

Patterns of Language Preferences of Educated Nigerians: The Case of Yoruba-English Bilinguals

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Abstract

The subject of this thesis is a sociolinguistic study of the language preferences of Yoruba-English Bilinguals. It is an empirical investigation into the motivation which propels Yoruba-English bilinguals in making linguistic choices in various domains. From time immemorial, preference for one language or another has characterized the human condition in linguistically heterogeneous societies. It is quite important for us to establish the indices of these variations and why one language should take pre-eminence over another in social, religious, political, educational and economic domains. Researches such as Akinnaso (1993), Akere (2009) and Ogunnaike and Dunhan (2010), which have given new insight into language preferences are enough to provoke fresh studies on the motivations involved in such language behaviour. This study also intends to fill the gaps in language preference studies; Kurniasih (2005), Arua (2010), and Jabeen (2011) which were carried out in other parts of the world specifically Indonesia, Botswana and Pakistan respectively. This present study builds on the reports of the above and provides fresh insight into language preference phenomenon in the Nigerian setting. It aims to investigate the nature and causes of language Preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals, especially the intervening sociolinguistic variables that underlie such preference. The fieldwork involves a language survey carried out to investigate the usage of English and Yoruba in specified domains as well as the motivations behind it. 800 subjects spread across the South-West and North-Central geo-political zones of the country where the Yoruba language is spoken were used for the study. Findings show that many Yoruba-English bilinguals display unmistakable preference for the English language in the formal domain while language ambivalence occurs where language preferences become situationally variable.

Keywords: Language Preference, Yoruba-English Bilinguals, Variation, Indigenous languages

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a multilingual society exhibiting very complex linguistic, social and cultural situations that require an insightful analysis and evaluation. Our use of language in a specific manner provides clues about who we are, our preferences, backgrounds, expectations and what kind of social experiences we have had. In many speech communities it is observable that selected linguistic variables are preferred by members of different social class groupings.

Experiences have shown that the social identity of individuals could be indicated through the way they talk. When interlocutors engage in a discourse, one can infer who they are and their speech will give a clue as to their language preference. The social significance of choice of words when one linguistic code is preferred to another in formal or informal domain should necessarily be of academic interest. Segun is a Nigerian undergraduate who speaks Nigerian pidgin in the university hall of residence among his friends from different parts of Nigeria though they are all proficient in English but he discusses in standard English with his professor when talking about his long essay. He however speaks Yoruba when he is among his friends who have the same linguistic background with him. We need to understand what informs his preference for Nigerian Pidgin in the previous context as opposed to standard English in the latter setting.

Language preference could be viewed as a universal phenomenon which manifests itself in the way we make choices in language behavior. This researcher has a hunch that an empirical quest into the pattern of language preferences which propels educated Nigerians in making linguistic choices in various domains would be an addition towards understanding their language behavior.

Labov (1972) talks of many speech communities where selected linguistic variables are being pronounced differently by members of different social class groupings. When he examined different speech styles, speakers from all social class groups style-shifted in the same way, using more variants that were non-standard when speaking in the most informal style, and vice versa. Therefore, whilst speakers were using language in different ways, there was evidence of shared evaluations, with speakers from all the differing social classes evaluating the standard language forms in the same way, using the most prestigious forms with greater frequency in the most formal and therefore the most self-conscious situations.

It is quite important for us to establish the indices of these variations and why one language should take pre-eminence over another in social, religious, political, educational and economic domains. The rest of the world cannot afford to wait for 'only English' usage and native-like proficiency when recent estimates of speakers of English as second, foreign or other languages out-number native speakers Kachru (1996), Graddol (1997), Widdowson (1997), Pakir (1999), McKay (2003), Jenkins (2006).

The above reality has engendered a situation whereby linguists examine which language becomes an appropriate medium of interaction for society because society is a matrix full of a very close relationship. We therefore have terms like linguistic preference, multilingualism, bilingualism, diglossia, language dominance, language shift, language maintenance and language planning to indicate certain conditions in which different varieties of language are used. Nigeria is a multilingual society exhibiting very complex linguistic, social and cultural situations that require an insightful analysis and evaluation.

Ogunnaike and Dunhan (2010) strongly believe that the language we speak may influence not only our thoughts but also our implicit preference as well. Findings at Harvard University by sociolinguists revealed that bilingual individuals' opinions of different ethnic groups were affected by the language in which they took a test examining their biases and predilections. A question asked in one language generated a positive answer while the same question in another language elicited a different response. It was reported that it is like asking your friend if he likes ice-cream in English and then turning around and asking him again in French and getting a different answer.

In a similar study, Leva (2011) suggests that the language people use may affect the way they think such that language conditions an individual's perception of issues and the preferences involved in the actions. The empirical evidence presented affirms that language shapes thinking putting to task the previously held theories on language universalism. The pattern of language preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals was observed to exhibit the sociolinguistic phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing. Code-switching is a phenomenon of making one utterance in one language and another in a different language within the same discourse e.g. 'eyin akeeko o ya. Let us go'. ('Students, its time, let us go') - Code-switching involving Yoruba and English. On the other hand, code-mixing is a phenomenon of making use of elements of two languages in the same utterance e.g. 'Awon footballers yen perform well;' ('Those footballers perform well') : or 'O sure ju.' ('It's certain'). English code-mixed with Yoruba.

Many people usually exhibit favourable linguistic responses to those who relate to them in their own language. A Muslim will prefer to relate more warmly to anyone who welcomes him by saying 'Salam Aleikun' (Peace greetings in Islam). A Yoruba man prefers to relate to others in informal setting using the Yoruba language. The researcher observed during his National Youth Service Corps programme in Bauchi state that a typical Hausa trader gave preferential treatment to a customer who said "nawahni" to another who said "how much". Our observation here shows that Language Preference also exhibits ethnic and religious biases which cut across all nationalities.. Hayakawa (1964:23) remarks of a dispute with an English woman, which arose over the correct pronunciation of a word and the attempt made to confirm in the dictionary. An emotional outburst followed: "*What for...I am English. I was born and brought up in England. The way I speak is English*".

The scenario below between two educated Nigerians exemplifies the emotional outbursts that characterizes the pattern of language preferences in social, economic, political, religious and educational domains:

Citizen A: (In support of English) *We must use it. It is the language of national unity.*

It fosters inter-ethnic communication. It is a global language.

Without it, Nigeria is doomed.

Citizen B: (Against English) *Don't use it. It is a foreign language. It destroys our culture.*

It is a killer language swallowing other languages on its path.

We need our own national language. 'Tiwantiwa.' (Ours is ours.)

The two citizens above typify educated Nigerians who exhibit characteristic love-hate attitude and language ambivalence in the use of the English language in Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

The Nigerian society could be described as one of the most complex speech communities in the world. The variety of any language used is determined by sociolinguistic factors such as age, status, education, location, gender, etc. The 36 states of the federation and the federal capital territory harbour a diverse and complex linguistic structures and English language is the only interactional language among the vast populace in many cities.

According to Banjo (1995), if Nigeria is to make a distinctive contribution to human civilization, it will have to be as a result of the symbiotic relationship between English and the indigenous languages, a pooling of the resources of all the languages without foreclosing the contributions that any of them can make. Experiences from countries like Canada, Mexico and Japan are enough to show that indigenous languages can fit into all levels and rungs of education as effective media of instruction capable of eliminating pedagogical differences in learning and thereby enhancing better understanding. The argument above is not a call to jettison the use of English but a call for language parity in line with Bamgbose (1994) who also suggests that we should be flexible when considering our language policy options:

In Africa, we are obsessed with number one. Not only must we have one national language, we must also have one party system. The mistaken belief is that in such oneness of language and party, we would achieve sociolinguistic cohesion and political unity in our multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society.

This study attempts to investigate the pattern of language preference among educated Nigerians who are of Yoruba-English extracion in Nigeria. We believe that the phenomenon of language preferences need more attention in sociolinguistic studies in Nigeria. This study will do a critical assessment of the situation by developing a corpus of relevant linguistic, social and educational data for language planning and development.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Determining the nature and causes of Language Preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals in Nigeria has become a significant problem because of the complex sociolinguistic variables involved. We believe that language preference is a worldwide phenomenon that needs more attention in sociolinguistic studies in Nigeria. This study will provide a corpus of relevant linguistic, social and educational data for language planning and development in Nigeria to determine the nature and causes of Language Preference among Yoruba-English bilinguals.

Kurniasih's (2005) study on Gender, Class and Language Preference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia examines why shifts occur in language preference among children in Indonesia and attributes the dominant factor to the influence of parents and caregivers. The two languages in Kurniasih's work are indigenous to Indonesia. Our own study is different because it will look at language preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals in Nigeria. Yoruba is indigenous to Nigeria while English is exogamous.

Arua (2010) which investigates patterns of language use and language preference of some children and their parents in Botswana was lopsided because children and parents were used with the assumption that their preference will coincide. This may be flawed sociolinguistically as the imperatives that govern language preference differ. Our study will fill this gap by giving consideration to a representative sample of Yoruba-English bilinguals whose responses will be their own only. This will eliminate possible bias and vague representation that could be inherent in Arua's study. Jabeen (2011) which also looks at The Linguistic Needs and Preferences of Undergraduate Students of Zoology in Faisalabad in Pakistan is classroom-oriented and failed to address the complexity of language preference patterns inside and outside of the home. Our study intends to extend the scope of language preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals to a variety of social contexts, both formal and informal.

The foregoing studies on Language preference were carried out in other parts of the world specifically Indonesia, Botswana and Pakistan respectively. This present study builds on the reports of the above and provides fresh insight to language preference phenomenon in the Nigerian setting. This study seeks to determine the nature and causes of the phenomenon of Language Preference in Nigeria by providing a corpus of relevant linguistic, social and educational data for language planning and development.

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to investigate the nature and causes of language Preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals, especially the intervening sociolinguistic variables that underlie such preference.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To explicate the choices of linguistic forms used by Yoruba-English bilinguals formal and informal domains in Nigeria;
2. To determine and highlight the sociolinguistic factors influencing the preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals for one set of forms over the others.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on the sociolinguistic theory of language variation. It is an amalgam concept which considers variation as the core of languages. The theory was used as an index to see how language preference determines the type of choices Yoruba-English bilinguals make. In revealing language loyalty leanings, preference that informs the choice of language is conditioned by sociolinguistic variables such as the interlocutor, the subject of discourse, the purpose of discourse as well as the occasion. All these affect language preference in different ways and make it dynamic. It should however be noted that language preference and language attitudes are not co-terminus but, instead, are situationally variable. For example, an educated Nigerian may use English among some friends who do not speak his own first language even when his attitude to the language is ambivalent. In other words, the choice of language is dictated primarily by the situation in which the speaker finds himself.

4.1 Preference-based Theories in Linguistics

Kul (2007) explains that the word *Preference* which comes from French *préférer* meaning *put before, transfer, conveyance*, commonly refers to a choice, real or hypothetical, between alternatives. These alternatives can be rank ordered. The concept of a preference is used in social sciences, particularly in economics. A simplest illustration of what preference means is as follows: a simple majority in X party defeats Y party when the number of voters who prefer X to Y is greater than the number of voters who preferred Y to X. Preference implies the existence of two opposites: preferred and dispreferred. There can be a wide spectrum of less or more

preferred between them which entails that preferences are invariably organized along a hierarchy. The concept of *preferred* evokes the notions of *better* and *more frequent* and, consequently, a better choice is always preferred, and, in turn, more popular in terms of distribution. The task for a researcher is to ascribe a common hierarchy of preferences to a given profile. In the Nigerian context the preference for English or Yoruba among Educated Nigerians is susceptible to a myriad of factors such as cultural, economic, educational and political.

According to Stampe (1979), all naturalist theories stipulate that preferences are based upon language acquisition and language use. The functionalist principle of naturalness predicts that due to the contradictory interests of language users, speakers and listeners, preferences fall accordingly into the articulatory and perceptual sets. The articulatory preferences are governed by the need to achieve simplicity, realizing this goal by means of assimilations and reductions (speaker-friendly processes). Therefore, a cluster of segments tends to be simplified in order to facilitate articulation. These processes are particularly conspicuous in languages which have clusters consisting of many consonants.

Another contribution to the discussion of the *preference* concept comes from Vennemann (1983). He has developed a theory of preferences which accounts for syllable structure and its change. On the basis of language external evidence, he formulated preference laws and introduced graded preferences: “a gradual concept of linguistic quality relative to a given parameter which entails that a change of a certain parameter involves the change of the situation as a whole. Under some circumstances parameter A may be better, i.e. more preferred, but under different circumstances the same parameter A can be worse (less preferred). The concept of graded preferences gives rise to a hypothesis that the less preferred structures have a tendency to change. The less preferred a structure is, the more it is prone to modification and improvement. The notion *change* means a *change for better*. Therefore, bad structures change in order to improve and to be more preferred. The hypothesis is verified against the assumption of locality in language change. This implies that every change in a language system is a local improvement. Locality triggers a chain-like reaction: if one parameter is modified and this is a change for the better, then some other parameter can suffer a different fate and get worse. Locality means also that a linguistic change may improve and deteriorate a structure at the same time. Improvement derives from application of preference laws.

The pattern of preferences is that Yoruba-English bilinguals tend to vacillate between the prestige and the local variety in their choice of either English or Yoruba. In the formal setting, where the use of the English language serves their utilitarian purpose, Yoruba tends to be less preferred but the opposite is generally the case in an informal situation because of their sentimental attachment to the Yoruba language.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed in this study examined some authoritative works on language preference and language use in and outside Nigeria. Empirical studies on language preference towards English and the indigenous languages that will give the study a sociolinguistic underpinning are cited to give accuracy and depth to whatever conclusions we might want to draw. The review also identified gaps in other studies which our own investigation tried to fill.

Kurniasih's (2005) study on Language Preference among Javanese in Indonesia confirms human beings' ambivalent attitude when one language is given an enhanced status over another. Subjects in the study make comments showing that Language Preference raises the questions of identity and perception of self. “I USE Javanese because I am Javanese” “I SPEAK Indonesia because I want to get ahead as an Indonesian” (emphasis mine).

Arua's (2010) study on language preference in Botswana shows that although many of the children possess two or three languages, they prefer only one- Setswana, the indigenous language. However, their parents prefer them to speak English especially in school and playground. They resent the use of English at home. In the Nigerian setting too parents prefer nursery schools that adopt the ‘straight for English’ policy in schools where their children speak English at all times. The language shift from Javanese to Indonesian despite government efforts to encourage the learning of Javanese is due to the nationalist feeling to promote Indonesian national identity. The people prefer to speak Indonesian because it is the language of prestige and modernization. In the Nigerian situation, we have an exogamous language (English) competing with an endogamous one (Yoruba). This has resulted in a situation whereby many educated Nigerians use the English language as the language of the elite while they prefer to use Yoruba in non-formal context because of the sentimental attachment to their language of origin. Such ambivalence characterized language preference among Yoruba-English bilinguals.

Jabeen (2011) in his study of language preference of undergraduate students in Pakistan reports their liking for British English. They claim that they need English not only in the country but also abroad. However there are certain predictable patterns as well. As the respondents are all students, their immediate linguistic needs are academic and the context where they require English most frequently is lecture room. His study is significant as it provides a background for English for Special Purpose (ESP) practitioners and helps them to design courses and develop material for undergraduate students. In the Nigerian situation we have noted the eagerness to

embrace the use of the English language as our language of education and technology and that access to specialized education for now is only through English regardless of the vacillating attitude of educated Nigerians.

Uzozie's (2004) study which examines the ambivalent attitude of educated Nigerians to the use of English as an adopted language solicits an empirical investigation to validate his hypothesis. He admits that "this thesis has not been immediately validated and the data so far collected were random observation." Our study will fill this gap by providing statistical data to verify his research. He submits that "the fact that in the outer circle communities, English has developed "lects" or "continua" judgment of standards usually based on metropolitan models are made with wrong yardsticks, since the functional use in second language (L²) environments is equally determinable by attitudes and such other factors as nativization and sociolinguistic adaptations? The question is whose standards?

Adegbija (2004) maintains that several instances have been cited of the inadequate usage of the English language by the so-called Nigerian elite. English will continue to present endless challenges to its users. There are intra-lingual and inter-lingual errors leading to several Englishes littering our society. Apart from the Nigerian English (NE), the one regarded as Educated Nigerian English (ENE) we have Yoruba English (YE), Hausa English (HE) and Igbo English (IE). These varieties are as a result of interference from the corresponding mother tongues in what Adegbija (2004:24) terms as the domestication of English in Nigeria. There is the day-to-day contact of English with many indigenous languages. This has created the need for new ideas and modes of thought to be expressed in new ways that are not available in the native variety of English. He identifies several levels of domestication such as: "Coinage (Cash madam, go slow), Hybridization (bukateria, kiakia bus), Analogization (arrangee, decampee) Direct translation (bushmeat, long leg), Affixation (awoism, zikism)".

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6. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The fieldwork involves a language survey carried out to investigate the pattern of language preferences for English and Yoruba in specified domains as well as the motivations behind them. On measuring language preference in the Nigerian sociolinguistic situation, we adopt the use of questionnaire and interview, a methodological triangulation which according to Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) is very suitable in language survey research because it springs from a behaviorist perspective in which language attitudes and preference are measured on the basis of differing social situations.

The questionnaire for this study labelled Language Preference Questionnaire (LPQ) comprises 15 questions each for language usage in Yoruba and English. It is divided into two sections. Section A elicits data on respondents' age, sex, occupation and education while Section B examines respondents' preference for the two languages consecutively to elicit responses from them on their preference for English or Yoruba in specified domains. This is to enable us analyse empirically their responses. Subjects were asked to tick a corresponding box to their preferred options which include: Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Open-ended questions that will assist in giving specific recommendations and throw more light on the preference of respondents were added. Interview was conducted on the more general aspects of the individual, societal, and government's attitudes to the use of the English and Yoruba languages. The intention was to make for direct interaction with respondents as follow-up questions not possible with questionnaire were asked.

6.1 POPULATION SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

800 subjects spread across the South-West and North-Central geo-political zones of the country where the Yoruba language is spoken were used for the study. The selection was done through a stratified sampling technique and respondents were drawn from the South-West zone comprising the following states: Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Oyo and Ekiti, (LOOOOE) States; and the North Central zone comprising Kwara and Kogi (KK) States on the basis of 100 participants per state. Nwana (1981:70) argues that "there is no fixed and inviolate rule regarding the size of the sample". Subjects for the study were in two categories. The first, numbering 400 were those who have had secondary school education. The second, also numbering 400 comprised those who have had some form of higher education like University, Polytechnic, College of Education or equivalent.

Subjects in the first category were deemed capable of thinking logically about information given to them though they may not be capable of generalizing about Nigeria's complex sociolinguistic situation. The subjects

have also gone through the Nigerian educational system where the English language and Yoruba face unequal rivalry as languages of instruction.

Subjects in the second category are deemed capable of making some reasonable generalizations as they will be in a better position to understand Nigeria's socio-political configuration. Some of them have interacted more with the two languages at the personal and policy levels and there was need for them to justify why they feel either of the two languages should be encouraged or promoted.

7. ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In line with the identifiable objectives of this study to explicate the choices of linguistic forms used by Yoruba-English bilinguals formal and informal domains in Nigeria; and to determine and highlight the sociolinguistic factors influencing the preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals for one set of forms over the others, the study has come up with the following:

English as Prestige Language

This study reveals that many Yoruba-English bilinguals display unmistakable preference for the English language in the formal domain. This informs their preference for the use of English when speaking, reading and writing. The Yoruba-English bilinguals here present yet another opportunity to confirm the dominant role of English in Nigeria. This could be traceable to the fact that English is compulsory for every Nigerian in formal context, since it is our official language and the language of international affairs. The instrumental role of the English language in comparison to any of our indigenous languages is high.

Tendency towards Additive Bilingualism

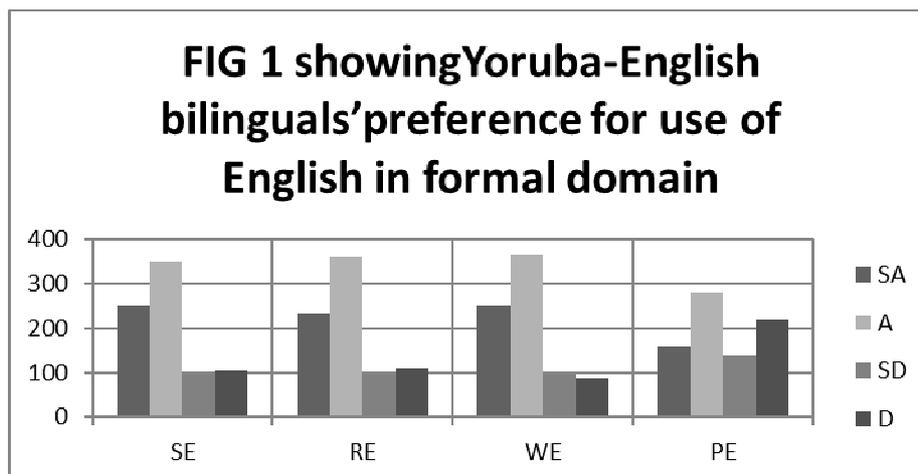
Our findings show that apart from the general trend of preference for the choice of English in formal domains, some Yoruba-English bilinguals are also beginning to use English in informal domains. This is a tendency towards additive bilingualism whereby the second language (L2), English language is used without detracting from the use of the first language (L1) Yoruba. The notion here is the promotion of the two languages and an attempt to encourage the user's flexibility in them. Cases like these occur in business and commerce where interlocutors found it expedient to make transactions without much distraction. Some of our respondents even indicated their preference to watch television movies and interact with their colleagues in English. We can see here that the dominance of the English language in the formal domain and its intrusion partly into informal usage is detrimental to our indigenous languages and therefore portends negative consequences for our national aspiration.

Instrumental and Integrative Functions of English

It is interesting to note that some parents who show anxiety to encourage their children to speak English are themselves alternating between the English language and Yoruba in formal and informal settings. The reason is not far-fetched as their wards will need more of English for upward mobility academically and socially. Parents on their own will prefer to assert their individuality by associating more with their indigenous language as a mark of identity. This finding establishes the age-related variable in language preference study of Yoruba-English bilinguals. Unfortunately, this attitude tends to lead to subtractive bilingualism whereby there is the gradual decline of mother tongue skills while advancing the development of second language skills.

Table 1 showing Yoruba-English bilinguals' preference for use of English in formal domain

| S/N | ITEM | SA | A | SD | D | TOTAL |
|-----|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| 1 | I prefer speaking English more often | 250 31.25% | 350 43.75% | 95 11.875% | 105 13.125% | 800 100% |
| 2 | I read better in English | 235 29.375% | 360 45% | 95 11.875% | 110 13.75% | 800 100% |
| 3 | I write more letters in English | 252 31.5% | 365 45.625% | 95 11.875% | 88 11% | 800 100% |
| 4 | I Prefer English to Yoruba as official language | 160 20 | 280 35 | 140 17.5 | 220 27.5 | 800 100% |



Legend: SE= Speak English Most Often, RE=Read Better in English, Write More in English, Prefers English.

Discussion

The preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals for English in formal domain as tabulated in item one shows that 75% of them agreed that they speak the English language more often while 25% of them disagreed with the statement. The preponderance of users of English in the first category validates the role English plays in the day to day lives of the respondents being a second language in Nigeria.

Items 2 and 3 follow the same trend whereby an overwhelming proportion of the respondents totaling 74% agreed that they read better in English than in Yoruba while 77% agreed that they can write better in English than Yoruba. This is evident in the fact that some Yoruba youths cannot even read in the language fluently. Some follow-up questions asked during the interview sessions probed why this is so and many answered that it is more convenient for them to read in English. The researcher also observed that many young Nigerians dread the task of having to read letters for elderly illiterates who often receive letters written to them in Yoruba by their relatives. The few ones who agreed to assist in reading such letters do so grudgingly.

The last item which seeks to know whether English is more preferred to Yoruba as respondents' official language reveals an interesting result. 55% of them agreed that English is preferred while 45% disagreed. One can observe here a bit of language ambivalence in the response of the educated Nigerians. The emotional attachment towards their native language makes it difficult for some of them to accept a foreign language as an official language while a reasonable number accept the reality of the situation that in a plural multi-lingual setting like Nigeria, the neutrality of the English language will do the nation a lot of good.

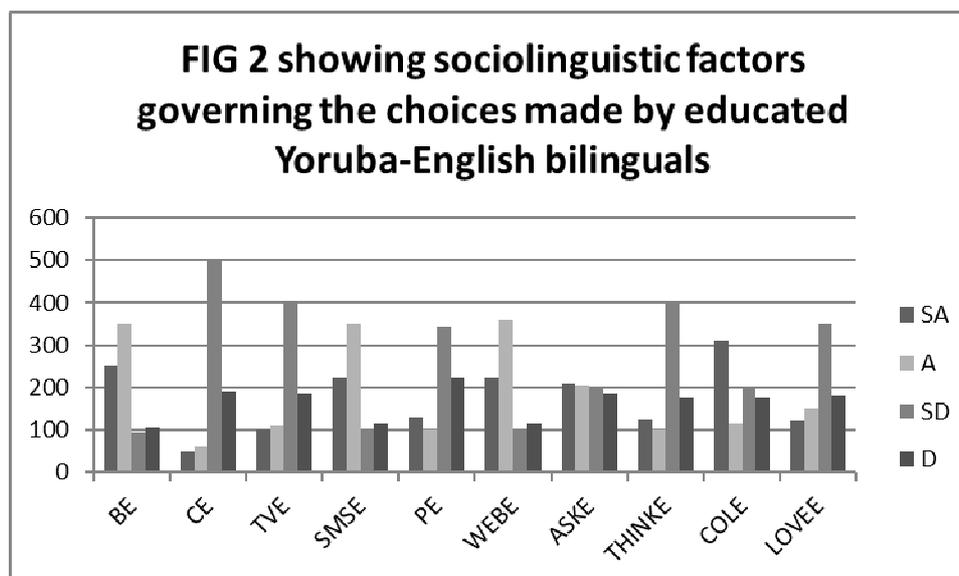
The second objective which is concerned with highlighting the sociolinguistic factors influencing the preference of Yoruba-English bilinguals for one set of forms over the others reveals the following results:

Language Ambivalence

The researcher discovered that many intervening variables came to play when Yoruba-English bilinguals display their preference for either Yoruba or English in non-formal contexts. Language preference in this respect becomes situationally variable. Investigation shows that many Yoruba-English bilinguals exhibit a love-hate attitude towards the English language. While they seem to prefer their high level of proficiency in English, they still complain about adopting the English language as a language of instruction. Adegbija(1989:16) has described this attitude as resulting from the conflicting sentimental and instrumental attachment to the use of a language. Many educated Nigerians extol the use of the English language because they use it as a vehicle to achieve their own goals.

Table 2 showing sociolinguistic factors governing the choices made by educated Yoruba-English bilinguals

| S/N | ITEM | SA | A | SD | D | TOTAL |
|-----|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| 1. | I engage in business transactions more in English | 250 31.25% | 350 43.75% | 95 11.815% | 105 13.125% | 800 100% |
| 2. | I prefer cultural activities to be conducted in English | 50 6.25% | 60 7.5% | 500 62.5% | 190 23.75% | 800 100% |
| 3. | I want English to be used for TV programmes | 100 12.5% | 110 13.75% | 405 50.625% | 185 23.125% | 800 100% |
| 4. | I send SMS with my phone in English | 225 28.125% | 350 45% | 100 12.5% | 115 14.375% | 800 100% |
| 5. | Prayers should be conducted in English | 130 16.25% | 100 12.5% | 345 43.125% | 225 28.125% | 800 100% |
| 6. | I surf the web in English | 225 28.125% | 360 45% | 100 12.5% | 115 14.375% | 800 100% |
| 7. | I want announcement to be made in English | 220 27.5% | 208 26% | 192 24% | 180 22.5% | 800 100% |
| 8. | I like to ask questions in English | 210 26.25% | 205 25.625% | 200 25% | 185 23.125% | 800 100% |
| 9. | I say my prayers in English most often | 120 15% | 110 13.75% | 360 45% | 210 26.25% | 800 100% |
| 10. | I think most often in English | 125 15.625% | 100 12.5% | 400 50% | 175 21.875% | 800 100% |
| 11. | Talk to colleagues in English most often | 310 38.75% | 115 14.375% | 200 25% | 175 21.875% | 800 100% |
| 12. | I interact with family most often in English | 120 15% | 110 13.75% | 360 50% | 210 26.25% | 800 100% |
| 13. | I enjoy argument given in English | 260 32.5% | 240 30% | 180 22.5% | 120 15% | 800 100% |
| 14. | I love English very deeply | 120 15% | 150 18.75% | 350 43.75% | 180 22.5% | 800 100% |
| 15. | I possess flawless ability in English | 120 15% | 110 13.75% | 400 50% | 170 21.25% | 800 100% |



Legend: BE=Business conducted in English, Cultural Activities in English, TV programmes in English, SMS in English, Prayers in English, Web surfing in English, Asking questions in English, Think in English, Talk to Colleagues in English, Loves English language

Discussion

The pattern of language preferences which seeks to ascertain the sociolinguistic factors governing the choices made by educated Yoruba-English bilinguals reveals that 75% of them engage in business transaction in English

while only 25% of them do not. This large number tends to confirm the instrumental role of English as the language of business and commerce in Nigeria.

Items 2 and 3 which seek to know the respondents' linguistic preference in the realm of cultural activities and television broadcast show that only 13.75% and 26% respectively will prefer the English language. A large number representing 86% and 74% respectively opposed the use of English. A quick impression here is the affinity between one's first language and cultural identity. Many Yoruba cherish their culture and tradition and will frown at any instruction of a foreign language where cultural activities like wedding, naming and initiation ceremonies are being observed. The same attitude extends to recreational and leisure activities especially now that Nollywood movies are titled towards cultural theme and traditional motifs.

Item 4 and 6 which show related concepts of Information and Computer Technology (ICT) such as sending text messages (SMS) and surfing the web show that English remains the language of the internet. 73% of the respondents agreed that they prefer English while surfing the web and sending (SMS) while only 13% disagree. We should remark here that the Information and Computer Technology (ICT) system is still at the formative stage in Nigeria. Our tele-density remains one of the lowest in the world. Though google has made provision in its search engine for the use of Yoruba and many phones like Nokia provide for use of some indigenous languages, many educated Nigerians do not avail themselves of these facilities.

A large proportion of the respondents constituting 71% disagreed that prayers and devotions should be conducted in the English language while only 29% agreed that this should be so. This result tends to validate the assertion that human beings are creatures of emotions. The affective domain which governs human thoughts and actions is deeply rooted in prayer. When we talk to our creator, our naturalness becomes complete. To speak in a foreign tongue to God seems improbable to many people. During the prayer mode, human beings wish to free themselves from anxiety, inhibition and apprehension that could be engendered in a foreign tongue. It is probably this premise that predicated respondents' answer to their linguistic preference for language of thought. Only 28% think most often in the English language while a whopping 72% disagreed that they think in English. Many respondents constituting 71% also agreed that they interact with family members most often in English while only 29% disagreed.

However, items 7 and 8 which seek to know the language preferred for announcement and which language they use to ask questions revealed a narrow margin between those that agreed and those who do not. While 54% agreed that announcements should be made in English, 47% disagreed. In the same vein, while 52% prefer to ask questions in English, 48% do not wish to. A bit of ambivalence is also noted here because the prevailing situations here are somehow vacillating. The language of choice here will depend on the individual's instrumental or integrative purpose of the English language. This informs the result elicited for item 11 where 53% agreed that they talk to their colleagues more often in English whereas 47% disagree.

The love-hate relationship of respondents towards the English language rears its ugly head in their answer to items 13 and 14. While 62.5% agreed that they enjoy argument given in English 37.5% disagreed. However, only 34% agreed that they love the English language very deeply while a larger proportion totalling 66% disagreed.

In sum, we could deduce that prevailing circumstances affected the motivation behind the linguistic preference of educated Nigerians. The phenomena of language shift and language loyalty permeate the preference scale being skewed either towards or against the English language.

7.0 CONCLUSION

This paper which investigates patterns of language preferences of Educated Nigerians specifically Yoruba-English Bilinguals has shown the preference scale of our elites in the specified domains such as the contextualized sphere of communication, e.g., home, work, school, religion, transactional, leisure or friendship involving language use in the Nigerian society. It also identifies the motivations behind these preferences. The study notes that with the emerging trend of globalization and more nationalistic outlook of many countries across the world, many educated people and the government will need to determine how to make careful choices as regards language use in the society.

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