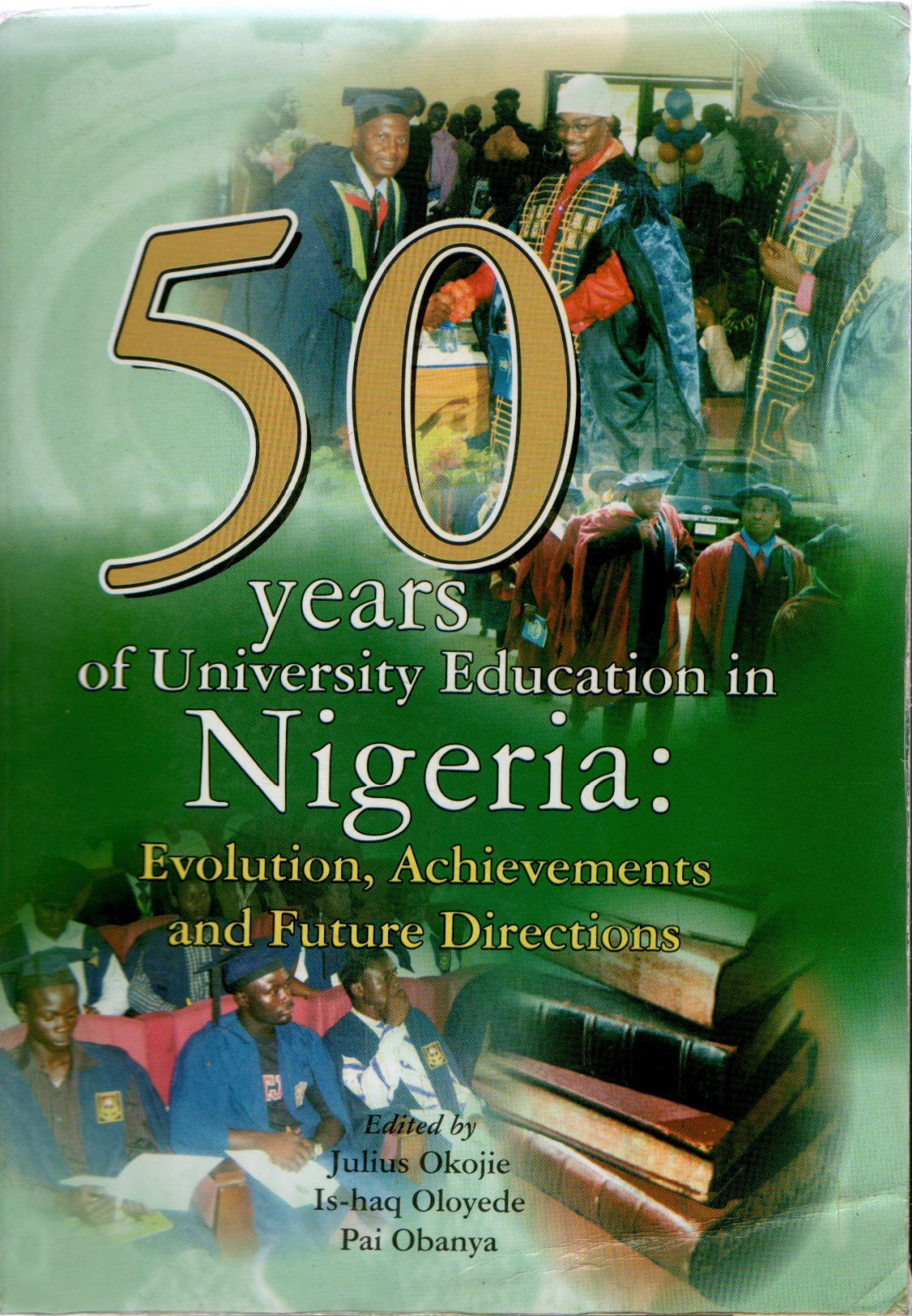




500

years
of University Education in
Nigeria:

**Evolution, Achievements
and Future Directions**

Edited by
Julius Okojie
Is-haq Oloyede
Pai Obanya

CHAPTER 17

Contributions of Nigerian Universities Over the Years to Knowledge and Development in Linguistics and Language

- *Victoria A. Alabi and Mahfouz A. Adedimeji*

Introduction

Although often taken for granted, language exerts a most powerful force on civilisation and without it, no development can ever be achieved. This is because as noted by He (1995:1) the creation of the human world we know could hardly have been without and “our development of everything... could not have come about in the absence of language”. It is through language that we understand the deepest secrets and inner feelings of other people as we appreciate the extent to which we share a common humanity by its means (Macwhinney, 2003:466). To imagine a world without language is to imagine a world without meaning and thus imagine the unimaginable (Adedimeji, 2006). This is so because being the only specie that uses language and whose survival ultimately depends on it, human beings live by “linguaging” (He, 1995:1).

The centrality of language in all human affairs has made it an object of attention and subject of enquiry in modern times since over two hundred years ago (Crystal, 1997:400). This was when interest in the scientific study of language or linguistics gained ascendancy from the initial interest in rhetoric (all the available means of persuasion in a given situation) poetics, (the study of problems of expressing ideas before the actual point of utterance) and dialectics (the study of creating and sustaining a dialogue) (Missikova, 2003) that prevailed in classical times. As a precursor to other forms of learning, language study has often constituted a critical component of the educational system and within the Nigerian University system, the case has not been different as Nigerian universities mostly continue to promote and advance language and linguistics.

This chapter highlights the contributions of knowledge in Nigerian universities to the corpus of knowledge and development in linguistics and language studies from various points of language, linguistics, literature, culture and academics. It addresses the national language question, discusses the Nigerian English phenomenon

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created in Nigerian universities as they are considered to be the foundation of, and the piston in, all forms of learning and academic achievement. This thus implies that the development of linguistics and language studies by Nigerian universities have been given much opportunity, perhaps until recently when there is a deliberate policy of giving sciences a greater focus over and above humanities, the crux of which is still driven by language and linguistics. Over the years, these contributions have witnessed a continuous progression and they have been revealed in new dimensions with the passage of time which explains why there had been poets, journalists, writers before there were engineers, doctors and scientists not only in Nigeria but throughout the world.

That Nigerian universities have contributed to the development in linguistics and language studies cannot be said to be a *fait accompli*. Yet, unlike in sciences where gains are measurable and easily quantifiable, development in humanities is mostly immeasurable and it deals mainly with the psychological, rather than the physical; it deals with values rather than forces. It is in this light that it is noteworthy that human development through arts and humanities is observable in the quality of mind and originality of ideas that have been generated over the years to nurture and nourish development in all its ramifications in Nigeria. It is noted that

The only reason Pythagoras was able to tell us that $a^2 = b^2 + c^2$ is a right angled triangle; Newton, that acceleration is a function of force; Einstein, that $E = mc^2$; Charles Boyle, that volume is a function of temperature, and pressure, a function of volume was because they had the means, the medium of communicating these ideas – language. (See Adedimeji, 2005)

The Impact of Language, Culture and Literature: A Conceptualisation

Language is by far one of man's greatest and most complex possessions, the essence of his humanity, without which individuals and nations lose their mental and cultural heritage (Essien, 1990:168). It is essentially the human-specific system of communication through conventional signs and representations. In our world of constant and concomitant information explosion, there is no keeping out language issues, to paraphrase Orwell (1946, 1997).

One of the manifestations of language lies in literature, a piece of writing [mainly] in prose or verse, fiction or fact, which has the quality of reflecting on any aspect of human life (Bakhtin, 1994:255). This definition is based on the Aristotelian conception of literature as the imitation of life, which Oscar Wilde twisted to say that life imitates literature. Nigerian (1994:24) in a similar vein defines literature as a portrait of man and his environment held on for him to see by the artist, so that he can have profound

reflections about his world view and general existence. Part of the nature of literature is that "literature is language" (Griffith, 1998:15). The relationship between literature and language at the border of culture is expressed by Ogunjinmi (1994:13) in the following words:

Literature being a cross-cultural discipline necessitates the critic's evaluation of and appreciation of socio-cultural linguistics in the creative process. The critic must be concerned with the levels of language and the resources of the philosophical and socio-cultural environment of the artist, reflected in his work.

As the medium of literature is language, a clear line of demarcation cannot be drawn between them. The risk of implying that the two may be mutually exclusive is not absent, and is quite justifiable, the fact still remains that "a dichotomy between language and literature is as absurd as a dichotomy between child and man" (Brooks, 1964: 97). Literature serves to educate, entertain, persuade and record events. Indeed, language is literature, literature is culture and culture is life. Culture, on the other hand, is an all subsuming concept that entails language and literature. As such, both the language and literature of a people are products of their culture.

This informs Biobaku's (1984:1) definition of culture "as the sum total of human achievement." According to Olorinmoye (1993:15), culture supplies us our habits of life and the process of self-fulfillment which defines everything man does and how he does it; a method of self realisation of the individual and society and the measure of the development of both (Spirkin, 1983:326; Adeyemi, 1998). Language and literature thus accentuate and celebrate a people's cultural values. As "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society", culture is by far an all-embracing entity, a vehicle to total development. Most scholars are agreed that the basis of development is culture and any community that aims at progress without its culture is only deceiving itself by engaging in self-immolation. Most developed societies are great by virtue of having great confidence in their culture, promoting and enhancing them as springboards for the drive to progress.

Language, literature and culture perform diverse and mutually inclusive functions. While language, according to Crystal (1997), serves eight broad purposes, viz: communication of ideas, emotional expression (as the case of expressing frustration), social interaction (i.e. greeting others), the sheer power sound (rhyme and alliteration), the control of reality (as there is in magic and incantation), recording facts, an instrument of thought and the expression of identity (i.e. the signalling of who we are and where we 'belong'), literature helps to refresh and influence the mind, helps the ability to read, brings the reality of life to the fore and educates, enlightens and entertains (Bolaji, 1994:258). Culture, on the other hand, serves as lenses of perception, spring of motivation, standard of judgement, basis of stratification, means

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In essence, there is a symbiotic relationship among language, literature and culture. Culture combines language and literature to serve its diverse functions. Literature depends on language to transmit and preserve culture while language reveals cultural values and showcases literary activities. Thus, there can be no literature without language and language cannot exist without a cultural context that it belongs to. According to Sapir (1921), language is a guide to social reality as "the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built on the language habits of the group" and language is literature when the expression is of unusual significance. In showing the connection between language and culture, Akindele and Adegbite (1999:5) also posit that three major ways of relationship are identifiable: language is an aspect of culture, language is an instrument of thought and language expresses culture. For Ngugi (1995:290), language, literature and culture are a tripod:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world.

Since the early period of university education in Nigeria, universities had sought to develop Nigerian languages, promote indigenous cultural values, produced literature that showcases aspects of language and culture of Nigerians and generally advanced Nigerian linguistic and cultural heritage.

Language and Linguistic Dimensions: The Language Question in Nigeria

A language question arises in a multilingual nation and it bothers on which language would serve what roles in the polity. In line with Isayev's (1977:92) thesis that language is a nation's most obvious and most important attribute and that there is no nation without a common linguistic basis, the need had always been felt for the promotion of Nigerian languages and the selection of a national language in Nigeria. These calls have often been made by people with university education in Nigeria or affiliated with educational pursuit. Thus, as early as 1961, the issue of national language question attracted the attention of the Nigerian parliament because of its grave importance to national identity and unity. But rather than considering what was rather linguistic, the speakers of minority languages mounted a stiff political opposition against the selection of any or all of the major languages (Bamgbose, 1993:4).

Isaacs (1965) arguably the first scholar to address the language question makes a strong case for the adoption of at least a native language such as Hausa as the Nigerian national language. He cites the case of Israel, which adopted Hebrew as her national language despite the fact that none of the 1,500,000 Jews who migrated to the occupied

land in 1947 spoke it, for the simple reason that Hebrew is native. He also provides statistical figures to appreciate the Indian adoption of Hindi as a national language among many Indian languages shortly after independence, as he makes further references to USSR and Denmark that took similar steps. While he bemoans the Nigerian lingua franca, "English" as a national shame, he confidently makes a prediction that eventually failed to materialise:

Our Winston Churchill in the House of Assembly in Kaduna is going to conduct his debate in Hausa; that of Enugu in Ibo; the one for Benin in Edo; the one for Ibadan in musician Yoruba; whilst the one for our House of Representatives in Lagos will be in Hausa. It is all going to be in my life time. Because we are such a casual lot, I put down 1975 for the total realization. Were we a militant people, I should have put us down for 1970.

When the Constituent Assembly was convoked in 1977-78, during the regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo, the language question also arose. The proposal to use the three major Nigerian languages as media for National Assembly business was vehemently opposed by the speakers of other languages at that Constituent Assembly (Jubril, 1990:111), despite the fact that the three-Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, had been used as official media of communication since the colonial days and their language development status was higher than that of other languages. Politics would have ultimately hampered the official recognition of these three indigenous languages in the 1979 Constitution if not for the efforts of Dr. Bashir Ikara. His moves succeeded and the Supreme Military Council inserted the provision in the Constitution disregarding its earlier rejection by the Constituent Assembly. While the Constitution still gave English a pride of place, at least, there was an official backing for the eventual emergence of the national language from at least one of the languages as the following extracts show:

The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate preparations have been made thereof (Section 51, Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979).

The business of a (state) House of Assembly shall be conducted in English, but the house may in addition to English conduct the business of the House in one or more other languages spoken in the State as the House may by resolution approve (Section 91, Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979).

These constitutional provisions have thus informed the National Policy on Education, (FRN, 1981) which remains the most comprehensive and explicit document from which the language policy statement can be found. According to the Policy (FRN, 1981:13), government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the

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primary school is initially the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, the English language. The summary of the language policy, first published in 1977, revised in 1981 and entitled Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE), is that:

- (i) in primary school, which lasts six years, each child must study two languages, namely;
 - (a) his mother-tongue (if available for study) or an indigenous language of wider communication in his area of domicile, and
 - (ii) English
- (ii) in Junior Secondary School (JSS) which is of three years; duration, the child must study three languages viz
 - (a) his mother tongue (if available for study) or an indigenous language of wider communication in his area of domicile;
 - (ii) English language, and
 - (iii) Just any one of the three major indigenous languages in the country, namely Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, provided the Language chosen is different from the child's mother-tongue.
- (iii) in Senior Secondary School (SSS) which also lasts three years, the child must study two indigenous languages, viz:
 - (a) an indigenous language, and
 - (ii) English language.

The efforts expended in the development of legislative terms in the three Nigerian languages were thwarted by the abrupt military interruption of the Nigerian Second Republic in 1983. The language policy maintained its status quo for many years, even after the Constituent Assembly deliberations of 1987/1988 and in 1990, in faithfulness to the National Policy on Education until 1998 when the National Policy on Education was revised to accommodate French, a foreign language, as thus:

For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in schools (p.9).

The National Language Question

According to Elugbe (1990:10 – 11) and Shobomehin (2002:14), attempts to define the national language have yielded various perspectives such as:

- (i) a language that is indigenous to a particular country;
 - (ii) a language that is constitutionally and by deliberate governmental orchestration elevated to the national limelight as a rallying point for national identity (like Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba); and
 - (iii) a language that has a nation-wide geographic spread within a country.
- Features of a national language are that such a language constitutes the emblem of national oneness and identity; it is used widely for everyday purposes, it is widely and

fluently spoken in the country; it is the major candidate for such a role; it is acceptable as a symbol of authenticity; it has a link with the glorious past; and it must be politically neutral. It can be generally observed that no Nigerian language fulfils all the given criteria.

At least five schools of thought have emerged from the task of evolving a truly national language for Nigeria. These are the Hausa-Igbo-Yoruba school, the Minority language school, the Artificial language school, the Swahili school and the Nigerian Pidgin school (Shobomehin, 2002:15).

The Hausa-Igbo-Yoruba school advocates for the emergence of one or all of the three major languages based on their vast population and official recognition. Though, empirical and general considerations have always favoured Hausa above its contenders, the allegation of cultural imperialism and political domination levelled against the Hausa speakers have not allowed a consensus. The Minority language school, on the other hand, posits the adoption of a minority language like 'Afrike', (proposed by Joseph Ushie) spoken in Rivers State and Igala, (proposed by Sofunke) spoken in Anambra, Benue and former Bendel State (Odebunmi, 2001:130; Sofunke, 1990:45). An example of a minority language used and functional as a national languages is Tagalog in the Philippines. The trade language of Bahasa Indonesia is also used as a national language in Indonesia.

The proponents of the Artificial language believe that a blend of three or more Nigerian languages will provide a way out of the linguistic labyrinth. This will be in the form of WAZOBIA a combination of Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo words for "come" through which a new language is fashioned out. Another experiment is that of GUOSA, proposed by a Mr. Igbinewaka, with elements of twenty-two Nigerian languages. The Swahili school is chiefly attributed to Wole Soyinka who proposed it during the World Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977. Swahili is proposed as a result of its developed oral and written forms, African indigeneity and its already established status as the national language of East Africa.

The Nigerian Pidgin School posits that Pidgin is the best candidate for the Nigerian national language contest. According to Bamgbose (1991:29), Pidgin is an attractive candidate for the national language because it does not suffer from the elitism associated with English, and as such, satisfies the requirements of authenticity and vertical integration. It is a view shared by this writer that the Nigerian Pidgin would be qualified for a national language because not only does it command millions of speakers, it is, according to Elugbe (1995:291), ethnically neutral, nationally spread, useful as the language of education in areas where many local languages would make it difficult to implement the national policy as it serves as the bridge language in the teaching of English. It is important to note that in all these efforts, Nigerian universities have played crucial roles.

Nigerian English

English language is not the only language spoken in Nigeria. It includes German, Ibo, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, and many other languages spread to South Africa where it is as a result of the colonialism. It recognises the roles of the language and declares that the language with the acquisition of the inner, outer and expanded circle.

The inner circle recognises the mother tongue for the first language. The outer circle denotes the second language, for instance, English. The inner circle recognises the value of its teaching as a foreign language.

It is a well known fact that the cultural norms of a country has brought about the development of British English, Indian English, and so on. The environment has given rise to the development of the language.

Over the years, the study of Nigerian English has been a major concern of Ibadan scholar, Banjo. The first variety is the English used in secondary education. It is a transfer from the mother tongue which is locally acceptable but not secondary school level and internationally acceptable. It carries a British accent. It carries on as foreign.

Adekunle (1979) has identified the native speaker variety, which comes up when the incipient bilingual reports that there are displays some mother of fairly creditable E deviations from the Standard English. Jowitt (1991)

Nigerian English

English language is known to belong to the Germanic group of languages, which includes German, Dutch, Flemish, Danish, Norwegian, Iceland and Swedish. The language spread to the United States of America, some African countries especially South Africa where it is the first language of many, Australia, and some Asian countries as a result of the colonies established by the British government. Kachru (1981) recognises the roles of English as first language, second language or foreign language and declares that the spread of English around the world can be represented in line with the acquisition and usage of the language in ways of three concentric circles: inner, outer and expanding.

The inner circle refers to the countries where English is spoken as the first language or mother tongue for example, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, etc. The outer circle denotes the non-native countries where English is used as a second language, for instance Nigeria, Ghana, Singapore, etc. The countries in the expanding circle recognise the value of English as an international language and invest credibly in its teaching as a foreign language as instantiated by Japan, China, etc.

It is a well known fact that a foreign language will always be impacted by the cultural norms of a linguistic society. The influence of English in diverse countries has brought about the various forms of what is known as World Englishes, thus: British English, Indian English, Chinese English, etc. English in the Nigerian environment has given birth to what is known as Nigerian English.

Over the years, scholars from Nigerian universities have given impetus to the study of Nigerian English by sub-dividing it into varieties. An erudite University of Ibadan scholar, Banjo (1970) asserts that there are four varieties of Nigerian English. The first variety is the one spoken by semi-illiterate Nigerians and those with elementary secondary education. The second variety is spoken with features of fewer negative transfers from the mother tongue. The variety is intelligible to the great majority and is locally acceptable but lacks international intelligibility. The third variety is ascribed to secondary school leavers with vital phonetic distinctions that make it both nationally and internationally acceptable. The fourth variety has a close model of the standard British accent. It carries higher international acceptance but is locally looked down upon as foreign.

Adekunle (1979) recognises three broad varieties of Nigerian English: the near-native speaker variety, which is spoken by well-educated elites; the local colour variety, which comes up when English finds itself in new ethno-linguistic environment; and the incipient bilingual variety that depends more on transliteration. Adesanoye (1980), reports that there are three varieties of the written Nigerian English. The first variety displays some mother tongue transfer both syntactically and lexically. The second is of fairly creditable English and third, which shows very few syntactic or lexical deviations from the Standard English. Awonusi (1987) declaims that English varieties are Basilectal Nigerian English, Mesolectal Nigerian English and Basilectal Nigerian English. Jowitt (1991) also gives his classifications of Nigerian English.

Several university scholars have as well contributed to ensuring an appropriate Nigerian English. Bamgbose (1971), Kujore (1985), Jowitt (1991), etc. have given the nexus of Nigerian English errors and British English. Some scholars have, since independence, given several reasons for the variations of the lexico-semantic patterns of Nigerian English as well. Notable among them are Bamiro (1981), Adegbija (1989). In the same token, the pragmatics (i.e. language use in context) of Nigerian English has received commendable contributions from scholars like Bamgbose (1971), Adesanoye (1973), Ubahakwe (1974), Akere (1982) Adegbija (1987), Adegbija (1989), Bamgbose (1995), Alabi (2000), Adegbija and Bello (2001), etc.

English in Nigeria is the language of educational evaluation, commerce, the mass media, national integration, religion, etc. Thus, the state of its use in the Nigerian situation has made scholars to propound Standard Nigerian English, which Bamgbose (1995) sees as a combination of what he calls Contact English (CE), Victorian English and School English (SE). *Language contact with the outside world has changed the state of linguistics and language in Nigeria.* It is certain that the effect of the change will be continual. Nigeria, a country of over 400 languages has numerous dialects. Okoro (2004: 169-177) in proposing guidelines for the identification of Standard Nigerian Usage writes and examines it from phonological, systematic, lexical, and semantic levels and concludes that if really the use of Standard Nigerian English should come up, it may not be easy in practice.

Trends in the Development of Nigerian (Minority) Languages

Sociolinguistically, the linguistic situation in Nigeria can be analysed from the three angles of exoglossic, endoglossic and semi-endoglossic languages. These three groups of languages respectively are English and French (foreign to Nigeria), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Kanuri (languages indigenous to Nigeria) and Pidgin (the elements of which are made up of the English superstrate and a hybrid of indigenous substrates). All these operate within the diaglossic Nigerian situation, the four forms of which are:

1. The Nigerian languages and its varieties especially Pidgin.
2. Nigerian languages and their varieties/dialects.
3. English and Nigerian languages.
4. Global English and Nigerian English (proposed) (Adedimeji, 2006a).

A demographic taxonomy of the Nigerian languages reveals five distinct categories of languages, which are:

- a) The exoglossic languages (e.g. English, French and Arabic)
- b) Four (4) very large languages (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and Pidgin)
- c) Seven (7) large languages (Edo, Igala, Kanuri, etc.)
- d) Twenty (20) medium-sized languages (e.g. Ebira, Batonnun)
- e) Three hundred and fifty (350) small sized languages (e.g. Bazange) (Williamson, cited in Lawal, 2006).

Another classification geographical (spread) is made up of decalogue languages are English or national lingua for people. The million. They are languages them and they are p media, especially ra Idoma, Igala, Ijo, K their hundreds, fall people as mother-to are fast becoming ext universities have not

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Another classification by Awonusi (2004) was based on demographical (population), geographical (spread) and sociolinguistic (functional) parameters which show that Nigeria is made up of decamillionaire, millionaire and minor languages. The decamillionaire languages are English, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and Pidgin which all function as local regional or national lingua francas. Each of these languages is spoken by at least ten million people. The millionaire languages are those that have a minimum of a million speakers. They are languages that have become identified with states that predominantly speak them and they are promoted by the federal government through mass communication media, especially radio since the 1970s. These languages include Edo, Efik, Fulfulde, Idoma, Igala, Ijo, Kanuri, Nupe and Tiv, among others. Other Nigerian languages, in their hundreds, fall under the category of minor languages or languages used by few people as mother-tongues but hardly as languages of education. Most of these languages are fast becoming extinct, a typical example of which is Koma (Lawal, 2006) and Nigerian universities have not risen quite significantly to the occasion.

The development of minority language when a major one is available requires special incentive. The most important motivation is cultural commitment to one's own language. It requires both courage (to against the stream by writing in the minority language) and, for the pioneers, the intellectual task of adapting a script with which to write the language. The development of minority languages was started by missionaries and their first converts devised orthography and began to publish books for the schools they set up, which led from alphabet to simple words and sentences and thence to religious text (Williamson, 1990). Among the languages developed are the network languages namely, Nupe, Edo, Efik, Ijo, Kanuri, Tiv, Idoma, Igala and Fulfulde, which can boast of not only large speakers but literature as well. As Adigboye (2002) observed, one of the best ways to sustain a language is to reduce it to writing. Departure of missionaries and eventual independence of Nigeria witnessed continued efforts at promoting indigenous languages.

In actual fact, development of Nigerian languages has not gone beyond mission statement indicated in the government policies year-in, year-out. Despite calls for the actual implementation on the need for indigenous language use in schools, the Nigerian child is still taught in the foreign language. Consequently, these languages are dying out because they are marginalised (Ohiri-Aniche, 2006). It is now clear that the future of minority languages in Nigeria is in the hands of the speakers of these languages, and government and institutional support.

Government support for the development of minority languages has come in form of sponsorship. For example, the Rivers State government sponsored the Rivers States Project, which was set up to organise the publication of primary school readers and supporting materials in all the local languages of Rivers State and published over 10 books and charts in 21 of these languages.

Also, language departments in institutions of higher learning works on the status of minority languages in Nigeria. Efforts in the Departments of Linguistics

and Nigerian Languages in Nigerian universities have revealed that majority of the minority languages are moribund. What linguists do, more or less, is to study level of endangerment of these languages and proffer solutions, which in actual fact, depend on the collective will of the users/speakers.

An example of such collaboration is that of the Annan speakers in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. In 2000, a Commission was set up to design orthography for Annan. The Commission was also saddled with the responsibility of producing primers for school children in the language. In 2002, the Commission came up with orthography of Annan. Today, short stories, poems, among others, are now written in the language for primary school pupils and higher school students. With the development of Annan, we now have 118 written Nigerian languages though National Institute of Nigerian Languages is aware of 22.

Nigerian Pidgin

Pidgin languages have evolved throughout the world as a result of language contact. Essentially, the need for communication between the natives and the European traders in the early centuries of European expansion accounted for different pidgins. As such, there are pidgins in French, Portuguese, German as there are in English. The Nigerian Pidgin, Jowitt (1991:13) asserts, undoubtedly originated and developed "its 'standard' forms during the period of 300 years that elapsed between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries". It served as a language of trade between the Englishmen and Nigerians. It was only after some time that some Nigerians started to gain proficiency, through education, in English that Pidgin became relegated and stigmatised. Associated with aspects of the Nigerian English, some Nigerian scholars like Ben Elugbe and Francis Igbokhare have contributed in the codification and conceptualisation of the Nigerian Pidgin (NP).

NP is today a mother tongue to at least one million speakers and it is spoken by about forty million people, more than the population of Hausa and Yoruba speakers put together (Egbokhare, 2001:112). It is gaining ascendancy in political, social, economic and cultural levels to the extent that its knowledge is fast becoming indispensable "for an understanding of Nigerian affairs and for practical communication in Nigeria" (Faraclos, 1996 cited in Egbokhare 2001:112). NP is vastly employed in intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic communication, commercial transaction, information dissemination, mass mobilisation and national orientation.

In many radio and television programmes especially of the National Television Authority (NTA) and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and newspapers, NP is extensively utilised. Egbokhare (2001:113) tabularises sixteen programmes in NP across Nigeria on the broadcast media, chiefly NTA and Radio Nigeria stations. The functional dynamism of NP in Nigeria informs the submission of Iroko (cited in Egbokhare, 2001:113) that through government's extensive and intensive resort to NP, "it would seem that the Nigerian government has suddenly realised that NP is

powerful language of communication which cuts across a wider audience than any other Nigerian language”.

Literary and Cultural Dimensions

The contributions of universities have also impacted on the conceptualisation, criticism and creation of distinctive Nigerian literature, which is arguably the richest and largest in Africa. University scholars have either written or analysed and critiqued, hence promoted many literary works that bear the stamp of African cultural and linguistic legacy. Oral literature or orature gave birth to written literature and the two intertwine in contemporary lit-orature. From time immemorial, literature had existed in oral forms among the various peoples of Nigeria and these have been documented by Nigerian writers for posterity. Stories, myths, legends, folklore, proverbs, poetry, performances and such other forms of oral tradition had been preserved and transmitted from generation to generation. The main goal of orature or oral literature was mainly to impart moral lessons. At the end of a typical story in a moon-lit night or at other times, the narrator would ask the audience: “what has the story taught us?” Oral literary forms also entertain, educate and offer explanations, however glib, for mysteries.

Written literature began in Nigeria in Roman script in the 20th century (Adegbija, 2004; Ogunba, 2006). Among the Hausa who had a flourishing Islamic tradition before their contact with the Europeans, there was an abundant literary tradition in Hausa in Arabic script much earlier. Contact with colonialism in the 19th Century brought about literacy in indigenous and English languages among several Nigerian communities. Bishop Ajayi Crowther, a former slave, returned to develop Yoruba orthography or script and published the first grammar in Yoruba language in 1843, following up with the Yoruba translation of the Bible in 1900 (Adegbija, 2004:23). By 1929, the first fiction in an indigenous language emerged from Nigeria in Yoruba language in *Segilola Egunpa Ege* (“Segilola of the Seductive Eyes”) appearing in serial form in *Akede Eko*, a Yoruba newspaper in Lagos. The work cautions against prostitution, a foreign culture in the Nigerian social context, that was a consequence of the colonial legacy (Ogunba, 2006).

D. O. Fagunwa then came with his Yoruba masterpieces beginning with *Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo Irunmole* in 1938. The work was translated by the Nigerian Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, the first African to win the coveted literary prize, as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* (1958). The work relies on Yoruba folklore to narrate the adventure of a brave hunter in a forest of unnatural creatures and his challenges, teaching ultimately aspects of Christianity. Fagunwa followed this up in later years with *Igbo Olodumare*, *Ireke Onibudo*, among other titles that have become classical Yoruba novels.

Amos Tutuola wrote the first Nigerian novel in English, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, in 1946, first published in 1952, and set himself out as a pioneer in the English medium of literary enterprise. In the novel, just like his subsequent titles, which were

less successful, (like *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* published in 1954) Tutuola explores Yoruba traditions, stories and folklore. Despite the success of *The Palm-Wine Drinker*, the sub-standard English in which it was written accorded it some scathing criticisms (Ogunba, 2006).

Cyprian Ekwensi came up with *People of the City* in 1954 and subsequently wrote many other novels among which *Jagua Nana* is the most successful. The publication of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, however, marked a watershed in the Nigerian/ African literary excellence. The work has been translated into more than fifty languages and studying African literature without reading Achebe is like studying English literature without experiencing Shakespeare. Other titles from Achebe are *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1967), *Anbills of the Savannah* (1988), etc. Achebe explores socio-historical experiences of the contact with Western civilisation and the challenges the contact poses to an emergent African nation. Contemporary Nigerian novelists include Wale Okediran, Zainab Alkali, Ben Okri, Tess Onwueme, Helon Habila, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Chimamanda Adizie among several others.

In drama, Wole Soyinka is a leading figure, as well as in poetry. His major plays are *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), written to celebrate Nigeria's independence in 1960; *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963), *Kongi's Harvest* (1967), *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) among others. Other prominent playwrights are Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, J. P. Clark, Zulu Sofola, Olu Obafemi, etc. who have all contributed immensely to the Nigerian dramatic genre. Femi Osofisan is a leading Nigerian playwright of today with over forty published plays to his credit. Some of his works include *Morountodun and other plays* (1982), *Another Raft* (1988), *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1991a), *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991b) and *Twingle Twangle, A Twynning Tayle* (1995), among others.

Major Nigerian poets are the late Christopher Okigbo, whose collections like *Home Gate* and *Labyrinths* are major landmarks in modern Nigerian poetry, Gabriel Okara, Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark, Tanure Ojaide and Niyi Osundare. The last is one of the best known Nigerian poets with at least ten collections to his credit (Osundare, 2000), which include *Songs from the Market Place* (1983), *Village Voices* (1984), *Eye of the Earth* (1986), *Waiting Laughters* (1990) and *The Word is an Egg* (2000), etc. There are indeed several Nigerian poets who continue to define and shape the Nigerian poetic landscape and they are, like their dramatist and novelist compatriots, products of the Nigerian university system both directly and indirectly.

Seminars, Conferences and Journals

Annual conferences are held by English and Linguistic Departments in Universities or by groups/associations. Some instances may be cited as follows: Annual conference of the Nigerian English Studies Association, Annual conference of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria, International Conference on Language and Gender, International Conference on African Literature (IICAL).

Reputable journals. These include *Journal of African Linguistics*, *Literature and Languages*, *Ibadan Journal of English Studies*, *Journal of Linguistics*.

Concluding Remarks

An open sore that independence, Nigeria appears to be elusive language in the existents, "while the languages of their in extant, how many so their native tongues: the educational system Nigerianising our children is an ambivalent, if dislocated youths who attributed to the curriculum.

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The Japanese example in describing the role national development was to be a developed based on her linguistic development is argued.

Reputable journals have also been contributed to linguistics and language studies. These include *Journal of English as a Second Language (JESOL)* which began to appear in the 1960s, *ALORE*, *Ilorin Journal of the Humanities*, *Contemporary Humanities*, *Ede Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, *FAIS Journal of Humanities*, *Inquiry in African Languages and Literatures*, *Ibadan Journal of English Studies*, *Ilorin Journal of Language and Literature*, (ILL), *Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria (JOLAN)*, *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association (JNESA)*, *Lagos Papers in English Studies*, *Liwuram*, *Maiduguri Journal of Linguistic and Literary Studies (MAJOLLS)*, and *The Linguist*.

Concluding Remarks

An open sore that assails the national conscience is that fifty years after her political independence, Nigeria still gropes in the linguistic wilderness as development still appears to be elusive. There is a lack of clear-cut language policy and aspects of language in the existing education policy are grossly undermined. As Oloyede (2010) laments, "while the policy that children should be taught through the indigenous languages of their immediate environment in early years of primary education remains extant, how many schools implement it? How many university students are literate in their native tongues?" He further asserts that "we have a big problem with us because the educational system we run seems to be ultimately de-Africanising and de-Nigerianising our children...this should not be so." To compound the problem, there is an ambivalent, if not negative attitude, to Nigerian languages by the culturally dislocated youths with the Nigerian multilingual status often, even if surreptitiously, attributed to the curse of Babel.

Without taking recourse to cultural and linguistic revival, the path to true development is still jagged and danger-filled. As posited by Babalola (2009), answers that are provided in proverbs and other cultural canons for educational, social, economic and political problems remain largely unaccessed as a result of negative attitudes to indigenous cultures, with policy makers being mere tankers, mere storehouses of foreign concepts and principles, rather than being lateral thinkers, or "those who are capable of taking a concept out of its original context and applying it on all sides and in different contexts". This situation has serious implication for developing because progressive countries of the world often launch their developmental efforts on the basis of their cultural and linguistic legacy. From India to Japan, from China to Iran, from Malaysia to South Korea, language and culture have always been considered a *non negotiable* to economic, scientific, socio-political and technological development.

The Japanese example as cited by Adedimeji (2006b) is perhaps the best paradigm in describing the role of language, the most powerful aspect of culture, in achieving national development. Japan has emerged from the ruins of colonialism and devastating wars to be a developed nation and a powerful country in the comity of nations mainly based on her linguistic heritage. The foundation of the Japanese techno-scientific development is arguably their language content. Achebe (1988:160) recalls "one of

the observations that made a particularly strong impact” on him at the 1981 Tokyo Colloquium that he attended. It was a family anecdote of one Professor Kinichiro Toba of the Waseda University. The author cites the professor as saying:

My grandfather graduated from the University of Tokyo at the beginning of 1880s, his notebooks were full of English. My father graduated from the same university in 1920 and half of his notes were filled with English. When I graduated a generation later, my notes were all in Japanese. So...it took three generations for us to consume western civilization totally via the means of our own language.

It is therefore imperative that the Japanese model is desirable as it has propelled the nation to development.

In conclusion, fifty years after independence, it is apparent that Nigerian universities have contributed to the development of language and linguistic studies. But while these contributions are theoretical mainly, the application of the insights that such contributions engender has been missing in the polity. The upsurge in the number of universities, which are basically engine rooms for development, has also not resulted in much-desired socio-economic changes and improved standard of living for many Nigerians. The reason for this mismatch, we theorise, lies in the relegation of indigenous languages, cultures, literatures, systems and world views and the over-celebration of things foreign. For Nigeria to be on a fast pace of development and be the true African giant by the time she celebrates her centenary, while the English language and its appurtenances continue to play their roles, the indigenous languages, cultures, norms, mores, ethos, ethics, should be developed to truly connect the nation to the true development it desires.

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Enhancing
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