Factors that Facilitate Multilingualism and Language Diversification

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Abstract
Multilingualism refers to a state whereby an individual can function in more than two languages. The aim of this paper is to discuss how dialectology and multilingualism give rise to linguistic diversity due to various factors. To verify this, works of different scholars were reviewed. It was observed that both multilingualism and dialectology give rise to linguistic diversity as both involve the use of language, whether the language is considered to be high/low variety, it does not matter as they contribute to the society. For instance, in a multilingual nation like Nigeria, according to Emenanjo (1990) and O’Reilly (2007), there are some linguistic phenomena (factors) that could lead to a language being diversified which include: language contact which is characterized by certain adverse effects on the native speakers’ use of the secondary language. A good example of language in such a contact situation is Nigeria, where English came in contact with numerous Nigerian languages. Basically the paper reviewed factors that lead to dialectology and language diversification.

Introduction
Language diversification involves the situation or state of a variety of languages. Where there are diverse languages what happens? How do these diverse languages get along and how do people accommodate them? The above questions entail a sum of what the research paper will look into. Now, multilingualism as the name
implies is the state of using two or more languages either by an individual or a community. Usually, multilingual speakers outnumber monolingual speakers in the universe. It is very rare to find individuals or communities with just one language. Many authors have a lot of definitions for multilingualism which can vary according to the description which best suites the authors background of the study. Language has a lot of issues embedded in it. When a community speaks more than one language how do they handle it? Here the issue of diglossia comes in. A community for various reasons might choose a particular language to be used in a particular setting or environment, some would have what we call ‘official languages’ and then others used in informal or unofficial environments. This happens just so that each language will fit in the community. Multilingualism is a form of language contact. Code switching and code mixing are bound to take place especially when there is a high-level of competence by the users. A whole lot of other issues come into play because of multilingualism and tends to encourage diversification.

Dialectology is the study of varieties of one particular language primarily based on geography and language features. Now, when a language, just one language has many varieties what becomes of that language? How does it play a role in diversification? Here, we see that speakers of a language may or may not know the many varieties of that one language; probably just one variety is what they will be speaking. Diversification comes in here when mutual intelligibility happens. For instance, when Mr. A speaks a variety of a particular language; if Mr. B does not understand him, then it is a different language entirely, regardless of what geography or politics state. It is when one has understanding of a variety that can be linked to a particular language, that it could be called a dialect. However, the role it
plays in diversification will be that as many dialects of a language as can be should not prevent people from communicating effectively. In essence what will be done is to find a common ground for interaction & survival of both varieties either by purely learning a whole new language, or forming pidgins, to prolong regular contact between the different language communities, as well as satisfying the need to communicate among themselves using a widespread accessible inter-language.

This is a socio-linguistic issue and its entire basis should be for understanding even in the diversification. Again, instead of downplaying diversification that is brought about by multilingualism and dialect variation obviously for its disadvantages, there should be increase and growth of the diverse languages, a thousand benefits abound. It may not be possible to recreate the old tower of Babel where everyone spoke one language.

**Literature review**

Language is an essential part and characteristic of a speech community. A lot of arguments and scholarly disagreements have been on ground for over a number of decades on the issues regarding how many languages an individual or a society speaks; what encompasses the knowledge of these languages; which languages are really languages or dialects; the definitions of multilingualism and dialectology; sociolinguistic issues that do arise when a society makes use of more than one language and so on. In this section, a number of these various assertions are stated and addressed. For multilingualism, a scholar like Franceschim (2009:33-34) defined it as a product of the fundamental human ability to communicate in a member of languages. Here, he explains that when a human is able to interact with others in more...
than one language, that human is a multilingual. Another author, Weinreich (1953:5) explains it as the practice of using alternatively three or more languages. By this, he means that when there is the practice of using more than one language in communication, multilingualism has taken place. Bilingualism – multilingualism were used interchangeably. For instance, he used the terms bilingual and bilingualism to apply to situations where more than two languages are involved.

Haugen (1956:9) sees it as a kind of multiple bilingualism. Invariably, it is a combination of many bilingualisms; that means the speaking of two languages multiplied in the speech of many speakers in a community. For example, if in a speech community, Mr. A speaks Igbo and English, Mr. B speaks French and Dutch and they are distributed all over in that manner, that community is multilingual. Mackey (1957:51) posits that it is the alternative use of two or more languages. To him, multilingualism is when there is use of more than one language interchangeably. Thus, it means that there must be a high level of proficiency in those languages for them to be used alternatively. Sharwood (1994:7) states that multilingualism (SLA as he referred to it) is any other language other than the first language learned by a group of learners. This explains the fact that, being multilingual is having other languages apart from the L1. Multilingualism is the linguistic behavior of the members of a speech community which alternately uses two to three or more languages depending on the situation and function (Kachni, 1986:159). Kachni emphasizes here that the users of the three or more languages interact in these languages based on the environment and situation. He is very much concerned with environment of use or domain of use. Cenoz and Jessner (2004) described multilingualism to be an act of acquiring and writing more than two languages. He is interested with the acquisition and
orthography of the languages not necessarily competence in speech. Crystal (1999) cited in Okwuchohu (2003) explains multilingualism as an alternative fundamental principal to the concept of shared global language. Agbedo (1991) looks at multilingualism from a perspective of speech community. To him, the term multilingualism suggests the existence of speech communities where more than two languages are used for communication purposes.

Alamu and Iloene (2003) posited that the term multilingualism refers to a linguistic state where numerous languages are in use by one individual or in the same nation. For them, it is the situation where many languages are used in communication by individuals or a community. Appel and Muysken (1987) in their definition of multilingualism believed that it is difficult to determine whether a given person is bilingual or multilingual; and for one to determine whether a given person is bilingual or multilingual one needs to provide answers to the questions that portray how a multilingual should be identified.

The above indicate the various views held by different scholars concerning multilingualism. As observed, some define it as an ability; others see it as a practice, while the rest view it based on the domain of use and an acquisition of writing skill. The point is that various scholarly perceptions generate various definitions. These various definition notwithstanding portrays the fact that language diversification is a constant play in any given multilingual society. It also gives an insight into dialectology which is the study of dialects or the regional differences in a language.

Concise Oxford Companion of the English language (Mcarthur, 1998) defines dialectology as the study of dialects that is the study of varieties features, differences in forms and meanings
interrelationships, distribution and broadly, their spoken forms as distinct from their literary forms. Vajda (2004), explains dialectology as a branch of sociolinguistics that studies the systematic variants of a language. This scholar sees it as a branch of Sociolinguistics not just Linguistics.

According to Cook (1992), the study of different aspects of the diversity of languages should be one of the main goals of multilingualism. He also went further to criticize Chomsky’s (1986) question “what constitute knowledge of language to him the question should be what constitute knowledge of languages. In the words of Mahapatra (1990:1), “Multilingualism and dialectology is the same as linguistic diversity and it is found in most present day nations. E.g. Nigeria. All languages show internal variation. This is to say that every language exists in a number of varieties and is in a sense the sum of these varieties.

Hudson (1996 P.22) defines a variety of a language as a set of linguistic items with similar distribution. With this definition, one can then say that Awka Igbo, Abakiliki Igbo, Onitsha Igbo, the Igbo used in the music industry etc are all varieties of the Igbo language. A lot of confusion arises from the use of the terms language and dialect. For instance, an English-speaker who went to China for the first time and meets a Cantonese-speaking Chinese man and a Mandarin-speaking Chinese man might get confused when trying to figure out the language been spoken by both men. Speakers of Mandarin Chinese say they speak Chinese and speakers of Cantonese say they speak Chinese, but a non-Chinese observer will find out that these two groups cannot converse with one another except through a shared writing system. They insist that they speak different dialects of the Chinese language and not different languages. To the Chinese, a shared writing system and a strong tradition of political, social and cultural unity form essential
parts of their definition of language. To a person who is not from
China, and who has no knowledge about the language, this is not so. (Ronald Wardhaugh 2010, P.29). The term dialect in a
language then becomes obscured in a situation where people are
multilingual.

In another typical multilingual setting, say a situation
where a Yoruba, Hausa and an Igbo man meet; to the Igbo man,
the Hausa man speaks the Hausa language regardless of the
particular dialect of Hausa he speaks, to the Yoruba man, the Igbo
man speaks the Igbo language regardless of whether he is a
business man in Nnewi who obviously speaks Nnewi Igbo, and to
the Hausa man, both the Igbo and Yoruba man speak Igbo and
Yoruba languages respectively, with no regard if they speak the
standard or dialectal variants. In multilingual situations like these,
dialectal distinctions within a language is not necessary, rather the
dialect of a particular language, represents or stands for the
language and by this, multilingualism and dialectology overlap.

The list of various scholarly discussions goes on and on.
However, it is important to understand that in all their stated
arguments, they all try to analyze the same issue but from different
angles. The knowledge of multilingualism would be incomplete
without addressing dialectology since both are all basis for
linguistic diversity.

Discussion on the subject matter
According to Agbedo (1991), the definition of multilingualism is a
subject of debate and has split scholars into two divisions, those in
favor of narrow definition and those in favor of broad definition.
This narrow and broad division is what Cook (1992) refers to as
minimal and maximal definition. The maximal division refers to
people who are more competent in more than one and two
language i.e. speakers who have control/complete knowledge over the language so as to sound native i.e. a given speaker/an individual, that can speak English, Igbo & French, and very fluent in all three languages; or in Nigeria, an Igbo speaker who is said to be competent in Hausa, Yoruba & Igala.

For dialectology, it is the study of dialects, that is, of variant features within a language, their history, differences of form and meaning, interrelationship distribution and more broadly, their spoken as distinct from their literary forms. Dialectology studies the individual dialects noting the characteristics, differences and the historical factors that gave rise to it. What multilingualism and dialectology have in common is that both involves language, one cannot take place without the other because language is a vehicle through which information, knowledge, ideas, thought and culture are communicated and passed on from generation to generation. Humans cannot do without language because there is a continuous quest to relate and interact, conquer and dominate in business, interpersonal relationships, politics, religion, education & other spheres of life.

What this means is that multilingualism and dialectology is a common ground for language diversification which could lead to a number of several linguistic phenomena which characterizes speech communities, this according to Emenanjo (1990). One of these linguistic factors include: language contact which is characterized by certain adverse effects on the native speakers’ use of the secondary language. A good example of society in such a contact situation is Nigeria, where English was brought in contact with numerous Nigerian languages. This can be traced to the act of colonial masters (the British). Equally, German co-exists with French and Italian in Switzerland. In Cameroon, we have English cum French and other indigenous Cameroonian languages. To
O’Reilly (2007), migration leads to considerable shifts in social life, economy, and politics and of course language involving contact and use. According to him, one of the noticeable macro-effects of modern migration is the confluence of linguistic diversities and the formation of new multilingualism all around the world.

Multilingualism involves speaking more than one language. A number of issues exist in multilingualism, namely: language shift, language attitude etc. These concepts can only be found in a multilingual society. Dialectology involves variations of a particular language. This means that a language may have forms or varieties. For instance, English has various forms like the British English, American English, Black American English, and Nigerian English and so on. It involves a relation of inclusion where one particular form can be included in a more general language. Issues like diglossia exist under this.

In relation to language diversification, it should be understood that language is the central point in both multilingualism and dialectology. When it is possible for individuals in a community to interact in more than one language, it fosters language diversification. In a multilingual society, language contact is inevitable. This makes the formation of pidgins and creoles possible over time especially when one of the spoken languages is difficult to learn. For instance, in Nigeria, the pidgin is a by-product of the various languages and as such, virtually anybody can speak and understand Pidgin. If an Igbo man does not speak Hausa or Yoruba or Efik, he is not limited to communicating with either of these other language speakers because he knows pidgin. Hence, pidgin is a product of language diversification. Diglossia explains the state of languages being closely related and considered dialects of each other. For instance, in Scotland,
English is used in formal situations while Scots is used in informal settings as preferred by the speaker. A lot of issues arise from language diversification, usually sociolinguistic bound. Issues of how the languages can dwell together or cope with each other can arise when a society is multilingual. Issues like language attitudes, choice, shift, code switching and code-mixing, and dialect issues and so on are all existing issues under linguistic diversity.

A nation having many languages both official and unofficial, written and spoken, can still have certain issues where the dialects of these languages are concerned. Example, using the Nigerian setting, it has been observed or discovered that Nigeria is a multilingual society having three major languages – Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, which are more recognized than other languages, like Ijaw, Efik and so on. As a result certain issues could arise, with regards to multilingualism. Coming to the dialect sector, Igbo will be used as an instance. Igbo has various forms or dialects but again, the issue of which ones are major and minor dialects, superior and inferior can arise. For example the Onitsha dialect, Owerri dialect and Umuhia dialect will be butting heads for superiority while the rest of the dialects like the Abakaliki dialect, Nsukka dialect will be soliciting for recognition. Again, there is also the issue of mutual intelligibility among dialects of a language. Some geographical and political policies have made the decisions of one dialect to relate to the other where as they are not mutually intelligible. For example, the Abakaliki dialect of Igbo is barely mutually intelligible with the Onitsha or Awka dialects, yet it is said to be a dialect of Igbo.

Thus, while language diversification in relation to multilingualism and dialectology has advantages, such as, to foster language unity by maintaining a unified system of education, by the influence of
the mass media, and by the social mixing that occurs within a highly mobile population. Moreso, it is a source of wealth and strength, which if properly harnessed and managed will act as a source of synergy for a more effective, directed, guided as well as vibrant evolution of a modern economically viable and technologically developed nation. Disadvantages also exist in situations where speech communities are being isolated from one another over a long period of time.

As a rule, the less groups communicate, the more their language forms will diverge. A good example of this is the Basques, who inhabit a tiny territory of northeast Spain. Since villages and regions are separated by mountains, the Basques speak at least half a dozen very different dialects. In ancient Greece each city state had its own dialect. German has so many dialects today because of centuries of political disunity, during which each province or town developed its own way of speaking; the main division today is between High and Low German.

The common ground between multilingualism and dialectology is that they both deal with variation or diversity. The former deals with language variation (i.e. various languages) while the latter deals with regional or geographical varieties of a language. Sociolinguistic factors that arise as a result of multilingualism are also observed in dialectology. Some of these factors are:

(a) **Language contact:** Dialects come in contact just the same way languages come in contact, and with this contact comes other outcomes such as;

- Borrowing: A situation where languages or dialects borrow lexical items from each other. For instance, a person who speaks delta Igbo may have a close friend who speaks
Onitsha Igbo. If these two use their native tongue to interact often, there is a possibility that they could consciously or sub-consciously borrow lexical items from each other.

- **Code switching:** Just as code switching applies to languages it also applies to dialects. A person who is conversant with more than one dialect of a particular language may switch back and forth between them in a conversation. The same way a person who knows more than one language might switch back between them in a conversation.

  (b) **Language attitude:** A person might have a positive or negative attitude towards his/her dialect, in the same way a person might have a different attitude towards his/her language. When people have a negative attitude towards their dialect, they tend to be ashamed to use it. When they have a positive attitude towards their dialect, they use it more often, thereby projecting it further. An example of a negative attitude towards one’s dialect is observed in some of the speakers of the Abakiliki dialect of Igbo, who are ashamed to use their dialect publicly or even been identified with it.

  (c) **Language choice:** An individual who is ‘multidialectal’ might prefer using a particular dialect over another. Just the same way a multilingual or bilingual might choose a particular language over another. There are no concrete explanations for these choices though.

  (d) **Language change:** A dialect might go through different changes due to the influence of other dialects similarly, a language might be influenced by another language and undergo change.
(e) **Diglossia:** A speech community that is bilingual separates the languages based on their functions. Hence, a particular language can be used in formal contexts, while a particular language might be used informally. Other factors such as language attrition, loss, revival etc which arise as a result of multilingualism can as well be observed in dialectology.

**Findings**
Linguistic diversity in the world today is an issue of growing social importance because a majority of all living languages are threatened in their contrived existence. Linguistic diversity has been defined in a broad sense as the range of variations exhibited by human languages (www.terralinguo.org). The ethnologue (Gordon, 2005, www.ethnologue.com) considers that there are 6,912 languages in the world today but some of the languages included are just considered varieties or dialects in other accounts.

Dialects is defined as a variety of a larger speech form of language, as such, dialectology is concerned with the analysis and description of related language varieties with regards to their salient differences and similarities. The diversity of languages in the world and different vitality of the languages has important implications for individuals and societies. As there are between 5,000 and 7,000 languages in the world and only about 200 independent states, multilingualism is indeed a very common phenomenon. The spread of multilingualism justifies that in this research. In fact, the study of different aspects of the diversity of languages should be one of the main goals of multilingualism as highlighted by Cook (1992). The primary question for linguistics should be not Chomsky’s (1986) what constitutes knowledge of language” (P.3) but “what constitutes knowledge of languages?”
Multilingualism can be seen as the ability to use more than two languages. That is to say that multilingualism and dialectology is a common ground for linguistic diversity, for example the current 48 states.

In Europe, there are 38 official state languages. The five official languages spoken by most people in Europe are, Russian, German, English, French, Italian. But due to the influence of migrants and refugees from all over the world, Europe has become increasingly multilingual and is thus also a common phenomenon in Europe giving rise to a richer linguistic diversity in Europe. In the language garden analogy proposed by Gascia and Jones (1998), it will be dull and boring to travel around the world and see that all gardens are of the same one-colour flower. The variety of flowers of different shapes, sizes and colours makes our visual and aesthetic experience rich and enjoyable. This variety gives rise to linguistic diversity making the world more colourful and interesting.

**Conclusion**

From the above, it is quite obvious that language diversification will not be possible if multilingualism and dialect variation are not in existence. Both ensure that linguistic diversity is inevitable with all its various issues. Multilingualism is indeed a fact of life. It centers on the practice of using more than one language, to varying degrees of proficiency among individuals and society. For dialectology, it concerns itself with the scientific study of variations in language based primarily on regional distribution and their associated features. Certain issues have been addressed in relation with both concepts and this is where language diversification comes in. This implies that there is a widespread of multilingualism and dialect variation within the society. Various
nations like Nigeria, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, India, and Mexico display linguistic diversity because of these two prevailing concepts, multilingualism and dialectology. In summary, dialectology and multilingualism both point to the same issue - language diversification, whether it happens by virtue of language or dialect. To O’Reilly (2007), migration also leads to considerable shifts in social life, economy, and politics & of course, language involving contact and use. In conclusion, multilingualism and dialectology is a sociolinguistic issue and its entire basis should be for understanding despite the diversification.

References

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