limitedi,	20
Oka, maka satode na sonde· I ma na o ga-adi	21
behuge ebe ahu· Livu intatenumenti shoo niiii	22

Cue out with music- sanigago ebe ahu

C) Oluchukwu Micro-Finance Bank

Music- Oluchukwu, eee Oluchukwu, eee Oluchukwu, Micro-Finance Bank

Voice- Ewo! umunne m na umunna m	1
Igbo kwuru okwu si na,	2
‘A gbara aka na-azo ala, o ji ji ana-akonye’	3
O bu ya ka e jiri tiputa odugwu	4
Micro-Finance Bank bu Oluchukwu Micro-Finance Bank	5
Oluchukwu Micro-Finance Bank nwere	6
Saving Account, Current Account, Fixed-deposit Account	7
I choro izigara mmadu ego maobu ka e zitere gi ego?	8
Oluchukwu ga-eme nke a n’otu ntabi anya.	9
Oluchukwu Micro-Finance Bank gbasara aka inyere ndi	10
Mmadu aka n’uzo di iche iche.	11
Ha na-agbazinye ma nwoke ma nwaanyi, ndi nkuzi,	12
Ndi olu ugbo, ndi olu oyibo ego.	13
Ekwula si,	14
A gbaa mbu o tuo n’ogwe, a gbaa abuo o tuo n’ogwe.	15
Kulie ozugbo gawa n’Oluchukwu Micro-Finance Bank	16
Ha nwere isi ulo olu na ‘Basilica Square’	17
Mission Road Onicha.	18
Oluchukwu Micro-Finance Bank nwekwara ngalaba na	19
12 New Market Road Onicha	20
SS John and Paul Awada, Onicha,	21
St. Jude Parish Fegge, Onicha,	22
St. Anthony Parish Mkpoo Junction	23
Oluchukwu Micro-Finance Bank bu egwu e ji n’ihe	24
Gbasaara banking.	25

Cue out

Some adverts from bill-boards placed round some strategic places in Awka

- i. Olu oma Gov. Peter Obi na Anambra State
- ii. Anambra adigo mma

Nye aka ka o dim ma

- iii. Onye isi obodo Nigeria
Ndi Anambra na si gi nnoo

Analysing the language of the above advertisements

Analyses of advertising style by linguists have drawn attention to certain salient features. Obviously, the language is generally laudatory, positive, unreserved, and emphasising the uniqueness of a product, example from the above transcribed adverts:

In the advert 'A' Whiz oil the following linguistic features are observed:

The advertiser used proverb in 'line 1' *Ogoli luo di abuo o mara nke ka mma* meaning that when a woman marries two husbands she would conclude who is better among them. Showing that when one uses whiz oil and other oils he must know which one is better. This proverb helped to show how much the Igbos value proverbs. Nwadike (28) quoting Egudu (1977) says that proverbs are employed in communication for the purpose of embellishment and reinforcing the power of argument. Obiechina (157) notes that as well as conveying linguistic reality, proverbs can become an artistic device for giving complexity to narrative, unity of form, coherence and pattern to action, and direction to moral and social insight. They can also indicate force and resourcefulness of character; the strong mind can manipulate the repertory of proverb to its own advantage.

In lines 2-7 the advertiser used overstatement when it says 'ndi ozo ahutaghi breaklight whiz oli anya ncha ncha... Also, the importation of an English expression in line 7 'brake light' is linguistically known as 'code-mixing'.

In line 11 'eke nwe ohia' is personification. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1054) says that personification 'is the representation of a thing or a quality as a person'. The use of personification is seen in line 15 'Injin gin wee ogologo ndu' meaning that your engine will have a long life. Engine is an inanimate object, and so should not have long life not to talk about long life.

Line 15 the expression 'sambeya sambeya' is an idiophone used for rhythmic effect.

Line 17 has another importation of a foreign expression 'I pass my neighbour'. It is a pidgin slang, therefore, there is a code-mixing in that line.

Line 20 has an overstatement where it says 'ebe ndi ozo na-aghoru mmiri mgbe oku chara ya'. The advertiser is trying to promote his own product by demoting, condemning and using derogatory words for other people's own.

Line 24 that 'Whiz oil' bu 'oka ibe is metaphoric.

Advert B Tourist Garden

Some linguistic features were also observed.

Line 1 the expression 'Elee' is an exclamation for drawing people's attention.

Line 6 ‘Okokorokoooo’ is an idiophone for rhythmic effect.

Lines 11-12 ‘A ga-ewepukwa pasenti iri ato na ato na rum obula kwa satode’ is an elliptical comparative. According to Bussmann (9), ‘Pragmatic fetures of advertising language include its persuasive intention, its communicative distance to various addressees, and its distinctive use of certain expressions such as elliptical comparatives (25 percent less car- than what?).’

Line 21-22 has innovative that is formation of new word. The new formed word is ‘behuge’. This word is not an Igbo word and cannot be found in any Igbo dictionary. It was coined by the advertiser. The word is idiophonic for rhythmic effect. Bussmann (9) avers that , Advertising language is innovative (e.g. in the formation of new words) on the one hand and functions as a means of language distribution between different language groups (technical language becoming standard language). On the hand, it confirms and reinforces existing social norms and social stereotypes.

Advert C Oluchukwu Micro-Finance

The following stylistic features are observed:

Line 1 ‘Ewoo!’ is an exclamation to draw the attention of the listener. In the same

Line 1 the use of ‘Umunne m na umunna m’ is politeness to appeal to people’s mind. Schmitt (80) writes that, ‘Politeness principle is to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place.

Line 3 ‘ A gbara aka na-azo ala, o ji ji ana-akonye. This is an Igbo proverb. The importance in as in Obiechina, 1975, Nwachukwu, 2009 above.

lines 1 and 2 *n’ihina otutu ndi nwere ugboala, ndi mekanik, ndi injinia na ndi okada atulego whiz……na nke ndi ozo mere wee choputa na nke ndi ozo ahutaghi breek liti ndi whiz anya chaa chaa* meaning that drivers, mechanics, engineers and cyclists have compared whiz products with others and discovered that whiz is far better than others. In ad2 line 8 *I ga- enwetekwa ohere n’erimere odinaala anyi jiri karia ndi ozo* meaning ‘You will discover how our local dishes is far much better than others’

The vocabulary tends to be vivid and common. Figurative expressions are commom as in ad 1 line 1 – *Ogoli luo di abuo o mara nke ka ya mma* meaning when a woman marries two husbands she will discover who among them is better.

Rhythm, rhyme, and other phonetic effects are noticeable for instance-*sambeya sambeya* in ad 1, *okokolonkoo, behuge kajara akaja* in ad 2 are there for rhythmic effect.

The major linguistic features of the above jingles are the use metaphors, exaggerations and onomatopoeia. There is grammatical constructions, which lend an air of vagueness and thus safety to the claim for the product for instance- in ad 1 line

11 and 14 *ihe whiz ji wee karisia bu-----* meaning whiz is better than others because---- and *whiz oyili bu oka ibe* meaning that whiz oil is superior to others.

Democracy

Democracy in a simplest language is the government of the people by the people for the people. Chukwuokolo in Odimegwu (2008:107) states that the etymology of the concept of democracy owes its ancestry to two Greek words: 'demo' with its variants of meaning as 'the people', 'the masses' or 'the mob' and 'kratein': which means 'the rule'. Hence, demokratia means the rule by the people or masses or the mob.

One can then say that democracy is the type of governance whereby the governed are governed by themselves. This means that the masses participate actively in the decision-making of their community.

The democratic setting of Nigeria comprises of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The first two positions are supposed to be made up reputable individuals duly elected by the masses following a well constituted electoral process.

Democracy and small scale businesses

Democracy in Nigeria in the last ten years has contributed a lot in the promotion of small scale businesses. The Obasanjo administration of 1999 which marked the beginning of another round of democratic rule after about sixteen years of uninterrupted military rule tried in different ways to encourage small scale industries.

First was the communication sphere which he did by the welcome of GSM business in Nigeria. This in no small measure has been helping unemployed people, graduates and non graduates to gainfully employed and self-reliant without casting all their hopes in white collar jobs which is not even forthcoming.

Government in this democratic dispensation is empowering people in small scale businesses through skill training acquisition, after which the trainees are given soft loans through micro-finance banks and cooperatives. With this scheme most farmers have benefited, some people have engaged themselves in fish farming, poultry, palm oil production, soap making, garri industry and host of others. For instance, right now in Anabra State the wife of the executive governor of the state Her Excellency, Mrs. Margarate Obi is visiting all the seventy-seven rural communities mobilising their women to form cooperatives and engage in small scale businesses.

Even in the transport sector people have been empowered to be self reliant. This could be seen in the introduction of NAPEP scheme which involves the tricycle transportation known as KEKE NAPEP. This has being helping majority of Nigerians to earn their living comfortably.

Conclusion

Small scale enterprises if well nurtured can grow up to a large scale industry. To handle it well, one major means is through enlightenment programs. The awareness programs would be more efficacious only when appropriate language is devised. The appropriate language for promoting businesses situated in the local area is the language of the speech community that is the language they understand well; their indigenous language. The government plans on the promotion of the small scale industries for self-reliance can be very effective when the populace is fully enlightened. And a comprehensive awareness can be done by communicating to the people in their own language, no wonder Mrs. Obi the wife of the governor of Anambra state was forcing herself to speak Igbo language during the visits to rural communities. The democracy in Nigeria can develop a strong taproot when people are empowered to develop themselves economically. The political office holder should always encourage the use of indigenous languages because it makes the government policies, programs and ideas to penetrate to the grass root.

Reference

- Adekunle, M (1990), *Language in Multicultural Context* in Emenanjo, E. (Ed) *Multilingualism, Minority Language and Language Policy in Nigeria*. Agbor: Central Books. pp.239-247
- Chukwuokolo, C. (2008), *Democracy in Nigerian Development* in Odimegwu, I. (Ed) *Nigerian Democracy and Global Democracy*. Awka: Fab Educational Book. pp. 106-123
- Chumbow, B. (1990), *The Place of the Mother Tongue in National Education*, in Emenanjo, E. (Ed) *Multilingualism, Minority Language and Language Policy In Nigeria*. Agbor : Central Books. pp.61-72
- Cook, G. (2001), *The Discourse of Advertising*. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group
- Crystal, D. (1987), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Fasua, K. (2006), *Entrepreneurship Theory, Strategies and Practice*. Jos: Larigraphic Printers
- Goddard, A. (2002), *The Language of Advertising*. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group
- Olise, M. (2006), *The Nature of Small Scale business*. a mimeograph
- Okoro, N. (2005), *Career Prospects in Advertising* in Nwosu, I., Aliede, J. and Nsude, I, (Eds.), *Mass Communication One Course, Many Professions*. Enugu: Prime Target. pp.93-96
- Sharma Raman, M. and, S (2004), *Technical Communication Principle and Practice*. India: Oxford University Press
- Sambe, S. (2005), *Rural Press as Agent of Development: Gains and Challenges*, in Nwosu, I., Aliede, J. and Nsude, I(Eds.) *Mass Communication One Course, Many Professions*. pp. 93-96

*Tonal variations constitute semantic
change in tone languages.*