Igbo Language Development: Exploring the use of lexical borrowing

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Abstract

As languages grow they acquire new terms to help them meet up with needs and issues related to globalization. Lexical borrowing is a global issue since languages borrow from one another in order to enrich their lexicon. Languages are not only important but also a relevant tool for human communication, cultural transmission and preservation. Language transmits our values; there is always need for a new lexical item to help us transmit the development we meet in our everyday lives as new inventions and developments happen. This study discusses the motivations behind lexical borrowing and its implications. It explores the various strategies of Igbo lexical borrowing in form of calque, naturalization, adaptation, external and internal borrowing from fields such as Agriculture, Education, Science, ICT and Technological needs. It also examines how borrowing could be helpful to the development of the Igbo language in terms of enriching its vocabulary to cope with the new terminologies arising from rapid advancement in science and technology. In this paper, emphasis is laid on the factors responsible for borrowing, the adaptation of these borrowings in Igbo and how these borrowings have affected the Igbo language development. The data for this study are obtained from primary and secondary sources. The paper recommends that inasmuch as lexical borrowing is a

veritable means of enriching one's own language's lexicon, Igbo language users should standardize and popularize these borrowed lexical items that are hitherto not standard.

Keywords: Igbo, Language, Development, Lexical, Borrowing

Introduction

Lexical borrowings can be described as a term that entered into the lexicon of a language as a result of borrowing (transfer or copying). Agbedo (2007:31) views it as a "practical sociolinguistic situation whereby people from different ethno linguistic backgrounds converge at a particular place for whatever reason or reasons to interact, providing a veritable ground for contact between languages used by these people." This definition can be said not be controversial: First, 'borrowing has been used by scholars in two parallel senses:

As a broad terminology for all categories of transfer or copying methods; whether as a result of native speaker's absorbing aspects from other languages into the recipient's language, or consequent upon non-native speakers imposing elements of their native language onto a recipient's language. This broad perspective seems to be, by far, the most prevalent use of 'borrowing'. Secondly, 'Borrowing', however, has also been used in a more restricted sense ''to refer to the incorporation of foreign elements into the speakers' native language''

The concept of lexical borrowing is informed by an important sociolinguistic phenomenon known as language contact. As different language communities co-exist in the same environment as a result of trade, education, international relations etc., there is bound to be culture as well as language contact though our interest in this paper is based on language contact, hence, linguistic borrowing. Language contact is a

phenomenon that suggests the coming together and interaction of people from different linguistic backgrounds which makes it possible for the languages of these persons to be influenced or to influence each other with the aim of easy communication.

This contact however results in the loaning and lending of lexical items known as borrowing. Extensive borrowing has been done by world languages both the stronger languages as English, French, German etc. and the weaker ones as Ijaw, Ibibio, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, etc. for representing terminologies present in cultures other than theirs. This however to a large extent contributes to the unifying of the world's languages. The notion of development, with respect to language creates a division between minority and majority languages. But, this work seeks to note that whether minor or major, lending and loaning of lexical items affect both parties for the building up of lexical inventories/items using Igbo language as the focus.

Igbo Language development is not just a business of the weaker language depending on the stronger languages but on how the Igbo language rely on other languages for the development of a strong lexicon that can build up a global lexical inventory where the language is said to be adequate enough as to fill up any lexical gap that has existed in the language. It is on this note that we look at language development and lexical borrowing and this study discusses the motivations behind lexical borrowing and its in the Igbo language. It explores the various strategies of Igbo lexical borrowing in form of calque, naturalization, adaptation, foreign influence borrowing and locally influenced borrowing from fields such as Agriculture, Education, Science, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Technological needs. It also examines how borrowing could be helpful to the development of the Igbo language in terms of enriching it's vocabulary to cope with the new terminologies arising from rapid advancement in science and technology. In this paper, emphasis is laid on the factors responsible for borrowing, the adaptation

of these borrowings in Igbo. This study basically adopts a descriptive approach in analyzing the data gathered through structured and oral interviews and secondary sources. A study of this nature encourages developing indigenous lexical items that can account for inventions and new scientific concepts that will come to be in the near future. In this work, Igbo is the recipient language while other languages it borrows from are the donor or lending languages.

Review of Literature

1.1 The Concept of borrowing

Lexical borrowing

By definition, when speakers initiate a word from a foreign language and, at least partly adapt it in sound or grammar to their native language, the process is called 'loan words' or borrowing. This was according to Shahla Simin et al (2012). In fact, one of the most common means of adding new words to any language is borrowing, the process by which a word or phrase is taken from one language and then it is used in another language. When one borrows a single word it is also called 'loan words'.

According to Sapir (1949:193), affirms that lexical borrowing is an important consequence of language contact. Moreover, lexical borrowing occurs when one of those languages in contact is more influential or prestigious than the others. Haugen (1950) notes that borrowing is a process which involves reproduction. This process should however produce a particular form or word as it is in another language. Haugen observes that the borrower is under no obligation to repay the loaned word neither is the consent of the donor language sort for when loaning the word.

Ugwuoke (1997:168) describes borrowing as a situation where a Language adopts or uses as their own words, concepts and expressions of

other languages. She further elaborates this definition by observing that borrowing speaks of ‘‘the copying, modification, translation or changing of a given set of patterned symbols of a source language into another set of patterned symbols (i.e. target or recipient language).’’

Mondegar-Nicasio (2007:2) also observes that ‘‘borrowing does not involve a language system; instead it is limited to lexical items to fill lexical gaps in the receiving languages and cultures.’’ According to Witalisz (2011), views borrowing as a linguistic exchange between languages. Borrowing regarding language is viewed as lexical or linguistic borrowing. Lexical borrowing (LB) is the necessitated by the need to represent concepts that are foreign to a particular language.

Yul-Ifode (2001) sees it as an aspect of lexical change. She avers that it involves adding new items to a language or dialect taking them from another language or dialect. This means that borrowing could be a morphological process that improves the lexicon of a language. She further notes that borrowing can be direct or indirect. Borrowing is said to be lexical because most often than not languages loanwords/ lexical items to represent the ideas they are adopting for the expansion of the lexicon. According to Agbedo (2011), explains that only exotic words known as content words can be borrowed while function words such as pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions etc. are not usually borrowed except on rare occasions.

Borrowing according to Nwala (2004:101) ‘‘ is a morphological process that enables language to increase the membership of words available in their vocabulary, while Ajah (2016) defines borrowing as a ‘‘ process through which words are incorporated into a language from mutually intelligible and non-mutually intelligible languages(dialect or languages) to fill the gap new and alien ideas create’’. In accordance with these definitions by Nwala (2004) and Ajah (2016), it is important to note that languages all over the world (recipient languages) borrow or incorporate words from other languages they come in contact with (donor

languages) to fill gaps created by lack of indigenous /native words for such ideas and also to enrich the language lexicon.

Vaisman (2016:160) observes that English has been increasingly borrowed into the speech and writing including the slang and journalism of the Hebrew language since 1980s. in his study, on Lexical Globalization in Isreali Teenage Girls Blog. He compared 56 blogs of girls of age 11-16 from two distinct speech communities; Fakasa and Freak aiming at finding out the sociolinguistic context of the girls' lexical borrowing choices on blogs. He finds out that they girls from Fakatsa speech community make a wider use of unique language characteristics that mix words borrowed from the lexicons of specific popular culture and media content in English, Spanish, Japanese, than the girls from Freak. He further observed that the preference in the choice of borrowed words from foreign communities were chosen by their phonology with little importance laid on meaning and the words are used in diverse ways including as onomatopoeic paralinguistic signs. He, however, established that borrowing from languages is closely linked to the interplay between gender, globalization and computer-mediated communication. Nneji and Uzoigwe (2013) carry out a research on globalization and lexical borrowing using the Igbo language as an example on lexical borrowing. The study being correlational finds out that the relationship between globalization and lexical borrowing is a case of cause-and-effect action since the former presupposes the birth of new technologies that will give rise to their naming.

Nneji and Uzoigwe (2013) conclude that since the technological no-how of the Igbos is very poor, they will continue to borrow to fill up lexical gaps which causes a shift and finally, endanger the language 'hence death for this reason aforementioned, Nneji and Uzoigwe (2013) advocate for the indigenous translation of technologies not withstanding its high level of ambiguity. The researchers further note that globalization does not

entail the lower language depending on the higher language instead, the both relaying on themselves some of the out listed examples are:

(1) Jenuwari : for January instead of *Onwambu*

(2) Tebulu: for table instead of *Mbo* (though dialectical)

Moyi and Egu (2019) research on lexical borrowing in Nigerian English which implies that even Nigerian English borrow to enrich itself. Moyi and Egu (2019) further state that their research is restricted to lexical variation. The researchers employ Nigerian Newspapers, Nigerian written documents like literacy works and some spoken English of Nigerians. The study critically analyses these loanwords differentiating proper loanwords and partial loanwords. Below are some of the examples as registered by Moyi and Egu (2019)

(3) Alhaji Hausa A Muslim man who has gone for pilgrimage in Mecca. It is also a title used for some individuals.

(4) Chief Igbo A traditional title holder

(5) Akara Yoruba Fried bean cake

(6) Adire Jukun Traditional Jukun attire popularly known as tie-and-dyed Indigo cloth

(7) Danfo Yoruba Van used for passenger transport commonly found in the Yoruba area and even mostly in Lagos state.

Finally, the researchers aptly posit that the researcher is and evidence of mutual influence of language context. The researchers conclude with the claim that Nigerian English receives lot of influence from the local languages. In addition, the researcher posit that the research does not justify all aspects of the Nigerian English as variant because some

are errors but say that some of them as illustrated in the data presentation are inevitable since language and culture are intertwined.

Furthermore, Grajenska (2009) focusses on the linguistic borrowing in the English language of Economics. The researcher tries to study the functions of loan words in English economic discourse as the author is both an economist and a linguist. The author investigates how other languages have influenced the economics discourse. Data was drawn from different languages like French, Latin, Japanese, Greek, Italian, Spanish and German. Some examples are:

(8) French – Price, arbitrage
(9) Latin – careat, emptor, quantum, meruit
(10) Japanese –geriba-shugi, keiretsu
(11) Greek- Kappa , rho, delta,gamma
(12) Italian – agio mezzanine
(13) Spanish – cargo , embargo
(14) German- blitzkrieg tender offer banka.

The study therefore concludes to say that linguistic borrowing will influence language greatly.

Ugwuoke (1997) says that the English words also come into the Igbo lexicon which is a positive development. She mentions importation, adoption, and adaptation as the outcome of social, political, economic. Religious and technical changes.

Different Models of Lexical Borrowing

This section of the paper throws light on the strategies adopted by the Igbos for developing their language to compete with other languages as earlier listed, they are calquing, naturalization, adaptation, internal and external borrowings.

A. Calquing

Oweleke (2017) registers that calquing is a morphological oriented process and also a unique strategy for borrowing in of new words. Calquing simple means the use of phrase/word to replace the meaning of a word.

	Donor word	**Calque**	**Translation**
(15)	Hospital	Ulo-ogwu	house of drug (s)
(16)	Aeroplane	Ugbo- elu	vehicle in the air
(17)	Diabetes	Oriamamiri	urine sickness
(18)	High blood pressure	Obaramgbalielu	Blood that goes up
(19)	Petroleum	mmanuala	oil from the ground

Culled from Oweleke 2017:115

Other examples are:

(20)	Obesity	Oriaibu	disease of fatness
(21)	Siblings	umunne	children of the mother
(22)	Linguistics	sayensi asusu	science of language
(23)	Microphone	igwe okwu	machine for speaking

This afore listed shows that calquing is a very productive strategy for enriching the lexicon of any language. There are also instances of calquing in other African Language. Furthermore, Oweleke 2017:113 posits that calquing is a direct translation method.

B. Adaptation

Through adaptation, words are borrowed from English or other languages into the Igbo language. This type of borrowing goes through adoption and adaptation before it is fully accepted or assimilated into the

language. Oweleke (2017:123) posits that adaptation was proposed by Vinary and Darbelnet. It is also purely a translation method whereby there is a case of improvisation on the part of the translator. Because of the absence of the lexical item in the language, adaptation hence helps to create a similar lexical item. This usually happens during translation of a cultural lexical item.

Examples:

(24)	Dear Sir	Ezigbo Amadi
(25)	Your sincerely	Ezigbo Enyi gi
(26)	Jesus lamb of God	Jizos Ezigbo nwa chineke

The (26) example has Jeesu ezigbo nwa chineke, and not Nwaturu chineke because in Igbo 'aturu'+ gentility and meekness.

Naturalization: In naturalization the quality of the borrowee is meant to conform to the nature of the borrower, when naturalizing a language, we change the pronunciation of a borrowed word to agree with borrower's phonology. This is seen as indirect loaning. According to Ezeuko .R.U (1998:47), '' Naturalization is an umbrella term used for coining an indigenous term out of a foreign term by pronouncing the foreign term target language orthography in writing the term'' This type of borrowing is also known as Igbonization.

Example:

(27)	Morphology	mọfọlọgii
(28)	Phonology	fọnọlọgii
(29)	Linguistics	lingwistiks
(30)	Computer	kọmputa
(31)	Stove	Stoovu

C. **Internal borrowing :** This describes a process of borrowing in which a word is borrowed/copied from a non-standard variety into the standard language (cf. Gorlach 2001:158) for lack of prestige, dialect words are often not considered dictionary-worth, but eventually items may become fully integrated into the standard variety, typically the speakers not being aware of their origin. It's also called intra-linguistic Borrowing.

Examples:

	Item	**Dialects**	**Meaning**
(32)	Okpogho	Abakaliki	money
(33)	Nari (from;innari)	Nsukka	Number system
(34)	Puku	Orlu	Number system
(35)	Nde	Umuahia	Number system
(36)	Ijeri	Delta Igbo	Number system

Following several West African languages, Igbo vocabulary also uses words loaned from European languages, especially English. Some such borrowed words are

	English	**Igbo**
(37)	radio	redio
(38)	Cigar	siga
(39)	January	januari
(40)	Operator	opareṭọ
(41)	Blue	blu

D. **External borrowing**: large scale of language borrowing takes place every now and then. Whenever this happens new vocabularies are formed. New innovations produced in country A may make country B

to borrow such innovations and the word from country A, that is inter language borrowing.

Examples:

	Item	Dialects	Meaning
(42)	Agidi	Yoruba	Corn paste
(43)	Ichafu	Igala	Head gear
(44)	Nkachiifu	English	Handkerchief

Foreign words borrowed into the language are written in accordance with Igbo spelling rules. E.g 'komputa' for computer, 'tebulu' for table, 'windo' for window. Although, Igbo does not allow consonant clusters words like school, address etc. are localized with clusters such as adressi and not adireesi, skull or skuulu, but never sukulu. While much change takes place in a given language without outside interference, many changes can result from contact with other languages. Linguistics use the terms borrowing and loan to refer to instances in which one language takes something from another language. The most obvious cases of borrowing are in vocabulary.

E. Motivations behind Lexical Borrowing

42) Communication gap
43) Inadequate Lexicon
44) Absence of Meta language
45) Cultural context based difference

A. **Communication gap:** owing to the fact that no language has a complete set of lexical items, the Igbo language is a victim and hence suffers same linguistics challenges, borrowing could be spurred up by a noticed communication gap on a language just as earlier discussed. Some of them are:

46) Jenuwari - January (Igbo- English)

47) Akamu - Akamu (Igbo – Hausa)
48) Ashawo - Ashawo (Igbo- Yoruba)
49) Pompu - water tap (Igbo-English)
50) Tebulu - table (Igbo-English)

In order to close up a communication gap, borrowing in terrenes or can be used as a tool for the Igbo language speaker to communicate perfectly.

B) **Inadequate Lexicon:** No language has it all as aptly registered by linguistics. This is the case of the Igbo language as some lexical items are absent in the lexical item list of the language. Hitherto, the audacity to enrich the lexical item or word list of such language. Lexical items owing to so many factors may be absent in a language. Same illustrations can be studied below.

English translation	Lexical item	Source from Translation type	Sense
Hospital	Ụlọọgwu	Calquing	House of drugs
Church	Ụlọụka	Calquing	House of worship
Diabetes	Ọrịa mmamịrị	Calquing	Urine Sickness
Morphology	mọfọlọji	Naturalization	Morphology
Linguistics	Lingwistiks	Naturalization	Linguistics
Yours friendly	Ezigbo Enyi gi	Adaptation	Greeting

Dear Sir	Ezigbo Amadi	Adaptation	Salutation

(C) **Absence of Meta language:** Meta language basically means a set of words or symbols that are used to talk about language itself. Some examples of Meta language are nouns, adjectives, prepositions. Sometimes it could be discovered that there are some parts of speech that may be missing in Igbo language. Borrowing is a veritable means through which lexical items could be classified and well explained.

(D) **Cultural Context based differences**. In order to match up to the high advancement in technological innovations today, Igbo language scholars have tried to establish some borrowed lexical items in the western culture. This situation cuts across all spheres of human endeavors. Over the years, before the advent of this technological advancement with the introduction of some electrical gadgets, nothing like that existed in the Igbo language. This explains that the westerners fronted these developments and experienced them much earlier than Africans. To get a remedy to these problems, borrowing was adopted and it has proved to aid seriously. Let's examine some areas of technological advancement where borrowing has occurred.

1. Agricultural related lexical items

58)	Fertilizer	Nri ihe a kuru n'ubi
59)	Feed (Animal food)	Nri anụmanụ
60)	Peasant farmer	Onye ọru ubi n'ogo nta
61)	Erosion	Idemmiri

2. Medical related lexical items

62)	HIV/AIDS	Ọria obiri n'aja ọcha
63)	Diabetes	Ọria mmamịrị
64)	Prostate cancer	Ọria kansa akpa amụ

65) High B.P Ọbara mgbali elu

3. Electronic gadgets

66) Television Onyonyo
67) Telephone Ekwenti
68) Satellite Satilaiti
69) Recorder Rekọda
70) Flash Flashị

It could be noticed that the Igbo translations of these afore listed lexical items are derived through naturalization which is an indirect loaning system. This goes a long way to emphasize the absence of these lexical items in the Igbo Context. They were not existent in the Igbo culture and from here the link from borrowing and translation can be captured.

Implications of Lexical Borrowing

1. Language attitude change
2. Enhanced Multilingualism
3. Facilitation of L2 Learning
4. Enhances globalization
5. Cross accessibility of languages

1. **Language attitude change:** there is always a pros and cons to every phenomenon and such is the case like the occurrence in lexical borrowing. Holmes (2013:410) posits that people just develop attitudes towards language which tells us more on how they view the speakers of the language. Through borrowing, Igbo language speakers, many Igbos don't speak the Igbo language again, instead, they prefer the other (English), seeing it as the language of the technocrats, elites, learned members of the society etc.

2. **Enhances multilingualism:** when lexical borrowing occurs to a large extent in a language like the Igbo language, speakers will be able to learn the other languages close to them. A practical case can be seen in that of an Igbo man who acquires some Yoruba lexical items. After a while, the Igbo man will gradually get to speak the Yoruba just like a native town speaker.
3. **Facilitation:** This is learning by practically engaging in studying the lexical items. The major thrust of this 'facilitation' is to make learning of some of the lexical items easier. For instance, an Igbo man that is competent in Hausa could even match up to a native speakers' competence because, on the process of employing the Hausa lexical items through lexical borrowing. It could be said that it encourages L2 learning. With this it could be said and deduced that lexical borrowing opens up a wide range of lexical items for a language speaker especially prior to his/her learning of the language.
4. **Enhances Globalization:** Borrowing is one of the fastest means of globalization. In the modern day age today, nothing can be achieved without the use of technologically advanced tools like computers, gas cookers, televisions, voice recorders etc. Borrowing has made it possible for the Igbos to match up with the current trends from any perspective in language since, these electronic tools did not emanate from Africa.
5. **Cross Accessibility of language:** Speakers are versatile today as the mix up with speakers from different spheres of life and speak varieties too. In our Igbo context, Yoruba and Hausa are often borrowed from time to time. This alone informs a speaker that there are also other languages to be studied/speak as the case may be. Sometimes, a neutral speaker tries to produce some lexical items in a language unfamiliar to him/her hence, easy accessibility of languages.

Summary and Conclusion

Hitherto, the thrust of this paper has been achieved as this paper has tried to holistically review lexical borrowing and the Igbo Language development looking at the nexus of both, that is to enumerate ways lexical borrowing has aided to the growth of the Igbo Language as no language can be independent from other languages and monopoly too. Looking at the models of lexical borrowing explains that borrowing could occur differently and from different perspectives. The cause which is the motivation discusses the 'why lexical borrowing?' Finally, it is said that there are results of these borrowings. This is the price the Igbo Language has to pay for the development.

It is pertinent to note the major demerit of lexical borrowing can be summarised to be endangerment. The Igbo Language today faces a high risk of loss of speakers. It should be understood by speakers that lexical borrowing is just an aid and not a total erasure of the main Language as dearth knocks.

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