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EDITORIAL

The African Journal for the Study of Educational Issues has really hit the educational research field in Africa with a bang. This very first edition of the journal has endeavoured to live up to the hallowed tradition of academic publishing – that of higher standards, academic rigour and thoroughness both in the conduct of research and in reporting research reports.

We have tried to draw from different fields of the educational sciences, and have even gone a step further to bring in valuable research from other fields that do impact on Education. Our field of concentration (Education) does not take place in a socio-economic-political vacuum. For this reason, all aspects of societal life impinge on Education. We will therefore always encourage colleagues from non-Education faculties to read the journal and to contribute articles that can help to broaden the horizon of scholars in the field of Education.

Our first edition is impressive both in the sheer number of contributions and in their quality. We intend to uphold this high standard in all subsequent editions of the journal.

We are impressed by the number of collaborative research efforts reported here in the form of joint-authored articles. The advance of knowledge is helped by researchers collaborating to analyse issues from as wide a variety as possible. We do hope that the tradition of joint research undertakings will be encouraged in our faculties of Education.

Perhaps the most important attraction of this journal is the immediate applications of the findings of the research reported to education policy and practice. Our future editions will give particular emphasis to this, since the research-development divide in Education must be bridged as a means of promoting the habit of evidence-based policy and practice decisions.

Our readers would do well to make the journal a 'must read', a 'must keep' and a 'must apply' material. We earnestly look forward to your scholarly contributions that will maintain the high standards that have been the hallmark of this maiden edition.

Prof. Pai OBANYA
(Editor in Chief)

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GLOBALIZATION AND THE SURVIVAL OF NIGERIAN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This paper takes a critical look at the current revolution going on in information technology and the challenges or threat of globalization on the national life of Nigeria especially in the area of culture. Larger or more developed languages dominate small languages. The possibility of many Nigerian indigenous languages going to extinction cannot be ruled out unless practical steps are taken to arrest the imbalance. Access to information is done through the imperial languages; hence Nigerian languages like most African languages are relegated to the background. The paper therefore suggests what could be done to make Nigerian languages fit in for the challenges of a globalizing world.

Keywords: Globalisation, Survival Nigerian Languages

Background To The Study

It is no longer news that technological dramatic changes are taking place in information technology. The communication tools and information resources of the information and Communication Technology (ICT) provide information on varying topics like online versions of research reports, newspapers, magazine, admission list, examination results and many others which provide a wealth of information that can be said to be greater than the holding of a typical Nigerian library. Some of the communication tools include the electronic mail (E-mail), software programmes, business to business Internet communications, entertainment activities and many others. These communication resources could be procured by linking up of computer networks known as the Internet.

The internet which could be described as a global information system has continued to make profound impact in the area of information sharing with an unprecedented speed especially in making possible rapid business transactions, global agreement among individuals and organizations (Isok, 2004). The ICT is no doubt turning the world into a global village.

Globalization according to Giddens (1990) in Orru (2004) is 'intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local activities are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'. Steger (2003) in Adegbola (2004) identifies the following as the focus of globalization:

- (a) Creation of new and multiplication of existing social networks and activities that go beyond the traditional political, economic cultural and geographical boundaries.
- (b) It is reflected in the expansion and stretching of social relations, activities and interdependencies.
- (c) It involves the intensification and acceleration of social activities and exchanges.
- (d) The involvement of the subjective plan of human consciousness.

Globalization has therefore been described by Adegbola (2004) a set of processes that manifest in cultural, economic, political, technological, ecological and many other dimensions. Udoh (2004) notes that since globalization involves some interaction, the tendency is there for some groups involved in it to monopolize the process by colonizing the activities instead of sharing these with the participating members. The implication according to Udoh is that the sharing can only be possible if every participant is empowered through the acquisition of the correct tools of participation.

Nigeria is highly blessed with a rich cultural heritage and a crucial instrument for preserving and transmitting this cultural heritage is language. Nigerian cultural heritage is as diverse as the languages, being a multilingual country with about 400 native language (Osaji, 1979 and Bamgbose, 1994). The originality and uniqueness of Nigerian languages need to be preserved. The languages need to be empowered through a deliberate effort of development so that they can properly positioned to have a place in the current globalization drive. During and after the colonial days, it appears that the Nigerian languages were made to be subordinate to English. In spite of the excellency of the language provisions in the National Policy on Education (2004) little seems to have been done. Oderinde (2005) notes that there are no legal and other sanctions outlined for any defaulting agency on the implementation of the provision most especially on the issue of teaching the child in his or her provision most especially on the issue of teaching the child in his or her mother tongue or the languages of immediate environment at the pre-primary and first three years of primary education. According to Akinloye (2002) the three major Nigerian languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) are among some African

universities in the United States of America. This attests to the fact that Nigerian languages have the potentials of being used in the mass media globally just like the Hausa language that is being used in the network news of British Broadcasting Corporation. The languages also have the potentials of transferring scientific and technological knowledge. It is the duty of Nigerians to revolutionize their indigenous languages. Our languages and cultures will have a better chance of surviving if we have the same academic knowledge as the dominant society (Littlebear, 1990). Nigerian languages should not be left out of the current revolution as this will lead to their being colonized by other languages that are currently being empowered.

Orru (2004) notes that with the latest successes in science and technology, man has broken beyond his immediate environment in the seeking and dissemination of information, unlike in the past when there was the near lack of sophisticated communication gadgets. ICT, according to him is therefore a child of necessity and facilitator of globalization. Isok (2004) however observes that while globalization has revolutionized and bettered education, healthcare, governance, manufacturing, banking and other sectors, in Nigeria, the effects have not been commendable in the area of Nigerian language use and development as globalization has courted the philosophy that anything short of international quality is not worth having. Out of the diverse Nigerian languages, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba could be regarded as international languages as they are being studied and spoken beyond Nigerian borders.

Prevailing Conditions Of Globalization On Nigerian Languages

From every indication, globalization and its ancillary of ICTs have relegated the local or non-international languages like the Nigerian languages to be background. Most information dissemination and retrieval are called out in English. This situation has been noted by Ndimeles in Orru (2004) that for more than a half century, African nations have been battling with the imposition of non-indigenous African languages on the educational system and the situation had been aggravated by globalization and the overwhelming presence of the imperial languages in the ICTs. He also noted that African languages and their native speakers live in a more intense and harsh linguistic environment as access to information is done through an imperial language. He therefore opined that one third of African languages would die before the first quarter of this century as the dominant use of the languages continue to reduce.

The global communication system had both its positive and negative sides. Looking at the negative plane, it could be regarded as an instrument of

colonization as it provides the colonialists and their allies the tool to exercise superiority and sovereignty over the underdeveloped and undeveloped languages. This no doubt amounts to language imperialism. The goal of colonization is to claim sovereignty over territory and people outside a state's own boundaries in order to facilitate economic domination over their resources, labour and market. Adegbola (2003) pointed out that the said domination transcends economic to include political and cultural dominance. According to him when a nation is colonized in this way, the citizens would become mere caricatures of themselves. It is therefore necessary for African nation including Nigeria to note that ICTs could be another attempt by the colonialists and their allies to destroy our value system and cultural heritage by making our languages irrelevant. While it will be impossible to destroy globalization, radical steps must be taken to empower Nigerian languages to swim conveniently in the fast running global waters.

Towards The Preservation Of Nigerian Language

It should be noted that globalization as a concept is not bad in itself. It however poses a great challenge towards the need for every nation or people to take the issue of developing their languages and promoting their cultural heritage more seriously. In the other words, in spite of the negative sides of globalization, it must be realized that it has come challenge us into rising up to the situation by putting up concerted effort to change the status of Nigeria languages from undeveloped to developed and from local to national as well as from national to internationally recognized languages. While it could be unpracticable for all Nigerian languages to be internationally recognized, these languages of wider communication (LWC) like Hausa in the northern part of Nigeria, Igbo in the eastern region and Yoruba in the southern region could be promoted in this regard.

The following suggestions are therefore put forward towards making Nigerian languages more powerful to compete adequately with the highly developed ones in a harsh linguistic environment.

- As earlier suggested in Makinde (2001), where more than one language exists, the people must be allowed to choose a language of wider communication to be used as medium of instruction and to be studied along with a major Nigerian language and English language. This should also be done at the state and at the regional levels. National language or choice of lingua franca is an emotive issue in a plurilingual society like Nigeria. Therefore the issue of one language for all may not be realizable.

- The National Assembly should endeavour to implement the provision of the Nigerian Constitution (1999) that the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and that adequate arrangement shall be made to add Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba to the language of parliament. It is only Ekiti and Osun states (Nigerian states in the southwest region) that set aside just one day in which they conduct deliberations in indigenous language.
- The French language's sudden ascendancy into the National Policy on education (1998) as the second official language in Nigeria is no doubt a big setback for the various indigenous languages. The implementation must not be pursued at the detriment of Nigerian indigenous languages.
- The Nigerian language teachers should be trained and where necessary they should be retrained in order to be literate in the use of modern technologies in teaching especially in programming information in computer software.
- Language institutions in Nigeria in collaboration with the National Institute of Nigerian language (NINLAN) should open a web site for Nigerian languages where developments and information about the varieties of Nigerian indigenous languages could be consulted for wide learning and acculturation.
- The language institutions should teach the local languages through their folk literature and community theaters, promoting the cultural values of the people. The use of translation clips would make teaching more effective and the programmes may be aired via internet facilities like the Digital Satellite Television (DSTV).
- Parents too must ensure that the communicate in their local languages with their children at home. They should equally have keep interest in preserving their cultural heritage and transmitting this to the new generations.
- Language Associations, the Association of Nigerian Language Teachers (ANLAT); Association for Promoting Nigerian Languages and Culture (APNILAC) and ethnic groups, the Ohanfeze, Oodua People's Congress Ijaw National Congress, Arewa People's Congress and many others should assist the government in the area of monitoring and enlightenment of the people on the importance of promoting the indigenous languages.

Conclusion

No language should be seen as being inferior another. Human language is dynamic and it can made to grow and develop to accommodate linguistic complexities of a globalizing world. This could be achieved by seeing the current trend as a challenge and evolve strategies towards ensuring the growth and development of Nigerian major and minor languages. Nigerians must develop positive attitudes towards the use of their language. If the Asian elites use indigenous languages more than to the African elites south of Sahara this shows that many African elites are alienated from their linguistic milieu. Among the Asians, the language of the marketplace is much closer to the language of the classroom while in among many Africans, the language of the marketplace (indigenous) and the language of classroom (foreign) are distant. The Nigerian government officials should be proud to use any of the major languages at any national or international functions to be translated into other international languages. Underdeveloped Nigerian languages must be developed and preserved. When language is used as a medium of instruction and studied as an instructional area, such a language is no doubt highly promoted. Multilingualism should not be an excuse for any African nation like Nigeria for not promoting the indigenous languages. For instance, Oderinde (2005) observes that Nigeria must learn from India, that uses eight other languages apart from English as media of instruction in her universities. Not only that, India has fourteen major languages of instruction in her universities. Not only that, India has fourteen major languages of instruction out of which eleven are regional and two (Hindi and Sanskrit) are non-regional while one (English) is foreign. A few other schools also retain other languages like Portuguese and French as media of instruction. If India, which is not more polarized than Nigeria, can take such liberties in managing their multilingual situation without relegating indigenous languages for English, Nigeria can also promote unity in diversity without sacrificing the indigenous languages at the altar of the English language.

No European language can effectively take the place of the indigenous languages in Nigeria. For instance, European languages in Nigeria as in other African countries have tended to be associated with the elites while the rural populace and urban underclass who constitute the larger population are neglected in terms of education, literacy, mass communication and development. If all the above are considered, our indigenous languages will be adequately promoted and preserved.

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