



The Effect of Language Policy on the Teaching of Hausa

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ABSTRACT

Issues relating to language in Nigeria have been politicized to the extent that the educational sector is finding it extremely difficult to work towards the realization of the objectives of the national language policy. In several quarters, there have been outright demonstrations of psychological dissatisfaction with the language formula and criticisms of various kinds about the inadequacy of the policy. This study examines, through the teaching of Hausa, the extent to which the objectives of the national language policy have been realized. Three hundred male and female students drawn from six selected secondary schools within the Calabar Municipality constituted the subjects of the study. Using appropriate test statistics, the responses of those students who study Hausa were compared with the responses of those students who do not study Hausa. The findings show that the current national language policy in Nigeria has outlined its usefulness. A viable national language policy is recommended.

INTRODUCTION

In most countries of the world today, there are series of issues bordering on the socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political lives of the citizens. A number of these problems have been created by the colonial masters. With the conquest and subsequent occupation of many regions in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the later parts of the nineteenth century, a lot of European impact was felt by the natives who reacted simultaneously to free themselves from the colonial bondage. Shortly after independence, these countries were confronted with problems of a new kind, fundamental problems of nation building. One of the ways to address these problems was to look inward with a view to formulating viable policies that would lead to national progress. Nigeria, with its numerous problems, has in the process of trying to achieve these developmental objectives, formulated a number of public policies. One of such policies is the National language policy. In the present circumstance,

The Effect of Language Policy on the Teaching of Hausa

the policy which is an integral part of the national policy on Education is viewed as a policy that falls short of the expectations of the majority of Nigerians. In several quarters, there have been outright demonstrations of psychological dissatisfaction with the language formula and criticisms of various kinds about the inadequacy of the policy. The heterogeneous nature of the Nigerian society is what is particularly responsible for this controversy. As a multilingual society, Nigeria is made up of several linguistic communities. The Nigerian Child is even aware of this fact. Expressing his opinion on the state of the nation in *Newswatch* magazine issue of October 9, 1989, Dunni Koya, a ten year old school child has said that:

In Nigeria we speak too many languages. Somebody from the North cannot understand what the person from the south is saying. This is bad.

The linguistic situation as it were in Nigeria is a source of problem for Nigerians. A problem of this nature is worthy of investigation. Records have shown that more than three hundred (300) languages are spoken among various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Hansford *et al* (1976) for instance, have estimated the number of languages spoken in Nigeria to be four hundred (400). It is believed by most Nigerian linguists that the figure may be higher, if intelligibility and other practical indices for delimiting language boundaries are used.

Of the numerous languages spoken in Nigeria, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have been given official recognition as 'Majority' languages at the expense of the others referred to as 'Minority' languages. This fact is contained in section 51, part 8 of the defunct 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The National Policy on Education (1981:9) makes this point very clear and the declaration tends to compound the problem".

In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and as a means of preserving the people's culture, the government considers it to be of interest to national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. This study therefore, is intended to ascertain the extent to which these broad national objectives have been realized. The main purpose of this study is to investigate through the teaching of Hausa, the social inequality inherent in the National Language Policy as perceived by speakers of the minority languages in the Calabar Municipality, Cross River State of Nigeria.

Assumptions of the study

This study is based on the following assumptions, as found in the National Language Policy:

Samuel Agada Obute

1. The teaching of Hausa in Nigeria encourages national unity
2. The teaching of Hausa arouses national consciousness
3. The teaching of Hausa will satisfy Nigeria's need for a national language.

Research Questions

The following four (4) research questions have been used to guide the investigation:

1. Will the level of commitment to national unity in students who study Hausa differ significantly from the level of commitment in students who do not study Hausa?
2. Will the degree of national consciousness in students who study Hausa differ significantly from the degree of national consciousness in students who do not study Hausa?
3. Will the attitude of students towards Hausa as a national language differ significantly between students who study Hausa and those students who do not study Hausa?
4. Will students who study Hausa have less ethnic prejudice than students who do not study Hausa?

Hypotheses

Four (4) hypotheses formulated to aid the scholar provide some of the answers to the research questions are stated below:

1. The hypotheses are stated in both their null and alternative forms.
2. The level of commitment to national unity in students who study Hausa will not differ significantly from the level of commitment in students who do not.
3. The degree of national consciousness in students who study Hausa will not differ significantly from the degree of national consciousness in students who do not.
4. The attitude of students towards Hausa as a national language will not differ significantly between those students who study Hausa and those who do not.
5. Students who study Hausa will not have less ethnic prejudice than students who do not study Hausa.

Alternative Hypothesis

1. The level of commitment to national unity in students who study Hausa will differ significantly from the level of commitment in students who do not.
2. The degree of national consciousness in students who study Hausa will differ significantly from the degree of national

The Effect of Language Policy on the Teaching of Hausa

- consciousness in students who study Hausa and those who do not.
3. Students who study Hausa will have less ethnic prejudice than students who do not.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HAUSA SPEAKING PEOPLE

The Hausa speaking people can be said to form the bulk of the people inhabiting Nigeria's most Northern states with concentration in Kano, Kaduna and Sokoto states. It must be noted that in common with other people of the Sudan, it is difficult to trace the true origin of the Hausa people, even though many attempts have been made by historians to explain through traditions, their origin. By about 635 A.D., in Kano, the capital of an Hausa city state, there existed a flourishing sedentary community. Most traditions have ascribed the origin of the Hausa states to the marriage of an old legendary hero, a certain Bayajida, prince of Baghdad, to a certain pre-historic queen of Daura and their off-springs are said to have founded the authentic seven Hausa states, known as Hausa Bakwai. Going by the various tradition, especially of the above legend, the founders of the seven Hausa states were all direct descendants of Bayajidda. Biram, the son of Bayajidda by a certain princess of Borno is said to have founded a ruling dynasty, while Bawa, a son from the co-habitation of Bayajidda and the famous queen of Daura, is said to have resulted in fathering the founders of the remaining dynasties. By all means, the source of information on the origin of the said city states is limited as history can only talk much on few of the city states, namely; Gobir, Daura, Zazzau, Katsina and Kano.

It is interesting to note that besides the legend pertaining to the original authentic Hausa Bakwai, there is another tradition that tries to explain the origin of the so-called unauthentic seven Hausa states, popularly known as Banza Bakwai. The seven unauthentic Hausa states include: Zamfara, Kebbi, Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Yoruba and Kwararafa. Six dialects developed in the various areas of Hausa land are known to exist, the six dialects are Sakkwatanci, Gobirci, Kananci, Katsinanci and Zazzaganci. As the name suggests, the dialect Sakkwatanci has its origin in Sokoto. The rest of the dialects are traceable to Gobir, Adrar, Kano, Katsina and Zaria or Zazzau. Religion plays an important role in the lifestyle of the Hausa people. Islam is the dominant religion practised by them and they are greatly influenced by the norms and principles of Islam in their behavioural pattern. Whatever interpretation one might give the Hausa speaking people, they are and can be found all over Nigeria practising one profession or another and thereby, spreading their language and by extension, their culture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Design of the Study

This study was designed to elicit information from students in selected secondary schools in the Calabar Municipality. One hundred and forty one male (141) and one hundred and fifty-nine (159) female students drawn from six secondary schools in the Calabar Municipality constituted the subjects of this study. The six secondary schools earmarked for the study run the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary school (SSS) programmes. The schools include: Federal Government Girl's College, Calabar, Holy Child Secondary School, Calabar, Hope Waddel Training Institution, Calabar, St. Patrick's College, Calabar, Teachers' Training College, Calabar and Duke Town Secondary School, Calabar. The choice of these schools is informed by the fact that they have recorded high academic achievement and popularity among other secondary schools in the Municipality. Proximity to source of information also accounted for the choice. The choice of students in the JSS 3 class was based on the consideration that they were more mature than those ones in the JSS1 and JSS2 classes and therefore, more reliable. The choice of the SS 2 class was done arbitrarily. The overriding factor however, was the desire to ensure a fair and unbiased judgment. Fifty (50) students drawn from both the JSS 3 and SS2 classes in each of the selected secondary schools were used as sample for the study. Shown below is a table indicating the distribution of the study sample across school and sex.

Table 1: Number of informants across school and sex.

	School	Male	Female	Total
A	FGGC	-	50	50
B	HCSS	-	50	50
C	HWTI	50	-	50
D	SPC	50	-	50
E	TTC	19	31	50
F	DTSS	22	28	50
Total	6	141	159	300

Instrumentation

To facilitate the process of data collection, a data inventory was developed and used for the study. Information contained in it include; name of school, name of student, class, session, age, sex and date. This was followed by instructions on how the respondents should respond to the items shown in the various sections of the questionnaire. Altogether, there were three sections – A, B, C, Section A had to do with area of study. No response was required in this section. Section B dwelt on the respondents' level of commitment to national unity. Section C was meant to test the attitude of students towards Hausa, while section D focused on the degree of ethnic prejudice. Ten items

The Effect of Language Policy on the Teaching of Hausa

were listed in each of the four sections (B-D) in order to generate the desired response from the respondents. A four likert type scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD) was provided for the respondents to indicate their responses depending on their degree of agreement or disagreement with each item. A respondent was required to respond to one and only one item at a time.

The t-test and the chi-square (χ^2) were used to analyze the data. The t-test was used to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 in order to determine whether or not significant mean differences exist between the two sampled groups of students studied. To determine the degree of ethnic prejudice that exists between the two sample groups of students, the chi-square (χ^2) test was used to test hypothesis 4 in its null (H_0) and alternative (H_1) forms. The hypotheses were all tested at the 0.05% level of significance ($p < 0.05$)

RESULTS

Shown below is the summary of the data obtained in the course of the study. The data is illustrated in table form.

Table 2: The Means, Standard Deviations and the Variables of the Study.

Variables distributed Across the Groups		\bar{X}	Sd	N
Students who study Hausa				
1	Level of commitment to national unity	18.87	3.74	50
2	Degree of national consciousness	25.3	2.66	50
3	Attitude towards Hausa	23.84	4.57	50
4	Ethnic prejudice	23.26	6.30	50
Students who do not study Hausa				
1	Level of commitment to national unity	20.0	8.30	244
2	Degree of national consciousness	27.39	3.84	244
3	Attitude towards Hausa	17.32	3.74	244
4	Ethnic prejudice	28.40	2.70	244

On the basis of the above data, the four hypotheses formulated and expressed in both null and alternative forms were tested for statistical relevance.

Hypothesis 1

This hypothesis was analyzed and the details of the analysis can be seen in the table that follows:

Table 3: Showing the Mean, Standard Deviation, 't' computed and critical values for the two groups: N = 294.

Level of Commitment to National Unity	\bar{X}	S.D	t.cal	T,crit	N	Result
Students who study Hausa	18.87	3.24	17.12	1.96	50	Significant
Students who do not study Hausa	20.07	8.30			2.44	

Samuel Agada Obute

The result of the test is significant since t_{obt} is greater than t_{crit} . Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative upheld, indicating that those students who study Hausa differ in their levels of commitment to national unity from those who do not study Hausa. The level of commitment to national unity in those students who do not study Hausa is more pronounced since \bar{X} ; 20.07 is greater than \bar{X} ; 18.87

Hypothesis 2

This hypothesis was also analyzed and the details of the analysis are contained in the next table.

Table 4: Showing the Mean, Standard Deviation, ‘t’ computed and critical values for the two sampled group N = 294.

Degree of National consciousness	\bar{X}	S.D	t.cal	T,crit	N	Result
Students who study Hausa	25.3	2.66	3.68	1.96	50	Significant
Students who do not study Hausa	27.39	3.84			244	

The result of this test is statistically significant because t_{obt} ; 3.68 is greater than t_{crit} ; 1.96. based on this analysis, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative accepted. This means that the degree of national consciousness in students who study Hausa differs significantly from the degree of national consciousness in students who do not study Hausa. As we can see, students who do not study Hausa tend to score slightly higher (\bar{X} ; 27.39) than those students who study Hausa (\bar{X} 25.3).

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 was also subjected to empirical testing. Details of the analysis are presented in the table below:

Table 5: Showing the Means, Standard Deviation, ‘t’ computed and critical values for the two sampled groups N = 294.

Attitude of Students	\bar{X}	S.D	t.cal	T,crit	N	Result
Students who study Hausa	23.84	4.57			50	Significant
Attitude of Students who do not study Hausa	20.07	8.30			244	

The result of the above analysis shows that the mean score of those who study Hausa is greater than that of those who do not in terms of attitude towards Hausa as a national language. This implies that a significant

The Effect of Language Policy on the Teaching of Hausa

difference exists in attitude towards Hausa as a national language between the two sampled groups (\bar{X} ; 23.84: \bar{X} ; 17.32).

Hypothesis 4

The analysis of hypothesis 4 is presented in form of table as shown in table 6.

Table 6: showing the distribution of Ethnic prejudice between the two groups of students (N=294) in a 2 x 2 contingency table.

	Groups		Total
	I	II	
	Students who study Hausa	Students who do not study it	
High	25	91	116
Low	25	153	178
Total	50	244	294
	f_o	f_e	
	25	19.72	$X^2_{obt} = 5.25$
	91	96.27	$x^2_{crit} = 3.84$
	25	30.28	$df = 1$
	103	174.43	$P < 0.05$

The analysis of this hypothesis shows that x^2_{obt} (ie 5.23 is greater than x^2_{crit} ; 3.84) therefore, the result is significant. That is to say that students who study Hausa have less ethnic prejudice than students who do not study Hausa. This agrees with the mean differences observed in the two groups in terms of ethnic prejudice (\bar{X} ; 28.40 as against \bar{X} ; 23.26). Based on this, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative upheld.

SUMMARY

Based on the analysis of data and the interpretation given in each case, we can summarize the result of the investigation as follows:

1. That, there is significant difference in levels of commitment to national unity between students who study Hausa and those students who do not study Hausa.
2. That, students who study Hausa and students who do not study Hausa differ significantly in their levels of commitment to national consciousness.
3. That, students who study Hausa and those students who do not study Hausa differ Significantly in their attitudes towards Hausa as a national language.
4. That, those students who study Hausa have less ethnic prejudice than those who do not.

CONCLUSION

The relevant aspects of culture that are usually transmitted from one generation to another are often expressed in terms of needs. Needs are those pressing problems which any given society experiences at any given time and which must be solved if that society is to make progress. It is one thing to identify needs and another thing to meet those needs. The success or failure of any policy programme depends on the type of system selected to administer such a policy. A policy poorly designed and formulated as a result of inadequate problem definition offers little or nothing to its beneficiaries even if it is properly administered. The current national language policy can be said to be practically unworkable and unacceptable to the Nigerian child in the school system because of its attendant problems. In a situation where only a handful of individuals meet to deliberate on the future of a larger society such as Nigeria, a number of important items are bound to be ignored. The policy maker did not at the time of formulation; take enough time to consider the heterogeneous nature of the Nigerian society, the cultural background of the Nigerian child and its implication for him when faced with learning experiences in school.

As this study has shown, the objectives of the Nigerian National Language Policy have been explained away. The much-talked about national unity which forms the bedrock of the policy has given way to hatred, tribalism and ethnic rivalry. What obtains is unequal opportunities for all; an indication that something is wrong somewhere. There is therefore, the need for an in-house-cleaning; a need for a redefinition of the role of language in the education of the Nigerian child. A viable national language policy is what Nigeria needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcome of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

Establishment of Rural Press

Government should establish a rural-based press that is capable of disseminating relevant information on language matters to the bulk of illiterate poor masses who, because of their disadvantaged position, are cut-off the various communication networks. This kind of press must have a clear perception of the rural people. Such a press should be able to reflect what urban dwellers and particularly, policy makers think of them and how they perceive themselves and their conditions. Government, through this kind of press, should make the rural populace aware of the prevailing linguistic problems and suggest method by which the people at the grassroots level can contribute meaningfully to a debate on such language-related matters. From

The Effect of Language Policy on the Teaching of Hausa

time to time, a campaign should be organized via the press to conscientize the people on the importance and judicious use of human language. This will help to minimize the incidence of mutual suspicion among the diverse ethnic groups in their respective speech communities.

Democratization of the Implementation Process

If Nigeria requires a language policy that should stand the test of time, it is necessary to democratize the implementation process. Most of the problems associated with the current policy on language in Nigeria will be reduced if a good number of people representing the various and linguistic groups in Nigeria are allowed to participate in the decision making process. This approach will ensure that the interests and aspirations of the diverse ethnic and linguistic communities are reflected in the aims and objectives of the policy that will be formulated. Prior to this kind of debate, a nation-wide-campaign should be embarked upon by government to enlighten the people on the need for a national language policy and to seek their opinion on the composition of the policy making body. This is to ensure adequate representation. This is where the rural press becomes most effective. The services of the National Orientation Agency can also be useful in this regard. If Nigerians are made conscious of their countries' socio-economic and political realities, they will be prepared to explore ways and means of solving their linguistic problems democratically. All that is required is for individual citizens to identify with national goals. Indians were able to surmount their national language crisis only when they realized that there was need to come together as one.

Adequate Supervision in Schools

Steps should be taken to monitor language-related activities in schools. A developmental approach to language learning should be encouraged among students. Occasional workshops could be organized during which intellectual discussion on the role of language in the teaching of other subjects would be held. Students should be made to take an active part in this sort of discussions that they can have a diversified view of the role of language in the learning process. This kind of intellectual discussion will lead to a cross-breeding of ideas between teachers and learners and provide avenues for mutual understanding between the two. In this way, students and teachers will be able to tolerate one another and see themselves as partners in progress.

In addition, a special task force on implementation of a policy on language should be set up in every school. Teachers in their respective schools should be encouraged to form committees that would carryout practical details of policy formulation. Such policies when formulated could be experimented upon and adopted if found suitable. Functions should be decentralized. When there is an observed tendency to deviate from course,

supervisors could use Lindquist's control process to bring the culprits back to the right channel. Nigeria needs to conduct a national census of existing languages of all the ethnic groups. All such languages should be accorded equal recognition. No particular language or groups of languages should be discriminated against. Government should encourage the development of all Nigerian languages, irrespective of the Majority/Minority tag. The services of linguistic experts should be employed by the central authority to develop orthographies which will be used to standardize and promote Nigerian languages. To this end, government should recruit and train language teachers whose services should be backed up by adequate and sustained remuneration.

Establishment of Special School of Linguistics

Efforts should be made by the government to establish in each state capital, a school of linguistics. Such will take care of the training and manpower needs in the area of language teaching, learning and language planning. Admission into these special schools should be restricted to University graduates of Linguistics and English language. This is to ensure that on graduation, they will be able to render the best linguistic services to the teeming population of Nigerians. If all the above are experimented and are found to be unsatisfactory, Nigeria should, as a matter of principle, learn to de-emphasize issues relating to language in the constitution.

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The Effect of Language Policy on the Teaching of Hausa

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