

CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE IN CONTACT SPACES: STRUCTURAL INTERFERENCE IN THE IGBO - HAUSA CONTACT AT LOKPANTA

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Abstract

This study examined and structural interferences on the Igbo and Hausa languages in contact at Lokpanta, Abia State, Nigeria. The study adopted qualitative orientation approaches involving semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations and linguistic elicitation. Data were analyzed in line with the thematic, interpretative and elicitation approaches. The study identified substratum interference involving alteration of some sounds in specific environments, substitution of sounds, as well as interferences relating to plural and gender marking in Hausa. These interferences manifest in a range of linguistic practices aimed at facilitating

economic exchanges and to navigate identity positions. It was concluded that the Igbo-Hausa contact at Lokpanta presents interesting patterns interferences (phonic and grammatical) that speak to the typological distance between the languages in contact.

Keywords: Cross-linguistic influence, language contact, phonetic, morpho-syntax, Igbo, Hausa

Introduction

Hausa settlement is a growing community at Lokpanta of the Umunneochi LGA in Abia State of Nigeria. The Hausa community involves people from different ethnic groups who are united by the use of Hausa language. The settlement of Hausa-speaking community has spread from ‘Garki’ to neighboring towns and villages around the area. For instance, there are Hausa-speaking people in villages in Okigwe in Imo State as well as neighbouring Abia State for example Ihube, Isuochi. The implication is that the Hausa-speaking community forms a reasonable percentage of the people and inhabitants in the areas around Lokpanta, Abia State. The settlement of Hausa-speaking migrants in Lokpanta community has brought them into sustained contact with the Igbo-speaking communities and signals a ‘dense’ contact space involving the Igbo and Hausa languages. This study examines structural outcomes of language contact. Specifically, the study focuses on possible phonetic and morpho-syntactic influence on the Igbo and Hausa languages.

The growing rate of the settlements has given rise to the need for more discussions of African contact studies

not just because it provides a fertile ground for investigation into structural interferences but also for language typologies. The contact is strategic as it involves two languages belonging to distinct language typologies namely, the Hausa of the Afro-Asiatic language family and Igbo of the Niger-Congo language family. Therefore, it is imperative to explore the influences or interferences in both Hausa and Igbo languages. This is one way of providing original insights into categories of language contact, as well as advancing discussions on African language contact and change.

Contact makes the inhabitants of a contact space bilingual or at least they will have a working knowledge of other language(s) in the area, in addition to their native languages (Gibson, 2008) and the languages tend to influence one another in various ways (Beswick, & Poso-Gutierrez, 2010, Luekpe, 2010, Gibson, 2019, Onwukwe 2018, Onwukwe & Iwe, 2021). The longer the contact is, the deeper the influence. These processes play out in various degrees and dimensions in different contact spaces (Onwukwe & Iwe, 2021). While much has been discovered about contact-induced changes, the discussion on linguistic implications of contact spaces in terms of language use patterns, consequences and structural influences on the languages in contact particularly involving African languages has been influenced by large-scale contact studies which creates the need for perspectives on intra-African language contact space or small-scale contact scenarios such as the Igbo-Hausa contact in Lokpanta.

Hausa is spoken as a first language in northern Nigeria and as a second language in various other African countries such as Sudan and Ghana. The total number of speakers is estimated to be 50 million, with around $\frac{3}{4}$ of this population living in Nigeria (Caron 2012). Hausa belongs to Chadic branch of Afro Asiatic languages (Caron 2011) while some people posit that it also has Semito-Hamitic roots (Smirnova 1982). “The Igbo language is a Niger-Congo language widely spoken in the Southeastern part of Nigeria involving Abia, Imo, Enugu, Anambra, Ebonyi States and parts of Delta with a population of over 25 million in Nigeria” (Agbo 2008, 68; cf. Williamson and Blench 2000). This paper begins the theoretical framework adopted for this study, and study objectives and methodology. This is followed by analysis and discussion of results which highlight phonetic interferences and morpho-syntactic interference in the Igbo and Hausa contact at Lokpanta.

Theory of transmission process in language contact

The most promising attempt to address the problems of classical theory is the theoretical framework formulated by Van Coetsem (1988, 2000). With regard to classification of contact phenomena, Van Coetsem (2000, p101-103) suggests that we use criteria such as:

- (i) The types or patterns of transfer, eg. Borrowing vs imposition
- (ii) Motivation of speaker for using the language (communication, self-identification, etc.)
- (iii) Nativenes
- (iv) Reduction.

Van Coetsem's (2000) major contribution was to further refine the traditional distinction between 'borrowings' and 'interference' by defining these types of cross-linguistic influence more precisely, and above all, by distinguishing the kinds of agentivity they involve. Van Coetsem's framework distinguishes between two types of cross-linguistic influence, or what he calls 'transfer types', namely, borrowing and imposition. The latter is largely equivalent to terms like 'interference via shift', 'transfer' 'indirect diffusion', and 'substratum influence'.

Borrowing and imposition, in this framework, are not seen as 'mechanisms' or 'processes', but rather as vehicles of contact-induced change. In both cases, there is a source language (SL) and a recipient language (RL). These terms serve as alternatives to various other terms such as 'donor language', 'substrate', 'replica language'. The direction of transfer of linguistic features is always from the source language to the RL, and the agent of transfer can be either the recipient language or the source language speaker. In the former case, we have borrowing (RL agentivity), in the latter, imposition (SL agentivity).

Also, highly relevant to the distinction between borrowing and imposition is the notion of language dominance. As Van Coetsem (2000) explains, difference in linguistic dominance is the main criterion for distinguishing between recipient language and source language agentivity. In the former case, according to Van Coetsem (2000), the recipient language is the dominant language of the speaker, while in the latter case; the source language is the dominant language. When we speak of dominance here, we are referring to

linguistic dominance, that is, the fact that the speaker is more proficient in one of the languages in contact. This must be distinguished from social dominance, which refers to the political or social status of one of the languages. Van Coetsem (2000) states that the socially dominant language may or may not; be the linguistically dominant language of the speaker. And such shifts in dominance may result in different outcomes, or lead to attrition of the previously dominant language. These considerations require us to distinguish the agents of change from the kinds of agentivity they employ in introducing changes to an RL. The fact is that the same agent can employ either type of agentivity, and hence both transfer types, in the same contact situation. This is particularly true of highly proficient bilinguals, though, not restricted to them alone.

Differences between recipient language and source language agentivity are also related to what Van Coetsem (1998: 25) calls the ‘stability gradient’ of language. This refers to the fact that certain components of a language, such as phonology, morphology and syntax, tend to be more stable and hence resistant to change, while others, such as vocabulary, are less stable and thus more amenable to change. This is partly why borrowing tends to be mostly lexical, and to have little if any effect on the recipient language grammar. On the other hand, according to Van Coetsem (2000), in imposition, where the source language grammar is more stable and resistant to change, grammatical features can be transferred more readily, leading to significant structural change in the speaker’s version of the RL. There may well be differences in degree of stability

within different aspects of the grammar, which may lead to different potential for transfer. Thus, certain function morphemes tend to be transferred more readily than others, and word order, for instance, seems to be transferred more readily than, say, embedding strategies.

Van Coetsem (2000) argued that language contact studies should focus on the transmission mechanism, which is an individual phenomenon, and not just on the diffusion of change, which is a social phenomenon. The former has to do with the (psycho) linguistic processes of change that reside in individual minds, while the latter has to do with processes of diffusion, leveling and focusing (conventionalization) within speech communities, which are sociolinguistically motivated. I believe this emphasis on the cognitive processes involved in the creation of contact languages is equally as important as the traditional concern with socio-historical and sociolinguistic aspects of contact. It allows for new links to be made between purely structural and sociolinguistic approaches to contact, and psycholinguistic models of bilingual speech production.

Van Coetsem's (1998, 2000) approach represented a shift in focus away from taxonomies based on 'prototypical' cases, to classifications based on the actual mechanisms involved in contact-induced change, as well as the constraints on their operation. Moreover, Van Coetsem reaffirmed the distinction between the results of such change, and the processes or 'mechanisms' underlying them. This remedied a serious weakness in previous approaches, where terms like 'borrowing', 'transfer' and the like had long been used

(and still are) to refer both to the outcomes of contact, and the mechanisms that produce them.

This theory is relevant to this study as it accounts for the processes or mechanisms through which languages exert some influences on others. Specifically, it provides basis to account for possible structural interferences or contact-induced changes in the contact occasioned by Hausa settlement in Lokpanta Igbo land.

Study objectives and methodology

The study aims to analyze possible structural interferences on the languages in contact (Igbo and Hausa). It is guided by the question: What are the possible structural interferences on the languages in contact (Igbo and Hausa)?

In terms of methodology, this study highlights the research design, area of study, research population, sampling, instrument, and validation of instrument, method of data collection and procedure for data analysis. In terms of research design, the study adopted qualitative orientation approaches involving recorded semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations. The semi-structured interview was designed to include open-ended questions, which allowed participants to provide a broad range of answers to the questions.

Ethnographic observations covered general activities in the contact space including customer-trader conversations, community or group meetings and interactions such as the Igbo and Hausa communities,

and some family exchanges particularly Hausa families who reside in the contact space. In other words, the ethnographic observation covered trading activities, customer-seller exchanges/communication, sociocultural spaces, as well as other social interactive platforms at Lokpanta. While the ethnographic observations aided in collecting data on social, linguistic and cultural dynamics of the contact space, and to gain insights into linguistic consequences of the contact, the oral interviews helped in gathering language data relating to multilingual practices among speakers of the languages in contact as well as structural interferences.

On the area of study, Lokpanta community is one of the communities in Umuoche Local Government Area (LGA) in Abia State, Nigeria. It is a small community, bounded on the north by Enugu State, South by Ihube, Abia State, West by Ebonyi State, and on the East by Isuochi, also in Abia State. The community covers an area of about 10sqmeters, and has a population of over 10,000 (*Nigeria Group*, 2019). It is located on latitude 6.0007, longitude 7.47107. One of Nigeria's biggest cattle markets is in *Lokpanta* community, and its popularly called “*Garki*” meaning “market” in Hausa language. The “*Garki*” is located in Amaekwu Lokpanta and particularly along Enugu-Port Harcourt express road, near Enugu/Abia boundary.

The population of the study involved adult Igbo and Hausa-speakers in the settlement. It extends to customers who come from different parts of the region for business activities in the market. In terms of sampling, the purposive sampling method was adopted involving non-

systematic or subjective selection of participants on the basis of their relevance to the subject of research. The purposive sampling method was used to select the 50 participants made up of 25 for Igbo-speaking and 25 Hausa -speaking participants and this was drawn from leaders of different unions in the settlement (for example, Association of Cattle traders, and the Igbo traders Union in Lokpanta), individual traders and customers amongst the Igbo and Hausa-speaking communities. More participants were recruited using the snowballing technique which entails that selected participants referred and recruited more persons for the study. The recorded semi-structured interviews involved 50 participants made up of Igbo and Hausa-speaking adults (for 30 minutes for each participant). The interviews were conducted in a mix of Hausa and English as well as Igbo languages. A Hausa-speaking research assistant as well as the researchers' basic knowledge of Hausa language facilitated the interview.

The interview was conducted in line with an interview schedule prepared by the researcher. This is made up of two sections: section one focused on eliciting biodata of participants and the second section, which aimed at eliciting information on the study objectives, which are open-ended questions allowing participants to freely provide answers to each question. The interview schedule was 'Face-validated', which entailed that it was presented to three scholars in sociolinguistics and general language study to assess the relevance and inclusivity of the questions. Collection of language data was conducted through ethnographic observation of social exchanges (for example customer-seller

exchanges), as well as oral interviews during which we recorded fluent speeches of the participants.

Analysis of data involved a combination of thematic, Interpretative and elicitation approaches. The thematic and interpretative approaches entail that language use patterns as well as linguistic consequence of the contact were identified in form of salient points or themes, and how they relate to the Igbo-Hausa contact is interpretatively revealed. The elicitation analysis involved detailed studying and analysis of the corpus (ie. fluent speeches) with the aim of identifying possible grammatical influences on the languages in contact. I am trained in Igbo linguistics and through linguistic elicitation, tried to identify any possible influences on the micro-level grammatical systems of the Igbo language. I employed a research assistant who is a native speaker of Hausa to assist in both interviews and analyses in Hausa, drawing on the assistant's expertise in Hausa.

Phonetic interferences

Segmental interference is a major linguistic implication of the Igbo-Hausa contact at Lokpanta. This involves both consonants and vowels of the languages in contact. More increasingly, the phonic interference is revealed in the subtle changes or alterations in particular phonetic environments, as well as sound substitution in specific contexts. This was observed more frequently among Hausa learners of the Igbo language and may be related to the demand or urge on the part of Hausa-speakers to integrate into the larger Igbo-speaking community. The occurrence of phonetic interferences further adds

credence to our earlier observation that the speakers of the languages are “(incipient) bilinguals who are more prone to exhibiting alterations of segments and sound substitution” (Winford, 2003: 34).

I begin here, with cases of sound substitution among Hausa-learners of the Igbo language. Observations revealed the substitution of the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ as well as voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ in the Igbo language with voiceless bilabial fricative [ɸ]. The sounds /p/ and /v/ are not part of the sound system of Hausa (Erbasi, 2000, Abdul, 2014). This is a reflection of mother tongue interference or what has been described as “substratum influence” (Thomason and Kaufman 1988; Winford 2005), interlanguage sound transfer (Akaan 2006) and “borrowing interference” (Winford 2003). I recorded the following exchange between a Hausa-learner of Igbo (Abu) and Igbo-speaker (Kalu). These are pseudonyms:

20.

Abu: **Oga**, kalu, ɸ[ɸ]utala (ɸɸutala) efi. E don bring am. I mean the cow?

Kalu: Yes. E don bring am.

Abu: you see the horn? ɸ [ɸ] u (ɸfu) mpi...mpi karaka. E big well well.

Kalu: ɸ si o fu mpi? (Laughter....) Aboki, you don dey speak Igbo well o.

Abu: hakani hakani...small small, hahaha

This is a short exchange between an Igbo and Hausa-speaker that reveals some subtle alterations in the use of some segments by the Hausa-learner of the Igbo language. The Hausa-speaker begins his enquiry in Igbo

Oga kalu, o[ɸ] utala efi? Which means “Boss, Kalu, has he brought the cow? and emphasises this both in Nigerian pidgin “e don bring am” as well as in the English language ‘I mean the cow’. Kalu, the Igbo-speaker responds in English “Yes, e don bring am”. Abu continues in English “You see the horn?” and states that the said cow has (big) horn, and switch to Igbo *o vi mpi* “It has a horn” and emphasises this in pidgin *E big well well* meaning “A very big (horn)”. Kalu laughed which signalled that he took note of the wrong pronunciation, and observed that his friend is gradually gaining mastery of the Igbo language. Beyond the switches, it is observed that the sounds /p/ as in *o p^hutala efi?* Meaning “Has he brought the cow?” is replaced with the voiceless labiodental fricative /f/ as in *ofulata efi*. Also, this is evident in the word *o[ɸ] u* instead of ‘ovu’ as in *ovu mpi* meaning “does it have (big) horn”.

One might argue that the sounds /p/ and /v/ are substituted by the Hausa-learner of Igbo more often when they occur in initial positions of a word. This is therefore the specific environment where this sound substitution occurs as in the examples above. Also, one might argue that the reason for the sound substitution may be related to the fact that the sounds /p/ and /v/ are not part of Hausa sound inventory (Erbasi, 2000), so the Hausa-learner of Igbo tends to replace the sounds particularly in initial positions with closely related sound in its inventory which in this case is the voiceless bilabial fricative [ɸ]. Alluding to this observation, Erbası (2000, p2) holds that “Hausa also lacks voiceless interdental fricative [f] as well as the voiced one [v]. Rather, it only has a bilabial voiceless fricative [ɸ] as in

the word [ɸankh a] ‘fan’. The fact that F2 and F3 come a bit apart as the first consonant comes closer to the vowel, which signifies labiality (Ladefoged & Johnson 2010) may indicate that the first sound of [ɸankh a] is a [ɸ] but not [f]”.

Equally evident is the alteration in the use of the Igbo heavy vowel /o/ and light vowel /ɔ/ orthographically represented as /o/. The light vowel is not part of the sound inventory of the Hausa language, and so Abu seem to substitute with the heavy counterpart /o/ which is obtainable in his mother tongue. I also observed this alteration in a number of other Igbo lexical items in which the light vowels occur as captured 21 below:

1.

S/n	Igbo	Hausa-Igbo learner/speaker version	Gloss
1	oḡa /oḡa/	oḡa /oḡa:/	Master
2	oṣoahija	oṣoahija /oṣoahiai/	Market errands
3	akazụ /akazɔ/	akazụ /akazụ/	
4	p ^h ụ /p ^h ɔ/	[ɸ] u /fu/	To drag
5	vụ /vɔ/	[ɸ] u /fu/	To carry (on the head)
6	nwanyị /n ^w anɪ/	Nwayi /nwayi:/	

In the table above, in all the positions of occurrence of the light vowels /ɔ/ and /ʊ/, the heavy counterparts are substituted, as well as the substitution of the consonants /p/ and /v/ with the voiceless bilabial fricative [ɸ] in Hausa. This substitution involving Igbo heavy and light vowels is not peculiar to Hausa-learners of the Igbo language but indeed most learners of the Igbo whose mother tongue or first language has no such sound distinction in their inventory for example English. Of particular interest are examples 1 and 6, /ɔga:/ and /nwayi:/ in which there seems to be sound lengthening. This is a feature of Hausa system but not found in the Igbo language, and it occurs more frequently when the half - open, front spread vowel /a/ as well as the closed front spread vowel /ɪ/ occur in the final environment in Hausa. Equally notable is the example 6, where the double articulated consonants /p/ and /n^w/ as in *nwan̄yi* are pronounced as two different sounds. This is another example of substratum influence as the two sounds are not part of the Hausa sound inventory but exist as two separate sounds i.e., sounds of single articulation.

Another example that revealed even deeper layer of substratum influence on the Igbo language by Hausa-learners is in 2, *oşoah̄ia* where it was perceived that the last vowel has some feature of a diphthong. This was observed in many other Igbo words that end with the vowel in the speech of some Hausa-speakers/learners of the Igbo language in the contact space such as *akpa* ‘bag’. Hausa is claimed to have three diphthongs including /ai/ (Erbasi, 2000). Although the analysis of the language data (sounds) in this study was solely based on auditory perception of sounds, these are incipient

signs of adoption of diphthongs from Hausa into Igbo which could be further substantiated through expanding the range of data and further analysis.

Morpho-syntactic interferences

Observations reveal some crosslinguistic interferences on some aspects of the morpho-syntactic structures of the languages in contact. This involves interferences in the plural formation as well as gender making in the use of pronouns among the Igbo-speakers/learner of the Hausa language. These were identified in the fluent speeches of some participants and involve wrong use of the gender markers and omission of plural marking in some nominals and other form classes in Hausa. Although these may be largely considered as inter-language errors or second language learning errors, they signal substratum interference in the use of the Hausa language by the Igbo-speakers. Winford (2003, p45) states that "...this is more common among incipient bilinguals" which further lends credence to our earlier observation that speakers of the languages in contact are incipient bilinguals.

Pluralization as an inflectional process is overtly marked in Hausa language, but this is not the case in the Igbo language. In nominals, some morphemes as well as zero morphemes are deployed to mark pluralization in Hausa. Observations revealed that these interfere with the Igbo-speakers' usage of the language as can be seen in the following examples extracted from different forms of exchanges between the Igbo and Hausa-speakers in the contact space. This may be related to the fact that knowledge of Hausa among the Igbo-speakers is limited

to basic words, occasionally to facilitate economic exchanges, and greetings.

2.

Hausa Singular-plural	Igbo- speakers/le arners forms	Gloss Singular-plural
Aboki –abok <u>ai</u>	Aboki	Friend -friends
Sannu -Sanu <u>kuu</u>	Sannu	Well-done (singular) - well-done (plural)
Mutum-Maza	Mutum	Man -men
Abu –abubawa	Abu	Item –items
Igiya –Igiyoyi	Igiya	Rope-Ropes
Akuya-awaki	Akuya	Goat- goats
Saniya -shanu	Saniya	Cow-cows

In the examples, the Igbo-speakers use more frequently the singular forms even in contexts where they should use the plural forms. However, since the emphasis in the contact space is not proficiency but communicative competence, these alterations often do not impinge on communication. This may be considered as Van coestsem’s (2000) idea of ‘imposition’ which is when learners of a second language in contact space, introduce or ‘impose’ features known in their language into the target language. This could be explained in the context that Igbo unlike Hausa has no overtly marked

pluralization strategy which facilitates the Igbo -learners to ‘impose’ this feature into Hausa. Explaining imposition, Van Coetsem (2000: 34) holds that

... it is well known that learners employ features of their L1 to compensate for their limited proficiency in an L2. Such L1 (SL) features are, in our terms, imposed on the L2 (RL). They may include vocabulary and semantics, as well as phonology, morphology, and syntax.

Interference was also observed in the aspect of gender marking particularly in Hausa language. This was observed more in the use of pronouns which are among the very basic vocabulary of Hausa that the Igbo-learners acquire at the contact space. I captured a short exchange between Abubakar, Hausa-speaker and Nnamdi (pseudonyms), an Igbo-speaking customer below:

3. Nnamdi: *Aboki, yaya?*

“Friend, how are you?”

Abubakar: *Lafiya!*

“I am fine/Fine”

Nnamdi: *Ina za ki*

“Where are you (female) going?”

Abubakar: *Ina zuwa*

“I am coming or I will be with you shortly”

Nnamdi’s inter-language error is evident in the use of gender marker ‘**ki**’ (+female) when actually addressing a male which should have been ‘**ka**’ (+male). This may be explained as a form of interference or substratum influence of the Igbo language on the learner of Hausa in the contact space. In the light of Van

Coestsem's (2000) theory, the Igbo learner is 'imposing' his native structures into Hausa, and what is imposed here is the feature of not overtly marking gender in particularly Igbo pronouns, and this is revealed in the speakers/learner's inability to know/identify which gender marker is appropriate in each context. This is also revealed in the Igbo-learner's use of the third person singular pronouns 'he/she', *Tana lafiya* "She is fine", and *Yana lafiya* "He is coming". Observations revealed a prevalence of the wrong use of both pronouns *Tana* (she) and *Yana* (He) which may be considered as substratum interference or influence as Igbo designates both male and female gender with the gender neuter pronouns "o or o?".

Discussion of results

We present this discussion in the lines of phonetic and morpho-syntactic interferences. We identified some phonetic interferences involving substitution of segments in specific environments. Phonetic interferences in the form of sound substitution and alterations in specific environments as an outcome of language contact has been alluded to by a wide range of studies involving different migrant and contact spaces (Winford, 2003, Agbedo, 2004, Enete, 2009, Onwukwe & Iwe, 2022). Discussion in the literature reveals that there are pervasive sound and structural interferences which may reveal some bit of information about the typological distance between languages in contact (Wolf 2019; Lüpke 2010). This observations from a small-scale contact space involving Nigerian languages as in

Lokpanta is particularly interesting in the light of the observation that

... the discussion on contact-induced language change involving African languages has been influenced by large-scale contact studies, while many of the more well-known studies involve European languages, which creates the need for perspectives on intra-African language contact space that allows the linking of global trends to more localised, small-scale and temporally limited contact scenarios (Lüpke 2010, p35).

The observations on sound interferences involving Hausa-speakers of the Igbo language are supported by the assumptions of the Van coetsem's (2000) theory. The substitution of segments, transfer of sound features including vowel lengthening, wrong pronunciation of sounds of double articulation as well as the light vowels in the Igbo speech forms of Hausa-learners in the contact supports the assumptions of 'imposition' as adduced by Van coetsem (1998, 2000). Van Coetsem (1988; 2000) assumes two transmission processes in language contact, namely, borrowing and what he calls "imposition." He classifies these as "transfer types." He assumes that imposition corresponds to what many scholars refer to as "interference" in second language acquisition. He refers to borrowing and imposition as types of crosslinguistic influence involving a source or donor language (SL) and a recipient language (RL). The direction of transfer of material is always from the SL to the RL, and the agent of the transfer is either the RL speaker (RL agentivity) or the SL speaker (SL agentivity). In the case of Lokpanta, the source language

is Hausa while the recipient language is Igbo, and these interferences depict source language agentivity (Hausa-speakers of Igbo language). Van coestsem (2000:34) sums it up thus,

In imposition, the SL is the dominant (usually the first or primary) language of the speaker, from which materials are transferred into an RL in which the speaker is less proficient; this is an instance of SL agentivity. Transfer of this type tends to involve mainly phonology and grammatical features, though imposition of vocabulary can occur as well.

On morpho-syntactic interferences, we identified some forms involving interferences in the plural formation as well as gender making in the use of pronouns among the Igbo-speakers/learner of the Hausa language. Morpho-syntactic interference is more pronounced in cases of extreme and potential structural diffusion and less common in ‘marginal’ contact spaces (Winford, 2003, Heine and Kuteva 2005; Matras 2009).

Winford (2003) denotes ‘marginal’ contact spaces as those with less domains or context of exchange between speakers of the languages in contact. In the Igbo-Hausa contact space, the central domain of exchange is the customer-trader setting which is the reason for the contact in the first place. This may explain less predominance of morpho-syntactic interferences in the social exchanges and interactions among the Igbo and Hausa-speakers in the contact space. However, as the contact grows and spreads to other Igbo-speaking communities, leading to a broader immersion of both

speakers in the languages, there may be the potential of more domains of use of the languages, and other sociocultural activities that bring the people into a more sustained contact which may result in a more visible case of morpho-syntactic interferences. In addition, the growing intermarriages and co-habitation involving Igbo and Hausa-speakers in the contact space and resultant second-generation settlers, i.e., children from those families; may signal a more intense and indeed complex contact space in the near future. This may increase the need for further studies on grammatical interferences in the contact space.

Summary and conclusion

This study set out to examine the linguistic implications of the Igbo-Hausa contact at Lokpanta of Abia state, Nigeria. It focused on the structural interferences or influence on the languages in contact. Typical of contact spaces, analyses revealed some cross-linguistic influences between the Igbo and Hausa languages in the contact space. I reported on phonic interferences involving segments of the languages, and morpho-syntactic interferences involving structural features and processes in the two languages. First with segments, I observed some alterations and substitution of some sounds in certain phonetic environments reflecting mother tongue/first language interferences. For example, the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ as well as voiced labiodental fricative /v/ in the Igbo language is substituted with the voiceless bilabial fricative [ɸ]. Furthermore, vowel lengthening and wrong articulation of the light vowels in the Igbo were also identified. These were

analysed as cases of ‘imposition’ in line with the theoretical framework of Van coestsem (2000).

The study further identified interferences in the plural formation as well as gender making in the use of pronouns among the Igbo-speakers/learners of the Hausa language. These were identified in the fluent speeches of some participants and involve wrong use of the gender markers and omission of plural marking in some nominals and other form classes in Hausa. Although these may be largely considered as inter-language errors or second language learning errors, they signal substratum interference in the use of the Hausa language by the Igbo-speakers. In the light of Van Coestsem’s (2000) theory, the Igbo learner is ‘imposing’ his native structures into Hausa, and what is imposed here is the feature of not overtly marking gender in particularly Igbo pronouns, and this is revealed in the speakers/learner’s inability to know/identify which gender marker is appropriate in each context.

This study has provided insights into the linguistic outcomes of small-scale contact scenario which complements studies on large-scale contact spaces involving particularly African languages. The study holds that linguistic consequences of language contact varies according to the degree of contact, distance or relationship between the languages involved, and some extraneous factors which have been analysed in this study as motivations for or factors that facilitate the linguistic consequences. These factors differ across contact spaces. To this end, the study concludes that predicting linguistic outcomes or consequences of

language contact as well as classification of contact spaces is based on or related to specific contexts.

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