



AN INTRODUCTION OF THREE MAJOR LANGUAGES AS A GENERAL COURSE IN TETIARY AND SECURITY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The recommendation of three major Nigerian Languages in our school system is one of the most relevant innovations done by our curriculum planners: An Introduction of one Nigeria Language as a lingua Franca in Nigeria has been politicised. It creates a lot of controversies and attracts national debates. Language is considered as the most effective tools for national development and unity. This paper therefore, examined the importance of introducing three major Nigerian Languages Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba as a general course in tertiary and security institutions in Nigeria. For clarification purposes, it looked at Nigerian Language Policy and suggested some worthwhile solutions. which will help Nigerians in the recent insurgents and produce maximum result in the development of our nascent democracy and unity of purpose.

Key words: The nature of language, classification of languages. The importance of the introduction of the three major Languages in the tertiary and security institutions, places of the introduction.

Introduction

Nigeria is made up of 450-500 ethnic groups. All the ethnic groups have different types of languages spoken by the people. But the major ethnic groups are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (1981) recommended the use of the mother-tongue in pre-primary and early years of primary education in Nigeria. It is also stated in the policy that every Nigerian child should be encouraged to learn one of the three principal languages in Nigeria which are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba in addition to mother-tongue in the junior secondary school. The three

Languages are accepted as "National" Languages in the Legislative houses in the 1979 Constitution. This provision was introduced in the document to take care of Legislators in the House of Assembly who could not communicate in English language.

Some remarkable efforts have been made by various scholars, linguists, statesmen and Federal Ministry of Education to implement the policy of teaching and learning of the three national languages. Yet the implementation is still impracticable in the sense that some of the provisions made towards the implementation are not followed accordingly.

Some of the controversies in the implementation are due to the fact that government stated in the National policy on Education (1981) Section (1) philosophy of Nigerian education, its sub-section 8 reads as follows; in addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process and as a means of preserving the peoples' culture and unity, that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major Nigerian Languages other than his own mother-tongue. The government agreed on the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, but what seems confusing is the section 4, sub-Section 19(4) which reads that in selecting the Nigerian Languages, that students should study the language of their own area in addition to any of the three main Nigerian Languages. This condition subject to availability of teachers made it possible for non-adherence of the provision of National Language Policy. Language situation in Nigeria is like Nigeria's movement for democracy which was drilled for decades of years. In the same development, about ninety percent (90%) of Nigerian languages are not yet written. This means that an environment, where their language is not written there would be no teacher to teach the language of the immediate environment, therefore its introduction would not be possible. But Nigeria Language Policy is clamoring for an introduction of Language of the immediate environment.

In this paper, the presenter examined how best all Nigerian tertiary and security Institutions, should introduce three major Nigerian Languages, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba as a general course in the various institutions.

The Nature of Language

Language is marked by some distinguishing characteristics which have been described by many scholars. Brooks (1961) thus: Language is learned, systematic" symbolic vocal behaviour, culturally acquired and universal mark of man. Language is learned; man learns to speak a language in much the same way as he learns to walk, to climb, to ride a bicycle or drive a car; build a house with block; to write or type on a machine, to play football or to scrim. Mgbodile (1997) makes efforts to listen to and to learn to speak the language spoken around him. He does not speak a particular language automatically at birth. In other words, the power to speak a particular Language is not innate or inborn in human being. Man succeeds in speaking a language only by learning, and not by any other device or magic.

A child is not born to speak Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, English, French, Tiv or Swahili for example, he speaks any of these languages only if he is born into the milieu or environment where any of these languages is spoken (Mgbodile 1998).

A child of Igbo parents who is born and bred in Hausa or Yoruba land will grow up to speak Hausa or Yoruba. Similarly, a Hausa child born in Britain will learn to speak English as his mother-tongue while a French child born and bred in Kenya will grow to speak Swahili language as his first Language (L1)

Man is luckier than the other animals because he is the only animal that is equipped with the capacity to learn and to speak a language. This natural potentiality is described by Meneil (1966) as language acquisition device (LAD). It is the innate ability or capability to learn to speak a language without this special equipment and environment helped man to be operating in much the same way as his fellow primates in terms of communication.

Classification of Languages

The first and second language (L1/L2) distinction was introduced by Catford in (1959). One may for convenience use the abbreviation L1 for Primary Language and L2 for Secondary Language. L1 is usually but not always, the Language first acquired in childhood. It is the language of its speakers, intimate everyday life; it is also a large extent the language of counting and other forms of self-stimulations, or thinking in words. Most people that is all except perhaps am-bilinguals have only one L1 but they may have a number' of L2 each perhaps reserved for one particular purpose.

According to Catford (1959) in David Webb M. (1974), First Language can also be described as the Language naturally spoken by the members of a speech community and employed by them as their potential factor in intellectual and cultural affluence

While in the other hand, second language will start from common sense distinction between mother tongue or native language, second language or foreign language. As a more technical level we also find for the first two terms primary language and (L1) we can tabulate the two sets of terms as Catford (1959)

(L1) Language One

First Language
Native Language
Mother tongue
Primary Language
Stronger Language

(L2) Language Two

Second Language
Non-native Language
Foreign Language
Secondary Language
Weaker Language

This set refers to the geographical distribution, social function, political states, origin type of importance of the language and so on for example language of wider communication or standard language can be shown as follows:

Standard Languages

- Regional language
- National language
- Official language
- Modern language
- Classical language

Some terms fall into more than one category for example foreign language can be subjectively a language which is not L1 objectively a language which has no legal status within the national boundaries.

According to Ndukwe (1995), mother tongue specifically refers to the language of the mother transmitted initially by parents.

The Importance of Introducing Three Major Nigerian Languages as General Course in Tertiary and Security Institutions in Nigeria.

Language learning is of great significance in the mental and political development of man. Its importance can be better understood by a look at its various uses.

Languages as a Means for Maintenance and Transfer of Nigerian Culture:

A man is called Hausa man because he speaks Hausa language, and a man is also called an Igbo man because he speaks Igbo, in the same vein a Yoruba man who speaks Yoruba language has the same attributes. Mgbodile(1995). Language is the chief means of generating, maintaining and transferring of culture and civilization.

In this development culture includes knowledge, values, skills and competence; it is as well includes habits and patterns of behaviour and expressions, modes of dressing, system of agriculture, manner of religious worship, literature, folktales and mythology etc. All these which man has developed and continue to develop over the years, and which has become part and parcel of man's normal way of life and self-expression has been made possible only through the use of language. If these three major Nigerian Languages are not properly implemented, how would the present Nigerians transfer the culture to the next generation? Secondly, how can our security operations communicate in international war front? A race whose language is not used for learning, communication and politics internationally, the race is in a state of decadence and in future will be extinct.

Nigerian Languages as the Fastest Vehicle for Learning other Discipline

Offorma (1997), National Language is the most vital elements for all forms of learning with understanding. It is essential for thinking and for abstract reasoning, of which are active ingredients for learning. The best way of imparting knowledge is the transfer of value, attitude and the acquisition of skills and competences are essentially through the instrumentality of language (National language). The most important popular research in instruction using the Mother-tongue was the six year (Yoruba medium) Primary Education conducted at the University of Ife by Fafunwa (1977). The project was carried out at St. Stephen's Primary School Ile-Ife.

Nigerian languages as ladder for Social interaction:

Man is the only social animal that has evolved and perfected the use of language. Other lower animals have lower order forms of communication which are instinctive responses or reaction to external sound and stimuli, Mgbodile (1992). The importance of understanding interactions among citizens of one nation cannot be over-emphasised. A man from England cannot interact perfectly with a man from Igbo land unless the English man learns Igbo Language, it is only when the three major Nigerian languages are made compulsory in all the formal institutions that this great relationship from interaction will be accorded to all and sundry.

Nigerian languages as a means for communication:

Communication in one's language helps him to communicate smoothly to his God and his people. It is man's most basic love without which it would have been difficult for our

forefathers to transfer the science and culture to our generation. Before the advent of white man our fore-fathers had their basic ways of communication. English Language was introduced in order to make us understand the religion of the Western world. But we should not allow foreign languages to replace totally our own indigenous languages like Greek Language did to Latin.

Places of Introducing the Three Major Nigerian Languages

On a serious note, the Nigeria Language Policy has not properly and fully implemented in the primary/secondary schools in Nigeria. This has been attributed to several flimsy factors which include vagueness, ambiguities, political, contradictions and ethnical problems. Arne N. (1991) lack of effective implementation machinery and as well as the absence of sanctions against defaulters, that apart from advocates and animators of indigenous Nigerian languages torture as they are labeled as handicapped frustrated by their fellow men and women in English suit. This subdues such advocates of indigenous language into keep language into keeping quiet. This also explain why little or no commitment on the part of Nigerian Government and individuals as regard to the implementation of the Language Policy at this level.

There is one thing that is obvious in the implementation of mother tongue in the secondary schools which cannot be over-emphasised. There is a good time for language learning. If Nigeria child is not given this opportunity at this recursive state to have awareness of linguistic structures of indigenous languages definitely, it will affect his moral and psychological advancement in the future. This is the best time when their brain is like plastic. It can be vulcanised and any new information can be retained in their sensory memory (SM) throughout their life.

General Study in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria:

Ojo (1995) Emphasised that as life in the rapidly changing world of today is so complex that it becomes increasingly important for people to be able to adjust and react to new situations. The continual pressure weighs down even children more than in the past. For this reason, the parents find out the significance of introducing three major Nigerian Languages, Igbo, Hausa, and. Yoruba in our tertiary institutions as a general course.

Obviously, the idea will bring all Nigerians together politically, psychologically and socially for national development in the new dispensation just like 1996 Olympic games in Atlanta when Amokachi the Nigerian player spoke to Kanu Nwankwo "kawoshi nan " meaning bring it here, which was not understood by their opponents (Brazil) and this led to the lifting of the Olympic World Cup. In another development the problem of religious and ethnic crisis will reduced Language as vehicle for the storage of information and artifacts will help Nigeria to unite and speak in one voice because when "Adamu understand what Chike speaks and Olusegun hears it", I think our problem of Jihadism and nicknamism will come to an end.

In the case of stages in language acquisition, it is actually time that children understand language faster than adults. But in the Case of Nigerian language problem in the learning process, philosophically, "nobody comes too early or too late to cure the ill health of his knowledge. In this connection; it is clear that most of these categories missed the

opportunity of learning these languages at primary and junior secondary schools. This introduction will provide them another opportunity to study Nigerian languages. And if these three major Nigerian languages are simultaneously introduced at these levels in the future, it will form an acceptable and popular language whose orthography will originate from Nigerian languages.

Nigerian Languages Registers and Speakers

| WORDS | SPEAKERS | MEANING | NATIONALLY ACCEPTED |
|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Wa ZoWazobia Bia | Yoruba Hausa Igbo | Come Come Come | . |
| Mahadun | Igbo | University | “ |
| Agidi | Yoruba | Food from maize | “ |
| Oga | Yoruba | Master | “ |
| Akamu | Hausa | Pap | “ |
| Chineke | Igbo | God the creator | “ |
| Wahala | Hausa | Problem | “ |

Compulsory Course to Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) and all the Para-Military Institutions.

Institutions in any multi-ethnic society like ours, the instrumental value of language cannot be over-emphasised, in Nigeria experience, ethnic sentiments and rivalry had been a common phenomenon right from the pre-colonial days (Adefolarin 1989). The Nigeria pre-colonial institution that were structured along the line of ethnic variation made Nigeria to first see himself as either an Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba. However, with the introduction of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba Languages, make a Nigerian to see himself as a Nigerian not as Northerner or Southerner.

It is at this context that one can rightly say that language means much to every Nigerian. But Nigeria as an independent nation has language problem; unwritten dialects spoken by 5% of the populace is fighting to be introduced as the Lingua Franca to Nigerians. Nigeria as a giant of Africa and the “BLACK RACE POLICE” has no language rather than dialects. As old as Fifty-four years, our country Nigeria still has the best imitators of foreign languages. French is now introduced as a compulsory course in our country because Nigeria is surrounded by French countries and some political reasons which are best known to Nigeria government and its curriculum planners. In another development in the course of this discussion if Germany provides Nigerians with German cars and Air flight they will accept German language as the third language. In fact, at this old age Nigerians are still Jack of all trades and master of none.

It is pertinent to ask the following question: How many white men speak any of the Nigerian languages? And which of the Western countries can adopt African language as their

6th language (L6) or their national language?, why not; we use our popularity as they buy our crude oil now and introduce Nigerian languages to other parts of the world.

Language as the most effective tool for National consensus has a very vital role to play not only to foster unity among the users, but as the most powerful security among the speakers. As Nigerian soldiers always in the peace keeping operation around the world, there is every need now that all Nigerian soldiers and Para-military must understand one language which must be different from English, French, Arabic and German languages.

By implementing three major Nigerian Languages in the Defence Academy and Para-military schools, some Nigerians who might have missed learning the languages at the pre-primary and secondary may have opportunity again to master the Nigeria languages codes.

Recommendations:

In the light of the study, the following recommendations were advanced:-

- (1) Federal, State and Local Government should embark on mass training and employment of language teachers, particularly Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba.
- (2) Tertiary institutions in the country especially colleges of Education, Nigeria Defence Academy: all the Para-military schools, Universities, should expand their programmes by making Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba as general course in their institutions.
- (3) Special grants should be given to the teachers of Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba as it is done in Sciences.
- (4) Automatic scholarship should be given to students of Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba in the tertiary institutions particularly those combining Nigerian Languages with education.
- (5) The Federal Government should provide adequate funds and instructional materials, and through a Language policy implementation decree, compel all States and Local Governments to implement the Language policy or face serious sanctions which should include non-accreditation of that school, withdrawal or reducing of Federal Government allocation in the annual budget meant for such defaulters.
- (6) Special seminar on guidance and counselling on the stigma attached to the reading of these three major Nigerian languages: Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. This may improve the number of the enrolling students to read these languages in our tertiary institutions.

Conclusion:

The idea of introducing three major Nigerian languages in our school system is one of the most relevant innovations done by our curriculum planners. Language as the means of preserving peoples' culture as well as the most powerful tools for national unity and development; but in the case of Nigeria, it seemed to be identified with problems of implementation and neglect. This paper suggests government to include the three Nigerian Languages in all her plans, and all Nigerians to start forming words with Nigerian Languages orthography so that National Language will in future emerge as creoles to standard and accepted language.

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