

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF LANGUAGES IN NIGERIA WITH A PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE POSITION OF ARABIC, ENGLISH AND FRENCH

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Abstract: *Nigeria is a multi-lingual, a multi-ethnic and a multi-cultural nation with Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba as its national languages. Although other Nigerian languages are in acrimonious rivalries with these official languages, Nigerian successive governments have been promoting other local languages in order to foster a peaceful co-existence in the polity. Moreover, strong loyalty expected of the Nigerian peoples to Nigerian languages is sharply shared between Nigerian official as well as local languages and some recognized foreign languages in Nigeria. Despite that Arabic, English and French languages are of enviable positions in Nigeria and are equally promoted by government and individuals, Nigerian national and local languages have been playing divisive and destructive roles among divergent Nigerian ethnic groups. Using the descriptive and analytical methods to achieve the intended research goal of the current studies, the paper has conclusively arrived at an outcome that linguistic jingoism inherent in all Nigerians has been responsible for a lack of trust amongst the Nigerians. In the same vein, there are other multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nations in the world which are of multilingualism related conflicts, rumblings and vendetta, no matter how high is the level of their civilization, sophistication and education. .*

Keywords: *Multilingualism, Nationhood, Patriotism, Multi-cultures, Ethnicity, Use of Languages*

INTRODUCTION

Human essence is inherent in human language. According to Noam, “when we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the human essence, the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man” (Chomsky, 2012: 17). Language remains the only indispensable tool to human through which they play, fight, make love or make automobiles (Fomkin, V., Rodman, R. and Hyams, N. (2003). At this juncture, Fromkin and Rodman (2011: 19) further explain that:

We live in a world of language. We talk to our friends, our associates, our wives and husbands, our lovers, our teachers, our parents and in-laws. We talk to bus drivers and total strangers. We talk face to face and over the telephones, and everyone responds with more talks. Television and radio further swell this torrent of words. Hardly a moment of our waking lives is free from words, and even in our dreams we talk and are talked to. We also talk when there is no one to answer. Some of us talk aloud in our sleep. We talk to our pets and sometimes to ourselves.

Looking in to the nature of language, which is the source of life and power of human, it is evident that it is capable of orchestrating deadly misunderstandings, squabbles and volatile co-existence among different speech societies worldwide. On the African Continent, the linguistic compositions of Nigeria better highlights the convoluted demography of Nigeria as well as of other African countries.

Nigeria is a linguistic, ethnic, cultural and social mosaic with more than four hundred different indigenous, endoglossic tongues. Based on the inter-relationships between indigenous languages and other exoglossic world languages such as English, coupled with government's attitude and policy towards languages in general, languages spoken in Nigeria are classified into three different groups:

- i) Indigenous languages, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo;
- ii) Exogenous languages, namely, Arabic, English, and French;
- iii) Pidgin English, which is inter-ethnically used as a means
of communication (Akindele, 2022).

In what follows are the detailed explanations of each language group:

Indigenous languages

There are approximately four hundred Nigerian native languages whose genetic classifications have been a source of controversy. Since we are less concerned with the disputes surrounding this domain, probing into such details is beyond the scope of this research paper. Nonetheless, according to Inegbeboh, B. O. and Roland, U. A. (ND), as to the classification of Nigerian Languages based on Greenberg's classification of African languages, these languages are of divergent genetic families such as Niger-Korodofanian, Afro-Asiatic, and Nilo-Saharan. Furthermore, Niger-Korodofanian has two branches: Niger-Congo and Benue-Congo. Niger-Congo itself is of three sub-branches, namely, Kwa, West-Atlantic, and Adamawa. However, Benue-Congo has two sub-branches: Cross-River and Bantoid. As for the Afro-Asiatic, it has two branches, namely, Chadic and West Chadic, while Nilo Saharan has only a branch which is Saharan. In what follows is a table detailing these families with some examples:

Genetic families of some Nigerian native languages

Language Family	Branches	Sub-branches	Examples
Niger-Kordofanian	Niger-Congo	Kwa	Agatu, Ekpeye, Ebira, Eza, Yoruba, Nupe, Kalabari, Igala, Igbo
		West Atlantic	Fulfulde
		Adamawa	Libo, Burak, Kugama, Bangwinji
	Benue-Congo	Cross-River	Efik, Bekwarra, Bumaji

			Eleme, Tiv, Jukun
		Bantoid	Iregwe, Jarawa, Kaje, Khana
Afro-Asiatic	Chadic		Kamwe, Jilbe, Margi
	West-Chadic		Hausa, Pero, Angas, Tangale
Nilo-Saharan	Saharan		Kanuri, Dendi, Zarma

Furthermore, these languages receive varying degrees of government statuses and development funds ranging from federal to state levels. They are recognized according to their degrees of incorporation into formal education, the number of their speakers and the extent of their use in national life. Among these languages are the three main national languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, whose speakers consist of 53% of the population. Some languages fall under regional language classification among which are Fulfulde, Efik, Kanuri, Tiv, Edo, Igbala, Nupe and Ijo. These languages are natively spoken by 27% of Nigerians. The remaining over 380 languages are classified under local minority languages and spoken by 20% of the population.¹² Speakers of these languages resist their being referred to as ethno-linguistic minority groups due to the resulting politico-economic exploitations by ethno-linguistic majority groups. Hence, they deliberately set up obstacles before the implementation of any proposed language policy which could relegate their languages to the background.

All these languages are distributed alongside geographical locations within the country. According to Akinnaso and Ogunbiyi (1990). Hausa, other six regional languages, namely, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Tiv, Nupe, Igala, and Idoma; and more than two hundred minority languages are spoken in the north. In the Southern States, Yoruba, Igbo; three regional languages, viz Efik, Ijo, Idoma; and more than a hundred minority languages are natively spoken. Nonetheless, there are other languages which transcend their geographical zones, for example, Yoruba and Igbo both stretch into certain areas of the north and south. In order to disambiguate the linguistic situation in Nigeria, the followings are all the languages spoken in each Nigeria's 36 states in addition to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, as illustrated by Blench, Roger, (2014):

Languages spoken in each state in Nigeria

State	Languages Spoken
Abia	Igbo, Legbo, Pidgin English (henceforth PE).

Adamawa	Tiv, Maighi, Mboi, Hausa, Fulfulde, Mbula, Bwazza, Kanakuru, Longuda, Bcama, Libo, Momjango, Ngwaba, Gudu, Nzanyi, Nyong, Peere, Psikye, Samba-daka, Samba-leko, Sukur, Terme, Tarok, Thir, Tiba, Vin, Waja, Wom, Yendang, Yungur, Kanuri, Abinsi, Ba, Bana, Bata, Bile, Boga, Bura-Pabir, Dadiya, Ders, Dijim, Dza, Ga'anda, Gengle, Gevoko, Gude, Hedi, Huba, Hwana, Jarawa, Jimi, Kamwe, Kuma, Kpasam, Kugama, Kumba, Lala-roba, Lamang, Lanija, Lotsu-piri, Mabas, Bwattiye, PE.
Akwa Ibom	Ibiobio, Ito, Okobo, Oron, Obolo, Uda, Anaang, Ebughu, Efai, Ekit, Etebi, Ibino, Ibuoro, Idere, Iko, Ilue, Itu-mbon, Uzo, EP
Anambra	Igbo, Igala, Ikomgbo, Kukele, Oring, PE.
Bauchi	Hausa, Agawa, Awak, Bada, Bangwinji, Barawa, Bele, Bele, Berom, Biliri, Bole, Burak, Dadiya, Dass, Daza, Deno, Dijim, Diri, Duguri, Duguza, Dulbu, Galambu, Gamo-ningi, Gana, Geji, Gera, Geruma, Giiwo, Guruntum, Mbaaru, Gwagyem, Izere, Jara, Jera, Jimbin, Jimi, Ju Jarawa, Kanuri, Karekare, Kariya, Kamo, Kir-bala, Kitimi, Kona, Kubi, Kudu-camo, Kupto, Kushi, Kuzamani, Kwaami, Kwanka, Labir, Lame, Lemoro, Lenyima, Leyigha, Lo, Longuda, Lotsu-Piri, Luri, Mangas, Mburku, Miya, Mawa, Ngamo, Pa'a, Pero, Piya, Polci, Sanga, Saya, Shall-Zwall, Shau, Shiki, Siri, Tala, Tangale, Tapshin, Taura, Tera, Tsagu, Tula, Waja, Warja, Wytana, Zangwal, Zari, Zeem, Ziriya, PE.
Bayelsa	Ekpeye, Eleme, Epie, Gokana, PE.
Benue	Idoma, Igala, Nupe, Tiv, Abinsi, Agatu, Akpa-Yache, Dhwede, Eloyi, Etulo, Igede, Izi-Ezaa-Ikwongbo, Oring Otank, Rubasa, Hausa, PE
Borno	Kanuri, Afade, Arabic (Shuwa), Bagirmi, Bole, Buduma, Bura-Pabir, Cibak, Dera, Bororro, Ga'anda, Gevoko, Glavda, Gude, Guduf, Hedi, Jara, Jilbe, Kupto, Lagwan, Lala-roba, Lamang, Maaka, Mafa, Marghi,

	Mbai, Mpade, Nggwanhyi, Ngizim, Putai, Teda, Tera, Waja, Wandala, Dghwede, Hausa, Karekare, PE.
Cross River	Agoi, Agwagwune, Alege, Anaang, Bakor, Bakpinka, Bekwarra, Bete-bende, Bokyi, Bumaji, Doko-Uyanga, Efik, Efutop, Ejagham, Ekajum, Ekpai, Evand, Iceve-maci, Igede, Ibiobio, Ibino, Kiong, Kuhumono, Korop, Kukele, Legbo, Loko, Lubila, Lenyima, Leyigha, Mbe, Mbembe, Ndensele-nta, Ndoe, Nkem-nkum, Nkukoli, Nnam, Obanliku, Odut, Oluluma-Ikom, Otank, Okobo, Oron, Ubanghara, Ubang, Ukpe-Bayobiri, Ukpai-Ehom, Ukwa, Umon, Usakade, Utugwang, Uzekwe, Yala, PE.
Delta	Ukwuani-aboh, Ulukumi, Urhobo, Uvbie, Essan, Ijo, Ika, Itsekiri, Isoko, PE.
Ebonyi *	Igbo, PE
Edo	Edo, Esan, Igbo, Itsekiri, Isoko, Urhobo, Okpe, Okpe-idesa, Oloma-akuku, Ososo, Sasaru-enwanigwe, Ukaan, Uneme, Yekhee, Ebira, Emai-iulehara, Eruwa, Ghotuo, Igala, Ikpeshe, Ivbie, PE.
Ekiti	Yoruba, Ijo, PE
Enugu *	Igbo, PE
FCT. Abuja	Nupe, Rubasa, Gade, Gbagyi, Gwandara, Gbani, Hausa, Koro-ija, Koro-zuba, PE.
Gombe	Fulfulde, Hausa, PE.
Imo *	Igbo, PE.
Jigawa	Teshanawa, Warji, Auyokawa, Bade, Hausa, Kanuri, PE
Kaduna	Hausa, Acipa, Amo, Aten, Atsan, Ayu, Bacama, Begbere, Ejar, Berom, Bina, Doka, Dungu, Gbagyi, Gbani, Gbiri, Niragu, Gwandara, Ham, Idon, Idun, Ikugowa, Ankwa, Ikulu, Irigwe, Izere, Jera, Iju, Kadara, Kagoma, Kaivi, Kamantan, Kamo, Kamutu, Katab, Kiballo, Kinuku, Kono, Karuma,

	Kuturmi, Mada, Mala, Nandu-tari, Ninzam, Nkwak, Numana, Piti, Ruma, Shama, Sheni, Surubu, Yeskwa, Kanufi, PE.
Kano	Hausa, Duwai, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Kurama, PE.
Katsina	Fulfulde, Hausa, PE
Kwara	Yoruba, Nupe, Aduge, Bariba, Bokobaru, Boso-soro-gama,
Kebbi	Puku-geeri-wipsi, Reshe, Shanga, Tyenga, Zarma, Acipa, Boko, Boso-sorogama, Cishingini, Dendi, Dukanci, Gwanhi-wuri, Hausa, Lela, Lopa, PE
Kogi	Ebira, Nupe, Oke-eni-osayen, Rubasa, Yoruba, PE
Lagos	Yoruba, Setoge, Gungbe, PE.
Nassarawa	Tiv, Rubasa, Ake, Eggon, Hausa, Elori, Gbagyi, Gbari, Goemai, Gwandara, Lijili, PE.
Niger	Nupe, Hausa, Acipa, Banngi, Bariba, Basa-kadina, Baushi, Boko, Bassa-kotongura, Bosso-saragama, Busabisi, Cishingini, Dukanci, Fungwa, Gbagiji, Gbari, Gurmana, Lela, Gwanhi-wuri, Gwandara, Hungworo, Kakihum, Kamuku, Laru, Lopa, Pongu, Reshe, Shama, Tsikimba, Tsishingini, Ujjili, Zarma, Ghagyi, PE.
Ogun *	Yoruba, PE
Ondo *	Yoruba, PE
Osun *	Yoruba, PE
Oyo *	Yoruba, PE
Plateau	Tiv, Miship, Montol, Mundat, Mwaghawul, Ninzam, Nungu, Pia, Pyapun, Ron, Rubasa, Sha, Shagawu, Hausa, Tal, Tambas, Tapshin, Tarok, Turkwam, Wapan, Wase, Wedu, Yashi, Yeskwa, Yiwon, Agatu, Ake, Alago, Amo, Angas, Arumeesu, Aten, Bada, Basa-kadina, Bashar, Begbere, Ejar, Berom, Boghom, Bole, Cara, Kushe, Daff-barure, Duguri,

	Ebira, Eggon, Elori, Firam, Fyarn, Fyer, Gbagyi, Goemai, Gwandara, Ham, Horom, Iguta, Irigwe, Izere, Izora, Janji, Jarawa, Jera, Kantana, Karfa, Koenom, Kofyar, Koma, Kulere, Kwanka, Lemoro, Lijili, Mabo-barku, Mada, PE.
Rivers	Degemo, Igbo, Ikwere, Ijo, Kalabari, Kana, Mini, Nkoroo, Obolo, Obulom, Odual, Ogbah, Ogbai, Ogbogolo, Ogbronuagum, Okrika, Oruma, Ukwuaniaboh, Abua, Biseni, Defaka, Ekpeye, Eleme, Engenni, Epie, Gokana, Ibani, Koana, Kugbo, PE.
Sokoto	Hausa, Fulfulde, Gibanawa, PE.
Taraba	Mghd, Mak, Mambila, Fulfulde, Mbembe-tigon, Mumuye, Munga, Mvanon, Ndoola, Hausa, Puja, Saba-daka, Somyewe, Titta, Tiv, Vute, Waja, Waka, Wapan, Yamba, Yendang, Yukuben, Abong, Bali, Batu, Bete, Bitare, Comokarim, Dirim, Dong, Dza, Etulo, Fali, Fam, Gbaya, Gwomu, Icen, Jibu, Jiru, Jukun-takum, Jukun-wurkum, Kam, Kamkam, Kapyia, Kona, Kpan, Kpati, Kulung, Kutep, Kyak, Laka, Lamnso, Leelau, Limbum, Lo, Lufu, PE.
Yobe	Ngamo, Bade, Duwai, Hausa, Kanuri, PE.
Zamfara	Hausa, Fulfulde, Gibanawa, PE.

FCT: Federal Capital Territory (Abuja)

* These are the linguistically homogeneous states.

Exogenous Languages:

Arabic Language

With regard to exogenous languages, Arabic is one of the famous languages in Nigeria. According to Turkham as (cited in Zakariya, (1991) it was the first to arrive the country through Islamic faith and Arab traders in the northern part of Nigeria in the ninth century A. D. when the Old Kanemi Empire was first introduced to Islam. Moreover, at the initial stage of its arrival in Nigeria, Arabic was circumscribed to religious spheres due to its great affinity with Islam. The Arab traders, apart from their being Islamic propagandists, also rendered various assistance to local peoples and their rulers. They helped the illiterate in written, put themselves at local chiefs and rulers' disposal. Through all these benevolence, Arabic became the language in which daily events and historical facts were documented.

The spread of Islam as well as the diffusion of the Quranic knowledge, together with the set up of religious statehood in Sokoto by Fulani Jihadists, made Arabic gained enormous ground by the end of the nineteenth century. During the time, Arabic successfully penetrated into the judicial and political domains and became the language of daily communication. Besides, Arabic made significant inroads into social, commercial, educational and literary activities. Being a prestigious language of erudite, scholars of high caliber and of people of high ranking positions, Arabic was made mandatory for government offices and judicial appointments. Besides, before the arrival of Europeans in Nigeria, Arabic had been extensively used for foreign contacts with the Arab World via the North and North-East of Africa. It was through Arabic that writing knowledge and ancient civilizations first came to Africa (Zakariya, 1991). Invaluable knowledge documented in Arabic, according to Professor K. O. Dike, "from the raw material of research work in the field of West Africa Islamic Studies and Africa history" are treasured in libraries, archives, university and museums in all West African countries. The use of Arabic in West Africa for religious, social, economic, administrative, and cultural undertakings antedated the arrival of European imperialists in the continent. It was through Arabic that knowledge and ideas among West and North African citizens were imparted. All these are indicative of the facts that the use of Arabic, according to Bamigbose (1977) and Zakariyah, (1991) is not limited to religious contexts.

Interestingly, in the nineteenth century, the influence of Arabic transcended the North and permeated into educational system of the Southwest where it became the medium of instruction. In contrast, Arabic was not adopted whatsoever in the Southern parts of the country, nor included in the school curricular until 1896. This year also witnessed the establishment of the first Government Muslim Schools in Lagos, Epe and Badagry where Arabic was taught. However, in 1925, these schools were phased out, an incident that culminated in the erection of primary and secondary schools in Lagos, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode and elsewhere in the Southwest part of the country from monetary contributions made by Muslim Voluntary Agencies. In 1930, in an abrupt change of policy, the colonial government imposed an English medium instruction policy on schools (Akinaso & Ogunbiyi, 1990). Such a policy marked the beginning of the degradation of Arabic in Nigeria up till now (Zakariya, 1991).

As a language of Quran, Arabic is adorable and dear to every Muslim in the world among whom is the Nigerian Muslims. They admire the learning of the language with keen interests for religious obligations such as their reading of some Surah (Chapter) in the five canonical daily prayers. As the language of Islamic education, Arabic has deeply influenced the languages of all peoples who embraced Islam such as Persian, and other Iranian languages, Turkish languages, Urdu, Bengali, Malay, etc. as well as African languages like Hausa and Swahili. As a spoken language, Arabic is widely spread over an area from West Africa to the Persian Gulf; it is also spoken by more or less important minorities in non-Arab countries, including Nigeria, Chad, Turkey and Iran. Small Arabic-speaking communities are found in the former Soviet Union, Central Asia, and Afghanistan. In the Sudan, Nigeria, and Uganda, a pidginize variety of Arabic is used for communication among speakers of different African languages (Zakariya, 1991: 7).

Moreover, some Nigerian tribes are culturally and socially influenced by the Arab and the Arabic language. A lot of Arabic loan words are being used by speakers of languages such as Hausa, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Nupe, and Yoruba. Arabic words form an integral part of the Hausa language. For example, Salim, as cited in Zakariya (1991: 7) points out that:

It is now evident that no Hausa sentence of any credible length can be uttered without the inclusion of some Arabic words, words which most Hausas will swear are native origins.

On the same issue, Kamorudeen (2021: 19), further admitted that:

The high incidence of Arabic loan words in Yoruba transcends any artificial barrier of religion that may be expected to be created by Islam which is the original carrier of Arabic to this speech community.

Before the advent of Islam, words used in trade, administration and law in Africa were of Arabic origin. Besides, in Borno State, there exists a sizeable ethno-linguistic minority population called Shuwa-Arabs whose mother tongue is Arabic. Therefore, Arabic is a Nigerian language as it is a language of considerable political, economic, and diplomatic values to Nigeria. However, the fact that Arabic is not given its due care in West Africa and Nigeria in particular is regrettable.

English Language

The second exogenous language that came to Nigeria is English. It was brought to the country by traders in the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century, it became a missionary language and later in the subsequent century the colonial language. In the 1950s, English was eventually made the official tongue throughout the Nigerian federation. Ever since, it has been the only dominant language in government businesses, administration, upper education, trade, the media, international politics, as well as science and technology. According to Whitely (as cited in Fishman (1974), English remains the language of law makers in the Federal Assemblies, the Western and Eastern Regional Assemblies, the High Court, and alongside Hausa in the Northern Region Assembly.

In addition, English is the unifying language among the diverse Nigeria's ethnic groups. Within and outside the country, it is the language used for communication when Nigerians meet for the first time. It is after their tribal affiliations are determined by each other, a decision on which language to further their communication is made. In this sense, English language plays a crucial role in welding the linguistically diverse Nigerians into identifiable and integrated one nation-state. Without it, the current burning political situation in the country would have got out of control. The excruciating ethno-linguistically triggered feuds whose consequences could lead to disintegration of the Nigerian polity would have erupted. To be realistic, the three Nigerian national languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba – are sufficient for intelligible communication among the citizens whenever they come together owing to their being multilingual, but communication barriers are deliberately created by some ethnic groups. Rather than allowing the national languages to be developed and spread across the country, the

gathering trip for this research to some Hausa-speaking states in Nigeria, the researcher manipulated such an opportunity. Knocking on an officers' door, the researcher greeted an officer in the Hausa language and managed to explain his wants in the fragmentary sentences he had with little switches to English. Having discovered the researcher's fake fluency in Hausa, one officer inquired about the researcher's mother tongue. The researcher then responded in Arabic. With faces aglow with excitement, the officers ordered their subordinates to gather all required documents with immediate effect. Some elementary Hausa textbooks were also added as compliment to the researcher.

On the following day, the researcher, accompanied by a friend who is proficient in Hausa, went out for shopping. In a super-market, the researcher spoke English to the salesperson to which she responded in Hausa. She then asked in English whether the researcher could speak Hausa. No, the researcher nodded and called on his partner to intervene. When the partner spoke to her in the Hausa language, the pace of cordiality swiftly developed between them followed by a substantial discount in the commodities' prices. Such a linguistic loyalty is one of the insidious causes of failure in the implementation of national language policies.

On the other hand, the Yoruba people are very extreme in their loyalty to the English Language. Hardly would you see an educated Yoruba man saying one to two sentences without inserting many English words. This linguistic extremism extends to their working places and government offices. Whenever a Yoruba individual comes in contact with other Yoruba-speaking people, especially in government's offices, instead of communicating in their language, the Yoruba technocrats would insist on the use of English even when they are conversed with in Yoruba. You would find several people among the Yoruba who lack the ability to write or read a single letter in their mother tongue. To be frank, this is ridiculous. This habit, though upholds the official status of the English language, it is very detrimental to the national language provisions calling for the acquisition of each Nigerian child at least one of the three major languages apart from his/her mother tongue (Ahmad, 1999).

As for the Igbo-speaking people, they are conversant with the use of the Nigerian Pidgin English. Not out of illiteracy, but for their business transactions with the general public whose proficiency in the Standard English language is virtually non available. Throughout Nigeria, the Igbo People are regarded as the Pidgin English speaking pioneers. Pidgin English has even become a Creole in their region. The Igbo People have a peculiar life style different from most of the Nigerian people and they are educationally well-grounded (Nwoda, 2023).

French language

With regard to the French language, it is the third foreign language in the country. It came to Nigeria through the neighboring Francophone countries such as Benin Republic, Cameroun, Niger Republic and Chad. However, no historical account of its arrival is documented, and it is the least foreign language learned in Nigeria despite its apparent diplomatic roles with Francophone countries. It is offered in few Nigerian schools and universities (Faniran, 2016).

Pidgin English

The third group of language in Nigeria is Pidgin English. It is a neutral language used as a local lingua franca among linguistically diverse speakers in every nook and cranny of the country. Its emergence stemmed from speakers ardent endeavors to exchange conversations with white people, but managed to understand very little. Pidgin English is composed from several languages' vocabulary with English as a great donor. Some African languages such as Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Ijo, Itsekiri, Kongo, Krio, Urhobo, Fante, Arabic and Twi generously contributed vocabulary to Pidgin formation (Nwoda, 2023). Although, it is not recognized by the Nigerian government owing to its being an ill-formed type of language, it is mainly used by lower social strata educationally, occupationally and economically. In spite of that, it has deeply crept into national life of all Nigerians. Pidgin English is widely used by different ethno-linguistic communities, as the case is in many newspaper advertisements, print and electronic media, radio and television.

Commenting upon the pervasiveness of Pidgin English in Nigeria, Brann (1979) notes that in the Mid-west of the country, Pidgin is routinely used within a family, in market places, in informal learning contexts which comprise various ethnic background young students, and in expatriates' quarters known in the Hausa language as Sabongaris of northern cities. In this researcher's view, one of the good characteristics of the Pidgin English is its economical nature of wording. Its inclusion in formal education has even been suggested by some elite, and according to Bamiro (1991), some literary works have been produced in Pidgin English by some renowned Nigerian writers such as Wole Soyinka, the Nobel laureate for literature in 1986, and Chinua Achebe, the author of a classic novel, "Things fall Apart" in 1958 which has been translated into more than forty world languages among which are Czech, French German, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish, Slovene, and Russian.

Looking at the ease with which the Nigerian Pidgin English is constructed, its use tends to be sufficient for the Nigerian peoples as an intelligible means of communication without resorting to other Nigerian languages. However, its stigmatized formation nature has led to its being curtailed by elite, thereby confining its popularity to cosmopolitan cities where different people of divergent ethnic backgrounds meet. Moreover, despite its not being accorded any official recognition, the Nigerian people prefer its acquisition than learning each others' language.

The political turmoil in the country has made the people more adamant and deviants to government defined linguistic policies. Dissatisfaction with political, economic, educational, or social conditions is often expressed in ethnic terms, particularly by the opinionated leaders of the group, thus making the less privileged ethnic group belligerent because of their feelings of marginalization. These have led to repeated inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic armed clashes which pose great threats to the long-standing unity of Nigeria. Interestingly, in Niger Delta, the Ijaw and Itsekiri are killing themselves over the ownership of oil rich territories (Ahmad, 1999).

In the Northeast, acrimonious enmities between the Jukun/Chamba and Kuteb, the Tiv and Jukun, as well as the Sawaya and Hausa have resulted in the killings of hundreds of thousands of people and destruction of properties worth thousands of millions of Naira (Nigerian Currency). Unfortunately, several measures taken so far by successive Nigerian governments to ameliorate these ethno-linguistic squabbles have been futile. After the Civil War in 1970, as a confidence-building measure, the Gowon regime introduced a policy known as 3Rs (Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation) to stamp out mutual suspicion, hatred, and discontent, and to reabsorb the Igbo People into the political, economic, and social mainstream. Since the war ended, the Igbo People have complained of being marginalized, of being denied key positions like the presidency, top military and Para-military positions. They have also complained of being denied top civil service positions, of being neglected and not having the impact of federal projects, while federal roads in their areas are abandoned. Unfortunately, this 3Rs reconciliatory effort failed to mollify the Igbo who still view themselves excluded, oppressed and ostracized from the Nigerian polity. This appalling civil war has made the Igbos contemptuous of both the Hausas and the Yorubas. The extermination of the Igbos during the war was blamed on the Hausas, while the Yorubas were convicted of complicity in the massacre. This unforgettable event has made the Igbos unwilling to study either Yoruba or Hausa for academic purpose, although they acquire both languages through business interactions (Ahmad, 1999).

Furthermore, another reconciliation healing project known as National Reconciliation Commission (NARECOM) surfaced after the fatal incidents ensuing the ugly spectre of the June 12, 1993 presidential election in which the well-known business mogul and philanthropist, the late Chief Mashood K. Abiola was poised to win. This nightmare has undermined the potential inclusion of Hausa in the Southwest schools' curricula. The healing measure designed to placate the cheated, aggrieved ethnic groups in the country also resulted in a failure. At this juncture, it is the researcher's view that political power sharing as well as egalitarian access to national wealth and economy are the prerequisites to any language policy success. The on-going political disposition, if succeeded and perpetuated with justice, equality and full sense of belonging to the country by every citizen, would allay the current heightened tensions and push forward reciprocal cooperation and peaceful cohabitation (Ahmad, 1999).

Intra-ethnically, in the Southwest, there exists the reemergence of old animosities between Ife and Modakeke. This has also led to wanton destruction of lives and property. This development has often affected our body politic through crippling of socio-economic of these areas where conflicts are raging. In other parts of the world, the urgency can be seen in this era when centrifugal forces of ethnic particularity and weird nationalism have raised spectres of hatred, intolerance and savagery which threatens the very foundations of many societies around the world and contribute markedly to the tensions and instability of the post Cold War order. Instructively, the thaw of the Cold War has brought many long-standing but submerged communal rivalries and feuds to the surface. In places like India (Kashmir), Sri Lanka (Tamil homelands), Indonesia (East Timor), Iraq and Turkey (Kurdistan), Burma/Myanmar (Karens' territory), Yugoslavia (Kosovo), Sudan (Southern Sudan), Senegal (Casamance), Angola

(Cabinda), Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo-Kinshasha, the continuing strife and mounting tempo of the guerrilla warfare in these countries can be linked to ethno-nationally inspired vendetta (Ahmad, 1999).

These have prompted a culture of impunity that has manifested in massive violence, waves of killings and destruction, humanitarian emergencies, breakdown of authority and abuse of human rights. In Kenya, the country has been on the precipice of ethnic meltdown as a result of the frequent clashes between the Karinga and Kikuyu in the rift valley. Both linguistic and cultural differences are the factors in the recurrent discord and controversy between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians, the Flemish and Walloon in Belgium, the English and Scottish/Welsh in the United Kingdom, Castilians and Basques/Catalans in Spain, the Francophone and Anglophone Cameroonians, the Arabs and Berbers in Algeria, the Han Chinese and Tibetans, the Turkish and Greek population in Cyprus, and many others (Ahmad, 1999).

Given these examples of intense communal rivalries which have frustrated state unity in the afore-named countries, not to say much about military coups, election crises and armed conflicts elsewhere which often contain references to the ethnic/tribal dimensions that are involved, we can see that building bridges of understanding across the divisions in Nigeria today is of crucial importance. This is for the sake of survival and viability of the nation-state in this 21st century. This necessity is not peculiar to Nigeria as a multilingual national society. In the United States of America for example, the Clinton administration pursued a policy of dialogue on race in order to consolidate the melting pot of cultures the country symbolizes. Besides, in South Africa, once convulsed by White-black bloodletting, President Nelson Mandela, arguably one of the world's most respected leaders, un-wavered in his commitment to build what former Arch-Bishop Desmond Tutu called "a rainbow nation of God", a non-racial South Africa that is predicated on mutual interests and reciprocal respect (Ahmad, 1999).

For us in Nigeria, the challenge of renegotiating the terms of our national concerns is not to let out bitterness or recriminations, but to resolve the culmination of long process of institutional conflicts arising from the clash of ethnic groups and cultures in the country. Patriotically, our exhortation for the Federal government of Nigeria is to keep on devising more strategies to avert potential ethno-linguistically inflamed hostilities which could spark off a kind of conflicts such as the one which led to the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and ignited the traumatic war in Rwanda, Burundi and Somalia. For the sake of Nigeria's survival, the Federal government should build bridges of understanding across the divisions in Nigeria by sensitizing the citizens to the significance of learning each other's languages, and to a reality that we live in an ever-changing, interdependent world where beliefs and wisdoms are dynamic in nature, the wisdoms of yesterday are becoming today's anachronism (Ahmad, 1999).

All erroneous ideas of blind loyalties and negative, primordial attachments to one's language in a multilingual, multicultural polity are not conducive to a proper nation-state construction and development. People should be made cognizant of the fact that knowing a

second or a third language should be accepted as an article of faith in religion, for it is an index of erudition, not a sign of ignorance. Our future as a nation is indisputably a multilingual one. All suggestions of a monolingual future not only go against the global trends but contain the dangerous seeds of future conflicts. A consistently democratic approach to the language question has to be based on the sound linguistic premise that all languages are equal in their capacity to serve as means of communication, as means of thought and as bearers of culture, as well as on the sound political premise that any attempt to suppress the rights of languages will inevitably give rise to the most bitter resistance (Fromkin & Victoria, 2011).

The government should also reward students at high school and at university levels for studying other national languages different from their mother tongues. We believe that it is through linguistic tolerance and real social interactions of divergent language speakers that Nigeria would remain strong and economically prosperous. The government should reassure both the majority and minority groups in the polity of their full rights of citizenship and national freedom, including the right to maintain their linguistic and cultural identities. It is our belief that the fusion of diverse populations in Nigeria into a national unity in 1914 through the amalgamation policy of Lord Lugard is not a curse. It is not because multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual society, as the case of the US and Switzerland has shown, a canker but a necessary vehicle for civilization. Beyond this, it is only within the larger crucible of heterogeneous and diverse multi-national states like Nigeria that separate nations (i. e. ethnic nationalities) and cultures would interact, amiably compete, and contribute to the progress of one another. However, this is with a caveat: if there is a sincere willingness for such cohabitation on the basis of equity and fairness (Ahmad, 1999).

The coexistence of several nations under the same state is a test as well as the best security of its freedom. Invariably, the best security for Nigeria as it joins the rest of the world to be prosperous in the 21st century and its tremendous challenges are unity and peaceful coexistence. Indeed, these are double imperatives of our time! Therefore, the ultimate challenge facing ethnic groups and cultures in Nigeria today is how to exchange and share various endearing idealistic values and employ such strive for the common good of the country. Our mass media, as means of information, education and enlightenment, has a major role to play in the search for a tolerant pluralistic Nigerian society. Through their productions (editorial comments, features, news stories), they should lay emphasis on elevating virtues of peace and mutual accommodation and respect. The media should not give room to views with primordial sentiments or sectional diatribes which tend to divide rather than unite the people. Ethnic nationalities and cultures in the country should be encouraged to strive to cohabit in peace and harmony, not in pieces and acrimony. By so doing, whatever language policy is introduced by the government would be wholeheartedly embraced.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the complex linguistic situation in Nigeria has been hindering the implementation of language policies formulated by successive Nigerian administrations. The primary factor responsible for the implementation failure has been the absence of balanced

political and economic power. Groups who believe to have been marginalized by other privilege groups, or feel of being deprived of their civic rights simply because of linguistic variations, are not expected to support any official policy classifying certain languages as major or national.

Minority ethnic groups in the country have been resisting any policy undermining their languages and cultures whereby their existence is represented on the pretext of language planning. Their resistance has transcended a mere sentiments, it has occasionally led to violent riots and destruction of lives and the country vital infrastructures. Similar situation abounds in different parts of the world. Look at the Tamil armed struggles in Sri-Lanka, the destructive insurgence of the Kurdish people in Turkey, and Iraq; the heightened political and military tensions between India and Pakistan in Kashmir, the plights of the civilians in Cabinda, Angola, the bitter discord between Kikuyu and Karinga in Kenya, the long-standing discontent between Francophone and Anglophone Canadians, the intermittent bloody ethno-linguistically sparked assaults in Spain, the Berbers' revolt in North Africa, especially in Algeria, the Poli-Sario/Morocco political animosity, the racially based discrimination between the Aborigines and other speech communities in Australia, and the genocide perpetrated on Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia. All these are ethnic related fueled atmospheres in which hundreds of thousands of lives have been killed. Not to say anything about Arabic that has been the source of squabbles and trouble since Nigeria's independence. It is always seen as a religious tool by adherents of other faiths. They see it as a language designed to Islamize the country, and is deprived of a full-fledged official status in spite of its being one of the country's living languages.

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