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## AFRREV LALIGENS

*An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*  
Ethiopia

Vol. 3 (1), Serial No 7, February, 2014: 163-185

ISSN: 2225-8604(Print)

ISSN 2227-5460 (Online)

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### **PROBLEMS WITH LITERACY IN NIGERIAN LANGUAGES: IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT**

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#### **Abstract**

*This work examines problems associated with literacy in Nigerian languages with the aim of identifying the implication for national language policy on the one hand, and national development in Nigeria on the other. The paper relies on relevant literature, empirical data and findings from earlier research works in isolating some of the*

*issues (with reading and writing, and with prospective pedagogy) in native Nigerian languages. This is against the backdrop of the unrelenting calls for prioritization of (even if only the leading) native languages in Nigeria, with regard to the nation's language policy in order to better propel socio-economic growth and national development. The present study therefore contributes to the on-going debates on Nigeria's language policy, and on the role, prospect as well as problems attributive to (such largely unwritten) native languages, in the country's policy-making and national development.*

### **Introduction**

This paper proceeds from the observation that a plethora of studies continue to debunk the linguistic imbalance in Nigeria, whereby English ironically enjoys status as the official (major) language, whereas only a minority of Nigerians dubbed 'Literate' use the language for anything (see Salawu, 2012; Aito, 2005; Blench, 2003; Bamgbose, 1994). The dramatic turn, and for that matter the unpleasant other side of the coin here is that the over-250 other native languages in the country remain tagged and marginalized as Minority languages, occupying far inferior positions in the country's documents on national policy (NPE, 2004; CFRN, 1999).

Yet these numerous Nigerian languages are spoken as mother tongue or as lingua franca across societies and linguistic borders throughout the country. Nigerian Languages were and are still used to serve the socio-cultural, political, health, economic and even the spiritual needs of the people. They are repositories of the customs, norms and values of the different but contingent societies. The importance of the languages and their vital roles have attracted the attention of many people, who try to learn or study or even carryout research on the languages, including categories of interest groups such as the missionaries, expeditionists, colonialists, educationists as well as the general populace.

The consequence of the linguistic disparity (centered on English) is an inquisitive tendency among scholars to critique and probably see this turn of events reversed as a matter of significance and urgency. It has even been claimed in certain quarters that National Development may have slowed and tarried greatly in Nigeria mainly because the people who ought to contribute meaningfully to that national development, Nigeria's Youth, and Productive Capacity, think in one language (their mother tongue Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, etc) while they are expected to produce, conceive, birth, create, and recreate ideas in another.

The young are expected to re-invent their Nigerian and African society in a colonial English which, unfortunately, conflicts with the essence and entities of their instinctive mother tongues: a language quite foreign to the possible breadth and scope of their creative capacities. It might be ruminated for instance that China and Japan, among other countries, even though learn English as a Foreign (optional) language, have been able to immensely catapult their economies probably because to a very large extent, the productive populations think and create in Chinese and Japanese languages(not in some creativity-and-innovation-damning, adopted colonial language). Akinwunmi (2011) captures the perspective in the following words:

This is a good example of the developmental dimensions of culture; China has never lost its culture. The language of instruction from pre-primary to University level has been Chinese. The child understands better when taught in the mother tongue. China therefore has made enormous progress in science and technology and they are selling this to the world.

The question however for Nigeria is, who, if not us, would help translate our Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Agricultural Science, Engineering, Medicine, and even Law textbooks into native Nigerian languages, for the purpose of accelerated National Development? Who would create, and when would we have an effective meta language in science, commerce, arts, engineering, law and so on in the Nigerian native languages: capable of being

efficiently harnessed for the purposes of research and formal pedagogy in schools? Do so-called marginal languages in the world ever witness feasible changes-of-state with contingent societies, according to data available from history? What about the issue of standard orthographies, for the languages: how easily could our educational system be re-adapted to fresh teaching and learning in the indigenous languages, or orientation and propensity for its acquisition largely redirected?

It has even been reported that a good percentage of Nigerian children cannot read and write comprehensibly-well in their respective mother-tongues, and that the statistics of yearly performance in O'Level language-subjects Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo do not in any way correlate with the true practical competence and performance of the learners in those languages. Given the problematic linguistic situation in Nigeria therefore, what role could the languages yet play in country's educational sector and quest for national development? What has been the stride so far, where do the gaps and problems lie, and how may these be bridged quickly and most effectively? The present study seeks to answer these and other related questions.

### **Understandings of Literacy**

A number of important concepts come to bear on the theoretical framework of this study: these include Literacy, Orthography, and Language Development to start with. Although most would see no need for such a discussion as the title of this subsection states, and would rather simply define Literacy – as most dictionaries would and most 'literate' people will agree – to be the ability to 'read and write'; and then the state of being 'well educated'. The logic then is that for literacy to exist in the first place, there has to first be a language of reference, and for education to take place by means of that language, the said language has to be learnable first, which means that it has to meet the requirements of standardization, including possession of a standard orthography and meta language supplementary to the other major properties of language.

According to Fransman (2005), studies on Literacy have received increased propensity from scholars since around the mid-twentieth century, with direct implications for practice and policies bordering on educational systems. Granted the dictionary definitions and the general consensus among people, the term would appear to defy absolute definition, in essence. For example, how do we adjudge a professor of French who tours in, say Tokyo or Beijing, a place where he or she perhaps has no glimpse what the word tourism is called in Japanese or Chinese languages. The French professor, if he has no proficiency in an optional go-between (foreign) language, like English, becomes not only unable to transact business without hitches in those lands, but is practically barred from accessing (news and other important) information encoded or printed in either of the language groups. What then is the native French professor in Beijing: literate, or illiterate?

From the foregoing it would appear that knowledge of language, and precisely the written form of that language, is quite distinguishable from some ‘other knowledge’ which the instrumentality of the written language enables the acquisition of – e.g., acquiring education in Medicine must necessitate the prior acquisition of, or familiarity with the written form of some language, and which familiarity then enables education in the field of Medicine (after all, the prospective medical student has to be able to study text on medical concepts in order to be educated and then to qualify). Where the language in which the Learning is encoded, turns out to be the mother-tongue of the learner however, it may be unnecessary to make such a distinction as ‘literacy in that language’, say in English, or in a Nigerian Language. But where the language of the Learning is totally different from the Learner’s mother-tongue, the concept of literacy becomes elusive, as one may have to distinguish or isolate ‘literacy in the given mother-tongue’ if learning is to take place by means of it – in which case the term then designates the ability to read and write in that native language first.

Obviously, the Understanding of Literacy becomes something which is conditioned by context and circumstances. The above view is eloquently articulated in the Education for All Global Monitoring Report of the UNESCO in 2006, entitled *Understandings of Literacy*. According to the Report, “at first glance, ‘literacy’ would seem to be a term that everyone understands [b]ut at the same time, literacy as a concept has proved to be both complex and dynamic, continuing to be interpreted and defined in a multiplicity of ways”. And important to take into reckoning is that people’s understandings of what is meant when a person is said to be literate are influenced by a number of factors which include academic research, institutional agendas, national contexts (and policies), cultural values as well as personal experiences (Ibid).

As a result of these and other developments, understandings in the international policy community have expanded too: from viewing literacy as a simple process of acquiring basic cognitive skills, to using these skills in ways that contribute to socio-economic development, to developing the capacity for social awareness and critical reflection as a basis for personal and social change

It is important then, and more so for the purpose of this study, that the distinction of ‘literacy in Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Ijaw, and the other major Nigerian languages’, be made, as distinct from the general notion of Literacy. The question to ask however is, as the situation is currently, could the average learner in the Nigerian education system process information (access, decode and re-encode such) in their respective mother tongues in none other than the written form? Routine observation on the part of the present researcher would find the answer to be in the negative. Children speak fluently in their mother-tongues (just as illiterate adults in the villages do), and then they go ahead and score high grades in their examinations which are expected to test and assess the learners’ true proficiency in the respective language. But asked to engage a small piece of written passage in those languages, by reading aloud, the young learners flabbergast one by unleashing a show of incompetence which even the

bemoaned situation in the English language might never rival. This makes prospects for pedagogy by means of the native language to be a bit hazy and truly problematic.

### **Orthography and Literature in Nigerian Languages**

Another major impediment to the use of Nigerian languages for the purposes of pedagogy, and by inference, to its prioritization of place (as yet) in the national language policy, is the problem of orthography. Orthography, according to Cahill & Karan (2008), is a system for representing a language in written form. As a concept in linguistic discourse, it entails not just the symbols used for representing the sounds used in the given language (such as characters, letters or graphemes), orthographies also encompass the relative placement of such symbols, word breaks, punctuation, diacritics, capitalization, hyphenation and other aspects which might be regulated in a written standard. Technically speaking then, orthography is the natural and fundamental domain of the written language, or vice versa.

There has been a trend of increased attention to orthographies in recent years as shown by a great increase in major publications on the topic. Several factors account for this, most importantly the increased awareness of endangered languages, and the positive effects literature and literacy in these languages can have in preserving them. The attention to universal human rights (such as the Education for All movement) and the Unicode movement have also been influential. Not just any orthography will do; it needs to be effective. That is, it needs to be (a) linguistically sound, (b) acceptable to all stakeholders, (c) teachable, and (d) easy to reproduce. These roughly can be thought of as scientific, political, educational, and technical aspects. These four criteria often conflict with each other. SIL has been working for several decades in literacy and has published many works related to orthography. This paper is not based on the authors' own experience and research alone, but takes into consideration SIL's extensive corporate experience, and questions raised by others on the issue. We have severely limited the topics covered in this paper

According to Coulmas (1996:379), “all orthographies are language specific”. Of the three leading indigenous languages in Nigeria, existing literature corroborates Yoruba to be the one with the most standard orthography, for having been the first to be documented perhaps. The language is said to have received documentation since as far back as the mid1800’s, with the first newspaper in colonial Nigerian territory haven been published in Yoruba. In the words of Babaloloa (2002),

...the history of the Nigerian press dated back to 1859, when in Abeokuta Reverend Henry Townsend released *IweIroyin fun AwonAraEgbaati Yoruba* (The Newspaper for the Egbas and Yorubas). The newspaper was the first to be published in what is now known as Nigeria. It was a bilingual newspaper since it was published both in Yoruba and English. This newspaper spearheaded the attack on slavery.

Another major headway, to but a mention few, which has been recorded by the Yoruba language, and which bears significance for its standardization and orthography, is in the area of experimentation for formal pedagogy.

But the same has not been the case for Hausa and especially the Igbo Language. Furthermore, apart from the newspapers, there continues to be an appalling dearth of literature in these major minority languages.

Textbooks are important tools to effective teaching and learning of Nigerian languages. The major challenge that the teaching of Nigerian languages and the use of these languages as medium of instruction face is the developing of adequate books. Textbooks for the teaching of many Nigerian languages are lacking, thereby making it difficult for these languages to be well taught and learned. There is dearth of text books written in Nigerian languages which will be used for the teaching of other subjects in Mother Tongue medium at early childhood, pre-primary and early primary education. There is need for Primers, supplementary readers, charts, dictionaries, maps, workbook, and manuals to be developed in Nigerian languages.

The teaching and usage of Nigerian languages is dependent upon the standardization of the languages to be taught, or used as well as the availability of relevant data. Language standard or level of development is measured based on the existence of orthography; meta-language; glossaries of technical terms (in science, mathematics, technology and humanities), and legislative/administrative terminologies. The orthographies of many languages in Nigeria are yet to be developed. The registers or terms to be used in teaching many of the languages (called meta-language) have not been developed. The technical terms to be used in the teaching of other subjects in the Mother Tongue, for effective communication in the media and conduct of other activities in the so called national domains, have not been fully and formally developed. The legislative and administrative terms to be used in many Nigerian languages have not been developed.

However, to face the challenges of language standardization and to ensure effective teaching and usage of Nigerian languages, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has developed orthographies of 35 Nigerian Languages. It has also collaborated with the Rivers State government under the Rivers Readers Project to provide orthographies of 14 indigenous languages. It also produced terms on primary science and mathematics for 9 network languages in Nigeria, which are now due for review in line with the Basic Education Curriculum. The meta-languages of the 9 Network languages in Nigeria have also been developed by the NERDC. A quadric lingual glossary of legislative terms in English, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba has also been developed. Equivalent basic expressions for use by tourists and learners in English, French, Arabic, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have been developed and are now in press. In the area of language research, the NERDC has completed the sociolinguistic survey of Nigerian languages that gives names, number and location of languages in Nigeria and data on several language issues (GodswillObioma, 2011).

The progress recorded by NERDC on language standardization needs to be complemented. Linguists, language educators, specialists in various fields, communities, publishers, non-governmental organizations and international agencies can play very important roles in the development of language so that there will be a raise in the standard of languages in Nigeria. Areas of interventions need to be identified. Equally convincing proposals need to be generated by experts and agencies that will attract funding from donor and specialized agencies.

### **Nigeria Educational Policy on Language Literacy**

It is commonly known that Nigeria as a nation does not have a well-articulated and explicit documented national language policy in education. In the year 2010, a committee was inaugurated for the development of a national language policy. Members of the committee who are professionals in languages, promised to come up with a language policy that will bring about a rapid development of the country. The committee promised to work out a language policy in the expiration of three months but have not being able to get a well-documented language policy for Nigeria.

### **The Role of Indigenous Language in Development**

It is no longer tenable to posit that the use of English language as the Official Language [OL] of Nigeria has solved the problems of equal access to knowledge, divisiveness and grounding poverty and underdevelopment (Attahiru). Conversely, it can be argued that English as OL and medium of instruction in schools has become a formidable and impenetrable barrier to access to knowledge and information to a great part of the Nigerian society by ostracizing the languages of the environment and disengaging them from the business of education. This singular act of omission goes a long way in effectively undermining and stunting the growth and development of all the languages of the environment to a level of near incapacitation. The spiral effect of prioritizing exoglossic languages against the languages of the environment is unmistakable: No Nigerian society

has ever acculturated modern knowledge to its cultural and environmental context. Even to the south west that prides itself with producing the largest number of professors on the African continent, knowledge remains an imported foreign commodity accessible to only those that are baptized with the English language. What is troubling, however, is the meek acceptance of the status-quo as ideal and sufficient for our educational and developmental need.

The choice of English language is based on its function in Nigeria and abroad. It is Nigeria's lingua Franca (official language) used for various national functions. It is used in multi-lingual settings for instance, in Nigeria, where there are over 500 languages. The reason for placing it first is because it is the mainstream language for education. The essence of a medium of instruction is to disseminate the desired knowledge to learners thereby preparing them for long life education (Federal Ministry of Education, 1988).

Mother tongue is the language, which a person acquires in early years and which normally becomes his/her natural instrument of thoughts and communication (UNESCO, 1969). Realizing the importance of mother tongue in the education of the primary school child, the National policy on Education (2004) states the general objectives of primary education as "the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and in pursuance of this objective, Government will see to it that medium the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage English (p.8).

The primary level of education is the most important level of education. This is because the quality of other levels of education-secondary and tertiary-is determined by the quality of primary education. Adeyemi (2003) is of the view that most problems manifesting at later stages of education have their root in the primary educational practices. It could be inferred from the foregoing that there is a direct relationship between the qualities of education.

It is a matter of regret however, that in spite of the importance and the strategic position of primary level of education, performance of pupils in core school subjects is nothing to write home about in the view of Aderemi (2004), the crop of pupils in public primary schools in Nigeria today is far from being comparable to that of two decades ago. This is because of the limitation imposed on the learners by the medium of English language in the course of instruction. Adeyemo (2008) declares that the average Nigeria child in public primary schools come in contact with English language for the first time in school. The implication of this is that knowledge of the content of the curriculum that is 'foreign' to learners is processed in a foreign language to him which is English. It should therefore be expected that pupils' quality and quantity of learning would be below expected standard. The alternative available to the teacher is to use a mother tongue in the teaching/learning process.

However, the common denominator of mother tongues in Nigeria today is inadequacy of materials as well as lack of teachers. Olaoye (2007) observes that even though the National Policy on Education prescribes that the language of instruction up to primary three should be language of immediate community; and that at secondary school, a Nigerian language be offered by the students, the inadequacy of teachers and materials constitutes a serious constraint to the implementation of this policy.

The use of English as a medium of instruction has posed many difficulties to pupils at primary school especially in the interpretation of questions posed by teachers and giving appropriate responses.

Research reports and feelers from Osun States Ministry of Education paint a dismal picture of primary pupils' performance in English at the common entrance examination and indicate that they account for low transition rate of public primary school pupils from primary school to secondary school on yearly bases. The result of the common entrance in Osun State from 2001 to 2006 in the table below confirms these claims.

### **A Summary of the Statistics of Performance of Pupils in Common Entrance from 2001 – 2006**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Total Enrolment</b>	<b>Total Sat</b>	<b>Total Absent</b>	<b>Total Pass</b>	<b>Total Fail</b>
2001	English Language	1889	1794 (95.0%)	95 (95.0%)	1000 (53.0%)	794 (42.0%)
2002		2999	2155 (93.7%)	144 (6.3%)	1105 (48.1%)	1050 (45.7%)
2003		2679	2488 (92.9%)	191 (7.1%)	1486 (55.5%)	1002 (37.4%)
2004		2489	2281 (91.6%)	208 (8.4%)	1281 (51.5%)	1000 (40.2%)
2005		2917	2799 (96.0%)	118 (4.0%)	1789 (61.3%)	1010 (34.6%)
2006		4085	3950 (96.7%)	135 (3.3%)	2050 (50.2%)	1900 (46.5%)
2001	Mathematics	1889	1794 (95.0%)	95 (95.0%)	1078 (57.0%)	811 (43.0%)
2002		2999	2155 (93.7%)	144 (6.3%)	1188 (51.7%)	1111 (48.3%)
2003		2679	2488 (92.9%)	191 (7.1%)	1379 (51.5%)	1300 (48.5%)
2004		2489	2281 (91.6%)	208 (8.4%)	1343 (54.0%)	1146 (46.0%)
2005		2917	2799 (96.0%)	118 (4.0%)	1514 (52.0%)	1403 (48.1%)
2006		4085	3950 (96.7%)	135 (3.3%)	2142 (52.4%)	1943 (47.6%)

**Source:** *Osun State Ministry of Education Examination Processing Computer Centre*

It could be observed from the table above that the percentage of failure in English Language has consistently been on the increase but for their scores in Mathematics they would not have been able to meet up the average scores for admission requirements. Scholars have attributed this ugly trend to the problem of medium of instruction in public primary school. Adeyemi (2001) advocates the use of mother tongue medium as a way out of the problem.

It is through this mother tongue (MT) that every human being first learns to formulate and express ideas about him/her and about the world in which she/he lives. Every child is born into a cultural environment; the language is part of an expression of that environment. Ahmed SekouToure (1978) observed that:

Language constitutes the basis of a people's personality, while contributing to their creative genius... A people renouncing the use of its language are doomed to stagnation, and even to retrogress in and to disappear completely as a people.(p. 23)

Thus, the acquisition of this language is a part of the process by which a child absorbs the cultural environment, it can then be said that this language plays an important part in molding the child's early concepts. When the Mother Tongue (MT) is used the child will therefore find it difficult to grasp any new concept, which is so alien to his/her cultural environment that cannot readily find expression in his/her Mother Tongue (MT). If a foreign language belongs to a culture, very little different from his/her own, the child's chief difficulties in learning that language will be only linguistics. But if the foreign language belongs to a culture very different from child's own, then the child's learning difficulties are greatly increased; when the child's comes in contact, not only with a new language but also with new concepts (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1974).

It is no longer news in Nigeria of the poor performance of secondary school students who sit for WAEC/NECO/GCE. It has become an annual show of show as reported by Sanusi Abubakar in his Monday column of The Daily Trust Newspaper which carried more sad statics. The impact of the language factor in the massive and the near total collapse of the educational sector have not been highlighted. It has become a taboo to talk of the role of indigenous languages in the question of education and national development. We all seem to always nod in approval of the lie of the sufficiency of English language despite the statistics showing the contrary.

However we've all along been lying to ourselves and to others about the sufficiency of foreign exoglossic languages in addressing our educational and developmental problems. The truth, simply put, is that amidst all the contributing factors that led to this impasse of recurrent massive failure in examination, the language factor stands out as the most critical. Ironically it is the factor that we chose to deny. If we are not prepared to accept the fact that foreign languages cannot be sufficient for the educational needs of Nigeria, then the aspiration for a knowledge driven and modern society will remain a mirage to us. Our policy makers must therefore, of necessity, find a way of engaging and experimenting indigenous languages especially the regional Lingua Franca as languages of instruction in at least some of our schools, thereby complimenting English language which still serves as the sole vector of knowledge in the country.

### **Implications**

- Shift of over idealization of English from primary to university- bilingual medium
- The status of the indigenous language should be reviewed and student should be reviewed and students should pass one indigenous language as a requirement for admission.
- This will encourage authors and scholars to publish materials in these languages.
- At the tertiary level of education GNS COURSES should be made compulsory in the indigenous language where students will be made to study Nigerian Languages such that they should be proficient in their own language this will boost their efficiency in their own language. This will help in perpetuating their culture.

### **Prospects**

- Better teaching learning in indigenous language Ife project, Akinbote, Amao, river reader project.

- More active involvement of student in teaching learning project.
- Promoting the culture of the language.

### **Problems**

- Absence of teachers who are proficient in the language and can use it to teach.
- Negative Attitude of parents towards educating their wards in indigenous language (Emersion).
- Many languages are not committed to writing.
- The failure of Nigeria Languages Centre.
- Over idealization of English language in all facets of our national life.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the effective usage of English and its influence on English language examination among L2 learners in the formal school by conducting a case study of selected secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. It proceeded from two basic assumptions, namely: that students who speak English more effectively perform better in English language examinations than those who speak English less effectively, and that students from Private secondary schools in Nigeria generally speak English more effectively than their counterparts from the Public secondary schools. The 2009–2012 SSCE O'Level English results of two secondary schools from the study area, one Private and one Public were thus analysed to answer the study's major research questions. Relevant literature was reviewed to create adequate theoretical background for the study, and in addition, during the analysis, several tables detailing the distribution and behavior of data were presented to illustrate and buttress the analysis. It is to be noted that existing and current literature on students' academic performance in English language especially is

replete with reports of progressively falling standards of learner outcomes, both in the aspects of poor grades and oral-cum-written communicative competence. This undesirable trend calls to question both the existing methods of ESL pedagogy across schools in the country, as well as the efficacy of standardized English examinations and assessments (such as WAEC and NECO) being the true test of English language fluency, competence, proficiency or effective usage in Nigeria. Based on the above findings therefore, it is the recommendation of this study that English language examinations and tests, as well as the English language curriculum in Nigeria, should be reappraised and revamped such that, particular emphasis is now laid on the teaching, learning and testing of fluency and effective practical usage of the English language. The present researcher stands with others in sharing the view that, test and exam items (i.e. questions) which assess learners on aspects not closely relevant for practical competence and fluency in the everyday usage of the language should mostly be absented from the pages of the question-papers (as well as from the English school-curriculum in the first place), since these aspects take up considerable portions in the standard assessment of the learners yearly, and in the outcomes obtained there from. The study further recommends that new methods better adapted to the pedagogy of practical oral and written English competence should be designed among teachers of English as a matter of urgency, both in Nigeria and in other places where English is learnt as a Second Language.

### **The Federal Government and Her Agencies**

- 1) In spite of politics and politicians and very strong interest groups, multilingualism should continue as the (national) policy on languages.
- 2) The NERDC should be further encouraged with funds and other necessary materials and cooperation to continue. It should also be given more enabling power to become the think-talk and research and co-ordination centre for language education in Nigeria.

- 3) The NERDC should be seen to be taking its assignments in the languages' areas more seriously. It should be directed and funded to develop more orthographies, curricula and relevant text materials especially in the non-major Nigerian languages.
- 4) The NTI does not enjoy the same autonomy of action as the NERDC, following the fact that it is a teacher's outfit and its involvement in the NCE; it could be given special directives to perform certain tasks which could expedite the production of language teachers and relevant textual materials.
- 5) A network of Federal and State Inspectors of Education competent in linguistics and languages should be posted to the States and local governments to monitor the teaching and use of languages. The situation as of now is far from being encouraging or satisfactory.
- 6) Federal Radio and Television should be mobilized to effectively teach and popularize languages in the media.

### **The States**

1. There must be committed state involvement and responsibility in implementing the policy. In this regard the National Council on Education should direct all states, especially the multilingual ones to identify the distinct languages in their areas and evolve their own language policies for them within the framework of the NPE. Having identified the distinct languages in the states, the states should then establish the modalities for:
  - i. training teachers in these languages;
  - ii. developing the languages from oral to literacy;
  - iii. designing orthographies and other textual materials necessary for the effective teaching and learning of these languages as school subjects;

- iv. evolving evaluation examination materials for their use in the primary, JSS and later SSS;
  - v. generating and sustaining interest in these languages in the primary schools and JSS.
- (2) The States should co-operate fully with the Federal Government in sponsoring knowledgeable persons to meetings where matters concerning languages are discussed.
  - (3) A Language Unit should be established in every Ministry of Education to handle all matters dealing with languages. This unit should be manned by specialists in language, linguistics or language education. Language and linguistics are highly specialized fields and not everyone is competent to be in these areas.
  - (4) The States should develop orthographies and literacy materials in all languages in their areas.
  - (5) The States should also set up special post-primary language schools to complement the efforts of the Federal Government for French and Arabic.
  - (6) State Radios and Television should, as a matter of policy feature the languages of their locality.
  - (7) State Newspapers should have, for a start, monthly publications as a matter of policy, in the major languages of the State. The point needs to be emphasized that with goodwill and understanding, State Ministries of Education, Information and Culture working in full co-operation and consultation with Colleges of Education in their states, whether Federal or State, and using the reservoir of expertise available in the universities, NERDC, NCCE, WAEC, they can achieve very much with very little and within a very short time.

### **The Linguist**

- 1) Linguists and language educators in Nigeria should be more forth-coming, by striking a patriotic, nationalistic mean of linguistic relevance between esoteric and exoteric research. Bamgbose (1982:4) made this point forcefully thus: "More than ever before, there is need for greater dialogue between policy - makers and scholars of language. Perhaps (linguists) should no longer fold (their) hands waiting for the letter of invitation from the Ministry of Education. It may never come. Linguists should bombard the Ministry with proposals and memoranda, and organize symposia to which policy makers should be invited; for no matter how valuable (their) research and ideas, they will remain library and classrooms materials unless they find their way into policy formulation and implementation.
- 2) Linguists in theoretical, applied linguistics, socio-linguistics and in languages should produce texts that are not only relevant but are also couched in easily digestible forms.
- 3) Linguists should be less standoffish and close ranks with their respective language associations and give their expertise, when needed.
- 4) Linguists and language educators should have more opportunities for the exchange of notes and ideas, through seminars, conferences, workshops, etc.

### **The Language Associations**

- 1) Where these do not exist, they should be formed. For they can, with or without government backing or even recognition, do enormous good for their languages.
- 2) Where they are dormant they should be reactivated.
- 3) Where they exist, they should be aggressive when the occasion calls for it, they should embarrass government and

ministry officials and act as watch-dogs and partners in progress with government and government agencies in the overall interests of their languages and their groups.

- 4) They should fortify their ranks with indigenous linguists and tap their expertise to the maximum.
- 5) Leaders, officers and interest groups in these associations should always act in the best interest of the ethnic group and of the nation.
- 6) They should adopt more academic postures.

### **The Nigerians Themselves**

Formal education in Nigerian language, Aku (Yoruba) began way back in 1831. Yet, up to now not much progress appears to have been made in education in Nigerian languages, irrespective of the 1926 Education Edict of the Colonial Government, and the many noble sentiments of indigenous Federal and State Governments and valiant activities of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria. Okon (1982) and Bamgbose (1982) have correctly identified the many barriers, which militate against effective education in West African languages in general and Nigerian languages in particular.

One of the concrete examples of the "barriers" is the assumption held on to with fanatical tenacity that literacy is the ability to speak and/or write English. This fallacy is strongest among the Southern Nigerian elite. If after over 200 years of English in Nigeria less than 20% of Nigerians are able to speak and/or write some forms of English, we should begin to see our folly and learn to embrace our indigenous languages in its totality.

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