Sociolinguistic study of language contact in Ubolo speech community, Enugu State-Nigeria

G. I. Nwaozuzu[1], C. U. Agbedo*[2] & C. N. Ugwuona[3]

1. Department of Linguistics, Igbo & Other Nigerian Languages, University of Nigeria, Nsukka-Nigeria
2. Department of Linguistics, Igbo & Other Nigerian Languages, University of Nigeria, Nsukka-Nigeria
3. Department of Linguistics, Igbo & Other Nigerian Languages, University of Nigeria, Nsukka-Nigeria
* Email of the corresponding author: info@linguisticsafrikana.com Phone: +234036868498

Abstract

This paper presents a preliminary report of the linguistic study of language contact in a rural speech community of Ubolo, Enugu State, Nigeria, using a sociolinguistic approach. The researchers selected seven linguistic groups in the area of study. They are Ubolo (the indigenous community), Awka, Onitsha and Owerri from different regional linguistic groups of Igboland. Others include: Hausa, Idoma and Yoruba from other ethnolinguistic groups in Nigeria. The researcher relied mostly on unstructured oral interview, direct observations, group discussions, and interactive sessions. The data collected for the study were analyzed using Higa's directionality model of analysis. From the study, five basic issues that influenced language contact in Ubolo speech community were established from the factors examined. These are trade/historical antecedents, access roads, border areas, migrations. More specifically, the research revealed the effects of language contact to include linguistic borrowing, code-switching, and hyperadoptation. In addition, it was discovered that the factors that influenced linguistic borrowing in the area of study include: Domain or the contact area, age, convergence, prestige, referee design, and interaction.

1.0 Introduction

It is a common assumption that in virtually all parts of the world, hardly does a language find itself spoken in a completely isolated environment with no contact at all between its speakers and the speakers of other languages. For various reasons, people from different linguistic backgrounds come in contact with each other and interact. The factors/motives, situations, conditions and effects are often investigated and discussed in terms of factorial components and linguistic consequences in a given speech community.

Language contact study in the narrow sense goes back to the early fifties (Weinreich, 1953). Being one of the current areas of sociolinguistics, language contact uses the methods of sociolinguistics. It originated in the United States where Weinreich's (1953), Fishman's (1960), and later Labov's (1970) work revived what had been sidelined for a long time: field research of an empirical nature. In the wake of extensive migrations across linguistic and ethnolinguistic borders, linguistic systems in many speech communities have been confronted with people of diverse linguistic backgrounds. Consequently, the presence in many speech communities of people with different linguistic backgrounds – both autochthonous (indigenous) and allochthonous migrant communities has necessitated the study of language contact.

In addition, before the fifties, linguists paid little or no attention to directionality of some of the observed consequences of language contact informed by contact phenomenon in specific domains in speech communities. This asocial orientation held sway in language contact studies until Higa (1979) drew attention to directionality theory to establish that word – borrowing can be used to determine or indicate the direction of contact and amount of culture learning/dominance between two or more given cultures that are in contact. Since Higa applied this theory successfully on cultural contact we intend to extend the theory and apply it to language contact in this rural speech community of Ubolo.

Language contact research in this part of Africa Ubolo (referred to in its present anglicized form as Obollo) with influx of people from different linguistic background in Nigeria tends to be very peripheral. In the early seventies, the remarkable influx of people from different parts of Nigeria especially southeastern (Awka, Onitsha, Owerri), northern (Hausa, and Idoma) and Yoruba to Ubolo was obvious enough to attract this kind of study. ln addition, geographical contiguity, migrations, and access to federal high ways in the area probably fed language contact and the subsequent effects it has created on the speech pattern of the speech community to attract this kind of study

2. An overview of literature

In this section, we intend to review the relevant and related studies earlier carried out by some scholars and researchers in the field of language contact studies. We shall attempt this by examining the theoretical and

empirical studies. From the theoretical studies, we intend to review the term speech community, few theoretical frameworks, and then explore the possibility of choosing and adopting one.

Mackey and Ornstein (1979) assert that, language contact is essentially a social phenomenon resulting from the meeting of peoples speaking different languages. The notion of language contact continues Mackey and Ornstein include the dominance of certain languages and their social functions, the location of language communities and their demographic, political, and economic importance, and the motives which push peoples to master another language in addition to their mother tongue. They argue that language contact varies according to the distribution of the languages, their stability and their social functions.   Agbedo (2007) notes that, language contact occur when people from different linguistic backgrounds converge at a particular place for whatever reason or reasons to interact. According to Wikipedia (2009), language contact occurs when speakers of distinct speech varieties interact. When this happens, it is typical for their languages to influence each other. Emenanjo (2005) notes that man has an unending quest to relate, interact, conquer or dominate in spheres of life such as business, interpersonal relationships, politics, religion or education. Such meeting or coming in contact with people by implication is the coming together or the presence of two or more languages in a particular geographical environment, community or nation.

In their study of language contact and bilingualism, Rene and Muysken (1987) describe language contact in relation to what the dominant language contact situations in recent history are and the scenarios for grammatical borrowing. They identified five situations of language contact and instantiate one of such situations as the linguistic archipelago where many unrelated languages, each with few speakers are spoken in the same ecosphere. These are the Amazon basin and the Australian desert; where many aboriginal peoples still live in tribal groups typify this situation. They see these areas as being characterized by extensive bilingualism and widespread diffusion of words and elements of grammar from language to language. The other term Rene and Pieter (1987) describe language contact is in relation to five scenarios with which grammatical borrowing could potentially take place. The five scenarios include: convergence, cultural influence and lexical borrowing, second language learning, relexification, and imitation of prestige pattern

These situations and scenarios of language contact are interesting but it seems that the study is very peripheral. It lacks code-switching, hyperadoption, directionality in specific domain. Consequently, we shall examine the effects of language contact as well as the directionality of the effects in our study area.

2.1 Theoretical framework

Over the years, the most common theoretical models of language contact are the, accommodation, convergence, systematic and interference theories. At this juncture, it seems pertinent to consider these theories one after the other hereunder:

2.1.1 Accommodation Theory

According to *Wikipedia*, the accommodation theory, in linguistics, starts from the premise that speech accommodation takes place when speakers modify their speeches so that it conforms more to the way their conversational partner speaks. A wide range of subtle adaptations have been observed, which tend to occur more or less unconsciously. The example shows that, the speed at which people talk, the length of both pauses and utterances, the kind of vocabulary and syntax used, as well as intonation, voice pitch and pronunciation are all subject to the accommodation process. When people talk to each other, their speech often becomes more similar (Holmes 2008, Yule 2006:300). Each person's speech converges towards the speech of the person they are talking to. When this happens, accommodation has taken place.

2.1.2 Convergence theory

Holmes (2008: 242) remarks that convergence implies when people adopt some of the pronunciation features of addressee. That is, each person's speech converges (resembles) towards the speech of one another. In other words convergence refers to the strategies through which individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviors, in order to reduce these social differences.

2.1.3 Systematic theory

In this theory as Garcia (2003) observes, all contact phenomena are systematic, and language contact and linguistic borrowing are no exception. Regarding forms, the determining factors are in the nature of the morphological systems in contact and how they relate to one another. Two principles according to Garcia are proposed to determine the nature of the systematic and interaction: the principle of system compatibility (PSC),

and the principle of system incompatibility (PSl). Together these principles provide a consistent account of the possibilities and limits of borrowing.

2.1.4 Directionality theory

Higa (1997) remarks that in general, no word borrowing takes place unless two cultures and their languages come in contact with each other and the directionality of word borrowing is understandably predictable. Continuing, Higa argues that when word borrowing takes place, it is not random in the sense that its directionality and amount vary from place to place, and from one language to another often as a function of cultural, economic or military advancement or dominance. Continuing, Higa argues that Mutual borrowing or non-borrowing takes place when two cultures in contact are equally dominant or not dominant, or when their dominance-subordination relationship is not clearly established. In line with Higa, Yule (2006:209) argues that if one language is more dominant or advanced than the other, the directionality of word borrowing is not mutual but from the dominant to the subordinate. This framework to a large extent exposes the pattern of the effects, the direction, and the dominant language in each every domain in speech community. Consequently, this study anchors on Higa's directionality approach because of the advantages it has over others.

3. Presentation and Analysis of Data

This section contains the analysis of the language contact phenomenon in Ubolo speech community, Enugu State, Nigeria in terms of two major issues. The first one constitutes the factors that have given rise to the contact phenomenon. The second is about the sociolinguistic outcomes of the language contact on the speech pattern of the speech community.

3.1 Factors that influence language contact and the sociolinguistic implications

From what we gathered from our respondents, we discovered that the factors that influence language contact in the area include: trade, federal roads, border area, and migrations. In this section, we shall report the observed consequences of language contact in different domains, and then determine the directionality of each of the observed effects in each domain.

3.1.1 Lexical borrowing in the 'New-Road'

The new-road area is the heart and core area where speakers of Ubolo, Hausa, Yoruba, Onitsha, Awka, Owerri and the indigenous community converge mostly for commerce. In this analysis, Onitsha and Awka are grouped as Onitsha linguistic group for they have almost similar speech patterns in the area

Table 1: Distribution of lexical borrowing in the New-Road

S/N					
Onitsha	Owerri	Ubolo before contact	Ubolo after Contact	Gloss	
ii.	ọ$ra	q$ha	Isisikèberè	q$ra	a type of vegetable
Iii	ọkà	Ukwōrù	azəzə	ọkà	maize
Iv	ọ$pàpa	àhụekere	q$kpampa	q$pàpa	Groundnut
V	akwxnaecheenyi	a$kwxnaechenyi	igede$	akwxnechenyi	a type of traditional music
Vi	[gba #nkwx#	[gba nkwx	[labeji#/ivu manya	[gba# nkwx#	traditional marriage ceremony
Vii	nwaany[$	nwaany[$	onyenye$	nwaany[$	woman
Ix	[chipẹ	[chipẹ	[chipẹ	[chipẹ	a type of local food in Ubolo

Source: Igbo speaers in the New-Road, Ubolo.

In the table above, Onisha and Owerri borrowed aↄ✓yaↄ✓raↄ✓ya and ichipe to their lexicon as a consequent of the language contact in the area. Furthermore the Examples in table (1) above show that Ubolo has borrowed the lexical items (i-vii) from Onitsha, while Onitsha and Owerri linguistic groups borrowed [chipẹ and ↄ✓yaↄ✓raↄ✓ya (types of food) respectively from Ubolo. Ubolo borrowed igbankwu 'traditional marriage' from either Onitsha or Owerri.

Figure 1: The Directionality of the lexical borrowing in the New-Road (Domain)
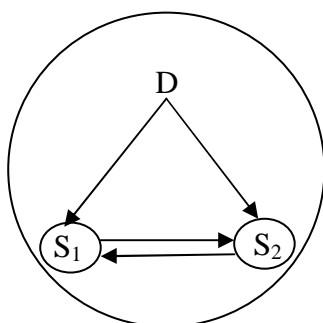
In the diagram above, 'D' represents the dominant dialect (Onitsha) of the Igbo language, while S_1 and S_2 represent Owerri and Ubolo dialects respectively in that domain.

3.1.2 *Lexical borrowing from the Hausa linguistic group in the 'Goat Section' (Domain)*

Below are those lexical terms that have largely spread and form part of the speech pattern of many people both in and beyond the speech community through this section of the speech community (goat section domain). A number of linguistic terms from the Hausa speaking groups abound in Goat Section in the New-Road. Some of them are: remu 'orange', suya 'roasted cattle meat', saraka 'sacrifice', kwunu 'a type of drink from millet,' baruba 'pineapple', albasa 'onions', among others.The linguistic terms above were borrowed in the area from the Hausa speaking groups. This is due to the fact that the goat business is largely dominated by the Hausa speakers. Other names (often nick names and trade names) that have entered the speech community through Hausa ethnolinguistic group include: Waziri, Gambo, Alhaji Yaro, Adamu, Dauda Yakubu among others. While some people adopted or borrowed the names and bear them as nicknames, others bear them as trade name or even personal names. Those names from the Hausa speaking groups do not even conform to the phonology and pronunciation of Igbo names. They do not connote any meaning in Igbo. However, those who bear these names seem to cherish the Hausa people that bear the names in the area. The diagrams bellow illustrates the directionality of the borrowing words thus:

Figure 2: Directionality of the Lexical Borrowing in the New-Road, Ubolo
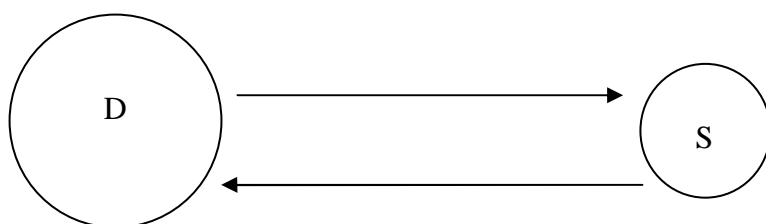
(3b) In the above diagram, 'D' represents the dominant/superstratum language, while 'S' represents the subservient/substratum language/dialect. The directionality of borrowing is towards the Hausa language as can be observed in that domain in the examples above. The above suggests that linguistic borrowing is inevitable in most language contact situation.

4.2.5 Lexical Borrowing in Native Drug Section of the 'New Road' (Domain)

During business transactions mostly, Yoruba linguistic groups dealing mostly in traditional medicine herbs interact with other linguistic groups especially the indigenes. The following terms have entered the speech community from the Yoruba ethnolinguistic group.

Table 2: Lexical borrowing in the traditional medicine section of the 'New Road'

| S/N	Yoruba form	Ubolo	New form/borrowed form	Gloss
i	a$gbo	qgwx$ iba	qgwx$ iba$	malaria syrup
ii	a$ghqn	qji	qji	colanut
Iii	E$l[$bq	ogbo$logo# x$mx$ketẹ	a$ry[$bq	powdered cassava
iv	wayo			
awxwq	wayo			
trick				
v	kpele	darə#	darə#	thank
vi	agbada	awuru	agbada	A brand of big cloth for occasion
vii	Oluwa	Chukwu	Chukwu	God
viii	bu$ba	ẹkwa$ o#shushue	bu$ba	wrapper

Source: Igbo and Yoruba speakers in the traditional medicine Section, New-Road

In the table above, (iii, iv, vi, viii), we discoverec that Ubolo borrowed from Yoruba linguistic group, while the Yoruba linguistic group borrowed (i, iii, v, vii, ix, x) from Ubolo linguistic group. The borrowed terms/new forms are not restricted to those in the domain only. Rather, they have spread and influence other linguistic groups in the speech community. It seems pertinent to note that the Ubolo indigenous speakers often do not abandon their original terms especially when interacting among themselves. But when interacting with people from another linguistic group, the influence largely comes to play. In the domain above, the directionality of borrowing is towards the Yoruba language. This is due to the fact that they dominate the trading in this area.

3.1.3   Lexical borrowing in Ubolo Eke and Ubolo-Echichi

Ubolo Eke and Ubolo-Echichi have been in contact with Idoma (Iꜜkakpa, Iꜜkwo, Uꜜpioge and Qjọgbqꜜ) due to geographic boundary between them. This phenomenon has some desirable linguistic influences on the speech pattern of Ubolo variety of the Igbo language. For instance, the following personal names have entered the speech community from the Idoma language: Oꜜchibe, Oꜜgəꜜryi, Oꜜsogwuꜜ, εꜜsọ, Aꜜpε, Igaraꜜ, Iꜜdoko, Aꜜyagbo, Oꜜmamέ Aꜜkέyiikpaꜜ, εꜜjε, and Qꜜsε, among others. The names above have now formed part of the legitimate names that Ubolo people bear. However, Idoma ethnolinguistic groups aborrow edand bear some of the Ubolo names such as Oꜜdoꜜ, Xꜜramaꜜ, Ugwu, Ezeꜜ, Asqgwa, Aꜜgbo, Oꜜkpe, Ugwu, Qjqbqꜜ, Ndx, Oꜜmekaꜜ, Ugaꜜmaꜜ among others. The data, gathered from our respondents show that the number of terms that both Idoma and Ubolo borrow from each other is twelve each. That shows that the borrowings between the two linguistic groups at the border are mutual. This can be shown diagrammatically thus:

Figure 3: The directionality of borrowing between Idoma and Igbo languages at the border
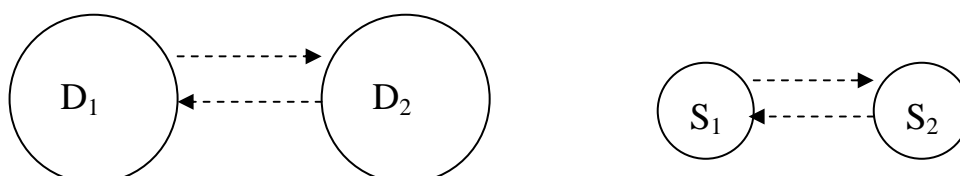
In the diagram above, we can notice that the languages or dialects are influencing one another almost in the same proportion. That is, Ubolo (D$_1$) is borrowing from Idoma language (D$_2$) and Idoma is equally borrowing from Ubolo dialect of the Igbo language. The border area is in the remote part of the speech community and both speakers of Ubolo and Idoma speakers are living side by side, enjoying inter-trade relationship and inter-marriages together. This suggests that borrowing is a natural phenomenon

3.1.4. Hyperadoption by Owerri linguistic group in New Road domain

The Owerri speaker of Ubolo dialect most often adopts Ubolo dialect in New Road domain to enhance their business. The examples below illustrate this point.

Table 3: Distribution of Hyperadoption by Owerri Linguistic Group in New Road Domain

S/N	Owere	Ubolo	Adopted form	Gloss
i	ngaa$	m$bena	m$bena	here
ii	X$gbx a$	nwq$shwxa	nwq$shwxa	now
iii	[$b[ala	[$ b[ama	[$ b[ama	have you come
iv	xkwxq#rx$	a$zə$zə$	qka$	maize
v	okpo$ro jigbq#	oko okpo$logo#	oko okpo$logo#	cassava tuber
vi	a $huekere	q$kpampa#	q$kpampa#	ground nut
Vii	n$nweyi	ẹkwa	ẹkwa	cloth
viii	r[ga	ryi$ire	ryii$re	eat

Source: Ubolo and Owerri Speakers in the New-Road

The table above shows how the Owerri linguistic group has adopted the accent of Ubolo dialect in their speech pattern in the area. The influence of the schwa /ə/, ẹ, /☞/, which is not originally in their dialect or lexicon can now be observed in their speech pattern in the speech community.

3.1.5 Code-Switching as observed in 'Ubolo-Ahq Market 'Domain

Below are the examples of code-switching between Onitsha woman (buyer) and Ubolo woman (seller).
Buyer: Nwonyenye$ o$le ka$ [na$-e$le evele ose# 'yelo$'?
Woman how much do you sell this plate of yellow pepper?
i)   **Seller:** Afere ose$ yelo$ bx$ akpa ego# ise (N1000).
The plate of yellow pepper is sold for one thousand naira (N1000)
ii)   **Buyer:** {$ na$-e$le akpa ego# atq (N600)
Do you sell for six hundred naira (N600)
iii)   **Seller:** Onye ashwx$a m, q$ d[rq mma#.
My customer it is not good.
iv)   **Buyer:** G[n[bx$z[qnx ah[a ya.
What then is the prize?
v)   **Seller:** Ezigbo qnx ah[a ya b«$ akpa ego# anq (N800)
The last price is eight hundred naira
vi)   **Buyer:** {$ le$e$ akpa ego# atq na$ qkala$ (N700)
Will you sell for seven hundred naira (N700)
vii)   **Seller:** We$ta ego#, b[$a v$ərə Bring money, come and carry.
        In the example (i) to (viii) above, the utterances in italics are Ubolo variety of the Igbo language, while the rest are in Onitsha variety. It is obvious that the switching is more from Ubolo variety than from Onitsha.

3.2 Factors that influence linguistic borrowing
From the unstructured oral interview, interactive session and direct observation, we identified the factors that underlie linguistic borrowing to include:
(i)Domain
Domains are named usually for a place or an activity in it. There are different domains in our study area occupied by people from different linguistic groups. Such domains include: goat section, yam section, Ubolo main market, new road areas, Ubolo-Eke, Ubolo-Echichi, and home domain. As observed from the study, the extent of borrowing depends largely on the domain, that is, the contact area. Linguistic borrowing progresses more in the other domains at the heart of the speech community than in the indigenous homes.

(ii) Age
Age plays an important role in influencing linguistic borrowing. For instance, the young stars we interviewed in our study area, that is, the adolescents respond largely to the wider society's speech norms by using fewer

vernacular norms and more of the perceived prestige forms. Examples include 'agidi' from Yoruba, 'abacha' from Onitsha, 'kanda' from Hausa etc.   They also use the borrowed terms in official situations and even in other social gatherings such as religious, political, marriage and funeral ceremonies.

(iii) Prestige

In Ubolo speech community, the perceived prestige of certain dialects or languages has contributed to maximize the community's (30 to 35) pressure to borrow more from such language or variety

(iv) Convergence

In contact situation, due to prolonged coexistence of two or more languages, their speech often becomes more similar, that is, the languages in contact tend to influence each other. Ubolo has been in long contact with people from other linguistic groups as we have seen in this present work. From the foregoing discussion, although linguistic borrowing appears to be a simple and often random linguistic phenomenon, it is often motivated and regulated by certain linguistic and sociolinguistic factors and its sociolinguistic aspects and processes often present academically interesting research topics as we have shown

4. Findings and Conclusion

In this work, we have discussed the sociolinguistic cues of language contact in Ubolo, an Igbo speech community of Enugu State, Nigeria, in Southeastern Nigeria. We also discussed the factors that led to the language contact, a crucial issue that preconditions the language contact phenomenon in this speech community. The effects of the language contact were studied using directionality model of analysis. The data were drawn from the seven major linguistic groups in the area such as Awka, Idoma, Hausa, Onitsha, Owerri, Ubolo and Yoruba. Onitsha and Awka linguistic groups were merged and referred to as Onitsha linguistic group because the speech pattern of the people from both linguistic groups seems very much alike in the study area. The work also discussed the factors that influence linguistic borrowing in the area of study. The dominant language or dialect in each of the domains by such pertinent variables such as, age and domain was also discussed.

It is to be recalled that the objectives of this research is to identify the major factors that account for the language contact phenomenon in Ubolo speech community. Our findings show that the major factors that influence language contact in the speech community are border area, migrations, and federal roads. The study also identified sociolinguistic consequences of the language contact to include linguistic borrowing, code-switching, and hyperadoption. The study also revealed the factors that influenced linguistic borrowing to include domain, age, prestige, and convergence.

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