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Language Contact and Lexical Enrichment in Agwagune

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the Agwagune language, which belongs to the Niger-Congo phylum and is spoken in Biase local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The language has been classified as a minority language because of its paucity in development and demography. The paper examines the phenomenon of lexical enrichment in the language which has been brought about by contact with other languages and the need to develop new vocabulary to cope with new concepts. Such has been achieved through borrowing from other language sources, compounding, hybridization, collocation and so on. Language contact has also led to the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing. Data for this work was obtained primarily through direct interactions with native speakers and from secondary sources. The language still needs to develop a corpus for the language of technology.

Key Words: *Code-mixing, collocation, hybridization, metaphorical extensions, superstrate languages.*

Introduction

Thomason, (1991) views language contacts as something that has existed for a very long time, probably since the beginning of mankind. Language contact has been shown to have far-reaching social, political, and linguistic effects. No language has developed in total isolation of another. One only has to look at the dynamic wealth of vocabulary in the English language and the etymology of its vocabulary. Baugh and Cable (1978) point out that the English Language of today reflects many centuries of development. Language contact also brings about language shift and language death. Language contact is therefore the norm and not the exception.

The status and classification of the Agwagune language

The Agwagune Language is spoken in the political unit of Egip-Ipa clan in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Its main speakers reside in Agwagune, Okurike and Itu-Agwagune communities.

The language is found within the Agwagune cluster or Nne group of languages in Biase Local Government Area (LGA). The Agwagune cluster of Languages comprises Erei, Abini, Adim (Urum) Abayongo, Etono 11 Etono central and Agwagune speakers (Essien 2003, Udoh 2003 Ugot, 2008b) as mutual intelligibility is found within this group of Languages. See Table 1.

The Agwagune language could be called a minority language from the perspective of demography and development (Bamgbose 1992, Essien (1995) refers further to micro-minority languages which he asserts are mainly clusters of particular languages such as the Agwagune cluster, the Ejagham cluster, the Bekwarra-Bette cluster all within Cross River State.

The Agwagune Language with the Agwagune cluster has been raised to the status of an LGA Language with the creation of the new Cross River State in 1987 as it stands out as the largest homogenous group of languages within Biase as it contains the largest number of speakers in the LGA. The language has also been used intermittently in the past in the state media apparatus to discuss health, social and economic issues.

The Agwagune language has been classified severally by Faraclas (1989) Williamson and Blench (2002) Essien (2003) as belonging to the Upper Cross language group, which in turn is a sub-group of the Delta-Cross, which together with Bendi, constitutes the Cross River group, a significant sub-classification of the Niger-Congo phylum.

Language contact and the Agwagune language

a. Biase Languages

The Agwagune language and its speakers are in contact with other Biase speakers in the Local Government Area. Biase falls under heterogeneous LGA with Umon being the only homogenous clan. Other clans demonstrate purely political groupings with linguistic overlapping (Ugot 2008b) The main language groups in Biase are Ubaghara, Nne (Agwagune Cluster) Mmewhu also known as Mehu (Ukpet-Ehom Cluster), Umon, Isanginyoinyo and Iyoniyong (Udoh 2003)

Contact and proximity is seen in the similar sounding vocabulary within the Nne group of languages. Ugot (2008b) however asserts that Agwagune is the dominant language in the group and the most central. However, there is mutual intelligibility within the group. The Nne group are also the most central and the largest group of all the Biase languages as all others understand them, particularly the Agwagune language itself. Apart from these local indigenous languages of the Local Government Area, other languages of equal importance are spoken in Biase. These include the English language, the Efik language, the Nigerian pidgin (NP) and the Igbo language spoken widely in Erei. The local indigenous languages do not wield any linguistic influence over the Agwagune language. Rather it is these other languages that are not local to the LGA that wield linguistic influences.

Table 1: Some lexical items in the Nne Group of languages

Gloss	Agwagune	Abini	Erei	Adim(urum)	Etono11
a) Mouth	ama	ama	ama	ama	ama
b) Meat	ezenegot	erenegot	erenegot	elenegot	ebenegot
c) One	jeng	ndang	kong	kong/seng	jeng
d) Father	ase	etey	ase	eteh	ase
e) Work	odom	othom	odom	orom	odom
f) orange(fruit)	ichokoro	ichiokoro	ijokolo	ichokolo	ifiokoro
g) good morning	aveni	ayere	ayileni	aweleni	afere
h) enter	gbuni	wang	gbini	gburo	gibi
i) ten	job	chop	dop	jop	diop
j) hair	shin	din	sin	chin	shid

Ugot, 2008

A. The English Language

English is the official language in Nigeria and by extension Cross River State and Biase LGA. The language is used extensively in Biase LGA. It is used formally in administration at the LGA headquarters in Akpet Central; it is used in education, in business, in religion; in the media and it is used in the many social activities that take place daily across the LGA. English is therefore spoken in Biase alongside the local indigenous languages and serves as an important means of communication not just among the Biase people but with other Nigerians within the state and beyond (Ugot, 2008b). In the multilingual society of Biase, the English language is the dominant language that enjoys institutional support. We therefore refer to it as the official language. It is the language of instruction in schools and given the heterogeneous nature of the area, it is widely a trade language too.

B. The Efik Language

The Efik language is the major Lower Cross language in Cross River State. It is also the most developed of all Cross River State languages, (Essien 1990). Besides English, Efik was the lingua franca along the Cross River Basin for over a century. It was also a language of religion (liturgical) which facilitated the spread of Christianity along the Cross River basin. It was the language of trade which served as a major economic tool in the area from the 18th century (Nair 1972). It is recorded that the trade between the Agwagune and Umon was conducted in Efik as far back as the 17th century (Beecroft and King 1844) Efik competes very strongly with the Nigerian pidgin or NP for the position of L2 in Biase as most indigenes of Biase speak Efik fluently.

C. The Nigerian Pidgin (NP)

In spite of its lack of official status in Nigeria or even in Cross River State, the NP is fast growing and spreading and becoming more acceptable within the state as a necessary language of communication. Its acceptability in the state is further enhanced by the heterogeneous nature of the State's sociolinguistic landscape. NP is widely used even if informally in politics, in trade and the mass media. It is also used in social interaction in Biase and the Agwagune community in particular. The NP is used as an essential communication tool/ medium; most if not all linguistic communities in Biase speak and understand NP. It competes with Efik as a second language L2, in the LGA. The NP that is spoken is highly versatile, it conveys cultural meaning and values in Biases' multilingual pluralistic society. It is basically

the most favourable language of choice in the LGA. The pidgin according to Todd (1978) is essentially a communication system that develops among people who do not share a common language politically; It is also viewed as a self-imposed language that cuts across ethnic, cultural, political and psychological barriers (Ejele 2003).

D.   The Igbo Language

This is one of Nigeria's three major languages, the others being Hausa and Yoruba. The Erei share a common border with the Igbo people at Ohafia and also at Abiriba, in neighboring Abia state. This proximity has resulted in Igbo competing as an L2 with Efik and NP in Erei. The interplay of cultural values among the Erei and Igbo people such as inter tribal marriages, sharing of common markets etc facilitate the incursion of Igbo not just into Erei but into other Biase communities. The Agwagune also had links with the Igbo as they traded across the waters with them and further up, to as far as Ogoja in northern Cross River State. The Agwagune also traded in slaves with the Efik and Arochukwu trading partners between 1800 and 1900 (Ubi 1985)

Methodology and theoretical framework

Data for this study was obtained primarily through "naturally occurring casual speech" of the speakers of Agwagune and other speakers used in this work (Kadenge and Mavvnga 2010). Secondary sources were also referred to.

The theoretical assumption that under pins this work is the concept of the wave theory and according to Hudson (2001) it is based on the assumption that changes in language spread outwards from centers of influence. Hudson draws an analogy with different species of plants sown in a field, each spreading outwards by dispersing its seeds over in particular area. There would be competition between certain species as in the competition for L2 between Efik and NP in Biase. Other species would be able to coexist in the same spot as other languages in Biase have all been able to co-exist with each other and even English, the NP and Efik. Whether or not the species thrives depends on how strongly its representatives grow, that is, on the power and influence of its speech community.

Processes of lexical enrichment

In most cases of language contact, there is transfer in all areas of language structure, from the phonology (sound system) morphology (word structure)

syntax (sentence structure) and lexical semantics. The vocabulary of the new language will usually though not always be derived primarily from the Language of the prominent group in the contact situation (Thamason, 1991). From contact, lexical items in Agwagune may be achieved through creativity or expressiveness or direct borrowing and may be independent of the original meaning in the source language. In the following discussion, we examine some of the word formation processes in Agwagune, that have been brought about by contact with other languages.

Borrowing

One of the primary phenomena that occurs through language contact is borrowing. English and Efik constitute the superstrate source of borrowing for Agwagune while languages like Igbo and the NP are the substrate sources. Chimhundu (1983) remarks that major characteristics of borrowing include the adoption and adaptation of terms through integrating them firmly in the receiving or recipient language. Loan word adaption implies that speakers will show faithfulness to the source word and at the same time try to make the loan words conform to their native segmental inventory, phonotactic constraints and morphological system (Renstowicz & Suchato 2006)

Table 2: Borrowing from Efik Nouns

	Efik	Agwagune	Gloss
a.	nwèd	Nwèt	'book'
b.	útuénníkáñ	útúeníkáñ	'lantern'
c.	sókòrò	íchókóró	orange
d.	ékpè	ékpè	'leopard'
e.	ùtèrè	ùtèrè	'vulture'
f.	édésí	érésí	'rice'
g.	úbók	óbók	'hand'
h.	ókpò	ókpò	'hat'

    Ugot, 2007

In Table 3 other words are lifted fully from Efik except for an extra syllable sound at the end of the alternatives. In (3a) the nasal consonant /n/ is replaced by the alveolar /t/ in Agwagune which again changes to a trill /r/ when there is verbal extension. These are all verbs.

Table 3: Borrowings from Efik Verbs

	Efik	**Agwagune**	**Gloss**
a.	màn	mát, màrà	'give birth'
b.	tá	tá,tàrà	'bite'
c.	mèn	mèn, ménè	'swallow'
d.	yìb	yìb, yíbé	'steal'
e.	kóòk	kóòk	'vomit'
f.	nàm	nà	'do'

This extra syllable in the verb in Table (3a) (3b, (3c) and (3d) is a case of conversion; that is zero derivation where the meaning remains the same and the change in the verb is brought about by an extension of the verb root. The extension is mostly harmonious to the vowel of the verb root. These additional sounds do not change the meaning of the verbs. However, Ugot, (2008) observes that the extended forms of the verbs are commonly used with objects in sentences as in (1a) while others may be clipped as in (2a)

1a. Agwagune   **Gloss**

n- yénè - mó- nì.   ' I have seen him/her/it '

sc v o Asp

Where SC is the subject clitic replacing the subject pronoun *nàm*

2a. Efik   **Agwagune**   **Gloss**

anwambana   nwambana   'cat'

In the case of (2a) the Efik version has been further shortened and is commonly called *anwa*

Although borrowing from Igbo is negligible compared to Efik such words are lifted with minimum phonological changes and passed into the general currency of the Agwagune lexicon.

Table 4:   Borrowings from Igbo

	Igbo	**Agwagune**	**Gloss**
a.	nkúchá	nkúchá	'sponge'
b.	afìà /ahìà	áfìà	'market'
c.	àbbànì	àbbànì	'night'
d.	òkrìkà	òkrìkà	'second hand items'
e.	òsúsú	òsúsú	'savings'
f.	ékpòrókò	ékpòròkò	'stockfish'

Ugot, 2007

Borrowing and to a lesser extent, coinages can be seen in certain words that have been altered to suit both the lexical appearance and phonological aspect of the word. These include some technical words too. They are borrowed from the superstrate language, English

Table 5: Borrowings from English

	Agwagune	**Gloss**
a.	abarafin	'kerosene'
b.	komputa	'computer'
c.	ntomin	'glass'
d.	nsop	'soap'
e.	komfi	'camphor'

Most technical expressions remain unchanged in English as in Tables 5(b) and are mostly maintained with the stress of the English Language without the tones of Agwagune being imposed on them. These include words such as menu, delete, laptop, software. Other words maintained in English include mathematical expressions and the language of science. They are employed in a code-mix when used in speech.

3.   Delete mọ́ árùk   'why don't you delete it?'

Aruk is a word that expresses many emotions but primarily one of a plea or an insistence. It has no direct equivalent in English. The phenomenon of code-mixing is discussed later in the paper. NP borrowings in Agwagune are normally clippings and metonymy. Clipping or truncation is another morphological process that is visible in Agwagune. Some lexical items from the substrate language NP are shortened but still retain their full lexical content and meaning.

Marchand (1968) argues that clippings are not coined as words but belong to the standard vocabulary of a language as they are terms for special groups

4. **NP**   **Agwagune**   **Gloss**
a. okriks   okriks'okrika'/'   second hand items'
b. bros   bros   'brother'

However, in Agwagune these clipped words from NP are essential constituents of the lexicon. In this case, although Agwagune has a word for 'brother' *wakáàm* literally 'my mother's child' 'bros' is used to address someone who is not a blood brother. Clipping is arbitrary in NP. In the borrowed clipped words, there is back clipping where the beginning of the word is retained.

The use of metonymy is an important word formation strategy. Where objects or concepts are formed based on their contiguity or close association with other objects or concepts (Mensah 2011). However, language contact has limited such usages in Agwagune to borrowing from NP

5. **NP**   **Agwagune**   **Meaning**
a. muri/muritala   muri/muritala   'twenty naira note'
b. wazobia   wazobia   'twenty naira note'
c. 419   419   'fraud/fraudster/fraudulent activities'
d. ghana must go   ghana must go   'container /content'

Murtata and *wazobia*   are derived from the faces on the currency notes. The former was a Nigerian head of state while the latter depicts people representing the 3 major tribes of Nigeria and by extension Nigerians. *Wazobia* is used to cover all ethnic groups and in the 3 major languages *wa*

(Yoruba) *zo* (Hausa) *bia* (Igbo) all mean the same thing – 'come'. 419 also known as advance free fraud is derived from the article of the Nigerian criminal code. It is an organized crime tradition in which a target is persuaded to advance sums of money in the hope of realizing a significantly larger gain, but which will ultimately end up as a scam. *Ghana must go* functions as both a container and content. As a container it connotes a cheap bag used by refugees and as content it represents money which is often interpreted as bribe. The word came from the lexicon of NP in the early 1980s when over a million Ghanaians were expelled from Nigeria. In their rush to leave the country, they turned cheap bags of woven plastic into make shift luggage. (Estrada 2004)

Names in Agwagune serve as another source of language contact. They are however not so common but are a reflection of cultural assimilation brought about by trade links. Here are some of such names.

Table 6: Borrowed Names in Agwagune

Name		Meaning	Remarks
a.	Bassey	'God'	Anglicized Efik version of Abasi, in Agwagune Obazi
b.	Ugo	'Eagle, Power'	Of Igbo Origin
c.	Ikpi	No known meaning	Of Lokaa Origin
d.	Ikwo	Market day	Of Efik Origin
e.	Isamo	No known meaning	Of Umon Origin
f.	Inyang	'river'	Of Efik/Ibibio Origin
g.	Ndarake	I am not rejoicing	Of Ibibio Origin

The name 'Inyang' however has dual meaning in Agwagune with the more accepted meaning being its connotative or referential meaning of 'great trader' based on the personality and occupation of the original bearer (Ugot, 2005).

Compounding and hybridization

Language contact brings about new words that do not already exist in the lexicon of the recipient language. In order to cope with such words, new words are put together to produce that sense from the donor language.

Agwagune has exocentric compounds (in the sense that the constituted parts do not contain a head) which are made up of components or constituents which mostly include a verb.

6. **Agwagune**   **Gloss**
a.   Ẹdòrò + óròk + ògáhárà   'phone'

To talk +word + whiteman

(verb + N + adj) N

b.   Ẹyènẹ̀ + úsò   'mirror'

To see + face

(verb + N) N

'Phone' is often referred to as 'phone'. Agwagune also has synthetic compounds. These compounds are derived from the verb + noun forms. The prefix is introduced for nominalization in the lexicon hence it has the structure

[Subject clitic + Verb + Noun] N

The subject clitic stands for the subject pronoun which cannot be used for a coinage/compound as it would imply a particular person. The 3rd person/subject pronoun is *aye* 'he/she', and its subject clitic is *u* 'he/she' as used in (7a) to (7c).

7. **Agwagune**   **Gloss**
a.   ùfòkwà   'police'

ù	fè	+	ọ̀kwà
3Sg,Sc	v	=	black
He/she +	wears	+	black

b.   Ukipǹwuẹ̀t   'teacher'

U +	kip	+	nwẹt
3SgCL	v	=	book
He/she +	teach	+	book

c.   ùkpọ́rọ́dák   'soldier'

U +	kpot	+	odak
3SgCL	v	=	leg

He/she +   strong   +   leg

<div align="right">Ugot 2007</div>

In (7c) the composition is [Subject clitic + Adj + Noun] N

Again in (7c), *ukporodak* , it is observed that Agwagune has sounds that occur in free variation Hence the [t] of ukpot at word boundary becomes [r] intervocalic when followed by another word. Some compounding in Agwagune is composed from hybridization or loan-blend combining morphemes of different languages (Ndimele 1999). This is a phenomenon that arises out of a need to create new vocabulary and cover the lapses of non-existent vocabulary for objects that are now obviously in existence.

8.   **Agwagune**   **Gloss**
ọgbọ̀ghọ̀rọ̀ẹ*moto*   'car key'
ọgbọ̀ghọ̀rọ̀ +ẹ+ moto
key   +   motor
Agwagune + English

   a.   *íkọ̀ọ̀* bàzì   'church'
Ikọ̀ +   ọ̀bàzì
Word + God

    Efik +   Agwagune

   b.   *Pail*évònò   'bucket'
Pail + ẹvọnọ
Pail + to bathe
English + Agwagune

<div align="right">Ugot, 2007</div>

In (8a) the hybridization is made up of a verb in the infinite *evoño* 'to bathe'. Verbs are commonly used in hybridization in Agwagune. Compounding in Agwagune is frequently characterized by an epenthetic rule where the empty morphs /e/ /o/ or /a/ are inserted into the compound structure to make for smooth breaks between two consonant sounds or simply for ease of pronunciation as seen in (8a) and (11a).

Metaphors and Metaphorical Extensions

Metaphors are used to extend the meaning of words and forms as single symbolic formation. The lexical items from the superstrate source denote entirely different meanings from those conveyed in Agwagune in an analogical sense. The new meaning acquired by Agwagune is socially constructed. Robins (1989) views metaphorical extensions as an extensive type of semantic widening wherein on the basis of some similarity in the meanings, a word is used in different sorts of context in reference to different sorts of features, usually of a more abstract nature than was once the case. The corresponding meaning is based on the combined meaning of two or more words and understood in a related way. The individual meaning of the collocating lexical items share some features of meaning with the new word. In Agwagune we have:

9.		**Agwagune**		**Gloss**
	a.	àká + ẹ́tọ̀		'President, Governor
		Big + head		chairman'
	b.	àkáẹ́tọ̀ + è Nigeria +		'president of Nigeria'
		Bighead + Nigeria +		
	c.	ẹ̀fá + ẹ́tọ̀gbọ̀		'government'
		Power + town		

Collocation

Collocation is the habitual association of a word in a language with other particular words. Most collocation in Agwagune is done with an existing form and the word *ogahara* 'white man' (who is believed to have introduced the item) or when the concept or thing is new. The best way therefore to distinguish a word with a close semantic relationship with an existing one is to collocate the existing form with *ogahara*

10.		**Agwagune**	**Gloss**
	a.	ádúk	'wine' (general word)
		ádúkógàhàrà	'beer , stout'
	b.	étù	'road'
		étùógàhàrá	'tarred road'

c.	égìp	'kernel'
	égìpógàhàrá	'coconut'
d.	ófèn	'pear' (the local one)
	ófènògàhàrá	'avocado pear'

Collocations such as these are based on native roots and as Robins (1985) puts it, they are manifestly related to the referential and situational meaning of words concerned. We also have component collocating units such as:

11. **Agwagune** **Gloss**

a.	dòñ	'house'
	dòñ + a +nwèt	'school'
b.	uji	'food'
	dòñ + ùjí	'hotel'
	house + food	
c.	ósè	'medicine'
	dòñ + ósè	'hospital'
	house + medicine	

Code-switching and code-mixing

Code- switching and code- mixing in Agwagune have been brought about by language contact. It is a phenomenon that involves almost all languages that the Agwagune language has come in contact with including the local neighbouring languages and dialects.

Due to language contact there is a lot of code-switching and code-mixing due to prevailing situations, the context or even just the inappropriateness of a particular language. For example, code-switching may be done in a particular situation because what is being said sounds more effective in a particular language. The switch from English to an Agwagune proverb is a case in point. Such a switch helps to drive home a point. Essien 1996, defines code-switching as "the process by which the speaker or the initiator of speech changes or switches from one language or code to another depending on the situation, audience subject matter etc" (p.271). Ugot (2008a) observes that speakers may often switch for emphasis, or because a word in another language maybe more appropriate, or because of their perceptions of the speech situation, changes in content, the linguistic skills of their interlocutors, degrees of intimacy etc. An Agwagune student in the university for example

could use three codes at any given time of the day, depending on who he is talking to (Okon 2003). He speaks NP to his fellow students

12.

    a.   How far? Bros abeg find me some pepper. Yawa don gas today.

       "How are you? Brother, please give me some money. I'm in a mess"

       He goes home to his mother and speaks Agwagune.

    b.   Mama gbérùk, mòm érézìbànì. Béjìjì nsinjì domo óvòvùm

       "Mama please I'm hungry. I have not eaten all day"

Earlier in the day he met with his lecturer whom he addressed in English.

    c.   I shall submit my assignment unfailingly tomorrow Sir.
       Source: Agwagune students in Cross River University of Technology.

Similar changes in language use may also take place within the sentence. Such a switch is known as code-mixing which Essien (1996) defines as "a language phenomenon in which two codes or languages are used for the same message or communication" (p.272).

13. émèyènè   ìzép   my sister?   Do you have any message
                                           my sister

       Efik   Agwagune   English

       Do you have   message   my sister?

Code-mixing according to Essien (1995) serves as a linguistic function for those who cannot immediately find a word or expression in a language and so revert to one they understand better or are more comfortable with. This serves as an intimacy function among friends and relations. It is also a socio-psychological function.

    14. He died? ébíábù !!

Here, the translation of *ebiabu* is almost meaningless in English as it is used to satisfy an emotional expression at that point in time. Perhaps it could be best be translated as 'Good Lord" However, in its strict sense, ebiabu is the name of a highly placed male association in Agwagune. It is used here to

convey ethnic affinity, deep emotion and sympathy. Code-mixing arises from "an inner drive that cannot find a ready expression by remaining within a single language" (Lipski 1982p.192). However, most code- mixing in Agwagune is a combination of this "inner drive" and to show solidarity with a speaker particularly if his L1 is different from yours.

The future of vocabulary development in Agwagune

New words have been created from a combination of the internal resources of the Agwagune language and contact with other languages. Unfortunately most of these words do not have adequate designation for specific, literary and educational terminologies thereby denying the language most of the benefits accruing from a written language. Ugot (2007) suggests that corpus planning is therefore needed for the growth of the language and this includes a standard orthography; a compilation and production of a dictionary; literature in the language, its use in the mass media; its use in education through the employment of primers for the primary school system; its use in religion through the translation of classics such as the bible and hymn books and its use in cultural activities. This criterion is not impossible as proved by the Rivers Readers Project (RRP) shortly after the creation of Rivers state in 1967 which gave rise to the development of languages within today's Rivers and Bayelsa States in Nigeria (Ndimele 2003).

Conclusion

This paper discusses the phenomenon of lexical enrichment in Agwagune through language contact. The paper discovers the relevance of borrowing from languages such as English, Efik, NP and Igbo through early contacts in these languages. It also looks at other avenues for enrichment such as collocations, metaphorical extensions, compounding, metonymy and arrives at the conclusion that the Agwagune language still needs to develop a corpus that will see it through a new technological age as the present state of vocabulary is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of a global drive in science and technology and suggests a deliberate policy by Government and other agencies to reverse this trend.

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