

English Language Proficiency and Use as Determinants of Transactional Success in Gbagi Market, Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract : Language selection can be an efficient negotiation strategy employed by both service or product providers and their customers to achieve transactional success. The transactional scenario in Gbagi Market, Ibadan, Nigeria provides an appropriate setting for the exploration of the Nigerian multilingual situation with its own interesting linguistic peculiarities which questions the functionality of the 'Lingua Franca' in trade situations. This study examined English Language proficiency among Yoruba Traders in Gbagi Market, Ibadan and its use as determinants of transactional success during service encounters. Randomly selected Yoruba-English bilingual traders and customers were administered questionnaires and the data subjected to statistical and descriptive analysis using Giles Communication Accommodation Theory. Findings reveal that only fifty percent of the traders used for the study were proficient in speaking English language. Traders with minimal proficiency in Standard English, however, resulted in the use of the Nigerian Pidgin English. Both traders and customers select the Mother Tongue, which is the Yoruba Language during service encounters but are quick to converge to the other's preferred language as the transactional exchange demands. The English language selection is not so much for the prestige or lingua franca status of the language as it is for its functions, which include ease of communication, negotiation, and increased sales. The use of English during service encounters is mostly determined by customer's linguistic preference which the trader accommodates to for better negotiation and never as a first choice. This convergence is found to be beneficial as it ensures sales and return patronage. Although the English language is not a preferred code choice in Gbagi Market, it serves a functional trade strategy for transactional success during service encounters in the market.

Keywords : communication accommodation theory, language selection, proficiency, service encounter, transaction

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