



IBO INTERFERENCE IN ENGLISH AS A CASE OF ENUNCIATIVE NECESSITY IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S NO LONGER AT EASE

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Abstract

The recourse to Ibo language in English is a necessity resulting from the insufficiency of English to convey faithfully the inner conviction of the discourse participants in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*. Thus, African languages can be compared to a stubborn child who will advance whenever he is asked to go away. Understanding this amounts to saying that though numbers of decisions have been taken to smother or even unexaggerately to kill African languages, they do resist. They rather impose themselves as unavoidable in Africans' daily life. Thus the topic Ibo Interference in English as a Case of Enunciative Necessity in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*. With this work, we are expecting to state that African languages' position can arguably comply with the quest for objectivity in conveying one's mind, displaying by the same token, insufficiencies of so-called modern, powerful and perfect languages escaping thereby their dictatorship.

Key Words: African languages, enunciation, Ibo, interference, objectivity, necessity.

INTRODUCTION

Résumé

Le recours à la langue Ibo, en parlant Anglais est une nécessité imposée par l'insuffisance de l'Anglais à transmettre fidèlement la profonde conviction du locuteur dans le *Malaise* de Chinua Achebe. Aussi, les langues africaines à l'image d'un enfant tête avancement quand on leur demande de reculer. Comprendre cela, c'est comprendre qu'en dépit des nombreuses décisions pour étouffer si ce n'est pour les tuer, les langues africaines résistent encore. Mieux, elles se sont rendues incontournables dans le quotidien des Africains. D'où le thème: Interférence de la langue Ibo dans la langue anglaise comme une nécessité énonciative dans *Le Malaise* de Chinua Achebe.

Dans ce travail, nous espérons faire comprendre que l'«incontournabilité» des langues africaines doit être comprise à raison comme la quête de dire le vrai dans l'expression des idées, étalant par voie de conséquence des insuffisances des langues soi-disant modernes, puissantes et parfaites, échappant de la sorte à leur dictature. The cultural geography of Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* seemed linguistically fruitful to draw attentions. It witnesses to what extent languages degenerate in contact with another one. That is, they lose their pureness as compared to the original one. In fact, concerned with characters whose lives were lived across multiple

cultural spaces, *No Longer at Ease* is a novel neither of the village nor the city. On the contrary, it was conscious and celebrative of both rural and urban spaces. As consequence, the language used is an hybrid one, that is: not homogeneous Ibo, not homogeneous English. But rather Ibolish resulting from the interference of Ibo in English.

Thus, with the topic: "Ibo Interference in English as a Case of Enunciative Necessity in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*", we shall go through some of these aspects to catch the depth of these linguistic realities. That is, in which way the interference of Ibo in English overlaps with enunciation? What information does the interference of Ibo in English convey in terms of the powerfulness of English language? Isn't it a debasing sign of the failure of English to express the Ibo realities.

Thus, in this paper, which is a wake up call, in favour of the strengthening African languages, because they can faithfully account for African realities since language is a social praxis an exploration of some of the factors that trigger this interference will be revealed in connection with their enunciative value. The first part will be devoted to: Nigerian English in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, the second part to: Hegemony and Resistance via Ibolished Expressions and at last, the third part will discuss: equality between Ibo and English.

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Nigerian English in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*

What does the sequence "Nigerian English" mean? Characterising that English, Afam Ebeogu (2014:377) asserted:

It could be categorized vertically as the English whose standard form has been interfered with by some indigenous Nigerian language, or horizontally as that English language which has been interfered with by some recognizable way of speaking and writing English peculiar to Nigerians. In the case under study, the indigeneous Nigerian language is Ibo. Then, particularising the study, one will support that Nigerian English in *No Longer at Ease*¹ is the English spoken by people whose mother tongue is Ibo. That is, the English expression in Nigerian suggests "a dialect form of the English language". (Afam Ebeogu: idem) ". Such code will be christened "Igbolish"² in this work.

"Ibolish" in Speech Events as Metalinguistic

"Iboized English" to quote Afam (Op.cit:378) "is more justifiable as a stylistic impression than as a linguistic phenomenon that is amenable to clear-cut identification". Afam Ebeogu (ibidem) That means it goes beyond the mere linguistic level. "It is the level of theoretical schematization based on observation of linguistic phenomena. It follows from this that the metalinguistic representations are representations of representations." Valette (2006:265). They are representations of the quest for being themselves. What is meant by that is the medium by which Nigerians will express their true being, their profound humanness. It avoids alteration of one's mind expression. In the following example, (1) the proper noun "Obi" (NLAE: 6) is the hypocoristic form for "Obiajulu" which means in Ibo "the mind at last is at rest". "Obi" as can be seen is nothing but a representation. It reveals the metalinguistic level. As such in English, the name "Obi" is a case of interference. It witnesses the strong desire and state of mind of his father. "Obiajulu" is an indicator of the enunciative value. It displayed an axiologic evaluation of Obi's father. One can glose it as follows: it is good that Obi is born because my mind is now at rest. Put in that way renders obvious the subjectivity in naming.

In (2) "Na good luck" said the man. (NLAE: 15). One can guess that "Na" means 'it is'. Then (2) can be put rightly: 'It is good luck'. This Ibo interference in English is a particular case of code-switching. As observed by Vogt: Code-switching in itself is perhaps not a linguistic phenomenon, but rather a psychological one, and its causes are obviously extra-linguistic. But bilingualism is of great interest to the linguist because

it is the condition of what has been called interference between languages. (Vogt 1954:368). In (3), "His bowl of akara was lying in the dust..." (NLAE:15). The interference of the Ibo word "akara" meaning bean cakes is self-centered. That is, the enunciator is imbedded therein. One can therefore, assert that when we communicate, we do not just convey information. One is tempted to agree with Bang & Døør (1998:28) when they affirm that "Every description and any indication is always also at the same time a self-description and self-indication. [...] Every utterance and every part of an utterance has a specific and dynamic modality".

Thus, enunciatively the occurrence of "akara" in (3) unveiled that the locutor is related to that food and more to that Ibo language. In (4), Charity's Ibo name is a good axample of interference, particularly, syntactic interference. It means: "a girl is also good" (NLAE:55). This Ibo name is nothing but prompted by enunciative necessity. This Ibo name of Charity displays Obi's father's attitude. It implies that Obi's father was not only expecting a baby but more a male baby. But as stated by Proverbs³ 19.21, "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established." In other words, Charity's Ibo name reveals Obi's father's resignation. He is compelled to welcome her birth. One can better put it this way: a boy is good; a girl is also good. Obi, when quarelling with Charity tells his father true attitude: "A girl is not good". (NLAE: 55).

Another interference worth analysing is (5) "Obi Okonkwo nwa jelu oyibo" Obi who had been to the land of the whites. Bernth Lindfors (1973:47) particularised Achebe using "this kind of English that "resembles natural expression in their native tongue". It makes obvious the overlapping between Ibo and English. Ibo interference is sometimes used in avoiding to tell things as they come to us. Discussing that will be the goal of the next section.

Verbal Indirection as an Enunciative Strategy

One way of escaping from the verbal interaction is using verbal indirections. For Agyekum kofi (2008:82) "Verbal indirection is a strategy used in communication to abstain from being direct so as to have the opportunity to communicate sensitive and controversial issues and also to talk about verbal taboos." In (6), "Che sarà sarà" (NLAE: 16), Clara avoided direct answer in order no to be rude. In reverse she hummed. This is an axample of verbal indirection but that does not serve much the study because Clara is not Ibo. Nevertheless, it does not mean that she does not understand or speak it. Given

that she does not want Obi to understand what it is said, it appears more probable that she has not used Ibo. As Samuel Gyasi Obeng (1994:42) mentioned, "Interactants abstain from directness in order to avoid crisis, conflicts and being offensive." From the point of view of enunciation, this verbal indirection serves only the interest of Clara. Its understanding will require taking into account the discursive context.

In (7), "Olulu ofu oge" (NLAE: 53) is a technique adopted by Obi in order not to disobey the teacher. It witnesses Obi's willingness to fulfill the task. This indirection can pair the phatic function. It is prompted to test the audience's readiness to listen to him. In (8), "ori oda" (NLAE:16) used by a taxi driver⁴ is not to be taken properly as an abuse but rather as a verbal indirection to tease Obi and cause him to quicken a bit. This is a common attitude of taxi-driver. Commonsensically, people will not give it great attention. It is uttered simply for the sake of speaking. It is meaningfully empty. In nouchi, in Côte d'Ivoire, people will oppose this verbal indirection the indifference phrase: "c'est da"⁵. As can be observed, verbal indirection complies with evasion strategy. It has the advantage of avoiding answering directly or avoiding face to face confrontation. The apparent verbal indirection of Obi (8) "ori oda bloody fool" is because they are in traffic and consequently no opened confrontation can be envisaged. The example (9) "Tut-tut" (NLAE: 140) in Marie's address to Obi simply displays her un-easiness. Normally, Obi does not need feel unwell since his fiancée is a nurse. She would have advised him the appropriate remedy against malaria.

The sound understanding of "Tut-tut" as a verbal indirection is possible taking into account the discourse participants. This means that code emerges from interaction, and becomes relevant when parties to discourse treat them as such. The natural feedback to this indirection is silence that amounts to "you have nothing to say". It permits to ease the atmosphere and end the conversation. Here, Obi's silence is coupled with nodding; "Obi nodded" (NLAE: 140). As indicated by Ferrara (1980:234) "Speech acts do not usually occur in isolation in real life; rather, they come in sequences and are performed by speakers who are engaged in rule-governed activities". Anyway, this Ibo interference in English means that in communication, more than simple information is conveyed. For example, it shows the hegemony of English and the attempt of resistance.

Hegemony and Resistance via Ibolished Expressions

Political Strategy behind English

The widespread use of English is ascertained by

Ikechukwu Ugwu (2013:1808) as follows: The English language is the target language (L2) of all Nigerians including the Igbo people. It is Nigeria's lingua-franca, the official language and the language of everything including the economy, politics and socials. It is the language spoken in all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria. The 1999 constitution of Nigeria gave it a primate position. Nigerians have embraced the language passionately for many reasons.

In (10), "Na film I wan' go" said Bisi, Christopher replied (11): "This na Africa, you know". What is worth mentioning is the comment that follows: "Whether Christopher spoke good or 'broken' English depended on what he was saying, where he was saying it, to whom and how he wanted to say it" (NLAE:100). One can reasonably believe that the assimilation is so complete that only English is spoken, in one way or another. This made Hagège's (1985:349) view fair: «Le langage, est instrument de pouvoir tout court»⁶. Thus, using increasingly English means acknowledging and consenting with its power. For Edge (2003) "This, fundamentally, is what hegemony means: a relationship based not upon explicit coercion, but on established power and the consent of the majority to go along with the arrangement that flow from that power because of the rewards that we receive".

Rightly, Jeffrey's (2002:67) warning can be one of these many reasons of that English language hegemony: "...those that adopt English and use it alongside their own culture, and combine it with, for example, communications technology, can possibly escape from the poverty-trap and catch up with developed country rapidly." All this linguistically led Mikhail Bakhtine (1977:57) to assert what follows: Tout signe idéologique extérieur, quelle que soit sa nature, baigne dans les signes intérieurs, dans la conscience. Il naît de cet océan de signes intérieurs et continue à y vivre, car la vie du signe extérieur est constituée par un processus sans cesse renouvelé de compréhension, d'émotion, d'assimilation, c'est-à-dire par une intégration réitérée dans le contexte intérieur.⁷

Enunciatively, the positioning of the speaker as the subject shows he has wants and desires that he will choose the ways of conveying them. As put by Benveniste (1974:84) "The individual act of appropriating a language inserts the speaker into his speech act". Mikhail Bakhtine (1977:60) termed it otherwise: L'énonciation a pour but de traduire en signes extérieurs des signes intérieurs, en tant que tels, et exige de l'interlocuteur qu'il les rapporte à un contexte intérieur, ce qui constitue un acte de compréhension purement psychologique. Dans l'autre

cas, c'est une compréhension idéologique objective et concrète de l'énonciation qui est requise.⁸

In the Terms of Political Discourse, Connolly cited by Sophia Jane Mihic (2010:99) focused his criticisms on this assumption. "The language of politics", he counters, is not a neutral medium that conveys ideas independently formed; it is an institutionalized structure of meanings that channels political thought and action in certain directions. Those who simply use established concepts to get to the facts of political life, those who act unreflectively within the confines of established concepts, actually have the proportions and modes of conduct available to them limited in subtle ways. (Connolly, 1983:1-2). In (11) "Na Lagos you de go?" (NLAE:127) asked the driver. The question of the taxi-driver serves the interest of English hegemony. Their failure to speak English displays their quest for saying their true mind. In (12), "Na only by God of power na him make you still de talk". (NLAE:128), it is a broken English by a lady addressing Obi.

As it can be observed, whoever you are, and anywhere you are to interact in English (no matter what the register is.) Sometimes attempts to resist that hegemony can be seen via the interference of Ibo in English. As noticed by Isabela Fairclough: Political theory is concerned both with what politics is like and with what politics ought to be like; it is both descriptive and normative. The two are not entirely separate, because political actors in actual politics constantly evaluate action against normative standards, assessing for instance what actually happens. Fairclough (2012:25) Taking into account this wake up call, it can be said the normative level has been analysed, now it sounds necessary to view to descriptive level: the level of resistance.

Linguistic Resistance via Ibolish

"To say something is to do something; [...] by saying or in saying something we are doing something" J. L. Austin (1962:12). Therefore, resorting to Ibo language is opposing English hegemony. Example (13) "Ah no, Oga, Master E no be like dat I beg. I go pay end of mont prompt" (NLAE:88). This English feedback by Charles couldn't go further. The sequence (14) "He then reverted to Ibo" (NLAE:88) indicates the shift. "Our people have a saying that a debt may become mouldy but it never rots. (NLAE:88) "To say something is to do something; [...] by saying or in saying something we are doing something" J. L. Austin (1962:12). Therefore, resorting to Ibo language is opposing English hegemony. Example (13) "Ah no, Oga, Master E no be like dat I beg. I go pay end of mont prompt" (NLAE:88). This English

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This kind of language choice considerably contributes to establish solidarity between the user and the recipients. Through the use of the same language register, the author wants to show that he is an integral part of the recipients. By using speech variants, that connote intimacy, as Sornug (1989:108) points out, the author insinuates chumminess and creates "an atmosphere of mutually shared fates". There is significant power of persuasion which is mainly due to the use of in-group language.

The use of the lexical interference "Nda" in (16) (NLAE:148), of "nza" and of the phonological interference "chi"¹⁰ in (17) "He is like the little bird nza who after a big meal so far forgot himself as to challenge his chi to single combat" (NLAE:148). Bamgbose (1991) cited by John Teye (2008:52) asserted that "It is not language per se that divides or unites people of a nation, but rather the attitudes of the speakers and the sentiments and symbolism that speakers of the target culture attach to their language."

These are examples of negative transfert in the case of Ibo and English in Nigeria. They can be viewed enunciatively because related to Ibo culture and unlikely to be faithfully conveyed by the English language. Mikhail Bakhtine (1977:99) in this trend observed En réalité, le locuteur se sert de la langue pour ses besoins énonciatifs concrets (pour le locuteur, la construction de la langue est orientée vers l'énonciation, vers la parole). Il s'agit, pour lui, d'utiliser les formes normalisées (admettons pour l'instant leur légitimité) dans un contexte concret donné. Pour lui, le centre de gravité de la langue n'est pas situé dans la conformité à la norme de la forme utilisée, mais bien dans la nouvelle signification que celle-ci prend en contexte¹¹.

As one can notice, often, linguistics interference causes deviation from the point of view of the interfered language norms. Lott (1983:356) viewed such interference as "errors in the learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue". This pairing of the mother tongue and the target language for example led Hagège to establish parallelisms: «Les langues sont des modèles, façonnés par la vie sociale, d'articulation du

pensable, grâce auxquels se déploie une réflexion capable d'ordonner le monde.»¹² Claude Hagège (1985:347). In (19) you may laugh if laughter catches you. (NLAE: 56).

This metaphorical structure is nothing but Ibo chiefly via the verb "catch" that pictures the irresistible power of laughter. Coincidentally, Dualy (1982) defines interference as "the automatic transfer due to the habit of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of target language." Such automaticity justified Weinreich (1983:1) who substituted the traditional term interlingual influence by the new term interference to refer to "instances of language deviation from the norms either language which occurs in the speech of the bilingual as a result of their familiarity with more than one" Connolly smelt politics in this interference. In fact, Connolly cited by Jeremy Valentine (2010:203) demonstrated that "Political discourse could not be reduced to logically definable categories and concepts that could be applied and measured independently of the differing, and in many cases opposed, political projects within which they make sense" Seen this way, Ibolish can be apprehended politically. It even complies with the newest deixis definition by Jeppe Bundsgaard & Sune Steffensen (2000:21) "A category used to subsume features of languages which indicate, personal, objectical and medial". It means that Ibolish can reveal somehow an attempt of English hegemony resistance. Moreover, they clarified "but are also indications of the logical, modal and lexical configuration of the text and situation are deictic phenomena, because there is no such thing as universal logics. Jeppe Bundsgaard & Sune Steffensen (Idem: 22) If Ibolish can pretend resist English, it is because language in general share something or particularly because Ibo amounts to English in some extents.

Equality of Ibo and English

Precedence of Expression over Code

«La situation façonne l'énonciation, lui imposant telle résonance et pas telle autre¹³ » Bakhtine (1977:124). This view of Bakhtine can be proved true in the following examples:

In (20), they clapped and cheered and danced when they saw the car pull up. (NLAE:71)

"Umuofia kwenu!" shouted one old man.

"ya !" replied everyone in unison.

"Umuofia kwenu!"

"ya!"

"Ife awolu Ogoli azua n'afia", he said.

This warm welcoming would have been English words since the meeting was conducted in that language.

But English would not have conveyed appropriately their feeling. In Ibo, the welcoming words seem more natural and more satisfactory. It shows that the people had something to communicate to Obi, and they don't want it to be betrayed. As mentioned by Hagège (1985:347) «si ces derniers communiquent, c'est qu'ils ont quelque chose à communiquer¹⁴». That something authentic reserved to Obi was not mere words, but the authenticity of the Ibo tradition.

In (21) "The last sentence was said in English" (NLAE:72), that shift to English is worth analysing:

One can realise that this "Code switching signals contextual information equivalent to what in monolingual settings is conveyed through prosody or other syntactic or lexical processes. It generates the presuppositions in terms of which the content of what is said is decoded." Gumperz (1982:98). What we observe is the fact that Ibo people, imbedded in orality, gave precedence to the expression of their feeling than code, because codes are equal.

Hagège (1985:56) warned: En effet, les langues que l'on voit disparaître ne sont en aucune façon des organismes mal adaptés aux besoins de ceux qui s'en servaient, ou dont le lexique ou la grammaire se soient appauvris au point qu'elles cessent quasiment d'être utilisables. Les vraies causes sont ailleurs. Dans les zones accessibles où se parlent encore des langues de minorités qui ne parviennent plus à préserver leur identité, le foisonnement des contacts a pour effet l'irrésistible diffusion de langues qui portent avec elles l'argent, les techniques, l'idéologie.¹⁵ It becomes obvious that some power rather orientate the use of language and this is what Hagège (1985:361) considers as «l'appropriation du langage, comme d'autres instruments de pouvoir». Seemingly, the real reason of that interference is: the informal linguistic environment.

Informality of Ibolish Occurrence

One of the most striking features of these interferences is the informality of the atmosphere in which they are held. In (22), Joseph terminated the telephone conversation like that: "Good! See you later" (NLAE: 70). Immediately, the comment follows: "He never spoke Ibo or pidgin English at such moments" (NLAE: 70). One learns from that that, Ibo interferes when informality is at stake. After the telephone conversation, one can perceive the easiness with which Joseph re-started Ibolish "That na my brother" (NLAE: 70) with might mean: he is with his colleagues) The examples : (23),"E no be like dat" (NLAE:70. (24)"Him na gentleman. No fit take bribe". (NLAE:70) (25)"Na so", said the other in unbelief (NLAE:70) are marked by the solidarity between Obi and Joseph.

Alan Partington (2004:35) noted that "The code varies from informal to formal (even highly rhetorical) registers." Claude Hagège (1985: 343) put it in other words : «Ce songe ne fait que porter au-delà de ses limites une pulsion de l'exprimable qui se fraie des canaux variés¹⁶». Consequently, there is no primitive language, no perfect language. The gist is to express oneself. Though the alienation and fragmentation of the late modern condition may intimate the demand for 'a more harmonious collective identity'.

The interference of "garri" in (25) "I went and poured sand into your garri"(NLAE:85) The borrowed word "garri" proved that there is a lack somewhere. As put by David R. Howarth (2010:26) "Derrida's reflections yield a more general insight about the structure of human desire, namely that there is something lacking or missing in every structure or field of discursive practice,". That missing thing is a common denominator of languages. This reality is worded by Hagège (1985:85) as follows: "Les langues se ressemblent par les fonctions dont elles sont investies et par la place qu'elles occupent entre l'homme qui les utilise et l'univers dont elles parlent, mais rien ne postule d'homologie de leurs formes.¹⁷ " For David R. Howarth (Idem:27) "This logic presupposes that any existing discursive practice or system is missing at least one object it is structurally incomplete and it is this lack that activates and structures subjective desire". It has been expressed in Jame's words, cited by David R. Howarth (Idem :28) like this : "something always escapes" from the world. Consequently, what escapes from a source language can reasonably be fulfilled by the target language.

In 26, "Ndo" in everybody on arrival went to Obi and said in "Everybody on arrival went to Obi and said 'Ndo'" (148), it can be noticed the lbo expression to comfort their likes, knowing that: «L'expression, à la limite, est thérapeutique»¹⁸ according to Claude Hagège (1985:350). "Ndo" is comparable to an lbo invariant because of its substitutability. That is, other words except in lbo will fail expressing the fair compassion degree. Then, one has not to hesitate in using it. Hagège (1985:351) put it like this: «Concilier la nécessaire recherche des invariants avec les pratiques sociales qui s'expriment en langue et les discours réels en quoi se résout tout un discours imaginaire propre à chaque groupe humain»¹⁹ . This is the reason why, although history is rife with the exploitation of other races, Africans should have no complex using their language.

It is merely politics requiring to reject it. If we understood politics rather better, we would expect less of it. Colin Hay (2014:6) Taylor cited by Sophia Jane Mihic (2010:102) went further by putting that

"He comes to feel that being ashamed for what you are, apologizing for your existence, is senseless. That on the contrary, there is something demeaning precisely about feeling such shame, something degrading, merely supine, craven." Consequently, shame and any other complex should now disappears or substantiantially diminished for lbo and English on equal footing. They all fulfill the same communicative function of language.

CONCLUSION

Even if lbo language cannot effectively replace English as international lingua franca of science, technology, and commerce, it is worth noting that the resort to lbo is an undeniable proof of enunciative necessity. lbo language is valorized through its use in communication via an elaborate system of code-switching. lbo interference in English can be seen as an unstated resistance to English imperialism. lbo has therefore an argumentative value. It has a metalinguistic tool that displays its enunciative opacity.

It teaches us that all languages are equal in the viewpoint of communicating function in general and particularly that lbo amounts to English. It is their sameness that favours their interferences. lbo native speakers should now be proud of their language. It is adjusted to the environment and better conveys their realities than any other language. Therefore the recourse to lbo when they are using English is not an option, but rather a necessity imposed by argumentation in enunciation.

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