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## *The Sociolinguistics of a Nollywood Movie*

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Recent trends in sociolinguistic study (Bleichenbacher 2008, Heller 2008, Coupland 2007, Lippi-Green 1997) have focused on the understanding of the ideologies that underpin linguistic variation and how linguistic behaviour in a multilingual setting makes people reveal both their personal identity and their search for social role (Le Page and Tabourett-Keller 1985). Language scholars have interrogated these issues more in face- to-face interaction than in fictional contexts. The movie as a genre of fictional study has been found to be the 'most apt medium to represent the richness and complexity of real-life multilingual realities' (Bleichenbacher, 21).

This article examines the dominance of English in Nollywood movies and the language ideology that is responsible. The semiotic processes of linguistic differentiation developed by Irvine and Gal (2000) and Mares' (2003) classificatory strategies for the analysis of multilingual texts provide the framework for the case study of a Yoruba movie in which there is a preponderance of English switching. Also, the distribution of languages in which filmmakers produce their movies in Nigeria indicates that English is dominant. Even when a movie is produced in the local Nigerian language, English words and expressions still feature prominently. The article consequently argues that the dominance of English in Nollywood movies is linguistic as the power relation between English and Nigerian languages is disproportionate. The local and global implications of this are then examined.

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistics, Nollywood, Movies, Multilingualism, Language Ideology, Linguist.

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# The Sociolinguistics of a Nollywood Movie<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

This article demonstrates that the use of English in Nigerian (Nollywood) movies is linguicist. *Linguicism* is a terminology coined by Phillipson to depict “ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language”.<sup>2</sup> In recent time, language scholars have focused on the functional and insightful benefits that sociolinguistic study can offer to the understanding of multilingual communities and the assumptions that govern the language choice of individuals. This has prompted the assertion that ‘when individual people shift their ways of speaking... they do it... in predictable ways that are amenable to social explanation’<sup>3</sup>. Language scholars have analysed language ideology in different ways but none seems to have disagreed with the view that it is the study of how languages and linguistic styles or features come to have given social and political meanings<sup>4</sup>. Lukas Bleichenbacher studied multilingualism in Hollywood movies and found that multilingualism is not considered to be a universal and mainstream phenomenon as his study indicated that movie dialogues were conducted mainly in English with minor and skeletal occurrence of other languages.<sup>5</sup> He outlined a framework for the description and interpretation of how multilingual practices are represented in contemporary mainstream Hollywood movies while noting that his findings and conclusions strictly applied to multilingualism in Europe and America but that “the insights gained from the work can be tested against the evidence from different sociolinguistic settings”. This study therefore attempts to validate these findings in Nigerian context where English is used as a second language. Bleichenbacher’s study focused on the use of other languages in a context that is almost entirely English i.e. L1 English context where movie actors are native speakers. This is in contradistinction with the Nigerian situation. In spite of so many local languages in Nigeria and in spite of the fact that English is a second language, the language dominates movie production

1 This article has been made possible by the fund made available by the Central Research Unit of the University of Lagos and the kind permission granted to me by Prof. Ben Rampton and Dr. Jannis Androsopolous to benefit from the scholarly inspiration of the Centre for Language, Discourse and Communication, King’s College, University of London.

2 Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 47.

3 Nikolas Coupland, *Style: Language Variation and Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. ix.

4 J. Irvine, and S. Gal, “Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation”, P. V. Kroskrity, (ed.), *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, Santa Fe, School of American Research Press, 2000, pp. 35-83.

5 Lukas Bleichenbacher, *Multilingualism in the Movies. Hollywood Characters and Their Language Choices*, Tübingen, Narr Francke Attempto, Verlag, 2008.



in the country. Thus, this study examines the use of English and indigenous languages in the production of Nollywood movies and how the languages are made to index social practices.

Nollywood refers to the Nigerian film industry; the name being an adaptation of its American counterpart, Hollywood. But unlike Hollywood, Nollywood is a recent phenomenon, barely one and a half decades old. In spite of its age, the industry has made an astronomical stride and has secured global attention for itself having been declared as the world's second largest producer of film by the United Nations<sup>6</sup>.

The popularity of Nollywood films can be traced not just to the people of African descent but also to Europe, America and the Caribbean where the films are "hawked"<sup>7</sup>. This popularity has resulted into insightful comments from scholars. John McCall underscores this when he says "... it's hard not to get excited about the Nigerian video industry, ...the video industry has laid the groundwork for what might be called the Nigerian Dream – a genuine opportunity for legitimate financial success and even celebrity, open to just about anyone with talent and imagination"<sup>8</sup>. Nollywood filmmakers have applied their talent and imagination to both historical and contemporary issues as reflected in diverse themes of their movies. The themes range from religion to governance, from crime to adventure and from rural/urban living to campaigns against social vices like AIDS, corruption, prostitution, etc. These are produced as common video genres like horror, comedy, urban legend, mythic parable, romance, witchcraft, melodrama, Christian morality tale and historical epic.

The aim of this article is to analyse the language choice of film makers in Nigeria in the context of English and indigenous languages and to interpret the language ideology that governs the choice. The multilingual character of Nigeria is reflected in all aspects of the national life, including film making. It is thus interest-provoking to discover how the languages that are available in Nigeria, including English, are deployed in film making. Of equal interest is the power relationship between the languages used in movie production with particular focus on the overt and covert power equation between English and Nigerian languages. When characters are made to speak English in a context of Yoruba (or any other indigenous language) interaction, it is assumed that the film maker has chosen that medium consciously or unconsciously to achieve certain ideological objectives. Also, the use of code-switching by characters is also ideologically significant. It is desirable to know the ideological underpinning of codeswitching in Nollywood movies especially as English is observed to be at the centre of this phenomenon.

### Language in Fictional Studies

The scope of language studies in fictional texts has been expanded beyond form and style in monolingual texts. Considerations of language use in fiction now entail

6 United Nations, "Nigeria Surpasses Hollywood", Scoop Independent News, [www.scoop.co.nz](http://www.scoop.co.nz). (Accessed 05 June 2009), p. 1.

7 Ekwenchi, Ogochukwu, Popular Fiction Television Production in Nigeria: Global Models, Local Responses. Unpublished Ph.d Thesis, London, University of Westminster, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2008. p. 7.

8 John C. McCall, "Nollywood Confidential: The Unlikely Rise of Nigerian video Film", *Transition*, 95, 13, 1, pp. 98 – 109.



a critical examination of the languages that are present, signalled or even absent in a work of art as these have a set of assumptions guiding them. In other words, the study of fictional language now goes beyond language-internal variation and now includes textual multilingualism. When a text is produced in only one language, it is believed that monolingual ideologies – linguistic attachment, cultural patriotism, etc. – underly it<sup>9</sup>. In the same vein, a multilingual text is also believed to have its own set of assumptions governing it – identity, linguistic heterogeneity, etc.<sup>10</sup> Mares identified four classificatory strategies for the analysis of multilingual discourse in fictional texts.<sup>11</sup> These are elimination, evocation, signalization, and presence. The strategy of *elimination* permits the writer to replace the speech of a character that would have been in another language with an unmarked standard variety of the base language or the language of communication. For instance in fiction, a writer may enact the dialogue between an English character and a Yoruba character in English. Automatically, Yoruba is eliminated. This strategy does not allow the audience to know that the other language is replaced unless other issues of plausibility crop up.

*Evocation* is a strategy used by writers to make characters speak a variety of base language that is characterized by interference or transfer phenomenon. For instance, the author of an English text can make a Yoruba character speak English that is marked with Yoruba accent or filled with Yoruba mixing. The use of L2 accent for evocation has an advantage in movies over written texts as there is no risk of violations of orthography<sup>12</sup>. *Signalization* is a strategy that permits the viewer to make an intelligent guess of replaced languages. Well-known landmarks and sociolinguistic inferences of geographical settings are the major tools of signalization. Viewers may link the flag of Japan with Japanese language or the name “Hitler” with German language and use this as an evidence of language exclusion in a movie. The last strategy for the analysis of multilingual discourse in fictional texts is *presence* which allows the multilingual reality to be enacted in fiction. The characters are made to display their multilingualism individually and the multilingual character of the society is also depicted. The contact situations that are responsible for multilingualism are plausibly captured in fiction as characters are carefully represented in their languages. When the strategy of presence is used, it is expected that the audience too will be multilingual in the languages that feature in the fiction. Otherwise, the problem of comprehension will arise. However, one of the ways of tackling the comprehension problem is translation. In movies, comprehension is enhanced by the multiple, overlapping signifiers of the images that underlie the dialogue and by the option of a written translation in subtitles<sup>13</sup>.

9 Krennitz, Georg, *Mehrsprachigkeit in der Literatur: Wie Autoren ihre Sprachen Wahlen*, Wien, Edition Prasens, 2004.

10 Ludi, Georges, “Le ‘melange de langues’ comme moyen stylistique et/ou comme Marqueur d appartenance dans le discours litteraire”, in J. Bem and A. Hudlett, *Ecrire aux Confins des Langues*, Mulhouse, Centre de Recherche sur l’Europe litteraire, 2001.

11 Mares, P., “Mnogojazycznaja komunikacija I kinofil’ m”, in Rossijskaja Akade-mija Nauk (ed.) *Jazyk kak Stredstvo Transljacii Kul’tury*. Moskva, Nauka, 2000.

12 Bleichenbacher, p. 25.

13 Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002, p. 25; Brigitta Busch. *Sprachen im Disput: Medien und Offentlichkeit in multilingualen Gesellschaften*, Klagenfurt/Ce-lovec, Drava, 2004.



The extent to which the study of filmic language approximates reality or language studies in face-to-face interaction is a major issue in fictional discourse. Kozloff anticipates this when he points out that fictional (filmic) representations may be regarded as being “too carefully polished, too rhythmically balanced (and), too self-consciously artful”. However, researchers have argued that the benefits derived from fictional and media studies are indeed crucial to lived reality and existence as they contend that studying the language of fiction (film) approximates reality and interrogates it. Linguistic study of fiction can reveal “unconsciously-adhered-to-assumptions” which constitute the strategy speakers use to generally formulate verbal interaction.<sup>14</sup> Coupland is of the opinion that fictional conversation “can sometimes reveal social processes more clearly than lived reality”<sup>15</sup>. Pable considers the study of fictional conversation to be a major source for the study of language ideology and stereotyping.<sup>16</sup> Researchers have used different approaches to understand the language ideology that underlies stereotypes. Angela Reyes focuses on how widely circulating stereotypes can serve as resources for interactional identity construction and diverse social actions<sup>17</sup>. Jane Hill explores the hidden racism in “Mock Spanish” and shows how it exemplifies a strategy of dominant groups which she calls “incorporation”<sup>18</sup>. By “incorporation”, she means the expropriation of desirable resources, both material and symbolic, by members of the dominant group from the minority group. Through this practice, both the cultural and mental facilities are utilized to legitimate the exclusion of the minority from the resources that are reserved for the majority.

The process of incorporation also operates in Nigeria and reflects in Nollywood movies. Characters are depicted in a way that makes them show positive attitude to “whiteness” and permits them to relegate home-grown resources, both material and symbolic, to the background. This kind of practice in which Nigerians indicate preference for white values at the expense of local choices, including language choice, is what Coupland has described as “sociolinguistic styling”, a means by which people have an avenue to understand social identities and social relationships.<sup>19</sup>

Irvine and Gal propounded three semiotic processes “by which people construct ideological representations of linguistic differences”.<sup>20</sup> These are iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure. Iconization refers to a process where the sign relationship between linguistic features and the social images with which they are linked is transformed and the linguistic features are made to depict social group’s inherent nature or essence in a way that is iconic. Fractal recursivity is a term used to describe

14 E.S. Tan, *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film: Film as an Emotion Machine*, Mahwah, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996.

15 Nikolas Coupland, “Stylised Deception”, in Adam Jaworski et al. (eds.), *Metalanguage: Social and Ideological Perspectives*, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 2004, p. 258.

16 A. Pable, “Archaische Dialekte im Vergleich: Das Fruhamerikanische in filmischen Adaptionen von Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* und Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*”, in I. Helin, (ed.) *Dialektubersetzung und Dialekte in Multimedia*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004.

17 Luis Reyes and Peter Rubie, *Hispanics in Hollywood: An Encyclopedia of Film Television*, New York, Garland Publishing, 1994.

18 Jane Hill, “Mock Spanish, Covert Racism, and the (Leaky) Boundary Between Public and Private Spheres”, Roxy Harris and Ben Rampton (eds.), *The Language, Ethnicity and Race Reader*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 11  
Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977.

19 Coupland, 2007, p. 30.

20 J. Irvine and S. Gal, pp. 37-52.



the projection of an internal opposition to some other level which may be external. For example, the suspicion among Nigerian languages arising from the competition about which of them should be chosen to perform official functions might lead to the encouragement that English should function without any hindrance in every aspect of the national life. Erasure is a term used to indicate a strategy of rendering some persons or activities, e.g. sociolinguistic phenomena, invisible by ignoring or glossing over facts that are inconsistent with an ideological scheme.

Irvine and Gal applied these processes to different sociolinguistic settings, ethno-linguistic data and multilingual societies. An example is their description of the "complex and multilingual sociolinguistic landscape of Macedonia". They found that the different linguistic groups that lay claim to the Macedonian territory use the strategy of erasure to omit aspects which are not in tandem with their interest. Other scholars have also successfully applied the theory. Blackledge adapted the theory to demonstrate and criticize how "a lack of English, and a failure to encourage others to speak English, are iconically associated with the presupposed oppressive, regressive values and practices of Asian men"<sup>21</sup>. Also, Kelly-Homes applied it to multilingualism in advertising discourse<sup>22</sup>. She discovered that advertising is replete with instances of "fake multilingualism" and that "ethnocentrism" is the underlying ideology behind the use of many languages in a piece of advertisement. In the same vein, Jaworski, et al studied language choice in British TV holiday programmes to show the way other languages apart from English are used "to enhance the entertainment level for the television viewer rather than to serve any other communicative need"<sup>23</sup>. Lippi-Green analyzed a corpus of 371 characters in a quantitative study of Disney films to examine the relationship between negative characterization and the use of non-standard accent or foreign language (a language other than English).<sup>24</sup> He found a correlation between negative depiction and characters that either speak foreign languages or non-standard English. On the other hand, there was a correlation between the depiction of good characters and monolingual speakers of English or characters that speak standard English. Bleichenbacher also used the theory to study the language choices of Hollywood characters.<sup>25</sup> Although his findings neither supported nor rejected the claim that there is linguisticism in Hollywood movies, it "shows that an unhibited preference for multilingualism is far from being a universal and mainstream phenomenon, at least in the Western world". The present researcher also adopts the theory in an attempt to understand multilingualism in Nollywood movies. The fact that it has been successfully adapted by similar studies encouraged this choice.

Therefore, this study adopts both Mares' classificatory strategies for the analysis of multilingual discourse in fictional texts and Irvine and Gal's ideological representations

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21 Adrian Blackledge, "Constructions of Identity in Political Discourse in Multilingual Britain", Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge (eds.), *Negotiations of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 2004.

22 Kelly-Homes, Helen, *Advertising as Multilingual Communication*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

23 Adam Jaworski et al. (eds.), *Metalanguage: Social and Ideological Perspectives*, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 2004, p. 21.

24 Rosina Lippi-Green, *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*, USA, Routledge, 1997, pp. 63-76.

25 Bleichenbacher, p. 12.



of linguistic differences because of the similarity of their propositions and relevance to the present study. While fractal recursivity and iconization are equivalent in various ways to evocation, signalization and presence, erasure is similar to elimination.

## The Data

The data for this study are of two types. The first is made up of statistics obtained from the Nigerian Film and Video Censorship Board (NFVCB) which provides information about the films and languages in which they were produced between November, 2007 and October, 2008<sup>26</sup>. The period represents the latest official statistics on movie production released by NFVCB. The second is a case study in which a Yoruba film, *Jenifa* was selected for analysis.<sup>27</sup> This choice was motivated by five factors. First, the film is a box office success. Its popularity cuts across geographical location as evidenced by different category of people that have accessed it on the internet. What this means is that the nuances contained in the film have been sufficiently disseminated to the public and the public has been made to share the socio-cultural sentiments and language ideology that are present there. Second, it is a recent film, produced in 2008. Thus, it provides up-to-date information about the current state of multilingualism and language use in Nollywood movies. Third, the film is a recipient of the African Movie Academy Awards for best indigenous film in Nigeria which underscores the positive assessment of the film and further raises awareness about its popularity and acceptance. Fourth, the film typifies the use of local language by educated Nigerians whose language of education is English, and provides evidence of how this multilingual knowledge is displayed in the course of interaction in the local language. Moreover, the film was chosen because of the topicality of its theme, prostitution and AIDS, which has been a subject of international concern and action. Finally, the film was selected for analysis because it depicts the multilingual situation in Nigeria and also represents several other Nollywood movies that feature urban/educated language use.

Nollywood movies are produced in English and Nigerian indigenous languages made up of three major languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba – and more than 500 other minority languages. According to the 2006 national census, the population of Nigeria is about one hundred and forty million five hundred and forty two<sup>28</sup>. However, the 2009 estimate puts the population at 149,229,090 million. Growth rate is 1.9%; birth rate is 36.6/1000; mortality rate is 94.3/1000 while the life expectancy rate is 46.9.<sup>29</sup> Nigeria is one of the most linguistically diverse regions of the world, with over 500 languages. The number of languages currently estimated in Nigeria is 521. This number includes 510 living languages, two second languages without native speakers and 9 extinct languages<sup>30</sup>. The official language of Nigeria is English while the indigenous languages are classified into three. The first being the three major Nigerian languages classified in terms of number of speakers – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The second group

26 Nigerian Film and Video Censorship Board, Federal Ministry of Information, Abuja, 2008.

27 Funke Akindele, *Jenifa*, dir.: Myyhddeen Ayinde, Olasco Films Nigeria Limited, 2008

28 Official Gazette (FGP 71/52007/2,500 (OL24): Legal Notice on Publication of the Details of the Breakdown of the 2006 Nigerian Census

29 <http://www.nigeriastate.gov.ng>

30 David Crozier and Roger Blench, *An Index of Nigerian Languages*, Dallas. SIL 2nd ed., 1992





is made up of nine relatively less widely spoken, state/regional languages, namely – Edo, Efik, Ibibio, Fulfulde, Ijaw, Kanuri, Nupe, Tiv and Urhobo. They are also known as “network languages” because they are used in announcing national and state news originally broadcast in English. The third group consists of other local languages which are mostly spoken in small districts or local government authorities within some states<sup>31</sup>. The historical processes underlying Nigeria’s linguistic diversity remain poorly understood and a rapidly increasing research base makes continuous updating quite essential.<sup>32</sup> The linguistic diversity in Nigeria is a microcosm of Africa as a whole, encompassing three major African language families: the Nilo-Saharan, Afro-Asiatic and the Niger-Congo. The representation of English relative to local Nigerian languages in the production of Nollywood movies and the language ideology that governs it are the focal points of this article.

### Analytical Frame-work

Five major procedures were designed for the purpose of analysis. The first accounts for the frequency of movie production in English and each of the Nigerian local languages within the study period i.e. within 2007/2008 calendar year. This enables me to assess the extent of deployment of English and other Nigerian languages in the production of Nollywood movies.

Procedure two to five are designed to socio-linguistically analyse multilingualism in *Jenifa* and determine the extent of deployment of English in the movie. In Procedure two, attention is given to language use in each of the scenes. Through this, I am able to account for the pattern of multilingual behaviour in the film world. In Procedure three, I focus on the characters’ use of language in order to understand how individual characters respond to the multilingual situation created in the film and the possible factors that condition their response. The fourth Procedure is a socio-demographic analysis of multilingualism in the dialogues of the characters according to their gender, age and occupation. This makes it possible for me to interpret the sociolinguistic factors that account for the characters’ linguistic behaviour. In each of the Procedures, effort is made to analyze the languages that are present, evoked, signalled and eliminated.

### Languages Of Nollywood Movies

Table 1 below shows the details of the languages in which filmmakers produced Nollywood movies from November 2007 to October 2008. As earlier noted, this period was chosen because it was the latest statistics available with the Nigerian Film and Video Censors’ Board, the official watchdog of movie production in Nigeria, and my desire to base this study on current data made the period in which the statistics apply attractive. The statistics is significant in the sense that it accounts for the deployment of languages in Nollywood within the context of multilingual Nigeria.

31 Emmanuel A. Adedun , “Linguistic Plurality and Language Policy Decision in Nigeria” , C. S. Momoh & Jim Unah (eds.), *Nigerian Integrative Discourse: Vol. V, Intergroup Tensions*. Lagos: Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, 2006, pp. 68-91

32 Roger Blench, “The Linguistic Geography of Nigeria and its Implications for Prehistory”, Kpppe verlag Koln, 2009, pp. 187-206.



**Table 1: Nollywood Movies And Their Languages Of Production**

LANGUAGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
ENGLISH	436	37.36
YORUBA	623	53.38
HAUSA	67	5.74
BINI	37	3.17
IBIBIO	1	0.08
EFIK	1	0.08
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Annual Report of Nigerian Film and Video Censors' Board

The table clearly indicates the level of multilingualism in the Nigerian movie industry within the study period. Six languages were used for film production consisting of English and five indigenous languages. This means that only six languages used in movie production are present while over five hundred indigenous languages are not represented in recent Nollywood productions.

It can be seen from the table that English language accounted for 37.36 percent of the total films produced in Nigeria within the study period. This was second only to the films produced in Yoruba which accounted for 53.38 percent of the total films produced within the same period. Hausa accounted for 5.74 percent, Bini 3.17 percent while Ibibio and Efik each accounted for 0.08 percent. It is significant to note that of the three major languages in Nigeria, Igbo is the only language that did not feature in film production within the study period. This may be due to the fact that Igbo ethnic tradition and world-view find expression in English language motivated by the desire to reach a wider audience. Therefore, the films produced by Igbo producers within this period are in English. According to Haynes and Okome, “the Igbo videos are the expression of an aggressive commercial mentality, whose field of activity is Nigeria’s cities – and not only the Igbo cities”.<sup>33</sup> In comparison, Yoruba language has become a veritable vehicle of producing films reflective of the cosmology, culture and tradition of the Yoruba people. In the words of Jonathan Haynes and Onookome Okome, “ the Yoruba video repertoire has expanded beyond the genres of village idylls, traditional religious dramas, juju contests, and farcical comedy that dominated Yoruba travelling theatre films and early videos....” Before the advent of Nollywood, film production in Yoruba had been very popular and it dated back to the 1960’s . The interest of the people to project their culture and worldview through their language is still evident in this statistics. However, the data shows that film production in Hausa language is very scanty. Haynes and Okome (as cited) explain that the culture of producing film in the language is “emergent”. Again, out of the three major languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba – and over 500 minority languages in Nigeria, there were only five indigenous languages that featured in film production within the study period. The minority share of film production within the study period was 3.34 percent out of which Bini language accounted for 3.17 percent, that is 94.88 percent of the total film

33 Haynes, Jonathan and Okoome, Onookome (eds.), Nigerian Video Film, Jos, Kraft Books Limited, 1997, p. 35.



production in minority languages. Does it mean that speakers of all the remaining languages do not engage in film production? Not exactly. Film production by speakers of these languages may have been done in English so that the *film* can circulate beyond their shores. English thus becomes the language of wider communication in movie production not only for the minority languages but also for the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. I have already mentioned how speakers of Igbo may have made all their movies within the study period in English. The fact that the statistics presented Yoruba as the language of highest film production within the study period is not an indication that it is free from multilingual influences, especially as motivated by the nuances of English. How Nigerian movies are influenced by multilingual practices is the focus of the next section which uses a popular and an award-winning movie produced in Yoruba, *Jenifa*, as a case study.

### A Sociolinguistic Analysis Of Jenifa

*Jenifa* (2008) was written by Funke Akindele and directed by Myyhddeen Ayinde

*It is a story of a village bumpkin, Suliat, whose desire to live an ostentatious city life leads her into campus prostitution which eventually consumes her. The process of becoming a "big girl" is tortuous for her as she finds the aura of importance and self-esteem she brings from the village bruised time over time. She learns from the three "refined" city girls that adopt and give her the necessary campus orientation that her cherished brash ways are uncouth and vulgar and do not fit into their desperate quest for social relevance and financial security. "Through the protagonist, Jenifa, whose name is a corruption of the Anglo-Saxon 'Jennifer', the movie succeeds in meandering through a potent mine-field of well-worn clichés and easily- recognizable situations, ending up as a box-office success, the kind of which has not been seen in Nigeria in recent times"*<sup>34</sup>.

### Analysis Of Languages Used According To Scenes

There are 68 scenes in the movie but I have added the post-production clip because of the significance of its language. Six possibilities of language choice and combination were created to account for linguistic behaviour in the scenes. These are Yoruba, English, Yoruba-English, English-Yoruba, Yoruba/Other-Nigerian-Language, and English/Other-Languages. The option of Yoruba-English is to account for scenes where Yoruba is the major language used and where there is also a preponderance of English words and expressions. On the other hand, the option of English-Yoruba accounts for the scenes where English is the major language of discussion with occasional use of Yoruba words and expressions. Yoruba/Other-Nigerian-Language option accounts for the scenes where Yoruba language co-occurs with other Nigerian language while the option of English/Other-Languages handles the possibility of having a scene dominated by English and interspersed with other language(s). The extent of occurrence of each of these possibilities is assessed on a three dimensional scale of high, medium and low. A

34 Wole Oguntokun, "Movie Review: Nigerian Playwright Deconstructs Nollywood's 'Jenifa', – AfricanLoft – <http://www.africanloft.com> – (Accessed 30 May 2009), p. 1.



scene is rated “high” if all the characters converse in the same possibility of language or language combination. The rating is “medium” if most of the characters converse in the same language or combination of languages in a scene. The “low” rating is applied to the possibility of the use of a language or language combination where there are just flashes of another language other than the main language of communication. Table 2 shows the occurrence of each of these possibilities in the movie. It indicates the languages that are used in each of the scenes, the nature and the extent of their combination where ‘extent’ refers to the three dimensional possibilities of ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’ occurrences of language choice.

**Table 2:** Language Use Options According To Scenes

SCENE	SETTNG	YOR	ENG	YOR/ENG	ENG/YOR	YOR/ONL	ENG/OL	EXTENT
1	Village	X						High
1	Campus			X				High
3	Campus			X				High
4	Campus			X				High
5	Home			X				Low
6	Market						X	High
7	Hotel			X				High
8	Campus			X				High
9	Campus			X				High
10	Campus			X				High
11	Campus			X				High
12	Campus			X				High
13	Village	X						High
14	Home			X				High
15	Campus			X				Medium
16	Home			X				Medium
17	Hotel			X				High
18	Campus			X				High
19	Bar			X				High
20	Campus			X				High
21	Campus			X				Low
22	Campus			X				High
23	Campus			X				High
24	Campus			X				High
25	Campus			X				High
26	PartyHall			X				High
27	Hotel		X					High
28	PartyHall			X				High
29	Campus			X				Low
30	Campus			X				High



SCENE	SETTNG	YOR	ENG	YOR/ENG	ENG/YOR	YOR/ONL	ENG/OL	EXTENT
31	Campus						X	High
32	Campus			X				High
33	Campus			X				High
34	Home			X				High
35	Party			X				High
36	PoliceStation			X				High
37	Campus			X				High
38	Campus			X				High
39	Campus			X				High
40	Office			X				High
41	Home			X				High
42	Panel			X				High
43	Campus			X				High
44	Campus			X				High
45	Campus			X				High
46	Campus			X				High
47	Garage			X				High
48	Market						X	High
49	Village			X				Low
50	Village			X				Low
51	Office			X				High
52	Home			X				High
53	RoadSide			X				High
54	Home			X				High
55	Home			X				High
56	Restaurant			X				Low
57	Home			X				High
58	Hotel			X				High
59	Home			X				High
60	Home			X				High
61	Hospital			X				High
62	Home			X				High
63	Bar			X				High
64	Home			X				High
65	Hospital			X				High
66	Hospital			X				High
67	Hospital			X				High
68	Village			X				Low
69	PostProductn		X					High

**Table 3:** Options Of Language Use In Scenes According To Percentage Of Occurrence

LANGUAGE POSSIBILITIES	NUMBER OF OCCURRENCE IN SCENES	PERCENTAGE TOTAL
YORUBA	2	2.90
ENGLISH	1	2.90
YORUBA-ENGLISH	62	89.86
ENGLISH-YORUBA	-	0.00
YORUBA/Other Nig. Lang	-	0.00
ENGLISH/Other-Lang	3	4.35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>

In the movie, there are only two scenes where Yoruba is wholly used. It is significant to note that the two scenes are set in the village where the characters are depicted to be illiterate farmers. Two scenes are recorded as having used English as a language of communication. One of them is an advertisement that appears in-between acts of the film. This raises the issue of motive and target audience. The fact that *Jenifa* is classified as a Yoruba movie makes one to anticipate that it will target Yoruba audience, both bilingual and monolingual. But when there are instances where English is exclusively used, the monolingual Yoruba audience is automatically cut off. This may be a strategy to signal the motive of the producer. This motive is made clearer by the fact that pre- and post-production information (about producer, director, writer, persons who played various roles in the making of the movie, etc.) is written in English. This suggests that there is a point to be proved about language preference and target audience. There is no doubt at all that the movie is not directed at a monolingual Yoruba audience as 62 scenes representing 89.86 percent of the total scenes in the movie contain heavy mixture of Yoruba and English. The co-occurrence of English and Yoruba cuts across the settings of the movie – campus, home, hotel, bar, party hall, police station, garage, office, road side, restaurant, hospital and even the village as there are two other instances of Yoruba-English usage, though of a low degree. (Pidgin) English/Other Nigerian language (Igbo) is used twice in the market when the protagonist goes to buy used clothes. *Jenifa*, the Yoruba buyer, speaks (Pidgin) English to Bobo Ibo, the Igbo seller and Bobo Ibo also responds in English but with Igbo (Ibo) interjections: “Asa nwa ima na idike” (Pretty girl, you know you are very strong). The movie does not make it clear whether *Jenifa* understands the interjections or not but they are not strong enough to distort the flow of communication, even if she does not. This is very real in the sense that used cloth business is associated with the Igbo in Nigeria and market language or informal buying and selling is done in Pidgin (English).

### The Multilingual Behaviour Of Characters

There are 105 characters in all that are featured in the movie. Only thirty two of them engage in the movie dialogue (the focus of this section). The rest appear as extras. There are four major characters, *Jenifa* (the protagonist), and her mentors -Becky, Tracy and Franca – who provide the platform for interaction and it is with them that the remaining 28 characters relate either collectively or individually. The task here is

to analyze the speeches of the 32 characters with a view to identifying the patterns of their multilingual behaviour. The table below provides the summary.

**Table 4: Characters' Turns And Their Language Choices**

Character	Number of Scenes	Number of Turns	Language Choices of Characters' Turns					
			Yor	Eng	Yor-Eng	Eng-Yor	Yor/ONL	Eng/OL
Jenifa	41	562						
Becky	22	324	256	3	297	6	-	-
Tracy	26	398	102	6	204	12	-	-
Franca	8	193	121	1	270	5	-	-
Bobo Ibo	1	16	78	5	112	3	-	2
Gb.BigGirl	5	53	-	13	-	-	-	-
Jeni's moth	4	68	28	3	42	-	-	-
Jeni's fath	4	63	56	-	2	-	-	-
Iyabo	1	13	63	-	-	-	-	-
Dayo	4	33	8	-	5	-	-	-
Prof.	3	21	17	-	16	-	-	-
Lekan	1	11	7	3	11	-	-	-
Tutu	1	9	6	-	5	-	-	-
James	1	8	6	-	3	-	-	-
Demola	6	19	6	-	2	-	-	-
Shakira	5	17	15	-	4	-	-	-
Funmi	5	13	10	-	7	-	-	-
Waheed	3	9	6	-	7	-	-	-
DPO	1	7	8	-	1	-	-	-
Skid	1	3	4	-	3	-	-	-
Herbalist	1	7	2	-	1	-	-	-
Owonikoko	2	11	7	-	-	-	-	-
Badmus	2	11	9	-	1	-	-	-
Lecturer	1	7	5	-	6	-	-	-
Franc's sis	1	3	3	-	4	-	-	-
Baba T	1	6	-	3	-	-	-	-
Doctor	2	32	4	-	1	-	-	-
Student 1	2	5	12	3	14	3	-	-
Student 2	1	3	1	-	3	-	-	-
Student 3	1	3	1	-	1	-	-	-
Student 4	1	2	1	-	1	-	-	-
Student 5	1	2	1	-	1	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>1,931</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>



As earlier explained (in the section under language use according to scenes), the six possibilities of occurrence of language choice are used to analyse the turn-taking strategies of the characters. The number of scenes in which each character appears and the number of turns each takes in the movie dialogue are weighed against the choice(s) of languages they make. For a more vivid description, the characters' multilingual behaviours are calculated in percentage and presented in the table below.

**Table 5: Percentile Analysis Of Characters' Language Choices**

CHARACTER	LANGUAGE CHOICES IN %					
	Yor	Eng	Yor-Eng	Eng-Yor	Yor/ONL	Eng/OL
Jenifa	45.55	0.53	52.8	1.07	0.00	0.00
Becky	31.48	1.85	62.96	3.70	0.00	0.00
Tracy	30.40	0.25	67.83	1.26	0.00	0.00
Franca	40.41	2.59	58.03	1.55	0.00	0.00
Bobo Ibo	0.00	86.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	13.33
Gb.BigGirl	44.44	4.76	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
Jeni's moth	96.55	0.00	1.72	0.00	0.00	0.00
Jeni's fath	100	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Iyabo	61.53	0.00	38.46	0.00	0.00	0.00
Dayo	51.51	0.00	48.48	0.00	0.00	0.00
Prof.	33.33	14.29	52.38	0.00	0.00	0.00
Lekan	54.55	0.00	45.45	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tutu	66.67	0.00	33.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
James	75.00	0.00	12.5	0.00	0.00	0.00
Demola	78.94	0.00	21.05	0.00	0.00	0.00
Shakira	58.82	0.00	41.18	0.00	0.00	0.00
Funmi	46.15	0.00	53.85	0.00	0.00	0.00
Waheed	88.89	0.00	11.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
DPO	57.14	0.00	42.86	0.00	0.00	0.00
Skid	66.67	0.00	33.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
Herbalist	100	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Owonikoko	81.81	0.00	18.18	0.00	0.00	0.00
Badmus	45.45	0.00	54.55	0.00	0.00	0.00
Lecturer	42.86	0.00	57.14	0.00	0.00	0.00
Franc's sis	0.00	100	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Baba T	66.67	0.00	33.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
Doctor	37.5	9.38	43.75	9.38	0.00	0.00
Student 1	40.00	0.00	60.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Student 2	33.33	0.00	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
Student 3	33.33	0.00	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
Student 4	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Student 5	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>PERCENTAGE TOTAL</b>	<b>39.09</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>57.34</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.10</b>





The analysis reveals that Yoruba with English switching turns are more prevalent than any of the other language choices. With 57.34 percent, this language choice is ahead of turns recorded in Yoruba (39.0) by almost 20 percent. Turns recorded in English are very minimal, 2.07 percent, just like turns recorded in English with Yoruba switching, 1.50 percent. Turns recorded in English and Other Nigerian Languages are negligible, 0.10 percent, while there are no turns that occur in Yoruba and Other Nigerian Language, 0.00 percent. It is significant to note that there is only one character, Bobo Ibo, whose turn-taking device falls into the category of English with Other Language. In the two scenes where he appears, he combines English and Igbo. His name is indexical of his origin and language. Being a person from another linguistic group, he adopts the Nigerian lingua franca, English, to do his business of used clothes. Of course, he mixes this with his Igbo language. His customers too have no choice than to use the lingua franca to communicate with him as English is the language that binds every ethnic group in Nigeria together. However, pidgin is the type of English that is freely available to trade and informal communication in the urban cities of the country; it does not require formal learning unlike standard English that needs to be learned formally in the educational institutions. The method of acquiring it is by immersion, an individual's effort to mingle with the people that use it. The use of Pidgin English is even more evident in the speeches of Francisca's Sister whose turns are 100 percent (Pidgin) English. A character's choice of language is conditioned by his/her awareness of the language options and abilities of his or her interlocutor(s) and, a recognition of his/her own language strengths and limitations. Francisca's sister arrives at the campus, meets her sister's roommates and makes enquiries about Francisca from them. Right from the beginning of the conversation to the end, Francisca's sister converses in Pidgin English. Why does she choose this option? First, she recognizes that she is from a Nigerian linguistic group that is different from her interlocutors' whom she may not be certain of their linguistic affiliation. Second, she has come to the campus and she knows or reasons that campus language, which is the language of social relevance, is English. She then initiates the discussion in English, the form of it that she can control, Pidgin. All through the film, this principle of interlocutors' language awareness and compatibility operate among the characters. For instance, Jenifa's penchant for English switching in Yoruba utterances is minimized when conversing with her own father and mother whom she knows are uneducated rural dwellers. On the other hand, Jenifa's communicative interaction with her fellow campus students and other educated characters and indeed the communicative interaction of the educated characters with one another are replete with Yoruba-English switching. The extract below illustrates this:

**(Key:** The utterances by the characters are numbered serially from 1 to 20. The English expressions in the utterances are underlined while the translation of the utterances is provided in brackets immediately after the utterances).

1. **Tracy:** Becky Baby!
2. **Becky:** Tracy Darling!
3. **Tracy:** S'owa okay? (Are you okay?)



4. **Jenifa:** Hi
5. **Tracy:** Oh, intruder wa around, ma ma gist e later. (Oh, an intruder is around, I will gist you later.)
6. **Becky:** Okay, em, mo lero pe o ti meet Sulia, omo ti mo soro e fun yin nijeta? (Okay,em, I hope you have met Sulia, the lady I discussed with you two days ago?)
7. **Jenifa:** Tracy, booni? So wa okay? (Tracy, how are you? Are you okay?)
8. **Tracy:** Mo wa pa. Becky, jo jeki nri e. (I'm alright. Becky, please let me have a word with you.)
9. **Becky:** Okay, Sulia, make yourself comfortable, you hear?
10. **Tracy:** Becky, kinni gbogbo eleyi now? Sebi gbogbo wa ti jo agree, afigba to mu omo yi wa sinu yara yi. Iwo naa ri problem to gbe wo yara yi o. (Becky, what's all this now? Despite our agreement, you still brought this lady into this room. You too can see the problem she has brought into this room.)
11. **Becky:** Ko si wahala. (There is no problem.)
12. **Franca:** Hello girls!
13. **Becky:** Hei Franca!
14. **Jenifa:** Hi, 'Franklin'!
15. **Franca:** Becky!
16. **Becky:** Yes!
17. **Franca:** Becky, kinni gbogbo rubbish yi na? O tun mu kinni yi wa sinu yara wa, ehn? (Becky, what is all this rubbish? You still brought this "thing" into our room, ehn?)
18. **Tracy:** Nnkan temi gan si nba so nisinyi niyen, (It's exactly the matter I'm discussing with her).
19. **Franca:** Lo nba so kekekele. Se nkan ti gbogbo yin nso kekekele niyen? O ya, o ya, o ya, eh, kinni won npe e, local champion, idiot, o ya dide, dide, o ya, o ya, o ya. (You are discussing it quietly. Is that what all of you are discussing quietly? You, what are you called, local champion, idiot, get up quickly.)
20. **Becky:** Franca, mi o like bi o se nse yi, sebi emi ati Tracy ni original occupant inu ile yi. (Franca, I don't like this behaviour of yours, after all, Tracy and I are the original occupants of this room.)

In this extract (the scene on Jenifa's arrival at the campus), there are twenty verbal exchanges by four undergraduate characters - Tracy, Becky, Jenifa and Franca. Apart from four exchanges (8, 11, 15 and 18), all the exchanges or turns have one form of English switching or the other. The first two expressions are statements of endearment which the characters use to demonstrate intimacy and solidarity. The expressions which also include the acquired English names of the characters are rendered in English. The third expression is structurally English. "Are you okay?" is an English greeting form and English phatic communion. This has been juxtaposed with Yoruba to produce the hybridized expression "so wa okay?"(are you okay?). This trend is sustained in the fourth expression where the English greeting form "hi" is used. This is also used in



the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth expressions. Even when the traditional Yoruba greeting form is used, the characters still feel there is need to use an alternative form of the expression in a way that will make it to accommodate an English word. We can see an example in the seventh expression where there is a duplication of the same greeting intention first realized in Yoruba and later given in Yoruba- English mixing: “bawo ni” (how are you?); “s’owa okay?” (are you okay?).

The next section is focused on the impact of socio-demographic factors on the multilingual behaviour of the characters.

**Table 6: Socio-Demographic Factors Of Characters**

CHARACTERS	SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS		
	AGE	GENDER	OCCUPATION
Jenifa	Adult	Female	Student/Self-Employed
Becky	Adult	Female	Student/Self-Employed
Tracy	Adult	Female	Student/Executive
Franca	Adult	Female	Fake Student
Bobo Ibo	Adult	Male	Trading
Gb.BigGirl	Adult	Female	Student
Jeni’s moth	Adult	Female	Farming
Jeni’s fath	Adult	Male	Farming
Iyabo	Adult	Female	Trading
Dayo	Adult	Male	Trading
Prof.	Adult	Male	Lecturing
Lekan	Adult	Male	Not Revealed
Tutu	Adult	Male	Lecturing
James	Adult	Male	Not Revealed
Demola	Adult	Male	Not Revealed
Shakira	Adult	Female	Student
Funmi	Adult	Female	Student
Waheed	Adult	Male	Not Revealed
DPO	Adult	Male	Police
Skid	Adult	Male	Not Revealed
Herbalist	Adult	Male	Herbalist
Owonikoko	Adult	Male	Trading
Badmus	Adult	Male	Not Revealed
Lecturer	Adult	Male	Lecturing
Franc’s sis	Adult	Female	Not Revealed
Baba T	Adult	Male	Comedian
Doctor	Adult	Male	Medicine
Student 1	Adult	Female	Student
Student 1	Adult	Female	Student
Student 3	Adult	Male	Student
Student 4	Adult	Female	Student
Student 5	Adult	Female	Student



**Table 7: Percentile Analysis Of Social Demographic Factors Of Language Choices**

SOCIAL DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS			LANGUAGE CHOICES					
			Yor	Eng	Yor-Eng	Eng-Yor	Yor/ONL	Eng/OL
AGE	Children	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Adult	100	39.09	2.07	57.34	1.50	0.00	0.10
GENDER	Male	56.25	22.41	47.50	45.68	10.34	0.00	100
	Female	43.75	77.59	52.50	54.32	89.66	0.00	0.00
OCCUPATION	Students	37.50	31.43	0.93	48.99	1.35	0.00	0.00
	Traders	12.50	1.76	0.67	1.14	0.00	0.00	0.10
	Police	3.13	0.21	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Doctor	3.13	0.62	0.16	0.73	0.16	0.00	0.00
	Lecturers	9.38	0.83	0.16	0.93	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Herbalist	3.13	0.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Comedian	3.13	0.21	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Farmers	6.25	6.16	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Not Revealed	21.25	2.07	0.16	0.93	0.00	0.00	0.00

The social demographic factors of age, gender and occupation are significant in analyzing social stratification in the movie world. In *Jenifa*, the factor of age is made to align with the theme of the movie. Children are completely excluded from the film due to its central concern which is prostitution. In the first instance, children are not expected to be involved in prostitution. Secondly, children are not expected to be university students. Therefore, the factor of age is totally made to emphasize adults who are naturally the ones qualified to practice prostitution. The language choice of these adults reflects a high display of Yoruba-English switching.

In terms of gender, the male characters are more than the female characters, 56.25 to 43.75. However, the female characters that are made to speak Yoruba are more than the male characters that used the same language option. 77.59 per cent of the females used Yoruba language option while only 22.41 per cent of the male characters are given the same language option. The language choice of the two sexes in terms of the options of English utterances and Yoruba-English utterances falls within the same range. 47.50 per cent of the male characters used English expressions relative to 52.50 per cent of the female characters while 45.68 per cent of the male characters used Yoruba-English expressions relative to 54.32 per cent of the female characters. The option of English-Yoruba expressions yielded astounding results as the ratio is 10.34 per cent for the males as against 89.66 per cent for the females. The reason for this is simply that females start off their talk in English and make English the base while injecting Yoruba into their utterances. A lot of prestige is attached to English and this reflects more in the attitude of the female characters who are out to deliberately flaunt their mastery of not just the language but also the culture. This becomes evident in the tutorial session organized for *Jenifa* by her mentors upon arrival at the campus. Tracy, one of the three mentors, tells *Jenifa*:



Then, awon ede to ma nso yen, emi o like e. O need lati ma so awon oyinbo diedie ninu oro e. For example, hello, you mean, instead of, what, I mean, you know, as in, what's up...

(Then, I don't like your language mannerisms. You need to interlard your speeches with some English words, for example, hello, you mean, instead of, what, I mean, you know, as in, what's up....)

Becky, another mentor, tells Jenifa to change her name from the native Nigerian name, Sulia, given to her by her parents, to a fanciful and more glamorous name, Jenifa:

I have a problem with your name. O ma need lati change oruko e. S'ori Franca to nwo yi, Izodua loruko e nile but ni school, Franca lo nje. S'ori Tracy to nwo yi gan, Peju lo nje nile, school, Tracy lo nje. So, iwo naa, O ma need lati change oruko e because O ranti pe emi gan, mi o kin se Becky nile but ni school, Becky ni mo nje. So you must change your name.

(I have a problem with your name. You will need to change your name. You see this Franca, her name from home is Izodua but in school, she is Franca. You see this Tracy also, her name from home is Peju. So, you too will need to change your name because you will recall that even me, I wasn't Becky from home but in school I'm known as Becky. So you must change your name.)

This extract illustrates the attitude of the leading characters and indeed most educated Nigerians to English, not just as a language but as a culture and ideology. The logic is that for one to attain the height of respectability and honour, it is not enough to be proficient in English; one's name must also be associated with the names of the owners of the language hence names like Becky, Tracy, Franca and Jenifa (an adaptation from Jeniffer).

In terms of occupation, the student characters are the highest, 37.50 per cent. This is understandable as the movie is centred on the students who engage in campus prostitution. Other categories of workers are made to complement the activities of the students. The traders sell to the students, the police investigate allegations brought against them, the lecturers conduct examinations for them, the comedian is a friend to one of them, two of them patronize the herbalist and the farmers are parents to one of them. However, seven characters representing 21.25 per cent of the movie characters have unrevealed identities. These are all male characters most of whom patronize the campus prostitutes. The significant thing about this is that the female characters, student prostitutes, who interact with the men are interested only in their money and not in what they do to get the money. Therefore, their identity is less important. None-the-less, the language choice of these men also shows that English is used in their interactions either alone or mixed with Yoruba. This indicates that they do not belong to the class of the uneducated and they too, consciously or unconsciously, will like to make this known. For instance, at the hotel where Becky leads Tracy and Jenifa to meet three men, the conversation confirms this fact:

**First Man:** Hello Baby! E kaabo, you are welcome, you are welcome. Mi o ba oju yi pade ri lodo Gbogbo Big Girl.



**Second Man:** Iyen ma wa romantic ke. Iyen ni wipe iwo le handle eeyan meji po leekan naa; inu film ni mo ti ri last.

**Third Man:** Wo, my dear, emi ni mo le handle eeyan meji leekan soso. Action ti bere.

(**First Man:** Hello Baby! You are welcome, you are welcome, you are welcome. I haven't met these faces with Gbogbo Big Girl.

**Second Man:** That one is romantic. That translates to the fact that you can handle two men at the same time. I saw it last in a film.

**Third Man:** Look! My dear, I'm the one that can handle two women at the same time. Action has started.)

The extracted speeches of the three men indicate the deployment of English in their verbal interactions. It reveals that the men are educated. The first sentence by the first man is significant in two ways. Firstly, it shows how anxious the men are to make the ladies feel welcome. This explains the use of Yoruba greeting form "e kaabo" which is reduplicated in English as "you are welcome" and is said two times. Secondly, reduplication is a by-product of multilingualism as one language readily comes to the rescue of another in a speaker's attempt for clarity and emphasis. In this case, it is English that has been used to aid Yoruba. It is important to stress that the men are meeting the ladies for the first time and this requires a negotiation of identity. Therefore, it is important on both sides to get as much respect as possible and the starting point for this is a conscious or unconscious effort to start with English by using it or making it to occur in Yoruba speeches.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the languages used in the production of movies in Nigeria with particular emphasis on *Jenifa*. A combined application of Mares'(2003) classificatory strategies for the analysis of multilingual discourse in fictional texts and Irvin and Gal's(2000) ideological representations of linguistic differences provide the framework for the analysis. The study reveals that the evidence of multilingual practice in Nollywood movies are of two types. The first relates to the number of languages that are used in Nigerian movie industry while the second deals with the number of languages that are used in a particular movie. As regards the first, the study found that there are only six languages that are used in Nollywood, English and five Nigerian languages – Yoruba, Hausa, Bini, Ibibio and Efik. It is also discovered that of the three major Nigerian languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba – only Yoruba was heavily used in movie production while Hausa was sparsely used. Igbo was not used for production at all. Of the numerous minority languages in Nigeria, only three – Bini, Ibibio and Efik – were represented in movie production. The conclusion one can draw from this is that there is an under-utilization of indigenous languages in the production of movies in Nigeria and this has negative consequences on the survival and growth of these languages. I shall return to this shortly.

The official statistics of the Nigerian Film and Video Censor's Board revealed that Yoruba was the only indigenous language that was heavily subscribed to in the production of



movies in Nigeria. This led to the selection of *Jenifa*, a Yoruba movie, as my case-study to understand the multilingual practice in specific movies. The study reveals that though *Jenifa* is tagged a Yoruba movie, it is difficult for a monolingual Yoruba speaker to comprehend because of the degree of English switching that is found there. Nearly all the characters found it expedient to use English in their speeches and this happened in nearly all the scenes regardless of the topic being discussed. From the fore-going, it is convenient to conclude that the multilingual practice in *Jenifa* is manifested in the types of switching between English and Yoruba. It should be stated that switching in this study is not considered as a stylistic strategy; rather, it is seen from an ideological perspective – the perspective of linguisticism, ideologies and practices of unequal division of power and resources which are tied to language.

Linguicism is evident in the distribution of languages involved in movie production. Majority of the linguistic groups in Nigeria prefer to produce their movies in English.

Films that are produced in indigenous languages also have a lot of English switching (or intrusions?). English is not just a language in Nigeria; it is a super language that is associated with education, prestige, class and opportunities. It is a language that everyone strives to use and this is reflected in the movies. This situation has led to what Bamiro describes as “subtractive polyglossia”.<sup>35</sup> According to him, “subtractive polyglossia is my term for the dominance and ascendancy of the English language at the expense of the regression and decline of the local languages”. This is a re-affirmation of an earlier point made by Ng and Bradac that “competence in the foreign language is acquired, but only at the expense of the native language”.<sup>36</sup> As a result of the powerful influence of English in Nigeria, which is also reflected in Nigerian movies, Adedun (forthcoming) has found that parents consciously encourage their children to gain mastery of English while discouraging them from learning their first language. The resultant effect is that most children are now monolingual Nigerian speakers of English or at best “defective bilinguals”. Defective bilingualism is my own term for describing Nigerians who claim they understand but cannot speak their mother tongue and the only language they claim mastery of is English. The unfortunate thing is that this attitude is popular especially among the elite and most people are even proud of the situation. The implication is that if no appropriate response is given, it portends a great danger to the sustenance and growth of indigenous languages. A Nigerian national newspaper, *The Punch*, in a screaming headline proclaims that hundreds of Nigerian languages face extinction.<sup>37</sup> The paper cites *Vital Signs 2006-200*, a publication of the United States based research group, Worldwatch Institute, that includes Nigerian languages among over 3,500 languages of the world that are likely to disappear by the turn of the century.

Insights from different aspects of language study reveal that languages do not just disappear, they follow some processes before they go into oblivion. The first sign is noticed when a language does not appeal to a young generation of people and when the

35 Edmund O. Bamiro, “The Politics of Code-switching: English vs Nigerian Languages”, *World Englishes*, 25, 1, 2006, pp. 23-35.

36 Sik H.Ng and James J.Bradac, *Power in Language: Verbal Communication and Social Influence*, Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1993, p. 179.

37 Omolola Awe, “Hundreds of Nigerian Languages Face Extinction”, *The Punch Newspaper*, July 20, 2006, p. 3.



older generation does not feel bothered about the apathy of the younger generation to the mother tongue. When in the name of style and modern practice, English is encouraged above an indigenous language, it is a matter of time, such an indigenous language is on its way to extinction. One of the tools for perpetuating a language is fiction, literature or creative writing. A language that has a rich repertoire of creative writing or filmic documentation will be preserved and subsequent generation can be relied upon for its continued propagation. But in the event of a scenario whereby the documentation of a people's history and culture is done either wholly in English by way of projecting such culture in English or partly in English by way of according more relevance to English in the simultaneous use of English and a local language, to record a people's worldview and experience, subsequent generation cannot be relied upon to propagate such a language and such a language is already endangered.

The issue of language choice is not new to African creative writers but there is no consensus on it. Indeed, there are three divergent positions about the choice of language for creative purposes<sup>38</sup>. The first is the unapologetic use of English for African creative writing. The second is the cautious use of English because of the power of its publicity while being conscious of its unfair advantage over indigenous languages. The third is the unequivocal advocacy that indigenous languages be used as vehicle for African literary expression. Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, the two frontline creative writers in Nigeria can be said to belong to the first group, though with varying degrees. While Chinua Achebe is of the view that African writers should feel free to adapt English to suit African surroundings and sensibilities<sup>39</sup>, Soyinka has been accused of being deliberately complex and inaccessible in his literary works because of his penchant for the use of English to reflect both the style and sensibilities of its native speakers<sup>40</sup>.

Social, political and economic considerations are the reasons why producers of creative endeavours, including film producers, prefer the use of English in their creative enterprise. Every creative writer or film maker wants to break the barrier of being restricted to his linguistic group and wants to reach a larger audience in order to promote his message, become more popular and at the same time earn more money. English becomes the only language that makes these possible in Nigeria. This explains why English dominates this sphere in Nigeria just like any other endeavour. However, these considerations are at the expense of local Nigerian languages. This makes Gikandi to declare that "what is important about language use in Africa is not what languages African writers prefer, but the ideological and cultural uses of such languages"<sup>41</sup>.

One recommendation that may address this problem is that film producers and creative writers generally should display language patriotism by encouraging productions in

38 Niyi Osundare, "What is the Nationality of your Idiom?: African Writers and the Language Question", Kola Owolabi, and Ademola Dasylva (eds.), *Forms and Functions of English and Indigenous Languages in Nigeria*, Ibadan, Group Publishers, 2004.

39 Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays*, London, Heinemann Press, 1975, pp. 55-66.

40 Chinweizu; J. Onwuchekwa, and M. Ihechukwu, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980.

41 Simon Gikandi, "Ngugi's Conversion: Writing and the Politics of Language", P. J.O. Smith and D. P. Kunene (eds.), *Tongue and Mother Tongue: African Literature and the Perpetual Quest for Identity*, Trenton, New Jersey, African World Press, 2002, pp. 21-38.





local Nigerian languages. This can then be translated into English for wider circulation. For films, this can be done through the use of sub-titles for movie dialogues. In spite of the criticism that subtitling typically results in a quantitative reduction of the original dialogue because of the limitation of the amount of written words that can appear on screen<sup>42</sup>, I submit that there is no better alternative to solving the problem. Also, there should be a positive projection of the local languages and the audience should be made to see the positive sides of the local languages either through what the characters are made to say directly or through an indirect interpretation of intentions or overall assessment of the movie. Again, while switching of codes is a multilingual reality, this practice should be extended to local Nigerian languages, that is, one Nigerian language can be made to switch with another Nigerian language. This will not only reflect the reality of co-habitation of different linguistic groups in Nigeria, it will also promote peaceful co-existence, mutual cooperation between and among different linguistic groups in Nigeria.

In addition, nobody can take away English from the place of honour the language occupies, not just in Nigeria, but in the world. It will amount to linguistic ignorance and intellectual arrogance for anyone to suggest that English does not have a place in Nigerian movie world. Of course, it does and that is why the movie industry has gained an early recognition and popularity. The issue here is that care should be taken so that one is not carried away by the assumed benefits of English and unwittingly play the scripts of the mindsets that historically conferred the assumed benefits on English. In other words, the issue being discussed goes beyond the assumed benefits derivable by producing Nigerian films in English. These assumed benefits are a tool that will eventually lead to the nunc dimitis of Nigerian languages if conscious efforts are not made to address the problem. The danger posed to Nigerian languages by English is hidden and can not be obvious to the undiscerning. It is historically ideological and "dually indexical". Dual indexicality is an expression used by Jane Hill to describe the strategy used by dominant groups to indirectly ascribe certain stereotypes to subordinate groups which constitute the basis upon which the minority groups are excluded from certain rights and privileges<sup>43</sup>. According to Elinor Ochs as cited by Hill, it is through these covert indexes that the deepest structures of the self, those that are least accessible to inquiry and modification, are laid down.<sup>44</sup> Hill emphasizes that covert semiosis is very powerful in the "construction of the world through linguistic practice". Therefore, brandishing the more obvious benefits of English in Nigerian movies will automatically blind one to the covert dangers the use of the language poses to the survival of Nigerian languages.

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42 H. Gottlieb, "Subtitling", M. Baker, and K. Malmkjaer (eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 247.

43 Jane Hill, *Mock Spanish: A Site for the Indexical Reproduction of Racism in American English*. <http://language-culture.binghamton.edu/symposia/2/part1/index.html>, (Accessed 26 May 2009), p. 2

44 Elinor Ochs, "Indexicality and Socialization", J. W. Stigler; R.A. Shweder, and G. Herdt (eds.) *Cultural Psychology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 245.



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