

DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS OF WIND OF CHANGE ON LANGUAGES IN NIGERIA: CASE OF IGBO AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

Change is a constant phenomenon. It affects all the facets of the society; hence people say that the society is dynamic. Changes may have favourable and unfavourable effect in the society including languages which are cultural patrimony. Wind of change in various domains has created more problems in local languages especially in areas of terminology. The computer, technological, and scientific era has great adverse impact on the language. While consulting some dictionaries in English and French published in the eighties, one discovers that some terms in modern technology are not there. Similarly, most of these terms are not found in local languages. As efforts are being made to clear the equivalent of existing terms, new ones are still coming out. This has made the teaching and learning of science and technology in the language difficult. In this work, we will identify the nature of the problems and proffer solutions.

KEYWORDS: Change, Local Languages, Wind of Change, Patrimony, Igbo, English, French, Dynamic, Adverse

INTRODUCTION

We would like to start this paper with a statement we read in French quoted by Karl, (1978, 42) in his book *Le Dictionnaire des citations* but credited to Bouddha “*Rappelez-vous bien mes mes enfants, qu’ il n’ existe rien de constant si ce n’ est le changement*” English Translation: Remember my children; nothing in existence is constant except change. Change is a constant phenomenon that affects every aspect of the world. Sociologists say the society is not static but dynamic. This is an aspect we were taught in those days in Sociology of Education. Change occurs even when it is not desired. Change affects all the facets of human activities and societies. The influence could be political, economical, social educational, cultural, and developmental among others. It may be favourable or unfavourable. Change is contagious. A little change in a particular community spreads like wild fire into others. We are all witnesses to the Revolution which started from one nation and spread to others in which people are clamouring for reforms in various areas. The inability of some leaders to accept change has resulted to blood bath. The case of Syria is pathetic where lots of human and material resources have been lost.

Developmental problems of wind of change is always enormous especially in situations where the people affected are not willing to adjust or are unable to cope with the changes. Wind of change poses problems to human development. At times, the change may reverse situations and unacceptable to the majority of the people. An issue at hand is the legalization of gay marriage and homo-sexualism which the majority of the various religious groups of the world are kicking against. Wind of change today wields a lot of influence on languages of the world (both developed and under-developed); but it is more enormous on the latter. This explains why a dictionary that is current today becomes obsolete tomorrow as changes occur in science and technology. As there are new findings, terms are created. Dictionaries that are old do not contain such terms but the revised ones do.

Discoveries and inventions affect languages. Languages that have an organized system are not adversely affected. We can make reference to some of the European languages such as English and French. They quickly find, create and adopt terms that are new to the languages. But for the developing languages the situation is different. Africa is made up of many languages and majority of them are deficient. Most of the scientific and technical terms are lacking. The situation is worse as new terminology emerges each day. Nigeria is one of the most important nations in Africa. It is the most populous, blessed with many human and material resources. The country has more than three hundred languages. Igbo language is one of them. It is one of the three most important languages in the country.

Igbo language is spoken by the Igbo tribe; one of the major ethnic groups located in the South East of the nation. It is spoken in eight states of the federation. It is insufficient just like many other languages. A lot of scientific, technical and specialized terms do not exist. This explains why some of the science subjects cannot be taught in these languages including Igbo. As efforts are being made to create the equivalent of some of the new terms, new ones are emerging. Thus, the language is facing a lot of developmental problems caused by wind of change.

In our work, we shall talk about the obstacles and hindrances militating against the development of the language, the effects of wind of change on language and the developmental problems and recommendation on how to solve the problems mentioned.

Wind of Change and its Diverse Forms on Languages

Wind of change has diverse forms. It could bring about new innovations; restructuring, total destruction of what is already in existence and putting in place something completely new. Change has different faces. A governor in one of the states in Nigeria came to power two years ago, he is bringing changes in many sectors. In the major cities in his state, there are demolitions of houses in order to widen the roads, the old asphalt is removed while in others, the old tars is not removed neither are the roads widened. Similarly, change has taken place in Igbo language. Some words are created and used to replace the existing ones. In numbers, there is the creation of new word to replace the old ones. For instance, the following figures existed in the past “Oru” which means “twenty”. To have forty (40), twenty is multiplied by two; that is Oru-abuọ (two twenties). To get sixty (60), twenty is multiplied by three (3), this gives Oru-atọ (three twenties). Eighty is derived by multiplying twenty by four (Four twenties) and hundred was got by multiplying twenty by five, that is five twenties. Igbo words for big numbers such as hundred, thousand, million and billion never existed. They are either called their names in English or the term “Agụ kata agba awaa” is used. Literally, it means counting until the jaw breaks. This refers to numbers with great value which one cannot imagine traditionally. Hence, this expression is used for all of them. But today, the situation has changed. There are changes and amendments.

Twenty (Oru) is no longer used to determine round figures such as forty (Oru-abuọ), sixty (Oru-atọ), eighty (Oru-anọ). It is necessary to note that numbers such as ninety, fifty, thirty and seventy cannot be formulated by multiples of twenty; rather they are created by adding ten to multiples of twenty. For example, “thirty” is got by adding ten to twenty. Fifty is derived by adding ten to two twenties (forty). Oru abuọ na iri two twenties (forty and ten); seventy is got by adding ten (iri) to three twenties (sixty) Oru atọ (sixty): Oru atọ na iri. Note: that there is “na” (and) which introduces “iri” (ten).

The system has changed today. Multiples of ten (iri) are used today to determine twenty (iri abuọ), thirty (iri atọ), forty (iri anọ), fifty (iri ise), sixty (iri isii), seventy (iri asaa), eighty (iri asatọ), ninety (iri itoolu). This makes counting

easy. Literally, “iri abụọ” means two tens (twenty, while “iri atọ” stands for thirty, but literally, three tens. We can summarize what is stated above in the table below:

1.	10	Ten	Iri
2.	20	Twenty	Iri abụọ (two tens)
3.	30	Thirty	Iri atọ (three tens)
4.	40	Forty	Iri anọ (four tens)
5.	50	Fifty	Iri ise (five tens)
6.	60	Sixty	Iri isii (six tens)
7.	7	Seventy	Iri asaa (seven tens)
8.	80	Eighty	Iri asatọ (eight tens)
9.	90	Ninety	Iri iteghete (nine tens)

New words were created for numbers such as hundred, thousand, million, and billion. In 1975, the followings were adopted:

1.	100	Hundred	Nari
2.	1000	Thousand	Puku
3.	1,000,000	Million	Nde
4.	1,000,000,000	Billion	Ijeri

Other numerals such as: 22, 24, 33, and 45 are formed by adding 2 and 4 respectively to 20 to get 22 and 24 while 3 and 5 are added to 30 and 40 to get 33 and 45 respectively. These are similar to what we have in English and French Languages.

	English	French	Igbo
22	Twenty-two	Vingt-deux	Iri abụọ na abụọ
24	Twenty-four	vingt-quatre	Iri abụọ na anọ
33	Thirty-three	Trente-trois	Iri atọ na atọ
45	Forty-five	Quarante-cinq	Iri anọ na ise

The creation of a word like “Mahadum” which literally means “Know them all” stands for university where one can go and know everything. The creation of words has however been abuse by some scholars who formulate words that already existed in Igbo. In a paper presented in 2012, there was a scholar who gave names to some objects or words that were already in existence in Igbo Language. For example, cup was given the name “kọpụ” bicycle was called baisikūlū, window was named “windoo. Good morning was translated to “ụtụtụ ọma”. All these objects and greeting have their representations in Igbo and should not be replaced with other words. They are represented in Igbo as follows:

Cup	Iko
Bicycle	Anyinya igwe (iron horse)
Window	Mpio
Good morning	Ị sala chi? Ị pụtala ụra?

Obstacles and Problems in the Creation of Words

Creation of words has been very problematic in an attempt to fill the vacuum in African languages. There was an attempt to use Swahili as a national language in one of the East African countries. The project failed because many new words were introduced simultaneously and it was as if they created a new language. Today, efforts are also being made to fill the vacuum in Igbo Language. New words are being created for various objects, concepts and ideas especially in

science and technology. Many words are created by changing the structure of the word in English. As we were going through a grammar book in Igbo, we saw terms like infinitivu, jenda and Muudu. These words are coined from English words. They are meaningful to someone who knows their meanings in English. But for the illiterate man or woman in the village they do not make sense even though they are pronounced using the Igbo intonation. But if “Iko” cup is mentioned to a listener (Igbo linguistic sign), he hears a succession of sounds which associate themselves simultaneously with a concept. The sound which the listener hears is the signifier whereas the concept (what is referred to) whose mental image he sees is the signified. Words are created in Igbo but they do not make sense to every person that speaks Igbo. Ekwudu, (1988) in his grammar book *ut̄oasus̄u Ogbaraoh̄u* while using some words, concepts or titles in Igbo still put the English equivalent in parenthesis because he realized that not every Igbo speaker will understand them even though they are written in Igbo. We have the following examples:

Nk̄owa	-	Adjectives
Itule Nk̄owaaha	-	To compare adjectives
Njiko	-	Conjunction
Isingwaa	-	Verb root/stem
Mgbakwunye	-	Affixes
At̄umanya	-	Subjunctive
udaume oghe	-	Open vowel
Nsonaaz̄u Mgbat̄i	-	Extensional suffix
Nnonetiti	-	interfix
Nkebiokwu kemkp̄oaha	-	Noun phrase

There may be reasons for giving an object, a concept or an idea a particular name. If the name is suggestive it is easy to understand but if not it is difficult to understand. The words coined from English are not suggestive to an Igbo man who does not know the meaning in English. In the same grammar book by Ekwudu, there are words that are suggestive. He did not give the equivalent of such terms in English as in the case above. For example, mk̄p̄oahass̄s (Noun) literally means what something is called; Nn̄ochiaha (Pronoun) literally means what is used to replace a name.

The creation of terms is not an easy one. Every discipline, profession and human activity has special terms. There are literary, technical and scientific terms, whose equivalents have not been created. This explains why it is not possible to teach many courses in Igbo. Similarly, it is not possible to publish books in these domains in Igbo language. Some teachers even find it difficult to use Igbo language to teach some course or topics in Igbo.

Effects of Wind of Change on Language and Developmental Problems

Change is a constant phenomenon which does not blow without leaving the traces, it may be mild. In such a case, there may be little or no destruction. On the other hand, the wind of change may be severe and destructive when it is blowing. Change could be favourable or unfavourable. Whichever is the case man should accept it and make necessary adjustments. Karl, (1978) in a quotation made by Bartholomew said “L’ homme absurd est celui qui ne change jamais.” The foolish man is he who never changes.

Talking about languages in Nigeria especially the Igbo language, the language does not move at the same pace with the wind of change. The wind of change in science and technology has brought about invention and discoveries into the society which cannot be expressed in the local languages. As efforts are made to give names to existing objects, concepts and ideas, new ones are emerging. The consequences are a cluster of things in existence without names. Lack of equivalent words in Igbo makes the learning of science subjects difficult. There is no gain saying the fact that pupils and students will understand more if they are taught in their local languages.

Language is a medium of instruction. In our society, it is English. The national policy on Education recommends that local language should be used in teaching children in the lower classes in primary school. But what we observe in practice is the use of English especially in private schools because all the subjects are taught in English with the exception of Igbo language after the first three years in the primary school. Therefore there is need to get the pupils used to English before they get to the higher classes at this level of primary school. If it were possible to use Igbo language to teach all the subjects at all levels then this problem would not arise. The developmental problem which affects the language will not be experienced.

For example in France, French language is used at all levels of education. In Britain it is English and in China it is Chinese. For these nations, no developmental problem emanating from wind of change will be experienced. Developmental problems emanating from the changes which affect Igbo language will continue to be there as long as it cannot play the role English, French, German, Italian and Chinese play in the nations that own them. Wind of change does not affect them adversely as is the case with Igbo language instead it favors them to the detriment of our local language.

RECOMMENDATION

Having seen that wind of change affects the development and usage of Igbo language in the areas where it is spoken, it is necessary to find solutions in the prevailing circumstances. No Nigerian language is developed enough to be used as language of instruction including Igbo. In the interim therefore, it is necessary to be working towards the development of the language.

First of all, a credible body should be inaugurated and given the mandate to develop Igbo language by creating words, terms and expressions for objects, concepts and ideas that do not have their equivalents in the language. This body should be given a time frame within which to achieve this great assignment. It is necessary to avoid arbitrary introduction of words by individuals as was the case of a scholar who called cup “copu and branded it the Igbo equivalent. Any term suggested by any individual must pass through this body which has the responsibility to study the suggested word and make recommendations. Any term accepted by this body must be publicized especially in a journal that will be set aside for this purpose. This body inaugurated for developing the Igbo language must be made up of people who are full-time workers and not scholars who have other jobs and rarely pay attention to the development of Igbo language. The body should be financed by the Igbo speaking states so that it will have enough funds. It should not be left in the hands of Non governmental organization or philanthropists. The introduction of new terms, words and expressions in Igbo language should be gradual to avoid a situation where it would appear that a new language has been created. Speakers will listen to programmes in Igbo on radio and it will appear they are listening to a programme in another language. People should be encouraged to speak Igbo at all times especially in social gatherings where Igbo celebrations or festivals are going on instead of English. The latter may be used intermittently to carry along non-speakers of the language. The owners of the language should know that the ability to speak one’s language is element of patriotism.

CONCLUSIONS

Change has come to stay. It cannot be avoided. The best thing one can do is to imbibe the culture of change and take necessary steps to cope with the exigencies. Igbo language, one of the three major languages in Nigeria is facing challenges pose by the wind coming from the native speakers and external forces. It was sometime predicted that the language would go into extinction. But today, the language is developing and improving each day. The speakers of the language, scholars and Otu Sùbakwa Igbo (an Igbo Pan-Organization) should gird up their loins and face the challenges of wind of change on the Igbo language.

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