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BILINGUAL COMPETENCE AND THE SUPPRESSIVE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH ON YORUBA

Adegbite, Adewale Bandele, *Ph.D*

Department of English,

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

1.0 Introduction:

The contact between English and Yoruba, a Nigerian language, is a typical example of the language contact situation that has existed between English and many other Nigerian languages since the middle of the 19th Century. The contact between the languages has yielded some linguistic and sociolinguistic features, which overlap bi-directionally in the contact languages as aspects of linguistic facilitation or interference.

The earliest studies on contact between English and Nigerian languages have focused on the negative influence of the latter on the former. Linguistic features that are transferred from the mother tongues¹ (L1) of Nigerian learners and users of English (L2) at various levels – phonological, orthographic, lexico-syntactic, morphological and semantic – are observed to hinder the efficient learning and effective use of the second language (Tomori 1967, Adesanoye 1973, Adeniran 1977, Afolayan 1968, Banjo 1969 and Goke-Pariola 1987). Later studies have also investigated the creative aspects of the features transferred into English, which has resulted in what is referred to as 'nativization' or 'indigenization' of English (Achebe 1975, Bamgbose 1995, 2004, Schmied 1990). In recent times, the attention of scholars has shifted to, not only investigating the transfer of features into English, but also describing the influence of English on the Nigerian languages (Ansre 1975, Ekundayo 1987, Bamgbose 1995 and Ikotun 1999). Some features that have been identified in this respect include loaning of words, modification of sound systems, code-mixing and code switching.

The influence of English on Nigerian languages may have contributed positively to shaping the direction of language change and language development in Nigeria, but certain features arising from this influence have also been observed to suppress the native languages. Ekundayo (1987) maintains that not only does suppressive interference show how the structure of English as L2 affects the internal structure of Yoruba as L1; it also shows

how the structure of L1 is suppressed. He then identifies the suppression of Yoruba items at the linguistic levels of lexis, morphology and syntax in that study. Ikotun (1999) also gives further examples at the phonological level. This study extends the previous studies on this topic by going ahead to investigate the extent of the suppression on some Yoruba-English bilingual individuals.

2.0 The Aim and Objectives of the Study:

This paper aims at describing the suppressive influence of the learning and use of English on the competence² of selected Yoruba speakers in their L1. The specific objectives are as follows:

- (a) to identify items of Yoruba suppression in the language performances of some Yoruba-English bilinguals;
- (b) to describe the patterns of realization of linguistic suppression among the speakers;
- (c) to explain the reasons for the suppression and also identify their sources; and
- (d) to discuss the implication of suppression of L1 features for language learning, use and development in this era of globalization.

Four assumptions were made in respect of this study. First, it was assumed that features of suppression will manifest in the performances of students from the different groups in the study; that students in the Yoruba department will manifest less features of suppression than would be their counterparts in the English department; and that Part III students of Yoruba would be the least affected by linguistic suppression than the other two groups because of the advantage of academic exposure the former would have had to the vocabulary, structure and usage of Yoruba. Although all students are expected to have studied Yoruba as a subject in primary and secondary education, those who later proceed to study it in higher institutions are those who pass it at credit level in the school certificate examinations.

3.0 The Co-existence of Yoruba and English in Nigeria:

Afolayan (1999:83), in his description of the status and functions of English in Nigeria, writes thus:

As ex-colonial people, Nigerians hold English in great awe. They so overrate English that literacy in English is

considered the only mark of being an educated person. For example, for them, science and technology are not within the reach of any person who cannot master the English language. Not surprisingly, therefore, the language, unlike any of the Nigerian mother tongues, is regarded as being politically neutral for adoption by the people. Consequently, political expediency makes the English language the ready language for adoption for national literacy today. Indeed, some Nigerians, desirous of having a headstart in the drive for literacy with its attendant politico-socio-economic advantages, are already striving to make it their family mother tongue.

In the current era of globalization, there is no doubt about the continued existence and dominant use of English in Nigeria for accommodation, participation and social mobility (vertical and horizontal) in national and international communication (Crystal 1997, Akindele and Adegbite 1999). Although the continued retention of English poses a threat to the existence and development of indigenous languages, especially the minority languages, it has to continue to co-exist with them rather than displace them. The consequences of this co-existence are bilingualism, modernization of the indigenous languages and hybridization of both English and the indigenous languages.

Hybridization is a consequence of globalization, which means "the way in which forms become separated from existing practices and re-combine with new forms in new practices" (Rowe and Shelling 1991, Frank and Stollberg 2004). The co-existence of Yoruba and English has produced various hybrid forms in terms of nativized English, characterized by interference, codemixing and codeswitching, on the part of the L2, and the modernization and Englishization or Anglicization of the L1 (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1999) through addition or suppression of features. Another issue in contention on the hybridization concept is whether the hybrid pattern should be "melting-pot" or "salad bowl" relationship between L1 and L2. While the former suggests the emergence of a mega-language with mixed forms, in this case, an indigenized English, the latter suggests the co-existence of English and indigenous languages Yoruba for the benefit of global-ization.

Modernization is another feature of response to globalization by Yoruba-English speakers. According to Crystal (1997), a global language

can influence the structure of other languages in two ways. First, it can provide a source of loan-words for use by these languages and such influences can be welcomed in terms of language variation or enrichment. Second, it can suppress items and structures of L1 and such suppression will be opposed in terms of causing language 'injury' or death. It is the negative influences of English on Yoruba that are being investigated in this study.

In providing explanation for the phenomena observed in the data for this research, the theory of social realism shall be utilized. Sealey and Carter (2004) argue against the dominant practice in "Instructed Language Learning" (ILL), which give pre-eminence to the research practice of codifying and quantifying data and replicating results, and marginalizes or ignores the social and contextual dimensions of language. In their own social realist account, they first recognize the stratified nature of the social world into the levels of 'structure', 'agency' and 'culture' (including language as an emergent property), each of which has distinctive properties and powers. In "social/applied" linguistic research, the properties and powers at this level can be accounted for in terms of domains: psychobiography and situated activity, representing agency; social setting and contextual resources, representing structure; and culture as revealed through language. Agency describes the power of people (personal feelings, attitudes, predispositions), as individuals, to do things in the world; structure describes the roles and relationships identified in social structures; and culture describes the habits of the people, expressed in and revealed through language. The levels of agency, structure and culture provide the basis for the analysis of data collected for this study. The contextual information relevant for the interpretation of the data is given below.

4.0 The Extent of Bilingualism of Yoruba Speakers of English:

The Yoruba ethnic group in southwestern Nigeria is a complex speech community. The community consists of Yoruba monolinguals, many of whom are old illiterate people who live in villages and small towns. Some other members are bilinguals and polyglots, who, through education, many travels and trade activities, have learnt other languages, including English. Bilingual speakers of Yoruba and English exist with varying degrees of competence in the two languages. "Coordinate"³ bilinguals have good mastery of the two languages. Members in this group are less than 20% of the bilingual

population and they constitute the elite class in the society by virtue of their social (political, educational and official) status. "Subordinate" and "incipient" bilinguals represent the second group of bilinguals. Members of this group have good mastery of the first language but understand the second language partially, with the former being slightly higher on the bilingual competence ladder. These two groups used to constitute the bulk of the bilingual population, until the recent past two or three decades when the emergence of a third category of bilinguals or, rather, "non-linguals", which is fast becoming a threat to the phenomenon of bilingualism altogether. Normally, scholars take it for granted that a speaker must have competence in his or her native language (Chomsky 1965), although the degree of competence in a second language may vary. However, in recent times, the Yoruba speech community has been bombarded by an increasing number of children who are "non-lingual" as a result of bad language acquisition planning. The comment of scholars (Bamgbose 1985, Adegbija 1994, 2000), that the straight use of second language to teach children who are not yet competent in their first language may result in (i) lack of competence in both languages, especially when there is lack of adequate exposure to the second language, and (ii) lack of proper knowledge in formal education, aptly explains the occurrence of this phenomenon. While bilingualism is "additive"⁴ with respect to bilinguals whose mastery of English complements the competence in their first language, the linguistic experience of non-linguals is "subtractive" because their first language skills are being suppressed or lost in the process of second language learning and use.

Yoruba is the language of one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria; it is thus recognized in the national constitution (*The Constitution of Nigeria*, 1999, Section 55) as one of the three languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) to be used alongside English for deliberation at the national assembly, and to be learnt in the educational system for enhancement of unity and preservation of culture (*National Policy on Education 1977*). Yoruba has existed in the written form for more than 150 years. It has a standard form and is utilized as medium of instruction in early public primary school and taught as a subject up to the university level in Nigeria. Generally, the Yoruba people have a positive attitude towards both English and their L1. Although they prefer English for the politico-socio-economic and educational prospects which it brings, they also identify strongly with their language with which they continue to maintain their social ties and links and

preserve and project their strong historical traditions in the course of contact between the two languages.

Although the structures of Yoruba and English languages are similar in many respects, they also have major differences, which make total correspondence of features between them impossible in translations. It is expected that positive features arising from the contact of the two languages will be promoted and the negative features combated in order to enhance language development and the utilization of bilingualism to achieve sustainable social development.

5.0 Data Bases, Analysis and Findings:

5.1 Data Bases and Analysis:

A questionnaire that consisted of linguistic items from English and Yoruba was administered to 200 Yoruba-English bilingual under-graduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The research questions contained both lexical and morphological items derived from previous findings on suppressive interference by Ekundayo (1987). The items got from that study were supplemented with further lexical, orthographic and sociolinguistic data from anonymous tape-recordings of conversations and intuitive elicitations. The students, who were selected from two language departments, English and Yoruba, were requested to write down equivalents of expressions in the languages, in order to indicate the level of their mastery of them. Based on the population of students in the departments in a particular session, 100 students were from Part I English Studies, while 60 and 40 were from Parts I and III Yoruba Studies respectively.

Research Question 1 required the students to give the Yoruba equivalents of twelve English lexical items that have earlier been posited as suppressed in Yoruba by Ekundayo (1987). The equivalents acceptable in the language are presented in Table 1 overleaf.

The responses of the students to each of the items are divided into five categories with the following labels: Yoruba Source Words (YS), Coinages (C), Loan Words (LW), Wrong Words (WW) and No Response (NR). A large percentage score in the responses in columns YS, C or LW responses shown in Table 2 below would indicate that suppression is absent or minimal, while a large percentage of WW or NR would indicate a high degree of suppression.

Table 1: Some English Items and their Yoruba Equivalents

S/N	English Items	Yoruba Equivalents		
		Yoruba Source	Coinage	Loan
1.	cub of a horse	agodongbo		-
2.	television		mohunmaroran	telifison
3.	cup	ife	-	koobu
4.	radio		asoromagbesi	redio
5.	window	ferese		windo
6.	chair	aga		sia
7.	powder	atike		pauada
8.	dirt	eeri		idoti
9.	scissors	amuga	igeso	*saasi
10.	lantern	atupa	-	lanta
11.	milk	wara	-	miliiki
12.	he-goat	obuko	-	

*Mohunmaworan - that which catches voice and pictures

*Asoromagbesi - that which speaks without getting a reply

5.2 Findings:

5.2.1 Suppression of Lexical Items (Naming Objects):

The data overleaf showed that a few lexical items were suppressed among the respondents. Overall, students in the Yoruba department scored higher percentages in the first three columns than the students in the English department, to indicate that the former have higher competence in Yoruba than the latter group. The Yoruba students also scored lower percentages in the last two columns, to indicate their lower susceptibility to suppression than their counterparts in English.

Table 2: The Responses of Students to Some Common Yoruba

Items	English I				Yoruba II				Yoruba III			
	YS	C	LM	WW NR	YS	C	LM	WW NR	YS	C	LM	WW NR
1.	0	28	0	17 55	0	33	0	57 10	4	17	0	37 42
2.	0	88	9	1.5 1.5	0	97	0	0 3	0	96	4	0 0
3.	79	0	16	0 5	87	0	6.5 6.5	0 0	81	0	15 4	0 0
4.	0	82	12	2 4	0	97	0 0	3 0	0	89	9 2	0 0
5.	93	0	4	0 3	100	0	0 0	0 0	96	0	4 0	0 0
6.	99	0	1	0 0	100	0	0 0	0 0	100	0	0 0	0 0
7.	68	0	5	12 15	94	0	6 0	0 0	76	0	12 8	4 4
8.	10	0	82	3 5	0	0	97 0	3 3	23	0	73 0	4 4
9.	22	7	24	4 43	32	19	32 2	15 15	42	4	13 4	0 0
10.	89	0	15	1.5 8	91	3	6 0	0 0	79	4	13 4	0 0
11.	68	0	24	1 7	46	0	39 15	10 10	57	0	39 4	0 0
12.	79	0	0	16 5	94	0	0 6	0 0	83	0	0 17	0 0
Mean	50.	17.	14.	4.8 12.	53.7	20.	15.	7.2 3.7	53.	17.	15.	6.7 4.2
	6	1	9	6	8	6	6	6	4	5	2	2

More specifically, the data showed that only item 1 was suppressed among the three groups, while the existence of the YS for item 8 was also threatened by the preponderant usage of a loan word. Also, items 7 and 9 was more suppressed among students in the English Department.

From the responses of students, it was not difficult at all to identify a Yoruba word that was suppressed. The easiest way was for them to avoid the word and give no response at all. Sometimes, they engaged in nonce formation (e.g. 'imomi' – a coinage [that is used for drinking water] for 'cup'), direct translation (e.g., 'ako ewure' – he-goat) or misrepresentation (e.g. 'abe' – 'knife' for 'scissors').

5.2.2 Suppression of Lexical Items (Expressing number and dates):

The responses of the students to Research Questions 2 and 3 showed that they had problems with the expression of numbers and dates (days of the week, month and year) in Yoruba. The strategies employed by the students are shown in the table presented overleaf.

The findings showed that many of the students in the English department found it rather difficult to express the above lexical items in Yoruba; hence they avoided written exercises in the language. This accounted for the high incidence of non-response to the questionnaire. Apart from the above, it was observed that there was a high incidence of loaning and coinages instead of Yoruba source words for the items. For example, instead of employing the vigesimal system of counting in Yoruba (Ekundayo 1977, 1987) to describe the numbers (e.g.: (i) 3000 - egbeedogun (200 x 15) or eedegbaaji (2000 x 2-1000); (ii) 12,000-egbaafa (2000 x 6) and (iii) 36 million-egbesan oke (20,000 x 1,800), the decimal system is used to coin new expressions (e.g.: egberun meta (1000 x 3) and egberun mejila (1000 x 12) and loaning is used to describe 36 million -milionu merindinglogoji (million x 36).

The students appeared to be familiar with the Yoruba source words for days of the week, i.e., Monday (Ojo Aje), Tuesday (Ojo Isegun) and Saturday (Ojo Abameta). But a few of them still used loan words (e.g: Monde, Tusde and Satide), while a negligible number use coinages such as Monday - Ojo keji ose (second day of week).

Table 3: Students' Knowledge of Lexical Items (Expressing Number and Dates)

Items	English I				Yoruba II				Yoruba III			
	YS	C	LM	NR	YS	C	LM	NR	YS	C	LM	NR
1. Number												
a. 3000/12000	0	47	0	53	0	84	0	16	0	83	0	17
b. 36 million	0	28	21	51	0	13	67	20	0	15	77	8
2. Date												
a. Week days												
Mon/Tues/												
Sat	42	0	10	48	63	0	17	20	58	4	29	9
b. Months												
May/July	14	33	2	51	14	60	3	23	4	80	8	8
c. Year												
1999/2001	0	4	50	46	6	10	67	17	4	0	88	8
Mean	11.	22.	16.	49.	16.	33.	30.	19.	13.	36.	40.	10
	2	4	6	8	6	4	8	2	2	4	4	

The respondents referred to the two months in the questionnaire through coinages. For example, instead of the Yoruba expressions of 'Ebibi' (May and 'Agemo' (July), the expressions 'Osu Karun-un' (the fifth month) and 'Osu Keje' (the seventh month) are used. They claimed that the coinages were much easier for them to use than the original Yoruba forms for which they had to task their memories.

Most of the students also find it more convenient to express the years in figures instead of the long-winding Yoruba forms, e.g: 1999 instead of okandinlegbewa (200x10-1) and 2001 instead of okanlelegbewa (200x10+1).

Although the trend of the suppression of lexical items is similar among the three groups of students, it is quite clear that the students in the Yoruba department had more competence in the Yoruba language and were more willing to express themselves in it than those in the English department.

5.2.3 Suppression Via Under-lexicalization of Yoruba Concepts:

The Yoruba language is rich in expressing concepts via multiple lexical items. For example, the verbal item 'ra' (buy) is a superordinate item for several other items that are used to express the concept of 'buying' in different contexts. The Research Question 4 elicited responses from students to find out if they could mention the co-hyponyms of 'ra' in five different contexts. The results are presented in the table below, with the percentages of respondents who gave appropriate suggestions.

Table 4: Students' Mastery of Co-hyponyms of 'ra' (buy)

No	Items	English I	Yoruba I	Yoruba III
(i)	<u>be</u> epo	1.5	0	0
(ii)	<u>won</u> gaari	3	3	42
(iii)	<u>da</u> oka	4	6	54
(iv)	<u>yan</u> akara	1.5	3	16
(v)	<u>si</u> iyan	1.5	3	46
	Mean	2.3	3	31.6

The findings show that both the students of English and Part I Yoruba were not aware of the more particular words to use in the various contexts represented, hence their very low percentage scores. They use 'ra' in all

the contexts. The Part III students in the Yoruba department, however, demonstrated their better exposure to the Yoruba language as some of them put down correct lexical items.

Nevertheless, this aspect of the lexical structure has been suppressed, to the extent that knowledge of the particular items is beyond the reach of the younger generation of speakers of the language.

5.2.4 Suppression of Orthographic Features:

The sound /ʃ/ is represented in current Yoruba orthography as 's'. The Anglicization of the sound as 'sh' observed in some Yoruba writing can be attributed to the fact that Yoruba orthography was modelled after English in the first place. Many young writers of Yoruba and those not conversant with its current orthographic rules have been influenced by this suppression. The following responses were elicited from the students:

Table 5: Students' Mastery of Usage of 's' in Yoruba

No	Responses	English I	Yoruba I	Yoruba III
a (i)	Osun	84	97	100
(ii)	Oshun	16	3	0
b (i)	Osogbo	79	97	100
(ii)	Oshogbo	21	3	0
c (i)	Ilesa	55	86	95
(ii)	Ilesha	45	14	5
d (i)	Olusegun	77	100	100
(ii)	Olushegun	23	0	0

The findings show that although the students generally fared better in the spelling of names, a trace of suppressive influence was observed among the students of English with respect to all the items, most especially item 'C'. In contrast, the students in the Yoruba department successfully avoided the mistakes.

5.3 Discussion and Recommendations:

The study has confirmed that suppression is a common feature among Yoruba English-speaking university undergraduate students. This is manifested

in the speakers in forms of wrong usage of words, lack of or non-immediate appropriate responses to verbal tasks, under-lexicalization and usage of incorrect orthographic forms. The students use English forms in place of Yoruba because:

- i. they have limited knowledge of the latter language;
- ii. they find it convenient to express concepts in English; and
- iii. they find expressions in English more economical than expressions in Yoruba.

However, the feature is less pronounced in the performance of students of Yoruba than in the students in the English department who are more vulnerable to it. Furthermore, it was confirmed that Part III Yoruba students resisted this influence more than did the students in the other two groups. Some explanations for the above findings can be provided here.

To start with, the explanation provided by Ekundayo (1987:5) will suffice here, whereby he specifies five tentative conditions for the occurrence of suppressive interference. First is that it occurs between two languages which are in diglossic relationships (*cf.* Ferguson 1959) such that the direction of interference seems to be from High (H) to Low (L) on the functional scale. A second condition is the early contact with the L2 by children before they have successfully mastered the intricacies of their L1. Another condition is the unrestrained implication of English structures in the L1 during translations, which gives the misleading impression that same stylistic transformations are possible for both languages. A fourth condition is the similarities in some structures of both languages, especially in the lexical structures. The last condition is the attitude of the speakers of the L1 to the consequent refinement of their language. Where all the other factors are present, a positive attitude to the L1 will nip suppressive interference in the bud, whereas a negative attitude will promote it, even when the other factors are absent.

The tendency for parents and children to overrate English than Yoruba has been responsible for the strong suppressive influence of the former language on the latter. For example, Oyetade (2001) has rightly observed that many elite Nigerian parents send their wards to fee-paying private nursery and primary schools where the medium of instruction is English and the use of indigenous languages, pejoratively called 'vernaculars,' is

prohibited. This is predicated on the belief that the earlier a child begins to learn in English, the higher his/her chances of better mastery in English. Some elite parents communicate with their children in English and even go to the extent of banning the latter from using their indigenous language at home, even though the father and mother speak the mother tongue. In contrast, the children of the less privileged speak the indigenous language with their parents at home and attend public schools where both English and the local indigenous language are used, albeit haphazardly, by teachers and pupils. They also speak the indigenous language freely and extensively at home with their parents, friends and in social interactions.

The inferior status accorded the indigenous language is also reflected in the school curriculum where little time is devoted to the study of the language in comparison with English. Although the education policy provisions require that some attention be paid to the indigenous languages in Nigeria, such provisions are never implemented, especially in elitist schools. Unfortunately, this predisposition towards English does not necessarily translate into mastery of English by the children. According to Kyeyune (2003:174), despite the long term exposure to English as both medium of instruction and as a subject, learners have only experienced it in the very formal academic and structured arrangement of the classroom.

The low status accorded the indigenous languages in the educational system and the negative attitudes of parents already have repercussions on the interest of their children. Oyetade (2001:24) shows that applicants for language courses in Nigerian universities prefer European languages to Nigerian languages. Many of the students, sometimes under intense pressure from parents, do not come to study the indigenous languages out of genuine interest. Sometimes, when the admission requirements are lowered in order to encourage students to enroll for indigenous languages as courses, some use the courses to secure admission with an intention to change over to other courses in which they have interest.

However, the students in the Yoruba department are able to resist the suppression of Yoruba because, very often, these are students of non-elite parents who do not mount as much pressure on their children to avoid Yoruba as elite parents do. Most of these students are, thus, better exposed to the indigenous language, which they, possibly must have studied and passed at the secondary level and are still studying now.

Although some aspects of the suppressive influence observed above may have positive implications for the modernization of Yoruba, especially where it enhances more convenient and economical expressions in the latter language, the negative aspects of the phenomenon ought to be discouraged. There is great danger in allowing the negative suppression of Yoruba to continue. The negative consequences of unabated linguistic suppression are many, ranging from cognitive deficiency and communication inadequacy to loss of identity and language death. Proponents of language rights have consistently argued against the education of indigenous people that encourages the Englishization of their societies and leads to linguistic genocide (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1999, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). In this sense, globalization should rather aim at understanding the linguistic and cultural diversities of people all over the world and not at enforcing a mega-language and culture on the world. Spencer (1962:16) argues that "multilingual nations could make a great contribution to the world by virtue of the inevitable variety and mixture of their cultures". Patrick (2003⁴:4-5) also contends that "...both dominant (modern) and indigenous languages can both be valued and used by speakers" and that new forms of bilingual and multilingual practices will arise and create more hybridized acts of identity, especially among the youth.

The Yoruba community, a typical example of bilingual communities in Nigeria, therefore welcomes contact between English and the Yoruba indigenous language such that the learning of English adds to the competence of the bilingual speaker in his/her L1 rather than subtract from it. The creation of additive contexts, in which bilingual programmes enable children to acquire competence in both L1 and L2, is crucial for the promotion and sustenance of long term (i.e 'stable') bilingualism (Freeman 1998, Gutierrez, et al. 2002) that is essential for individual and societal development.

In order to promote efficient bilingualism that can be utilized for national development, all citizens are to be mobilized and empowered linguistically and educationally to participate in the governance of the country. Language can be used as a resource for social mobilization and empowerment in Nigeria if certain laws and practices that support language exclusion in the social system are checked and all citizens utilize languages as a participatory tool for national development. Leaders and the elite group of the nation are to demonstrate the political will to formulate and implement positive policies that relate to language and national development. They are

expected to demonstrate more patriotism by jettisoning their ambivalent attitude towards indigenous Nigerian languages and paying adequate attention instead of lip service to their development and utilization for serious communication and academic purposes.

With regard to the negative attitudes towards indigenous languages, scholars (Adegbija 2000, Bamgbose 2001 and Adegbite 2003) have already advised that enlightenment programmes through education and awareness campaigns be designed to convert such attitudes. The Nigerian elite are perceived as the initial target of such programmes, being the group most critical and antagonistic to the indigenous language development issue. With the full support of the elite, the masses can easily be convinced as they look to their leaders for direction.

Lastly, the implementation of the language policies should involve all stakeholders in status, corpus and acquisition planning – linguists, educationists, authors, publishers, teachers, media practitioners and various other individuals, bodies and organizations - to whom roles must be properly assigned. For example, legislators at the federal, state and local government levels are concerned with the formulation of policies to enhance the statuses of languages. Furthermore, local and state governments, with the support of cultural organizations, NGO's, wealthy individuals and language experts have the primary responsibility of developing both minority and majority indigenous languages. The federal government has the primary responsibility to fund the development of English and other foreign languages that are desirable.

6.0 Conclusion:

It has been observed in this study that, generally, English exerts a suppressive influence on the knowledge and usage of Yoruba by Yoruba-English bilingual undergraduates in Nigeria. The influence is noticed, especially, in the areas of naming of objects, expression of numbers and dates, description of actions and spelling. The exertion of influence is, however, observed to be more pronounced in the performances of students in the English department than in those in the Yoruba department. It is advisable that, in a stable bilingual country such as Nigeria, where the mother tongues still strongly serve as the symbol of solidarity and group ethnic identities, bilingual education ought to promote additive bilingualism such that speakers are competent in two languages and cultures and thus become coordinate bilinguals in them. This would require that appropriate roles are assigned to both languages at school

and in the society and that the languages are well taught in and outside the school system.

Notes:

1. Other terms for 'mother tongue' here, which Yoruba represents in this paper, are 'first language', 'native language', 'indigenous language' and 'primary language'; the second language refers to English.
2. 'Competence' is conceived here in terms of the ability to understand and use language(s) fluently. Afolayan (1977) argues that competence is a universalistic term, which is achievable by both first and second language speakers. Since competence cannot be assumed for all speakers in interlingual communication, the level of competence of individuals in languages can be explained by observing the performances in the languages (Adegbite 1988).
3. For further information on types of bilingualism according to the extent of achievement in L1 and L2, see Rubin (1972) and Akindele and Adegbite (1999).
4. For further information on 'additive' and 'subtractive' bilingualism, see Lambert (1978) and Fillmore (1991).

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BILINGUALISM AS A SOURCE OF HUMOUR IN SPEECH USAGE: THE CONTACT BETWEEN ENGLISH AND YORUBA

Professor Isaac Olugboye Alaba

Department of Linguistics, African & Asian Studies
University of Lagos

1.0 Introduction:

Bilingualism is produced through the acquisition of the non-native language when two languages come into contact¹.

There are three basic forms of bilingualism, namely, *coordinate*, *subordinate* and *incipient*. A coordinate bilingual is a person who has learned more than one language either during childhood acquisition of two or more languages or later "perfect" mastery of a language other than the native one. A subordinate bilingual is one who acquires just a non-native proficiency in the second language while an incipient bilingual is a person who has acquired simply a minimal proficiency (this is to be left open) or is at the initial learning stage of the second language.²

In current Yoruba friendly conversations, the contact between the English and Yoruba languages has a number of interesting linguistic and sociological implications.

One such implication is the coding and the decoding (i.e the creation and the understanding) of some Yoruba verbal jokes which have the value of enriching Yoruba speech in general and Yoruba friendly conversations in particular. In the contact, English is the upper or dominant language which many speakers of Yoruba, the lower language, learn although few or no speakers of the former learn the latter.

In the present paper, we would describe some examples of those utterances which by virtue of their linguistic structure and social-cultural context amuse both the speaker(s) and the hearer(s). Most of the verbal jokes being described were collected informally, that is, without the language users involved being aware of the researcher's action since he was usually among or close to them. He would memorize successful jokes and reduce them to writing as soon as possible. Other examples were collected formally: native speakers of Yoruba were asked to respond to a questionnaire and give examples supported by careful descriptions and explanations of Yoruba