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EDITORIAL

Every academic environment is sustained by learning through rigorous methods. Research is one and the focal point for assessment. A serious member of the academic community is measured by the quality and number of academic articles.

In spite of the desire to acquire many research reports, this edition has insisted on standards and quality. It is important to note that many articles have been rejected for not meeting our requirements.

The first and most obvious task of our journal is to provide a level playing field for researchers all over the globe in language-related disciplines, which is the vehicle for conveying knowledge. In this edition, seventeen (17) articles have undergone academic scrutiny from our blind reviewers.

To our esteemed contributors and readers, thought-provoking articles are expected and we are ready to publish them in the next volume.

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The National Integration Issue: A Case for Nigerian Indigenous Languages

Abstract

This paper explores the importance of indigenous languages in addressing the issues of national integration in Nigeria. It argues that Nigerian languages, as part of the national heritage, play an important role in forging unity in a multi-ethnic nation. It analyses the challenges of linguistic diversity and its potential for socio-political transformation, given Nigeria's history of colonial language imposition. It then provides an overview of the various language policies and initiatives adopted by the Nigerian government in the past two decades. Finally, it examines the effects of these policies and initiatives in terms of language revitalization, education, and national integration, as well as the implications for the nation's future. It uses descriptive survey and depends on the elements of qualitative technique. The data are drawn through secondary sources comprised both theoretical and empirical evidence of previous related literature, which suggests that language becomes an important tool for encouraging national integration and social change. It concludes by stressing the need for further research on the relationship between language and national integration in Nigeria.

Keywords: National integration, Indigenous languages, ethnicity and linguistic plurality, multilingualism

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1.1 Introduction

The challenge of national integration has been a lingering issue in Nigeria because of the problem of ethnicity and linguistic plurality. This challenge has continued to affect national integration in Nigeria. The interconnections between Nigeria indigenous languages and national integration may not have been adequately explored. Language which is the most compliance of all human possessions is possibly the most complex and the most interesting in the day-to-day activities of man. It is an instrument for human communications with one another, the growth and

development of their talents, causing creativity, innovation, and novelty, exchanging and transferring experiences. On the whole it is for the formation of society(s) concern with language which is not new. Apart from its instrumental role in education and communication, language is also viewed as a mark of identification, a symbol of cultural distinctiveness and a vehicle for cultural development (Olugbodi, 1999). Continuing, Olugbodi, asserts that Third world countries consider language problems as serious as the other problems with the same gravity as other critical issues such as low per capita income, mass illiteracy, disease, mass poverty, population explosion, national unity and political instability. The issue of language problem is not given the required attention in Nigeria as done in some developed and developing nations. Language issues have only been looked and discussed by language scholars as against the interest of government.

The study analyzes the situation of indigenous languages and the issue of national integration in Nigeria; it highlights the challenges of multilingualism and discusses the importance of indigenous languages in the realization of national integration of any nation and Nigeria in particular. It further x-rays the multilingual nature of Nigeria, the concept of national integration as well as the issue of language challenges facing the country. The paper concludes by emphasizing the necessity of further research on the relationship between languages, most especially indigenous languages and national integration in Nigeria.

Discussing the roles of languages in general and indigenous to in specific, Osisanwo (2003) cited in Olanrewaju (2018) asserts that the expressive function of language occurs when language is used to express the inner state of the mind of the speaker. It may be an instantaneous reaction to an ongoing event e.g. hurrah! It's a goal! The directive or conative or persuasive function of language allows the speaker to direct the hearer to carry out an action. It may also be used to persuade or plead with the hearer for an action to take place or not. The poetic function of language allows language users to use it creatively for aesthetic purposes while the contact function of language, also regarded as 'phatic' function allows people to use language for brief social or psychological interaction e.g. for greetings or in an attempt to open a channel for communication. The metalingual function is performed when language draws attention to itself for the purpose of clarification on any of its level. The referential function ensures that the denotative meaning of a word or expression is the physical object which the language user has used it for, while the contextual/ situational function of the language allows language user to relate his experience to others with regard to the immediate environment. In this regard, language users are able to use it to solve issues affecting the community or society as the case may be. Hence, this paper aims at examining the relevance of Nigerian indigenous languages to national integration and exploring ways of achieving national integration through Nigerian indigenous languages

The challenge of developing the Nigerian indigenous languages to ensure the desired national integration is one of the language problems among other problems like the state of language diversity, the intensity of group perception, the state of development of Nigerian indigenous languages, the projected allocation of functions for languages, the relationship between languages, education, problem of multilingualism and economy and the ability of the nation to bear the cost of language planning among others. (Gupta, 1976; Olugbodi, 1999; Agbedo, Abata-Ahura, , Krisagbedo., and Edward, 2012)

To achieve the aims of this study, some of the main concepts which can be related to the goal of the paper are introduced, explained and followed by a precise discussion.

The results of the study indicate that there is a very close relationship between language and national integration, that is, language has a direct effect on national integration. From the discussion, recommendations were made.

According to Usara 2001, cited in Kazi (2012), national integration is the unity of the various ethnic groups in the country or nation in such a way that they see one another as brothers and sisters, devoid of tribal sentiments, nepotism and all other vices that bring polarization of the people. Kazi (ibid) further explains that it means the coming together of Nigerian citizens, to speak with one voice, appreciate the circumstances of their nationality, contribute meaningfully to the development of their country and jointly protect the sovereignty of their country. He also argues that national integration exists, progresses and develops from the level of micro nationalism to macro nationalism as a result of fusion of various ethnic groups. The various ethnic groups have different languages in the case of Nigeria where they cohabit and interact to a level that some members of the community speak the language or languages of the other ethnic groups .

Language, our primary tool of thought and perception, is at the heart of who we are, and portrays us as individuals. The paper explores the fascinating relationship between language and national integration. The quest for national integration has continued to elude Nigeria despite efforts in introducing different programmes like National Youths Service Corps (NYSC) and intertribal marriage. Current observation has shown that virtually all developing nations like Nigeria are clamoring for national integration because of the multilingual nature of most nations of the world. Adeyanju (1988) agrees that the language problem is the most important problem for developing countries because without language there is no education, and without education there is no development. In the case of Nigeria, the education of her citizens is mainly done through the foreign language English as against the indigenous languages.

2.1 Indigenous language issues in Nigeria

Nigeria as a multilingual nation has over five hundred (500) languages. One of the well-known attributes of Nigeria is her linguistic diversity. The challenges of linguistic diversity and its potential for socio-political transformation, given Nigeria's history of colonial language imposition is important to addressing language related issues in Nigeria. In Nigerian multilingual community, especially most cities the English language is very important segment of the communication networks. It is used for various forms of interaction. It is also the medium of formal and transactional communication. This constitutes the situation of language use in Nigeria. According to Jowitt (1995) the initiatives taken by government since the late 1970s appear to have settled the Nigeria's national language question in favour of multilingualism, as the widely accepted basis of policy. The second initiatives as whether or not certain languages should be given more prominence than others appear either to have received rather less than total support of the Nigeria's populace while the third issue as to do whether some of Nigeria's indigenous language might or should be regarded as national languages and if so which ones. The multilingualism policy holds that in addition to English, the first language (L1) of Nigeria's citizens' demands to be given some degree of official recognition, and that since there are many languages spoken as L1, the all demand such recognition.

It is obvious from above that the language challenge in Nigeria can be traced to her multilingualism which in turn is a product of Nigeria's multi ethnicity. Though multilingualism is not peculiar to the multiethnic countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, it exists in other countries of the world such as India, Canada among others.

The issue could be regarded as a universal one whose existence could be traced to the interplay of historical, political and social factors. Again, the challenge of language issue could also be traced to the nation's colonial experience that left behind English language as foreign language to serve as the affairs of administration, communication and instruction in education. This of course has continued to influence the nation's language policy to the detriment of the indigenous languages.

It is based on this that this paper averred that the promotion of Nigerian languages can have significant impacts on education, national integration, and the development of a sense of national identity. This can be achieved through a detailed analysis and review of the past language policies and initiatives; the paper reveals the successes and failures of the government in using indigenous languages to promote national integration and social cohesion.

3.1 Indigenous Language issue and National Integration in Nigeria

The issue of national integration is an issue of serious concern to most countries of the world as mentioned earlier. The reason for the concern is based on the fact that the unity of different ethnic groups in a multilingual nation is cardinal to its national development cum integration. The issue may also be of concern to monolingual countries of the world as there are issues of regional and social dialects. Olugbodi (ibid) identifies 400 indigenous languages in Nigeria. She said that the language problem in Nigeria "is a function of her multilingualism which in turn is a product of Nigeria's multiplicity" (36). She further avers that the problem could be regarded as a universal phenomenon whose existence could be traced to the interplay of historical, political and social factors, but states that multilingualism is not peculiar to the multiethnic countries of African, Asian and Latin America since it exists in other countries of the world such as India, Canada among others. This actually points to the fact that multilingualism is not peculiar to Nigeria or Africa as a continent alone, yet such countries as Canada and India were able to develop and ensure national integration because of their commitments to planning and development of their indigenous languages.

In Nigeria, Adegbija (2004:46) looks at indigenous languages as native languages: There are about 450; Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo have been constitutionally 'recognised' as "major" Nigerian languages. This recognition has given these languages a kind of celebrity status among Nigeria's numerous languages. Bamgbose (1995) said that there are about between 400 – 515 distinct indigenous languages, while Agbede (2005) identifies fifty-one ethnic units and over four hundred and thirty languages. Olarenwanju (ibid) cited *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (2013) as putting the total number of Nigerian languages at 527. Olugbodi concludes that the disadvantage of having such a diversity and multiplicity of mutually unintelligible languages in a single country, are pedagogical and sociolinguistic problems. The indigenous language issue must have arisen from the inability of English language to address the challenges of insecurity, administration, education, religion, politics, science and technology and commerce among multilingual Nigerians.

The Constitutional provisions on language and the provisions in the National Policy on Education support the domineering use of the English language as Olarewanju (ibid) observes that: The National Policy on Education (NPE, revised 2013) subjected the use of mother tongue to early child education while the English language is reserved for learning and teaching from upper primary school to the tertiary level of education. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria also has some pro-English and anti-indigenous languages provisions such as enumerated below: The

business of the national assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. According to Agbedo Abata-Ahura, Krisagbedo, and Edward (2012:4), the result of the analysis of National Language Survey Research showed that over 95% of the teachers, parents and pupils not only preferred English to mother tongues as the language of instruction but were also strongly opposed to the teaching of the indigenous languages. Another thing that stands out clearly in the language policy of the NPE is that indigenous Nigerian Languages are given secondary roles to play. They are to play transitional roles for English to take over at a “later stage” right from primary school to the highest level of education. (Matemilola (1999).

Integration is the bringing together of many parts to make a complete whole, which means that when any integral part of that whole is removed; its completeness is undermined. It is the act of combining or adding parts to make a unified whole, or the act of amalgamating the ethnic group with an existing community. Kazi (2012) identifies lack of legitimacy, unhealthy cleavages, conception of political parties, low level of political sophistication, distrust on leadership, indiscipline and bribery and corruption as problems that hinder national integration. Obaje & Ocheje (2017) observes that most strategies applied to handle these challenges and diversity aimed to integrate Nigerians are by catching them young through the establishment of Unity Schools and National Youth Service Corps. Other strategies project equal representation of all ethnic groups, major and minority groups through the federal character policy and quota system to ensure appointments in political and civil service offices, to attain a balanced representation among the ethnic groups, at least among the three major ethnic groups – Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba (Osaghea, 1992) in (Olusegun, 2012). They further said that these strategies have proven ineffective at the face of obvious violent conflicts among ethnic groups who had coexisted in peace before colonization, during it, and at independence. They recommended the following as obligations among others in a multi-ethnic community or state for ethnic integration:

- i. Effective leadership is crucial to the development of an ethnic integration.
- ii. Tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity and enabling all the various ethnic groups to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods.
- iii. Equity in the distribution of wealth and resources which will significantly affect the orientation of the various groups.
- iv. Equal access to public information to make popular participation possible with well-informed member of the society.
- v. Commitment to promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity.
- vi. Commitment to promoting full respect for human dignity, achieving equality and equity between the various ethnic groups.
- vii. Nigerian must respect and tolerate one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language differences within and between societies neither fear nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity.

The above recommendations will continue to face challenges of implementation using only English language as a medium of communication without consideration for Nigeria indigenous languages in a multilingual Nigeria. It is also obvious that of all the recommendations above, it is the last of the recommendations that mentioned the issue of language differences. According to Adekunle (1995), the promotion of

national awareness, national consciousness and cultural awareness involves the cultivation, on a national scale, of group identity and solidarity motivated by the need for national self-determination in all its ramifications. He further said that this is naturally influenced by an integrative and identification of attitude characterised as a centripetal and inward-looking tendency. These national ideas and values can only be propagated and inculcated through the indigenous languages. In fact, it will be a contradiction to try to inculcate these values through a foreign language or by using an indigenous language with the stigma of religious or cultural parochialism.

3.2 Language situation in some African countries

In line with Adekunle (ibid) assertion on indigenous languages, some African countries as will be seen in the further discussions, is already giving the desired attention to their indigenous languages considering their roles to national development and unity. For instance, there are approximately twenty-five languages spoken in Senegal, most of which are indigenous African languages belonging to the Atlantic 12 and to a lesser extent Mande, branches of the vast Niger-Congo phylum¹³. A full 90 percent of the languages spoken in Senegal are Atlantic languages of which the main ones, in terms of numbers. Senegal's public education system has moved towards a trilingual education which consists first of literacy in the mother tongue and then of teaching the Wolof (the dominant national language), before moving on to French language. It should also be noted that kindergarten schools use national languages, but private schools only use French. In all educational institutions, written communication is provided only in French in the school administration. In primary and secondary schools, Wolof usually takes the place of French during recess and out-of-class conversations (Albaugh, 2007, cited in Meija-Martinez, O. 2017). Despite the efforts made in the field of education, French mostly likely will never become a national vehicular language for Senegalese. Wolof has already supplanted French on this plan and its expansion now seems irreversible. Senegal's language policy seems to harmonize with the long-term coexistence of Senegalese languages and French to ensure both social stability and economic development. The future prospects of French would be reduced to that of a second language. Senegal is not quite there yet since its linguistic decolonization has just barely begun. Senegal is moving towards a situation in which indigenous languages have the same, or relatively similar status to French (Locraft, 2005, Meija-Martinez, O. 2017).

According to Ambridge & Lieven (2011), Mali is one of the few francophones sub-Saharan countries to have introduced national languages as means of instruction into its educational system. French is the official language, but mastered by only 5 to 10 per cent of the population. Mali consequently has proportionately fewer speakers of French (as either a first or second language) among its population than any other francophone state south of the Sahara. This is partly because Mali is one of the few francophone countries to have an endogenous majority language, Bambara, which is spoken by around 40 percent as mother tongue and another 40 percent as lingua franca. Bambara has not however been granted any particular status: it is one of the thirteen Malian languages recognized as 'national languages. This status implies their codification (officially recognized alphabet and orthography) as well as their use in some domains of the public sphere, of which the most important is the educational sector. Mali is also exceptional in that it defends its cultural and linguistic pluralism in the 1992 Constitution:

Mali is a country that has consistently invested effort in what amounts to a broad defense of cultural and linguistic pluralism, rather than the narrower targeted

promotion of a single language such as the official language, French, or the dominant language Bambara. Of the twenty or so languages that make up the linguistic landscape, thirteen have been granted the status of ‘national language’. In Mali, this is more than mere nomination. Not only does the 1992 Constitution of the Third Republic state their equal rights according to the law, but language policy has followed up by introducing them into the educational system, the audio-visual media, and the written press. This policy, which started on a modest scale after 1960, has been more noticeable following the democratization process of 1991–1992.

Drawing from Senegal and Mali’s experiences, it obvious that these African countries have realized the importance of their indigenous languages, hence, they emphasize the need to for local language policies and initiatives, and to ensure that these policies are tailored to the existing socio-cultural contexts in the countries in with integration, economic, social and political developments. Nigeria cannot be left out this positive direction. It therefore provides that a critical assessment of the current state of language-related policies and initiatives for Nigerians, as well as their implications for national integration and social cohesion must urgently be reviewed in the interest of Nigerian indigenous languages for national integration.

3.3 The situation of Indigenous languages in Nigeria

The situation of most indigenous languages in Nigeria is such that indigenes prefer English language to their indigenous languages. Hence, they tend to avoid the use of their indigenous languages in both oral and written communication. This attitude towards the Nigerian indigenous languages has continued to affect the development and growth of the languages especially in the areas of codification and standardization of most of the indigenous languages. This situation is also followed with the issue of lack of quality mother tongue instruction at the early stage of pedagogy in most primary schools in Nigeria. Another issue connected to this, is the issue of the position of the Nigeria language policy that emphasized the three major ones of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba for pedagogy as against the so called “minority” languages. The policy has it negative effects on the development of most the indigenous languages.

3.4 Basis for considering Nigerian indigenous languages for national integration

It is obvious from our discussions so far that despite all efforts in ensuring national integration in Nigeria, there are still some hindrances to effective national integration as observed by Kazi (2012), Obaje and Ajibili (2018). It is against this background the following are considered for Nigerian indigenous languages:

- (a) Ikara (1989) opines that the use of English Language is a hindrance to genuine nationalism concerns and socio-cultural integration.
- (b) Adegbija 1994:4 points out that all languages in a multilingual context whether major or minor, exoglossic or endoglossic should be seen as resources that need to be effectively harnessed for the total national good and that language policies need to respect, support and encourage the mutual harmonious coexistence of all languages, no matter their origins and the political or economic power or numerical strength of their speakers.
- (c) Akere (1995) reports that one of the justifications for instruction in African languages is that the languages spoken by African peoples have an irreplaceable and decline part to play in the establishment of a system of education and the widespread dissemination of science and technology and authentic national culture.

- (d) Matemilola (1999) citing UNESCO (1953) and Chumbow (1990) says that knowledge is better gained through the indigenous languages medium. He further supports his claim with the scenario contrast of a successful village mechanic Onyems who knows little or no English with many unsuccessful holders of HND certificate in Mechanical Engineering.
- (e) According to Olugbodi (1999) the pedagogical and political advantage of indigenous languages cannot be faulted. It is a sure way to national unity and integration. She supports her claim by quoting Achebe (1975) who said that “ No man can understand another whose language he does not speak”
- (f) Koroma (2000) reports that in the Union Republic Schools, USSR, Russian language was taught as a free-choice second language along with the native language. He further says that the practice helped greatly in mutual exchange of experts, experience and giving each national group and people access to the cultural heritage of other peoples of USSR and the world. Every citizen in the USSR had the right to speak the language of his choice and to educate their children in that language.
- (g) Alhassan & Ali (2015) said that the current poor quality of students and their unimpressive performance have links with lack of mother tongue instruction at the early stage of learning. There is a growing shift in language policy around the world to support mother tongue instruction in the early years of a child’s education because of the inherent benefits of the practice. For instance, Burton (2013) points out that a study in the Philippines (Walter & Dekker, 2011), concluded that minority language students who gained literacy in their first language, experienced higher academic achievement than students who learned in a second or third language.
- (h) Olanrewaju (2018) advocates the adoption of more indigenous languages, apart from the three major ones- Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, for use. This will imply a revision of Nigeria’s language policy and the constitutional provisions on language.

It is against the above background that this paper advocates the Nigerian indigenous languages at across the country to ensure achievement of the desired national integration and development of Nigeria. This can be achieved through the total support of the Nigerian indigenous languages in terms of funding, official statement/recognition of all the indigenous languages in the revision of Nigeria’s language policy and the constitutional provisions on language. What needs to be done in achieving this are contained in the recommendation section of this paper.

4.1 Conclusion

Nigerians should place important emphases on the appreciation of her unique indigenous languages and promote national identity for national integration, vibrant and adequate indigenous languages education and language policy and planning can help instill the most needed culture, national identity for national integration among others. It against this background, which this paper concludes by stressing the necessity for further research on the relationship between languages, most especially indigenous languages, and national integration in Nigeria.

4.2 Recommendations

Having examined the language situation in Nigeria in relation to Nigerian indigenous language and national integration, and adduced reasons for exploring indigenous languages for the realization of national integration as the unity of the various ethnic

groups in the country in such a way that they see one another as brothers and sisters, devoid of tribal sentiments, nepotism and all other vices that bring polarization of the people, the paper concluded with the following recommendations:

1. There is the need to assign new roles on Nigerian indigenous languages on national affairs or matters, despite her multilingual nature.
2. The replication of Ife Six-Year Yoruba Project, the ABU Primary Improvement Project and Rivers Readers's Project should be enforced in other multilingual states. (Matemilola1999).
3. If we must attain the national integration despite our multilingual and multicultural settings, there is the need to shun any form of sentiment by encouraging and promoting our indigenous languages in our national activities.
4. There is need for total revision of Nigeria's language policy. If this is done, Government should ensure workable implementation and strict compliance with the language policy
5. The NYSC programme should make it compulsory for corps members to learn the language of the state where the serve and form of examination could be attached to this so that discharge certificate is given to them only when they pass the language examination (Olugbodi 1999).
6. Government should ensure adequate funding of researches in Nigerian indigenous languages to update people on the knowledge about the current development of the mother tongues.
7. Teachers and students of Nigerian languages should be given incentives in any form to enable them to continue to have interest in the teaching and learning of the indigenous languages.
8. There should be exchange programme involving the language teacher to ensure cross-fertilization of personnel at the different levels of the nation.

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