



The Linguistic Association of Nigeria (LAN) celebrated her Silver Jubilee on 14 November, 2006, at the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), Abuja. At the Annual General Meeting of LAN, it was unanimously decided that some of the good papers that were read at the Conference to mark the Silver Jubilee be published in the Festschrift Series to honour the

FATHER OF NIGERIAN LINGUISTICS, Professor Emeritus Ayo Bamgbose. This was a wise decision, and as a matter of fact, no other Nigerian linguist (living or dead) would have qualified to be so honoured. Professor Emeritus Bamgbose was the first indigenous Professor of Linguistics in Nigeria, and the first black African to teach linguistics in any known university south of the Sahara. He was there from the very beginning, and with the co-operation of the likes of the Late Professor Kay Williamson, Professor Emeritus Bamgbose nurtured Nigerian linguistics. He is not just a foremost Nigerian linguist, but also a most famous, respected, distinguished, and cherished African linguist of all times, to say the least.

How we wished we had more to give him just to show how we admire and appreciate him for all he has done to raise the level of study in Nigerian languages and linguistics both in teaching and in research. LAN wishes him well.

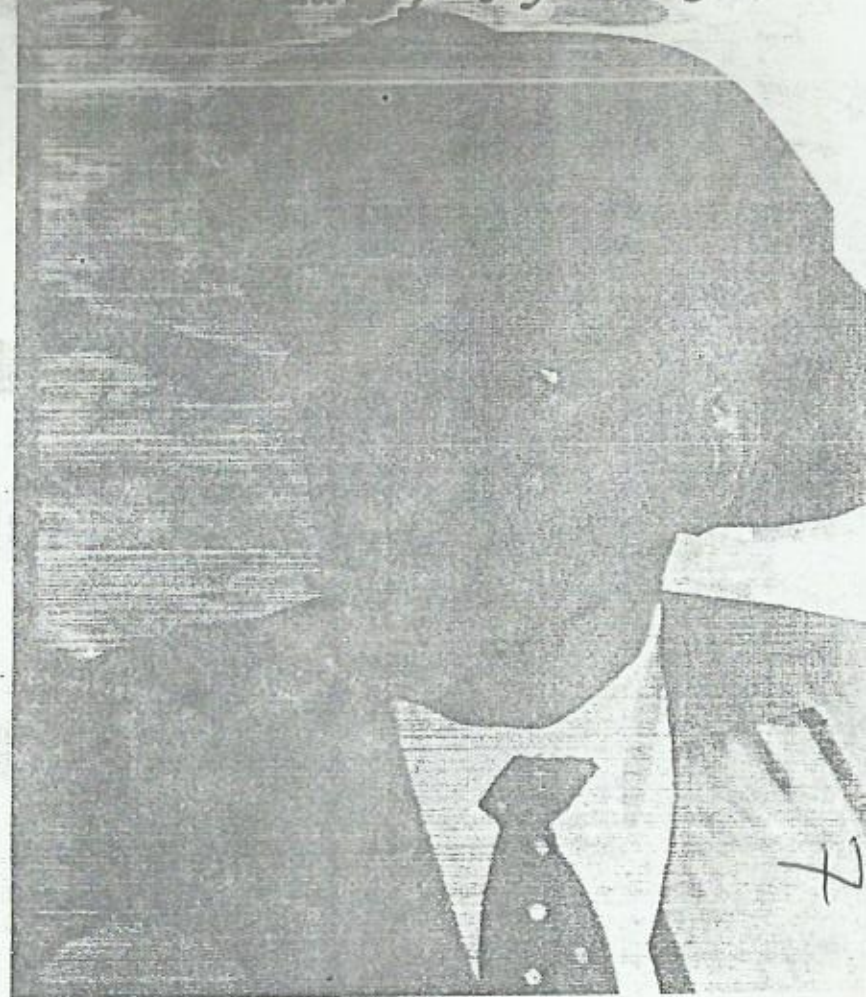
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...ndimele (Ed.)

# NIGERIAN LANGUAGES, LITERATURES, CULTURE & REFORMS

... Bamgbose



1. *Four Decades in the Study of Languages & Linguistics in Nigeria: A Festschrift for Kay Williamson* edited by Ozo-mekuri Ndimele (pp. 672 A4-size paper; 81 chapters)
2. *In the Linguistic Paradise: A Festschrift for E. Nolie Emenanjo* edited by Ozo-mekuri Ndimele (pp. 642 A4-size paper, 60 chapters)
3. *Language & Culture in Nigeria: A Festschrift for Okon Essien* edited by Ozo-mekuri Ndimele (pp. 1002 A4-size paper; 96 chapters)
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5. *Convergence: English and Nigerian languages - A Festschrift for Munzali A. Jibiri* edited by Ozo-mekuri Ndimele (pp. 988 A4-size paper; 73 chapters)
6. *Nigerian Languages, Literatures, Cultures & Policy Reforms: Festschrift for Ayo Bamgbose* edited by Ozo-mekuri Ndimele (pp. 720 A4-size paper; 59 chapters)

## Nigerian Languages, Literatures, Cultures & Policy Reforms

*Festschrift for Ayo Bamgbose*

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therefore be considered a valid type of language as far as the informal medium of communication is concerned.

## Notes

1. Francis Katamba's Book *English Words* is referred to by Eilu (2005:1)
2. Thurlow (2006) has referred to the article by Kasesniemi, E & Rauhainen, A 'Mobile Culture of Children and teenagers in Finland'.
3. 'Rebus' as found in Crystal's book *Language and the Internet*, is defined as "... something in which the sound value of the letter or number acts as a symbol for a word". This could be found in the article 'Mob ed'.

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## 8. Dynamics of Language: The Yoruba Example

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Language is a critical element in the education process. It is an instrument of thought, an expression of a people's culture and a veritable instrument for accessing knowledge and other forms of human development. Language possesses certain characteristic features, one of which is its dynamism. This paper explored the various factors which make language dynamic: official status accorded the language, languages in contact and creativity of the artist. The paper concluded by highlighting the implications of language dynamism.

## Introduction

Language plays an important role in the lives of people in any given society. No human society can do without language. However, language means different things to different people depending on what use they employ language to achieve. This accounts for the variations that could be noticed from the ways sociologists, philosophers, psychologists, and scientist would define language.

Bolinger (1970) sees language as a system of vocal auditory communication, interacting with experiences of its users, employing conventional signs, arbitrarily patterned sound, units and assembled according to set rules. This means that language is patterned systematically, it expresses a people's culture, reflects a speaker's experience and that it helps in communicating intended message.

Language is a principal medium of communication which is mutually intelligible to members of a given society. According to Crystal (1971) language makes civilization possible. There is no doubt that language facilitates meaningful interaction, communication and social processes among people of a given speech community. Stock and Widdowson (1979) in Kolawole (2003) believe that language is human specific and that language is a creation of man to meet his social needs. These authors also identified other characteristics of language which include: arbitrariness, dynamism, creativity, displacement, self-perpetration, conventional and duality of patterning.

One of these characteristic features of language 'dynamism' has actually influenced the writing of this paper. Language is an organic phenomenon whose dynamic growth from day to day and from age to age defies the most astute scholarly dissection (Ogunsiji, 2001).

Language is said to be dynamic in that it is capable of growth and it changes in order to reflect social realities and new ideas. Thus, every human language grows, expands, accommodates new coinages, new ideas and concepts. The corollary is true in that any language that fails to grow fossilizes and dies (Kolawole, 2003).

Lamidi (2000) notes that language is a versatile tool that is capable of being used for different purposes. According to him, happenings in the society bring

about the incorporation of new words into a language as old ones die out. Therefore, words like

... dialogue, annul, June 12, NADECO, power shift, and restructuring are recent additions/loans to the vocabularies of the three major indigenous languages and even to the so called Nigerian English (Lamidi, 2000:109).

Language is no doubt capable of growing and it is also subject to perpetual changes.

#### Dynamism in the Yoruba language

Yoruba is one of the three major Nigerian languages recognized in the National Policy of Education (2004). Indigenous languages in Nigeria number about 500 but the choice of three major ones must have been borne out of the consideration that each of the three, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba represents the language of wider communication in its region (i.e. Igbo in the East, Hausa in the North and Yoruba in the South-western region. (Makinde, 2005).

In Nigeria, the mother tongue or language of immediate community is expected to be the medium of instruction in the pre-primary and first three years of primary education. From primary four to six as well as in Junior Secondary School, that language is expected to be taught as a subject (NPE, 2004). Yoruba language enjoys all these in the southwestern part of Nigeria except that in most private schools and some public schools, the language provisions of the NPE are not implemented. Even in other parts of Nigeria, Yoruba language is expected to be taught as L<sub>2</sub> at the Junior Secondary School level but the implementation has always been limited to the Federal Secondary Schools, due to dearth of teachers.

The teaching of Nigerian languages, as L<sub>2</sub> is not limited to Nigeria. Some universities in the United States of America run L<sub>2</sub> programmes on selected African languages including Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba thus enhancing the status of the languages (Makinde, 2005).

Apart from the fact that Yoruba language is given the status of a major language in Nigeria, it is also being used as a medium of instruction and as well as an instructional area right from the primary to the tertiary institutions. By implication, this means that books and other educational materials would be produced in the language. This writer identifies other things that make the language to be dynamic.

#### Contact with other languages

Languages come in contact when speakers of such languages come together for commercial, religious, educational, marital purposes or for other social interactions. Such interactions bring about the borrowing of concepts or words from one language into the other. Borrowing words or concepts from other languages into a living language brings about the expansion of vocabulary in that language (Bello, 2001).

Examples abound of English, Arabic, Hausa and Hebrew words which have found their way into Yoruba through lexical borrowing. Lexical borrowing might involve having morphemes to undergo some morphological changes in order to make such words conform to the rules of word formation in the language doing

the borrowing. Lexical borrowing could be in the form of loanwords which involve a complete transfer of morphemes and meanings from a language into another with some phonological moderations: loan shift or creation which refers to the extension of the meaning of a word to some other concepts (Bello, 2001).

Examples of loanwords are English lexical items borrowed into Yoruba:

English	Yoruba
(a) ball	báàlù
(b) radio	redio
(c) table	tebu/tabili
(d) street	titi
(e) marriage	màrédè
(f) peculiar mess	penkele-méèsi

Example of loan shift from English to Yoruba is the English word 'railway'. In the donor language, 'railway' refers to tracks or routes for train but in Yoruba usage, it means the train itself. This is expressed in such sentences like:

- (i) 'Onímu faa fòò bí i reluwé fón mú'  
(The one whose nostrils are large like the horn of a train)
- (ii) 'Mo fẹ̀ lẹ̀ wọ̀ reluwé'  
(I want to go and board the train)

Malik (1995) highlighted Arabic loanwords in Yoruba language as used in poetry/songs, news bulletin, advertisement, and in the Yoruba translation of the Holy Bible. Few examples would be cited here.

Examples of loanwords used in Yoruba poems: (Loanwords are italicised in these examples)

- (a) *Má fi èpt' yẹ kùdàrà ọmọ*  
Don't change the child's destiny with curse  
(Arabic: *qadar* - destiny or fate)
- (b) *È ní' ha nínú isé ibi*  
Repent of evil deeds  
(Arabic: *tawbah* - repentance)

Examples of loanwords in Yoruba News Broadcast

- (a) *Komísánà Adedója se sàdánkàtá sí ilé isé Redio O-Y-O fun isé dásáá re*  
Commissioner Adedója commended Radio O-Y-O for its truth and sincerity.  
(Arabic: *sadaqa* - you have spoken the truth; you have been sincere)

## Loanwords used in Radio Advertisements

- (a) E yéé gba ribá mọ  
Stop taking bribe  
(Arabic: ribá – usury, bribe)
- (b) E yéé je mākārūrú  
Stop engaging in dishonest act  
(Arabic: mākārūh – detested thing or dishonest act)

## Loanwords in Yoruba Bible

- (a) "Gbọ́ àdírà mí, Oluwá"  
"Hear my prayer, O Lord"  
(Arabic: ul-du-á – prayer)
- (b) "Awon káfírí mbiú"  
"The nation's rage"  
(Arabic: káfír – unbeliever, infidel)
- (Malik, 1995:424-439)

Hebrew names in the English version of the Holy Bible undergo some phonological transformations in the Yoruba version. Few examples are herewith considered:

Abraham	-	Abrahamu
Mary	-	Maria
Moses	-	Mose
Shadack	-	Sadraki
Meshak	-	Mésáki
Zaccheaus	-	Sakeu

## Creativity of the Artists

Creativity is one of the characteristic features of a living language. According to Kolawole (2003) speaker of a language could understand and construct sentences which have never been heard or uttered before. Authors of novels, playwrights, poets and singers introduce new words into languages through their creativity. In Yoruba language, new proverbs, idioms, tongue twisters and slangs find their ways into the language through the creativity displayed by the artists.

## Some contemporary proverbs

Proverbs are witty sayings of elders that are used to convey thoughtful messages in few words. Artists display creativity by introducing new words or clauses into such proverbs. A few examples will be given.

- (a) Èlúlúú tó n fà òjò, orí ara rẹ̀ ní yóò fí rù ú – àtíjọ  
(Èlúlúú (a brown-feathered bird believed to be causing rainfall) that causes rain to fall shall bring it upon its head) – old version)

- (b) Èlúlúú tó n fà jò bábá rẹ̀ kò kú kú kọlé páánú sókò - igbálódé  
(The èlúlúú bird that causes rain to fall, the father does not build a house of roofing sheets in the farm) – contemporary usage

In the contemporary version, personification is introduced 'the father' who does not build a house in the farm or forest. This implies that the 'rainmaker' would have itself beaten by the rain.

- (a) Afopina tí yóò pa fitílá, ara rẹ̀ ní yóò pa – àtíjọ  
(A moth that attempts to put-out/quench the naked lamp, will end up killing itself) – old version
- (b) Afopina tí yóò paná súyá ní, eran fí yóò fí pọ̀ lori igbá ní - igbálódé  
(A moth that attempts to quench the roasting suya-meat furnace will end up adding to the meat for sale) – contemporary

In the old version, the moth attempts to put out the naked lamp while in the contemporary version, it is the roasting furnace or fire. Humour is also introduced in the new with the expression that the moth will end up as meat (súyá) for sale. All these types of innovations are indicative of the fact that language is not static. It is dynamic, it grows.

## Modern Idioms

An idiom is a vocabulary item and expression whose meaning is not obvious from the meaning of the individual elements or constituents words in them. Ogunsiyi (2000) sees idiom as "a special collocation: the meaning of which cannot be known through the meaning of the separate words that make it up" (p. 56).

It can therefore be said that idioms have two or more meanings. It must have an ordinary meaning and then the deeper or connotative meaning. To identify the connotative meaning, knowledge or familiarity with the culture of the speakers is essential. Some examples of modern idioms are given here. Idioms in Yoruba are called "àkánlò èdè".

	Idioms (Àkánlò Èdè)	Meaning (Itun...)
1. (a)	Ó lómori (It has cover)	O dára, ó pé pérépéré (It is good, complete and perfect)
(b)	Só ó dá a mọ? (Can you identify it?)	Se orọ, náa ye o? Se o mọ nipa rẹ? (Do you understand what we are talking about?)
(c)	Fún wọn tan (Give them all)	Èyí yóò dárá tábí wu gbogbo eniyan (This will be admired by all)

## Creativity through Tongue-twisters

Tongue twisters could be described as a play on sounds in which syllabus of words are subjected to diverse tonal changes for the purpose of producing different meanings. Among the Yoruba people, it is one of the learning experiences exposed to young ones under traditional educational system to teach them speaking skill. According to Okpewho (1992),

In tongue-twisters, the idea is to see who can rattle off the words with the greatest speed and accuracy (p. 250).

Such a person is usually praised and he or she would be regarded as a proficient speaker of the language.

Here is an example of tongue-twister coined by this writer:

- (i) Bádáǵiri ni bába Dáda tí rǒǵiri Bádá  
(It was in Badagry that Dada's father bought melon flavour of Bádá)
- (ii) ǒkókó lamúkókó tí ñ kó kókó Amúkókó wa s'Oníkókó  
(It is from Okoko that the pipe-smoker brings cocoa of Amúkókó to Oníkókó)
- (iii) Eran ǵlǵráá l'Aliré ará Iloráá rá nllé ará Aílárá  
(It is fat-meat that Alira of Iloraa bought from the man from Aílárá)

There is no doubt that it takes great concentration on the part of a Yoruba language speaker – young or old to rattle off those sentences with great speed without error.

#### Pedagogical Implications

The study has several implications to the teaching and learning of Yoruba and other languages. Since language is dynamic, carrying the unique features of a people's tradition and culture, the teacher is expected to keep abreast of developments in his language of specialization.

Attendance at seminars and workshops is a necessity for the language teacher. This will bring to his awareness relevant materials which have been developed by experts and he can use these to enrich the knowledge of his students.

The language teacher should also realise that when languages come in contact, apart from having borrowed words from one language to the other, interference through negative transfer of the knowledge of one language into the other might occur in the utterance of speakers of such languages, it takes a well-equipped teacher to employ relevant methods and strategies to help learners overcome such problems.

Curriculum designers should take advantage of the inherent potentials of those aspects of language and literature like proverbs, idiomatic expressions and tongue-twisters in preparing writing materials for various categories of learners. Textual materials can be designed to incorporate these aspects of Yoruba language for classroom teaching. For instance, learners can be asked to make a collection of proverbs on various subject-matters, tongue-twisters, modern idioms for classroom discussion and practice.

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