

An Integrated Approach to the Study of Language Attitudes and Change in Nigeria: The Case of the Ikwerre of Port Harcourt City

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1. Introduction

Port Harcourt City is the capital of Rivers State, Nigeria. Many centuries ago the present day location called Port Harcourt was inhabited only by the minority Ikwerre ethnic group, but today Port Harcourt is a metropolitan city, with over a million people (made up of Ikwerre and largely non Ikwerre indigenes from other parts of Nigeria, and a significant number of foreign nationals who work in the petroleum and allied industries). Due to the metropolitan nature of present day Port Harcourt, the Ikwerre now have to share their community with non Ikwerre people from other parts of the country, with whom they have no linguistic affinity. Thus, the medium of wider communication is naturally NPE (Nigerian Pidgin English). It is the language spoken at school and in the local neighbourhoods by children, at work and market by their parents and NPE is also commonly used for sermons in most Christian church services. Further, I observed, while doing fieldwork in Port Harcourt between May and September 2003 that the indigenous Ikwerre population of Port Harcourt is gradually, but powerfully, being influenced in their language behaviour (in terms of both use *and* choice) within and across the community by their neighbours who do not have Ikwerre as their first language. Ikwerre is still spoken by many inhabitants of the city and its environs as their first language, but this is largely confined to very intimate communications, typified by that between grandparents and other older members of the community.

Therefore, this paper explores this apparent language shift taking place in Port Harcourt by investigating the Ikwerre attitudes to their languages (Ikwerre and NPE), and how these attitudes assist to perpetuate the language choices reported here. Additionally, it aims to contribute to existing research in language attitudes by, firstly, examining in some detail the attitudes of young people, their parents and grandparents toward Ikwerre and NPE, including questions of perceptions about the future of the Ikwerre language. Furthermore, it intends to add to the methodology of research into language attitudes and use, most significantly by combining direct and indirect techniques to collect data and gain insights into the language attitudes of Port Harcourt Ikwerre bilinguals. This paper, as in Appel & Muysken (1987: 16), takes the view that in a society, social (or ethnic) groups have certain attitudes towards each other, relating to their differing social positions. These attitudes affect attitudes towards cultural institutions or patterns characterizing these groups such as language, and carry over to and are reflected in attitudes towards individual members of the groups. Thus, based on these assumptions, this study argues that the fate of the Ikwerre language will most vitally depend to a large degree on contemporary local linguistic attitudes.

2. Language attitudes studies

One of the subjects social psychologists are most interested in is the study of language attitudes. Given, as Appel & Muysken (1987: 16) correctly observe, the fact that languages are not only objective, socially neutral instruments for conveying meaning, but are linked up with the identities of social or ethnic groups has consequences for the social evaluation of, and the attitudes towards languages. In general terms the study of language attitudes has been based on two theoretical

approaches: the *behaviourist* approach and the *mentalist* approach. According to Fasold (1984: 147-148), under the behaviourist perspective attitudes are to be found simply in the responses people make to social situations. Further, he comments that this viewpoint makes research easier to undertake, since it requires no self reports or indirect inferences. It is only necessary to observe, tabulate, and analyse overt behaviour. However, I concur with Agheyisi & Fishman (1970: 138) who warned earlier that attitudes of this sort would not be quite as interesting as they would be if they were defined mentalistically, because they cannot be used to predict other behaviour. Nevertheless, Fasold (1984) argues that the more straightforward behaviourist approach, in which attitudes are just one kind of response to a stimulus, certainly cannot be ruled out.

On the other hand, under the mentalist perspective attitudes are viewed as an internal, mental state, which may give rise to certain forms of behaviour. It can be described as 'an intervening variable between a stimulus affecting a person and that person's response (see Appel & Muysken, 1987: 16; Fasold, 1984: 147). It is this latter perspective that is adopted in this paper to examine the Ikwerre language attitudes. The thinking behind the adoption of the mentalist view is based on the fact that most research work on language attitudes is based on this perspective (to mention just a few, see Appel & Muysken, 1987; Baker, 1992; Bosch & De-Klerk, 1996; Cargile & Giles, 1998; El-Dash & Busnardo, 2001; Gao & Zhou, 2000; Hoare, 2001; Hoare & Coveney, 2000; Hussein & El-Ali, 1989; Ioratim-Uba, 1995, 2001; Lawson & Sachdev, 1997, 2000; Long, 1999; Mgbo-Elue, 1987; Moreau, 1990; Payne, Downing & Fleming, 2000; Pieras, 2000; Thibault & Sankoff, 1999; Woolard & Gahng, 1990; Zhou, 1999). In addition, it provides interesting results that can be used to predict other behaviour.

It is important to mention that although the mentalist view has been widely adopted by language attitudes researchers, it poses significant research problems because internal, mental states cannot be directly observed, but have to be inferred from behaviour or from self reported data which are often of questionable validity (see Fasold, 1984). This notwithstanding, under the mentalist approach two methods are primarily employed for exploring language attitudes. They are the *questionnaire/interview* and the *matched guise technique*. I present a critique of both methods of investigating language attitudes in the following subsection.

2.1 Methods of language attitudes research

Earlier studies, like Gal's (1979) work in Austria, employed only a direct questioning method to investigate attitudes amongst inhabitants of Oberwart to their languages (German and Hungarian). As I mentioned in the preceding section, direct self reports of this kind delineating which language is spoken in which context can be of dubious validity, especially in politically self conscious contexts. For instance, researchers such as (Boix, 1993, Cohen, 1974; Ferrer & Sankoff, 2003; Lieberman, 1975; Woolard, 1992; Woolard & Gahng, 1990) have warned against using only the direct method to assess language attitudes, because it may fail to reveal language values that respondents are unaware of or are unwilling to admit for prestige reasons. In other words, such explicitly elicited attitudes may not always correlate exactly with the possibly unconscious attitudes which are revealed by more indirect methods of investigation. This last point is significant with regard to bilingual Ikwerre speakers, who are faced with the negative official government attitudes towards NPE, which is depicted as 'broken English' and language fit only for the uneducated poor. Thus, it was felt that it would have been difficult to obtain reliable data from the respondents about their attitudes towards the language if I had just relied only on a direct method. They may, naturally, not have been inclined to give answers that would pass them off as uneducated and poor or as preferring NPE over their autochthonous language. So, to alleviate this problem, it was deemed appropriate to combine both direct questioning and indirect methods. In combining both methods, a large pool of comparable data is obtained and it is easier to see if both sets of data corroborate each other.

A host of indirect methods for obtaining data about language attitudes have been proposed by various researchers and these include Fishman's (1971) use of the commitment measure to examine attitudes among Puerto Ricans; the investigation of the impact of language on persuasion, undertaken with Hebrew/Arabic bilinguals in Jericho, which is reported on in Fishman, Cooper & Ma (1971), and Williams' (1976) studies of teachers' evaluations of children's speech. However, the method used in this study is the matched guise test technique which was developed by Lambert *et al* (1960). This methodology makes use of tape recordings of speakers who each read the same text in two or more different guises; these could be different languages, dialects or accents. Groups of respondents are then

asked to listen to these recordings and, on the basis of voice cues only, to assess the speakers in terms of given personality traits or other variables. The respondents are not made aware that the recorded voices are not all of separate individuals, but include matched guises of the same speaker. Lambert (1967: 94) points out that the matched guise test seems to reveal judges' more private reactions to the contrasting group than direct questionnaires do.

As such, it is no surprise that it has been readily employed as a complement to more direct methods of gathering data, for example, by Lieberman (1975) in her study of St Lucian bilinguals, where the matched guise test showed that St Lucians rate their Patois higher than English, despite the generally expressed view (derived from direct questionnaire data) that English is superior to Patois. According to Bentahila (1983: 94) that aspects of dialect or accent provide information about social class has often been noted (see Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1974, 1983, 2000), but the matched guise technique has shown other associations; for instance, Strongman & Woosley (1967) found in their test that Yorkshire-accented Englishmen were judged to be more honest and reliable than London-accented speakers, while the latter were judged to be more self-confident than the former. In bilingual communities, the two languages may give similarly different impressions. In the study carried out by El Dash & Tucker (1976) they found that speakers in Egypt were judged to be more likeable, intelligent and religious and to have more leadership qualities when they spoke Classical Arabic than when they spoke Colloquial Arabic or British or American English. In the study of minority language groups matched guise tests have provided valuable information about some minority language groups' views of themselves. Carranza & Ryan (1976) found that Mexican Americans tend to downgrade Spanish speakers in comparison to English speakers; Tucker & Lambert (1972) discovered that U.S.A Negroes rate speakers of Black English lower than speakers of Standard White American English. Lambert *et al* (1960) found that French Canadians tend to downgrade their own language group, in contrast to English Canadians, who rate own group more favourable. Another study by Lambert *et al* (1966) showed that this tendency to view their own group unfavourably is present in French Canadians as young as twelve years old. On the other hand, Bourhis, Giles & Tajfel (1973) and Bourhis & Giles (1976) found that Welsh respondents, on the contrary, had a positive self image, judging speakers of Welsh and of Welsh accented English more favourably than speakers of R.P. English; they can thus be contrasted with the French Canadians who seem to give prestige to the majority language.

More recently, Hoare (2001) successfully used both the questionnaire and matched guise test in her study of language attitudes of school age children and young people towards three language varieties in Brittany. The matched guise test was also used rather innovatively by Bender (2001, 2004) to illustrate one particular methodology for discovering whether speakers have knowledge of another kind of pattern in language: the 'soft' or non-categorical grammatical constraints which are evident in the distribution of sociolinguistic variables. The results of her matched guise test indicated that speakers do have knowledge of the non categorical constraint tested.¹

In spite of the successful and wide application of the matched guise technique in many language attitudes studies, there are a number of problems inherent in it. A discussion of these problems and measures taken in this study to ameliorate them is the concern of the next section.

2.2 Matched guise technique: problems and remedies

The first problem inherent in the purest application of the matched guise technique is that in order to control the content of the language samples the same passage should be read by each speaker in each language (in translated form). But as Fasold (1984) states, this introduces one variable as it controls another; the speakers may be judged as performers of readings, and not on the basis of the language variety they are using. To address this problem, the speakers used in the matched guise experiment in this study are educated to the same level (University graduates) and are fluent in both the Ikwerre language and NPE, thus eliminating the problem of the respondents judging them on their reading performance as against the language variety being used. Secondly, it has been noted (for instance, Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970; Fasold, 1984) that the attempt to control content can lead to a related difficulty: the possible incongruity between language variety and topic. To ameliorate this problem the

¹ Other studies adopting the matched guise technique include the following: Blas-Arroyo, 1999; Dailey-O'Cain, 2000; Hyrkstedt & Kalaja, 1998; Jaffe & Walton, 2000; Maeno, 2000; Papapavlou, 1998; Preston, 1999; Van-Reydt & Ammon, 1999.

passage chosen for the matched guise experiment is a folktale commonly told by all Ikwerre people (both young and old), emotionally neutral and makes use of everyday diction. The passage was transcribed into NPE for the Pidgin guise. A third problem is that of demonstrating validity, especially in attitude studies relying solely on questionnaires. In this study as I indicated in earlier sections, to overcome this problem both questionnaire and matched guise tests have been combined to investigate language attitudes. This means that data obtained through one method can be compared and checked with the other.

A final difficulty associated with the matched guise technique is connected with its artificiality (Bourhis & Giles, 1976; Fasold, 1984). Asking listeners to judge people by their voices only, though it does give maximum control over other variables, is in the words of Fasold (1984: 154-155) ‘a bit far removed from real life contexts.’ In as much as I agree with this observation, I posit that so long as the advantages of the matched guise technique outlined in section 2.1 outweigh the disadvantages, it becomes a very important tool together with questionnaires to account for an individual’s degree of integration with the group.

3. The tests

For the test, two Ikwerre bilinguals (a man and a woman) were each recorded reading the same 40 seconds passage twice, once in Ikwerre and once in NPE. The four voices were ordered so that Ikwerre versions alternated with NPE ones, and no voice was followed immediately by its matched guise. The respondents were told at the beginning of the test that they would hear four speakers reading the same passage, some in Ikwerre and some in NPE. The fact that they would hear the same speakers’ voices twice was concealed from them. Before listening to each voice, they were given a response sheet containing ten traits (see Table 1 below) on which they had to rate the speaker. Each voice was played once, and the respondents were given enough time to complete all their ratings for this voice before the next one was played to them.

Table 1 Matched guise rating scale

Traits	5	4	3	2	1	Traits
	+	+	+	+	+	
Attended school	-	-	-	-	-	Did not attend school
Modern	-	-	-	-	-	Not modern
Ambitious	-	-	-	-	-	Un-ambitious
Hardworking	-	-	-	-	-	Lazy
Honest	-	-	-	-	-	Not very honest
Friendly	-	-	-	-	-	Unfriendly
Beautiful	-	-	-	-	-	Thin
Tall	-	-	-	-	-	Short
Generous	-	-	-	-	-	Not very generous
Confident	-	-	-	-	-	Not confident

The participants in the attitude analysis were required to rate the speakers for each of the traits listed in Table 1 on a five point scale. For example, for the trait *honest*, the scale would cover the range from ‘very honest’, through the neutral point, ‘neither honest nor dishonest’, to the extreme of ‘not very honest’. Thus, a rating of ‘very honest’ would be represented by 5 on the scale, that of ‘not very honest’ by 1, and so on. Once collected and collated, these scores were statistically analysed to see what relationship exists, if any, between language attitudes and the observed language choice patterns I recorded while doing fieldwork in Port Harcourt in the summer of 2003.

It is important to point out that in this study unlike in Bentahila’s (1983) study of bilingual Moroccans’ attitudes to their languages, which focused on the accents of the matched guise speakers, the present study makes a departure from this and focuses on the impressions the languages used by the two speakers in each guise created in the minds of the respondents. Therefore, the aim of the matched guise test was to investigate how the respondents attitudinal judgments were influenced by non-linguistic factors. The traits presented to the respondents for their judgments in Table 1 were based primarily on observations and general impressions and are traits that have been used successfully in

other matched guise tests in bilingual communities across the world (see for instance, Bender, 2001, 2004; Hoare, 2001; Lambert *et al.*, 1960).

At the end of the matched guise test the participants were then administered a short face to face language attitudes questionnaire for comparative purposes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Language attitudes questionnaire

Language proficiency

- a. If you had to describe how well you speak Ikwerre which would you say?
 - 3 = Perfect Ikwerre (Like an indigene of Ikwerreland).
 - 2 = Very well.
 - 1 = Moderately well.
 - 0 = Hardly at all.
- b. If you had to describe how well you speak NPE which would you say?
 - 3 = Perfect everyday Port Harcourt NPE.
 - 2 = Very well.
 - 1 = Moderately well.
 - 0 = Hardly at all.

Language preference

- c. Which language do you use when you talk to people: Ikwerre or NPE?
 - 3 = All the time.
 - 2 = Most of the time.
 - 1 = Some times.
 - 0 = Not at all.

The first question asked about the respondents level of proficiency in speaking either Ikwerre/and or NPE, while the second question sought to ascertain the informants favourite language (that is, their language preference). Answers to these questions it was believed would provide insights with regard to which language is preferred over another in a speaker's routine day to day interactions.

Before presenting a discussion of the results of the tests, in section 3.1 below is a description of the informant sample, their observed language choice patterns and level of education.

3.1 The participants

The 76 participants who answered the questionnaire and used in the matched guise experiment were also systematically observed for their language choice patterns.

Table 2 Generation cohort

Cohort	Male	Female
Grandparents	5	5
Parents	10	10
Younger (Children)	23	23
Total = 3 Generations	38 Males	38 Females

Table 3 Generalised language choice patterns with family members

Patterns	Interlocutors						Number of speakers
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I	I	I	I	I	I	I	9
II	I	I	I	I	IP	IP	13
III	I	I	IP	IP	IP	IP	21
IV	I	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	33

1 = Female grandparent, 2 = Male grandparent, 3 = Female parent, 4 = Male parent, 5 = Male child, 6 = Female child; I = Ikwerre language, IP = Indicates the use of both Ikwerre and Pidgin (i.e. Nigerian Pidgin English).

Table 4 Generalised language choice patterns with non family members

Patterns	Interlocutors						Number of speakers
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I	I	I	I	I	I	I	9
II	I	I	I	I	IP	IP	11
III	I	I	IP	IP	IP	IP	7
IV	I	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	26
V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	11
VI	IP	IP	IP	IP	P	P	7
VII	IP	IP	P	P	P	P	5

1 = Grandparent generation (female), 2 = Grandparent generation (male), 3 = Parent generation (female), 4 = Parent generation (male), 5 = Child generation (male), 6 = Child generation (female); I = Ikwerre language, IP = indicates the use of both Ikwerre language and Pidgin (i.e. Nigerian Pidgin English), P = the use of only NPE.

In Table 2 we see that the participants were made up of 38 male and 38 female subjects, chosen on the basis that they are natives of the Port Harcourt Ikwerre community and represent a wide spectrum of Port Harcourt Ikwerre bilinguals. Also they were put into three generational cohorts, representing an age range here designated the child, parent and grandparent generations respectively.

In Tables 3 and 4, pattern I, indicates the use of Ikwerre only in all situations, pattern II, is categorised as an Ikwerre dominant pattern, while patterns III and IV can be described as bilingual patterns, and either Ikwerre only (used with female grandparents of the family), or both Ikwerre and NPE is used with female grandparents outside the family. Patterns V and VI (Table 4) are best described as bilingual patterns, characterised by the predominant use of both Ikwerre and NPE with most interlocutors in most contexts. Pattern VII, indicates the use of NPE only with the parent and younger generations outside the family. This pattern can, therefore, be categorised as a NPE dominant bilingual pattern.

Other than age and sex, the level of education attained by each speaker was examined to see whether differences in attitudes and language choice patterns is influenced by the length of time spent in an educational system where Nigerian Standard English (NSE) is the medium employed in teaching in schools. This is significant because the widely touted view among the Ikwerre whom I interviewed and observed during the fieldwork stage of this study was that NPE is spoken by those Ikwerre who have been exposed to some form of formal education. In particular, the grandparents complained that the younger generation of Ikwerre people are losing the ability to speak the Ikwerre language because they spend all their time talking in NPE.

The Ikwerre notion of who speaks NPE is opposite to that expressed by some linguists who suggest that Pidgins are examples of unsuccessful or incomplete second language learning. To accept this view, is to assume that second language learning is not successful until the learners achieve native speaker like command of the target language being learned (in this case Nigerian Standard English). Thus, I agree with Sebba (1997), that a more pragmatic view would be to see Pidgins as representing successful second language learning from the point of view of their users, who learn just enough to communicate what they need to communicate and no more. Hence, energy is not expended on the unrealistic aim of learning the finer details of grammar and pronunciation. The focus is on successful communication within a limited range of interactions. Taking this as my starting point, I decided to investigate the interaction of level of education attained by the speakers and attitudes and how these in turn affect the choice between Ikwerre and / or NPE.²

² For detailed discussions on the role of education in bilingualism see Baker, 2000; Bialystok, 2004; Cook, 2001; Dornyei & Schmidt, 2002; Doughty & Long, 2003; Klein, 1986; Lafford & Salaberry, 2003.

Based on participant observation and direct interviewing of the informants, I designed a five point scale to measure individual speakers' levels of education. A score of [0] is assigned to those who did not attend / or are not attending school, [5] points for those who attended / or are attending primary school, a score of [10] is given to those who went through / or are receiving secondary school education, [15] points is allotted to those who attended / or are attending a post-secondary school (for example, colleges and trade schools), and those who are university trained / or are receiving university education get a score of [20]. Table 5, displays the average level of education attained by each of the 76 speakers and their language choice patterns.

Table 5 Average level of education attained by male and female speakers

Patterns	Male			Female		
	No. of speakers	Mean age	Level of education	No. of speakers	Mean age	Level of education
Family members						
Pattern I	3	76	0	6	65	0
Pattern II	7	42.14	8.5	6	35.66	9.16
Pattern III	11	36	9.5	10	28.3	8
Pattern IV	17	17.05	8.5	16	12.81	7.18
Non-family members						
Pattern I	3	76	0	6	65	0
Pattern II	4	54.25	5	7	44.57	5
Pattern III	5	52.4	8	2	31.5	10
Pattern IV	13	25.76	10.7	13	17.76	10.76
Pattern V	6	13.33	8.33	5	12	8
Pattern VI	4	15	8.75	3	9.33	5
Pattern VII	3	8.6	3.33	2	5.5	0

Rating scale: 0 = Did not / or not attending primary school, 5 = Attended / or attending primary school, 10 = Attended / or attending secondary school, 15 = Attended / or attending post-secondary school, 20 = Attended / or attending university.

These figures tend to indicate that the nine Ikwerre monolingual speakers of pattern 1 for family and non family member interactions have not received any form of formal education; therefore, this may well be an explanation for their lack of competence in the use of NPE. Although this might seem to be the case, it is important to point out that three younger speakers in the informant sample (two girls and a boy aged 7, 4 and 6 years respectively) were not in receipt of formal education at the time of this study. This notwithstanding, these speakers tend to use NPE dominant language choice patterns. Hence, it is important that we look beyond level of education to find out the underlying motivations for the Ikwerre language behaviour.

4. Results and discussion

In order to investigate the relationships that hold between the variables age, gender and level of education, and the various scores (i.e. language proficiency and language preference scores); I carried out a series of bivariate correlation tests using Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient. The basic assumptions relevant here, are as follows:

1. Speakers who return higher scores for proficiency in Ikwerre would also select this language as their preferred choice for interactions with most interlocutors; hence they will have a propensity to adopt Ikwerre dominant language choice patterns.
2. On the other hand, those who report lower scores for proficiency in the Ikwerre language would deselect this code as their preferred choice for interactions with most interlocutors, thus, they would use NPE dominant patterns.
3. Since the variable age has been shown to be strongly associated with variations in language choice patterns in the community (see Table 5 above), it is predicted that older speakers (male and female) would score higher than younger speakers of both sexes on the Ikwerre scale. The

reverse would thus be the case on the NPE scale, hence, confirming that a process of language shift is underway in the Port Harcourt Ikwerre community led by the younger generation.

4.1 Questionnaire

4.1.1 Language proficiency scores

4.1.1.1 Correlations between age and language proficiency scores

The correlation test results indicate that age of male speakers correlates positively with language proficiency scores on the Ikwerre language scale ($r = 0.915$ $p < 0.001$) and negatively with the scores for NPE ($r = -0.467$ $p < 0.002$). These results give the indication that older male speakers appear to return higher scores on the Ikwerre scale, while younger male speakers score highly on the NPE scale. Similarly, the correlations test results for female speakers mirrors that of their male counterparts: Ikwerre language scale ($r = 0.922$ $p < 0.001$), NPE scale ($r = -0.797$ $p < 0.001$).

4.1.1.2 Correlations between sex and language proficiency scores

There were no significant gender differences in the language proficiency scores. What has in fact emerged is that older speakers of both sexes score more highly on the Ikwerre scale, whereas younger males and females score higher on the NPE scale.

4.1.1.3 Correlations between level of education and proficiency scores

Here, also, there was found to be no significant correlation between levels of education attained by male speakers on the Ikwerre scale. This finding would suggest that this variable has nothing at all to do with the ability to speak Ikwerre by these speakers. However, level of education positively correlates with male proficiency scores for NPE ($r = 0.483$ $p < 0.001$). What this result indicates is that all male speakers who attended or are attending school returned high scores for proficiency in NPE.

Nevertheless, it should not be interpreted as suggesting that only those who attended or are attending school can speak NPE. On the other hand, a moderately negative correlation was found for female speakers on the Ikwerre scale ($r = -0.285$ $p < 0.041$) and positive correlations on the NPE scale ($r = 0.660$ $p < 0.001$). Here, the indication is that both middle aged and older female non educated and educated speakers alike returned high scores on the Ikwerre scale, thus, suggesting that marginally more women than men adopt Ikwerre dominant patterns. With regard to the NPE scale, like their male counterparts, all female subjects who attended or are attending school scored higher on this scale. However, as in the last section, this result is not to be taken to indicate the exclusive use of NPE by only those speakers who received or are in receipt of formal education.

4.1.2 Language preference scores

4.1.2.1 Correlations between age and language preference scores

Here the correlation results for male speakers are positive and significant on the Ikwerre scale ($r = 0.896$ $p < 0.001$), and negative but significant on the NPE scale ($r = -0.731$ $p < 0.001$), indicating that older male speakers tend to prefer to use Ikwerre more than NPE for their routine interactions. Conversely, younger male speakers select NPE more for their every day interactions with most interlocutors. The exact scenario is the case also with female speakers: positive and significant correlations on the Ikwerre scale ($r = 0.843$ $p < 0.001$) and negative but significant results on the NPE scale ($r = -0.843$ $p < 0.001$). Further, as was the case in my analyses of other variables, no significant gender related differences were found for speakers of both sexes with regard to language preference. Thus, the indication is that both older male and female speakers tend to select Ikwerre as their preferred code and younger speakers of both sexes choose NPE as their language of choice for interactions with most interlocutors within and outside the family.

4.1.2.2 Correlations between level of education and language preference scores

Additional tests were carried out to investigate the relationship between level of education and language preference scores. The results returned moderately negative correlations on the Ikwerre scale ($r = -0.322$ $p < 0.024$) and positive correlations on the NPE scale ($r = 0.447$ $p < 0.002$), suggesting that some mid to older aged male speakers (whether they attended school or not) returned higher scores on the Ikwerre scale. This confirms the observation made in earlier sections that the norm for older speakers is the use of Ikwerre only or Ikwerre dominant patterns. By contrast, all male speakers who attended or are attending school also scored highly on the NPE scale, indicating that all those who attended/or are attending school can speak NPE. Fairly similar results are also reported for female speakers: Ikwerre scale ($r = -0.439$ $p < 0.003$), and NPE scale ($r = 0.685$ $p < 0.001$). As has been noted already, these results mask the fact that some speakers who select NPE for most of their interactions had no formal education. For instance, the three younger speakers highlighted above in section 3.1.

4.1.2.3 Correlations between language proficiency and language choice patterns

By using the informants' language proficiency score for Ikwerre and NPE it is possible to rank all the speakers according to their scores. As a first step, the observed language choice patterns (See Tables 3 and 4) can be utilised as another set of ranks. That is, from pattern I, referring to Ikwerre monolingualism to pattern VII, i.e. NPE dominant bilingualism. By doing this, rank order correlations between language ability scores and language choice patterns can give some indication of whether speakers who use Ikwerre with more interlocutor types also use the language for wider communicative purposes. In the same way it can also show, if those who speak more NPE possess a better command of the language and use it for their normal everyday communication. The results of the rank order correlations are given in Table 6.

Table 6 Correlations between language choice patterns and language proficiency

Patterns	Males		Females	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Family members				
Ikwerre	-0.733	< 0.001	-0.794	< 0.001
Pidgin	0.501	< 0.001	0.755	< 0.001
Non-family members				
Ikwerre	-0.873	< 0.001	-0.874	< 0.001
Pidgin	0.479	< 0.001	0.793	< 0.001

Positive correlations indicate higher language proficiency scores and higher (NPE dominant) language choice patterns, and negative correlations indicate higher language proficiency scores but lower (Ikwerre dominant) language choice patterns. The results presented in Table 6 seem to indicate that speakers who score higher on the Ikwerre scale do indeed use Ikwerre only or Ikwerre dominant language choice patterns with both family and non family member interlocutors, while those who score higher on the NPE scale use bilingual and NPE dominant patterns.

The statistical analyses presented here, confirm the assumptions set out above in the introduction to section 4, but most importantly they confirm that the process of language shift is underway in Port Harcourt from Ikwerre dominant to NPE dominant bilingual language choice patterns and that it is led by younger speakers. Equally, they also show that, marginally, more-older male speakers than their female counterparts are beginning to adopt language choice patterns similar to those of the younger generation. Thus, indicating that the language shift taking place in this community is inter-generational and that males are taking the lead in this innovation.

In the next section, I turn my attention to a discussion of the results of the matched guise experiments carried out on the informants to explore further, the impact of attitudes on linguistic behaviours and if they corroborate the findings in this section.

4.2 Matched guise test

As noted earlier, the 76 informants have been put into three groups reflecting their generational cohort and a series of paired sample *t*-tests were carried out to see whether any relationship exists between choice of code and language attitudes in Port Harcourt. The assumption, here, is that the Ikwerre language (L_1) will have symbolic value as the mother tongue and will be associated with those traits that symbolise traditional values of honesty, friendliness and generosity. While NPE (L_2) will be associated with education, employment, modernity, etc. The *t*-test results are given in Tables 7 to 9 below.

Table 7 Contrasts between Ikwerre and NPE guises (Younger speakers)

Traits	Ikwerre	NPE
Attended school	n.s	t= -24.560 p < 0.001
Modern	n.s	t= -30.518 p < 0.001
Ambitious	<i>t = 2.638 p < 0.011</i>	t= -32.539 p < 0.001
Hardworking	n.s	t= -24.850 p < 0.001
Honest	t = -28.995 p < 0.001	t= -7.952 p < 0.001
Friendly	t = -14.553 p < 0.001	t= -8.387 p < 0.001
Beautiful	n.s	t= -24.094 p < 0.001
Tall	n.s	t= -37.290 p < 0.001
Generous	t = -24.946 p < 0.001	t= -6.653 p < 0.001
Confident	n.s	t= -32.758 p < 0.001

Entries in **bold** indicate positive judgments; the *italicized* ones mark negative judgments in either guise. Not significant results are indicated by the abbreviations: n.s.

Table 8 Contrasts between Ikwerre and NPE guises (Parents)

Traits	Ikwerre	NPE
Attended school	<i>t= 9.178 p < 0.001</i>	t= -6.535 p < 0.001
Modern	<i>t= 7.592 p < 0.001</i>	t= -8.770 p < 0.001
Ambitious	<i>t= 9.595 p < 0.001</i>	t= -17.456 p < 0.001
Hardworking	t= -2.699 p < 0.014	t= -6.039 p < 0.001
Honest	t= -13.754 p < 0.001	<i>t= 5.865 p < 0.001</i>
Friendly	t= -7.978 p < 0.001	n.s
Beautiful	<i>t= 3.775 p < 0.001</i>	t= -2.272 p < 0.035
Tall	<i>t= 5.612 p < 0.001</i>	t= -14.320 p < 0.001
Generous	t= -22.617 p < 0.001	n.s
Confident	<i>t= 7.406 p < 0.001</i>	t= -9.281 p < 0.001

Entries in **bold** indicate positive judgments; the *italicized* ones mark negative judgments in either guise. Not significant results are indicated by the abbreviations: n.s.

Table 9 Contrasts between Ikwerre and NPE guises (Grandparents)

Traits	Ikwerre	NPE
Attended school	<i>t= 12.685 p < 0.001</i>	t= -5.078 p < 0.001
Modern	<i>t= 8.594 p < 0.001</i>	t= -3.099 p < 0.013
Ambitious	<i>t= 18.647 p < 0.001</i>	t= -2.903 p < 0.017
Hardworking	t= -2.756 p < 0.022	<i>t= 4.440 p < 0.002</i>
Honest	t= -5.053 p < 0.001	<i>t= 13.606 p < 0.001</i>
Friendly	t= -4.863 p < 0.001	<i>t= 9.263 p < 0.001</i>
Beautiful	t= -3.476 p < 0.007	<i>t= 3.900 p < 0.004</i>
Tall	<i>t= 2.491 p < 0.034</i>	t= -4.088 p < 0.003
Generous	t= -4.351 p < 0.002	<i>t= 9.179 p < 0.001</i>
Confident	<i>t= 9.073 p < 0.001</i>	t= -4.492 p < 0.002

Entries in **bold** indicate positive judgments; the *italicized* ones mark negative judgments in either guise. Not significant results are indicated by the abbreviations: n.s.

In the above Tables, positive and significant *t*-test results on either the Ikwerre or NPE guise for any trait, indicates that the latter has been judged negatively by the speakers, whereas, a negative but significant result signifies a positive judgement for that individual trait by the speakers. In addition, results marked as not significant (n.s) on either guise would indicate a negative judgement for the given trait by a majority of the speakers in that group. These indicators are fully recoverable from the speakers individual scores.

As might be expected, the younger speakers of both sexes judged the NPE guise positively on all ten traits, thus, confirming observations made in the last section, that the language shift taking place in Port Harcourt is led by this group of speakers. All three groups are also in agreement that the speaker of the NPE guise as opposed to the speaker of the Ikwerre guise attended school. This finding is interesting, because the two actors used in the experiment as pointed out in section 2.2 are Ikwerre graduates from the University of Port Harcourt, who were working in the civil service. Further, it shows, as mentioned in section 3.1, that the Ikwerre believe that only those who attended school use NPE. The analysis presented in the last section demonstrated, however, that this notion is not entirely accurate. Also, my informants judged the speaker of this guise to be more modern, more ambitious, taller and more confident than the speaker using the Ikwerre guise.

Although younger speakers judged the NPE guise positively on all the traits, it would appear, nevertheless, that, comparatively speaking (that is, comparing the *t-values* in Tables 7 to 9), the speaker using the Ikwerre guise was judged by all to be more *honest, friendly, and generous* - traits that pertain to feelings of morality and traditional values.³

Overall, it seems then that in Port Harcourt, NPE is believed to be used by modern and upwardly mobile people by members of the three generations under investigation. For the younger generation and their parents it is also thought to be used by *hardworking and beautiful people*. These findings tend to confirm the general views among the Ikwerre community of Port Harcourt which also emerged during my participant observation. In fact, one father told me in NPE while doing fieldwork for this study that:

'Di dez don pas wen we go tink sey tu spik onli Ikwerre wi go go far for laif for dis awa kontri. Naim mek a de spik di langage en' a no de stop ma pikin dem tu spik Pidgin'.

'The days are gone when people thought they would make progress in life by speaking Ikwerre only in this country. This is why I speak the language [NPE], and I do not stop my children from speaking NPE'.

Attitudinal dispositions, such as those reported here, have also been noted by other researchers working in the African continent. Adegbija (1994) and Batibo (2005), for instance, observe that most parents wish their children to have proficiency in the former colonial language to improve their chances of social promotion and economic advancement, even at the expense of their mother tongue. However, in most African communities the former colonial languages are restricted to a small proportion of the elite. The only prestigious language would, therefore, be the prominent lingua franca, (in this case NPE). Hence, in many instances, parents want their children to be proficient in L₂ instead of L₁. Such an attitude, they argue, contributes greatly to the language shift process. Therefore, these results of the Ikwerre attitudes go a long way to buttress the fact that in minority ethnic groups such as this one, the language of wider communication is the most preferred code, because of the socio political and socio economic benefits it accords those who have competence in it.

Casting our minds back to Tables 7 to 9, it is evident from the results of the matched guise test that members of the grandparents' generation display favourable attitudes toward Ikwerre. They see it as the language that embodies feelings of honesty, conscientiousness, friendliness, beauty and generosity. These attitudes go a long way to explain why this group of speakers have remained largely Ikwerre monolinguals. On the other hand, the younger generation and a large proportion of their parents (male and female alike) display overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward the use of NPE, which equally explains, why they display the kind of language behaviours detailed here. That is, the use of bilingual and NPE dominant patterns with most interlocutors.

In sum, since the NPE guise was judged more favourably on the ten traits than the Ikwerre guise by all the groups, it is possible to submit that this is very strong evidence in corroboration of the

³ See also similar findings in Baker, 1992; Bentahila, 1983; 1985; Hoare, 2001; Ioratim-Uba, 1995, 2001; Oyetade, 1996; Yamamoto, 2001.

observation in earlier sections that the language shift taking place in this community cuts across generations. That is, although older Ikwerre speakers of both sexes are doing their utmost to use the Ikwerre language regularly, these results appear to suggest that local contemporary linguistic attitudes with regard to the middle aged cohort and especially the younger generation tend to favour NPE dominant bilingual patterns over Ikwerre dominant ones.

Given that the number of respondents used in this study is relatively small (76 people in total), I have taken care not to over generalize my findings. However, since I did ensure that the informants whose language choice patterns I have uncovered here do represent a cross section of Port Harcourt Ikwerre indigenes, the observations are not insignificant. For instance, they clarify the apparent language shift taking place in this community and allow us to gain insights into the use of both Ikwerre and NPE in Port Harcourt now and in the future. Moreover, by incorporating matched guise tests in a study of language choice and shift, this study has raised and addressed questions which are of significance not only for the future of the Ikwerre language and NPE, but also for language choice and attitudes research methodology more generally. It has been shown here that it is possible to combine both direct and indirect methods in the elicitation of data on language attitudes that can be analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

To my knowledge, such an integrated approach has not been used before in the study of language use and attitudes towards any of the minority languages spoken in Nigeria or in indeed Pidgin languages in general. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the possibility of modifying existing methods of gathering language attitudes data by integrating self reports with matched guise experiments within a single study, thus, clarifying and elaborating upon results obtained through quantitative methods.

5. Conclusion

This study has rigorously and systematically explored the language choice patterns of 76 Ikwerre informants from Port Harcourt. The results tend to show that a rapid inter generational language shift from Ikwerre monolingualism to NPE dominant bilingualism is presently underway. This shift is further epitomised in a remodelling of usual language choice patterns with different types of interlocutors. I have also examined a number of variables and found that age is an important factor associated with this change in language choice, with older speakers using only or mainly Ikwerre dominant patterns in wide ranging contexts and younger speakers utilise both Ikwerre and NPE or principally NPE to fulfil various communicative functions.

In order to adequately account for such variations, I have looked at factors other than age that are capable of explaining the underlying processes whereby speakers make their choices. For instance, I have investigated the informants language attitudes. The results of the questionnaire (and particularly the matched guise tests described in this paper) suggest that a Port Harcourt Ikwerre bilingual's judgements of a person are quite significantly influenced by what language he/she speaks, and that they may also obtain different impressions of an individual's character, status and level of education depending on whether the person is speaking Ikwerre or NPE. It would appear that in Port Harcourt a bilingual is viewed more favourably when he/she speaks NPE than when they speak Ikwerre. Members of this community, it would seem rate speakers of NPE highly with regard to level of education attained, modernity and general sophistication.

Such findings as these reported here are very important to bilinguals because, if they have an awareness of the effect of their speech and how they are perceived, then they can exert influence on others' language behaviour and attitudes towards them by deliberately varying their choice of language.

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