

A Comparative Study of the Impact of the Latin–English versus English–Igbo Language Contact Situations on the Subordinate Languages

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Abstract

Many Igbo language scholars continue to bemoan the negative impact of the English Igbo contact on the Igbo language. Issues ranging from lexical erosion, domain loss, standardisation problems, attitudinal decline, lexical dilution and so much more are the challenges bedevilling the growth of the Igbo language, and which many scholars have blamed as an effect of the imposition of the colonial imposition of English on the Igbo people. Contrarily, English language, once a subordinate language profited much historically and lexically from its Latin contacts, boasting a wide range of vocabulary, word formation resources and register differentiation, all thanks to cross linguistic borrowing from Latin. This study investigates the comparative impact of these two historically significant language contact situations; the Latin–English and the English–Igbo encounters, on their respective subordinate languages. Both situations reflect unequal linguistic relationships where sociopolitical, educational, and religious factors influenced linguistic transformations. Using qualitative historical and descriptive approaches, the paper analyses linguistic outcomes such as lexical borrowing, structural modification, semantic extension, and code-switching. The study is anchored on Weinreich’s (1953) Language Contact Theory and Thomason and Kaufman’s (1988) Framework of Language Contact Outcomes. Findings reveal that while Latin significantly enriched English lexically and stylistically during the Middle English period, English imposed a largely unidirectional influence on Igbo, affecting its lexicon, morphology, and orthography without substantial reciprocal influence. The paper concludes that power relations, domains of use, and literacy development determine the direction and depth of linguistic influence. It recommends deliberate policies for indigenous language empowerment and balanced bilingualism in postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: language contact, comparative linguistics, Latin–English, English–Igbo, subordinate language, linguistic dominance

Introduction

Language contact is a phenomenon studied by sociolinguistics and is the logical outcome of human interactions across ethnic, cultural and geographical divides. When people from different sociocultural backgrounds interact for trade, academics, sports or as a result of political conquest or colonialism, there is usually a concomitant cultural exchange. When such exchanges or interactions take place or are replicated on a large scale over time, the impacts become noticeable in the affected cultures. One culture emerges over time as the dominant culture contingent on which possesses the upper hand economically and politically while the subordinate

culture becomes disadvantaged. One of the major areas where such impacts are felt is language. Language is the lifeblood of every culture. It encapsulates, encodes, preserves and transmits the experiences, aspirations, nuances, norms and peculiarities of a tribe or group. It is the tool for human interactions, and the first port of sociocultural and political exchange. When any two cultures interact to the point of exchange, language becomes the tool for encoding, preserving and transmitting the change. Thus, language contact is a direct resultant effect of sociocultural and political interactions and exchanges. It is the situation where two or more languages interact through communities of bilingual speakers. According to Thomason (2001), the outcomes of such contacts are not accidental but are determined by the sociolinguistic context of the interaction, including the duration and intensity of contact, and power dynamics between the speaker communities.

The effects of language contact on the involved languages can be positive or negative, including but not limited to lexical expansion and enrichment, morphological integration, stylistic diversity, and semantic expansion on the positive side. On the negative side, it can lead to lexical erosion, cultural dependency, domain loss, identity conflicts and negative attitudes. The impact of these contact situations is usually more profound on the dominated or subordinated languages, which, owing to political or economic reasons are on the receiving end. The Latin – English and English - Igbo language contact situations represent such instances of linguistic inequality.

The Latin – English contact, one of the most documented in historical linguistics, contributed immensely to the expansion of the English lexicon, making English the dominant global language today (Durkin, 2014). Latin influence on English began in the Old English, from the initial Roman contact (43-410 BC), expanded with the arrival of Christianity in Britain around 597 AD, through the era of monastic scholarship of the middle ages till the renaissance era of 15th and 16th centuries. In contrast, the English – Igbo contact, which began in the nineteenth century due to the transatlantic trade, missionary work and colonialism, has had a more detrimental effect on Igbo language preservation. This study seeks to explore these two contact situations, comparing their linguistic impacts and highlighting the factors leading to their different outcomes. Specifically, the study set out to:

1. Analyse the historical and sociolinguistic contexts of Latin–English and *Engligno* language contacts,
2. Compare their linguistic impacts on the subordinate languages,
3. Examine the sociocultural and political factors that account for differences in linguistic outcomes.

Research Questions

1. What were the historical contexts and sociolinguistic contexts of Latin–English and *Engligno* language contacts?
2. How do the linguistic impacts of both contact situations on the subordinate languages compare or compare?
3. What sociocultural and political factors determined the differences in linguistic outcomes?

Literature Review

The literature review is carried out under two parts: the conceptual studies which involves a conceptual delineation of the key concepts involved in the study, and the theoretical framework concerned with the theories adopted for the study.

Conceptual Studies

Comparative Linguistics

Comparative linguistics is a distinct field in linguistic studies, domiciled under sociolinguistics. It is concerned with comparisons of the historical and structural backgrounds of different languages to establish similarities or contrasts. It originated from 19th-century philology, where scholars such as Franz Bopp and Rasmus Rask compared Indo-European languages to reconstruct their proto-forms (Baugh & Cable, 2013). Modern comparative linguistics has expanded its scope beyond genetic relatedness to include typological, areal, and contact-induced comparisons. Within this framework, comparing the Latin–English and English–Igbo contact situations provides a basis for understanding how power relations, sociohistorical contexts, and prestige determine linguistic outcomes. The comparative approach also reveals that linguistic influence is rarely symmetrical; rather, it reflects the sociopolitical dynamics between a dominant and a subordinate language (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988).

Language Contact

Language contact from the viewpoints of (Weinreich, 1953&Matras, 2009) refers to the interaction between speakers of different languages, leading to lexical, phonological, or grammatical influence across linguistic systems. Language contact could be as a result of trade relations, colonialism or missionary evangelism as in the case of English and African languages, or principally as a result of academic and religious activities as pertaining to the Latin-English situation. The nature of this interaction may result in borrowing, interference, code-switching, pidginisation, or even language shift. According to Weinreich (1953), contact-induced changes are social as much as linguistic, depending on factors such as bilingualism, social prestige, and cultural dominance. Thomason and Kaufman (1988) further argue that the intensity of contact, ranging from casual borrowing to structural convergence, depends on the degree of social integration between communities.

In both the Latin–English and English–Igbo situations, language contact occurred under asymmetrical power relations: Latin dominated as the language of religion and scholarship in medieval England, while English became the language of administration, education, and modernity in colonial and postcolonial Igbo land. The contact dynamics in each case produced distinctive linguistic and sociocultural consequences that reflected the sociohistorical hierarchies of their eras.

The Latin–English Contact Situation

The contact between Latin and English spans the Roman occupation of Britain (43–410 CE) to the Renaissance (15th–16th centuries). During these periods, Latin functioned as the language of the religion, education, and science, shaping English vocabulary and prestige forms (Baugh & Cable, 2013). The linguistic influence was predominantly lexical, resulting in thousands of borrowings, especially in law, religion, and scholarship (e.g., altar, justice, education).

Haugen's (1950) typology of borrowing helps explain this process: early English adopted Latin terms to fill lexical gaps, later extending to prestige-driven loans. Over time, English adapted these borrowings phonologically and morphologically, integrating them into its native system. The dominance of Latin, however, declined as English gained sociolinguistic prestige, culminating in its elevation during the Reformation and the rise of national identity. Thus, the Latin–English case demonstrates how a subordinate language (Old English) can eventually absorb and surpass a dominant one through institutional and ideological shifts.

The English–Igbo Contact Situation

The English–Igbo contact situation emerged under British colonial rule in the late 19th century, reinforced by missionary education and administration (Emenanjo, 1990; Bamgbose, 1991). English quickly assumed superordinate status as the language of governance, religion, and socio-economic mobility, while Igbo was relegated to domestic and informal domains. The interaction produced phenomena such as loanwords, code-switching, semantic extension, and English - Igbo hybrid formations, reflecting both linguistic innovation and cultural negotiation. Unlike Latin, which eventually ceded its dominance, English maintains its hegemonic position over Igbo due to ongoing globalisation and the institutional entrenchment of English in education, technology, and governance. Scholars such as Phillipson (1992) and Ngūgĩ (1986) describe this phenomenon as linguistic imperialism, which is a process where language dominance sustains cultural and epistemic subordination. The resultant bilingualism among Igbo speakers is thus both an adaptive and a constraining sociolinguistic reality.

Subordinate Language and Linguistic Dominance

A subordinate language refers to a language of lower prestige or limited institutional power within a multilingual ecology (Matras, 2009). It is the less powerful language (socially, politically and economically) in a language contact situation. Subordination is not merely linguistic but deeply sociopolitical. Linguistic dominance, conversely, involves the ability of one language to impose its forms, norms, and ideologies upon another, often through institutions and media (Phillipson, 1992). Thus, the concept of subordinate language presupposes the existence of a dominant or superordinate language, which is the language with more influence and power in a contact situation. The dominant or superordinate language takes primacy ahead of the language it dominates, mostly as a result of the historical, political, sociocultural and economic backgrounds it carries with it into the contact situation. In the Latin–English and English–Igbo cases, subordinate status is tied to education, religion, and socioeconomic opportunity. Latin was the language of empire, scholarship and religion as at the era of its contact with English, thus it naturally assumed the position of the dominant language, making English the subordinate language. On the other hand, at the time of English –Igbo contact, English was the language of colonial conquest, education, trade and religion, thus assuming dominance over Igbo, which became subordinated.

The Latin–English encounter demonstrates how a subordinate language can gradually evolve into a dominant one through demographic strength and political shifts, while the English–Igbo context shows continued subordination reinforced by modern economic and cultural globalisation. Bamgbose (1991) warns that the displacement of indigenous languages in Nigeria threatens not only linguistic diversity but also cultural identity and epistemic autonomy. In this

sense, dominance and subordination in language contact must be understood as ongoing, dynamic processes shaped by historical and political factors rather than fixed hierarchies.

Comparative Conceptual Insights

Comparing the two contact situations in view reveals critical insights into the nature of linguistic change and power. The Latin–English relationship was vertical but time-bound; English eventually internalized and localized Latin elements, leading to linguistic enrichment and self-assertion. In contrast, the English–Igbo relationship remains ongoing, characterized by dependency and limited reciprocal influence. The determining factors include colonial legacies, continued educational policy favoring English, and the global status of English as a language of opportunity.

The comparative framework thus underscores that linguistic outcomes are contingent on sociopolitical context. When the subordinate group achieves sociocultural empowerment, language revitalisation and identity assertion become possible, as seen in the English case. When dominance persists institutionally as in the Igbo case, subordination deepens, risking endangerment and language shift (Tsunoda, 2006). The conceptual implications highlight that linguistic contact is as much a negotiation of power as it is of form and meaning.

Theoretical Framework

While several theories concerned with language contact and its effects on both the dominate and subordinate languages have been propounded by different scholars over the years of linguistic studies, two pivotal theories which are fundamental to the current study have been selected, to guide the study's inquest into understanding the circumstances leading to the obvious divergences in the realisations of the Latin-English contact situation to that of the English-Igbo, they are the Weinreich's (1953) Language Contact Theory and the Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) Framework of Language Contact Outcomes.

Language Contact Theory by Weinreich(1953)

Weinreich's theory examines the effects of language contact, focusing on how languages influence each other through borrowing, interference, and code-switching. He introduced the concepts of superstrate (dominant language) and substrate (subordinate language), with the subordinate language typically undergoing more significant changes. This theory guides the identification of structural changes in Igbo due to English contact, as well as the Latin–English influence on English during historical periods. The theory provides a framework for cataloging linguistic features such as lexical borrowings, syntactic adjustments, and phonological interference resulting from contact.

Framework of Language Contact Outcomes by Thomason and Kaufman (1988)

Thomason and Kaufman offer a comprehensive approach that explains the outcomes of language contact, emphasizing the role of sociolinguistic factors like language prestige, bilingualism, and the duration of contact. Their framework accounts for variations in linguistic changes by considering how social hierarchies and language status shape outcomes. In this study, their model helps to explain the different linguistic outcomes of English-Igbo contact compared to Latin-English contact, considering the sociohistoric contexts, domains of use, and bilingual competence.

Integration of the Theories

The integration of Weinreich’s structural focus on contact phenomena with Thomason and Kaufman’s sociolinguistic approach provides a balanced framework. Weinreich’s theory helps to identify specific instances of linguistic change in both Latin-English and English-Igbo contact, while Thomason and Kaufman’s framework will offer explanations for why these changes occur, based on social and historical factors. This combined approach ensures a comprehensive analysis of both the structural and sociolinguistic dynamics of language contact. This dual framework is particularly suitable for comparing the Latin-English and English-Igbo contact situations, as it accounts for historical, social, and linguistic variation. It allows for a descriptive analysis of contact phenomena while explaining the social forces driving linguistic outcomes. This theoretical foundation guides the study's comparative analysis and supports recommendations for maintaining linguistic balance in contact situations.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analyses data from two distinct language contact situations: Latin-English and English-Igbo. The goal is to understand the historical and sociolinguistic contexts of these interactions and their linguistic impacts on subordinate languages. The analysis covers both lexical and structural changes, comparing the social, political, and historical factors that account for the differences in the outcomes of these contact situations

Research Q1: The historical and sociolinguistic contexts of Latin–English and *Engligbo* language contacts

Table 1: Historical Contexts of Latin–English and English–Igbo Language Contacts

Source: Researcher

Contact Situation	Historical Timeline	Contextual Factors	Key Influence
Latin-English	43 AD – 410 AD (Roman Britain); 5th–15th centuries (Medieval Period)	Roman occupation of Britain; Christianisation; Latin as the language of the Church and academia	Latin as the dominant language in religion, law, and scholarship
English-Igbo	Late 19th century – Present (British colonisation to post-colonial Nigeria)	British colonial rule; English as the official language in Nigeria; Role of English in education, governance, and media	English as the language of power, administration, and upward mobility

Discussion:

The historical contexts of Latin-English and English-Igbo language contact differ significantly in both timeframes and sociolinguistic environments. The Latin-English contact began with the Roman occupation of Britain (43 AD–410 AD) when Latin was introduced as the language of the Roman authorities, military, and religion. Following the Christianisation of

Britain, Latin became the dominant language in ecclesiastical and academic settings, influencing the English lexicon and grammar in religious and scholarly domains. During the medieval period (5th–15th centuries), Latin maintained its high prestige as the language of education and law, contributing to the development of English in these areas.

In contrast, the English-Igbo contact situation began with British colonisation in the late 19th century, when English was imposed as the language of governance, law, and education in Nigeria. After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, English solidified its status as the official language of the country, further entrenched by its role in media, business, and formal communication. The influence of English on Igbo became more prominent in urban areas, with English serving as a marker of social status and modernity.

Succinctly put, The Latin–English contact occurred within a shared European literacy tradition, leading to positive effects, while English–Igbo contact was colonial and coercive leading to mostly negative effects. This finding resonates with

Research Q2: How did each contact influence the subordinate language structurally and lexically?

Table 2: Comparative Review of Impact of Latin–English and English–Igbo Contacts on Subordinate Languages

Source: Researcher

Factor	Latin–English Contact	English–Igbo Contact
Duration	Centuries (gradual integration)	120 years (abrupt, colonial)
Prestige of donor	Latin = scholarly, religious authority	English = colonial, global dominance
Subordinate language fate	English survived and strengthened	Igbo endangered, risk of attrition
Benefits	Lexical/morphological enrichment; stylistic diversity	Lexical enrichment; hybridisation; semantic expansion
Dangers	Vocabulary stratification only (not fatal)	Endangerment; domain loss; negative attitudes; dependency

The comparison reveals that while both subordinate languages benefited from lexical enrichment and stylistic expansion, English emerged stronger after Latin contact, while Igbo is vulnerable under English dominance. The key difference lies in agency and domain maintenance: English integrated Latin while maintaining daily vitality, whereas Igbo risks losing both modern and domestic domains to English.

Unlike the English–Igbo contact situation, Latin–English contact must be conceptualised historically and diachronically. Latin no longer operates as a current competing language in English speech communities as English does in Igbo communities; rather, its impact is seen through borrowed vocabulary, orthographic conventions, morphological relics, and calques. The influence of Latin permeates English through:

- 1. Lexical Borrowing:** A vast number of English words, particularly in scientific, legal, medical, and religious fields, are of Latin origin. Latin-derived words such as "dictate," "religion," and "counsel" permeate everyday English use, albeit indirectly through French.

2. **Morphological Influence:** Latin has contributed to the formation of English derivational morphemes like -tion, -able, and -ity, which structure many words in English.
3. **Syntax and Rhetorical Influence:** Some English syntactic constructions and academic writing styles have been influenced by Latin word-order patterns, particularly in formal contexts, including passive constructions, nominalisation of verbs, prepositional density (eg “in relation to” from Latin *in relatione ad*), etc.

Linguistic Outcomes of English-Igbo Contact

The impact of English on Igbo can be divided into:

1. **Lexical Borrowing:** English contributes to Igbo vocabulary, particularly in education, governance, and modern technology. The Igbo lexicon has been greatly enhanced and expanded as a result of its contact with English. Examples include *tebulu*, *netwookụ*, *ntaneeti*, etc.
2. **Code-Switching and Code-Mixing:** The prevalence of code-switching and code-mixing in Nigerian society reflects the bilingual nature of many Igbo speakers, with a tendency to mix English structures in Igbo sentences (e.g., “*shifuro m ka m nođụ ala*” literally meaning “shift for me, I want to sit”).
3. **Nativisation:** English words are often nativised into Igbo syntax, changing their pronunciation and inflection to conform to Igbo phonology (e.g., “kettle” becomes “*ketulu*”, “government” becomes “*goomentị*” in Igbo, etc.).
4. **Semantic Expansion:** Borrowings often undergo semantic broadening. For example, *moto* in Igbo (from “motor”) refers to any vehicle, not just cars (Egenti&Okeke, 2021). This mirrors how the Latin *carrus* influenced the development of English “car” from medieval “carriage”, “cart”, and “carry” to contemporary “car”. Such extensions show creative domestication of loans.
5. **lexical erosion:** As the prevalence of English words borrowed into Igbo increases, more original Igbo words are lost in the process. For instance, words like “*ukpa*”, the Igbo cultural equivalent to shopping trolley or basket have been eroded in contemporary Igbo as you hardly hear anyone in a shopping mall say “*nye m ukpa ka m were kwakonye ihe m na-azu.*”, instead “*biko, helpuọ m pushute dis troli/basketị ka m were mee shopin.*” (pleaser help me bring this trolley, so I can shop with it). Examples abound of other similar expressions, which as Bamgbose, (1991) and Nwachukwu (2018) lamented, do not only lead to Igbo lexical erosion, but also bring about the more dire consequences of loss of linguistic purity if the tide remain unstemmed.

Discussion:

The Latin – English contact situation induced a generous expansion of the English lexis from the different fields it impacted, including religion where words like “advocate”, from “advocata” “advent” from “adventus”, etc originated. English greatly profited from its interaction with Latin, with little or no existential threat to its popularity among its users. Today, English, equipped with a comprehensive range of vocabularies and fully capable of serving the needs of any and every domain of human enterprise, stands as a giant among the committee of languages, serving as the major medium of international relations and globalisation.

On the other hand, however, the Igbo language despite the lexical enrichment it enjoys from its meeting with English, daily faces an existential threat owing to that same interaction. Problems

ranging from lexical erosion, code-mixing, relegation to being a language of the rural dwellers and unenlightened, growing disinterest by its owners in preference for English and so many other issues continue to bedevil the language even in the contemporary era. In essence, English eventually replaced Latin as a prestige and global language, while Igbo remains subordinated to English even within its own immediate environment.

Research Q3: What sociocultural and political factors determined the direction of influence?

Table 3: Factors Influencing Language Contact Outcomes

Source: Researcher

Factor	English-Igbo Contact	Latin-English Contact
Sociopolitical Power	English as a language of power and prestige	Latin as the language of the Church and scholarship
Educational Role	English in schools, Igbo in informal settings	Latin's role in religious and academic institutions
Contact Duration	Continuous since colonialism	Historical, confined to earlier periods
Language Function	English as official language, Igbo as local language	Latin as an intellectual and liturgical language

Discussion: Several factors contribute to the linguistic outcomes observed in English-Igbo contact:

1. **Sociopolitical Power Dynamics:** English is the prestige language in Nigeria, often used in formal education, governance, and media. This socioeconomic power leads to the subordination of Igbo in official settings, influencing language change in everyday speech.
2. **Function of English in Nigeria:** English serves as the official language, affecting domains like law, governance, and education. This institutionalized use of English leads to widespread bilingualism.
3. **Educational Policies:** Government policies promoting English in schools and the media contribute to the dominance of English, leading to increased language interference.

For the Latin-English contact, the following factors are notable:

1. **Historical Prestige of Latin:** Latin's role as the language of the church, science, and government in medieval England facilitated its integration into English vocabulary, especially in elite circles.
2. **Indirect Influence:** Latin's influence on English has been more cultural and intellectual than direct speech interaction, with most impact occurring through the Norman Conquest and the church.

These fundamental differences in the historical contexts of the two contact situations contributed immensely to the disparity in outcome. Based on Thomason and Kaufman (1988)'s framework on degree of contact intensity and social dominance determining contact outcomes, it could be easily deduced that the English-Latin contact was a more symmetric interaction; Latin was neither imposed on the English speakers, nor was it made a lingua franca, disposing the English as the primary medium of communication, English however, became the tool of political conquest (colonialism), became the lingua franca, and the primary tool of official communication.

Latin dominance over Old English was limited to religious and educational settings, while English pervaded all facets of public and official interaction, and owing to its economic potentials, and the multilinguistic climate of Nigeria, has come to pervade even the informal discourse settings, thereby posing a serious existential threat to Igbo language. It is worthy to note that English eventually replaced Latin as a prestige language without losing, while Igbo remains subordinate to English.

It is the finding of this study, that within the Thomason and Kaufman (1988)'s framework on language outcomes, Igbo suffered more in her contact with English as a result of asymmetrical bilingualism, whereas English profitted greatly in its contact with Latin owing to the symmetrical, symbiotic nature of their relationship.

Summary of Findings

The study set off to compare the impact of the Latin-English and English-Igbo contact situations on the subordinate languages; specifically to analyse the historical and sociolinguistic contexts of Latin-English and *Engligbo* language contacts, to compare their linguistic impacts on the subordinate languages and to examine the factors that account for the differences in linguistic outcomes. It was discovered that historically the influence of Latin on English language was as a result of scholastic and religious activities whereas Nigeria's colonial background gave rise to the ongoing interaction between English and Igbo. It was also ascertained that English profitted greatly from its contact with Latin, enjoying a generous lexical and generic expansion, while retaining its pride of place as the primary medium of communication among its native speakers, while the Igbo language while gaining a vocabulary increase from its contact with English, has been bedevilled with myriads of challenges including lexical erosion, domain loss and threat of being displaced by English as the lingua franca of its native speakers as a result of same. The study also highlighted how Latin – English influence was basically symmetrical and symbiotic, apolitical and limited to the religious and academic domains, while the English – Igbo contact was politically imposed, asymmetrical, systematically enforced and sustained, and all encompassing in its reach, thus accounting for the differences in impact on the subordinate languages vis English and Igbo.

Recommendations

It is the informed opinion of this study, that owing to the systematic and all encompassing nature of the imposition of English language on the Igbo, and its attendant dire consequences on the sustenance and growth of Igbo as a veritable medium of communication for its native speakers, a comprehensive and systematic approach is needed to stem the tide of lexical erosion, increasing relegation and threat of displacement facing the Igbo language. To this end, the study recommends as follows:

1. **Formalising *Engligbo*:** A systematic review of the English – Igbo contact realisations vis codemixing, codeswitching and blending as means of word formation for Igbo could greatly contribute to the expansion of the Igbo lexicon, enriching and empowering the language with a comprehensive vocabulary that would satisfactorily serve the communicative needs of its users. Scholars have severally lamented the negative effects of code swtching and code mixing on the linguistic purity of the Igbo language. However, this study is of the opinion that the lexical needs of the Igbo language supersedes in necessity than a rigid insistence on linguistic purity. English

borrowed extensively from Latin, French and other Euro-caucasian languages, hence its vast vocabulary today. Taking a cue from this, Igbo linguists could instead of further criticisms of Engligbo coinages, or the usual suspicion of its corrupting the Igbo language, develop strategies of formally blending them formally into the Igbo language. For instance, *Engligbo* verbs like “*maketie*” from “market” could be adopted in lieu of any Igbo equivalent that could offer an apt interpretation. Others like “*taipuo*”, and “*votuo*”, from “type” and “vote” could also be used alongside compounds like “*kuputa n’igwe*” and “*tuo votu*” (all meaning the imperatives “type” and “vote” respectively).

2. **Government policies:** The imposition of English as a lingua franca in Nigeria was a political action by the colonial government, redressing the harms it did and does to indigenous languages including Igbo will also require political approaches. For instance, the recent upturning of the National Policy on Education which prescribes the use of indigenous languages for basic education in Nigeria was an ill advised move as unilaterally agreed by language experts, and should be reversed with expediency. State governments within the Igbo speaking states could and should revamp the Wednesday *Subakwa Igbo* day initiated by the government of Peter Obi in Anambra State through the advocacy of *Otu Subakwa Igbo*. On such days, government programmes and business of the day should be conducted wholly in Igbo, Legislative and Judiciary proceedings should also be conducted in Igbo. Schools, banks, corporate institutions and government agencies should also mandatorily transact in Igbo on such days. Policies such as this will not only promote the use and sustenance of the Igbo language, but also further expose the lexical and terminological gaps in the language, and spur intellectual efforts to fill them, thus broadening the scope of the Igbo lexicon.
3. **Incentivise and support Igbo studies:** Till date, government sponsored institutions and agencies exist under the British government, who formally and informally promote studies into the English language, and its spread as the language of globalisation. The Chinese government continues to sponsor and maintain Chinese learning institutions across the world, including the Confucius Institute in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, with incentives and scholarship opportunities for promising scholars. These governments are aware of the potency of language, as medium for cultural and technological exportation, economic expansion and political conquest. The governments of the Igbo speaking states should emulate these wonderful examples. Language is the tool for transmission of cultural heritage and identity. Its death is the death of the identity of the owners. For that reason therefore, adequate support should be provided for scholars and researchers into the Igbo language and its study as a course in higher institutions subsidised and incentivised with employment opportunities. These will effectively promote the current wave of interest in the teaching and learning of the language, while the outcome of the researches will further expand the reach and efficacy of the language, giving it a competitive position in the committee of national and international languages.
4. **Deemphasize English language in schools:** while English remains Nigeria’s official language and rightly so as a result of its ethnolinguistically heterogeneous ecosystem, the emphasis laid on English language competency as the hallmark of intelligence is counter productive to the preservation and promotion of the indigenous languages, including Igbo language. While the students should be exposed to the English language

as early as possible, emphasise should also be made to acclimatise them to their native languages. Moreover, studies have proven that learners achieve more when taught in their mothertongue (Bosahet al2025), thus it becomes crucial to teach and promote native languages in their respective areas, alongside English language. This approach will not only ensure that the learners become proficient in both the English and Igbo languages in the Igbo speaking areas, but also achieve more in their classroom experiences, while being equipped with the needed linguistic competencies to communicate effectively both within and outside their immediate environs.

Conclusion

Contact between languages is a phenomenon which could be beneficial or detrimental to the subordinate languages. It was largely profitable for the English language in its contact with Latin, owing to the symmetrical and symbiotic nature of their interaction and the conscious efforts of the English people themselves to preserve and project their identity and heritage onto their global arena. However, as a result of the colonial background of the English-Igbo contact, the asymmetrical nature of their contact situation and early politically motivated imposition of English as lingua franca on the Nigerian peoples, the Igbo language suffered and still suffers much decline and lexical erosion from its interaction with English. Lessons drawn from the concatenation of the two contact situation include that sociocultural and political factors determine the direction and impact of influence, thus for the Igbo language, conscious efforts including political and scholarly interventions need to be adopted to reverse the negative effects, while building on the positive outcomes in the sustained efforts to reposition the Igbo language as a language of repute and long standing both within Nigeria and across the globe.

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