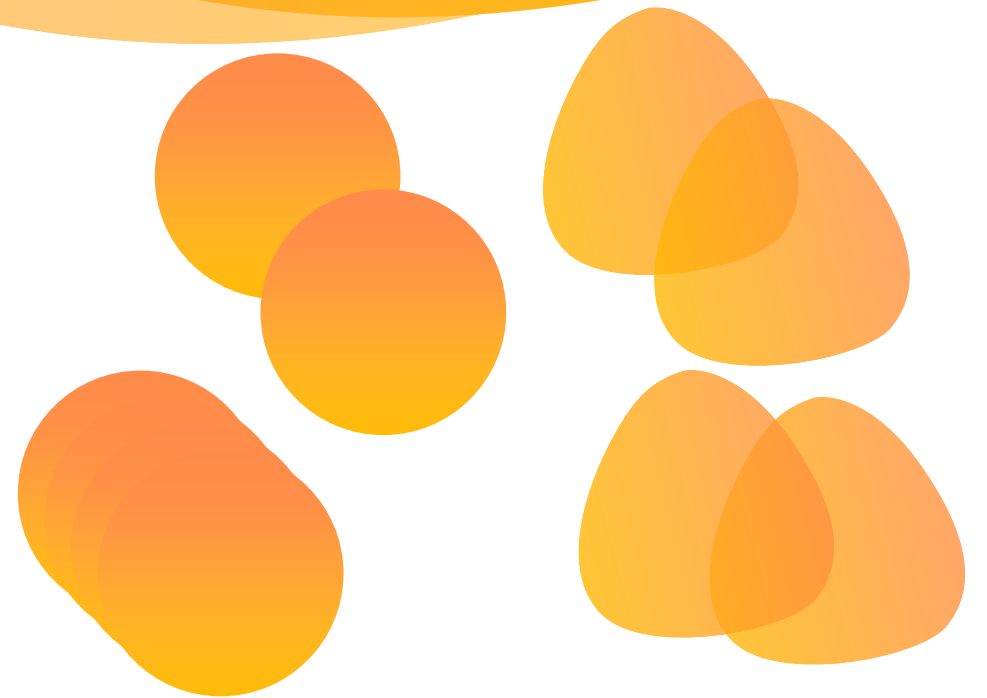




MUCH MORE THAN TRANSLATION: TERMS CREATION IN YORUBA LANGUAGE

BY

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Introduction

Language engineering is the science of creating lexical items for ongoing evolution of new notions and ideas, maintaining such creations and applying them appropriately. Applying the modern words involves the use of the computer to design relevant software.

Introduction

Language engineering is a universal necessity for every living language. The assertion that African languages in general and specifically the Yorùbá language cannot express new and emerging ideas and notions is the main motivation for this presentation. The quotation below aptly captures this assertion, which Professor Owólabí rightly calls *Native Language Prejudice Syndrome* (NALPS).

If anything, our local languages are constrained in a number of ways. Most of them are not developed enough to accommodate the intricacies and inflections that a dynamic language should have. New ways of doing things especially in the areas of science and technology as well as information technology can hardly be captured by the lexis and structure of our indigenous languages (Editorial comment of SUNDAY SUN of March 28, 2004, p.2).

(Owólabí, 2006:17)

Introduction

This presentation is out to allay further the fear of those who hold the view expressed in the above quotation. I acknowledge the modernization efforts being made by several scholars such as Awóbùlúyì (ed.) (1990), NERDC (1990), Ọdẹtáyọ (1993), FGN (1991) and Bámgbóşé (ed.) (1992). I also appreciate the native speakers' continual efforts to provide lexical items to fill any existing linguistic gap. This is important because the native speaker's intuition provides the foundation on which the modernization efforts or purposeful generation of new lexical items by scholars rest.

Introduction

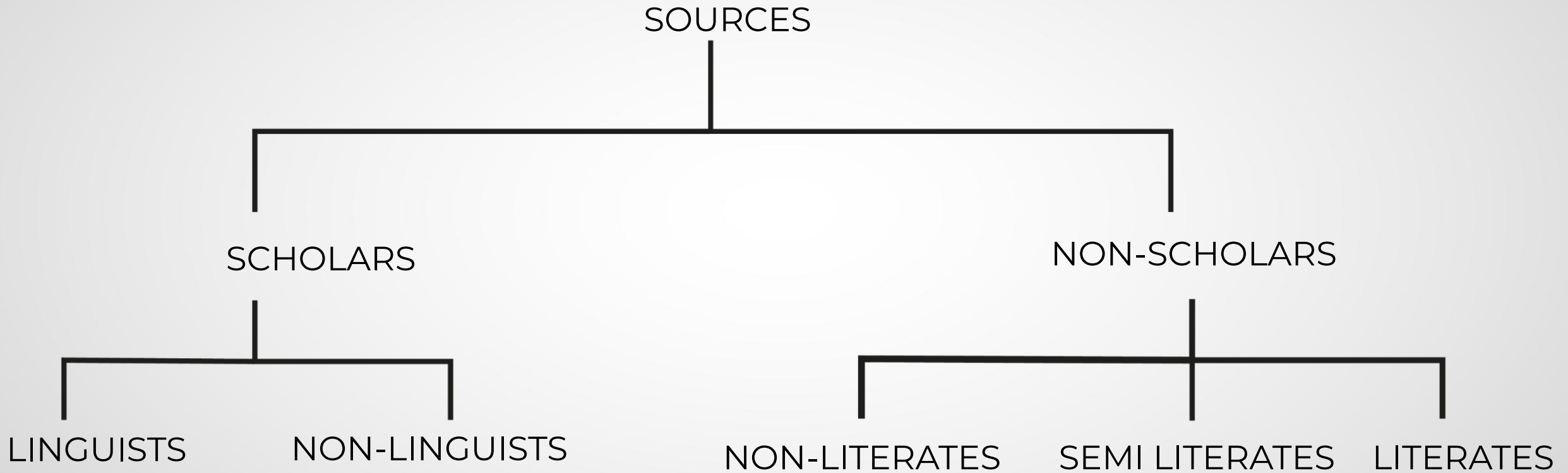
In sympathizing with languages which have suffered endangerment from colonialism and neo-colonialism, Capo (1990:1-2) becomes more precise by asserting that:

Language engineering is a continuing and dialectic process including orthography design, corpus planning, materials development, encouragement of language use at all levels to account for and communicate the changing experiences of the speakers as well as aspects of human legacy called knowledge.(emphasis mine)

Introduction

To me, Language Engineering is the process of modifications within a language which enables it to capture contemporary notions and ideas in order to meet the challenges of proper communication in the modern times. Every language is constantly engineered. African languages are capable of being engineering compliant if developed properly as any other European or American language that is so developed.

Speech Community



Scholar's Efforts

For ease of reference, the bulk of the data in respect of the developers who are linguistic scholars are listed in the following published sources: Awóbùlúyì (1990), Bámgbósé (1992), FGN (1991) and NERDC (1990). To indicate sources of data cited in the analyzed examples under this subgroup, I shall adopt the following strategies.

Bámgbósé (1992) and

Awóbùlúyì (1990) as [META]

Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (1991) as [LEGISLATIVE]

Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (1990) as [VOCABULARY]

Taofee Adebayo (Contemporary linguist's efforts on social media) [SOCIAL MEDIA]

The Efforts of Linguists

These developers are professional linguists whose vocations are academics and research in Language. They are based in the tertiary level of education such as colleges of education, polytechnics and universities, and research institutes such as the Language Development Center (LCD), now merged with the Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).

A. Meta

- Ìfiwàwèdá: Characterization
- Afèjìètèpè: Bilabial

C. Vocabulary

- Ìdà: Fraction
- Òpójẹ Blood vessel

B. Legislative

- Àbá-òfin: Bill
- Ìsọlèdẹgàn: Afforestation

D. Social Media

- Gbépogbátégùn: Carburetor
- Èmí-ẹrọ: Engine
- Astronaut: Arinrinàjò gbalasa-òfurufú

The Efforts of Non-Linguist Scholars

Data relevant to non-linguistic scholars are also listed mainly in Adìgbòlùjà (1946) and Odẹtáyọ (1993). Others, especially those from the mass media are sourced from radio and television broadcasts and newspapers published in Yorùbá language.

Here also, I shall indicate sources of analyzed examples as follows:

Odẹtáyọ (1993) as [ENGINEERING]

Adìgbòlùjà (1946) and other unpublished medical terms as [MEDICAL]

Sourced from the Mass Media as [MEDIA]

The Efforts of Non-Linguist Scholars

A. The Field of Engineering

- Olóòfà: Magnet
- Ìkòkò ahóyaya: Boiler

B. The Medical Field

- Àpólò: Conjunctivitis
- Onígáméjì: Cholera

C. The Media

- Èlẹ̀yàmẹ̀yà: Apatheid
- Elétígbàróyẹ: Public Complaint Officer
- Akónimòọgbá: Soccer coach
- Akónimòọwẹ: Swimming coach
- Ajìjàgbàrà: Freedom fighter
- Ọlọpàá adìgbòlùjà: Mobile Police
- Ọlọpàá kògbéréégbè: Mobile Police

Non-Scholars' Efforts

The Efforts of Non-Literates

- **Múrí: #20.00**
- **Bósíkòrò:**
Used dress
- **Jáàmù:**
Accident
- **Iléyá: Id-El-Kabir**
- **Dìónà: The owner**
- **Rélùwée: Train**

Non-Scholars' Efforts

The Efforts of Semi-Literates

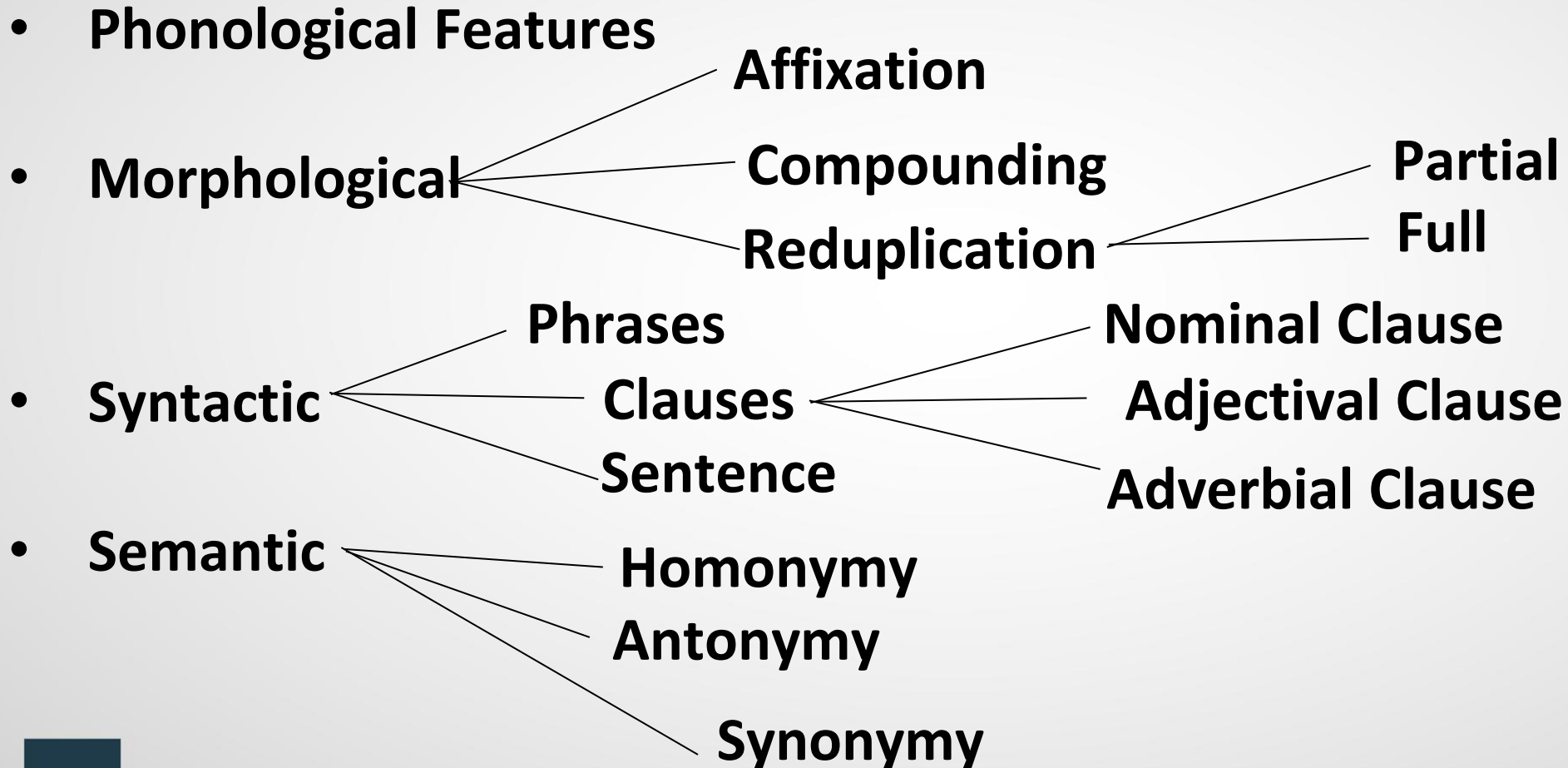
- **Fàyàwọ́:**
Smuggling
- **Pẹpe:** Altar
- **Wòlù:** Prophet
- **Písìsì:**
Dismantle
- **Ajẹbọ̀tá:** Sophisticated person
- **Kòlà:** Pastor
- **Àáròlawà:** Fluorescent
- **Kòndò:** Bus conductor

Non-Scholars' Efforts

The Efforts of Non-scholar Literates

- **Aago: GSM**
- **Àdòtí : Dirt**
- **Akadá: Academic**
- **Mìlíkì: To enjoy**

Resources



Resources

I shall approach this by considering features relating to the primary levels of language analysis such as **phonological** features, **morphological** features, **syntactic** features and **semantic** features. In addition, there is also the cultural features, as well as the flora and fauna knowledge of the environment.

Phonological Features

- Church [tʃə:rtʃ] ↔ ʃóòsì [ʃɔɔfi]
- Television [telivɪzən] ↔ tɛlifísàn

Morphological Features

Affixation

oní + fótò → onífótò

pre photograph photographer

For example:

(i) àdùrà + kí + àdùrà → àdùràkádùùrà

prayer infix prayer any/bad prayer

Àdùrà is a loan word from **Duau** in Arabic meaning ‘prayer’ in both languages.

(ii) fọga + kí + fọga → fọgakífọga

vulcanizer infix vulcanizer any /bad vulcanizer

‘Fọga = vulca’; fọganáísà = vulcanizer’. - **náísà** gets deleted in the loaned form, its lexical category of noun is retained. Whereas, in English (SL), the suffix - er derives a noun from the verb root ‘to vulcanize (a tyre)’.

Compounding

Lexical Meaning

• Ọ́ẹ̀ kọ̀nà
turn corner



ẹ̀ẹ̀kọ̀nà
'breakthrough' (Idiomatic)

• iná ọba
fire king



inọọba
electric

Both

Phrasal (Literal)

Lexical (Idiomatic)

(i) Ọ́ẹ̀ owó
exchange money

ẹ̀ẹ̀wó
exchange money

ẹ̀ẹ̀wó
sex work / prostitution

(ii) ra ike
buy plastic

ra ike
buy plastic

rake
buy credit card

Reduplication

Partial Reduplication

- | | | | |
|-------|-----------|---|---|
| (i) | lóbì | ? | lílóbì |
| | lobby | | lobbying (political discourse) (literal)/pleading for recognition (idiomatic) |
| (ii) | kùnyùn | ? | kíkùnyùn |
| | vibrate | | voicing |
| (iii) | léélè | ? | líléélè |
| | redundant | | being redundant (technical term in Generative Grammar) |

Syntactic Features

Phrases

- **Traditional**

- se èwòn ? sèwòn
(lit: do prison) go to jail be imprisoned (for an offence)

- **Engineered**

- fi àyà wó ? fàyàwó
use chest to crawl to smuggle goods (an action verb)
- ti òkun bò ? Tòkunbò (proper noun)
from sea arrive born abroad/across the sea.

Syntactic Features

Clauses

- **Traditional**

- kí a ri ohun wí ẹ́ Károunwí
COMP we see thing say 'have something to say' (personal name)

Syntactic Features

- **Engineered**

- (i) kí orí yá ? kóríyá
 COMP head swell encourage/motivate (with money or gift)
- (ii) bí Olú (wa) ti fé? bólútifé
 COMP the Lord God manner want an act of God (also used as a
contemporary personal name)
- (iii) kí á rí mi ? kárími
 COMP we see me show off
- (iv) bí ó se wà ? status quo
 COMP it is
- (v) bí inú ko inú (ayé á rójú) ? bínúkonú-face to face house

Syntactic Features

Sentences

- **Traditional**

- má jẹ ata ? májata (imperative)
don't eat pepper mouth sore (or peptic ulcer)
- má gùn ? mágùn (imperative)
lit: don't climb adultery-harming device

- **Engineered**

- ma fo gọtà ? máfogọtà (imperative)
lit: Don't jump over gutter (Engloan) 'short skirt'
- Kọ ọmọ kí n rí ọ ? kọmọnríọ (imperative)
teach child while I watch you 'teaching practice'/'practical teaching'

Syntactic Features

- **Engineered**

- má da mi dá òfò ☐ mádandófò (imperative)
don't leave me alone to face loss 'insurance scheme'
- má ro ẹ̀sẹ̀ ☐ (títí) márosẹ̀ (imperative)
don't hold foot 'express (road)'
- Orí kan bódì ☐ oríkanbódì (declarative)
head touch body (roof of a lorry) (Eng .Loan) "a very tall person"

Semantic Features

Homonymy

- **Traditional**

- ìdí 'buttock'
- ìdí 'reason'

- **Engineered**

- Lọyà (n) 'lawyer'
- Lọyà (v) 'argue'

Antonymy

- **Traditional**

- Èrín 'laughter' / ẹkún 'weeping'

- **Engineered**

- Ọròbò 'fat' / lẹpa 'slim'
- Àmúwolé 'input' / àmújáde 'output' [META]

Semantic Features

Synonymy

- **Traditional**

- Ọmú
Ọyàn ————— 'breast'
- àsán
Àtòrì
Ọré
Ẹgba ————— 'whip'
- Ipọn
Ẹjẹ ————— 'blood'

- **Engineered**

- Lọyà
Agbejòrò
Alágbàwí ————— 'lawyer'
- Abèjìètè
Afèjìètèpè ————— 'bilabial'
- Rélùwéeè
Ọkò ojú irin ————— 'train'

• STRATEGIES

- These are proposed strategies employed by the developers in generating the modern terms which convey the senses in the new ideas, notions and concepts which the native speakers come across.
- In (Bámgbósé (ed.) (1992):viii) Metalanguage volume 1, five main strategies are adopted in the coining of technical terms. They are: composition, semantic extension, dialect borrowing, special coinage and loan words. Giving the fact that my work includes intuitively generated terms, a reorganization of the strategies becomes necessary to capture the sources of the whole body of the data. I therefore identify four main subdivisions, namely: coinages, socio-linguistic variables-based, intuitive substitution and borrowing. I have subsumed Bámgbósé's semantic extension under intuitive substitution, his dialect borrowing under socio-linguistic variables-based and his composition under coinages. I observed a dominated – dominator relationship in each of the three pairs mentioned above. Also it makes my categorization to be firm, concise and wholesome.
-

Strategies

- **Coinages**
 - **Description**
 - **Sound Imitation**
- **Socio-linguistic Variable Based**
 - **Slang**
 - **Jargon**
 - **Taboo words and Euphemisms**
 - **From Dialects**
- **Intuitive Substitution**
 - **Descriptive Intuitive Substitution**
 - **Semantic Extension**
- **Borrowing From Other Sources**
 - **Idioms**

Strategies

Coinages

Coining could be description of an item or thing. It could also be by sound imitation.

- Asòròmágbèsì that which talks without accepting a response = “radio”. The loan word rédiò is more common than asòròmágbèsì.
- Ìfòhùnpèniyàn referring to a thing as an individual / person = “personification”

ì fì ohun pe èniyàn
pre use thing call person

by deletion and contraction

↓
ì fohùn pèniyàn

by lexicalization

↓
ìfòhùnpèniyàn = personification (a stylistic device)

Strategies

Coinages

- Ọtẹlẹmúyẹ he who steps softly = detective

ẹni tí o tẹ ilẹ múyẹ
person who pro match ground softly

(ẹni tí ó) tẹ ilẹ múyẹ

by deletion and contraction

ò tẹlẹ múyẹ
agentive match ground softly

by lexicalization

ọtẹlẹmúyẹ = detective

Strategies

Coinages

- Aṣègbèfábo *he who supports the female* = feminist
- Kòbògbònmù *does not make sense* = absurdity
- Àséèsétán *close but not fully closed* = approximant
- Ìjìwèédàkọ *act of copying book by stealing* = plagiarism
- Ìdánásunlé *act of setting a house on fire* = arson
- Amúnisìn *he who holds person for servitude* = oppressor
- Adúnkookòmọ̀ni *he who puts fear in one like a spotted hyena* = terrorist

Strategies

Sound Imitation (Onomatopoeic ideophones)

- Katakata ‘caterpillar’ from the noise it makes while moving. Also “agricultural equipment for clearing bush” = Tractor. It is also descriptively called [Èrọ ahúgihópè] for road builders and building demolishers.
- Kèkè ‘bicycle’
- Bààlúù “aircraft”
- Fìrìfìrì ‘frequency’
- (Ìgbé Gbuuru ‘diarrhoea’
- Ọ̀fìnkìn ‘catarrh’
- Tatapùpù ‘engine or motorbike’
- Tánń́ganran ‘breakable enamel plate’
- Àtátàntótò (lit: to chatter or murmur incoherently) = babbling.

Strategies

Sociolinguistic Variables-Based

This category is meant to accommodate those items which I consider found their way into Yorùbá language from sources that reflect socio-cultural experiences. Such sources are slang, jargon, taboos and euphemisms, and even dialects of Yorùbá.

1. Slang

- Àjàgbé ejò: Trailer
- Şẹ̀wòn: Frozen
- Ọḍẹ: Tipper
- Ọḍékù: Guinness stout
- Rógà: Street urchin

2. Jargon

- Kòkò-ìdí : Rear axle of a vehicle
- Ìyídà : Transformation
- Ìró: Speech sound
- Owó-orí (lit: head money):tax
- Bẹrí (lit: cut head):salute (verb)

Strategies

Sociolinguistic Variables-Based

3. Taboo words and Euphemisms

- Bàbá-ọmọ 'father of a child' euphemism for Okó 'penis- (obscene)
- Ojúara 'eye of the body' euphemism for Òbò 'vagina' (obscene)
- Okùn-ilẹ (lit: ground rope), euphemism for ejò 'snake'
- Ìkébè (word for buttock in Urhobo and Isoko languages of South-south Nigeria)
- Şẹyọ (şe ẹyọ) (lit: do filtration) = urinate.

4. From Dialects

- Wúnrèn 'item' from the Ìjẹbú Yorùbá dialect.
- Afọ 'discourse' from the Ọwọ Yorùbá dialect
- Pónna 'ambiguity' from the Ọyọ Yorùbá dialect.
- Idu 'fallacy' from the Ọyọ Yorùbá dialect.
- Òtú (from oní òtú olótùú) editor from the Ìjẹbú Yorùbá dialect.

Strategies

Intuitive Substitution

1. Descriptive Intuitive Substitution

- Ìjàpá ‘tortoise’ refers to Volkswagen (Beetle) car
- Ayókélé ‘moving stealthily’=motor-car
- Ọbòkún (type of fish)=Mercedes Benz car.
- Alátapadà (oní àtapadà) (lit: that which bounces back)=reflexive
- Ìjáhà (lit: the act of getting hooked while descending)=reference in examination

2. Intuitive Substitution Based on Semantic Extension

- Àpólà (lit: ‘split wood’) ‘phrase’
- Àtẹ (lit: ‘raffia tray’) ‘chart’
- Késé (lit:spur) = stimulus.
- Ọpó (lit : an upright post supporting the roof)=stem in word formation
- Awẹ (lit: a segment into which a fruit splits naturally)=clause

Strategies

Intuitive Substitution

3. Intuitive Substitution Based on Idioms

- Fàyàwọ (lit: 'crawl on all fours') "smuggling".
- Àjẹpajúde (lit: eating with eyes shut) "profiteering"
- Tẹjúmálejò: (lit: stare at visitors) = 'frozen fish'
- Ajímẹfun (lit: he who grasp chalk at dawn) = teacher.
- Šínábolẹ "Solel Boneh". It is an Israeli construction company=expressway

Strategies

Borrowing From Other Source Languages

1. Integrated Loan-Words

- Lọyà: lawyer in the sentence:
Lọyà ti dé “the lawyer has arrived”
Lawyer perf.asp. arrive
- Kannkéré: concrete
- Pètẹ̀ẹ̀sì: upstairs
- Fíkù ‘vehicle’
- Àníyàn (an-niyat (Arabic) = intention.

2. Domesticated Loan-Words

- **Lawyer(noun) unnecessary argument**
- Táátì (thirty) ta á tì
- Wágùnnù ‘wagon’
- Rìbá (Arabic language) = usury or interest
- Níkà (English language) = Knickers.

Strategies

Borrowing From Other Source Languages

3. Basic Form

- Féré mù: frame
- Sànmò 'sà mà wá átì' (Arabic): Heavens
- Şíbí: spoon
- Tóró: three pence

4. Stem or Root

- Fírî: free ì + fírî
- Eépinnì: half penny by ear-loaning
oní + eépinnì → eléépinnì
- sìgá : cigarette by clipping
oní + sìgá → onísìgá
- Fótò 'photograph' by clipping
a ya + fótò → ayafótò
- Àsàlátù 'as-salat (Arabic) 'worship
oní + àsàlátù → alàsàlátù

APPARENT CONFLICTS IN THE EFFORTS OF THE YORÙBÁ LANGUAGE DEVELOPERS

Highlights of the Apparent Conflicts

The Media

1. Use of Misleading Terms Emanating From Literal Translation
 - 'Akòwé àgbà orílẹ̀-èdè Amẹ́ríkà: Secretary of State (United States of America): This term is grossly misleading.
 - Ààrẹ: President
 - Agbẹ́nuṣọ 'he who speaks on behalf of others'
2. Use of Ambiguous Terms
 - Amóhùn máwòrán 'that which captures both voice and picture'
 - Èrọ Asòròmágbèsì (Radio)
 - Alákòóso 'He who administers' Commissioner/ Minister/Director

APPARENT CONFLICTS IN THE EFFORTS OF THE YORÙBÁ LANGUAGE DEVELOPERS

The Media

3. Use of Borrowed Terms

- Wòṛòdù 'ward'
- Síkú sẹ̀ẹ̀ 'sickle cell (anaemia)'
- Fìrîjì 'refrigerator' clipped as 'fridge'

The media is well positioned to provide terms for new notions, ideas and concepts. Proper training is therefore necessary for the communicators. Regular workshops, seminars and training programmes facilitated by linguists and other relevant experts will enhance their productivity in developing the Yorùbá language and expanding its vocabulary appropriately for use in the modern times.

APPARENT CONFLICTS IN THE EFFORTS OF THE YORÙBÁ LANGUAGE DEVELOPERS

Non-Scholars

The efforts of this category of developers is neither published nor documented. They comprise educated and uneducated speakers of the Yorùbá language. I categorize them into literates, semi-literates and non-literates. Their efforts are spontaneous and intuitive. These efforts are borne out of the creativity and gregariousness of the native speaker's intuitive knowledge of the language (Chomsky 1965). From their experiences while perceiving the sound, appearance and behaviour of each of the new notions, ideas and concepts, the developers formulate many Yorùbá terms which, with use gradually become legitimized and integrated into the lexicon of the Yorùbá language.

- **Ìjàpá 'tortoise':**
Volkswagon car

- **Oríkanbódì: Tall**
person

- **Òbòkún:**
Mercedes Benz Car

APPARENT CONFLICTS IN THE EFFORTS OF THE YORÙBÁ LANGUAGE DEVELOPERS

Non-Scholars

Through the behaviour of occurrence or action perceived or observed in new concepts, terms like the following are produced.

- **Arówáàsí: Sermon echoer**
- **Bòòlẹ̀kájà: Wooden lorry**
- **Súnkẹrẹgbàkẹrẹ: Traffic congestion**

One observable characteristic of non-scholars' efforts is the free proliferation of items for one new concept or, notion or idea. Consider the following examples:

APPARENT CONFLICTS IN THE EFFORTS OF THE YORÙBÁ LANGUAGE DEVELOPERS

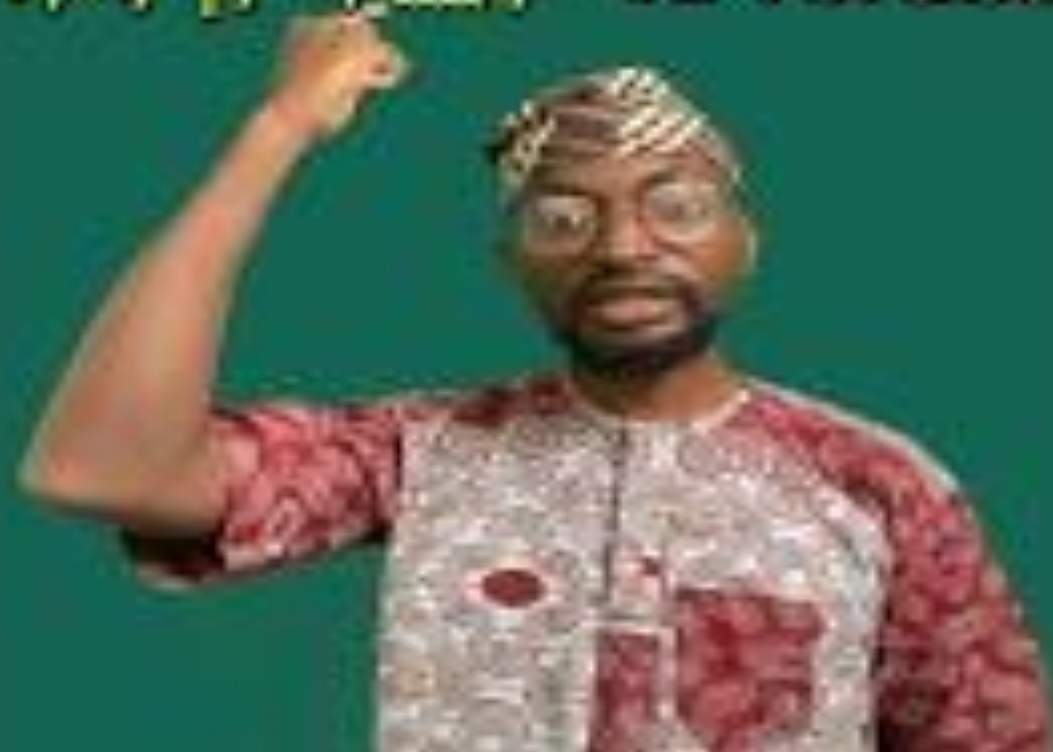
Frozen fish - tejúmálejò lit: 'fix gaze on visitor,
-Òkú-èkó lit: 'Lagos corpse'
-Ẹja inú yìnyín 'fish in ice'

Prostitute/Harlot – Aṣẹwó lit : 'money exchanger'
-Ọlọjà-ìròlẹ́ lit : 'evening trader'
-Gbélépawó lit 'stay-at-home money-maker'

Expressway - Títì Ṣínábolẹ́ lit 'open fire on 'ground': road which literally says i.e. do not slow down at all, also homophonous with the name of a popular road construction firm called 'Solel Boneh'. Here, metathesis exchange of sounds [n] and [l] occur to produce the 'Ṣínábolẹ́' from 'Solel Boneh'.

Títì Márosẹ́ lit: Don't slow down'

Ṣe, Ṣe, Ṣe, Ṣe, Ṣe ni Yoruba



**MANY THANKS FOR
YOUR PATIENCE
IRE O!**