



An Evaluation of the Linguistic Correlate in Nigeria's Developmental Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Regrettably, language and communication are hardly accorded more than perfunctory mention when policy makers formulate policies intended to uplift standards in Nigeria. The paper attempts to sensitize policy makers and implementers to have a rethink about the position of language in the national development policies. Moving away from the traditional argument of whether endolects or exolects present better opportunities for social development, the paper argues that both are useful, as they have distinctive roles, and sometimes complimentary. The paper attempts to show how language and communication factors are implicated in the realization of the 7-point agenda and the vision 2020 programme of the Federal Government. The paper is therefore, a language-driven audit of the management of the key domains of education, healthcare and information, as they propel national development. A schema of linguistic desiderata for improvement of these domains will then be proposed.

Key words: Endolects, Exolects, Developmental Strategies, Language-driven Audit..

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has always shifted from one development policy to the other. From the mid-80's year 2000 was fixed as the "magic year". This year we are told, was going to be a year of health for all, education for all, food for all, water for all, etc. As the magic year was drawing near, vision 2010 was formulated. Six year to 2010, precisely in 2004, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) was formulated within the frame work of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which has 2015 as its target date. With well over five years to 2015, we again shifted to vision 2020. As the vision was just being internalized by Nigerians, this administration came up with 7-points agenda.

With actions or inactions of the Government, it is sometimes difficult to know whether the last two in the series(vision 2020 and the 7-point agenda) are supposed to facilitate the realization of one another, or they are

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just the same. It is important to point out that these two are not the same and must not be confused with one another. Whereas, vision 2020 was acclaimed the day the president was inaugurated, as he mentioned it that day, the 7-point agenda was formulated later. A vision is simply an image or concept in one's imagination. It is not reality, but something that could guide decisions and actions to make it work. Vision 2020, therefore, has the vision of getting Nigeria to be among one of the top twenty economies of the world by the year 2020. on the other hand, 7-point agenda is simply an attempt to fulfill campaign promises. Hear Mr. president himself: "our goal now is to build on the greatest accomplishment of the past few years. Relying on the 7-point agenda that formed the basis of our contact with voters during the recent campaigns, we will concentrate on rebuilding our physical infrastructure and human capital in order to take our country forward. We will focus on accelerating economic and other reforms in a way that makes a concrete and visible difference to the ordinary people". In the agenda, seven key sectors have been selected for special attention. These factors are Power and Energy, Food Security, and Agriculture, Wealth Creation and Employment, Mass Transportation, Land Reform, Security, Qualitative and Functional Education. At the 27th Convocation Ceremony of Bayero University, Kano(as reported in *This Day* of 1st March, 2009), the President himself stated that human capital development is the key to 7-point agenda. And, since it is a known fact that education is the bedrock of any human development, we will do a language audit in the sector and two other key sectors of healthcare delivery and the media to see if with the present position language is accorded in these sectors, the improvement of living standards of Nigerians as envisaged by the 7-point agenda and the vision 2020 is realizable.

Western Education: Past and Present

It was through serious education laws, ordinances, memoranda, reports and policies from 1872 that we are where we are today, educationally. The history of education in Nigeria is well documented(cf. Fafunwa. 1974, Fajana, 1978, etc.).Right from the beginning of the practice of western education in Nigeria, it was tailored to be useful to society. As Adeyanju(2004) reports western education, whether as presented by the missionaries or colonial governments, was very functional. It was always aimed at, either, producing evangelists and catechists in large numbers to spread Christianity or at producing clerks, artisans, agricultural assistants, court interpreters. There was emphasis on knowledge, language proficiency, reading, numeracy and the systematic acquisition of values. The emphasis on character education was essential for ensuring loyalty, discipline, law and order without which national development was not going to be possible. Even after decolonization, education was fashioned in such way that products of the various tiers of education were found to be very competent where they were to function. Today, we cannot pretend that the quality of education obtainable in the

country is the type needed to bring about national development. So many factors are responsible for this ugly situation. Baike(2002) maintains that our religious pursuit of certificate-oriented education is having a toll on our children at a very alarming rate. He continues that many parents are so much in a hurry these days to see their children come out with certificate that they do not even allow their children to complete a normal primary school education before moving onto the secondary level. The children are taxed beyond their mental capacity and some of them stand the danger of not completing secondary school education. The flow chart of the new National Policy on Education does not help matters much. If anything, the structure will not minimize the problems we are now experiencing whereby our education is heavily geared towards the acquisition of certificates

Language and Development

It is generally accepted that education is the basis of any meaningful development. Education is conceived, here to mean the process by which knowledge and life experiences including the values associated with them, each training the sensibility of the people in such a way by which knowledge and experience may be harnessed and manage to achieve, promote and advance societal objective as perceived, determined and or accepted from time to time(Fajana,1978). Education is, thus, looked at as all forms of experience geared towards the socio-cultural, economic and political improvement of an individual and society at large. It therefore, stands to reason that the languages in which education is packaged, healthcare delivery is carried out and the languages through which information is disseminated are vital in the processes of uplifting standards. The choice and use of languages in the Nigerian public domains has always remained a big problem. This is so because the Nigerian society presents a picture of linguistic checkerboard: Hanford, Bender-Samuel & Standford(1976) lists 394 languages; Crozier and Blech (192) lists 440, and Grimes (2000) puts the figure at 515. But in spite of this multiplicity of languages, a proper language planning will produce good developmental results. In the sections that follow, we will do a brief appraisal of the domains of education, healthcare delivery and the media to show how this can be done.

Language in Education

Endolects

Right from the beginning of western education, the issue of which language offers best learning opportunities has been debated. This prompted the British Colonial Administration to set up two commissions(financed by the Phelps-Stroke Foundation in 1920) to assess the quality and quantity of education given to Africans. The commission published reports criticizing the neglect of the mother tongue(MT), pointing out that the mother tongue education (MTE) for Africans is the means of giving expression of their personality,

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however, primitive they may be(cf.Awoniyi, 1976). As a follow-up to this report, the colonial administration in its Memorandum on Education in British Colonial Territories in 1925 said, among other things that the study of the educational use of vernaculars is of primary importance and qualified workers should be set aside for this purpose.

After the Second World War, the first international support for MTE emerged at the UNESCO Meeting of Specialists in 1951 (UNESCO, 1951). This meeting posited that education is best carried out in the MT, and it went ahead to recommend that pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of MT and the use of the MT be extended to as late a stage as possible. With this declaration, colonial territories increased their efforts, in varying degrees, in promoting the use of mother tongues in education(read Bamgbose for details).Even after independence, most African countries continued with this practice, despite the non-existence of definitive statements on language policy. For example, in Nigeria, the National policy on Education formulated in 1977(revised in 1989 and 1989) states that at the pre-primary level, the medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community. It continues that at the primary level, the medium of instruction for the first three years shall be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community apart from the child's MT. At the secondary level, the policy provides for a compulsory study of one Nigerian language apart from the MT. The extent to which this policy is being implemented is a subject of another research.

Linguists and language educationists have continued to advance arguments for and against that stated benefits derived from the use of endolects in education. Chumbow(1990) asserts that the MT plays an important role in molding the child's early concepts. In this respect, he maintains that language is very closely related to the mind. It is means by which we conceptualise and think, so that we normally cannot think with language. This point emphasizes the psychological importance of language to man, particularly the MT as the language first learned by the child. Poth(1990) argues that it is the MT which provides a fundamental balance which prevents stultification., and it is MT which enables a child to verbalise his thinking and fit it harmoniously into the world around, him repression of the MT is therefore, extremely harmful to the development of the child's cognitive activity., as it impairs the subsequent development of his faculties of experience in the non-mother tongue has to learn later. We are aware that these days, there many Nigerian children who have English as their MT, thereby not necessary having to grapple with the problem of transiting from an endolect to an exolect. But even at that, such children cannot be said to posses the capacity to function in English as a native speaker. This kind of argument led to the mounting of many experiments to find out which language offers the best leaning opportunities. In Nigeria, Six-Year Primary Project also known as the Ife Experiment, was carried out between 1970 and 1978(see Fafunwa, 1989 for details).

Outside Africa, there was the famous Iloilo Experiment in the Philippines, in which researchers examined the relative effectiveness of using Hiliganyan as opposed to English (cf. Bamgbose, 1999). The results of these experiments showed that the experimental group taught in the MT performed better than the control groups. It is no longer an argument of whether endolects or exolects offer best learning opportunities. What has become problematic is the sustenance of the use of the endolects and some exolects in education as successive governments in Africa have not accorded any worthy attention to language matters as they affect education.

Exolects

The foreign languages in Nigeria's educational system started as early as possible, when Latin was taught as a subject in the Secondary Schools and as a discipline (Classics) in the Universities. During this period, of the 19th century, French was taught as "extra". It was with the recommendation of the Yaounde International Conference of 1961 which recommended to all African Ministries of Education South of the Sahara to introduce their neighbour's official language in their educational curriculum, that is, French in Anglophone countries, and English in Francophone countries (Brann, 1970). As captured elsewhere (Ashipu, 2005), from 1960, inspired by this opening towards the Anglophone neighbours, as well as the new world order (after war) when French language became a world-wide movement and the benefits derived from the knowledge of the language, based on cultural and economic interests became apparent, the teaching of this language gained ground thereby supplanting Latin.

Language in Healthcare Delivery

There have been several assessments of the state of healthcare in Nigeria. Such assessments are either internal or external. But either way, they hardly present the correct situation. For instance, a year 2000 study by the World Health Organisation (WHO) of overall health system performance in 191 countries members ranked Nigeria 187th (cf. Antia and Bertin, 2004) a year 2007 study by the same organisation has shown a slight improvement: Nigeria ranks 182. In 1998, Nigeria's own Federal Ministry of Health declared that "the status of health services provision is very defective". The reason cited for this does not include the one of language and communication, but rather reasons like inadequate coverage, inequitable distribution of health resources, inadequate managerial skills, among others. The non-inclusion of the language factor here shows how very little attention is paid to the extent to which it would help to improve on the quality of health services in Nigeria as studies have shown.

Because most local languages have this problem of under-differentiation, oftentimes, what patients tell physicians they suffering from would turn out to be different, after clinical investigations. The concept of "sensitivity" and "specificity" as in medical tests, were applied to words used by patients in reporting their conditions to physician. Example, out of ten

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patients who reported to physicians, over a period of two weeks, that they had *nombu*(tetanus), only three out of these were actually found to be suffering from *tetanus*. The others were diagnosed to be suffering from either *cerebral spinal meningitis* or *lock-jaw* which present similar symptom as *tetanus*. Clearly, this situation arose as result of the fact that in Bette language universe, there are no names for *cerebral spinal meningitis* and *lock-jaw*, hence no differentiation between the three. One may argue that there are always interpreters to assist bridge the communication gap between healthcare providers and patients. But a careful analysis will raise the question of the interpretation services offered. Oftentimes, the interpreters are hospital attendants or sometimes even cleaners, who themselves do not understand and speak English as it is often the case. Chances then, are that what interpreters tell physicians may not always be correct. This shows that there is a direct correlation between quality of communication and quality of healthcare delivery: language barrier between caregiver and patient is a contributing factor to morbidity and mortality.

Language in the Media

This is the domain in which one can justifiably claim that *ondolects* are effectively used. Between the print and the electronic media, the later has the highest patronage of indigenous languages. As reported by Ladele et al (1979), the distinction between the levels of broadcasting-national, regional and local-was first made by Turner & Byron in their Broadcasting Survey of the British West African Colonies of 1948, which provided for Studio Centres in Lagos, Kaduna, Ibadan, Enugu and Kanowith broadcast from 15-30 minutes daily in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba on the national programme while the local programme from Lagos, were in Yoruba, Igbo, Edo and Hausa, programmes from Enugu were in Igbo, Ibibio, and Efik, programmes from Kaduna were in Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri, while the local programme in Kano city used Hausa and Arabic. According to Brann(1995), this arrangement was carried over by the subsequent Nigerian Broadcasting Service, from 1952. This marked the origin of the twelve network languages. The 1956 Broadcasting Corporation Ordinance(cited in Ladele, 1979) left the choice of *vernaculars* for regional transmission to the Central and Regional Boards.The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria(FRCN), established in 1979 has continued with the democratization of language use. The zonal stations in Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna broadcast in the major languages of each zone. The languages are distributed in this order:

Enugu: Igbo, Izon, Efik, and Tiv.

Ibadan: Hausa, Edo, Igala, and Urhobo

Kaduna: Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfude, and Nupe

News is read in these languages, request programmes, enlightenment programmes, discussions topical issues, etc. are also done in these languages. In a bid to get people to know about government programmes, various State Governments have set up their radio and television stations. This has

effectively widened usage sphere of the local languages, for they are only vehicles through which information on the government activities can reach the vast majority of citizens who can not understand English language. The television stations of both the state and federal government do not as much use the endolects as the radio stations. In the print media, much needs to be done to reach the masses that cannot read and understand English. In this direction, efforts should be made to publish more newspapers in the local languages. The huge success recorded in the dissemination of information through the local languages via the radio service can be seen in the general awareness that is noticeable among the citizenry.

Endolects in the face of Globalization

A discussion on the promotion of the local languages in the face of globalization is likely to engender a lot of arguments. But based on our conviction that local languages too have roles to play, we will glean over the subject with a view to convincing us that globalization must not be allowed to destroy a people's self-identity.

Globalization as a concept seeks to eliminate the state-enforced restrictions on exchanges across borders and the increasingly integrated and complex global system of production and exchange that has emerged as a result (Stiglitz, 2006). It is frequently seen in terms of increased mobility and capital, goods and labour; the formation of the transnational economic and trade blocs, inter-linkage of markets, increases information sharing across national frontiers. On the face of this, globalization can be lauded for simplifying life for people. In many academic discourses, attempts have been made to demonstrate whether it is beneficial to all humans, or it is beneficial to only a few. The position one takes is dependent on one's personal orientation, or on which side of the divide one comes from: the industrialized world or the third world. Critics of globalization view it only as the intensification of the economic, political, security, military, and social-cultural affairs of the world by the industrialized capitalism, aided and facilitated by the hegemony of the United States of America and its allies in Europe and Japan. Chomsky (2003) believes that the term globalization has simply been appropriated by the powerful to refer to a specific form of international economic integration, one based on investor rights, with the interest of people incidental. The anti-globalization movement maintains that globalization should be seen to be attending to people's rights, not private power system, as it is the case now. Other critics of globalization argue that it makes poorer countries to suffer disadvantages; the industrialized countries try to save their national markets. For example, the European Union Common Agricultural Policy subsidized their farmers, which lowers the market price for the poor farmer's crop compared to what it would have been in a free market. The critics also maintain that there is a continuous exploitation of foreign impoverished workers. Example, the multinational

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companies pay huge salaries to these impoverished workers to entice them into enduring extremely long hours, and unsafe working conditions.

Globalization to some of us, in this part of the universe, is just a new form of colonization, where the big powers seek to impose anything of theirs on us. Globalization, as envisaged by the West, the US, and their cronies, seeks to subjugate the economics, culture, and even languages of the third world countries. English is heading towards becoming the 'language of the global village'. About 35% of the world's mail, telexes, and cabals are in English. Approximately 40% of the world's radio programmes are in English, and about 50% of all internet traffic uses English. If this trend continues unchecked, sooner or later, most people will abandon their languages for the language of the global village. Most people may have no problem with this, as long as the global village language gives them what they need in life. By the way, the argument is always that the importance of a language is dependent on what one stands to get via the instrument of that language. But as linguists we are concerned with what becomes of the other languages in the face of globalization, because of the inherent benefits derived from multilingualism. For instance, it is unique tool for analyzed and diversity means intellectual diversity. Each language is a unique tool for analyzing and synthesizing the world, incorporating the knowledge and values of a speech community. 'Forgetting' about other languages, as the proponents of a global language want it, will simply imply 'forgetting' a way of constructing reality (Sapir, 1931). This implies the less variety in language, the less variety in ideas. This kind of reasoning can be likened to that of evolutionary biologists who use the Darwinian analogy. Schrock (1986) says that evolutionary biology recognize the great advantage held by species that maintain the greatest possible diversity. Disasters occurs when only one strain of wheat or corn, monolanguage' holds the same dangers as a monoculture. Because languages partition reality different, they offer different models of how the world works. He continues that there is absolutely no reason why the metaphors provided in English are superior to those of other languages.

But interestingly, globalization itself has some important linguistic correlates. For instance, Antia (2000: xvii) give us two examples of such correlates. The first has to do with trade. He says that the Manager in charge of South Asia for computer software giant, Microsoft, has admitted that because 'most India have to first to use a computer (...) the use of computers could go up tenfold if programmes were made in local languages'. This means that, had the former situation not obtained, Microsoft might have been able to reap huge profits in this potentially huge market (India). This points to the fact that, instead of fostering US hegemonies, Microsoft has to have a measure of sensitivity to local environments. In the second example, Antia (2000) tells us about how Microsoft was taken up by the President of the Icelandic Association in the United Kingdom for the company alleged refusal to localize its applications in Icelandic. Interestingly, the question was not so much one of the ability or inability of Icelanders to use applications in English as that of checking the erosion of cultural identity, in an apparent

appreciation of how business could be affected by the assertion of cultural rights, even in a country of 20,000 inhabitants, Microsoft stated its willingness to enter into localization talks with governmental authorities in Iceland, as it has done previously with Catalan and Basque governments. This is very instructive to users of minority languages.

This discussion on globalization has been deliberately made fairly elaborate so as to prove to skeptics that even with globalization, people of minority cultures can still assert their rights, as exemplified above. The problem with us, in Nigeria, can be likened to what has been described by the Somalis as *Gumeysi Maskaxeed* (Colonization of the brain, by which they mean the excessive admiration of foreign languages and cultures, even making us to believe that African languages lack the capacity to cope with the demands of fresh discourse). Even the foreign languages we pretend to be in love with, we are just focused on English, which sometime limits our capacity to function. All we need is a reorientation and the right sense of commitment. In the section that follows, we will look at how language is implicated in development.

Endolects and Exolects: A Symbiosis

The picture captured in the discussion on language use in education, in the media, and in the health sector above fits into what Brann (1979) terms mother tongue, other tongue and further tongue. By this, he means the Nigeria situation in which most people speak a mother tongue, a language of wider communication (other tongue), and an official language (further tongue) for the purpose of realizing the vision 2010, Nigeria will have to adopt a three-tier language approach: local, national, and international. The local tier will be made of all the indigenous languages; the national tier for this purpose, will be made of English and the international tier will, in this case, be made of French. As we all know, the choice and allocation of language for specific purpose must have to depend on the communicative needs for the language. In the present-day world, it is a thing of common knowledge and information that determines what rung of the social, political, and economics ladder speakers of certain languages find themselves. In this regard, the local languages will be used in disseminating information to the vast majority of Nigerians who cannot function in English. As many languages as are desirable, will have to be developed. This is what is known as the democratization of language use. English, spoken by a small percentage of Nigerians, will continue to be used for official matters and interethnic communication. And since we have not yet developed any of the local languages to serve all purposes of life, services like education, health care will, to some extent, continue to be delivered in English, with inherent disadvantages. French, which is Nigeria's pelsiolect, has not been given the desired attention so as to engender development. As has been argued elsewhere (Ianna,2007), as a matter of necessity, Nigeria needs French for economic and political development, which may, in turn, facilitate Nigeria's

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quest for the leadership position in the West- Africa sub region. For instance, as a result of its majority language status, French has become *the de facto* working language ECOWAS that is commonly used both at Executive Secretariat, incidentally, situated at Abuja, Nigeria and is used for the running of some of the Commissions of the community. The implication of this is that, the successful implementation of some of the commission's recommendations would require the services of experts with relevant and competent knowledge of French, because most at times, the commissions' proceedings are written in French.

Desiderata

The linguistic scheme we have tried to establish in this article shows that Nigeria needs, at least, three languages for proper functioning, so as to realize her dream of becoming one of the top twenty world economies. To achieve this, a lot needs to be done to modernize the many endolects. This is where the question of how many languages are to be modernized arises. Certainly, not all the languages will perform the same functions. This, therefore, means that each language will have to be modernized according to the function they are to perform. The usage of some of these languages will be restricted to the local level. Two major problems are, however, associated with language modernization are cynicism and commitment.

First, cynics believe that it is difficult to modernize African languages so as to cope with the demands of expression. But this feeling is just a product of historical constraints, in which established practices are so overwhelming that most of us think it is impossible to break away from them. But linguistically, it has been demonstrated that any language can be used to cope with the demands of expression. Pierre Alexandre, a French linguist, cited in Mazrui and Mazrui (1995:26), argues that "there is no syntactic structure African languages (...) that could seriously inhibit their development as scientific discourse". He argues further that Japanese language, for example, was developed as a language of scientific discourse in spite of syntactical difficulties seemingly more acute than might be encountered in other languages (for details of the modernization of Japanese, read Kpalan and Baldauf, Jr.1997).Second, there is always no commitment, especially on the part of government, when it comes to language matters. There is no general feeling that language matters are not urgent.

This kind of feeling persists because of the economic implication in developing these languages. Human and material resource must be generously used to develop the various languages of the country, as they are needed. We are not suggesting that there is a direct correlation between development and linguistically heterogeneous/homogenous states, but depending on how planning is done, national development is achievable through the use of many languages.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Our language- driven audit has been an attempt to highlight how language can be a major factor in uplifting the living standards of Nigerians. The choice of which language, at what time, in our opinion, is highly dependent on political, social, cultural, and economic benefits derived from the use of such languages.

As has been demonstrated in this article, local languages have their roles to play in national development, just like English and French. What remains to be done is to identify the role each will play, and who will learn which languages. More efforts and resources should be stepped up in the direction of endolects usage, so as to promote vertical dissemination of information among the citizenry. More endolects should be used in the print media. For instance, the re-branding Nigeria campaign of this administration could be packaged in as much language as it is desirable. Our discussion has also shown that language is very important factor in the success of healthcare delivery. Language should, therefore, form an integral part of the training of healthcare givers. In the same way, the democratization of language use in education cannot be overemphasized.

The question of how many languages an individual will have to learn then comes to mind. Psycholinguistic studies have shown that, depending on when an individual is exposed to language, the human brain has the capacity to contain as many languages as an individual wants to learn. This has been demonstrated in Lenneberg's Critical Hypothesis. He reports that between the age of one and twelve, a child's brain can accommodate many languages.

This, he points out, is because at this stage the brain is still pliable and moldable, and the process of learning a language is still relatively unconscious and unreflective. This means that if citizens are exposed to these languages at the early stage in life, they would have no problem learning these languages.

Since languages partition reality differently, and thus, offer different models of how the world works, it, then, naturally follows that people who speak several languages will have a better understanding of how the world works.

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