

various times, have described this phenomenon in different ways for different reasons including "policy incoherence" (Isa 2021), "policy summersault" (Awoyinfa 2013), and "policy exploitation" (Ajiboye 1990). Bamgbose (2001) describes it as a salient but rarely documented fact, while Oyetade (2002) opines that policies are made to fail or designed to make their implementation difficult because of some obvious pitfalls built into them. While it is still open to doubt if politics has not negatively affected the development of French in Nigeria, this study examines some of the underpinning policies that seem to drive language policy-making in Nigeria and their implications for the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language. It is our considered view that much of what is being perceived as inconsistency, exploitation, or sudden change are the results of the politics being played by the policymakers or sometimes by those at the receiving end of the policies. Given Oyetade's statement above, the two important questions of this study are: (1) Who is responsible for the kind of language policies that are made in Nigeria? (2) Who are those at the receiving end?

Meanwhile, there are inconsistencies in the policy-making processes that tend to contend or conflict with government aspirations for French language when viewed against English, Arabic, and the major Nigerian languages such as Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. Hence, we will do a textual analysis of Nigeria's NPE with the aim of drawing out the politics that lie within the language policies. For the purposes of this study, we will highlight some of the ways in which policy constitutes an additional challenge to the myriad of problems already confronting the teaching and learning of the French language in Nigeria. We also hope to conclude by suggesting ways to reduce or completely eradicate some of the problems.

French, Politics, and Language Policies in Nigeria

French is an international language spoken almost everywhere in the world. The modern world sees it as one of the major languages on which future civilization and technological advancement depend (Ajiboye 2002). Apart from English, French is the only foreign language that is devoid of ethno-religious sentiments in Nigeria. This is because the history of the teaching of Arabic, which is another

priority foreign language in Nigeria, particularly in the non-Arab world, has been the history of the spread of Islam (Adeyemi 2016). French is taught in primary and secondary schools, at the teacher training college, and the university levels. Other foreign languages are only learned in certain universities or in private centers such as the Goethe Institute for German or the Chinese Language Training Institute for Chinese.

When we talk about politics, we mean all the activities, interactions, and social relations that develop and are structured within the autonomous space of the struggle for the conquest and exercise of power. Politics refers to the competitive struggle for the distribution of power. This is why it is often devalued or why it is being seen as intrigue or struggle. This dimension, according to Lefebvre (2017), is what is commonly referred to as political life. Politics covers the mechanisms of political competition, the game of competition between parties, and the struggle between those who make politics their profession.

But as for language policy, it is described by Crawford (2000) as government's regulation of its own language, which includes measures to facilitate communication, encourage political participation, train and recruit staff, ensure due process, and provide access to public services and documents. In other words, language policies are primarily concerned with determining the status of languages. That is, they help to determine whether a language should be used as a national language, an official language, a working language, a language of wider communication, a language of instruction, and so on.

We understand that language policy cannot be separated from politics because; Ugal (2011) describes language policy as a binding language guide that is meant to be applied by the society that formulates it through a political process. But our use of the term "politics of language policies" is not an attempt to delve into the actual politics as described above. Instead, we intend to draw attention to the inconsistencies in our language education policies that may not be too far from political motivation, since a particular language policy could serve different political interests simultaneously. According to Ricento (2000), formal language policies are essentially political documents. In fact, Ricento (ibid.) believes that they may have been forged with compromises, based on a series of assumptions and probable expected outcomes, reflecting at least to some extent political requirements that may change over time. So, what are the politics of language policy in Nigeria?