

**REVIEW ARTICLE**

**Language as A tool for Global Integration and Sustainable Democracy: An excursion in Political Linguistics**

**DR. Anthony Ayodele Olaoye\***

**Abstract**

*This paper entitled “language as a tool for global integration and sustainable democracy” is approached from a socio-political and linguistic perspective. The objective of this study is to analyse the situation of languages in contact, the function of English in Nigeria, the role of language and literature, and the need for multi-lingual education for sustainable democracy. The author posits that languages are a veritable tool for global integration, and that “Enlishization” of the world leads to linguistic homogeneity and hegemony which, in turn, leads to linguistic genocide (linguistic genocide), linguistic imperialism and opportunism. In spite of all these deleterious effects of linguistic globalization on African languages it is incontrovertible that the languages serve both integrative and instrumental purposes.*

*The paper concludes that for African indigenous languages to be effectively used as a tool for either national or global integration and sustainable democracy, effective language education planning, and more specifically multilingual and multi-cultural education, supported by Universities of Education and Faculties of Education in conventional universities, is imperative.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The title of this paper- “language as a tool for global integration and sustainable democracy” is very apt, relevant and very germane to the present-day global concerns. It is axiomatic that languages are veritable tool for global integration. This is evident in the fact that the world has now been reduced to a global village through the instrumentality of language. Let us, therefore, look at the role of the language in general, whether as mother tongue, Lingua Franca, Second Language, Foreign Language or other tongues and put them in context.

Language is a tool for actualizing human ingenuity, creativity, human skills and knowledge. Through it man as a gregarious animal can comfortably live among his people and adapt himself to various socio-cultural groups and situations. For instance, Greek and Latin, regarded as the languages of pristine civilizations, held sway for several centuries before English and French took over as world languages.

---

\* Department of Linguistics and African Languages University of Abuja Nigeria

Latin for instance, during the Middle ages, was not only the language of religion but also the universal language of diplomacy, scholarship and culture. Its integrative force was recognized in Christianized Europe, as all personal advancement both secular and clerical depended upon a sound knowledge of Latin. The rich thoughts of the ancient philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, etc. are being preserved by languages. Contact with these great minds even those of the modern political, linguistic and religious philosophers widens man's mental horizon, and develops man's intellectual faculties.

Language could be used as a unifying tool, especially for people who speak the same tongue. For such people, language acts as a national flag, giving the speakers a common identity and a sense of belonging. It is also used for controlling people's behaviour since it is rule-governed, and a breach of its rules attracts sanctions. Speakers of the same tongue are bound together culturally and linguistically. This is the socio-linguistic integrative role of languages. Speech norms are to be observed in speech acts to avoid communication breakdown. In the ethnography of speaking of any speech community, languages are regarded as 'law-enforcement agents' under whose sovereignty all speakers must come and bow. The acronym SPARKING, (Setting i.e. milieu; participants otherwise known as interlocutors; Ends i.e. speaker's goal; Act sequence i.e. speech for; key, i.e. manner of speech, Instrument i.e. type of utterance) (Olaoya, 2002), is an Octologue akin to god's Ten Commandments called Decalogue. These eight sociolinguistic commandments must be obeyed by all speakers of the same language, and indeed any language, thus welding the speakers together into one family or one speech community.

The prime objective of any language is co-operation, and this can either be transactional or interact-ional. When a language is used for the intentional transmission of factual information, it is said to be transactional, and when it is used for the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, it is international. It is this international function of any language that serves integrative purpose. Ogundare (2004) describes language as a facilitator and an index of a people's capacity to conquer nature and civilize their environment. It is capable of carrying the burden of a society's value, experiences and ideologies. What she means here is that language is a powerful weapon for colonization and neo-colonization. English language, for instance, has brought the world together in many respects. Let us examine the English language situation in Nigeria.

#### **English language in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a multilingual nation where English has acquired the status of a second language to many, while to others it is a third language. It plays a significant role in almost all spheres of human endeavour, be it in education politics, the judiciary, administration, economics, religion, government, business and legislation. English today is the lamp which the youths need in order to travel through the educational tunnel. Government reaches out to its teeming multi-ethnic and multi-lingual population through the English medium. It is the language of crisis management, be it political, religious or ethnic crisis. At the Independence Day, Democracy day, Nigerian workers' day, etc, English is the language used to address Nigerians. I cannot agree any more with Ogundare (2004) when she asserts that English is so fundamental to functioning of the nations that she refers to it as "one of the major Nigerian languages".

According to her, because ethnic and linguistic plurality is a fact of Nigerian life, the role of English as a unifying and integrating language is obvious. Nigeria as a developing democracy operates a multi-party system where political parties meet frequently, hold rallies and meetings, and carry out electioneering campaigns. Members of these different political parties come from diverse ethnic, religious and socio-linguistic backgrounds. In this situation, English becomes the only viable, integrating language, because English is a neutral language. As a multilingual nation, Nigeria requires a common medium for inter-ethnic communication, English has remained the compromise choice as the medium of interaction in this situation, since political resistance has forced three major Nigerian autonomous languages out of the status of *Lingua Franca*.

#### **Languages in contact**

Nigerian Pidgin English in Nigeria is a “Language in contact” because it was imported into a multilingual nation. According to Adekunle (1974) the locus of contact is the individual bilingual, but there is, usually, at least two interacting mother tongue groups representing the various cultural and linguistic groups. When two or more languages meet, a variety of linguistic phenomena takes place such as bilingualism, linguistic convergence, code-switching, code-mixing, borrowing, calque, pidginization, creolization and so on (Olaoye, 2002). The first phase of contact is characterized by what Adekunle (1974) calls primary and secondary hybridization, by which he means linguistic fragmentation. Primary hybridization, by which he means linguistic fragmentation. Primary hybridization is characterized by “smooth integration due to the effect of waves of minimal mutation” or change. Linguistic changes and the consequent emergence of an “incipient

Nigerian dialect of English’ took place during the early part of the colonial period in Nigeria (Adekunle, 1974). The standard Nigerian English which is a dialect of English, eventually emerged, and it’s having an integrative effect on its speakers in Nigeria. English has thus been nativized, Africanized or Institutionalized in different countries where it is spoken.

The Nigerian speech community is characterized by monolingualism typified by isolated village communities, and also by bilingualism and multilingualism of the urban centre. Here English and mother tongues are the alternative codes. Nigeria, exemplifies fish man’s bilingualism with diglossia-type of speech community. English, in evaluative term, is regarded as the high (H) variety where the Nigerian languages are regarded as the Low (L) variety. The indigenous language is the medium at linguistically homogenous social gathering. It is the medium of cultural authenticity. English is the official language of politics, business administration, commerce and education. Diglossia therefore, serves the purpose of vertical integration wherever the situation exists.

Multilingualism fosters national, international and global integration. Those who speak the same language are likely to share common cultural and linguistic traits, thus forming, as it were, one ethno-linguistic global family unit. This is recognized by Nigerian government as exemplified in the national language policy which promotes trilingualism. This national policy on education states that: “government appreciates the importance of language as a means of producing social interaction and national cohesion” (1998:9). And that, in the interest of national unity it is expedient that every Nigerian child shall be required to learn

one of the three major Nigerian languages, i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, in addition to his MT and English. Now that French language is being encouraged and popularized in Nigerian schools, quadrilingualism is being promoted.

### **Language, Globalization and Democracy**

A preliminary definition of some of the key terms might be appropriate and necessary for directional purpose. The word 'global' means "involving the whole world, comprehensive or total". The terms "globalization and globalize are derived" from "global". "Integration" means absorbing into existing whole. Global integration therefore means bringing people of diverse cultures, languages, races, etc, together under one umbrella-be it political, economic or linguistic. According to Lawal (2006), globalization rests squarely on the tripod structure of trade liberalization, liberal democracy and international communication.

Globalization is seen by some people as a process of the international integration of the economics of nations by means of social restructuring a global scale. The restructuring, is being accomplished in part, through the removal of trade barriers and opening of borders for easy flow of capital, people, goods and services. Globalization is however seen beyond economic integration. It is seen as the "universalization and commodification of knowledge, technology and communication. Globalization is equated to westernization and modernization, especially where existing social structures, etc. are destroyed and replaced by colonialism, neo-colonialism, capitalism, imperialism, etc. Education is not spare because, since education mirrors the society, social change occasioned by globalization must, of necessity, involve educational change. This in turn affects

educational change and indeed language policies. Languages are thus used as the channel through which global integration moves.

Information and communication Technology (ICT), brought in through globalization, has a pervasive influence on education delivery. ICT, through television, satellite communication, on-line services, e-mail, computer conferencing, etc. has brought the world to the door-step of students and other people. The place of change brought by new technologies has had fundamental impact on the way people live, work and play the world over.

The advances in Science and Technology have also impacted positively on people's way of life. Knowledge explosion is brought about by globalization whose genesis can be traced to the enlightenment era of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Man's access to information is made possible through languages. Through world news, accessed through languages, democracy has become a regular menu or item on nation's political agenda. Nations are becoming more connected in cyberspace, and this helps in the spread and growth of democracy. The introduction of peace education, political education and preventive diplomacy has a salutary effect on sustainable democracy. Through peace education nations will begin to imbibe the principles of peace making, crisis resolution, fundamental human rights, people's limit of freedom, the rule of law, constitutionality, global citizenship, and the value of dialogue, compromise, tolerance, reciprocal respect, due process and the culture of reform. These are some of the ingredients of sustainable democracy.

The "culture of reform" initiated by the former Nigerian president chief Olusegun Obasanjo, according to UNESCO Abuja

(2005), is to engender sustainable change within educational institutions in Nigeria. This is one of the themes that runs through the National Economic empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). These reforms are to be carried out through education-potent vehicle of national and global integration. In the same vein, the World Conference on human right in Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action is on human right education. The United Nations General assembly resolution of 1994 proclaimed the U.N Decade for human Rights Education. This is a global concern, which focuses on stimulating and supporting international and local activities and initiatives, and is built upon a partnership between governments, international organization, NGO', professional associations, individuals and large segments of civil society.

The United Nations general Assembly has, over the years, been an international body committed to global integration through education. For instance, the year 2000, was proclaimed the international year for the Culture of Peace by the United Nations General Assembly. A culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviours and ways of life based on respect for life, promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and co-operation; respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, respect for fundamental human rights; commitment to peaceful conflict resolution; and adherence to the principles of freedom, justice democracy, solidarity, pluralism, co-operation and cultural diversity. These are rich ingredients of global integration and sustainable democracy.

### **Globalization and English**

The linguistic situation of English is both a consequence of and a contributor to globalization. The position of English is seen as the linguistic communication correlate of globalization. English is the universal medium of the new technological age, the age of information. Globalization has introduced new words into English lexicon; hence we talk of the globalization of English, and the use of English for the globalization of the world.

Linguistic globalization is an interesting phenomenon, because human beings and languages exhibit remarkable resemblance in their characteristics the world over. For instance the origin of man is as mysterious as the origin of languages. Human beings are born and they die just as languages develop, grow and die or become extinct. Languages and humans have kinship relation based on their historical genetic and structural affinities. There are variations within and between humans, just as there are intra-and inter-variations. Human beings behave according to the company they keep just as words in languages change their functions and meanings according to the company of other words they keep. That is, environment affects man's behavior just as words behave differently in different contexts. Borrowing is a common characteristic of humans and languages. Words move across geographic and linguistic boundaries just as human beings travel across the globe. All these characteristics have integrative force as they bring human beings together under one global family unit.

Linguistic globalization however has its deleterious consequences. English language, for instance, now behaves like an overbearing monster bestriding Africa and the globe like a colossus, launching its

devastating missiles on weaker languages. English according to Lawal (2006) is the brazen penetrating force, as a “rapist”, not sparing even ‘French-another malevolent aggressor. The pervasive influence of English on other languages is in the area of homogenization. This refers to the increasing global similarity in the use of a particular language or particular languages. By this we mean that English is used for almost similar purposes-official, co-equal, national, first language, second language, other languages, the consequences of which are deadly.

Linguistic hegemony, Lawal (2006) asserts, manifests itself in three ways: (a) linguistic genocide (linguicidal traits) i.e. “Englishization” is monopolistic, totalitarian and destructive; it is decimating other languages, (b) linguistic imperialism i.e. linguistic, political and economic dominance of English, and (c) linguistic opportunism, i.e. domination and control that is limited in scope by competition from other equally strong languages like French and Spanish. Many countries of the world suffer from these twin sisters-homogeny and hegemony. However, Englishization has been noted to have both integrative and instrumental functions. English for instance is very essential for participation in global democracy and economy; it is a natural force and tool for progress and it has expanded and enriched the lexicon of many languages. It is believed that languages will serve more effectively as a unifying force on both corpus and status language planning and implementation. Multilingual education is the answer to problems of Englishization.

Nigerian English (NE) is the hardest hit by this linguistic influence. We now find in NE such lexical items as download, access, browse, e-mail, software, on-line, hardware, navigate, etc. Unfortunately, a

variety of English has emerged on the work’s linguistic atlas. According to Oyeleye (2005), in such a variety, words such as democracy, equity, freedom, liberalization, non-discrimination, appropriate pricing, deregulation, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), etc, acquire meanings that turn the semantics of ordinary English upside down. This modification in meaning is described as glibspeak, a re-semanticisation process in which the meaning of long-established linguistic patterns are being hijacked by chieftains of industries and commerce in order to deceive those being addressed. This is the stock-in-trade of the multi-nationals, the political ideologues, and captains of industries. The route is the cable television networks- CNN, Sky News, Voice of America, video tapes, movies music, films, etc.

### **Literature, Global Integration and Democracy**

Literature is language in action. Literature communicates through language. It enlarges our knowledge and understanding of human behaviors. Through literature we know what goes on in other nations of world. Literature illuminates man’s mind and liberates man from prejudices. Through it the ills of the society are mirrored and criticized. Democratic and antidemocratic practices of different nations are highlighted, as literature relates to life and deals with man in his social political, economic, emotional, religious and cultural realities. The younger generation, though voracious reading comes face-to-face with global malaise, such as armed robbery, assassination of citizens, political thuggery, arson, sectarian crisis, lawlessness, dictatorship, extra-judicial killings, ethnic clashes, military coups, ritual killings, rape and a host of other social vices. Literature can thus be viewed as veritable tool for globalization.

Literary Artists who, are described as seers, Gadfly, Prophets, Town criers, Visioner, Revealers or even Divine Mind, are the conscience of the society. Literature brings about awareness of global trends. It spurs people of diverse races into action, and binds them together as a people effacing a common enemy. It thus welds together, in an integrative manner people of the same ideological beliefs, their colour notwithstanding. It has contributed immensely to world culture and civilization. Through language and literature, works such as Machiavelli's "The Republic", St. Augustine Confession became world agents of change.

Literature according to Asade (2000) can be regarded as the matrix of the socio-cultural ethos of a people, the weapon of sustenance, the means of exchanging opinions, feelings, apprehension and aspirations. It is the greatest machinery for the mobilization and coordination of political activities into a cohesive, and unified whole. It is even suggested that intra-national and international translation of literary works can enhance further mutual understanding, tolerance and cultural integration among the various socio-linguistic and cultural groups of the world. Indeed literature, as a source of information, is one of the most potent instruments for societal enlightenment and integration.

#### Language and global citizenship

Education is carried out through language medium, and education brings about global citizenship. An educated person has access to world information, and can co-exist with people of different races who speak the same tongue. Through language the United Nation's 1946 declaration on Universal Human rights become a handy document in the hands of all and sundry. Through language, the ingredients of global

citizenship and integration-such as peace, cooperation, interdependence, mutual trust, respect for human rights, patience, altruism, etc are taught in schools.

These values too are also ingredients for sustainable democracy. Anikweze, et al (2005) christen these socio-cultural values as "Petadi" and which stands for the issues and values of patience, education, talent, altruism, discipline and internationalism. These are now global ideas often discussed at national and international fora.

Peace education is now, more than ever, a recurring menu on the tables of world leaders. At the OAU, AU NEPAD and other international organizations the agenda has always been the "re-education of humanity". This means that global citizenship/ peace education can re-orientate the youths towards meeting the challenges of a globalized world. Peace education is also about democracy. Language, global integration and sustainable democracy are triplets that are almost mutually exclusive.

#### CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis, it is axiomatic that languages can be used, and are being used, as a veritable tool for national and global integration. Democracy is imported and exported through language. Literature humanizes through language used in education. Globalization however has both positive and deleterious effects on indigenous languages. Our finding is that the role of languages is pivotal to human growth, national development, global integration and sustainable democracy. The negative effects of linguistic globalization can however be reduced through effective corpus and status planning, particularly multilingual and multi-cultural education. African

languages have to be well developed, codified, standardized, modernized and used for the implementation of multilingual education. This is the role of linguists and language educators in the Faculties of Arts, Languages and education.

#### REFERENCES

- Adekunle, M.A. (1974). "The standard Nigerian English in Sociolinguistic perspective," Nigerian English Studies Association Journal, Vol. 6 No.1 P. 24-36.
- Anikweze, C.C and Maiyana, A.A. (2005). "Peace, Human Rights and Global Citizenship Education: The Mission of Petadists Community Organization". Paper Presented on Culture of reform workshop, FCE Okene, Nigeria.
- Asade, B.K (Rev.) (2000). "Language, Literature and National Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria". In: Language, Literature and Linguistics, (ed) Olaoye, et al. P. 190-197.
- Lawal, R.A (2006). Linguistic Globalization and Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria. Being a lead paper presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> National Conference of the School of Languages, Federal College of Education, Kontagora, Niger State, Nigeria, 6<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> June.
- National Policy on Education (1998). Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria.
- Ogundare, M.A. (2005). The Role of Language Teaching in National Development. "In: Language and Literature in Education for a Better Society. COE Ankpa, Nigeria P. 60-63.
- Olaoye, A.A. (2007). Introduction to Sociolinguistics; Text in Applied Linguistics Abuja: Israel Ogunleye Press Ltd.