THE SOCIOLOGY OF LANGUAGE USE IN MOTOR PARK

By.

Adewole A. Alagbe

Department of English
Nasarawa State University, Keffi

and

Abraham A. David

Department of Lnguages and Linguistics
Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Abstract

Udofot (1998) defines language as a tool with which people from the same and related community interact and express their thoughts and feelings to one another. Similarly, Lyons (1970:326) defines a speech community as people who use a given language (or dialect) and need not have any social or cultural unity. It is based on this that a motor park qualifies as a speech community. The crux of this paper is to analyse language use in Keffi Motor Park using some socio-linguistics concepts and how it affects the language use of the surrounding environments. The Motor Park is a multilingual speech community because people of different backgrounds patronize it. This same people tend to use English differently such that sometimes it reflects mother tongue interference or class status distinction. Other indigenous languages like Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Mada, Gwandara, Eggon, e.t.c. co-exist with English language. The observation and eavesdropping technique was used in gathering data from the motor park. The data proved that English language has an upper hand in the Keffi motor park which also functions as the country's lingua franca. Even if any indigenous language is to be spoken the speakers tend to use English language along with it by borrowing and code mixing.

INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, language is a medium through which human beings communicate with one another. It is an important tool to man because it differentiates humans from animals because animals communicate through mimes, sounds and gestures. Language is indeed a pan-human development and a behavioural aspect of human beings which makes it a point of differentiation from animals. Udofot (1998) defines language as a means by which people from the same and related community interact and express their thoughts and feelings to one another. This infers that without language, man will have a problem to express his needs and emotions. Similarly, the Merriam Websters Dictionary and Thesaurus defines language as a

systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings. Language is a purely human and non-instinctive way of communicating ideas, emotions and desires, by means of voluntarily produced symbols. It is also defined as a system of arbitrary and vocal symbols which permit all people in a given culture to communicate and interact. Any language is fundamentally a series of sounds which become meaningful only when these sounds are grouped together in certain definite arrangements. It can be seen in the above definitions of language, which collectively elucidate the fact that the main aim of language evolved out of the need for men to communicate; the ultimate function of language is communication.

The term sociolinguistics has defined itself, i.e. Sociology + Linguistics, as "the study of interaction between language and the structure and functioning of society (Crystal, 1987:421). It is for instance, concerned with the significant correlation between social class background (be it lower, middle and higher class) age, education or gender with language use that is, the extent to which language use is related to social identity.

In the same vein, Trudgill (1974) defines sociolinguistics as a part of linguistics in which the preoccupation is with language seen as a social phenomenon i.e. language shaping the society and culture: the society and culture shaping language, in addition to language being a window to his socio-cultural heritage of a people. On his part, Hymes (1974), conceptualizes it as the relationship between system of communication, especially linguistics system, and the social situation in which they are used and that the social situation is frequently analyzed in terms of three components namely; setting, participant and purpose.

The inferred meaning from the above is that socio-linguistics as a discipline is chiefly about the study of language as an instrument of communication in relation to the affection it receives from the society in all ramifications of its use. Sociolinguistics is therefore a field of linguistics that studies the various ways of using language in society, as well as the various ways through which society conditions such uses. Sociolinguistics from the above points of view is the study of language from the society or social perspective.

The motor park kind of language has its unique style, and it is the aim of this paper to find out and bring to light this language use by observation and eavesdropping techniques using two motor parks as study areas. The study areas are Keffi and Nasarawa Central Motor Parks. The observation comprises the drivers, the conductors, passengers, touts and hawkers.

Language also shows two social differentiations amongst its speakers, that is the way an individual speaks reflects his personality. The difference in the way people speak can be as a result of age, wealth, education, social class. residence, geography, sex, topic, personality etc.

Language performs phatic function. Man uses language to communicate social experience in order to cement social relationship. For example, when language is used to greet, it is performing a phatic function (for social solidarity) rather than informative. Language can also be used for aesthetics purposes. In poetry for example, man manipulates words in the same way he might mould clay or paint picture. In this case, language serves as a purpose of self-expression. Previously the example on the popular Lagos "Danfo bus" language is aesthetic and creates humour: earlier the last available space in the bus was called or referred to as "one chance" but is now reframed to "one yansh" which sounds humorous and indecent. As it is normal to people to embrace new things and changes, people now prefer to call it with the latter name.

LANGUAGE SITUATION IN THE MOTOR PARK

The motor park is a multilingual and multi-cultural speech community. As a multilingual speech community there are three or more languages in use. It is also a speech community where apart from indigenous languages, foreign ones also compete with the culture of these indigenous languages. There is no doubt that English language plays a dominant role in the motor park. The language use in the motor park depends on the environment within which the park is situated. For instance, if the park is situated within a Hausa environment like Keffi, the dominant language that operates here is the major language in the environment, which is Hausa. What obtains then is that the minor languages within the environment such as Alago, Afo, Eggon, Fulfulde, Mada, Nyanka, Koro e.t.c are used in minimal level by its speakers. Besides these, there are in use other Nigerian languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Urobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri e.t.c depending on the presence of the speakers of the language. For instance in the case of Hausa speakers present in the park, such varieties or dialects of Hausa as the Kano, Katsina, Sokoto dialects e.t.c. usually exist. The Kano and Katsina dialects are regarded as the western variety. For Yoruba language, such dialects as Ijesha, Egba, Ondo, Ife, Oke-igboho, and Oyo dialects e.t.c. also exist. For Igbo, such varieties as Ngwa, Onitsha, Igbo-Ukwu, Akwa, and Enugu dialects e.t.c. exist too. Therefore, the motor park is characteristically a multilingual speech community with array of different languages and their different dialects.

Beside indigenous languages, foreign languages are also used in the motor park. English language is a foreign language and has been accorded the status of official language in Nigeria. However, like its indigenous counterparts, English language in the motor park in particular and in Nigeria has its own varieties like the Hausa variety, Igbo variety, Yoruba variety as well as the 'Nigerian English' (NE is an abstraction used as a cover-term to refer to the varieties of English used by Nigerians), British English, American English, Australian English, and Canadian English e.t.c.

Most people in the motor park are bilingual while others are multilingual in nature. Some are English-Hausa bilinguals, English-Yoruba bilinguals, English-Igbo bilinguals, Hausa-Alago bilinguals e.t.c. Some are English-Hausa-Afo multilingual, English-Gwandara-Tiv multilingual, English-Igbo-Yoruba multilingual e.t.c. This is because of the differences in language and culture in the way they view the world. The way a Hausa man views the world may differ from how a Mada or Gbagyi man views it. Above all, because of the differences in languages and cultures used in the motor park, there is no doubt it has an adverse effect on various commercial activities that are practiced in the motor park. The need therefore arises for a common language that will serve as a link among the various languages. To facilitate commercial activities there is the need to have a common medium of communication, which will be easily accessible to everybody. It is therefore, this situation that leads to the emergence of the language phenomenon known as Pidgin, which is regarded as a trade language.

In Keffi and Nasarawa motor parks the need to communicate effectively does not allow for the Hausa language to be used strictly for communication because they are not the only people that participate in the activities of the parks. There are others like the mechanics, the hawkers, the NURTW members, the drivers and conductors as well as the passengers. As a result of the diverse language and the presence of different people from different walks of life there is the need for a language of wider communication. The pidgin language which is a contact language is adopted here but, it is used in a way that it suits the purpose of what the

speaker intends to say. That is speakers code-mix in order to make communication easy because they are not fluent or competent in English. The way a speaker use pidgin in the north will not be the same with the person speaking pidgin in the south because they are not from the same speech community.

Language Choice and Use

In a multilingual setting, individuals exercise freedom of choice in their use of language in different situations. According to Grumperz (1963:119), in many multilingual societies, the choice of one language over another has the same significance as the selection among typical alternatives in linguistically homogenous societies. In other words, Grumperz says rules determining alternation between distinct language varieties may serve the same communicative ends as the selection of rules in not simply a matter of conscious choice. It operates in response to communicative contents like the grammatical choice between, for example, present and past tense verb.

Therefore in choosing among various codes available to speakers of the particular language, a speaker indicates what can be called social meaning. Speakers of any speech community share rules regarding language usage which allow them to interpret the social meaning of alternate linguistic choices. Edward (1971:89) says that bilinguals who do know the appropriate accommodative response in certain social exchanges may be judged unjustifiably by their interlocutors.

Fishman (1972:74) says proper usage dictates that only one of the theoretically available languages will be chosen by particular classes of interlocutors, on particular kinds of occasion like the motor park. A speaker may be taken for a new comer when he chooses to use the 'wrong' 'language on an occasion. The implication of topical regulation of language choice is that certain topics are somehow handled better or more appropriately in one language than in another in a multilingual context. However, this greater appropriateness may reflect or may be brought about by several different but mutually reinforcing factors such as age of speaker, occasion of use, class status; high or low class and so on. Thus some multilingual speakers may acquire the habit of delivering a speech or topic in language XI partially because it is the language in which thy are trained to deal with such topic and partially because they (and their interlocutors) may lack the specialized terms for satisfying the same topic using language Y (Pride:87).

Fishman, (1972:19) and Malinowski (1935:98) say certain socio-culturally recognized spheres of activities are at least temporally under the sway of one language rather than another. Thus while topic is undoubtedly an important consideration in understanding language choice variance, we must seek a means of examining and relating their momentary choices to relatively stable patterns of choice that exist in their multilingual setting as a whole. Ervin and Gumperz (1964:216) have presented many examples of the importance of locale as a determining component of situational analysis. Both role relation and locale are determining factors in language in a bilingual speech community like the motor park.

Language Variation

Hudson (1996) sees variation of language as a set of linguistic items with similar distribution. This leaves us with the general in non-technical terms we call language, dialect or styles. Language varies at different levels. No two people ever interact exactly in the same

learning situations, and consequently there are never two individuals whose language habits are wholly identical. Not only does one person's language differ from every one else but no one speaks exactly the same way at different times in their life: you are unlikely to speak to your boss in the style (or vocabulary) that you had used in talking to a drunk who just rammed your car from behind. This unique way of speaking of members of a community is due to life experience, education, age, aspiration and situation. An individual's personal variation is called an idiolect (Hymes, 1964).

The motor park kind of language is influenced by social class; the position of the speaker in the society measured by the level of education, parental background, profession e.t.c. No matter one's class, one will not use the style one uses to lecture one's students or to talk to a conductor for his change.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Data from Drivers

- Oga please ka biya shi daidai ha aka karba
- No be your turn to do loadi na me they for turn
- Emeka call bicent make him mobe his motor I want to commot
- Kai I no dey gree make passenger drink ciga for my mota gaskiya
- Maman Bola kawo tuwon amala da ewedu
- Nace maka do reverse a hankali no hit my mota
- Shege omo Yoruba you know wai cigarette drinking na danja to your health kuwa? Your month and salansa no banbanci
- Ka dena mana hanging ga road safety a gaba
- I wan go makaniki ga yada mun mota
- Akwai dropping a toal roundabout?
- Ni in nan na kai shekara talatin wallahi talahi ina driving kuma kai, long distance kuwa
- Nna give me petroleum dan Allah passenger na jira a mota ka ji.
- Madan akara kosai hot kuwa?
- Nna shebi they want to do us wayo, they don jam today
- Wallahi nayi timing in yau ne in gyara mota

Data from Conductors

- Oga no vex no more dropping again yanzu Abuja straight ba sa'yawa
- You enter from inna ne?
- Oga bari inje wurin mama fut in ci abina, since morning wallahi
- Tabdi! Pat pat feofle ne hin dey for back ku adjust saura daya na we dey kari por back.
- How far suleja far
- Ai loadin direct inna wani locaci iska ne
- I was sorry I think say na from bariki you enter
- Direba a kunna mana ardio
- Sikira akwai fufu da miyan ogbono kuwa?
- Oga chikudi kedu ya aiki?
- I go chop your father

- Oga na gaya maka leave me with him, ba yana Gadara ba bar shi dan unibashi, inna nan daidai da shi.
- Driver akwai dropping anen junction
- Oga driver biko I no dey hurry abeg
- Na wao driver your car don daboru kpata kpata
- Kar ka zageni akan pipty naira
- Look at this foolish tout don't you ever talk to me in that manner am not your type
- Kamin shiru, kai ma kason na fi karfi fifty naiara, fifty box chicken change ce a wuri na
- Conductor ka bani sauran chanji na fa
- Condasta inan tashen karshen ku.

Data from Touts

- Kai no drink cigari near me fa
- Ina so in drink orange wallahi
- Oremi kawo fiyo water
- Ina wannan yau ya shi ina nemen ka thoughout ban gan ka bai
- Unibasti in nan gen nasu ya kai shekara ashirin da biyar bai tashi ba
- Ke kawo meneras
- Quata minutes, agogon ya nuna danja sau ra ya nuna girin, locacin prayer yayi.
- Zan kai ka cell, dama yanzu akwai rug carpet da tibi da satellite, kai ne zaka fara gani
- Bari mu gudu muje mus
- Ni zani moqueks in izalan kaduna ne ni
- Eka messaji, eni kilori number

Data from Hawkers

- ga kwai da sweet banana aunty in kawo
- Oga ga agogo por sale
- A sayi pure water mai sanyi
- Ga mineras mai sanyi
- Rainin season a sai laiman, laima umbrella magani nruwa
- Buy your hot akara
- Buy your sweet sweet guda biyu fifty naira
- Aunty ga recharge card
- Buy, necklace, warwaro, dan kunne

The above listed language use in the sentences or utterance are from both parks elicited through the observation and eavesdropping of people conversation (drivers, conductors, passengers, touts e,t,c). These are common expressions used in the motor parks. The data is analyzed below using the concepts of interference (phonic or grammatical), code mixing and borrowing.

INTERPRETATION OF LANGUAGE USE IN MOTOR PARK

Grammatical Interference at the Motor Park

At the two model motor parks, that is the central and Nasarawa motor parks, it was observed that at the grammatical level, systems of mother tongue intrude into that of the English language. However, although very common occurrence, grammatical interference at the parks was found to depend largely on the level of competence of the bilingual involved. For instance grammatical interference is not well pronounced among the educated people at the parks but very rampant among the illiterates and the semi- illiterates. For example this is a direct translation of Hausa to English: "Musa, two days wallahi my stomach is very sweet to see you"

(it's been a while since we saw each other, I am very happy to see you"). The speaker has translated the Hausa expression directly into English. Another example is between a Hausa man and an Igbo man. The Igbo man provoked the Hausa man by crashing his car into that of the latter's and also accused the latter of being the cause by refusing to apologize. The Hausa man uttered "I go chop your father' which translates to the Hausa expression "zan ci uban ka."

Another example of grammatical interference among second language learners of the Hausa language found in the data was between a Yoruba man who is a tout and who saw a beautiful girl hawking groundnut and called her by saying:

"kyau yarinya"

Which in English could be interpreted as 'fine girl' but it is grammatically wrong in Hausa because of the absence of an adverb before 'yarinya' – the adverb "mai" to quality "kyau which means beauty or beautiful as the context may be. The correct thing to say is "yarinya mai kau" not translating it directly into the English language as:

English language	Hausa language
fine	– kyau
girl	– yarinya

Though 'fine girl' is correct in English 'kyau yarinya' in Hausa is not. Another of such example is below:

"Do not drink sigari near to me" the above example is a direct translation of the sentence:
Do not smoke near me"

However, because the word "sha" means 'drink', 'smoke', 'soak' e.t.c in Hausa the speaker used it as drink for cigarette in the English language as is used in Hausa. The Hausa sentence is "kada ka sha sigari kusa da ni". The translated sentence is first and foremost ungrammatical but we are not concerned about the ungrammaticality of the sentence, what we are interested is to show how interference affects the language of the motor park.

In Hausa language like the English language or any other language, there are some words that have dual or more meaning for example:

sa - which can mean; were, put, cow etc
This is why we have people saying:
"I want to drink orange"

"Drink" in the sentence should have been "suck".

Similarly in the expression "oga please, no drink ciga inside my motor if you wan drink make you commot do wan for outside" used by a bus driver violates the use of Standard English. The expression relies on the pattern of the indigenous languages.

Code Mixing at the Motor Park

Another language phenomenon that operates at the two motor parks in Keffi is code mixing which is closely related to code switching.

"Yau ka shiga ina ne throughout ban gan ka ba".

In the above sentence the compound word 'throughout' can be replaced with "tundazu".
Another example:

Wannan unibastin gen nasu ya kai
Shekara ashirin da biyar bai tashi ba

Also "Nna biko nyame change"
Here "change" is the code mixed word into the Igbo expression.
"Driver akwai dropping anan junction in", is also a good example of code mixing in use in the motor parks.

Conclusion

The discussion in this paper has shown that the selected motor parks in Keffi and Nasarawa are multi-lingual settings which necessarily encourage the use of sociolinguistic strategies such as code-mixing, code-switching and interference among other things. This, the paper noted, is typical of multi-lingual settings where the over all goal of the interlocutors is communication above all else.

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