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GLOBALIZATION AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE NIGERIAN CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC HERITAGE: THE AMERICAN PARADIGM

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Introduction

The increasing empowerment of Western cultural values, including language, philosophy and worldview and the predominance of capitalism in the mobility of labour, information and services has brought about the true worldwide revolution called globalization (Balakrishnan, 2004). The tremendous impact of globalization on the world has thus engendered the entrenchment of the Anglo-American culture with the English language emerging as a *global common language* spoken by more than two billion people of the world today (Kubota, 2001; Okwudishu, 2003; Adedimeji, 2006a). Like all revolutions, globalization appears to threaten the economic, socio-cultural, linguistic, educational and political independence of all people in the world such that the question that befuddles every nation is that which confronted James Scott who was *Lost in the Tropics*, a book he wrote: how can I survive? This question of survival in the global world is central to developing nations among which Nigeria ranks high.

Perspectives on globalization have mainly tilted from its advocates to its opponents. While the supporters of globalization see it as a positive and veritable phenomenon bringing about improved trade, economic growth and collaboration among peoples regardless of their geographical locations, opponents of globalization construe it as a continuation of colonialism that further enriches the rich and the powerful, especially the multinational companies, who are *pressuring* developing nations to invest in ever larger-scale infrastructures and to open their markets to multinational corporations to the detriment of millions of local and national enterprises (Norberg-Hodge, 2006). Without the necessary emotionality, what is central and crucial is that globalization is a reality and it should generate an appropriate response. Even if it is true that, as James Kurth claims, that globalization is a threat to a people's very security, safety and even identity, it is still true that the world revolution that is globalisation in some

(Reidhakrishnan, 2004), it is nevertheless expedient to forge a strategy or a system of strategies for coping with its reality. This reality has been captured by Adamu (2003) in the following light:

Globalisation is like a wild fire, it has started, it is uncontrollable and nobody knows where it is taking us. What is evident is that no person, family, religion and society is immune to it. It is therefore, shaping our society's labour market and its pattern of inequality, its consumption, its health, its political stability and legitimacy, values and members' life style. We, as humanity, are shaping and affecting globalization and globalization is shaping and affecting us.

One of the fundamental ways through which globalization affects us today is at the level of cultural and linguistic identity (Awonusi, 2006). The culture of a society being the way of life of its members, the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation (Edewor, 2003: 195), a society or individual that is robbed of its/his culture can only marginally survive. Like a fish removed from its natural habitat to the earth surface, which is doomed to perish, anyone that loses his cultural and linguistic legacy is bound to expire. It has been argued that one of the consequences of globalization is the end of cultural diversity and the super-imposition of the global, homogenized culture serving the needs of the developed world and its multi-national corporations. It is said that globalization is causing conflicts, wars and social disintegration in almost all countries of the world, leading to the construction of new identities and the reinvention of old ones (Nabudere, 2000). Forging appropriate response to the seemingly irresistible wave of globalization requires a tripodal process of strategic thinking, strategic planning and strategic action which constitutes the thrust of this paper.

Nigeria: The Making of a Cultural and Linguistic Mosaic

It is a historical fact that prior to the end of the 19th Century, the name Nigeria did not exist. Various empires and kingdoms occupied what is now reckoned with as Nigeria. Such empires and kingdoms include Oyo Empire, Kanem Borno Empire, Benin Kingdom, and Caliphate, etc. All these administrative entities enjoyed relative peace as a result of their homogeneous cultural and linguistic features and marginal differences. The advent of colonialism forcefully brought the disparate ethno-linguistic groups together for colonial administrative convenience. The British attacked Lagos in 1851 and made the colony a decade after. Subsequent conquests brought all the modern Nigeria under British Rule, administered first by Royal Niger Company. The name Nigeria was first coined and used by Mac-

Shaw, then a correspondent with *London Times* newspaper in her January 1, 1897 dispatch. The name stuck with the adoption of *Northern Nigeria* on January 1, 1900 by Brigadier General Lord Lugard, based on Shaw's suggestion, to refer to the Northern Protectorates of the *Royal Niger Companies' Territories*. By the time the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated in 1914, modern Nigeria was born (Omolewa, 1986).

Colonial rule prevailed in Nigeria between then and 1960. The indirect rule system was adopted in the North because of its established administrative system while the Southern parts that were not as politically united were ruled directly. Between 1922 and 1960, there were quests for self rule which greatly intensified after the Second World War in which the Nigerian war veterans were able to demystify the invincibility of the *White Man*. Agitations soon attained a frenzied tempo with the formation of political parties and by October 1, 1960, Nigeria became an independent nation, subsequently becoming the 99th member of the United Nations. The implication of this historical sketch is that Nigeria has always responded positively to the forces of globalization, evident in the official status of English, a colonial heritage, and the retention of the name Nigeria, unlike under African countries that changed their names after the attainment of political independence.

There are as many cultures as there are languages in Nigeria. Each culture represents the people's ways of life, norms, values, customs, ethos, ethics, and etiquettes and complete worldview. Chief among these cultural values are the languages we speak, that reflect the world we live. Colonialism was a historical accident, a globalization that disrupted Nigerians' ways of life even though it had added blessings. The vast array of Nigerian languages became subordinated under the domineering wave of the English language. The situation has been illustrated to be a negative effect of globalization, linguistically such that the country's enormous linguistic resources have turned into a curse rather than a blessing (Lawal, 2004). But multilingualism is better seen from the positive angle as the sheer diversity of flowers in a garden is considered precious to its vitality, diversity and beauty (Bamgbose, 1991). The response to the bemoaning multilingualism and globalization, the effective approach to the inevitable.

Linguistic Situation of Nigeria

Generally, the linguistic situation in Nigeria can be analyzed from three angles of exoglossic, endoglossic and semi-endoglossic. These three groups of languages respectively are English (the foreign language in Nigeria), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Kanuri (the indigenous in Nigeria) and Pidgin (the elements of which

(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, Batonnu)
- e) Three hundred and fifty (350) small sized languages (e.g. Bazange) (Williamson, cited in Lawal, 2006).

Another classification by Awonusi (2004) was based on demographical (population), geographical (spread) and sociolinguistic (functional) parameters which show that Nigeria is made up of decamillions, millionaire and minor languages. The decamillions 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, Igbo, 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 and hardly as languages of education. Most of these languages are becoming extinct, a typical example of which is Koma (Lawal, 2006).

The peculiar Nigerian cultural values, like languages, are being eroded by the pop culture brought by globalization. Greeting, cuisine, appearance (i.e. appearance and dress), custom, occupation, religion and other cultural components are giving way to acculturation, the suppression and subjugation of African culture, a tragic phenomenon of history that is fast destroying the cultural complexion of not only the budding generation but also the adults (Ogunjimi and Na'Allah, 2005:36). The tragic situation ensnaring the youths of today is that with the monolingual

families is fast resulting in a zero language scenario. This is because the English used by the younger generation, despite being introduced to them as a *first language* of sort, is *semi-literate*, while they are ignorant of, and/or illiterate in, their own mother tongue (Obafemi, 2006:13). What is evident in the cultural situation of Nigeria is pathetically painted as follows:

The budding generation, which is to serve as the safety valve and promoter of cultural continuity, are (sic) in most cases uprooted from the traditional environment. This is a serious impediment for the study of African oral literature and the practice of African culture in general in contemporary Africa and in the New World. Many youths are not born in the traditional setting, and it is an asthmatic injury for people to mention the village in their hearing. Even many adults do not want to have any dealings with tradition again. The hip-hop generation in the New World, and even those forming in Africa, are fast adopting a bastardization of urbanity enhanced by electronic gadget to represent a new cultural identity (Ogunjimi and Na'Allah, 2005: 35-36).

The Roles of Culture in Development

Culture is defined 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*. It is an all-embracing entity, 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-destruction. Most developed societies are great by virtue of having confidence in their culture, promoting and enhancing it as a catalyst for progress drive. The colonialists understood the role of culture in charging people to action. Their method was therefore to denigrate and scorn the colonized peoples' culture and then systematize the destruction of their own culture, their own thinking, their own identity. The consequence is the absolute belief in the colonialists' cultural programs and policies. This is the bane of many nations of the developed and developing world. Seven roles of culture are outlined, closely following Mazrui (2000):

Culture functions as lenses of perception. It reflects how people see themselves and see their environment. For individuals and societies, passing through life without culture is analogous to being guided as a blind man. The African philosophy of life is congruent with the existence of a Supreme Being, for instance, and there are many myths about the creation of the world. Traditional Africa also perceived man as a social being, not just as an individual but as an integral part of the society. African culture thus embraced communalism as

opposed to the individualism of the modern society. An individual lived within a close-knit family system where his actions and reactions were moulded by family values and subject to familial intervention. He would not marry a wife, for instance, his family would. Marriage is contracted not just between individuals but rather between families. The idea of *me and my (nuclear) family* that underpins modern society therefore did not arise.

- (b) Culture secondly serves as a spring of motivation. *What people respond to as incentives or disincentives for certain patterns of behaviour is a phenomenon which is greatly influenced by culture* (Mazrui, 2000:5). People were motivated to work hard, setting out early in the morning (at cock-crow) because hard work was synonymous with success. Many oral traditions (folk stories, lores, aphorisms, proverbs and songs) in Nigerian cultures denounce indolence and indolent people while several others promote and advance the spirit of hard work. The present predilection for wealth without work, the first of the seven blunders of the modern world identified by Mahatma Ghandi, prevalent in the Nigerian socio-political system, was then anomalous. The African philosophy of life is that what is worth having is worth working for, an antithesis of desiring to reap from where one did not sow in the pop culture, serving as a precursor as well as catalyst to corruption in all its forms.
- (c) Another role of culture is that it serves as a standard of judgment. The basis of what is right or wrong, good or bad is provided by culture. Honour and respect were conferred on the elderly in African cultures and their words were automatically associated with wisdom and experience. Senility is often associated with old age in the pop culture, with the elderly being considered as being out of tune with the contemporary world, the real world of the day as opposed to the old world of theirs. So, in the traditional culture, it is wrong to be separated from the parents at their old age; perhaps to be taken care of by strangers in special homes prepared for the old and feeble, the unproductive members of the society. This is right however in the modern pop culture. Another example is morality and sexual restraint. While virginity before marriage was highly valued in African culture and was considered sacrosanct, that the institution of marriage could be nullified without it; in modern culture, it is despised. A young girl is conventionally expected to have experimented sex before marriage, with her eventual husband or other kinds of men, so as to have obtained *field experience*.

The morality level of the traditional and modern societies when compared tells the difference.

- (d) Culture also functions as the basis of stratification. *Rank, caste and class are all profoundly conditioned by, if not created, by culture* (Mazrui, 2000:6). In essence, culture determines one's aptitude based on institutionalized parameters. Culture, especially its geographical component, determines occupation. Nigerian societies were stratified as fishing, farming, weaving, hunting, etc. societies as conditioned by their culture and environments. Gender roles are also allotted by culture: the woman was traditionally a home keeper, and man a bread winner. That various African cultures oppressed and subjugated women is a common belief. Yet, history provides a different picture, especially before the African landscape was distorted and perverted by colonialism and its consequences. In the pre-colonial period in Nigeria for instance, various communities held their women in high esteem. Indeed, *they were apportioned social and political roles accordingly in those societies* (Adedimeji, 2006b). They were active as goddesses and priests (Yemoja of the Yoruba), political figures (*Iyalode* of the Yoruba), warriors (*Queen Amina of Zaria*) business moguls (*Omu Okwei of Ossomari*) and administrators (*Megira of Borno*), etc. As Ogunsheye (cited in Attou, 2002) notes, in pre-colonial Africa *a woman who was without a craft or trade or who was totally dependent on her husband, was not only rare, but was regarded with contempt*. Colonialism helped to entrench stratification: women's roles were systematically relegated and while men dominated the production of cash crops that yielded heavy monetary returns, women were in charge of food crops which were only for subsistence and meagre earning (Adedimeji, 2006b).

Culture serves the important role as a means of communication. Culture produces language and it is advanced by it. The engine room of development is culture, with all its linguistic and non-linguistic variables. Communication is all what makes the world network, interact and advance. Relevant questions posed by experts are: can any country approximate first rank economic development if it relies overwhelmingly on foreign languages for its discourse on development and transformation and in education? Will Africa ever effectively take off when it is held hostage so tightly to the languages of its former imperial powers? If development means modernization minus dependency, how can development be attained through perceiving the world through the

eyes of the Other? These are questions that warrant thinking about, so that Nigeria will be great.

- (f) The sixth function of culture lies in defining production and consumption and influencing them. As in genealogy, culture imbues certain traits in individuals in relation to production and consumption. While some cultures may be enterprising, others may not be so daring. The Igbo in Nigeria are noted for their daring entrepreneurship traits. A larger percentage of what is *made in Nigeria*, original and counterfeit, is produced by the Igbo. While cultures may imbue productivity, other cultures may settle for consumerism. Attitudes to education are also culturally determined. While some cultures may value education, learning, skill acquisition and training, some cultures may treasure having just whatever nature and providence offer them, with the belief that nature does not allow a vacuum.
- (g) Culture, finally, constitutes the basis of identity. The definition of *self* and *other*, *us* and *them* is determined by culture. Being Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, *Efik*, *Kanuri*, etc. is a function of cultural variables like lineage system, kinship and language. To be removed from one's culture is to be deprived of one's identity. To lose one's identity is to be tossed in the wind fluttering along like a leaf separated from its parent tree. The recognition of self and where *self* belongs is a property of culture. Even in modern and cosmopolitan cities where there is a wide diffusion of people, each individual still has his sanctuary, his cultural base within which he feels more secure than elsewhere.

These fundamental functions of culture indicate that sustaining one's cultural heritage is as important as preserving one's life itself. It smacks of intellectual naivety, immaturity and misplaced priority to discard one's culture. It is in the light of the foregoing that Nigerians must think, plan and act strategically in order to salvage the nation from the cultural/linguistic disaster that hovers ominously on its horizon.

The Survival of Nigerian Languages and Cultures in the Era of Globalization

Language and culture are so critical to a nation's development that meaningful development can be achieved without them. Language is an integral part of culture as:

Culture embraces all the material and non-material expressions of a people as well as the processes with which these expressions are communicated. It has to do with all the social, ethical, intellectual, scientific, artistic and technological

expressions and processes of a people usually ethnically and/or nationally or supra-nationally related, and usually living in a geographically contiguous area, which they pass to their successors and how these are passed on (Andah, 1982: 45).

For the survival of Nigerian cultures and languages, the tripartite process discussed as follows is desirable:

Strategic Thinking

It is highly essential and strategic that Nigerians think high of their languages and cultures as their own heritage to showcase to the world. An open sore that assails the African continent in general, and the Nigerian context in particular, is the lackadaisical, ambivalent or even negative attitudes unabashedly displayed towards Nigerian indigenous languages (Igboanusi and Ohia, 2001; Iwara, 2003). This situation has arguably accounted for the perennial quest for development. But, development is not a magical seed that sprouts in any field; it rather grows where there is fertile cultural and linguistic humus that nourishes it. In other words, development is about genuine development in indigenous languages because they play a role in technological, scientific, economic and educational progress and prosperity (Macharia, 2003). The dilemma confronting Nigeria, like the rest of Africa, more ever than any period in history, is the evolution of a generation that is neither competent in the mastery of its foreign language nor its indigenous languages (Cammiller, 1986; Iwara, 2004). *Thinking strategically* essentially involves cultivating appropriate language attitudes that would make Nigerians proud of their languages and cultures without which they lose their sense of not only existing but living.

As a basis for strategic thinking, it is important to note that globalization is not totally a situation in which nations and peoples are helpless. It is not agreed that the harmonization of cultures is what globalization is about. Rajee (2000) notes that globalization is not synonymous with homogenization as diverse identities will not be lost. Nobody can lay claim to globalization—it is complex and beyond the control of anybody or nation (Adamu, 2003). Thus, it is advisable to clear the cobwebs from one's thinking and develop a positive mental attitude: that what is inevitable is welcome; that globalization is good and it is expedient one devises means of surviving within globalization. As Hill and Stone (1991:65) counsel, *What you think. Your thoughts are evaluated by whether your thoughts are positive or negative.* Strategic thinking involves accepting that as good, that Nigeria is good, that our cultures are good, that God did not make a mistake making us who we are and live where we live; that God is good. Nigeria and Nigerians will be great when we direct our thoughts, control our

emotions and as such our destiny will be ordained. America is great because Americans think and act great.

Strategic Planning

The *strategic planning* requires a commitment towards preserving the Nigerian languages through the appropriate investment in the sector of culture. This includes but is not limited to the language engineering processes of orthographization, graphization, standardization, modernization and popularization of Nigerian languages (Ezikeojiaku, 2002) or what Capo (1990:1) refers to as codification, standardization, modernization, development, reform, etc. Language engineering is the domain of applied linguistics that is concerned with the design and rehabilitation of strategies (i.e. the conscious and deliberate steps) toward the rehabilitation and optimal utilization of individual languages (Capo, 1990:1). This strategic planning, a property of language planning, is made up of three major areas: corpus planning, status planning and acquisition planning.

Codification embraces orthographization and graphization. While the former refers to the way the users of the language choose to represent the letters of the alphabet of their language, a system of reducing speech to written symbols, the latter (graphization) involves the development of a writing system and rules of spelling and convention of writing. Developing orthography always precedes graphization: while orthography may involve using the Roman, Arabic, Chadic scripts, and graphization makes it easy for communication to take place from one generation to the other. In a broader perspective, codification is not only limited to writing. It includes the production of primers, spelling books, grammar books and dictionaries so that the writing of the language would be efficient and follow a logical pattern among various writers. Standardization is the development of a variety of language which is considered the norm and supersedes regional or social dialect, which makes it serve as a model or a frame of reference from other varieties. *Codification* is like *standardization* except that the latter aims explicitly at a *normalized (and prescribed) orthography and pronunciation, a prescriptive reference dictionary, etc.* (Capo, *ibid*).

Modernization often refers to the expansion of the lexicon in order for the language to be relevant to the expression of the subtleties of modernity in science, technology, philosophy, law and governance. Language modernization is the *process of engineering a language to become an equal to other developed languages as a medium of communication*. It is a process involving the creation of new words and expressions, borrowing and development of new styles and forms of discourse (Ezikeojiaku, 2002: 286). Popularization is the last stage of language development which involves creating appropriate

ness of the language through relevant agencies such as the school and the media. The stage of popularization is the crucial stage of publicity.

Appropriate projects and commissions towards the attainment of this should be mapped out such that practical efforts can be geared towards attaining the goals embedded in the various stages of the plan. Research centers like National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN), Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), etc. would have to be energized, empowered and funded to direct and oversee the planning and execution of various projects appertaining to the codification, standardization and functionalization of Nigerian languages. The death of a language to a nation is akin to the death of a family member or it is even worse. While a family member can be replaced, relatively speaking, with giving birth to a new child, or getting married to a new spouse, a dead language cannot be replaced as hardly do new natural languages get born. It is thus a monumental loss to a country to lose its languages and it is curious that in Nigeria and sub-Sahara Africa, languages are dying almost on a daily basis.

Strategic Action

This critical issue that should bother Nigerian policy makers and the entire citizenry is the fate of the indigenous cultures and languages in a world increasingly becoming flat and tiny (Friedman, 2005). The current era of globalization 3.0., it appears on the surface, is antithetical to the survival of indigenous languages but it behooves every linguistic nationality to preserve its culturo-linguistic heritage as not to lose its past and present, and by extension, its future. This is because as argued, globalization is not about encroaching other peoples' cultures but a dynamic system through which the local experiences in places generate response in other places. Globalization is thus at force in the global concern for various political, economic, social crises ravaging some parts of the world. The *strategic* of adapting with the trends of a global world without losing the essence of one's local/national heritage is pertinent to the survival of a nation. There can be no meaningful development except on a linguistic basis (Isayev, 1977). As such, decolonization in all its forms should be strengthened while not compromising the gains of modernization. The most prevalent form of neo-colonialization, it is argued, is the continuous trampling on the 'linguistic rights' of the indigenous languages and the over-celebration of the English language as the American pop-culture. This situation cannot guarantee a bright future for Nigeria at both short and long terms. The world must be made to recognize the contributions of various individuals and nations to

the global pool and the linguistic and cultural values of Nigeria are veritable goods for the global market.

As such, acting strategically in Nigeria involves having a clear language and cultural policy, which unfortunately, as Musau (cited in Macharia 2003) observes, many African nations including Nigeria, do not have. It is high time Nigeria evolved a workable language policy which would preserve the linguistic rights of Nigerian languages in the scheme of things. Other components of this strategic action include, as Macharia (2003) submits: (a) the use of African languages (b) the use of African names, rather than the trend for names that do not reflect African identity (c) encouraging and supporting African music, dance and drama as potent ways of cultural expression (d) standardization and patronage of traditional African medicine, the efficacy of which has been empirically established (Dopamu, 2003) and (e) the construction and use of cultural centers in rural and urban areas.

Other strategies of preserving Nigerian cultural and linguistic values are:

- (a) encouraging the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages and cultures through encouraging the teachers of Nigerian languages and motivating the learners. Governments may consider it essential to grant employment opportunities to linguists of Nigerian languages and provide scholarships to study Nigerian languages at all levels of education.
- (b) sponsoring the publication of literature and materials on Nigerian languages and taking up the responsibility of distributing such works. There is no doubt that authors would write in Nigerian languages if they are sure that such works would be published and adequately circulated.
- (c) supporting cultural and linguistic associations or groups that promote Nigerian heritage. Film producers, directors and artists that focus on cultural awareness should be recognized and motivated;
- (d) compelling broadcasting in Nigerian languages at the national level. Floating newspapers and magazines in languages spoken in various states and using the media to create political awareness among the masses. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Broadcasting Corporation of Nigeria (BCON) should be positioned to conduct a meaningful percentage of their network transmissions in Nigerian languages.

Languages and the American Paradigm: A Lesson for Nigeria
Against the backdrop of the existing apathy towards and marginalization of Nigerian languages, it is relevant to draw insights

from and argue for the American multilingual model. As a melting point of divergent cultures and traditions, peoples and nationalities, the US offers a good example for Nigeria in terms of protecting the linguistic rights of her citizens. The American paradigm is also ideal because as the driving force behind globalization, attitudes to languages in the US would show the true nature of globalization whether it is truly, as being speculated, strictly about homogenization or harmonization of languages or otherwise.

As a matter of fact, the dawn of globalization saw the policy shift from *English Only* to *English Plus* in the US. While *English Only* movement used to be popular, campaigning for the use of English alone in private and public life as a way of forging linguistic unity, the *English Plus* movement considers it restrictive and limiting to rob Americans of the values of heritage languages. The advantages of speaking many languages have thus been recently documented by scholars and researchers (e.g. Crawford, 1999; Krashen et. al., 1998; Fishman, 1991). Chief among these benefits, which account for the predominance of English Plus as a linguistic philosophy and the creation of more linguistic space in the American educational system, are that multilingualism (or plurilingualism, especially to those who use English for integrative and instrumental purposes) is beneficial in:

- (a) achieving cognitive and academic growth: Psychologists have found that linguistic plurality in individuals correlates with greater mental flexibility. This is evident in the fact that possession of two symbolic systems provides more than one way of solving a problem or approaching an issue. For instance, Hakuta (1986) champions the cause of 'balanced bilingualism' as a way of accelerating cognitive development; and Portes and Hao (1998) found that cultivating communicative skills in one's mother tongue leads to a superior academic performance;
- (b) helping with identity conflicts: A mastery of native languages assists people, especially in their formative years and years of adulthood, struggling with ethnic ambivalence or negative attitudes to their own culture. *It enables them not only to explore their roots and associate more closely with fellow speakers of the language, but also to overcome feelings of alienation with a sense of pride in their community* (Crawford, 1999);
- (c) entrenching family values: As communication is an integral part of forging harmonious familial relationships, native languages are powerful in passing across values, norms, advice and traditions to children. Language loss, a consequence of several sociolinguistic factors, creates barriers

within families and generations, which ultimately results in tension, conflict and sometimes violence (Wong Fillmore, 1991; Cho and Krashen, 1998);

- (d) creating career advantages: The more languages one speaks, the brighter one's career opportunities are. The globalized market-place of today and the increasing diversity of populations make bilingualism/multilingualism (or biliteracy/multiliteracy) more valued by employers. In the research of Boswell (1998), it was found that Florida Hispanics that are fluent in English and their native Spanish earned about 50 percent higher than their colleagues who speak English only. Similar patterns are found in states like California, Texas and New York, among others. The globalized world makes linguistic proficiency in diverse languages relevant and advantageous with the remarkable diffusion in international trade, science and technology, tourism, social services and education. As *language brokers*, they help themselves and others in negotiating tricky situations in English (Gold, 1999);
- (e) maintaining cultural vitality: Skills in native languages open worlds of experience that would have remained shut not only in literature, art, music but virtually in every gamut of everyday life of ethnic communities. Shebala (1999) quotes a member of the Navajo tribal council while resisting the English-only legislation that *once we lose our language, we lose our culture and we're just another brown-skinned American*.

The implication of the above for Nigeria is that what is good for America is good for Nigeria too. Approximately 337 languages are spoken or signed by the US population, out of which 176 are indigenous to the area (Grimes, 2000). Three US states, for instance, are officially bilingual: Louisiana (English and French), New Mexico (English and Spanish), and Hawai'i (English and Hawaiian) while another three US territories are also bilingual: American Samoa (Samoan and English), Guam (English and Chamorro), and Puerto Rico (Spanish and English). At least, one US territory is trilingual: Northern Marianas Islands (English, Chamorro, and Carolinian).

The imposition of English alone and the suppression of local/minority languages are not considered to be harmonious with the type of development that the US envisages. Despite the prominence of English in the world and its indigenous status in the US, spoken by 82 per cent of the population, it is not the US official language as the US has none (www.en.wikipedia.org). English was not proclaimed a national language until recently, for it was just on May 18, 2006 that the US Senate voted on an amendment to an immigration reform bill

that would declare English the national language of the United States (*Chicago Tribune*, 2006). The sole privilege being accorded English, which is spoken by less than 30 percent of Nigerians [though Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000: 49) say literacy level in Nigeria is 57 percent] in all spheres of national life at the expense of the indigenous languages cannot guarantee Nigeria sustainable development and as such, Nigerian languages should be promoted as a matter of urgency. The vast benefits of promoting indigenous languages are too fundamental to be compromised.

It is established that, as Samuel Johnson once said, *language is the pedigree of nations* (Iwara, 2003: 15) and *our development of everything from music to warfare could never have come about in the absence of language* (Trask, 1995). This realization perhaps informs giving language the appropriate policy thrust in the US in this era of globalization. The year 2005, for instance, was declared *The Year of Languages* in the US and the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) was launched by the US President on January 5, 2006 while February 2006 was equally declared a *Discover Languages* month (Adedimeji, 2006c). Language is considered so crucial and critical that the US government encourages the teaching and learning of several world languages including those of Nigeria in the American schools, colleges and Universities. Such as the US considers linguistic competence in world languages crucial to national security and world peace, Nigeria must construe the preservation, the empowerment and development of Nigerian languages essential to national development, national survival and heritage. This is an important lesson to draw from the American example.

Conclusion

Various attempts have been made to conceptualize globalization, the revolution that is sweeping across the world. Attitudes to globalization also vary from positive, negative to ambivalent as it has impacted strongly on all aspects of the modern age. One area where globalization appears to exert powerful and long range influence is the area of language and culture. It is maintained that as globalization is a complex process, it is erroneous to associate it exclusively with linguistic and cultural homogenization. This misconception has provided a theoretical framework for the assumption that pop culture and acculturation are indispensable and that ethnic communities are helpless. Evidence from the US, the driving force of globalization 3.0., appears to provide a different picture. Rather than suppress indigenous and foreign languages to allow total Englishization, the dawn of globalization has occasioned interest in world languages and cultures by the U.S policy makers. As such, globalization cannot be said to be primarily about cultural suppression and linguistic

imperialism while the US accommodates and promotes world cultures and increases space for learning many world languages and appreciating other peoples' cultures. The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program (of which the present writer is an alumnus) wherein young scholars are recruited to teach for about a year their national/native languages, cultures and literatures at various levels of American educational system is a case in point, among other educational and cultural exchange programs of the US Department of State.

This paper ultimately submits that the essence of globalization in our own case should not lie in submerging the Nigerian languages and cultures. Indeed, globalization is an ambivalent process that merits neither a comprehensive endorsement nor a blanket rejection (Nwigwe, 2003: 619). Yet, the prevalent post-colonial language policies of Nigeria, and Africa at large, have created the dominance of hegemonic languages, especially English (Awonusi, 2006: 62). As such, counteracting some of the negative consequences of globalization involves socio-political and cultural awakening among developing societies with the tools and technology provided by the industrialized world harnessed to preserve the Nigerian linguistic and cultural heritage. Strategies towards ensuring this survival begin from strategic thinking to planning and to action. Government should start the process by according Nigerian languages the constitutional recognition and attention they deserve and creating policies that will strengthen their teaching and learning. Encouraging teachers of Nigerian languages will stimulate others in developing interest in the study of our indigenous languages. This encouragement will go a long way in changing Nigerians' attitudes to their languages for better and will facilitate the language engineering process that will eventually preserve the languages, orature, cultures and literatures of Nigerians for rapid development and posterity.

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