

**LEXICAL BORROWING AND LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT: A CASE OF THE TIV LANGUAGE**

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**Abstract**

Language gives identity to a people and makes them a speech community, thereby defining their culture. It is their means of initiating and propagating development; it therefore means that without language that is peculiar to a people, it becomes difficult for them to forge ahead with the development of their society. However, because language communities co-exist and their strengths and numbers are not equal, some languages that are stronger than others begin to dominate them when they come into contact or co-exist. This dominance could gradually lead to language endangerment and possibly extinction of the weaker language. This is the case between the Hausa language and the Tiv language in the middle belt region of Nigeria, where Tiv language speakers tend to borrow lexical items from the Hausa language. The current study involved oral interviews with adult native speakers of the Tiv language, as well as reviewed reports, journal articles and books written on the subject matter under study. The study explored the extent of lexical borrowing by the Tiv language from the Hausa language and discovered that the Tiv language has borrowed lexical items significantly from the Hausa language. The borrowing is based on the fact that the Tiv language has no lexical equivalents of the borrowed words in its lexicon, or that the speakers of Tiv language have over time adopted such Hausa words because of their knowledge of Hausa language. The danger here is that borrowed lexical items from Hausa have come to replace some Tiv words, making them to gradually go extinct, thereby endangering the Tiv language. The study concludes that the trend of Hausa words gradually replacing Tiv words is worrisome, and calls for intensified studies to ensure that the Tiv language is protected from domination by the Hausa language, to prevent extinction of the language in the future.

**Keywords:** Language, Lexical borrowing, Tiv language, endangerment.

**Introduction**

Language is a tool for human communication and national development, thus it is quite indispensable since all human activities of man in the society revolve around it. The co-existence of different languages in a community is an

inevitable development because in most nations of the world, different languages co-exist and are for different functions even without the presence of their native speakers. Language contact comes about as a result of the coming together of different ethno-linguistic groups. In order for groups to live in

a particular place and make way for the languages they speak to inter play, different linguistic implications are bound to result. These languages compete with one another for particular functions and consequently, some languages in the same community assume a high status while others are accorded low status. It is in this regard that Omeje (2008:51) maintains that "...languages compete unfavorably with themselves..." For any language to serve its primary function of communication, and also be preserved, it must be taken to heart by its owners who must be deliberately speaking it so that it will not be endangered. It is therefore, the duty of the owners of a language to maintain it and safeguard it jealously to forestall its endangerment.

Language endangerment as one of the critical implications of language contact has befallen several languages of the world today. The co-existence of different ethno-linguistic groups in a particular area, for whatever reasons, paves way for the relation between the languages they speak. Most often this results in language endangerment and other sociolinguistic implications. Nigeria has over 400 languages; half of them are tilting towards language endangerment. This is a case in Nigeria where dominant languages like Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba are endangering other minor ethnic languages like Tiv, Kanuri, Edo, Gwari, etc.

"One of the most solid achievements of linguistics in the twentieth century has been to eliminate the idea (at least among professionals) that some languages or dialects are 'better' than others". Regardless of that declaration, sociolinguistic views recognize inequalities among languages and affirm the factuality of language endangerment. The linguistic and sociolinguistic views on language equality/inequality leave us with two strong perspectives which can be boisterously stood for or against. Language equality means that every language has a phonological system, a morphological system, a syntactic system and a meaning system all exclusive to it (all together referred to as the structure of language). It is

used to wholesomely satisfy the communication needs of its owners and to express any concept or phenomenon as the situation arises.

Paradoxically, inequality among languages is a fact, irrespective of their equality. Language inequality means that languages are not equally 'strong', that not all have the same social value. Not all are used in every domain of human endeavour with the same sphere of influence, even though they all have the potential. In Nigeria for instance, languages are designated 'majority' and 'minority'. This means that there is something a given language has which another might not have and which makes the one 'more equal' than the other. Minority and majority languages derive their designations from the numbers of speakers, literary, political or educational status.

It is believed that the inequality of languages in some ways exposes them to endangerment; which is a clear sign that a language faces threats to its existence. The language becomes endangered or threatened with death and extinction. An endangered language is one that is gradually going out of use because fewer and fewer people now speak it and it is no longer being transmitted to the younger generations. Such a language is unlikely to be spoken in the nearest future as it will become unknown.

Among the causes of the sad phenomenon of language endangerment are the depletion of speakers' population (through natural disasters, famine, disease, war, genocide, political oppression etc), undervaluing of the language by its owners and the consequent language shift. Language shift, where the owners of a given language begin to use a language other than theirs for their basic communication needs, may be brought about by the owners of a language upon themselves and their language. Such people(s) undermine the value of their own language(s) believing that the other language(s) has/have more value or prestige. This is injurious to the life of the language. Coulmas notes that:

Language shift ... attests to the fact that some languages are not thought valuable enough in a given socio-historical setting to be transmitted to

the next generation, and that others are objectively of greater economic utility.

When people undervalue their language, they tend to shift to the one they perceive as valuable according to 'their socio-economic ecologies' or due to some political and historical forces that may foist this action on them. For example, some minority tribes in Northern Nigeria use Hausa language for social, economic and political reasons. The language has dominated some of these minority languages, and is gradually driving them into extinction. Whatever the means by which it happens, language shift is a most surreptitious way in which a language becomes endangered as people leave their languages to use a dominant one in the environment without noticing that they are slowly losing their own languages and themselves.

#### **Socio-cultural, Economic and Political Grounds for Hausa and Tiv Contacts**

Hausa is both a language and the name of an ethnic group. In Nigeria, the Hausa ethnic group is the largest in terms of population and its impact on other language groups. This impact can be felt politically, socially, economically, and educationally. Apart from a speaking population that is found in all the 19 northern states, Hausa-speaking communities are found beyond Nigeria in countries like Niger, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Sudan, Togo, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Gabon, and Senegal. Hausa language has been recognized as one of the Chadic, Afro-Asiatic languages (Hussain, Yakubu&Salisu, 2018; Usar& Ofoegbu, 2017)). In the old political structure when Nigeria was described according to regions, Hausa was the regional language of the North while English served as the national language. Till date, Benue the state with the dominant Tiv speakers, Plateau, Nasarawa and Taraba have been politically affiliated to the Northern region where Hausa language holds sway.

Section 51 of the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria provides that the business of the

National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Ibo, and Yoruba. Hausa is also taught as a core subject at basic and secondary school levels of education in Nigeria. Hausa is offered as a course of study in higher institutions in Nigeria and beyond. Hausa language is used for international broadcast on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, London), the Voice of America (VOA), the Deutsche Welle Radio, Radio France International, the China Radio, Radio Cairo, Iran Hausa Radio, and Radio Moscow.

On the economic front, Hausa men and women are actively involved in trade and commerce, a strong factor which makes them to be widely travelled. It can thus be argued that trade, commerce and agricultural business relations have fostered contact between the Hausa people and Tiv for many years. Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau states attract a large number of emigrants for their high agricultural yield like sesame seed, yam, rice, groundnuts, citrus etc. daily, food stuff in their commercial quantities are trucked out of these Tiv-dominated areas to other parts of the federation. It should also be mentioned that Hausa-Fulani pastoralists constantly emigrate to the rich Benue valley principally in search of pasture and water for their cows, but their continued stay among the people of Benue State has created language communities that impact language borrowing. The soil degradation and desert encroachment in the North force these pastoralists to travel and settle in the Benue valley. Another strong factor that has attracted Hausa emigrants among Tiv communities is the hospitable nature of the Tiv people.

The Tiv people are predominantly found in Benue State, but there are indigenized Tiv populations in Taraba, Plateau, Nasarawa, and Cross River States and the Cameroon Republic. Tiv language is spoken as a network broadcast language along with Nupe, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Ibibio, Izon, Edo, Urhobo, Igala and Annang. Apart from this, Tiv is used for interpersonal communication, trade and religious worship (Udu, 2009). Tiv is a splinter group of the Bantu, and belongs to the Niger-Congo language classification.

### The Concept of Lexical Borrowing

“One of the most easily observable results of intercultural contact and communication is the set of borrowed words that are imported into the vocabulary of each of the languages involved” (Hoffer, 2005: 53). Lexical borrowing has been an interest to various linguists for some time (Whitney 1875, De Saussure 1915, Sapir 1921, Pedersen 1931, Haugen 1950, Hockett 1979, Anttila 1989). Hockett (1958) has organized the options as follows. The language from which words are adopted is often referred to as the “source”, “lending” or “donor” language while the language into which those words are adopted is labeled “recipient” or “receptor” language. “Lexical Borrowing among languages serves the chief purpose of filling gaps in the lexicon of the recipient language as it lacks the means to designate the newly introduced products, concepts or notions” (Bahumaid, 2015: 13). It is interesting to note that a good number of the borrowed words undergo adaptation in order to fit into the recipient language.

*Borrowed words* are words adopted by the speakers of one language from a different language (the *source language*). There is no transfer from one language to another, and no *returning* of words to the source language. The words simply come to be used by a speech community that speaks a different language from the one the words originate from (Hoffer, 1983). Borrowing of words can go in both directions between the two languages in contact, but often there is an asymmetry, such that more words go from one side to the other. In this case the source language community has some advantage of power, prestige and/or wealth that makes the objects and ideas it brings desirable and useful to the borrowing language community. For example, the Germanic tribes in the first few centuries A.D. adopted numerous loanwords from Latin as they adopted new products via trade with the Romans. Few Germanic words, on the other hand, passed into Latin (Hoffer, 2002). Similarly, the Tiv people borrow from Hausa language words such as 'chokoli' meaning 'spoon'

which has come to replace the Tiv equivalent 'ubu' overtime.

The actual process of borrowing is complex and involves many usage events. Generally, some speakers of the borrowing language know the source language too, or at least enough of it to utilize the relevant word. They, often consciously, adopt the new word when speaking the borrowed language because it most exactly fits the idea they are trying to express (Hoffer, 1984). If they are bilingual in the source language, which is often the case, they might pronounce the words the same or similar to the way they are pronounced in the source language. For example, English speakers adopted the word *garage* from French, at first with a pronunciation nearer to the French pronunciation than is now usually found. Presumably the very first speakers who used the word in English knew at least some French and heard the word used by French speakers, in a French-speaking context.

The above notwithstanding, a language community might borrow words that ordinarily do not exist in their vocabulary; this is possible where such a concept or object is new to the borrowing language community. For such languages, descriptions are used to state such a product, notion, concept or objects. For example, the Tiv language for instance does not have the word '*scissors*' in its vocabulary, so it borrowed the word '*keshi*' from the Hausa language. To state scissors in Tiv language it would mean using the description "*kwagh u hondontyough*", which translates as 'something for shaving the hair'.

### Studies on Lexical Borrowing

Einar Haugen's *The Analysis of Linguistic Borrowing* (1950) is a major reference work on the subject 'borrowing.' His work summarized and extended the previous research and it formed the basis for much of the later research. Haugen's goal was to "define more precisely the terminology used in linguistic analysis of borrowing, and to set up certain hypotheses concerning the process of borrowing" (Haugen, 1950: 210).

Studies on lexical borrowing and languages in contact are varied and of different outcomes. In Kenya, Njagi (2016) investigated the degree of lexical borrowing



and semantic change involving English and Gikuyu language contact situations. His motivation was to determine the mechanism speakers adopt in borrowing words from English into Gikuyu and establish whether borrowed words retain their original meaning or they undergo semantic shift, and the socio-cultural factors that trigger borrowing. Evidence from Njagi's (2016) study showed that a large amount of borrowed words, especially direct loans become nativised. Gikuyu speakers use loan translations, loan shifts, loan creations, clippings and coinages as mechanisms of borrowing. The study also established that psychological and social factors influence lexical borrowing.

Hatoss (2016) empirically investigated the language contact phenomenon in the speech of first-generation Hungarian immigrants living in Australia. His approach involved interviewing 22 of such immigrants and analysis was done by tagging items according to word class categories, the speaker's identification code, and the type of lexical borrowing. The study found that the participants were highly creative language users who were able to integrate large number of English lexical items into their speech.

Adamu (2016) reported the nature and aspects of language contact between Yoruba and Nupe, as noticed in the speech habits of Nupe speakers particularly those living in Lafiagi and Pategi Local Government Areas of Kwara State. Evidence from recorded conversation of participants suggested that Yoruba features were noticeable in the speech patterns of the sampled group. The phenomenon of borrowing was made possible as both language groups are within the same geo-political classification, while Yoruba serves as a lingua franca. Members of both language groups attend the same schools, market and participate in cultural festivals that promote communal existence. Little research has investigated the influence of Hausa language on other Nigerian languages. Usar and Ofoegbu's (2017) two-fold purpose on English and Hausa loanwords in Tiv provided evidence that Tiv has had many years of contact with

English and Hausa. Their study examined not only the scale of borrowed words but also the strategies used by the new host language in naturalizing and integrating the loanwords. Usar and Ofoegbu (2017) attributed the large scale loaning of Hausa words to Tiv due to Hausa's "hegemonic influence". Such influence has been exerted on all minority languages around the Hausa states. Usar and Ofoegbu established that Hausa animal words, household items, transport and trade have found their way in Tiv language.

Abubakar's (2016) study in Nigeria focused on the influence of Hausa language on Yoruba spoken around Ilorin. His phonological analysis of data collected led to the outcome that the contact between the two languages gives rise to "cultural diffusion, transfer and assimilation...". Evidence showed that Hausa exerts influence on Ilorin Yoruba on the aspects of phonology and morphemic structure, and less on the semantic sphere.

Languages are not static at any given time. Languages are amenable to changes in population movement and other changes introduced by human activities. All these have significant influence on the phenomenon of borrowing. Van HerkandKatamba(2011) maintain that borrowing results from contact situations and borrowed words are used to describe new situations and activities associated with the new language. "Once a word is truly borrowed, it loses its association with the original language, and is adapted to the pronunciation and morpho-syntax of the borrowers." (Van Herk&Katamba, 2011:502). This is further supported by Tarev (2012) who contends that:

The 'fate' of loan words may be different: some of them are firmly fixed in a recipient language and remain in it as an integral part of general language, while others remain in the position of words for special purpose, the third, ceasing to serve the purpose of communication, gradually fell out of use, and then disappear completely.

First, the use of language forms from two languages is not a random mixing. Rather, a speaker either switches rapidly from one to the other, or switches only for a word, phrase or

sentence. Later the term **code-switching** became a term for this behavior. Second, the resulting language is not a **hybrid** versus a **pure** language, since the term has pejorative sense. All languages borrow and attempts to "purify" the language of foreign elements are misguided. Third, "borrowing" is itself a misleading term since it takes place without consent of the lender and need not be repaid. However, it has been retained in the field as a technical linguistic term. Haugen defined borrowing as "the attempted reproduction in one language of patterns previously found in another" (Haugen, 1950: 212). The types of borrowing are discussed in terms of the original pattern or **model**. An **import** is an item similar to the model; a **substitution** is an inadequate version of the original, i.e. speakers of the origins of the original language would not recognize it. The usual terms in the study of borrowing relate to the process rather than the results.

It is clear from the foregoing that language grows and lives and if it is not used, it will die. But in the course of using it, language users indulge in borrowing from one language to another to enhance and enrich the vocabulary of their native language. However, a situation whereby seventy or eighty percent of the total vocabulary becomes that of a foreign language, there is a problem; because that could be threatening the survival of the recipient language borrowing. This study particularly finds the borrowing of Hausa words into Tiv language worrisome. Despite the fact that the borrowed words serve and have improved the vocabulary of the Tiv language, the danger is that continued borrowing from other languages might overtime lead to the Tiv language going into extinction. This will deny future generations of Tiv people the opportunity of knowing their original language and culture. The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent of borrowing by the Tiv from Hausa language, as well as raise alarm on the danger of Tiv language going extinct if this trend of borrowing is not checked in time.

The rationale of this study is well justified

on account of the need to examine borrowed Hausa words and their adaptations into the Tiv lexicon over the past few decades. The lack of sufficient linguistic research into this particular aspect of Tiv further emphasizes the significance of this study. The aim is to identify the words borrowed from Hausa language that have penetrated the Tiv lexicon over the past few decades and examine how this benefits the Tiv language, as well as what dangers this poses to the Tiv language in the future.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research adopts the theory of diffusionism because of its relevance to language adaptation. This encourages cultural borrowing and enriches the vocabulary of the language with latest technological terminologies thus raising its status. It also enhances the modernization of the language as emerging technological and scientific terminologies are imported into the language through borrowing. Diffusionism is a sociological theory that was propounded by two sociologists, Elliot Smith and Perry; it was used by Beatti in 1964. According to Idyorough (2002:24), the theory states that "cultural change and progress are mainly as a result of cultural borrowing". It elucidates that as cultures come into contact, there is room for borrowing which helps the culture to grow. It was also used by Shagba in 2014 to advocate for linguistic borrowing to enhance the growth of the Tiv language. Thus, it is also relevant to this research work, because it is centered on investigating the issue of borrowing of lexical material from Hausa language to Tiv language.

### **Methodology**

The data for this study were obtained from oral and printed sources on Tiv language. Thirty one Hausa speakers of Tiv origin and twenty five Hausa native speakers given a Tiv wordlist to trace their origin for the purpose of ascertaining whether they were borrowed or not. The 35 Tiv speakers were randomly selected in Tiv communities but of the 25 Hausa native speakers, 5 were each selected each of Makurdi, Gboko, Zaki-Biam, Adikpo and Katsina-Ala towns. These towns were

chosen because, they were the towns with the highest number of Hausa immigrants in Benue State. The respondents were adults of between 60 to 90 years of age and belonged to various socio-educational backgrounds. Only forty seven words on the wordlist were returned for analysis. Printed sources such as Tiv-English Dictionaries, Hausa-English dictionaries, dissertations/ theses, books and journal publications on Tiv language were consulted in the course of this work. The analysis focused on the nature and magnitude of borrowing, the grammatical class of loan words, the internal and external changes that have taken place as a result of the process of borrowing.

The next section of this study, a detailed presentation and analysis of the Hausa borrowed words adopted into Tiv language is carried out. The analysis focuses on highlighting the fact that some of the borrowed words are used to replace existing words, while some are borrowed to fill an existing gap in the Tiv lexicon. Also, the conditions of the entry of these Hausa words into Tiv language are highlighted and discussed in this segment of the study.

### **Lexical items borrowed from Hausa language into Tiv language**

This section presents and discusses the major phonological adaptations that have characterized Hausa words borrowed into Tiv language. The most significant of these is the replacement or modification of the Hausa sounds that are in the phonemic inventory of Tiv by the ones that are closer to them in articulation. Illustrative examples of this phenomenon as well as notable exceptions will be mentioned.

Table 1 presents lexical items borrowed from the Hausa language into Tiv language, whose forms and structure are altered in terms of vowel substitution. For instance, the Hausa word '*agbada*' becomes '*agbeda*' when borrowed into Tiv language; there is a substitution of the /a/ with /e/. Another example is the alteration of the Hausa word '*kalangu*' becomes '*Akelangu*'. Here the alteration occurs in addition of a lexeme at the beginning of the word, as well as

substitution of one of the vowels - /a/ is added and /e/ substitutes the /a/ after /k/ in '*kalangu*' to become '*akelangu*'. This alteration changes the form and structure of the borrowed word, to make it a lexical item in the recipient language; in this case the Tiv language.

It is important to note that some of the borrowed lexical items have equivalents in the Tiv language, for example the Tiv word for '*stool*' is '*ayakpa*'; however, the word '*kujera*' is borrowed from the Hausa language. The danger here is that the borrowed word '*kujera*' seems to have replaced the original Tiv word '*ayakpa*', making it to gradually go into extinction. Tiv also have the word '*adôgôn*' for 'train', yet the Hausa word '*girgi*' has been adopted and most native speakers of Tiv hardly use '*adôgôn*' in communication. It is worse with the Tiv youth who are not even aware of the existence of the word, but are more familiar with the borrowed '*igirgi*' from Hausa's '*girgi*'.

Table 2 presents a list of borrowed lexical items from Hausa language to Tiv language, whose form and structure have been altered by consonant substitution. A good example is the Hausa word '*alura*' meaning 'needle' is borrowed with the same semantic value but altered morphologically in Tiv as '*anura*'. The consonant /l/ in '*alura*' is substituted with /n/ in Tiv to become '*anura*'. Similarly, the Hausa word '*buhu*' meaning 'sack' is borrowed with alteration as '*bufu*'. Here the consonant /h/ in '*buhu*' is replaced with /f/ to become '*bufu*' in Tiv language. It is important to note that the original Tiv word for sack is '*ibya*'; however, the borrowed Hausa word is becoming more dominant and threatening to replace the original Tiv word if something is not done to salvage the situation.

Table 3 catalogues some Hausa words that have been adopted into Tiv language without any shift or alteration in their semantic and morphological features. These words have not been altered; they assume the same form and meaning in Tiv context as in their original Hausa language context. It is worthy however, to note that this is so because the Tiv language does not have equivalents of such words in its vocabulary, and at best

descriptions are used to state such notions, objects or items. In all, twenty vocabulary items have not equivalents in Tiv. For the remaining 27 words, even though Tiv has words originally, new words from Hausa have been borrowed to substitute them.

Words like 'adua' and 'Lahadi' however, take a more general meaning a bit different from that in the source language. Adua in Tiv describes the entire process of worship or church of worship. Similarly, 'Lahadi' also means a period of seven days (i.e. a week). When a word takes on a wider, more general meaning than it had previously used in the source language, the phenomenon is called *semantic broadening* (Radford, Atkinson, Britain, Clashes & Spencer, 1999).

Overall, our investigation has shown that all the loanwords sampled in the current study belong to one grammatical category: nouns.

Thus it can be said that Tiv words borrowed from Hausa are nouns similar to Usar and Ofuegbe's (2017) findings. Our study was not concerned whether Hausa borrowed from Tiv too. Even though this was not investigated, it could be said that this is unlikely because, language contact research indicates that linguistic borrowing occurs most extensively on the part of minority language speakers in an attempt to fit into the language of wider communication (Sankoff, 2002). This finding is similar to Adamu's (2016) finding that Nupe, which is a minority language has borrowed lexical items mainly nouns, verbs and adjectives from Yoruba.

On the internal and external changes that take place in the loan words, our finding corroborates Njagi's (2016) study. The current study has noticed high evidence of direct loan and loan shifts from the source language, Hausa to Tiv, the recipient language.

Table 3: List of Hausa words adopted into Tiv Language without any shift or alteration in their semantic/morphological features.

**These are Hausa words which their semantic and morphological features are not altered in Tiv. They assume the same forms and meanings in Tiv context.**

Tiv	Hausa	SL meaning	Borrowed word	RL meaning	Gloss
Nil	adua	prayer	Adua	Church	Church
Nil	agogo	watch/clock	Agogo	clock/watch	clock/watch
Nil	ayaba	banana	Ayaba	Banana	Banana
Gido	busa	trumpet	Busa	Trumpet	bugle
Ubu	chokoli	spoon	chokoli	Spoon	Spoon
Nil	Dubu	thousand	Dubu	Thousand	Thousand
Nil	Jaki	donkey	Jaki	Donkey	Donkey
Nil	kakaki	trumpet	Kakaki	Trumpet	Trumpet
Nil	kasuwa	market	Kasua	Market	Market
Imande	Kusa	nail	Kusa	Nail	Nail
Nil	laadi	sunday	Lahadi	Week	Sunday
Nil	makaranta	school	makeranta	School	School
Ishendan	makuli	key	Makuli	Key	Key
Nil	rakumi	camel	Rakumi	Camel	camel
Gbande	tasa	dish	Tesa	Dish	Dish
Nil	tuta	Flag	Tuta	Flag	Flag

SL (source language), RL (recipient language)



The discourse analysis above indicates that the Tiv language have over time borrowed significantly some lexical items from the Hausa language due to language contact. These borrowings have introduced new words into the Tiv lexicon, either as alternatives to existing words, or to fill an existing gap where only descriptions are used to express or state something.

Based on the data presented in tables 1-3, one can glean that some concepts, notions or objects are new to the Tiv vocabulary and the easy way to obtain these lexical items is by borrowing of words from the Hausa language. This is good to a certain extent, but worrisome in the sense that it poses the danger of killing Tiv language growth. Such objects or concepts could be described in Tiv, and perhaps with passage of time, a word of Tiv origin could emerge. But with the borrowing no room is given for such innovation, it only gives room for the source language to dominate the recipient language with its lexical items. This could lead to a gradual take over (in this case) of the Tiv language by the Hausa language, leading Tiv language into extinction.

As worrisome as the above seems, it is even more terrifying to observe that some original lexical items in Tiv language are being replaced by borrowed words from the Hausa language. The fear is that over time these original Tiv words would be forgotten, while their Hausa replacements would survive; this is a clear case of language endangerment. This study provides information that serve as an important reference point on the Tiv language for future generations of Tiv people.

### Suggestions

Arising from the feeling that when minority languages borrow much from the dominant languages, the recipient language is under survival threat, we therefore suggest the following measures to revitalize Tiv language:

1. The formal teaching of Tiv language and literature be

intensified during basic education to get the interest of the young ones in their mother language. Languages survive when there are many speakers of such a language. The only way to keep the Tiv language alive is by ensuring that the language legacy is passed across to the younger ones through western education.

2. Laying a solid foundation of the spoken medium through the oral genre like the use of tongue twisters, riddles, proverbs, storytelling, and *kwagh-hir* puppetry theatre.
3. Development of indigenous literature as a both a resource for reading and as a means of preserving Tiv language and culture.

### Conclusion

This study explored the concept of lexical borrowing and its potential for language endangerment. The study explored the extent of lexical borrowing by the Tiv language from the Hausa language, showcasing the nature of borrowing to be purely one-sided (ie) on the Tiv language borrowing lexical items from the Hausa language. The analysis has shown that the Tiv has borrowed significantly from the Hausa language, and the borrowing tends to be replacing some Tiv lexical items and gradually pushing them into extinction.

It is therefore, concluded that the nature of Tiv borrowing of Hausa lexical items, is one that threatens the future of the Tiv language. The fact that words borrowed from the Hausa language are posing a threat to the future performance and survival of Tiv words is a clear case of endangerment. Based on the result of this study, it is important that Tiv scholars and linguists intensify studies in this area, to come up with viable strategies to ensure the survival of the Tiv language for future generations to come.

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**Abstract.**

A close reading of Idris Amali's poetry volumes; "EFEEGA War or Ants"(2014) and Back Again at the "Foothills of Greed"(2012) and Idris Musa Okpanachi's "The Eaters of the Living"(2007) and "From the Margins of Paradise"(2012) reveals the fears and hopes of contemporary Nigerian poets. The poets rant and ponder through their poetry why certain problems persist in their country. They are dissatisfied with their lives as Nigerians. Marxist Poetry allows more space for the subjectivity of the author to be displayed in which the themes depicted typically convey a message of social or political struggle edged with satire. The paper examines their works via the prism of Marxism; how they stand out as Marxist poets and the extent the theory of Marxism has influenced their poetic discourse. In this context, the ideological struggle of Marxism is experienced most often as a result of the socio political failings in the poets' society. The analytic approach is the study of a poetry type labelled 'Marxist Poetry' which is drawn from a philosophical assumption of Karl Marx. The selected poems are analysed within this philosophical paradigm. The emphasis is on how Marxism as a philosophy trends within the scope of contemporary Nigerian Poetics. It is thus illustrated in this paper that Marxist traits in the poets are ventilated through extreme metaphors in their poetic discourse.

**Introduction**

Perhaps the most enduring poetic aesthetics of

the poets; Idris Amali and Musa Idris Okpanachi lie in the preponderance of the semiotics of the predator and the prey. It is on that note that the structure and form of their entire collection draws its content and technique. Hence, what comes often to the reader's mind is an artfully constructed binary thematic structure – the leader and the led, the good and the evil, the looters and the looted, David and Goliath. According to Karl Marx, the 'forces of production,' the way goods and services are produced, will, in a capitalist society, inevitably generate conflict between social classes created by the way economic resources are used and who profits from them. More specifically, the struggle will take place between the bourgeoisie, who control the means of production by owning the natural and human resources, and the proletariat, who supply the labor that allows the owners to make a profit. The conflict is sometimes realised as a clash of management and labor, sometimes simply as friction between socioeconomic classes and more specifically in this context, between the political class and the led. The objective of this research is to analyse the form and content of the poems of Idris Amali and Musa Idris Okpanachi to be able to unearth the inherently Marxist trait in them as a reflection of a trend in contemporary Nigerian poetry. 'They are two parts of a whole that struggle against each other, not just physically but also ideologically' (Dobie P96-97). 'Ideology' is a term that turns up frequently in Marxist discussions. It refers to a belief system produced, according to Marxists, by the relations between the different classes in a society, classes that have come about because of the society's modes of production. An ideology can be positive (Struggle), leading to a better world for the people, or it can be negative, serving the interests of a repressive system. According to Dobie (2012: P144)

The latter rarely presents itself as an ideology, however. Instead, it appears to be a reasonable, natural worldview, because it is in the self-interest of those in power to convince people that it is so. Even a flawed system must appear to be a success. An ideology dictated by the dominant class functions to secure its power. When such cultural conditioning leads the people to accept a system that is unfavorable for them without protest or questioning—that is, to accept it as the logical way for things to be—they have developed a false consciousness.

Marxism works to rid society of such deceptions by exposing the ideological failings that have been concealed. It takes responsibility for making people aware of how they have unconsciously accepted the subservient, powerless roles in their society that have been prescribed for them by others. This ideological friction between the bourgeois and the proletariat is what Marx referred to as 'dialectical materialism'. Actually the term includes more than class conflict, for it refers to the view that all change is the product of the struggle between opposites generated by contradictions

inherent in all events, ideas, and movements. A thesis collides with its antitheses, finally reaching synthesis, which generates its own antithesis, and so on, thereby producing change. This is what Marx referred to as 'dialectical materialism'. This paper connects poetry to the question of nationhood, humanity, political regeneration and a better civil society. This research attempts to portray how poetry critiques the spheres of human life how it interrogates humanity raising awareness especially in sharp economic divides via the prism of Marxism.

**Marxism, Rage and Melancholy in Nigerian Poetry.**

In the Nigerian context, the literary critic Sule Egya in his *Poetics Of Rage: A Reading of Remi Raji's Poetry* (2011), explores the nationalist imagination, artistic philosophy and the overtly political dimension of Remi Rami Raji's poetry via the prism of angst. According to Egya, 'Raji's poetry devices an idiom, realises an aesthetics, utterly sensitive to the plight of the society, largely responsive to the failure of leadership in his country. And this is characteristic of his restless angry generation'. Egya further explains that the poetry of this generation does not shy away from this fact nor try to veil them in any avant-garde formalism. In fact their poetry easily, readily, betrays the socialist outrage that tends to dwarf techniques in

African poetry. Their poem is first about rescuing the society, before it is about rhythm and rhyme. It is in this light that we can tag Raji's poetry as 'Marxist Poetry'. Egya defines Marxist poetry as 'that variety of poetry that depicts and declaims the failure of leadership; that captures the helpless masses suppressed and oppressed by the establishment that whether molded in optimism or pessimism, engages the society, the people, in charting a positive discourse of nation formation'. He further explains that this kind of poetry, belongs to the domain of protest literature, it shouts, barks, screams, cries, curses, swears and prays in dire resignation, with the intent, most often to awaken the consciousness of its audience, and to challenge, even if ineffectual, the regime of oppression silencing the society. Egya opines that Marxist poetry establishes a two dimensional dialogue: one, between the poet and the people for whom the poet claims to undertake a selfless duty; and two, between the poet and the oppressor figure who the poet relentlessly attacks with what he describes as 'violent metaphors'. Ingrained in, but not limited to post colonial literatures, Marxist poetry is a manifestation of committed writing that comes with the realisation of the poet that his poetic vision must transcend the abstraction of artistic self- glorification. In transcending poetic subjectivity, the Marxist poet objectifies his voice through what Remi Raji himself calls 'the aesthetics of rage'.

G.M Emezue in an essay, *History, Vision and craft in new Nigerian Poetry* (New Nigerian Poetry; 2005) opines that modern Africa's poverty and political instability has furnished the background for the lamentation poetry of her younger generation. Not even the economic exploitation of Africa by Europe and neo colonist politics of the new world order: themes of actual historical significance of African studies have preoccupied the new poetics of Africa as much as black man's betrayal of motherland. Images of Africa's self-inflicted reversals are then presented with emotive poignance and

expressive clarity in the new poetry that have emerged from the region of Nigeria. For Emezue these brand of mournful poetry are expressed in voices not alien to their surroundings despite the several occurrence of modern styles. Of interest in this study is the poetic threnodies which style of rendition is drawn from spheres of human endeavor. It could be the loss sustained from betrayal of trust, disappointment in relationships, denial and deprivation of rights and the sense of atrophy experienced from inured visions.

Where ever a poet utilizes the threnodic voice in his poetry, such poems according to Emezue 'differ in terms of sentiments'. Nigerian poets are thence caught expressing despair, gloom, hopelessness, melancholy, despondency, discouragement, bitterness, desperation and shock. These feelings are also expressed in a language of ire, anger, passion, fury, exasperation, trepidation, cynicism, bitterness, sarcasm, ridicule, derision, irony, grief, distress, misery woe and anguish. Equally important is the relevance of a poet's art within a given time and age. Many of Africa's new generation poets reflect the quality of an age that is being swept in a wooly reverie of failures. They have therefore become lamenters or dirge singers by extension. They lament the monumental failures of leadership and betrayal of dreams of national aspirations as envisioned by her founding fathers. To this group belong such poets led by Chinweizu, Niyi Osundare, Funso Aiyejina, Ezenwa Ohaeto, Odia Ofeimun and Ossie Enekwe. Others, more recently, are Peter Onwudinjo, Joe Ushie, Chin Ce, Ismail B. Garba, Toyin Adewale, Osita Ezeliara, Remi Raji, Musa Idris Okpanachi, Idris Amali etc. all of Nigeria. Generally, these breed of poets lament the betrayal by the political leaders, or the dilapidated state of the Nigerian nation. Their anger over the corruption that afflicts the nation is unmistakable. It is this form of threnody ushered in by these young men and women that has come to be known as the poetry of angst.

These poets who express Marxist traits are impatient with national slogans that fly in the face of glaring contradictions. For them, political sloganeering, when juxtaposed with



the serial betrayals by their own leaders becomes meaningless.

The hallmark of this brand of poetry (Marxist), as opposed to others, is the militancy of spirit often conveyed with threnody of voice and mood. The manners of poetic expression are informed by visionary pursuits. The dearth of purposeful vision in all spheres of life of the Nigerian nation is too overwhelming an issue to express in 'mild' language, hence these poets who express angst 'scream' these problems in a voice that is discernible to the masses whose woes they chronicle.

Emezue 2005 gives an insight as to what poetry of angst looks like using four poets; Funsho Aiyejina, Niyi Osundare, Chin Ce, and Toyin Adewale. According to Emezue, Funsho Aiyejina for instance projects mistrust, disillusionment, and even disaster for the political future of the nation as seen in his poems 'Before the Dawn Dawns,' and 'The Year of Hopeless-Hope'. He identifies those responsible for Nigeria's political and economic problems. Where death, in traditional dirge, is bemoaned at the demise of a loved one. Nigerian politicians are held responsible for the virtual death of the Nigerian nation.

Emezue also cited Niyi Osundare's 'Siren' and 'Rithmetic of Ruse' which explores similar political themes with Aiyejina's. 'Siren' that bewails the arrogant parade of power by local leaders through a graphic depiction of starving nature and malnourished humanity: kwashiorkored children waving tattered flags, land disemboweled by erosion ... yam tendrils yellowing on tubers smaller than a palm kernel. Their 'Excellencies' manage not to see the seeds of tomorrow's famine because they are not there for the begging and bickering of the faceless rural crowd. The mourner of a national tragedy is a satirist who sketches the modern poverty of the Nigerian people whose contorted babies on their 'mothers' back/ are question marks for tomorrow's answer.' Osundare's lamentation is typical of the revolutionary temper that dominates African dirge songs. The poet's lament, inspired by sensitivity to the anomaly of prevailing leadership,

acutely shares the feeling of loss and frustration. Similarly, 'Rithmetic of Ruse' shows how power-sick civilians inflate census figures in order to gain political ascendancy over their opponents. We are told how politicians go to the extent of adding their cattle to census figures and engage in all sorts of deceit in order to grab power. Osundare's poetry creates a feeling of despondency in the reader. But undaunted by this evil, there is the underlying note of confidence on the triumph of knowledge: 'our search/for the fragments of truth' over ignorance.'

Chin Ce's poetry according to Emezue, , reveals an awareness of shared experiences in relation to the singularity of individual destiny or purpose whether in collective or personal degrees. An African Eclipse would ring shrilly, and bristle with contempt while the poetics is so full of experimentations to the point of eccentricity. Yet the overall threnody of the African Eclipse takes the quality of an African dirge. The prologue comprises a single poem, 'Farewell,' wherein the poet sets the tone for a new direction. We may assume that this is a parting of ways, from old to new but it is the 'old ways' that Ce confronts us with. In a traditional sense, 'African Eclipse' mourns the atrophy of Africa's future. It is the truncation of hopes for a great black African nation by the 'generation without a soul,' the responsibility of which must be traced to military and civilian collaborators in national ruination. This tendency to load the enemy with negative images according to Emezue, has become a continuing tradition with popular lamentation poetry. Nigerian politicians are vultures, and their military turncoats are reptiles. In any case, the military are the precipitators of the eclipse. Probably the most acerbic lamentation of political corruption can be found in the four-part movement to the 'Eclipse.' (p16-19) 'The sun shall not wait...' begins the poet, in admonitory locution to the president who barricades himself in office and is now alienated from his people. The image of time which does not wait but hurtles down the decline is ominous of impending doom: 'respector' of persons. The style of

rendition in 'Eclipse' according to Emezue presents time as the great leveler: that which equalises the imbalance among men, nations, and races. 'Every penny must be paid,' is the refrain that presages future consequences of present decisions. Emezue goes on to explain that Chin Ce's poetry is not all a lament of 'stinging stench,' 'stalking hyenas,' 'barbarian boot,' and 'tired drummers.' The constellation changes hint at some future determination and is symbolic of an after-eclipse. The sun in the epilogue amplifies the concept even before the succeeding four poems enforce this hope of a renewal. More striking is how a mournful chronicle now presents this sense of renewal 'aposteriori'. In the loud denunciations of the preceding sections of Chin Ce's African Eclipse, none could have thought such deep sense of optimism possible. But such is the real vintage of an African lamentation which lifts the veil of sullen grief to reveal a landscape of glorious fortune.

Emezue further explores Toyin Adewale's 'Naked Testimonies'. He makes us see how we are struck by the poet's ability to make of general interest such personal themes. Like the African dirge singer on a mission of introspective and communal purgation, the poem 'Naked Testimonies' overcomes the mournful perplexity of broken truces with studied, deliberate renunciation of all that discredit the villainous object of her mourning.

For Emezue 2015, a point of artistic convergence among poets who express angst is the use of simple language. This may be an attempt to make their art accessible to the people whose experiences they seek to register. He says;

Of striking interest in this convergence is the incidence of common connotations and symbolisms. Aiyejina's predatory images: 'dog,' 'snake,' and 'eagle,' for Nigerian leaders echo in the laments of Chin Ce and Ezenwa Ohaeto. Niyi Osundare and Funso Aiyejina explore the image of 'soldier ants' as metaphor for oppression. 'The poetry of the new threnodists is also characterised by code switching where local nomenclatures take their position with

formal English. Here, names like 'tanwiji,' 'molue,' 'danfo,' and 'dagbere,' abound in Osundare as a matter of conscious artistry' Emezue (2005). In Aiyejina Yoruba and Hausa codes are virtually switched. In 'The Year of Hopeless Hope' the lines 'lai lai Alamu O le dede la eewo Orisa' express the Yoruba thought that 'nothing happens from nothing' in a manner that retains the collective belief in that truism where its English equivalent may truly not have sufficed. From Ce's poems, local nomenclature: 'Dodan,' 'agbada,' 'menini,' 'surugede,' retain their cultural trappings in spite of the formal language of artistic expression.

Here, with the traits of Marxism, the poet celebrates the belief that 'poetry has a special capacity to move readers in a political way by raising consciousness, bearing witness, arousing indignation, questioning falsehood, putting human faces on sufferings, deconstructing pat formulas and speaking truth to power.

#### **Marxist traits in Idris Amali's Poetry.**

*Back Again At the Foothills of Greed* and *Efeega: War of Ants* evidently contains poems about post military era democracy with its disturbing shortcomings. At this point, the poet persona in Amali's poetry sinks into angst and becomes totally frustrated that all the energy he has put into his antimilitary poems like *Generals Without war* are in vain, as the civilian regime does not seem better than the military. The poet's eponymous poem 'Back Again At the Foothills of Greed' further portrays the poet's anger and resentment toward the ruling class who have sustained the habit of looting and amassing wealth to the detriment of the poor masses. The poet says;

We are back again

At another full moon of "Chop and Chop"  
When the chased Eagles and Vultures Have  
perched on low shrubs

But with their surgical talons poised

To further empty our starved  
bowels...(Stanzas 3 p. 100)

The high point where Marxism is manifested in the poet is where he feels that nothing seems to have changed. For him, the situation is like the biblical 'Wolves in Sheep Skins' as

he says “when the chased Eagles have perched on low shrubs” meaning the same military despot are still the ones who have come in the form of civilian rule. Therefore, the looting continue.

In the poem the “Stream of Life” (Back Again At the Foothills of Greed); Marxism is reflected in Amali's mixture of pessimistic and optimistic message to the oppressive politicians where he says;

If you are lucky to see them  
Tell them our brothers the politicians That  
the stream of life has cut us off On the other  
side of the river.....

Tell our brothers the politicians that we  
starve

As their stream of rosy life daily sweeps  
With her men at arms encroaching the land  
Our strongholds...(pg 95).

Here the poet illustrates the situation of his country where the citizens/Proletariat have been abandoned in the cold to starve by politicians/Bourgeoisies who are supposed to live above board or better than the military. The poet amidst his lamentation and anguish is equally apocalyptic towards the end of the poem where he predicts doom for the wicked political class. He says;

Heart is strength  
Tell them our brothers  
The politicians if you are lucky to see  
them  
That we shall at midday strip them of  
our wings  
For them to crash at the bar beach  
As we have been cut off  
by their turbulent stream of life.

'Stripping them of our wings' here metaphorically means taking back our mandate or votes by which the politicians have flown beyond our reach.

Amali's best poems arguably are those that reverberate with resistance and rage, challenging the myth of military oppression and rendering optimism in the climate of tender metaphors, to a people turn between survival and death. The aforementioned collections also have that instinctual concern with sociopolitical issues. Amali's continued engagement with sociopolitical themes exemplifies Sule Egya's quote of William Faulkner's

opinion, thus; “the only reason the poet ever writes another poem is that the one he just finished didn't serve the purpose-wasn't good enough so he will write another one” (Egya 2011: P67 ). This sense of longing and belonging is what defines Idris Amali as a Marxist poet; it impels the poet toward purer, stronger metaphors and a more discursive social vision. This can be seen in the opening poem “Prelude” (*Efeega: War of Ants*);

Let these word  
Trickle down the lines  
From the fountain of thoughts  
Of my ancestral pride...(Stanza 1, p.9)

Amali's signature a Marxist poet is present at this point. He assumes the role of a town crier drawing people's attention to the words he was about to speak in his (ancestral pride) nation.

He goes forth to say:

This cruel heat of the night  
In the season of long deserts of words That has  
besieged the restless brains..... Let the acid  
words trickle down  
From these restless lips of truth  
That fear no one. (Stanzas 2-3)

'This cruel heat of the night' is a metaphorical definition of a stagnated Nigeria with an insistent prophet who sees and understands her unending ailments. In this poem, the persona-prophet do not only present him as a resilient watchman keen about the fate of his nation, he undoubtedly emerges as an enraged town crier with a message that, interestingly, is both apocalyptic and optimistic. This poem is exemplary of Amali's discursive social vision in these collections. A number of overarching images are thrown up from the flora and fauna of the poet's immediate (Idoma) society. Amali has this to say concerning the influence of his Idoma language on his poetic discuss;

There is nothing “deliberate” about it, about Idoma language style of expression in my poetry. I am an Idoma traditional poet. I can chant the Idoma oral poetry well enough. The use of Idoma language of expression is an interventionist approach where Idoma mode of expression naturally finds a place in my modern poetic expression. There is nothing deliberate about it. I do not take myself to be a deliberate poet. ...The

anger in me, the anger in my poetry  
is real and I want my message to  
reach out, be heard, be understood,  
and attempt to change society for a  
free society.

These desperate images give a sense of the chaos ravaging Nigeria. In spite of the chaos, the poet persona still realizes that he is one with the nation. "Of my ancestral pride" therefore is a symbolic bond between the poet and his society.

Like Musa Idris Okpanachi, Idris Amali relentlessly continues to engage sociopolitical issues especially the issue of corruption in his new collections. Corruption that has eaten deep into his society contributes greatly to what fuels the Marxism in the poet. This is amplified from the titles of these collections: *Back Again At the Foothills of Greed* and *Efeega War of Ants*. In the poem "Efeega: War of Ants," the poet symbolically uses the image of an Elephant to signify the monster of corruption and the Ants as the masses been trampled. The poet says:

Let us line the triumphant route  
Where the Elephant treads ....  
Bring in out the ancient drums of war  
To wake a legion of ancestors of  
brave.....  
(Stanzas 1&2, p. 108)

Here the poet calls for unity in the fight against the monster called corruption. Though the battle might seem like the biblical 'David and Goliath', victory is the citizens' for the taken so long as they are united. Interestingly, the anguish and rage of the poet against the issues of corruption bedeviling his society is laid bare in the Acknowledgement in "Efeega War of Ants" where the poet addresses the issues of corruption point blank when he says;

I acknowledge with grave pains  
activities of the dramatis persona  
who have acted and are acting in  
the dramatic scene or episode of  
broad day light gangster looting of  
the nation's enormous wealth as its  
greatness is turned into woes and  
unending sufferings while the few  
pocket what belongs to the public  
without any dust been raised.... I

acknowledge and record for  
posterity, that it is in this regime, a  
thing of great honour and pride to  
have the God given opportunity to be  
chosen for "Team Corruption" to  
govern the peoples estates full of  
treasures: it must be further  
acknowledged that since the birth of  
this child of circumstance, it has  
never witnessed this prevailing level  
of debasement of human values and  
morals in state governance and no  
one knows when the looting race  
would end as the looters daily expand  
their looting empires.

**Marxist traits in Musa Idris Okpanachi's poetry.**

In both collections; *The Eaters of the living* and *From the Margins of Paradise* there is the expression of Marxism in the generous use of irony and satire in representing the extreme disparity between the leaders and the led. This is the medium by which the Marxism in the poet is illuminated. For instance, in the subdued almost unrealized love between the political class and the land, from the poem, "The Legion of Cain" (*Margins of Paradise*), there is angst invested in lines such as; "they love the land/So they bite off her lips/In passionate kiss of patriotism".

Okpanachi's poetic aim is to advocate for art's power to engage the imagination on social issues. In his eponymous poem "The Eaters of The Living", the poet says:

Ours is a nation of the eaters  
They eat everything and everyone  
They eat like the termites  
They eat like the locusts  
They eat like the cancer cells  
They eat like acids  
They eat festering sores of the people.  
.....(stanza 1, lines 1-7,p.28)

Here, with the Marxist trait, the poet celebrates the belief that 'poetry has a special capacity to move readers in a political way by raising consciousness, bearing witness, arousing indignation, questioning falsehood, putting human faces on sufferings, deconstructing pat formulas and speaking truth to power.

The poet in stanza two of the poem further shoulders the task of reminding his people



through his poetry that those at the helm of affairs; in this context the political bourgeois are totally out for everything but the interest of the less privileged/proletariat (i.e the majority of the led in the society) . They will rather devour them (the poor masses) if given the chance. The poet says:

They eat the skin of the poor  
And drink the beverages  
Of their sweats  
They eat our patriotic service  
They eat documents. Lines 12-16

Okpanachi expresses Marxist trait in another poem “We Give You This Country” (*The Eaters of The Living*) Here, the oppressor figure is addressed as 'you'. The poem is highly sarcastic and the voice of the poet- persona here is pained, wounded, engaging pitying; the poet-persona's powerful feelings of course towards the ordinary people collectivised as a country, a country blatantly brutalized by this very powerful oppressor figure to which, as the entire tone of the poem suggests, all humanity has to succumb. In the rhythmic flow of the poem, accentuated by the repetition of 'We give you this Country', the poet persona, through images familiar to Nigerians, states, but implicitly challenges, the phenomenon of self-perpetuation, what is today known publicly as the sit tight syndrome, common to African despots. The dialogue here is between 'we' representing the oppressed people of the country, and 'you' representing the despot and her cohorts. Like most poems of this cast, this poem concentrates on the disturbing chasm between the leader and the led, always with the poet persona taking side with the led. This is one claim that Okpanachi's poetry lay to 'angst', carefully deploying words that arouse sympathy for the country in the reader. The poem concludes this way:

We give you this country  
It is your birthright Inhabited by  
subhuman The land is your throne  
.....  
We give you this country  
Because your heart desires it Because it  
is where you Spread yourself  
To defile the land.....(*The Eaters of*

*The Living* p.11-12, lines 32-38)

Some of the lines resonate with irony. The poet persona of course means the opposite of it when he says 'It is your birthright'. He also means the opposite of it when he says 'Inhabited by subhuman' for these are aimed, just like the entire poem, to confront the sickened psyche of the oppressor who thinks to rule is his birthright or thinks the people whom he rules are sub humans. A poem in the period of peril, especially one as this, is to prove to the despot that his subjects are not sub-humans but in fact, capable of getting into a dialogue with his over the limitation of power.

Marxism is reflected in his two collections of poetry; “The Eaters of The Living” and “From the Margins of Paradise” mainly with the way he deals with sociopolitical issues. One of such is the high level of corruption (like embezzlement of public funds, taking of bribes etc) in the land that thus sinks the poet into a deep state of angst. Corruption breeds other vices in a social structure. Corruption is a symptom of numerous difficulties within contemporary societies. The poet is so angry and frustrated with the high level of corrupt practices in the land that he rages by his description of the situation when he says 'The nation and the masses have been eaten by the colossal index of corruption and the weak unity of the nation, and we are collectively hurt'. As a poet, he feels helpless and wonders beyond his imagination as to the manner in which to represent the behaviour of political actors, especially the do-or- die games of desperadoes they play. In the poem Lying “With The Calendar” (*The Eaters of The Living*), The poet draws our attention to the seemingly hopeless situation of the virtual circle of lies told by the leaders to keep the led in futile hope and expectations for a better tomorrow as the rulers/bourgeois continue to make reoccurring empty promises to keep the led/proletariat aloof and pacified creating an enabling environment for them to thrive in their looting escapade. The poet says:

They said in 1990  
Everyone will fetch water  
From under his bed  
By 1995 we will  
Pick electricity from the ashes

.....  
 They said in 1996  
 Hunger shall be banished  
 From our republic  
 With the official prescription  
 Of gold diet  
 They said in 1997 every leaf  
 Should cure all diseases  
 With the hospitals converted  
 To Children palaces  
 They swore that by the year 2000  
 We will all sleep  
 In paradisiacal mansions  
 Now the ashes of our hope  
 Had been blown by the desert storm  
 Our bliss postponed  
 Till the dream year 2010  
 .....(stanzas 1,3-7. P76)

Till date, reoccurring empty promises seems to have come to reside permanently in our sociopolitical state because now we have our leaders promising a land flowing with milk and honey in the guise of the maxim, 'vision 2020'.

Also, the poet as a Marxist expressively takes a little taunt at the legislators (who sometimes engage in anti-peoples policies) we have in our society today. He tries to give us a clear picture of what we get as citizens from our representatives (legislators) in the poem "Message From Mother" (*From the Margins of Paradise*). Here, satirically, the legislators are so preoccupied with the business of looting that it blocks their ears and eyes preventing them from listening to the citizens that sent them there.

She said I should Take her message  
 To the law makers I said they would  
 Not listen to the dead Their mouths  
 eyes ears Are sealed with gold  
 They could only mumble  
*Sumum bukmum umyun* (stanzas 9-10. P22)

What reflects Marxism is the extreme contradictory representation of situations in these poems. For example in "Children of The Night" (*From the Margins of Paradise*) the poet draws our attention to the irony of our society marred by corrupt practices.

The harder you work  
 The poorer you shall be

You shall be deprived so much until you become beggars Amidst plenty. (stanza 9. P55).

Okpanachi rightly describes his use of irony in an interview with P. Umez; 2103. He says; Indeed, ironies and satires provide poetry with a kind of cynical beauty and protective devices for the poet, especially from those who crave absolute social control of human behaviour". In the poem, "In Me", these contradictions are indeed "the world/on its head." It mirrors the disturbing plight that we have found ourselves, in a nation with raped, ravaged and devoured "common heritage and patrimony

Musa Idris Okpanachi's major frustration rests with the fact that everybody in his society seems to be very comfortable with the poor situation of things. This perhaps is what majorly sends the poet into extreme bitterness and rage. For our corrupt and near collapsed sociopolitical system, the poet seems to hip the blame on 'Silence'. For Okpanachi, things are the way they are simply because no one is talking.No one seems to have the courage to ask questions. In the poem "Words Elude Me" (*From The Margins of Paradise*), the poet seems resigned to taciturnity, saying:

I was once a word Then a syllable  
 Now a Silent letter  
 In the fist of sphinx (stanza 10, p.74-75)

Okpanachi arouses our sympathies through his array of human misery in his poetry. His deep insights into the psychology of poverty and suffering give birth to his moral ideas which represent his artistic vision—a vision that couched in the doctrine of Marxism. This Marxist traits is the generous use of paradox and irony that exposes the contradictions and hypocrisy of his society. In the poem "The Legion of Cain" (*From The Margins of Paradise*) for example, the poet demonstrates how hypocritical the political elites are, who claim to love the land so much that they bite off her lips in passionate kiss of patriotism.

### Conclusion

While there are views that contest the stance of poetry as a critique of socio-political condition of the society, contemporary Nigerian poetry in diverse forms, to different degrees,

continues to stage issues and realities that impact directly on the life of the peoples of Nigeria particularly and Africa at large. This research will therefore demonstrate the engagement of the emerging poetic voices in Nigeria with mainly political issues that have rather become perennial to the country. Their poetry heavily marked by Marxist traits see Nigeria's condition of underdevelopment as mainly a result of political failure. While the concerns raised in their poetry are not new-because their precursors have thematised the same fears and hopes, it will be seen that a peculiar form of struggle and lamentation unifies their tones. In their tones, they appear more frustrated than their precursor. Their poetry thus becomes a weapon to engineer change, to create awareness and if possible spark a revolution that may turn the table in favour of the masses whose side they always pitch their tents.

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