

A SEMANTIC STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF MEANING CHANGE IN YORUBA-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

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Abstract.

The dynamism of language is birthed from time to time in the minds of native speakers, either consciously or unconsciously. Language is uniquely designed to fix meanings of words, and the essence of meanings is indispensable. As humans, we are directly conscious of meanings. The passage of meanings from the speaker to the hearer can vary, and the interpretation is dependent on the context, among other things. In view of this, it can be said that the dynamism of language reproduces semantic change, such that meanings can be equally or differently interpreted because words mean different things to different people. In a society where meanings are not diffused equally, there is often a gap between the classical and contemporary generation. This semantic deviation contributed greatly to the poor development of communicative performance among native speakers of Yoruba. This work therefore, examines lexical items whose meanings have been extensively distributed to suit different contexts. The work is approached through Simak Bebas Libat Cakap technique and library research. This work focuses on the features of M.A.K. Halliday's functional theory which include new discoveries, technological words and slangs. These features are compared with their Standard British forms or meanings, and the differences are established. The data of this study was randomly selected and analyzed. It was discovered that the deviation in the meanings of some Yoruba lexical items is facilitated by the need for a new meaning, vagueness of meaning, ambiguous context, among others. The findings are suggestive of the communication gap among Yoruba-English speakers. This gap is observed between the classical and contemporary generation. In view of this, more efforts should be made by linguists and writers to preserve the dynamism and uniqueness of meaning change in Yoruba language.

Keywords: Semantics, Linguistics, Yoruba, English, Language, dynamism,

Introduction

Language changes with time and the role of time in semantic change cannot be overemphasized. Time is central to language and it has powerful effects. Thus, the existence of language is deeply rooted in time. Language changes, evolves and adapts to the need of its users. It has been acknowledged across different scholarly works that languages are ever-dynamic. The dynamism of languages can be likened to that of a chameleon. As long as the need of the speakers change, so will the language. Moreover, language change is due to the fact that language is handed down from a generation to the other. As a language is passed from a generation to the other, there are usually changes in language forms. Children also use the same physiological and cognitive endowment in learning language. Therefore, the same patterns of change are repeatedly manifested across all languages.

Also, change in meaning is as common as change in form because as time goes on, there is loss of lexical transparency in language vocabularies. That is when a word becomes opaque. This occurred because words that are constantly used do not have the same meaning at all times. Thus, when a different intention for a word is shared by the speech community and becomes established in usage, then, a semantic change has occurred.

Semantics is the study of meaning, and meaning resides in words and structures. It is established that semantics is a linguistic study that enhances communication. The ability to communicate within and outside one's linguistic environment depends on the knowledge of the meanings of lexical items in the language. This knowledge is instilled in the native speakers of a language right from inception.

In addition, the development of different meanings for a word automatically raises the question of whether there is an 'original' meaning. This conception is termed 'etymological fallacy' with the intention that, there is an original meaning to a word if one could trace it to the origin of the word. This conception of meaning is false, because no matter how you trace the origin of a word, there is a stage before that with a probably different meaning. This shows that language moves faster than we can imagine.

Furthermore, as time goes on, loss of lexical transparency occurs in semantic change, where a word or part of a word becomes opaque to a later generation because the meaning of such a word may be reinterpreted. Such a reinterpretation is called 'folk etymology'. This occurs on the basis of words which are similar in sound and meaning. A simple example is the Yoruba word 'ògì' which means 'pap'. This same object was first referred to as 'kókó', eventually, it was called 'èkò' and now, it is referred to as 'ògì'.

The development of the word 'ògì' came from several stages of re-interpretation and lexical expressions. Meanwhile, 'ògì' which was re-interpreted as 'pap' which means "a cooked drink made from corn/maize", originally meant "the raw form of grinded corn that has not been made into pap through cooking". Now, the two meanings are used interchangeably for both the raw and the cooked form. This asserts to the phenomenon of 'folk etymology' that words can develop similar meanings.

In addition, semantic change has several effects on linguistic performance. The term 'linguistic performance' was introduced by Noam Chomsky in 1965 to describe "the actual use of language in concrete situations". Linguistic performance is the actual use of language in communicative event. It is used to refer to both the production as well as the comprehension of language. This refers to the idea that native speakers of a language should be able to produce as well as comprehend their language.

Yoruba is the first language for approximately 30 million West Africans, and is spoken by populations in Southwestern Nigeria, Togo, Benin and Sierra Leone. It is also one of the prominent languages and cultures of the diaspora, it greatly impacts the social, cultural and religious lives of millions of people in countries outside Africa, such as Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, and Haiti. In Yoruba language, the lexical forms of object and concepts changes in the course of time and the meaning of words are not always retained. Words give rise to new meanings and some old meanings are mostly in use.

Generally speaking, a necessary condition in any language change, no matter its cause, is some connection; some association between the old form and the new. This happens when the classical generation refers to an object/expression in a different form while the contemporary generation refers to the same object using a lexical form that is entirely different from the one used by classical generation. For example, 'window' in Yoruba has different lexical forms over the years. 'Window' was first called 'mórásáná' and then, 'fèrè̀mù'. Now, it is referred to as 'fèrèsé'. The development of the word 'window' has passed through different stages such as; mórásáná-fèrè̀mù-fèrèsé, all of which refer to the object; 'window'.

In most cases, there is no connection between the old form and the new; 'Mo je dódò'/'Mo je dódò omo yen' (I ate plantain/I admire that child). At other times, both forms are used interchangeably; 'ògì'/'èkò' (grinded corn/pap). There are also cases where the old form goes into extinction, while retaining the new; 'òsùpá/òdún' (moon/year).

In conclusion, situations also exist when both the old and new meanings are retained. This is followed by the act where the old forms/meanings are mostly used by the elderly speakers. This is termed as the core/ 'ìjìnlè Yoruba' among native speakers. Young speakers are left with the new forms/meanings which are often

perceived as fragments of the Yoruba language, by most elderly speakers. As a result, younger speakers also carve out new meanings of lexical items that are totally obscene to the classical generation. As a consequence, there is usually a communication gap between the classical and the contemporary generation.

Statement of the research problem

In an attempt to study Yoruba language, one realizes the extent of its deviation in terms of meaning evolution of some lexical items. Some words had recently undergone semantic change, thereby making them more ambiguous within a sentence.

Semantic change affects the performance of native speakers, no matter the level of competence. These semantic changes are mostly influenced by time and the chronological age of speakers; the classical generation versus the contemporary generation.

Furthermore, words experience semantic change which is the hallmark for new meanings. The new meaning of a word can even represent an entirely different object/concept in the language. As a result, the two meanings compete and appear ambiguous within a sentence. Sometimes, these words cannot be rightly interpreted, even in context.

For the classical generation, such semantic changes are hard to commit to memory. Sometimes, context might be the only saving grace. At other times, the classical generation might not be able to keep track of the semantic changes in lexical items and phrases in their native language. This contributes to the contemporary generation taking notes of the new meanings generated by semantic change, thereby losing the former ones unconsciously.

In addition, it has been observed that some Yoruba lexical items have different meanings attached to them by native speakers as influenced by the Nigerian context and culture. These semantic deviations contribute largely to the poor development of grammatical competence among the native speakers of the language, as the meanings attached to these lexical items/phrases are more of those obtained in the Nigerian environment. This makes it difficult for non-native of the language to understand utterances.

Moreover, the poor comprehension of utterances leads to the development of poor linguistic performance in any communicative event. As a result of this, a communicative event becomes another moment of analyzing lexical items, which seems futile because, at the end, the message is not understood. This leads to a breakdown in communication, since the channel of communication is incomplete without a feedback.

It is this apparent deviation from the earlier meanings that justifies this study while considering the competence and performance of native speakers in relation to the semantic changes in Yoruba language, with special reference to the semantic features of Yoruba lexical items and their usage.

The main objective of this study is to examine the peculiarity in the meanings of some Yoruba lexical items as used in the Nigerian environment. While semantic change has caught the fancy of scholars for centuries, the area of semantic change in relation to linguistic performance has not received much attention.

In conclusion, this research will contribute to all the existing literatures of evidences in semantic change. The data collected through this project has the potential to be used as basis for other research in the field. The results of this project are important to linguists because they will provide insights into the linguistic performance needs of speakers through the publication of 'The Dictionary of Semantic changes in Yoruba language', thereby

neutralizing the negative effects of semantic change to unravel solutions to this apparent deviation. It is on this note that this study is justified.

Review

Semantics

There have been arguments on whether semantic change is a deviation or not. A lot of linguists have conducted researches and investigations to examine the existence or otherwise of semantic change. It has been established that since language is dynamic, every other aspect of a language also undergoes changes from time to time.

Furthermore, there are many literatures revealing the phonological, morphological and syntactic features of Yoruba language. It is however quite unfortunate that little attention has been paid to its semantic deviations from standard Yoruba as well as its effect in linguistic performance of native speakers.

Additionally, meaningful communication cannot be achieved by only the knowledge of the phonological, morphological and syntactic aspects of the language, since a communication channel is incomplete without a feedback. Yet, we can't receive a feedback without the semantic understanding of the communicative event, even in context.

Semantics is the study of meaning in a language (Lobner, 2002). According to Chambers Biographical Dictionary (1990, p. 202), the word semantics was first used by Michael Bréal in the nineteenth century to mean a range of ideas often used in natural languages to explain the issue of understanding that is associated with word selection and connotation.

Correspondingly, semantic aspect of the language needs to be given more attention, especially the area of semantic change. As stated by Firth, this is because, language is a meaningful activity and the indispensable goal of any language is the communication of thoughts and meaning (as cited in Ogunleke, 2008, p.19).

However, semantic change in words is so evident in Yoruba to the extent that some words cannot be understood by an individual who is not familiar with the changes or even by learners of the language. Although, one can sometimes ascertain that some words have more than the original meaning by the context surrounding the communicative event.

Meaning is an indispensable companion of language. Humans communicate with meanings in their minds. Yet, words mean different things to different people. Not to talk of semantic changes in such words. The study of semantic aspect of Yoruba will go a long way in enhancing communication among users of the language.

In an attempt to make a distinction between semantic change and semantic neology, Boussidan (2013) observed that "the term semantic change is generally associated with Anglo-Saxon approaches, while most European approaches uses the term 'semantic neology'. However, semantic neology, or how words acquire or lose some of their meanings, is part of semantic change which encompasses conceptual change or how new or obsolete concepts are attached to a known/new word" (p. 29).

In addition, it has been established that the methodologies used to investigate semantic changes over the years has been the same; all pointed in the same direction and of course, the same results. Magué (2006) asserted that "Despite the great variety of theoretical approaches, the study of semantic changes has gone through, the methodology remained the same: only completed semantic changes are studied, either by the analysis of

synchronic manifestations i.e. polysemy or sets of cognates, or by the analysis of the development of a new meaning from corpus evidences”.

Furthermore, one of the contribution to the theory of meaning change is the classic article by Antonie Meillet titled, “Comment les mots changent de sens?” which when translated means; “How do words change meaning?”. It was published in 1906 in “*Anne Sociologique*”. In this article, Meillet presented the outline of a sociolinguistic view of meaning change which consists in an integrated theory of innovation and diffusion. According to this theory, semantic changes arise mainly due to the fact that speech communities are heterogeneous, and that they are organized into different social groups.

Nevertheless, the society as a whole, tend to resist linguistic innovation while small groups tend to encourage innovation. As the same individual may belong to different groups, simultaneously or in succession, there is an exchange of lexemes between such groups. This is what is termed ‘borrowing’. As soon as a word is extracted from its original sphere of usage and is taken up by wider circles, the new users will generally lack the knowledge available to the original group of speakers and will use the word in a less specific sense. Therefore, the moving of words from group languages to the common language and vice-versa causes semantic change.

Also, word dynamics encompasses all the semantic process of word formation, such as morphological productivity, whereas concept dynamics include all the mechanics of conceptual evolution and redistribution. This occurs when words are removed from its original frame of usage, and has evolved their meanings. The new meanings are gradually diffused into the speech community until they are widely distributed. Though, not all groups will embrace meaning change at once. The youths are generally known for embracing anything that has to do with ‘change’ in all spheres of life.

Also, new meanings are mostly confronted with the issue of diffusion. It has been established that somehow, a new word or meaning is relayed in communities of speakers, until it becomes part of the language either at the level of unspoken consensus or at the level of lexicology.

Thus, new words and meanings may emerge from individual innovation but their existence is rooted in a speech community, for diffusion matters. Indeed, new meanings may be said to have come into existence through language use, as stated by Traugott and Dasher (2002). This implies that a lot of changes emerge from colloquial language before being absorbed into more formal language.

Meaning seems intrinsic to a language. When we make a sentence, we combine it to have a structural meaning and communicative sense. Semantics is the study and analysis of how language is used figuratively and literally to produce meaning. So, in a way, semantic rules make communication possible since they are rules that people have agreed on to give meanings to words. Semantic misunderstandings arise when people give different meanings to the same words or phrases.

When looking at how speech communities assign meanings to words, Ulmann (1964, p. 265) identified meaning as a verbal definition that is conventionally assignable to a form. Meaning can basically be divided into two: lexical and grammatical. Lexical meaning is the literal meaning of a word, as contained in the dictionary. It is the original meaning of a word which has not been diluted by any verbal or situational context. Grammatical meaning is the meaning conveyed in a sentence by word order and other grammatical measures. This implies that a word expressing the same idea can perform different syntactic functions.

O’Grady et al. (1966, p. 257) as cited in Tobing (2010) thinks differently about the existence of meaning. He viewed meaning as something that exists in the mind rather than the word spoken during speech. So, words

mean different things to different people. The speaker and the listener may hold different meanings in their minds during a communicative event. This is the picture-producing power of arranged word.

Certainly, meaning is subject to change. The dominion of change over meaning is instant and unstoppable. When reviewing the nature of meaning, Nerlich & Clarke identified that “the nature of meaning is change” and that “the explanation of meaning should be based on the fact that meaning is dynamic and ever-changing, “something” of which change seems to be an inherent property. That is, one can only explain what meaning is, by explaining how it changes” (Bouddisson, 2013, p. 40)

This led C.K Odgen and Richard (1946, p. 186-187) to combine twenty-two definitions of the word ‘meaning’, some of which were quoted by Leech (1974, p. 1) as;

- An intrinsic property.
- The other words annexed to a word in the dictionary.
- The connotation of a word.
- The place of anything in a system.
- The practical consequences of a thing in our future experience.
- That to which the user of a system actually refers.
- That to which the user of a symbol ought to be referring.
- That to which the user of the symbol believes himself to be referring.
- That to which the interpreter of a symbol:
 - a) refers
 - b) believes himself to be referring
 - c) believes the user to be referring

In view of this, we can deduce that semantics cannot be ignored or tagged as the weak point in the language. Our world revolves around meanings. Of its essence, Morris bravely stated; “we come then to conclusion that meaning is practically everything. We always see the meaning as we look, think in meanings as we think, act in terms of meaning when we act. Apparently, we are never directly conscious of anything but meanings” (Morris, 1946, p. 19).

Hence, meaning is an indispensable companion of language.

Semantic Change

Semantic change is the subfield of historical linguistics that investigates changes in words over time. Semantic changes occur when speakers attribute new meanings to extant expressions. Semantic changes have been scientifically studied for more than one hundred and fifty years. All along this history, successive generations of scholars have adopted at least three theoretical frameworks.

Chronologically, the first trend focused on the identification of the different kinds of semantic changes a lexeme can undergo. The second trend laid emphasis on the advocacy of cross-linguistic studies and the focus is on semantic field rather than isolated lexemes. The third trend is the cognitivist trend, which aims at explaining the cognitive mechanisms that underlie semantic change. Investigators of changes in meaning have established a set of semantic categories, such as ‘generalization’, in which the meaning and reference of a word widen over the years and ‘specialization’, in which the meaning of a word narrows over the years. Like any linguistic change, a

semantic change is not acquired simultaneously by all members of a speech community. An innovation enters a language and spreads through the speech community along socially determined lines.

As well, semantic change is not necessarily a change in meaning per se, but the addition of a meaning to the semantic system or the loss of a meaning from the semantic system while the form remains constant. The original meaning of a form is not immediately displaced by the innovated meaning, but the two coexist for some time. It occurs in Yoruba language when native speakers adopt/innovate expressions and apply them to activities or conditions in their own social and cultural environment. When words in Yoruba undergo semantic change, it is often observed that there is no semantic similarity or connection between the new sense and the original. The alteration of meaning occurs because words are constantly in use and what is intended by speakers is not exactly the same each time. So, if a different intention for a word is shared by the speech community and becomes established in usage, then, a semantic change has occurred.

Moreover, lexical change is probably the most frequent type of language change and the easiest to observe. For instance, we can make confident assertions about the age of a speaker who uses the word ‘òsùpá’ to refer to ‘year’, or the one who uses the word ‘òjà’ to refer to ‘marijuana’. This illustrates perfectly how words can virtually disappear or gradually shift in meaning and usage. Older speakers use vocabularies we might now consider a little outdated or tag as outright outdated while young speakers use vocabularies that the older ones might not even understand or tag as complex.

Also, the meaning of a word can either be slightly altered, or it can evolve greatly. While this can cause confusion and misunderstanding, it is also seen as a positive step forward in the growth and adaptation of languages.

In addition, semantic change can be influenced by a variety of factors, including culture, language interference, as well as the advancement of science and technology. Some words disappear completely from daily usage, thereby confirming the notion that language is fluid and ever-changing. The definitions and meanings behind words do not have set rules and guidelines, and are at the discretion of the society.

In conclusion, the reason for language change is that each generation has to learn a language for themselves and what they do is to construct a different version.

Palmer (1981) observed semantic change (as cited in Tobing, 2010, p. 16-17) and, argued four types of semantic change as follows;

Generalization

This is the broadening of the meaning of a word. The sphere of usage of such meaning increases, such that the word can be used in diverse contexts with a broader meaning rather than, the neural meaning. For example, the original meaning of the Yoruba word ‘òjà’ is ‘market’; a place where goods are sold, while the exact word ‘òjà’ has been broadened to mean ‘weed’; a street name for ‘marijuana’.

Specialization

This is the opposite of generalization. It occurs when the meaning of a word is narrowed into the same class. The sphere of usage of such meaning is decreased, so that a word can be used in fewer contexts other than before the change of meaning. The meaning of such a word is reshaped courtesy of the pressure of another word that had frequently co-occurred with it. For example, ‘òsùpá’ in Yoruba, has been known with the meaning

‘year’ and ‘moon’ overtime. Now, the word ‘moon’ retained ‘òsùpá’ while the word ‘year’ is now referred to as ‘òduń’.

Pejoration

It is a process by which the meaning of a word worsens or degenerates, and has evolved to represent something less favourable or unpleasant than it originally did. For example, the Yoruba word ‘olójà’ refers to a seller of goods and it has a positive meaning, but the word ‘olójà’ now means ‘prostitute’, which has a negative meaning.

Amelioration

This is a process by which the meaning of a word improves or becomes elevated, and has evolved to represent something more favourable and pleasant than it originally refers to.

For example, in the sentence, “O ti tà ibon”(You have shot the gun), the Yoruba phrase ‘ta ibon’ means ‘to shoot something with a gun’. It has a terrifying sense of hurting or killing someone. However, in the sentence “Dake, o ti ta ibon”(Keep quiet, you have committed an error) probably uttered in the course of a communicative event. The phrase ‘ta ibon’ here means, ‘to commit an error when speaking a foreign language’. In this sentence, the phrase ‘ta ibon’ does not have a terrifying sense as it was in the former sentence.

Factors that facilitate semantic change includes: Happening by chance, the need for a new meaning, scientific words, taboo, discontinuous of language, vagueness of meaning, loss of motivation, polysemy, ambiguous context, structure of the vocabulary, etc.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical pivot of the phenomenon that produced semantic changes in Yoruba is that of language change, lexical expansion and innovation. The theory for this study is the Functional theory that was proposed by M. A. K. Halliday. He developed the theory in the early sixties (seminal paper, Halliday 1961). The theory posits that language changes according to the needs of its users. This mainly covers lexical change. This tend to take the form of new discoveries/learning/inventions, technological words and slangs.

Thus, this research is based on the four principles of functional linguistics. Functional linguistics holds that; language use is functional, its use is to make meanings, these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged and it affirms that, the process of using language is a semiotic process; a process of making meaning by choosing.

According to Halliday (1975), language has developed in response to three kinds of social-functional 'needs.' The first is to be able to construe experience in terms of what is going on around us and inside us. The second is to interact with the social world by negotiating social roles and attitudes. The third and final need is to be able to create messages with which we can package our meanings in terms of what is 'New or Given', and in terms of what the starting point for our message is, commonly referred to as the ‘Theme’. What is new or given here refers to the trend in the meaning of words. The existence of such meanings is deeply rooted in the realization that the initial meaning can no longer satisfy the needs of the language speakers.

Methodology

This research was done qualitatively and descriptively. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present. This paper focused on semantic analysis of the effect of semantic

change in linguistic performance of Yoruba native speakers. A group conversations of people in their natural settings were observed. The population was randomly selected from bilinguals of Yoruba-English of obtained. The aim of analyzing the data is to find out the regular pattern so that the purpose of the study is achieved. The data are analyzed based on the functional theory proposed by M. A. K. Halliday, which posits that language changes according to the needs of its users, using: (1) New discoveries/learning/inventions (2) Technological words (3) Slangs as the features of analysis.

Thus, the purpose of the descriptive research is to make a description and paint systematically, the semantic changes observed in lexical items as well as the effect of meaning change in Yoruba-English speakers.

Analysis

NEW DISCOVERIES/LEARNINGS/INVENTIONS (LEXICAL EXPANSION)

1. Moon/Year

2. 1ST STAGE: Òsùpá

Meaning: moon

2ND STAGE: Òsùpá

Meaning: year

CURRENT STAGE: 'Òsùpá' for 'moon' retained its meaning.

CURRENT STAGE: 'Òsùpá' which means 'year', evolved and 'òdún' for 'year' emerged.

'Òsùpá' which means 'moon' is a universal word. There is no language that does not have a way of referring to this heavenly rounded light. So, the word 'òsùpá' for 'moon' existed before the word 'òsùpá' for 'year'

2. Festival/Year

1ST STAGE: Qdún

Meaning: festival

2ND STAGE: Qdún

Meaning: year

CURRENT STAGE: 'Qdún' retained the meanings for both 'festival' and 'year'.

3. Pot

1ST STAGE: Ísasùn

Meaning: A pot molded with clay that passes through a heated furnace during the making process. It is used for cooking soups and stews.

2ND STAGE: Ìkòkò

Meaning: A pot molded with clay and used for cooking all sorts of delicacies. It is especially used as a water pot that is often placed in a corner inside a house. A cup is often placed on it, and water drawn from it is always cool.

3RD STAGE: Ape

Meaning: A pot made with a metal that is usually round and deep; often has a handle and lid.

CURRENT STAGE: ‘Ìsasùn’, ‘ìkòkò’ and ‘apẹ’ retained the meanings for ‘pot’. Now, they refer to different kinds of pot. ‘Ìsasùn’ and ‘ìkòkò’ are gradually disappearing and are used in different contexts; when referring to ancient practices or traditions. ‘Apẹ’ is taking the lead, and it is used frequently.

4. Lamp

1ST STAGE: Fítílà

Meaning: A type of lamp made with clay. This lamp was majorly used before the discovery of kerosene especially in Yoruba land, and it is often filled with palm oil. It was later called ‘àtùpà’.

2ND STAGE: Kádégbón (Jàngo)

Meaning: A type of lamp made with tin enclosed in wick. The tin is often filled with kerosene. It has a small opening at the top where the wick is lighted with a match stick to give light.

3RD STAGE: Àtùpà

Meaning: A type of lamp made with clay with an elongated tip which houses a wick. It is the wick that is lighted to give light. The lamp is filled with palm oil which serves as the fuel. It was initially known as ‘fítílà’ before it evolved and was named ‘àtùpà’.

4TH STAGE: Léntíríkì

Meaning: A type of lamp that is pumped to give light. It is pumped like a bicycle tyre, and the more pumped it is, the more the brightness.

CURRENT STAGE: It was observed that the words ‘fítílà’ and ‘léntíríkì’ are no longer in use, the words and the objects; ‘kádégbón’ and ‘àtùpà’ are used in different contexts and social situations. These words are gradually going into extinction as they have been replaced with electricity (iná èlétíríkì), battery lamps and rechargeable lamps.

5. Cup

The word ‘cup’ passed through different lexical expansion. They are as follows;

1ST STAGE: Ikeemu

2ND STAGE: Ife

3RD STAGE: Koobu

CURRENT STAGE: The word ‘koobu’ for ‘cup’ is majorly in use now. It was borrowed through adaptation into the Yoruba vocabulary structure from the English word ‘cup’.

6. Container for fetching water

1ST STAGE: Agbè (akèrèngbè)

Meaning: A container made from calabash.

2ND STAGE: Ìkòkò

Meaning: A container made from clay.

3RD STAGE: Ládugbó

Meaning: A four dimension container made from metal.

4TH STAGE: Ike

Meaning: A container made from plastic.

CURRENT STAGE: When it comes to containers for fetching water, 'ike' is majorly in use now. However, a container made with plastic can be called 'ladugbo' or 'baafu' by the elderly speakers. The choice is largely dependent on the speakers, and it varies from speaker to speaker.

7. Kerosene

1ST STAGE: Epo èbó.

"Epo èbó" when translated, literally means the 'fuel of the white'. The sellers often advertize this way; "Àròkún epo èbó o". This means; "your container will be filled to the brim if you buy from me". This advertisement is literal, because your container being filled to the brim is dependent on the liters of kerosene you buy. So it is purely a marketing strategy.

2ND STAGE: Baafin

3RD STAGE: Karosín

'Karosín' is a borrowed form and it was borrowed through adaptation.

CURRENT STAGE: The word 'karosín' for 'kerosene' is mostly current and it is heard in speakers' daily conversations.

8. Maizepudding

1ST STAGE: Àbàrí

'Àbàrí' is made from grinded maize. It is a meal made exactly like a beans pudding. Sellers often advertize this way; "Àbàrí tepo, tiyò". This means; "Àbàrí is loaded with palm oil, and salt to taste". This is just a marketing strategy to make buyers salivate and desire to buy. Later, 'àbàrí' evolved and was called 'sapala'.

2ND STAGE: Sapala

Sapala is the same as 'àbàrí'.

CURRENT STAGE: Both words are used interchangeably. The preference of one over the other is dependent on the age of speakers.

9. Beans pudding

1ST STAGE: Òlẹ̀ (Òlẹ̀lẹ̀)

'Òlẹ̀, also called 'òlẹ̀lẹ̀' is made from grinding beans into a smooth paste, with the addition of seasoning, palm oil or vegetable oil, depending on individual preferences.

2ND STAGE: Mọinmọin

The word 'òlẹ̀' evolved, and beans pudding got the name; 'mọinmọin'. It still has the exact processes of making the meal.

CURRENT STAGE: Both words are used interchangeably by native speakers.

10. Cold pap (made into leaves)

1ST STAGE: Oori

2ND STAGE: Èkọ-tútù

CURRENT STAGE: 'Èkọ-tútù' is now used by the majority of native speakers. Before one can come across the word 'oori' for cold pap, such a speaker will probably be between 60-80 years. Though, speakers that are not up to this age can recall the word 'oori', but not in a linguistic performance.

11. Lime

1ST STAGE: Orombo

2ND STAGE: Qsàn wéwé

CURRENT STAGE: Both words are used interchangeably by both the classical and contemporary generation.

12. Compound

1ST STAGE: Káà

2ND STAGE: Agbolé

‘Agbolé’ is from ‘Agbo (outside) + Ile (house)=Agbolé (compound)’.

CURRENT STAGE: ‘Agbolé’ is commonly used now.

13. Broom

1ST STAGE: Şaşara

‘Şaşara’ is a type of broom gotten from a particular tree called ‘Igi Qlşşepotu’. The plant is often dried and tied with a rope. It is usually used to sweep the compound.

2ND STAGE: Qwò

‘Qwò’ is gotten from palm tree. It is mainly extracted from its fronds. At a point, ‘Qwò’ is called ‘Ìgbálè’ by some speakers.

3RD STAGE: Ìgbálè

‘Ìgbálè’ is the same object as ‘Qwò’.

CURRENT STAGE: ‘Qwò’ and ‘Ìgbálè’ are used interchangeably by speakers.

14. Underwear skirt (females)

1ST STAGE: Ìlábìrù

2ND STAGE: Tòbí

3RD STAGE: Yèrì

CURRENT STAGE: ‘Yèrì’ is majorly in use now.

15. Yam flour meal/Cassava flour meal

This is made by boiling water and adding yam flour/cassava flour which is mixed together to form a smooth paste.

1ST STAGE: Qkà

2ND STAGE: Àmàlà

CURRENT STAGE: ‘Qkà’ and ‘Àmàlà’ is used interchangeably, and it varies from speaker to speaker.

16. Body cream

Different materials are used as cream. They are as follows:

1ST STAGE: Osùn (camwood)

2ND STAGE: Àdí-àgbon (coconut oil)

3RD STAGE: Ìpara

CURRENT STAGE: The use of any of these is dependent on the type of body cream that is being used. However, ‘ìpara’ is used for all sort of cream except that of ‘Osùn’ (camwood) and ‘Àdí-àgbon’ (coconut oil).

17. Maize

1ST STAGE: Yangan

2ND STAGE: Erín

3RD STAGE: Àgbàdo

CURRENT STAGE: 'Yangan' is mostly used by elderly speakers. 'Erín' and 'Àgbàdo' is majorly in use now. The use of any of these is dependent on the preference of the speakers.

18. Trousers

1ST STAGE: Kẹmbẹ

'Kẹmbẹ' is quite baggy and does not reach the ankle.

2ND STAGE: Sọró

3RD STAGE: Sòkòtò

CURRENT STAGE: 'Sòkòtò' is majorly in use now. The use of 'Kẹmbẹ' and 'Sọró' is dependent on the type of styles in question and the age of speakers.

19. Uniformed clothing

Uniformed clothing are used by the Yoruba people for ceremonies and festivals.

1ST STAGE: Asọ-ẹgbéjọdà

2ND STAGE: Asọ-ẹbí

CURRENT STAGE: Asọ-ẹbí is majorly in use.

20. Locust beans

Locust beans are condiments added to foods and soups because of its special smell and nutritional value.

1ST STAGE: Irú

2ND STAGE: Ìsebẹ

CURRENT STAGE: Both 'Irú' and 'Ìsebẹ' are used interchangeably by native speakers.

21. Motorcycle

1ST STAGE: Tatagànràn

2ND STAGE: Álùpùpù

CURRENT STAGE: 'Álùpùpù' is majorly in use now.

22. Door

1ST STAGE: Àfàsé

2ND STAGE: Ilẹ̀kùn

CURRENT STAGE: 'Ilẹ̀kùn' is majorly in use now.

23. Sieve for yam flour/cassava flour

1ST STAGE: Kònkòsò

2ND STAGE: Ajò-ìkùlùbó

CURRENT STAGE: 'Ajò-ìkùlùbó' is widely used now, while 'Kònkòsò' is no longer in use.

24. Sewing needle

1ST STAGE: Ọ̀pọ̀rò

2ND STAGE: Abẹ́ré

CURRENT STAGE: ‘Abéré’ is majorly in use now.

TECHNOLOGICAL WORDS

Electricity	-	Iná-mònàmoná
Philosophy	-	Àròjinlè
Science	-	Ìmòjinlè
Academy	-	Ilé-ẹ̀kọ́
Technique	-	Ọ̀nà
Earth	-	Ayé
World	-	Àgbáyé
Star	-	Ìràwò
Galaxy	-	Àjọọràwò
Tool/Device	-	Èrọ
Diplomacy	-	Ìfọ̀rọ̀wérọ̀
Civilization	-	Ọ̀lájú
Thesis	-	Àlàyé-ijinlè
High-way	-	Òpòpónà
Subject	-	Àsàyàn-ẹ̀kọ́
Democracy	-	Ìjọba-alágbádá
Hospital	-	Ilé-iwòsàn
Air-conditioner	-	Èrọ-amúlétutù
Phone	-	Èrọ-ibánisòrọ̀
Blender	-	Èrọ-ilọta
Television	-	Èrọ-amóhùnmáwòrán

4.0.3 SLANGS

Words	Literal meanings	Extended meanings
Rógo	Behold glory	Trouble
Gán	Sting	Deceive
Èja	Fish	Marijuana
Gbe senu	Put in mouth	Drink alcohol
Ọsẹ	Soap	Contempt
Ta lenu	Spicy	Sexy
Ọgèdè	Banana	Penis
Ọjà	Market	Weed (marijuana)
Ọlọjà	Seller	Prostitute
Epo	Palm oil	Bleaching cream

Gbésẹ̀	Adjust one's leg	A form of dance
Ajá	Dog	Prostitute
Gé ìgò	To break a bottle	Drink alcohol
Sisí peḽẹḽẹ	Slim lady	Groundnut candy
Jẹ̀ gò	Eat a bottle	Forfeit/lose something
Gbé áyán mì	Swallow a cockroach	Pregnant
Ìjẹ	Edible	Prey
Ru po	Carry potty	To fail woefully
Sán gbó	Cut the bush	Retake an exam
Gbé gbó	Gather dried plant	Failure
Orombo	Lime	Small breast (female)
Ìbẹḽẹ	Pawpaw	Extra large breast (female)
Ọsàn	Orange	Big breast (female)
Ó pò	Many/plenty	Endowed (female)
Ó pò dánú	Filled to the brim	i. Heavily endowed female ii. Well dressed (male/female)
Sọrò sókè	Speak louder	Lend your voice
Jẹ ojú	Eat an eye	Put to shame/surprise/disappoint
Gba tiẹ	Agree to an opinion	Love/support
Kó jẹ	Eat	Like/admire
Ojọ iwájú	Future	Breast
Ẹ̀yìn ọ̀la	After tomorrow	Butt (female)
Kálá	Harvest okro	Stingy
Jẹ̀ dọ̀dọ̀	Eat plantain	Love/admire
Saka	Sack (bag)	Good
Gbe fun	Give it	To lie
Kó rodo	Pack pepper	Not smart/foolish
Ẹ̀lẹ̀	Patience	A beautiful lady
Ojà alẹ̀	Night market	Prostitution
Òlẹ̀lẹ̀	Beans pudding	Woman
Gbéra	Lift one's body	To move at a fast pace

Findings and conclusion

This study has examined the case of different meanings attached to words in Yoruba language, as well as how some of these words disappear or become established in usage. This has been achieved by looking at terms used as technological words, slangs, as well as lexical expansions that are as a result of new inventions. These are encapsulated to cover strategic areas (social and cultural) which dominate everyday activities of people.

Similarly, basic and important factors which are responsible for deviations have been revealed. These factors include; the need for a new meaning, happening by chance, level of exposure, scientific words, level of education, taboo, and the like.

Moreover, meaning is an indispensable companion of language, therefore, this study has shown that semantic change in Yoruba language has been influenced by factors such as; culture, language interference, as well as the advancement of science and technology. Some words disappear completely from daily usage, thereby confirming the notion that language is fluid and ever-changing.

Also, the definitions and meanings behind words do not have set rules and guidelines, and are at the discretion of the society. It has been discovered that, if a different intention for a word is shared by the speech community, and becomes established in usage, then, a semantic change has occurred. This is because as society evolves so does language and language changes to meet up with the immediate need of the society.

In view of this, older speakers use vocabularies that are considered a little outdated, or tagged as totally outdated while the contemporary speakers use vocabularies that the older generations might not even understand or tag as fragments of the Yoruba language. As a result of this, confident assertions about the age of a speaker who uses the word 'òsùpá' to refer to 'year', and the one who uses the word 'ojà' to refer to 'marijuana' can be made. This illustrates perfectly how words can virtually disappear or gradually shift in meaning and usage.

However, as much as semantic change in Yoruba language exists, the classical and contemporary generations are expected to fill up the semantic gap between them. This will help native speakers as well as learners of the language to be involved in the understanding of communicative events in the language.

Finally, the limitations of this study is a challenge to direct critical attention towards a comprehensive study of semantic change in Yoruba language, and also in its proper documentation and publication of materials on semantic change.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing findings, it is recommended that;

Since the internet can ultimately be likened to the dictionary of semantic change, it is recommended that lexicographers should consider the internet when sourcing for words. There should be a Dictionary of Semantic Change in Yoruba language, which should be reviewed and updated from time to time. This will help each generation to keep track of meanings. Another recommendation is that there should be a Dictionary of Slangs in Yoruba language. Learners of the language are mostly taught the literal meanings of words, and so they seem lost in a communicative event. This is also evident in native speakers who have little or no idea on the changes in meanings. Finally, it is recommended that the gap between the classical and contemporary generation of Yoruba-English speakers should be filled by striking an optimal balance between the two generations through books and the mass media.

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