# ANYIGBA

## Journal of Arts & Humanities

A Publication of the Faculty
of Arts & Humanities
Kogi State University
Anyigba, Nigeria

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# Anyigba Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 5 SPECIAL ISSUE August 2008

*Produced & Printed in Nigeria by*
*NATHADEX PUBLISHERS,*
*No 22 Opo-malu, Ilorin*



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# Anyigba Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 5 SPECIAL ISSUE August 20087

ISSN:1595-9589

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# REPACKAGING LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY FOR ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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## Introduction

Language is innately tied to men's feelings and activities. It is bound up with nationality, religion and the feeling of self. Everyone uses it for work, worship, counting and play, be he a beggar, or banker, savage, or civilized (Lado 1990). As a result of its pervasiveness, it is the object of study by many branches of learning- Linguistics, psychology, anthropology, education, economics and geopolitics, to mention a few-all deal with language more or less systematically.

Languages differ in their functions, and the degrees of use or function allotted to different language vary from people to people. But of greater importance is the notion of domain or the spheres of activities where specific languages are used. Dirvin (1991) differentiates between primary and secondary domains, where primary domain accords with the soft sectors of life involving family, kinship, friendship network, local markets, cultural life, and the likes. The secondary domains correspond with advanced areas of life, where issues like education, science and technology, government administration, judiciary, and economics are given prominence. Naturally, certain languages are intimately bound to particular domains. In reference to the Nigerian situation, the engagement of indigenous and foreign languages comes to the fore. While indigenous languages are identified with the primary domain, foreign languages (notably the English language) are reserved for the secondary (high)



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lomain. English is the major foreign language in Nigeria. The incidence of English and its maintenance as an official language in the country derives from our colonial experience under the British, who administered he pre-independent Nigeria with their language. Thus the nstitutionalization of English as the official language in Nigeria till the present time (Adeniran 1995). English language also is the language of globalization and globalization as observed by Lawal (2005) refers to the ntegration and democratization of the world's culture, economy and nfrastructure through national investment, rapid proliferation of communication and information technologies, and the impacts of free-narket forces on local, national and regional economics. Globalization as seen here is multidimensional. It touches the area of politics, social culture) economy, communication and education. It is a process of knitting the world together and producing through unity in diversity in a global village. Having realized the intense and purpose of globalization, the questions now are what is the role of Nigerian Education vis-à-vis its national language in knitting Nigeria among the global village and how do we repackage Language Education in Nigeria to make language (English and Indigenous Language) perform excellently well both its primary and secondary domain functions, especially in making the nation's economy more vibrant and empowering individuals to survive in a globalized era? Before answering these questions, it may be pertinent to assess language use in relation to socio-economic dichotomy.

## Language as an Index of Socio-Economic Dichotomy

The major differences in language development seem to connect with social class, as manifested in the contrast between poor and middle-class children. This has important practical implications in any society. The failure of these children is induced by poverty, which in turn hampers learning. Ginsburg (1972) asserts that, deprived environment retards children's speech, and inferior speech leads to deficient thought, while deficient speech and thought result in school failure and total failure in general. The link between language and society is also the ground for uage planning by government largely through the educational system. ance in linguistic skills (literacy-in reading and writing, and oracy- and speaking) is taken as an indicator of educational and els and it provides access to the whole range of education.

*Repackaging Language Education Policy For Economic And Technological*

Observing the difference in educational attainment by middle-class and students from poor family background, Bernstein (1970) establishes a connection between their school experience and their characteristic language usage. He distinguishes between two types of linguistic patterns used by school children, i.e., restricted code and elaborated code as shown on the table below:

| RESTRICTED CODE | ELABORATED CODE |
|---|---|
| Unfinished and short simple sentences | Accurate grammatical order complex sentences: cordinacy/superordinacy. |
| Commands and questions categorical statements repetition of constructions hesitancy | Frequent use of preposition impersonal pronunciations, passive contractions unusual adjectives and adverb |
| Confusion of reasons and conclusions.<br>Rigid and limited use of adjectives and adverbs.<br>Sympathetic circularity ('You know').<br>Language of implicit meaning. | |

**Source: Bernstein 1970.**

Elaborated code is explicit and can be communicated without gestured to the immediate context. It is thus universalistic. On the other hand, the restricted code is implicit and requires participants who share assumptions and a local context, it is particularistic. Bernstein concludes that middle class children have access to both codes whereas children from poor parents have access only to restricted code. Since school life and education generally is predicated upon the elaborated code, Bernstein asserts that exclusive users of elaborated code are likely to do well at school and in the society at large. It is also clear that children from poverty stricken home have a restricted language code which can not perform excellently well both the primary and secondary domain functions.

People with restricted language code are in large quantity in Nigeria. They can largely be found in motor parks, markets, farms and offices (as clerks and messengers). These people are usually regarded as



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population and rural farmers especially. Others are the national Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALD) and Family Support Programme (FSP). NALDA was established in 1991 to execute the national Agricultural Land Development programmes, and to encourage the adequate use of extensive farmland with proper placement of farmers in their farmland. FSP came into being in 1994 with the aim of improving the social and economic standards of the Nigerian family. NAPEP was also introduced in 2005 in a bid to generate employment. The seven points agenda (i.e security, agriculture, health, education, political reform, employment generation, and water supply) of the present President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Umar Yar Adua, capped it all. From the above, it is viewed that Federal Government has introduced various relief packages aimed at reducing the incidence of rural and urban poverty, but the fact remains that government policies, strategies and programmes have had little impact in alleviating rural poverty.

The question may be asked: what has all this got to do with language use? The connection may appear tenuous, but it is real. Most of the folks in rural areas are illiterates using the restricted language code. Most of the alleviating programmes introduced by the government are not properly understood by these rural people and are often hijacked by the few educated ones among them who misinterpret the programmes to them. No thanks to the language situation in the country where there are constant conflicts between the speakers of minority and major language, leaving English to continue to dominate official communication.

Some of the conflicts that hindered unity and socio-Economic development in Nigeria are language conflicts. Language problems in the country have to be understood from the backdrop of the numerous ethnic languages, all of which are in competition for supremacy and survival. Minority languages in Nigeria are often neglected, their speakers seem to be aware that their languages do not often function in gaining upward social mobility (Adeniran 1995). Government's national language policies in general, and minority language development in particular, are often viewed with suspicion. Among speakers of the neglected minority languages, there are usually political tension and rivalry, resulting from perceived educational and linguistic underdevelopment, cultural and linguistic alienation and manipulation, discrimination, and exploitation that leads to unending rural poverty.



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underprivileged and sometimes very poor. Given the abundant natural and human resources in Nigeria, it is quite surprising why so many people are poor. Poverty could be seen as adverse economic, social, psychological, environment, technological, educational and political conditions that impoverish man and hinder the attainment of a meaningful standard of living (Abiodun 1996). According to IMF report (1998), about one-fifth of the world's population is affiliated with poverty. Poverty is not only a mode of existence, but also a process with many dimensions and complexities, usually deprivation, vulnerability and powerlessness characterize it. These characteristics impair people's sense of well-being.

A more focused perspective of poverty is to see it in terms of inadequate income to obtain basic goods and services. This involves the individual's inability to meaningfully subsist and to reproduce against all forces that minimize the quality of life. It also involves a situation where substance depends on wages with which to purchase food, which often is inadequate in quality and quantity. Poverty also involves inability to meet basic material needs encompassing food, water, clothing, shelter, education, health as well as basic non-material needs that include participation, identity and dignity (Blackwood and Lynch 1994).

There is no universally acceptable definition of poverty. However, the poor in any society depicts certain economics and social deformities in comparison to the unwritten standards set by that society at that period.

In view of the fact that poverty is considered a global phenomenon, which threatens the survival of mankind, the decade (1997-2006) has been declared by the United Nations as the Decade for eradication of poverty (United Nations 1991). The Federal Government of Nigeria has established various agencies and programmes either directly targeted at poverty reduction or put in place to enhance production and welfare in general terms. Those programmes, which came into existence after the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), include the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) which was established in 1986 with the objectives of creating employment, particularly through self-reliance, apprenticeship and entrepreneurship. (Okusun 1997). The Agricultural Development Project (ADP), was also introduced in 1971 with the identification of poverty mainly with rural people and in line with World Bank recommendations with the sole aim of stimulating agricultural production and enhancing the income of the rural



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In Nigeria presently, if the level of poverty, especially, in the rural areas is to be drastically reduced to the barest level, there is need to reach out to the grassroots for proper propagation of government policies and programmes meant to alleviate poverty. The best way to do this is through the use of both indigenous and English languages. So, we need to adopt a virile language policy that would cater for the development of the indigenous languages, and English language, which is Nigeria's lingual Franca. This now brings about the issue of how to repackage language education programme to improve the socio-economic status of the Nigerian populace, especially the folks in rural areas.

## Language Education Policy for Economic and Technological Development

The goal of any developing nation like Nigeria is to catch up with the technologically developed nations or, at best, try to reduce the gap between these sets of nations (i.e., developing and developed). The four major features of this goal are political, social, economic, and educational (Adeniran 1999). It is no gainsaying that the modern state is dominated by economics, and that the yardstick by which development is measured is economics. The nation with a vibrant economy is developed, and the developing one like Nigeria is poverty-stricken. A nation that has majority of her rural and even urban populace living in abject poverty cannot be said to be developed.

For a nation to be developed, apart from being economically vibrant, it must emphasize education. Education has to be put at the service of the development process, making it possible for individual citizens to be as fully developed as possible, improving their skills, and creating new knowledge. Education is a powerful instrument for forging national unity, especially in a multilingual setting like Nigeria. Considering the susceptibilities of the constituent ethnic groups that make up the nation, the national goal of forging a common nationality may not be easy. It is now very obvious that Nigeria needs to develop a virile national language policy in order to fully improve on her educational level through both the indigenous and English Languages for the developing multilingual societies, such as Nigeria. Kelman (1971) suggestes two considerations to guide the authorities to arrive at their

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communication that would enable the socio-economic institutions to function most effectively and equitably in meeting the needs and interests of the population. The second is how to ensure that different groups within the society, varying in their linguistic repertories, have equal access to the public system. These are viable policy considerations, which need to be complemented by language engineering.

Successive administrations in the country have adopted a very cautions approach to language policy formulation because of the ethno-linguistic composition of the nation. Therefore, the country's present language policy relates to the language teaching and learning portions of the National Policy on Education (FRN 1998, 2005).

In section 1, paragraph 8 of the policy, there is a statement of philosophical awareness (on the part of government) of the role of language as a means of preserving culture, and of the adoption of particular languages of the media for preserving national unity. It states:

> ...in addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and of a means of preserving the people's culture, the Government considers it to be in the interest of the national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the Government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

The above policy statement is in consonance with what may be considered the right strategy for development in a multilingual society (Adeniran 1995), and if implemented in line with Brann's (1977), suggestions, it could yield upwards of 80% of the educated population of Nigerians who are able to polyglots in the indigenous language and English. Also, the strength of the policy lies in the fact that it could promote equal access to information in the public system from both rural and urban areas, leading to equal opportunities to participate in the system and enjoy the benefits of all government's poverty alleviating programmes.

It may be said that Nigeria has a virile language policy, but there is the problem of poor implementation, which could be viewed in two perspectives: lacking political will to implement the policy, and dangerous pedagogic implications. Pedagogic considerations have to do with language teachers and classroom activities of which curriculum is the

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corner stone. What kind of language curriculum can be packaged to help in realizing the goals of Nigeria's language policy?

Any curriculum must be based on knowledge of the learning process and the learning context as well as on values and purposes (including those of the teachers, students, parent and the stake holder). School systems can be either centralized or decentralized. In highly decentralized systems like Nigeria where the Nigeria Educational Research Development Council (NERC) prepares curriculum guidelines from which the teacher has only general guidelines; the state ministries of education prepare statewide syllabuses which the teacher has to adapt to the social need of his school and environment. This clearly shows that teachers are contributors to the task of curriculum development. For a teacher to be able to implement the decentralized curriculum successfully, he has to understand the objectives of such a package, and should be able to provide or adapt the most appropriate methods, materials, content and learning experiences needed. (Obanya 1980). With particular references to language curriculum, the teacher must be able to speak the language he is to teach fluently, and must be thoroughly trained in the language because it is not enough to speak a language. The speaker must be qualified to teach it. Even the native speaker cannot model the language or guide the students unless he can isolate and demonstrate its various elements. He must therefore have insight into the linguistic backgrounds of the language of the students in order to understand the particular problem they will have in learning the target language. In order to reach the grassroots, and to help the students go far into the target language without facing differences in cultural meanings, the language teacher must understand the intimate relation between a language and its culture. This involves the knowledge of specific facts concerning the culture, and some understanding of the major patterns of thoughts; beliefs, traditions and values that account for the way the people live and behave.

## Recommendations and Conclusion Remarks

The Nigeria language policy recognizes the importance of the individual language in the overall social, political, economic and technological development of the nation. The policy emphasizes a neutral foreign language i.e. English. This language policy has assigned this role in the to English Language not only because of its accident of history

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but because of its link with the developed world (Akindele and Adeshina 1999).

As rightly pointed out by Banjo (1995), the creation of wealth is the goals of modern democracy, and the rough and ready yardstick by which development is measured is economic. Therefore, for a nation to be adjudged as developed, its economy must be vibrant and its citizens economically empowered. And one of the ways of developing this is through language in which concepts are expressed. In Nigeria, one of the main reasons advanced for its poor technology growth and economic development is that the language for science and technology is foreign. Technology and economic advancement can only be achieved if expressed in the language that a community understands. English language does not reach the majority of the Nigerian populace. It may thus be said that majority of Nigerians have been precluded from economic advancement. It is possible that indigenous technology (which aids and promotes economic development in rural areas, especially where there is intense poverty), such as blacksmithing, dyeing, and pottery could be well developed beyond its present state, if relevant foreign experiences are made available to the indigenous technologists and scientists in the language that they understand.

In order to be able to develop the nation's economy and empower its citizens, it is advocated that the language to be used in our educational system should be the indigenous ones, in addition to English. As earlier said, teachers should be competent enough to adapt the centrally formulated curriculum to teach the language in his/her immediate environment, bearing in mind the cultural and economic needs of the area. Countries like Japan and China that are economically developed today acquired their education through their indigenous languages. These two countries, for instance, borrowed from Western societies and adapted their science and technology. Before, the adaptation, Western science and technology literature which exposed scientific and technical findings, and which were expressed in either English, French or German, were translated into the indigenous language of these countries (Akindele and Adegbite 1999).

It would be highly beneficial if teachers are properly trained in the various indigenous languages and are transferred to various rural schools indiscrimately. Public enlightenment in indigenous languages should be

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thoroughly intensified in the rural areas, and government economic relief packages and programmes should be properly relayed to the rural people in the indigenous languages, so that they could understand the various programmes and policies put in place to reduce ignorance and poverty in these areas.

Since a country cannot be adjudged as developed if its economy is not vibrant or developed, and there is no economic vibrancy without development in science and technology, the issue of technological transfer should be taken seriously. Indigenous language being advocated in the nation's educational system should be tailored towards technological transfer. Though the language of science and technology in the country will, for a long time, continue to be in the foreign language (English), the full involvement of the indigenous languages in the transfer process is necessary, if the Nigerian child is to make progress in his/her learning of science and technology and be socio-economically empowered.

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