

The Dynamics of Multilingualism and Language Variation in A Border Region: A Study of Omuo-Ekiti, Nigeria

Adeola Omodele Ogunlade

Department of English and Literary Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti,
Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Samuel Ayodele Dada

Department of English and Literary Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti,
Ekiti State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines the impact of multilingualism on the indigenous languages/dialects of Omuo people. The data for the study are obtained through the use of the questionnaires and interview. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is Domain of Language Behaviour. The study discovers that Omuo dialect, which is a subset of Ekiti dialect is distinguishable from all other Ekiti dialects most especially at the phonological level. The reason for this is accrued to the fact that Omuo shares boundary with two states- Kogi State and Ondo State as such dialects of the immigrants from these states have influenced Omuo dialect at the phonological and lexical level. This shows that multilingualism can lead to language variation, change and endangerment. Omuo people are therefore encouraged not to allow their language to be eroded or coloured through the influx of people to their community.*

KEYWORDS: multilingualism, language variation, domain analysis, language endangerment, language maintenance.

INTRODUCTION

Language is part and parcel of human existence in which without it the world will be in a state of chaos. Language is a tool of communication that is peculiar and essential to man's wellness and all-round peace. Therefore, we study language in relation to human beings who use it. Humans communicate in order to perform different functions in different places at different times and when we do these, we use language to achieve specific goals. Language

plays a major role in every community especially in border towns, where there are various ethnic groups using different languages as a means of communication. According to Sonni (2014: p.12), “No activity across borders can succeed without language proficiency.” No doubt, Language varies from one society to another. Every community has a particular language/dialect that is peculiar to it. Language, for every society, is a means of identity, communication, social integration, nation building, education and development. Indeed, language permeates all aspects of human endeavour because it reflects the features of a given culture. Language is a powerful instrument for identifying cultures. It is an important system of culture. This is what Dada (2010, p.1) means when he says “language is a symbol of cultural identity, a marker of solidarity among its speakers, a vehicle of values and even the history of its speakers”.

According to Ling (2005, p.1), “Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society, of language variation, and of attitude about language.” It is also defined as the study of the relationship between language and society. Sociolinguistics belongs to the arm of diachronic linguistics which studies languages from the viewpoint of their historical development. This branch of linguistics believes that language cannot be studied in a vacuum; therefore, it studies language in relations to the context of use, manner of acquisition, the society and so on. Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2010, p.67) claim that sociolinguistics proffers solution to the linguistic problems of bilingualism, multilingualism and how to design a language programme for children.

Language situation varies from one community to another. The term “language situation” includes the number of languages in use in a community, the language preferred by members of that community in different domains and the role or function of a language in a community. The language situation in communities can be monolingualism, bilingualism or multilingualism. There are communities where only one language is recognised; such communities are referred to as monolingual communities, but communities where more than one language is recognised are called bilingual or multilingual communities. As such a community can be regarded as a monolingual or bilingual community. In practical terms, many scholars have argued that total monolingualism does not exist in any country because bilingualism and multilingualism are common phenomena when we are talking about the language situation in many countries of the world. A monolingual country exists in principle not in practice because it is difficult to find a country where all the people who reside in such countries speak only one language considering immigrants that live in such countries. Although there are countries where only one language is recognised but in such countries, there are people who speak more than one language.

Babatunde (2014, p.14) asserts that “multilingualism does not even require the ability to speak two unrelated languages; a user of a language, for example, the ‘literary’ and a vernacular or dialectal variety of a language is already multi-competent”. According to him,

“multi-competence does not require perfect fluency in all the languages at one’s command; thus, setting the boundary would probably be a mission impossible”. This means that multilingualism can be seen as the act of using multiple languages or dialects, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers. Multilingualism is a product of language contact situations. When different languages rob on one another a number of things can happen and this is where the meaning of dynamics in the topic of this study comes into play. In other words, when languages come in contact the friction generated leads to changes at the various linguistic levels as well as in the functional roles assigned officially to the languages. More importantly, a weaker language in contact with other languages may be endangered or may die out. According to UNESCO (2003, p.1), “Even though approximately 6,000 languages still exist, many minority languages are threatened with extinction in almost every part of the world.

The language situation in the community under study is multilingualism. Omuo, (located in Ekiti State), the setting of this research work, shares boundary with Kogi and Ondo states. Thus, Omuo is a border town and we discovered that it is a multilingual environment. “Border regions can be seen as multilingual spaces of language contact” (Abel, Stuflesser, Voltmer, 2007). Our result shows that border towns are largely multilingual communities. This is because wherever these borders exist, there are people from different ethnic backgrounds who reside there for various purposes. As a result, the place is made up of people who speak diverse languages. Then, there comes problem of language mixing which has eventually led to a change of the Omuo dialect at the phonological level. This research is therefore interested in how these people, (original Omuo dwellers) have been able to preserve their languages/dialects especially at the linguistic level.

Research Problem

Multilingualism has posed a great deal of problems within and outside the country. Thus, the study of multilingualism has attracted the attention of sociolinguists. Sonni (2014) worked on the role of language in border relations. His conclusion revealed that cultural contact has caused some changes in the everyday language on the Norwegian side of the border. Babatunde (2014, p.518), also worked on the topic: “Multilingualism across borders: Nigeria/Republic of Benin as case study”, where he examines the incidence of multilingualism as a factor of language contact in the West African sub-region with particular reference to the interdependence between Nigeria and Benin Republic. He discovered that “multilingualism across the frontiers of Nigeria and Benin had made some important positive changes on the culture and life of the inhabitants of these regions. According to him, there are manifestations of linguistic borrowing and code-mixing in both countries. He, therefore, concludes that The socio-cultural and economic contacts between the people living in the two countries had resulted in the over-all development of these communities. It is observed that the language contact between the British/the Yoruba/the Egun in Nigeria and the

French/the Yoruba/the Adja-Ewe in Benin had made Yoruba language to belong to the latter group of languages.

To the best of the knowledge of these researchers, this research work is unique since its area of study is different from all other researches on multilingualism in Nigeria. Meanwhile, the linguistic situation in a multilingual community cannot be predicted until an investigation is carried out. Despite the general belief that people who resides in a particular geographical location belong to the same speech community as they are supposed to speak the same language, the situation among the Ette people differs as Egenti (2015), in her work, on multilingualism and the ethnic identity of the people of Ette concludes that although the people of Ette use three indigenous languages. It has been observed that language does not mark the ethnic identity of the Ette people because of their multilingual nature.

This study therefore sets to discover the linguistic situation in selected border towns in Southwest Nigeria with the aim of finding out the effect of multilingualism on the native languages of the people and also find out the changes that have occurred in the linguistic repertoire of these border towns owing to the contact situation.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

1. identify the languages in use in. Omuo and
2. show that the border town is a multilingual environment
3. show the implication of multilingualism on language maintenance and shift in the selected border town

The Study Area

The study area for this research work is Omuo-Ekiti. Geographically, Omuo-Ekiti is located at the Eastern part of Ekiti-State in South-west, Nigeria. It shares boundary with Ondo-State and Kogi-State. Omuo-Ekiti is divided into two major groups. One part of the town is referred to as Omuooke, while the other part is called Omuoisale. Omuooke shares border directly with Iyagba, a town located in Kogi State. As such, their language is more like the language spoken in Iyagba (Okun) because they share physical border. Like other Southwest communities, Yoruba is the main indigenous language used in Omuo-Ekiti, but they also speak Ekiti dialect. Omuo-Ekiti is the headquarters of Ekiti-East Local Government Area. Omuo is about 75 km away from Ado-Ekiti, the Ekiti State capital. There were different quarters in Omuo-Ekiti. Recently, the quarters have gained autonomy since 2019, under the headship of His Excellency, Governor Kayode Fayemi. These quarters are no longer under the headship of Oluomuo as they now have their own kings. Currently, Omuo has been divided into six towns each having her own King namely; Oluomo of Omuo, the paramount ruler of Omuo-Ekiti, in person Oba Noah Adejumo Omonigbeyin; Elekota of Kota, the

paramount ruler of Kota-Ekiti, in person of Oba Emmanuel Kayode Fagbemi; Asaya of Isaya, the key ruler of Isaya-Ekiti in person of Matthew Ajayi Elojokun ;Eleshi of Ugbeshi, the sovereign ruler of Ugbeshi, in person of Oba Ajayi Lawrence; Oluomuooke of Omuo, the paramount ruler of Omuo, in person of Oba Valentine Otitoju and Alahan of Ahan. The reason for this cannot be far-fetched. For years, these quarters have been agitating to operate on their own since many of them came to settle in Omuo many years ago from different ethnic groups. Some of them also speak different languages/dialects. For example, the Ahan people speak a language that is totally different from Ekiti dialect and even Yoruba language, while the Omuo people speak a dialect that is close to that of the Okun people of Kogi State. Okun people speak Iyagba dialect, known as a dialect of Yoruba.

Ahan people migrated long ago to Omuo. They may seem to have lost their ethnic identity because today they are referred to as Ekiti people, but their language remains their means of identity. These shows that border towns are largely multilingual environment and that language is a potent means of identity that is passed down from one generation to another. This research, is therefore, interested in how these people, (original Omuo dwellers and those who migrated to Omuo-Ekiti) have been able to preserve their languages and the changes that might have occurred in their language use and choice.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Domain of Language Behaviour. It emanated from Sociolinguistics. The theory was propounded by Fishman (1965, p.2) who stipulates that, it is possible to have different language behaviours depending on the topic, interlocutors and the settings. Although many works refer to Fishman as the source of the use of domain in sociolinguistic contexts, Fishman (2013, p.67) refers to Schmidt-Rohr, who in 1932 worked with expatriate Germans in multilingual environments, as the one who first spoke about domains. Schmidt-Rohr says there are nine domains of language, namely: the family, the street, the school (subdivided into language of instruction, subject of instruction, and language of recess and entertainment), the church, literature, the press, the military, the courts, and the governmental bureaucracy. Fishman (1965, p.2) stresses that different divisions of domain are needed for language for different purposes. He defines domains as institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences. Domains are names for “major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular multilingual settings (Fishman 1979, p.19). In 1972, Fishman mentions that this model seeks to elucidate who speaks what, to whom and when. According to Dada (2015, p.16), “Domain is a concept that draws on three social factors in code choice, which are the participants, setting or occasion and topic”. To him the concept of domain implies that no bilingual speaks all the languages he understands in each social setting. According to Fishman (1964), one language may be more appropriate than another in certain domains and usually it is the standard or prestigious language that is used in high domains, while the vernaculars are selected in low domains. Fishman (1972, p.244) also asserts that, “Proper usage indicates that only one of the theoretically co-available

languages or varieties will be chosen by particular classes or interlocutors on particular kinds of occasions to discuss particular kinds of topics. He maintains that this model is applicable in “those speech communities that are characterized by widespread and relatively stable multilingualism (Fishman 1972, p.15).

Every speech community is made up of different domains. “Humans continuously adapt their style and language to a variety of domains” (Sebastian, Parsa, and Breslin (2016, p.53). They vary their language depending on the context which may be in writing, dialogue and speech. In other words, the domains of language use can be formal or informal. Formal domains include education, employment, office and religion, while informal domains can be friendship, home, and market. In bilingual speech communities, in certain domains, one language is used while in other domains, the other language is spoken. This shows that the issues in reference to domain only occur in a bilingual or multilingual environment. “The domain of language use is important to the vibrancy of the language. Once the domain of home has been affected, a language becomes endangered” (Heinrich, 2015, p.613).

Significance of the Study

The study will be a contribution to the data required for the study of sociolinguistic phenomenon like language shift or maintenance, language death, language attitude, code-switching, diglossia, and so on. It will find out if the people of Omuo-Ekiti have maintained their indigenous languages in the face of the overwhelming influence of other languages. The study promises to reveal the state of the indigenous languages/dialects of Omuo-Ekiti whether they are maintained or not. The research will show how the people have managed to maintain their language in the face of the influx of other languages into the community. This study will help in sensitizing the people about the importance of their language as a means of identity, which they must maintain. The result of this study will help in evaluating the impact of multilingualism and language contact on the development of indigenous languages in use Omuo in particular and in the nation at large.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The survey method was employed to get a descriptive analysis of the pattern of language use in the border towns under study. This study aims at investigating a certain sociolinguistic phenomenon; the dynamics of language use and choice of the people of Omuo. The reason for this is to understand its implications and consequences for immigrant languages and indigenous ones existing in the selected border town.

As a survey-based study, quantitative method is adopted for data analysis. For data collection, close-ended and open-ended questionnaires which comprise of two parts were designed. A total number of 320 questionnaires were administered but 300 copies were retrieved. Various ethnic groups constitute the population of Omuo-Ekiti. As earlier mentioned, presently Omuo

has seven different towns. All these towns were captured in this research because the researcher administered the questionnaires by dividing the town according to the major demarcations, which are Omuooke and Omuoisale. All the new are located either in Omuooke or Omuoisale. The respondents were selected based on the purposive sampling technique so that every ethnic group is well represented and also because the study must reveal language use at different settings. Twenty people were also interviewed on language variations among Omuo dialects.

Data Analysis

This section focuses on the presentation, analysis and discussion of data collected from Omuo in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The data were processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 version. The purpose of this research was to analyse the impact of multilingualism on language use among Omuo dwellers and also reveal the pattern of language use in different domains of the selected border town. The findings were presented in tables and analysed based on the responses of the respondents.

Analysis of Language Background of the Study Area

The responses to the questions of the administered questionnaires are presented and interpreted using simple percentage and frequency counts.

Table 1 Demographic Information of the Respondents

Profile	Response Variables	Frequency of Reponse	Percentage
Gender	Male	171	57
	Female	129	43
Age	Below 15	32	10.7
	15-20	64	21.3
	21-35	72	24.0
	36-50	54	18
	Above 50	78	26
Place of birth	Omuo/Omuooke	223	74.3
	Ahan	14	4.7
	Ado-Ekiti	36	12.0
	Kota	9	3.3
	Oye-Ekiti	1	0.3
	Igbara-Odo	1	0.3
	Araromi	4	1.3
	Aaye Ekiti	1	0.3
	Other states	11	3.7
Marital status	Married	180	60.0
	Unmarried	112	37.3
	Divorced	2	0.7
	Widow	6	2.0

Table 2: Demographic Information of the Respondents (Continued.)

Items	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
State of origin/Town	Ekiti/Omuooke	272	90.7
	Ekiti/Omuo isale	4	1.3
	Ekiti/Ahan	3	1.0
	Ekiti/Kota	5	1.7
	Ekiti/Oye	1	0.3
	Ekiti/Igbara	1	0.3
	Kogi	1	0.3
	Ondo/Oke-Agbe	3	1.0
	Enugu	1	0.3
	Lagos/Mushin	1	0.3
	Ekiti/Ayegunle	3	1.0
	Ekiti/Araromi	4	1.3
	Oyo	1	0.3
If married, are you and your husband from the same ethnic group	Yes	172	95.6
	No	8	4.4
If no, what is the ethnic group of your husband/wife	Ekiti	4	50.0
	Igbo	1	12.5
	Akoko	1	12.5
	Ebira	2	25.0
Level of education	No education	18	6.0
	Primary school	13	4.3
	Secondary school	49	16.3
	NCE	71	23.7
	Polytechnic/university	149	49.7
Occupation	Civil servant	56	18.7
	Farmer	8	2.7
	Business	38	12.7
	Teacher	76	25.3
	Student	102	34.0
	Artisan	9	3.0
	Any other	11	3.7

Tables 1 and 2 present the socio-demographic features of the respondents. The tables showed that 171 (57%) of the total number of respondents were males and 129 (43%) were females. The higher number of males may be attributed to the fact that, Omuo being a rural area, more males were seen in offices, schools and religious domains while more women opt for trading

and keeping of their homes. Distribution on the basis of age indicated that 32 (10.7%) were below 15 years, 64 (21.3%) were between 15 and 20 years, 72 (24%) were between age 21-35, 54 (18%) were aged 36-50 years while 78 (26%) were above 50 years. This revealed that most of the respondents were adult who would be in the best position to shed more light on some of the objectives of the study.

More than three-quarter of the teachers (n=242, 78.6%) possessed Degree/HND certificate, 48 (15.6%) had NCE while 18 (26.9%) were holders of other qualifications. This affirmed that Ekiti people loved education and were well-read. It revealed that majority of the respondents were at least bilinguals if not multi-linguals since they were educated and English is the language of Education in Nigeria.

About three-quarter (n=223, 74.3%) of the total sample; representing the majority were born in Omuo and Omuooke town, followed by Ado-Ekiti (n=36,12%), Ahan (n=14, 4.7%) Kota (n=9, 3.3%) and Araromi (n=4, 1.3%). The least were Oye-Ekiti, Igbara-Odo, Aaye-Ekiti (n=1, 0.3) while 11 (3.7%) were indigenes of other states. It is important to note that at the beginning of this research, Omuo had only one king, but presently, Omuo town had been divided into seven towns, each having her own king. Hence, some of the respondents were born in Omuo, some in Omuooke, some in Araromi, and Ahan. All the aforementioned locations were villages in Omuo town but presently they are no longer under Omuo. This showed that the respondents had solidarity for their towns, although, other towns were recently calved out of Omuo, they did not agree that they were born in Omuo but rather stated their newly established towns. However, the result showed that most of the respondents were born in Omuo and Omuooke respectively.

Again, the marital status showed that 160 (60%) were married, 112 (37.3%) considered themselves unmarried while 2 (0.7%) and 6 (2%) were divorced and widowed respectively. Most of the respondents (n=272, 90.7%) were native of Omuooke. Majority of the married couples indicated that they and their spouses were from the same ethnic group. The table also showed the ethnic groups of spouses from different ethnic background, 4 (50%) indicated Omuo while 1 (12.5%), 2 (25%) and 1 (12.5%) said that their spouses were from Igbo, Epira and Akoko ethnic groups respectively. About half (n=149, 49.7%) of the respondents had polytechnic/university education, 71 (23.5%) had NCE certificate, 49 (16.3%) and 13 (4.3%) were holders of secondary and primary school certificate while 18 (6%) had no formal education. Regarding occupation, about one-third of the study participants 102 (34%) were students, 56 (18.7%) were civil servants, 8 (2.7%), 38 (12.7%) and 76 (25.3%) engaged in farming, business and teaching jobs respectively, 9 (3%) said they were artisans while 11 (3.7%) indicated other occupational practices.

Table 3: Language Background of the Study Participants

Language Background	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
What is your mother-tongue?	Yoruba	86	28.7
	Omuo	126	42.0
	Omuooke	29	9.7
	Ahan	24	18.0
	Others	5	1.7
Which other language/dialect do you speak apart from your mother tongue?	Yoruba	142	47.3
	Omuo	109	36.3
	Omuooke	25	8.3
	Ahan	9	3.0
	Others	15	5.0
How many language/languages do you speak all together?	1-2	45	15.0
	3-4	242	80.7
	5+	13	4.3
How many language/languages are in use in Omuo?	1-2	45	15.0
	3-4	154	51.3
	5-6	81	27.0
	7+	10	3.3

Table 4.2.1.1a presents the language background of the study participants. The result showed that the predominant mother tongue of the study participants was Omuo (n=126; 42%), closely followed by Yoruba (n=86; 28.7%) and Ahan (n=24; 18%) while 29(9.7%) and 5 (1.7%) represented Omuooke and others respectively. Other language/languages spoken by the respondents apart from their mother tongue were Yoruba (n=142; 47.3%), Omuo (n=109; 36.3%), Omuooke (n=25; 8.3%), Ahan (n=9; 3%) and others (n=15; 5%). The result above showed that most of the respondents agreed that their mother tongue was omuo instead of Yoruba which was a regional language in the area of study. This revealed that people were loyal to their ethnic group, it showed that ethnolinguistic vitality exists among the people. Although they belong to Yoruba ethnic group, they acknowledged Omuo as their in-group language.

Regarding the number of languages spoken by the study participants, more than three-quarter (n=242; 80.7%) indicated 3-4 languages, 45 (15%) reported 1-2 languages while 13 (4.3%) spoke 5 languages plus. About half of the study participants (n=154; 51%) said that there were 3-4 languages in use in Omuo, 45 (15%) indicated 1-2 language, 81 (27%) reported 5-6 active languages while 10 (3.3%) reported higher order of more than 7 active languages in Omuo-Ekiti. This revealed that Omuo was largely a multilingual society and it affirmed that border towns were largely pluralistic communities.

Table 4: Language Variation in Omuo

Language Background	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
If you speak Omuo, is Omuo dialect exactly the same in meaning with other Ekiti dialects?	Yes	131	43.7
	No	169	56.3
When a native of Omuo uses his native language (Omuo) to communicate with anyone from any other local government in Ekiti State, is there is mutual understanding between them?	Yes	185	61.7
	No	115	38.3
If your answer to the above question is “No”, provide or choose reason from these options:	Because the dialects are not the same in meaning	42	36.5
	Because words in Omuo are pronounced differently	64	55.7
	Because words are combined into sentences differently	6	5.2
	Any other	3	2.6
Do the Omuooke people speak the same language with Omuoisale people?	Yes	28	9.3
	No	272	90.7
If your answer to the above question is “No”, which language/dialect do they speak?	Omuooke	85	31.3
	Iyagba	159	58.5
	Yoruba	4	1.5
	Kogi	15	5.5
	Ijumu	2	0.7
	Okun	5	1.8
	Ahan	2	0.7

Table 4 shows that less than half of the respondents 131 (43.7%) affirmed that Omuo dialect was exactly the same in meaning with other Ekiti dialects while (n=169; 56.3%) disagreed. On whether there was a mutual understanding between native speaker of Omuo dialect and anyone from other local government in Ekiti State, majority of the respondents (n=185; 61.7%) agreed while 115 (38.3%) disagreed. The respondents gave the following reasons for the absence of mutual understanding between native speakers of Omuo dialect and other language speakers from other local government in Ekiti State: the dialects were not the same in meaning (n=42; 36.5%), words in Omuo were pronounced differently (n=64; 55.6%), words were combined into sentences differently (n=6; 5.2%) and other reasons (n=3; 2.6%). Only 28 (9.3%) of the participants said that Omuooke and Omuoisale people spoke the same language while majority; (n=272, 90.7%) disagreed. Among the 272 respondents that indicated language difference between Omuooke and Omuoisale people highlighted following languages: Omuooke (n=85; 31.3%), Iyagba (n=159; 58.5%), Yoruba (n=4; 1.5%), Kogi (n=15; 5.5%), Ijumu (n=2; 0.7%), Okun (n=5; 1.8%) and Ahan (n=2; 0.7%). This result

portrays that the native language of the Omuo people is not Ekiti dialect but Iyagba. Historically, Omuo people were said to have migrated from Kogi state. Presently, they live very close to the border between Iyamoye, a town in Kogi state and Omuo. Thus, the resemblance of their language to that of Okun, Yagba and Ijumu.

The result above further emphasised that Omuo was largely a multilingual environment. The questions above were asked in order to affirm that Omuo people who resided in Omuo spoke a different language. The respondents confirmed this by agreeing that Omuo people spoke other languages/dialects such as Iyagba, Okun, Ijumu. This suggested that Omuo being a border town had accommodated many ethnic groups who might have lost their names but not their languages. Despite the influx of diverse ethnic groups into Omuo, the result so far showed that Omuo people had been able to maintain their language to some extent, in that, more than half of the respondents agreed that there was mutual understanding between a native speaker of Omuo and native speakers of other towns in Ekiti. However, when asked whether Omuo was exactly the same in meaning with other dialects in Ekiti, the respondents declined, this showed that there were some noticeable changes at some levels, most especially at the level of phonology and semantics. These might be as a result of the influence of other languages/ethnic groups in Omuo- a border town.

Interview Questions on Language Variation

Kindly translate the following sentences into any of the following languages/dialects in use in Omuo

English: What did I want to collect from you?

Yoruba: Kini mo fe gba lowo e

Omuo: Ri mi fe gba lowo re

Ahan: Emi kin on ranni

Omuo: kan mofe gba lowo e

English: John is a good boy

Yoruba: Omokunrin to da ni John

Omuo: Omokunrin dada ki John

Ahan: Ayiye oma e ri John

Omuo: Omokunrin ko daa ni John

English: Will you follow me to farm tomorrow?

Yoruba: Se wa te le mi lo soko lola

Omuo: Se wa le

Ahan: Se nge ran li mi yunju ola

Omuo: Se wa bami lo oko lola

English: Mummy has gone to the market

Yoruba: Mama ti lo si oja

Omuo: Momi ka lo so ja

Ahan: Momo ke r'aja

Omuooke: Momo ka lo soja

Table 5
Words

English	Yoruba	Omuo	Omuooke	Ahan
Leg	Ese	Ese	Ese	Esin
Road	Oju titi	Oju titi	Titi	Okola
Money	Owo	Owo	Ewo	Eo
Come	Wa	Abo	Abo	Naa
Play	Sere	Sare	Sare	Fe
Go	Ma lo	Ma lo	Alo	Te lo
Cloth	Ewu	Awu	Aawu	Awu
Food	Ounje	Oun jije	Jije	Urutite
Cap	Fila	Fila	Ifila	Atu
Man	Eniyan	Oniyan	Oni	Oniye

The words above are pronounced differently and some has different spellings

The section above revealed that the languages/dialects in use in Omuo are distinct. Although there are little similarities especially between Omuo and Omuo dialects the result above shows that there are differences at the phonological and morphological levels. For example, English: John is a good boy Yoruba: Omokunrin to da ni John; Omuo: Omokunrin dada ki John; Ahan: Ayiye oma e ri John Omuo: Omokunrin ko daa ni John. This example shows the differences in the combination of words in the languages/dialects used above.

In addition, the result above also revealed that Ahan is totally different from Omuo and omuooke. There are no similarities between Ahan and other languages/dialects including Yoruba. Although some linguists believe that Ahan is a dialect of Yoruba, the result above displayed dissimilarities between the language and other Yoruba dialects in use in our study area. Again, while Omuo and Omuo dialects manifest some similarities with other Ekiti dialects, Ahan maintains disparity at all levels.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the dynamics of multilingualism and language variation at the border of Omuo-Ekiti. The first objective of this research is to establish that societal multilingualism exists in border towns. The findings showed that Omuo is a multilingual environment as

more than half of the respondents confirmed that they spoke 3-4 languages. Again, not less than three languages/dialects were in use in Omuo-For example, at the societal level of multilingualism, more than half of the studied participants (n=154; 51%) said that there were 3-4 indigenous languages (Yoruba, Ahan, Omuo Omuooke) in use in Omuo (See table 4.2.1.1). This language situation in Omuo revealed that many ethnic groups migrated into Omuo to settle their long time ago. The reports from interview confirmed that the emergence of multilingualism in Omuo can be linked to migration and border related factors.

The researcher deliberately interviewed more people from Ahan. These people are migrants who came to Omuo long time ago from Okeagbe near Oyin in Ondo-State. The Omuo people accepted them and gave them land. They in-turn became part of Omuo. They no longer claim their origin as they have simply accepted that they are natives of Omuo. The Ahan people reside in two locations in Omuo- Obadore near Ijero and Ikota. However, the interviewees said because their present location could no longer accommodate them, they now have a new location at Gbelete/Ugbesi. They affirmed that their ancestors migrated to Omuo in the year 1942. When asked how they have been able to maintain their language, they commented that they kept their language and used it for secrecy and they see the language as part and parcel of them. They added that, other Omuo dwellers did not understand their language because, the language is a complex one and because they only speak their language at home or when they wanted to hide information from a third party. This is an eye-opener, as it revealed how the people have been able to maintain their language, despite the fact that they live in the same geographical location with other natives of Omuo.

The interviewees from Omuooke maintained that they spoke the same dialect with that of (Iyamoye) Okun people- whom they shared physical border with. According to them, Omuo and Omuooke dialects are distinguishable at the phonological level. They also noted that they migrated from Kogi State. In addition, their dialect differs from Omuo dialect at the phonological level (Intonation) because of their long interaction with Okun people. The result shows the dynamics of multilingualism in border towns. It depicts that when languages rob on one another there is bound to be changes either at the linguistic level or at the functional level. Language variation is displayed here.

Again, the research also revealed that Omuooke people spoke the same dialect with that of (Iyamoye) Okun people- whom they shared physical border with. Respondents agreed that, Omuo and Omuooke dialects are distinguishable at the phonological level. They also noted that Omuooke people migrated from Kogi State. In addition, their dialect differs from Omuo dialect at the phonological level (Intonation) because of their long interaction with Okun people. The result shows the dynamics of multilingualism in border towns. It depicts that when languages rob on one another there is bound to be changes either at the linguistic level or at the functional level. Language variation is displayed here.

As earlier mentioned in the statement of the problem section, Egenti (2015), in her work, on multilingualism and the ethnic identity of the people of Ette concludes that although the people of Ette use three indigenous languages. It has been observed that language does not mark the ethnic identity of the Ette people because of their multilingual nature. Similarly, in Omuo language cannot be used as a mark of ethnicity. Omuo people sees themselves as a people who belong to the same ethnic group, yet their languages vary from one area to another.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the impact of multilingualism on Omuo as a border town. The study discovers that Omuo cause of multilingualism in the town is because it is a border town and migration being another reason. This border influence has actually brought about the multiplicity of languages and language variation. Language variation also exists in Omuo, since most of the languages/dialects in use are distinct at the semantic/lexical and phonological levels. All other Ekiti dialects are almost the same at all levels of linguistic analysis but Omuo dialects, Ahan and Omuooke are distinguishable especially Ahan. The researcher therefore concludes that multilingualism can give birth to linguistic changes at any level.

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