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The Politics of Language Policies in Nigeria

Some Implications for the Teaching and Learning of French

Bayo Isa

Nigeria is a country of many languages where each ethnic group has its own language and dialect varieties. According to the National Language Policy—NLP (2022), it is a country where different names are sometimes given to the same language(s), and the majority of the people wish to maintain a separate linguistic identity. This multiplicity of languages is now of great concern because it could be linked to the problem of national unity and cultural integration.

Ever since the publication of the first National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977, various Nigerian governments have deliberately attempted to use the state apparatus through language policies to formally establish the peaceful coexistence of the country's major languages. They have also tried to ensure the development of these languages and the way in which they are assigned functions in the educational, administrative, social, and political sectors. According to Ezeafulukwe and Chinyeaka (2016), all these efforts have unfortunately been characterized by haphazard and unworkable policies that have also resulted in avoidable outcomes such as lack of continuity, neglect of minority groups, weakening of mother tongues, and enslavement to the English language.

These outcomes are now of greater concern, especially as they may also be related to some of the challenges associated with the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, many academics, at