

Language Planning in Nigeria: Clash Between English Language and Indigenous Languages

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria almost 500 indigenous language that has assumed the status of a global linguistic code. The contact in different domains between English language and contact languages in the country continues to effect the performance in English and contact languages thereby making communication in either English or any other indigenous languages unattainable. This research work studied the gap between the use of English language and the indigenous languages in multilingual country, Nigeria which exists as a result of the non-implementation of language policies as stipulated by the Government. The sampling research method was adopted and questionnaires were employed to test the research hypothesis which proved positive. The major conclusion deduced from the findings reflect that if there must exist a linguistic balance between the use of English language in the country, the Government must endeavour through the Ministries of Education that both public owned and private owned schools adhere to a new language policy as the research work suggests. Offering indigenous languages in schools must be made compulsory and not optional as well as a compulsory subject to gain admission into Nigerian Universities like the English language.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, is undoubtedly, the largest black population and one of the largest (ESL) English as a second Language countries in the world (Jowitt, 2009). The country is a conglomerate of many languages and cultures, making the choice of an indigenous linguistic code difficult. As a matter of fact the country parades an array of about 500 ingenious languages. In a bid to arrive at what appears to be a linguistic consensus, three of the numerous indigenous languages are given some form of formal recognition, not any official or concrete implementable language policy document, but by snippets that can be garnered from official documents such as National Policy on Education (1981,2001) as well as the Nation's constitution (chapter 5, part 11, section 97).

With more than 500 indigenous languages in the nation, a large number of its citizens are first exposed to one or more of these languages in their immediate surroundings, typically as their L1 (first language). This presents a challenge for school-age children, as their existing Mother Tongue (MT) system keeps getting in the way of their language learning. Many of the native languages that this group of Nigerians has already learned cannot yet be written down, making them unsuitable for use as communication tools in the educational system. It is an accepted fact that communication is easier, better and more-effective when it is done in the L₁ medium. Where this is not possible, as it is always the case in non-monolingual nations such as Nigeria, there is always an adopted language as the LWC (Language of Wider Communication) also referred to as *Lingua Franca*, "a higher priority of use" and "is often acquired almost as a matter of course, usually as one is developing with the mother tongue" (Ayodele, 2004). has actually noted that because English is now considered a member of the linguistic family in West Africa, it is no longer a foreign language in the region's linguistic ecology. There isn't a single language in Nigeria that is recognized as the national tongue. Certain groups of communities or communities have their own unique language, which is treasured and protected with great care. Although official recognition is granted to three major languages that represent the three major geographical regions – Hausa in the northern part, Igbo in the south eastern part, and Yoruba in the south western part – the numerous languages have no place in official and educational matters. Even so, as long as other linguistic groups continued to assert the superiority of their languages, the so-called regional language in each region is typically neither widely accepted nor mutually understandable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the North, Hausa is known to have a very wide range of speakers outside the existence and importance of their indigenous language. Similarly, in the Eastern region, speakers of other languages besides Igbo are promoting Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, etc. Fulani, Igala, Nupe, Epira, Chamba, Bachama, Fulfude, etc. are a few of these.

As Fakuade (2004) has noted, "people do not fling away their languages for no good reason",

In addition to linguistic identity, ethnic identity has further divided the nation into more geopolitical zones than the three linguistically distinct regions

that made up the previous three regions. There are currently six geopolitical zones in the nation: North East, North West, South East, South South, and South West. There are numerous languages and communities that are supposedly divided along linguistic lines but are only a few kilometers apart within the same geopolitical zone, despite the fact that there is supposed to be a common linguistic code in the various zones. Even among communities that are only a short stroll apart, there are still a lot of minority languages that are incomprehensible to one another in the South West region, which is thought to be the most linguistically homogeneous. Because no indigenous language can be used as a national language in Nigeria, the linguistic scenario described above has made the adoption of a non-aligned linguistic code necessary for everyone's benefit. Social networks and other activities are frequently conducted in English in Nigerian society due to social linguistic differences. In summary, along with the three vital indigenous languages, English is widely spoken and plays a significant role in the media, the workplace, and as a medium of instruction in schools. Politically, as Arua (2003) rightly puts it "we cannot promptly specify the number of languages spoken in Nigeria" as a nation. The linguistic diversity in Nigeria is so pronounced and evident that individuals residing within a 25 kilometer radius speak vastly dissimilar and unintelligible languages from one another. The result of this complicated language situation is that there are no established, effective channels of communication between the various ethnic groups, which serves as fuel for prejudice and hatred as well as the decision to make English the primary official language. As he correctly pointed out, "Imagine a country where more than 400 ethnic groups project the interest of their individual groups at the nation! It also implies that the choice of any of the three major indigenous languages as a national language will certainly deteriorate to disintegration or unpleasant feelings!" There is no Nigerian language that can meet the demands of science and technology since nobody is flawless. Additional justifications offered for Nigeria's Lingua Franca's adoption of a non-indigenous language include:

1. Fear of political domination, if any indigenous language is selected no matter how good intentioned.
2. Avoiding the India's experience, where the choice of Hindi was reported to have led to riots in many non-Hindi-speaking regions (Yule,2007)
3. Lack of infrastructure, such as teachers, books and other learning resources, for any selected indigenous language.
4. Lack of political will to push through any of the indigenous languages, arising from (1) above.
5. Finally, the language which has come to fill the bill, which is English, is seen by many as a unifying force in the turbulent linguistic terrain

The linguistic diversities in Nigeria is accompanied with linguistic problems. This research work identifies the linguistic gap between English Language and Indigenous Nigerian Languages which has arisen as a result of non-implementation of the language policy statements as featured in the

National policy on Education and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The statistical hypothesis is adopted in this research work which could be formulated as null hypotheses or alternative hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1

Ho₁: English language is better appreciated as a course of study by Nigerian students.

Ha₁: English language is not better appreciated as a course of study by Nigerian students.

Hypothesis 2

Ho₂: Non-implementation of language policies in Nigeria produces semilingual citizens instead of multilingual citizens.

Ha₂: Non-implementation of language policies in Nigeria dose not produce semi-lingual citizens instead of multilingual citizens.

Language Concept

Language is the expression of ideas through the combination of speech sounds and words. Sentences are formed by combining words, and ideas are formed by combining words to form thoughts.

METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology

The researcher adopted the survey research method because it involves the use of questionnaire, personal interviews, observations and investigations. It is a useful tool for verifying theories.

Research Design

The descriptive design approach was chosen by the researcher because it does not seek to find new phenomena; rather, it focuses on relationships or conditions that already exist, prevalent practices, attitudes, points of view, and beliefs; ongoing processes; effects that are being felt; or emerging trends. Finding, characterizing, and interpreting what already exists is the main focus of this kind of research, according to Best in Denga and Ali (1989).

Sources of Data

The data used in this research are in two categories. The data provides evidence for both spoken and written ability/preference in English and the indigenous languages of Nigeria. The second is a fresh data collected by the researcher to prove that the non-implementation of language policies in Nigeria is gradually turning citizens into semilinguals instead of multilinguals.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

language Contact in Nigeria

When two or more languages or dialects interact, a language contract is formed. Contact linguistics is the study of linguistic contract. It usually happens that when speakers of different languages interact closely, their languages influence each other.

The following can lead to migration, which is the movement of people:

1. **War:** During this time, people move from the endangered area to a more secured region.
2. **Education:** People travel the world in pursuit of knowledge. For example, relocating to Nigeria's Western region, where education is more popular, from its Northern region.
3. **Business:** In order to transact businesses such as the sales of goods and services, a trader might move from one place to another place where the business will flourish more. They include:

1. **Marital Relationship**

When there is a union between two people that belong to two different linguistic backgrounds, their different languages come in contact as a result of usage. For instance, when a Yoruba man gets married to an Hausa woman, both Hausa and Yoruba come in contact.

2. **Religious Affiliations**

Presently, several religions in the world have languages peculiar to the for instance, Arabic language is found in Islam while Hebrew language is found in Christianity. Therefore, religious practitioners who are not native speakers of these languages automatically come in contact with these religiously affiliated languages.

Effects of Language Contact Situation in Nigeria

Every action has a counter reaction and language contact situation in Nigeria is no exception. The resultant effects of the situation are:

1. **Code Switching**

Code switching is defined as "a common term for alternative use of two or more languages, varieties of a language or even speech styles. Code switching is not a display of deficient language knowledge: a grammarless mixing of two languages.

Code Mixing:

In another language, Hudson (1996) says, the purpose of code mixing is to symbolize ambiguous situations.

2. **Pidgin**

Pidgin is a sort of language variety that emerged from low status "substrates" languages. Its vocabulary and structure have been drastically reduced, and none of the people who use it are native speakers. Pidgin is the outcome of language formation, the combination of two languages that both speakers can understand. As a result, it is thought of as a tainted and subpar rendition of donor languages.

Language Shift:

These are:

- a) Changes in the way of life of a group that weakens the strength of its social networks
- b) Changes in the power relationship between the groups
- c) Stigmatized attitude towards the minority group values, and language shared by minority and majority alike or various combinations of all.

The term "language shift" refers to the transition from one language to another that is used regularly. Language loss follows from this, as a language's vocabulary will not grow if it is neglected and abandoned, which can result in language death or extinction.

Language Planning Policy in Nigeria

The fact that Nigeria is an archetypal blend of cultural diversities is incontrovertible. It is surprising that after over fifty years of independences. However, the Nigerian government has on several occasions suggested different language policies to support and stimulate the growth and development of its over 520 languages in an effort to free its people from the yoke of an imperial language – English.

Sections 51 through 91 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution state, among other things, that the House of Assembly's business shall be conducted in English; however, the House may, by resolution, conduct its business in one or more other state languages as well.

Second is what is contained in the national policy on Education (2004) which stipulates the following:

- a)the (Federal) Government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encourage to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue (the major languages in Nigeria being identified as Hausa, Igbo and Yourba).
- b) The medium of instruction at the pre-primary level will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community. This would oblige the Government to:
 - Develop the orthography of many Nigerian languages.
 - Produce textbooks and other materials in Nigerian language.
- c) The government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community, and at a later stage, English.
- d) A promise by the government to supply specialist teachers via the Teacher Training Colleges.
- e) At the secondary level, English fully becomes the language of instruction while Nigerian languages are taught as subjects.
- f) Foreign languages like French may be taught later at the secondary level.

Problems Affecting the Implementation of Language Policies in Nigeria

The situation of language education matters in Nigeria is a proof that Nigeria is Very high and rich in policies but very low and deficient in

implementation. There are no strict adherences to the language policies in the educational sectors of the country. The stipulation in discourse is the specific pronouncement in the National Policy on Education that:

The government will make sure that the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community is used as the primary medium of instruction. At this level, the federal government's policy is extremely clear. The relevant statement can be found in the "pre-primary education" section of section two. According to the document, pre-primary education is defined as "the education provided in an educational institution to children aged 3 to 5 before their entry into primary school." Several objectives for pre-primary education are addressed, including the following:

- a) Effecting a smooth transition from home to school and
- b) Preparing the child for the primary level of education

The Status of English Language in Nigeria Education

A columnist addressed the issue of language clash in Nigeria in the August 13, 2015 "The Nation newspaper. Below are his observations under the caption "Fake WAEC".

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has some unfavorable news. In the most recent school certificate examinations, 61.32% of students failed the math and English sections (WASSCE). Just 616,370 candidates out of 1,593,442 who took the exam were able to pass five subjects with credit. Enrolling in a university will remain a pipe dream if you do not have credit in English and mathematics. Who is holding the can? Not WAEC. Indeed, then where is the error? Many homes, even those where the parents never attended school, only speak English. This, in my opinion, is the issue. Prof. Wole Soyinka, the Nobel laureate, undoubtedly possessed a profound understanding of Igbo language and culture, or else he would not have been such an exceptional writer.

The Azonto generation of today finds their entire knowledge base on Facebook, WhatsApp, 2Go, and other similar platforms. They – many of them, I venture to say – speak English fluently, but when handed a pen, they begin to perspire. They watch movies as though they were crucial to their future. Pop music-shakiti Bobo is permanently wired into their ears.

Numerous people have found comfort in the widespread deterioration of the English language, which the smartphone provides a medium for. This is from the younger brother of a friend: *Hi. Gud am. Howz work? And fanksfor the other day. May dis wk bring joy nd blessings 2ur home, family and luvd Is. May Almighty grant your innermost @ desire. Oluwa is highly involved. Plz don't forget to roya ya kid bro o. Luv uuuu!*

To WAEC, I say fanks for giving us, once again, awake_up call on the need to tackle some of the problems of our children's education. thanks.

Some Studies of Language Education Planning in other African Multilingual Countries

In Algeria, language policy is subsumed in one word called Arabisation, a policy of multilingualism favouring Arabic as the official language and largely

without measure to project and develop the other existing language (Benghida,2006)

Minority languages like Tamazight are currently undergoing development, standardization, and codification. French has a prominent place in Algerian society as it competes with Arabic in a number of domains, such as commerce and finance, science and technology, and education. Despite being deemed a foreign language by the country's constitution, French is still privileged in education, particularly in the private sector. Despite this, it has only received formal recognition in the country's constitution and no action has been taken to plan its status.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used is the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained eight questions to which the respondents should tick (✓) "yes or no" alternatives. The questionnaire used was designed by the researcher. The population under study was 80 students in order to test the research hypotheses of this research work.

Table 1. Sample Profile of Respondents

Variation	Options	Frequency
Gender of respondent	Male	30
	Female	50
	Total	80
Age of respondent	10-15 years	15
	16-21 years	40
	22 & above	25
Class of students	SS 1	20
	SS 2	20
	SS 3	40
School Type	Private	38
	public	42

Hypothesis 1

They do not accurately reflect the total number of applicants to study each of these courses in an analysis of the preference patterns of foreign language applicants at the University of Ibadan.

Table 1 shows the youths of Nigeria's attitude toward the country's languages. Students' preference for English, even over their mother tongue, may be explained by the various roles that the language plays in the nation's various domains.

Table 2. Preference Pattern of Applicants to Foreign and Nigerian Languages at University of Ibadan

Year	English	French	German	Russian	Igbo	Yoruba
1987	301	23	36	21	7	19
1988	519	14	33	19	7	24
1989	370	12	44	37	7	31
1990	384	20	44	17	8	29
1991	344	34	211	49	8	29
	1,919	103	368	143	32	132

Source: (2001:

Hypothesis 2

Analysis of the Questionnaire

Question 1:

Can you speak your native language very well?

Respondents	Response: Yes	No
Private school students	15	26
Public school students	42	0
Total	57	26

Question 2:

Can you speak English Language very well?

Respondents	Response: Yes	No
Private School students	35	3
Public school students	15	27
Total	50	30

Question 3:

Can you speak any foreign language fluently? Mention

Respondents	Response: Yes	No
Private school students	3 (French)	35
Public school students	2 (French)	40

Foreign Language Mentioned: French

Question 4: Can you speak Nigerian pidgin very well?

Respondents	Response: Yes	No
Private school students	15	27
Public school student	35	3
Total	50	30

Question 5:

Do you speak English language better than your mother tongue?

Respondents	Response: Yes	No
Private school students	15	8
Public school students	35	39
Total	50	47

Question 6:

How many of the three major Nigerian languages can you speak? (if your mother tongue belongs to this group, do not include it in your answer)

Respondents	Hausa	Igbo	Yoruba
Private school students	2	-	9
Public school students	-	-	14
Total	2	-	23

Question 7:

Do you parents communicate more with you in English Language?

Respondents	Response: Yes	No
Private school students	34	4
Public school students	40	2
Total	74	6

Question 8:

In all, how many languages can you speak? (mention them and don't include a major language if it is your mother tongue)

Respondents	MT	Foreign Language	Major Language	Any Other
Private school students	30	-	11 (Yoruba)	2 (Efik)
Public school students	35	4	14 (Hausa)	20 (Pidgin)
Total	65	4	25	22

From the table above, it was observed that a greater percentage of student in private schools cannot communicate fluently in their mother tongue because their parent use English language in communicating more with them at home and learning their language in school is optional. Also, a greater percentages of this category of student agreed that they are not familiar with any Nigerian major language except it is their mother tongue.

Whereas, students in public schools agreed at greater percentage that they can communicate more fluently in their mother tongue because they communicate more with it. They also agreed that they cannot communicate fluently in any other major Nigerian language except it is their mother tongue. Also, it is visible that schools do no adhere to the policies stipulated by the government in respect to language learning. Most of the students are not learning more than one language, except English language in their classrooms.

The diagram below shows the outcome of Nigeria's linguistic imbalance thereby creating and alarming gap and a clash between English Language and Indigenous languages.

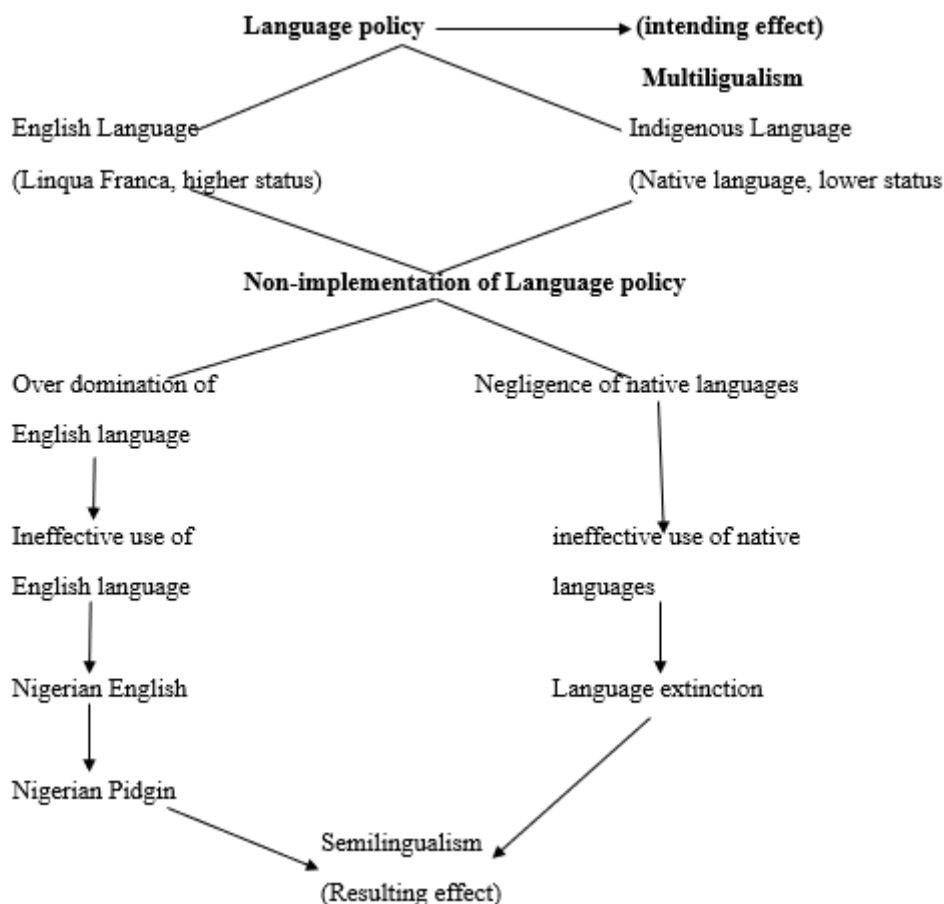


Figure 1. Outcome of Nigeria's Linguistic Imbalance Thereby Creating and Alarming Gap and a Clash Between English Language and Indigenous Languages

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding and Conclusions

As a result of this research, the following findings were made by the researcher as well as the conclusions supported by the findings.

1. Unfortunately, most Nigerian parents do not teach their children their respective mother tongues because of the dominance of English and the colonial mental hangover.
2. Nigerian students are performing worse than ever in terms of their proficiency in both their first and second languages, to the point where the current generation of youth is semilingual rather than bilingual. It is evident that younger Nigerians are becoming less linguistically proficient than their elder counterparts.
3. The current, steady decline in the entire language learning process in Nigeria is caused by government incompetence with regard to the Nigerian National Language Policy, which leaves young people experiencing international language conflict.
4. There is also a concerning disparity between the use of English and native languages in Nigerian public and private schools. The majority of

privately owned schools view the use of native languages as "taboo," and students who are caught using them will face consequences.

Recommendations

As a result of this research, the following are virile actions that can remediate these impediments:

1. there should be awareness programs organizer by language bodies all over the countries to reeducate citizens on the benefits of language preservation. Parents should be sensitized on the importance of teaching their children to speak their mother tongue. The media should be used to popularize the idea of language preservation. Programs should be introduced on television, and radio aid the awareness.
2. To begin with, the Federal Government ought to make a significant move to collaborate with language bodies that are already established, such as the Kanuro Language Board. The Nupe Language Committee, the Itsekiri Communal Land Trust and Its Language Committee, and the Ibibio Language Panel of the Akwa Esop. However, it is uncertain how many of these bodies are currently very active. All of those inactive ones need to be visibly revived, and numerous new ones need to be established across the nation. A more practical language policy will be developed in this way.
3. Secondly, The government of the state should implement some intervention policies for the corpus development of its many indigenous languages through the ministry of education. The policies as they are for the general good must be followed by both private and public schools.
4. Thirdly, there should be conscious attempts to motivate teachers of indigenous languages and private training and learning of such languages.
5. Experimentally, there should be a day set apart as "Language day" in Nigeria just as have Independence Day, Democracy day, etc in which Nigerian Languages will be solely used as a means of communication throughout the day, even in the media. Any of the major Nigerian language could be used in the media while translations will be in English Language on TV for non-speakers of the language used.
6. Finally, the study of indigenous languages should be made compulsory and not optional in schools. For the gap between English language and indigenous language to be balanced, indigenous languages must be made compulsory just as English language is a compulsory subject that must be credited by students to gain admission into universities. In the same way, students must offer my indigenous language be it a major language or a language of wider communication as a requirement. It is only then that indigenous languages can be valued in the true sense of the word. Rather than

throw away the bathwater of indigenous languages away with the baby, there should be a symbolic relationship between English on the one hand and the various languages on the other.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

In writing this article the researcher realizes that there are still many shortcomings in terms of language, writing, and form of presentation considering the limited knowledge and abilities of the researchers themselves. Therefore, for the perfection of the article, the researcher expects constructive criticism and suggestions from various parties.

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