

Languages in Nigerian education and the quest for national development

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Abstract

Many linguists and scholars have bared their minds on the language situation in Nigeria and how the country can achieve greatness through the languages existing in the country. Some have advocated, for national development, the use of our indigenous languages in the Nigerian education system beginning from the lowest to the highest level in the education system, while some feel that the language in use is not what matters. As the country has been working hard towards national development, this paper highlights the languages in Nigerian education and advocates the use of our indigenous languages if Nigeria will achieve greatness in her quest for national development. The researcher discovered that some hitherto underdeveloped countries that adopted languages other than their indigenous languages shot to limelight in development on their adoption of their teaching all the school subjects in the indigenous language(s) in their educational system. Nigeria should borrow a leaf from them and implement an elaborate language policy where Nigerian children are taught in the indigenous languages to enhance their thought processes and creativity. This way, Nigeria will, in no distant future, achieve the development and technological greatness it has sought for years.

Introduction

Education is the bedrock of development, as no nation will develop without effective and efficient education. This lends credence to the assertion by Ezeoke (2011: xiv) that, “The greatest tool to development is education...” Some Nigerian leaders seem to realise the importance of education for all Nigerians by advocating free education. “Luckily, the campaigners for free education in our history have done so well that today, although still needing to be properly implemented, the pressure for education is strong” (Ofeimun, 2017:63). Nigerian languages are the hinges on which the door of Nigerian education hangs. When Nigerian languages are not given their rightful place in education, one wonders whether Nigerian children are receiving the form of education that they must attain for them to contribute meaningfully to the overall development of the country; the form of education which Okoye (2017:64) refers to as ‘total/complete education’ (translation mine). Although some Nigerian languages are found in varying degrees in Nigerian education, many non-Nigerian languages as well find their way into the system,

each competing to have more relevance than the others. Nigerian languages are thus often sidelined in the scheme of things. This is the major concern of this paper.

Prior to the emergence of western formal education in Nigeria, where certificates are issued to successful candidates on completion of their prescribed academic work, Nigerians had engaged themselves in the education of their young through what we may call non-formal education. The society consciously engages the young in all the activities that are life-sustaining for the society. Through this process, the way of life of the society is deliberately and systematically transmitted to the young members of the society. In the words of Ugwueye (2005:19), “Parents are the principal agents that mediate values to children through teaching, preaching, punishment, reward etc.” Udechukwu (2012:26) elucidates further on non-formal or traditional education. According to her,

Traditional education is a type of education which a child receives from the family, from the parents and older siblings at home and neighbourhood, which impacts in the learner certain utilitarian features which help the individual to make a living through skill acquisition as well as creativity which produces critical, innovative, independent-minded individuals capable and willing to initiate desirable social changes.

The inculcation of the culture or way of life of the community into the child prospers the community by engendering appropriate continuity, and makes the child a true member of his community. For example, in the Igbo society, as in many other Nigerian societies, the child is taught what his society cherishes and what it abhors- the food, clothing, shelter, religion, occupation, social life, discipline, self respect and respect for the elders and, above all, language. We say ‘taught’ because the child acquires the knowledge and skills for most of these things through immersion into his society. He learns these things from his society through constant practice, formulation and execution of principles, asking questions and receiving adequate answers, receiving instruction, reward and punishment from, especially, his parents and older siblings, from his master with whom he is engaged as an apprentice and, in fact, from all the adult members of the society. Inasmuch as the society expects the child’s parents to play a prominent role in his upbringing, the society feels an obligation to train the child since, for the Igbo, ‘Nnwa bụ nnwa ọha’ i.e. ‘The child belongs to all the members of the society.’

With the advent of formal education, children are now registered in established schools to gain the relevant knowledge as mapped out in the curriculum, according to the level of education into which the child is enrolled. The school teachers and administrators train their pupils/students to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that will make the graduates of these schools to be useful to themselves and their society.

In all the aspects of training the young for his/her self actualization and the survival, propagation and development of his community, language plays a very prominent role. Hardly can much be achieved in the training of a normal child without the use of language.

In fact, language is indispensable in this regard (Okere, 2006). It is, therefore, important that we talk of the language(s) in use in the Nigerian educational system for the training of our children.

Nigerian education: Which languages?

The Nigerian formal education system is structured in a way that the child usually begins his education from the pre-primary school and goes through the primary and secondary schools and ends in the university. Immediately the child steps out of his home to begin his long journey of attaining formal education, he is confronted with not only the challenge of school subjects but also, and more critical, the challenge of the language question.

Even the adult members of the society who want to improve themselves academically by engaging in adult and mass literacy education have the same problem as the children – language problem. Although the adults already have their L1, they often find it difficult to keep afloat in their adult education centres because nobody seems to have thought of their language problem, not to talk of addressing it. Bamgbose (2006:26) gives a lucid account of the problem,

A close examination of the planning of mass literacy programmes shows scant regard for the language to be used for literacy. While it is generally agreed that a language that the illiterate adult already knows well is the best medium for literacy, it is surprising that the language medium is rarely explicitly stated nor are instructors trained with language in mind. Rather, there is heavy reliance on adult education experts, who are more at home with methodology and organization than with language.

Nigeria is a multilingual nation. Estimates as to the number of languages in Nigeria abound. For Udoh (2004:15), citing Grimes (2000), there are 505 living indigenous languages and 2 second languages. Wikipedia has it that there are 510 languages in use in the country, although the degree of use varies. Of this number, only two- English and French- are official second languages without well-defined L1 speakers. The others, apart from, may be, the Pidgin English, Arabic and Chinese, are indigenous Nigerian languages. These indigenous languages have their L1 speakers. The Nigerian Pidgin English has creolized in some parts of the country like Benin, Warri and Port-Harcourt such that it now has its L1 speakers in those areas, though they may be few in number.

As the country has numerous languages, many having small number of speakers and their use restricted to a small area of the country, and some others not being indigenous languages, it becomes pertinent that we look at the Nigerian child/adult in education with respect to his language challenge. We feel compelled to ask when we discuss language in Nigerian education- Which language(s)? Are there no provisions stating the language(s) to be employed in the training of pupils and students in Nigerian school system? Let us

examine the use of Nigerian and non-Nigerian languages in the Nigerian education system, and the provisions for their use.

Nigerian languages in education: The stand of the NPE

There is no gainsaying the fact that one understands better when he is taught in a language that he is competent and fluent in (cf. UNO Report, 1953; Gani-Ikilama, 1990; Afiesimama, 1991; Daniels, 2015). This has been proven by an experimental project carried out in Nigeria by Bamgbose (1984), as reported in Afiesimama, 1991. The project is called the Ife-Six-Year-Yoruba Primary Project (ISYYPP) where the Yoruba children who were taught all the school subjects using only their mother-tongue, the Yoruba language, performed very much better academically than their counterparts who were taught using a language other than their mother-tongue. It is a proof that somebody who hardly understands a particular language cannot learn effectively if the medium of instruction is that language he scarcely understands. The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) understands and acknowledges this. It makes provisions for the use of the mother-tongue at some early points in the educational system to make for effective and functional teaching and learning.

In its various sections, the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) points out the language policy of the country with regard to language use in education. We refer to the appropriate sections for the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels of education:

Pre-primary level: Section 2:14(c) of the NPE stipulates that the government shall

- (c) ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will
- (i) develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages, and
- (ii) produce textbooks in Nigerian languages.

What we understand from this section of the NPE is that not only will the child's mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community be principally employed in imparting knowledge to the child, the FGN pledges to develop the orthography of many Nigerian languages and also produce textbooks in them.

Primary level: The NPE in Section 4:19(e) says,

- (e) *The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject.*

This section clearly and in unequivocal terms shows the government's resolve to train the Nigerian child, from the moment he comes into the primary school to when he has stayed three years in the school, using the language the child knows. This language the child knows is the language he acquired from his environment from the moment he entered into the linguistic stage of his language acquisition up till when he acquires competence in the language at about age six years.

Secondary level: The secondary level of education is categorized into junior secondary and senior secondary, each having its own stipulation for language use. For the junior secondary, Section 5:22(d) of the NPE has part of one of its specific goals as the development and promotion of Nigerian languages. Section 5:24(a:iv-v) makes it mandatory for a junior secondary school child to take in his examination a minimum of ten subjects that must include the language of the environment, to be taught as L1; and one major Nigerian language other than the language of the environment, to be taught as L2. The foregoing shows that the child should learn the language of his environment as well as one other major Nigerian language. By this, every junior secondary school child should not only be fluent but also literate in two Nigerian languages (which must include one or more of Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) before he proceeds to the senior secondary level of his education. For language use in the senior secondary level, the NPE stipulates that every senior secondary student must learn one major Nigerian language which he takes in the examination as a core/compulsory subject. This is a way of saying that every senior secondary school student must be literate in at least one of the three major/main Nigerian languages- Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba- no matter what the child's L1 or the language of his immediate environment is.

These stipulations contained in the NPE could be said to favour Nigerian languages (cf. Obioma, 2010 in Ikekeonwu, 2011). Some others, however, are of the view that much more needs to be done for Nigerian languages (cf. Amfani, 2010). We shall come back to this shortly.

English and other non-Nigerian languages in education

The English and French languages are official languages of Nigeria. In the words of Amfani (2010:6), "The British Colonial Administration enforced English as the official language of Nigeria. During the military regime of General Sani Abacha, French was also made the second official language of Nigeria." The NPE gives English, French and Arabic a place in the curriculum of primary education (cf. Section 4). Whereas French and Arabic are to be taught as school subjects from Primary One to Six, English shall only be so from Primary One to Three; and thereafter become the medium of instruction i.e. from Primary Four to Six. By this, English is placed far above other languages in Nigerian education system as it is officially the language of instruction at the upper primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. The role accorded English in Nigeria goes beyond the education sector. In the words of Anagbogu and Eme (2000:52),

It [English] is the language used in education, government/official matters, international trade and communication, science and technology, politics, etc. In fact, the role English plays in Nigeria makes it a truism that anyone who acquires the mastery of the language has acquired the 'passport' to elitist membership.

Unfortunately, no Nigerian language has been elevated to assume the role that English assumes in Nigeria. Seeing how powerful the English language is in Nigeria, Dada, Owoye and Ojo (2015:1) call for indigenous language maintenance, "... the stage is now fully set for the establishment of a mother tongue based bilingual education in English and the mother tongue to avert any eventuality owing to the fact that English is used in practically all domains in Nigeria today."

Apart from the use of English, French and Arabic in Nigerian primary schools, Pidgin English is used as a medium of instruction in some schools, especially those in the sections of the country where the language is predominantly used or has creolized, example Benin, Warri, Sapele and Port-Harcourt. Its use is, however, unofficial and restricted to oralcy as the required textbooks are not available in the language. Most of the school children in these areas are competent in the pidgin even before they are enrolled in schools. Since the language is not officially permitted in the classroom, we see that the children, especially those who have pidgin as their L1, are academically deprived. The teachers who dare to use it are handicapped due to non availability of textbooks, but they still use it in order to help their pupils understand. In the words of Gani-Ikilama (1990:221), "Since the majority of children do not at this stage understand or speak English, some teachers, in practice, allow Pidgin in class and use it themselves to get through to the children." This way, the Pidgin English has found its way into the Nigerian education system.

Our research has shown that the Chinese government is making concerted efforts to bring the Chinese language into the Nigerian education system. China spends a lot in terms of finance, and material and human resources to actualize this dream in order to propagate the Chinese language throughout the world. For example, at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University High School, Awka, students in the Junior Secondary One and Two are taught Chinese, though they do not yet take it in their examination as a school subject. The university itself is a centre for Chinese proficiency examination and offers both Diploma and Degree Programmes in Chinese Studies.

Issues about language in education

Knowledge, they say, is power. 'Power' here comprises both political and economic power, and even more. One acquires knowledge basically through education. Imparting knowledge to learners can hardly be possible without the use of language. In the words of Ahmed, Jeje and Philipson (2015:188), "Education begins with language." This explains why language in Nigerian education must be viewed seriously. As stakeholders in the education of our children in Nigeria, we are concerned about so many issues concerning

language in education. Let us briefly touch such issues as Nigerian Language Policy, and Nigerian languages as a medium of instruction in schools.

Language policy in education in Nigeria

Language policy in education is expected to, among other things, fully specify the language(s) to be used in education and how, and map out strategies for its full and effective implementation. According to Junaidu (2008:1),

The concept of language policy generally refers to deliberate efforts by government using state apparatus to officially determine the coexistence of languages, their development and the way they are assigned functions within the state milieu so as to meet national priorities and maintain the rights of citizens to use and maintain their languages. The propelling and compelling reasons behind language policies in state, in majority of cases, is to promote official language(s) or national languages which sometimes extends to issue of lingua franca.

From the foregoing explanation of what language policy should be and aim at, one wonders whether Nigeria has a language policy in her education system. Many scholars have answered in the negative (cf. Junaidu, 2008; Amfani, 2010; Yarima, 2010). For some people, what Nigeria has are statements on language policy scattered in the constitution and the NPE without any serious commitment to the implementation of the stipulations of those statements as they concern, especially, promoting the indigenous languages and cultures in education. On the neglect by Nigerian leaders over the years to utilize the numerous Nigerian languages for the development of the country, Agbedo (2006:27) says,

The colonial language policy, which institutionalized English as the official language in Nigeria, extends to the present times because the inheritors of the colonial legacy largely ignored the need to harness the nation's rich linguistic resources as motivating spring of national development action.

The provision of the constitution that the State Houses of Assembly shall sometimes carry out their legislative business using their respective indigenous languages does not carry much element of seriousness as the Houses are to do this when they have set the machinery in place for the implementation of the provision. Is it surprising to us that so many years after the provision, most of the Houses are not yet ready or adequately prepared to legislate using the language of their immediate environment. Obiora and Mbagwu (2007) have explained that one of the major reasons for the non implementation of the constitutional provision of legislating in the indigenous languages is illiteracy in the local languages, as many Nigerians, including the elites and politicians, are illiterate in their local languages- a worrisome situation.

Nigeria is a large country, “comprising a whooping three hundred and eighty-nine (389) ethnic nationalities” (Ezeani, 2015:178). This makes it almost impossible for the language policy makers to be conversant with the language situation in the greater part of the country. In some areas of the country, the language situation is so complex that some of the language stipulations of the NPE may not be workable as they are fraught with numerous problems. Afiesimama (1991), after reviewing the language provisions of the NPE and their workability in Rivers State, a state with many small area languages and many other linguistic complexities, expresses the feeling that those NPE stipulations are either non implementable or not in the best interest of the students. She claims that it is “impossible to implement this policy in many areas in Rivers State, especially in Port Harcourt, the state capital” (p.51). For her, NPE is encumbered with many problems. She explains, “Some of the problems with the NPE as regards pronouncements on language are its evasiveness, ambiguity, its assumption that all the areas in the country are linguistically homogenous, and its rather loose wording” (p.44). She gives a few examples to buttress her claim: the pre-primary schools are run by private individuals and they are not subsidized by government. This makes them expensive and elitist and they use English which is the language of the educated elite in order to satisfy the people that patronize them; if not they may be thrown out of ‘business.’ In her words, “In fact, many patrons of the system send their children there for the sole purpose of acquiring a good grasp of the English language and government cannot pretend to be unaware of this fact” (p.45). As for the primary school, the language in use in the lower primary level depends on the classroom teacher as it seems that nobody is interested enough in the language the teacher uses as to monitor compliance with the NPE provisions.

What Afiesimama (1991) says of Port-Harcourt applies to some other parts of the country. The attitude of the three tiers of government- local, state and federal -towards the monitoring of schools to ensure the full implementation of the language provisions in the NPE and the provision of relevant materials makes some aspects of the policy to look as if they are produced to be on paper only; may be to satisfy the demands of some stake holders in education who demanded for such language provisions. No wonder Okediadi (2011:49) views NPE as a government’s way of “paying lip service through a moribund policy.”

The language provision that English be introduced at some point in the education of the Nigerian child is not strictly followed either. Some teachers can hardly speak grammatically correct English. Such teachers find it extremely difficult expressing themselves in the language. For such teachers, what the NPE says about the language to be used for the level of the primary or secondary students he is teaching does not matter. He combines the local languages and the little English he knows in his effort to impart knowledge to his students. Eme and Mbagwu (2011) aver that this is not to the advantage of either the students or the local languages.

It has been pointed out that the expected smooth transition from the use of local languages to the use of English as a medium of instruction from the senior primary level is not strictly followed in most schools in Nigeria (cf. Anagbogu and Eme, 2000). The students are not exposed enough to the English language which the nation has adopted as the language of instruction. One of the implications of this neglect is that the students do not learn English enough to lead them through their academic endeavours. As many students perform poorly in English in the WAEC annually conducted examination (see WAEC Annual Reports), it leaves no one in doubt that the students hardly understand the school subjects taught using English as the medium because of inadequate exposure to the language.

All these problems bedeviling language in education in Nigeria emanating basically from government's unconcerned attitude towards the implementation of the stipulations about language in education and their neglect of the indigenous languages explain why Yarima (2000:117) says that "Nigeria does not as yet have an explicitly stated language policy." For Junaidu (2008:5), "Candidly, there is no clear language policy in Nigeria that will conveniently accommodate the definition and concept of language policy."

Nigerian languages as a medium of instruction

Our foregoing discussion on the Nigerian language policy in education has briefly explained that the language provisions in both the NPE and the Nigerian constitution are not implemented as the government seems not to be interested in their implementation. The worst hit concerning the implementation of the language provisions are the indigenous Nigerian languages. Even the so-called major or main languages have not fared well as none of them has succeeded as the sole language of instruction in the first three years of primary education. Okediadi's (2011) research on the use of the Igbo language as the language of instruction in the pre-primary and early level of primary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State discovers, among other things, that most of the schools teach all their subjects in English. Most of the teachers she interviewed expressed their preference for teaching in English to teaching in Igbo. Also, many of the schools do not even teach Igbo as a school subject. She wonders why this is the situation and says,

This is quite surprising in view of the fact that there are monitoring sections at the respective supervising education offices, even at the local government levels. It appears the implementation of the NPE in terms of the language of instruction at the pre-primary/primary levels bother them less (p.39).

Lack of commitment by the nation's leaders concerning a well defined language policy for the nation, especially in education, stare us in the face when we observe their relegating the indigenous languages to the background either through omission or commission. For example, even the NPE language stipulations about using the language of the immediate environment as a medium of instruction in the first three years of primary education is not

implemented neither is the stipulation that the indigenous languages are to be promoted and developed. This has been viewed as an impact of colonialism (Agbedo, 2006).

Still on the impact of colonialism in the education of African children (including Nigerian children), Okere (2006) advocates indigenization of education where the indigenous languages are well developed and all academic work at all levels carried out in the local languages. He buttresses his point,

Today except in sub-Saharan Africa and colonized South America, all teaching and learning from kindergarten to university is carried on in the mother tongue. The Germans excel in learning because all their learning has been done in their native language...English as a compulsory subject [and the language of instruction in Nigerian schools] is not a help but an obstacle to learning. The mother tongue has no substitute (p.28).

Research reports and writings of many scholars have shown that Okere (2006) is completely right (see, for example, Bamgbose, 2006; Daniels, 2015). Some other scholars have, however, pointed to the impracticability of the proposal in Nigeria in the near future because of the many implications of the proposal- developing the many languages, adopting the language(s), training of adequate manpower etc. Mbagwu (2006:139), after weighing the problems and gains of adopting which language(s) in Nigerian education, summarizes thus, “In summation, the indigenous Nigerian languages could replace English in school instruction. However, they need to be developed for effective functioning as language of school instruction. Until the development is achieved, the status quo operates.”

For some Nigerians, English is so crucial not only in Nigeria but across the globe; therefore, for them, local Nigerian languages could be ignored in education while English is promoted at all levels. This kind of thinking is unfortunate, as evidence abound of countries that have broken even in all aspects of life, especially in science and technology, by using their local languages at all levels in the education system. For instance, instead of the citizens of such countries as Singapore, India, China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand and Germany to be frustrated because they cannot use English, they excel in their chosen careers, forcing the citizens of other countries to come and learn from them; and learning from them means learning their languages too.

Nigerian languages in education and national development

Nigerian citizens and her leaders have a lofty dream for the country. This dream is often expressed when they gather together to deliberate on issues pertaining to the country and her place in Africa and the world at large. Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the first executive President of Nigeria expresses this dream (Shagari, 2001:14-15),

... We want our nation to be not just a nation, but a great nation. We want our country to be peaceful, strong and prosperous. We want Nigeria to be undisputed leader in Africa, as God has endowed her with

all the ingredients for such leadership and power. We must therefore continue to contribute our quota to the building of this mighty edifice, to the envy of all other nations of Africa and to the admiration of the world.

The nation trusts and believes in her citizens for the realization of its dream. The country hopes for its overall national development on its citizens. For the Nigerian citizens to be able to fulfill the expected, they must have the pre-requisite knowledge that will give them the insight into what they are to do and how to do it. The required knowledge can hardly be gained through the use of non indigenous Nigerian languages in Nigerian education system, as is the case in Nigerian schools today.

We are of the view that for Nigeria to attain the development she dreams of, her language in education issue must be seriously addressed. There must be careful, deliberate and appropriate language planning, policy production and execution to fashion out the Nigerian language(s) to be employed in education from the pre-primary to university education. Unless Nigeria adopts her indigenous language(s) in education, her quest for development would continue to be a mirage. Many earlier researchers have said this. In the words of Okere (2006: 27),

Language is the verbalization of ideas, or ideas in words... It is in language and with language that all knowledge plays itself out. If language is the vehicle of education and knowledge, then trying to obtain education and knowledge through a foreign language is, for most people, a frustrating obstacle... It must be part of the explanation for the condition of things in black Africa.

Many countries that have adopted their indigenous language(s) in their education system from the pre-primary to university levels are better off for it, as their development status goes far beyond that of any African nation, including Nigeria. Let us borrow a leaf from such countries, like Germany, Indonesia, China, Japan, and Thailand. They recognized that their local indigenous languages cannot be done without in their national development and so they fully utilized their indigenous languages starting from their attainment of education to their application of knowledge in the manufacturing of products.

Summary and conclusion

This paper has tried to show that there is a seemingly robust education policy in the country with respect to the use of the Nigerian indigenous languages, at least at the pre-primary and early primary levels, but the truth of the matter is that the language provisions of the NPE are not implemented as stipulated. The issue at stake becomes the reality that the Nigerian students are disadvantaged in the Nigerian education system because of the non use of Nigerian languages in education. Nigeria needs a National Language Policy which will not be provisions on paper alone (like many aspects of the NPE) but a policy to

be implemented and officially supported with all the necessary material, financial and human resources.

It is difficult for a multilingual nation like Nigeria to make a serious progress in its quest for national development without a well-defined and strictly implemented National Language Policy. Many countries of the world that adopted their indigenous languages in their education system have made better progress than the African countries that are still grappling with one 'foreign' language or the other while relegating their indigenous languages to the background. Anekwe (2011:158) contends that, "Language is central to learning and to life itself..." This points to the glaring truth that no matter how easy a learning material is, if the person being taught does not have a very good grip of the language through which the material is being taught he cannot understand. Nigerian students at all levels of their education should be taught in Nigerian languages which they are familiar with as they are more likely to understand the learning material, no matter how difficult it is, if the language of instruction is their mother tongue.

Stake holders in the Nigerian educational development agenda like the government, linguists (especially language planners), educationists, publishers must be called together to fashion out a workable language policy for the country. Such a policy would ensure that its implementation will make Nigerian students in our education system to be taught using indigenous Nigerian language(s). This will culminate in making Nigeria's quest for development a reality. Nwadike (2008:47) advocates that, "We should build it [our indigenous language] into our technology (manufactures) in the same way the Japanese and Chinese are doing" since, in the words of Sekou Toure of Guinea Conakry (1978), as quoted in Nwadike (2008:48),

Language constitutes the basis of a people's personality while contributing to their creative genius... A people renouncing the use of their language is doomed to stagnation, and even to retrogression and to disappear completely as a people.

No wonder our quest for national development since after our independence many years ago seems to be an illusion. The best in us cannot be harnessed through any other language than the indigenous languages. Our using foreign languages in Nigeria should be secondary. "In other words, the use of our own mother tongues should not be compromised in the face of the languages of the colonial masters..." (Folorunso, 2016:34). Such a compromise will bring retrogression to the country, as it is a fact that "language is ... an essential tool in every sphere of human endeavour" (Iwuala and Igbeaku, 2015:96).

Although producing and implementing the kind of language policy we advocate here will take some time and a lot of planning and money, the reward of the venture in the near future is so enormous that we should be eager to work towards its realization; after all, some other multilingual nations have tried it and succeeded. We strongly believe that Nigeria will succeed if she tries. We must start our journey on this road to success and national development; and the time to start is now.

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