



REPOSITIONING THE NIGERIAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES FOR FUNCTIONAL UTILITY

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Abstract: Nigeria is a multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural nation. In the recent years, efforts have been made by the government of Nigeria to recognize and preserve the indigenous languages and cultures of Nigeria. According to Ethnologue, some of the Nigerian indigenous languages are endangered while about seven out of the over 500 indigenous languages are extinct. Most common reasons for the endangerment and possible extinction of Nigerian indigenous languages include globalization (where many Nigerians strive to learn and communicate in English), urbanization and mobility (where the rural dweller relocate to the urban cities for want of economic opportunities), emigration (where Nigerian peoples leave the country to settle in other countries). Other factors include indigenous peoples' attitude towards their languages leading to many indigenous people willingly dropping their indigenous languages and refusing to speak and pass on their native languages to the next generation. What is prevalent among the Nigerian indigenous people is the adoption of the English and Nigerian pidgin as part of their acculturation into the majority culture. These and many other factors have increased the vulnerability of Nigerian indigenous languages, leading in some cases, to linguicide. In this paper, Nigerian indigenous languages were projected as the nation's natural products. The functional utility of the languages were highlighted. Justifications for repositioning the Nigerian native languages were made raised. The paper concluded with measures that can facilitate the repositioning of the languages including attitudinal change from the native speakers, development and modernization of the indigenous language, review or formulation of realistic language policy on education, finalizing, approval and implementation of the just concluded national language policy and revitalization of acculturation programme for Nigerian second indigenous languages learners in Colleges of Education and Federal Government colleges all over the country.

Keywords: Reposition, Repositioning, Indigenous Languages and Functional Utility.

Introduction

According to Collins Advanced Learners' Dictionary, the word 'reposition' means to place in a different position; to adjust or alter the position of something or an object. It also means to move it to another place or change its position. To reposition something such as a product or service means to try to interest more or different people in it by way of changing certain things about it or the way it is sold or projected.

Repositioning is a gerund form or present participle of the verb, reposition. The Cambridge Dictionary defined repositioning as 'the process of changing the way people think about a product, service or company'. Indeed Editorial Team (2020) describes repositioning from marketing perspective, as an exciting opportunity to give a product or service a much needed update resulting in a drastic altering of the brand to change what customers think about the products or service. Repositioning

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therefore is the process of changing a target market's understanding or perception of a product or service seeing that product positioning involves what customers think about its features and how they compare it to competing products. Repositioning in the world of marketing involves changing how the target market perceives the product.

Language generally is nature's product. Every people and nation of the world is endowed with a language. Some nations are endowed with multiplicity of languages. Nigeria is one of the multilingual nations of the world. The more a language is used by the native and second language speakers, the higher the value of the language, the people and their culture. Popularity of a language measures the popularity of the speakers. Language identifies a people and their culture. As a living product, language deserves to be marketed by the owners.

An indigenous or autochthonous language is a language that is native to the region and spoken by the indigenous peoples. An indigenous language is from a linguistically distinct community that originated in the area. It is not an imported or foreign language imposed on a people. In Nigerian situation, about 520 indigenous languages are spoken in the different regions (Ethnologue, 2007, Blench, 2014). However, by reason of colonialism, Nigeria is a Anglophone nation. English, the language of the former colonial British- Nigeria is the official language. By official language, it is meant, the language that the government uses for all official messages and communiqués. An official language is a language given supreme status in a particular country, state or jurisdiction (McArthur, 1998). In the natural sense, an official language is not a language used by a people or country, rather it is the language used by the government of the people or country at the domains of judiciary, legislature and or administration. Nigerian Pidgin and Brail are other languages widely spoken in Nigeria. Apart from the English, Pidgin and Brail, all other languages spoken in Nigeria are indigenous.

Nigerian indigenous languages are categorized into national/major languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba); regional languages (Efik-Ibibio, Isoko, Edo, Tiv, Kanuri, Fulfulde, Idoma, Ijaw, Urhobo, Nupe, Gbagyi and Ukuani etc) and very many others, many of which are not yet developed. It is true many Nigerian indigenous languages do not have developed orthography but it is worrisome to watch Nigerians trash in the bin, their indigenous languages both big and small (measured by the population of their native and second language speakers). The developed ones recognized as national languages are under-harnessed, the developing ones are stagnated and the underdeveloped languages are neglected. The flare for English has eroded the cultures of the Nigerian peoples, killed their initiatives, creativity and productivity. The use of English in every domain make Nigerian people say less where they should say more and more where they should say less and sometimes keep mute where they should speak up. The rate the Nigerian indigenous languages are facing endangerment and imminent extinction is alarming. A people without language do not exist. Indigenous languages have many critical roles they play for their speakers. They have social, psychological, spiritual, economic and educational values. If no measures are taken in repositioning the Nigerian indigenous languages, we would loose them and their functional utility values.

In economics, the utility represents the satisfaction or pleasure that consumers receive for consuming a good or service. Utility function measures consumers' preferences for a set of good and services (Blokhin, 2021). Although functional utility is an economics term, it can be applied in any other industry. For instance, Sherta Allaire, a Real Estate Agent describes functional utility as a property's usefulness to the Homeowner or Lessee; a property's usefulness and the variety of purposes for which a homeowner or lessee can use it. She also describes it as the usefulness of a property to the needs of the occupants. In the context of education, functional utility of an education



programme refers to the measure of the usefulness of an education programme vis-à-vis the inputs and outputs. Functional Utility can be summarized as an evaluation or determination of how a good, service, programme, product, language etc. can fulfill its designated purposes. Thus, this paper advocates the repositioning of the Nigerian indigenous languages to enable them fulfill their designated purposes or targeted utility values. In what follows, we shall raise and answer some questions.

What are the Functional Utility Values of the Nigerian Indigenous Languages?

The Nigeria society looks up to her indigenous languages to perform the following functions:

Propagation of functional language education, cultural preservation and integration and promotion of national unity

Education forms the bedrock of national development. Any nation that wishes to be truly developed must be functionally educated. The strong link between education and development makes the slogan, ‘education is development’ real. It is difficult to trace the history of a nation’s development in isolation with the history of her education. Therefore, education is the basic tool for achievement of individual development and national development.

Phelps-Stokes Commission understudied the provision of education in Africa with particular interest in the quantity and quality of education being provided to Africa, Nigeria inclusive by the British government. One of the prominent discoveries published in her reports in 1922 was that ‘African education was nonfunctional and inadaptable because it was not given in the Africa’s indigenous languages and therefore, not rooted in their culture. It recommended among other things that education should be given to the people in their vernacular (Ohaiké and Ikoné, 2004). Following this reports and subsequent agitations, the government of Nigeria began to appreciate the importance of language in the education process, in

preservation of culture, promotion of national integration and unity and provided for indigenous language education. This was captured in the National Policy on Education, ‘government will see to it that the medium of instruction for the early primaries will be the mother tongue (MT) or language of immediate community (LIC) and at a later stage English (NPE, 1977 revised 1981).

This language provision of the NPE was made in recognition of the pedagogical, cognitive, social and psychological justifications of beginning education in a familiar language. Many research findings have supported the benefits of providing initial education in a language the learner is familiar with (Awoniyi, 1985; Chombow, 1990; Olagoke, 1979; Sharama, 1975; NERC, 1971 all cited in Ikoné, 2019). These studies prove that if a child must learn well at school and grasp the basic concepts and be able to make progress in the later life, the language of his initial education must not be strange to him.

Going further, UNESCO (2003) confirms through years of research that children who begin their initial education in MT make better start and continue to outperform their counterparts who begin formal education in a new language. UNESCO even stressed the advantages of starting school in MT to include acquisition of strong initial literacy skill and faster acquisition of second language that would be introduced later in the education cycle. Fafunwa et al. (1989), cited in Anyanwu and Ikoné (2017) revealed through the findings of the Ife Experimental Project, the SYPP that postponed English medium or extended MT medium of instruction in primary education achieve greater educational results. According to their findings, primary education in MT medium leads to more permanent literacy and numeracy; faster and more development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills; provides greater surrender value and makes the child a better adjusted member of his community. Also Okonkwo (1986) was highlighting the importance and place of Nigerian indigenous languages in the education



process, when she warns, ‘any educational system that neglects the first language/MT of the child would automatically be contributing against the mental and social development of the child.

Speaking of cultural preservation, language is a vehicle and instrument of cultural transmission and preservation. Any community or society that loses its language loses its culture. Government in the NPE (2013:15) talks about measures in ensuring that the culture of the nation is kept alive through the teaching of creative and cultural arts and visits to the museums. Teaching of creative and cultural arts as subject will help to some extent but teaching it and other content subjects in the indigenous languages would produce greater and enduring appreciation in the learners. Going further, the multilingual and multiethnic status of Nigeria makes cultural integration and national unity of essence for peaceful co-existence. It is against this expectation that government in the NPE (1977, revised, 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2007) provided for second indigenous language education. The policy stipulates that, ‘at the junior secondary, a child learns one Nigerian language other than his/her MT or first language (L_1); subject to the availability of teachers. The languages to be learned were Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba in addition to the child’s MT. This is the section of the language policy of the NPE that not only lent credence to the establishment of the National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba, but provided the impetus to floating and accrediting Nigerian Second indigenous Languages programme in virtually all the Colleges of Education in Nigeria. These were veritable measures to produce massively, the required number of indigenous languages teacher to facilitate the implementation of the L_2 policy. It is the same section that caused all the Unity schools in Nigeria to teach the three major languages and participate in two weeks acculturation each year. The idea was to use the indigenous languages to foster national, understanding, regeneration, continuity as well as promote cultural linkages. These were

government’s expectations for featuring Nigerian indigenous languages in education. The indigenous languages can achieve these national goals if given the desired political will.

Indigenous Languages as tools for Technological advancement for the nation

Technology is not taught by rote. It requires critical thinking, problem solving and practical approach. It takes deep understanding, initiative and creativity to excel in the world of technology. This is where we are. In this dispensation, anyone, industry and nation that is not technology driven will go down. Therefore, any nation that desires technological advancement must provide education and vocations in the native languages where the learners have comparative language advantage. The industrial revolutions in Europe and America, the technological advancements of China, Japan and India etc. are products of functional and productive educational system provided in their indigenous languages. NERC (1971) cited in Ikonne (2019) reports that, ‘Nigerian children will develop in curiosity, manipulative skills, spontaneous flexibility, initiative, industry and manual dexterity if they are taught through the use of mother tongue’.

The efficacy of indigenous languages in the technological development of case study nations is apparently the reason the Honourable Minister of Science and Technology Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu advocates teaching of sciences and mathematics in indigenous languages medium in primary schools (Lawal, 2017). The Ministry of Science and Technology expressed worries over the low interest in mathematics and the science subjects among primary school pupils and fathoms that the best approach would be to teach mathematics and sciences in indigenous languages in primary schools. The Minister in an interview granted to the Guardian Newspaper on June, 15, 2017 revealed that, ‘... information technology powerhouse like India had long before now adopted a similar strategy by teaching mathematics and science subjects in indigenous languages



at the primary school level. Lawal Iyabo reinforcing the Minister's speech says, 'With the Federal Government's resolve to promote the teaching of mathematics and sciences at primary school level via the use of indigenous languages, Nigeria may not be far from sending its own scientists into space'. And I add, not only sending our scientists to the space, computer hardware and software applications (Nigerian languages customized keyboards), simulations, games, cartoon would be produced and domesticated in Nigerian languages, distant and online teaching and learning will be that is novel here will become the new order. Industrialization will be ignited moving Nigeria possibly from consumption to production nation.

Nigerian indigenous languages as employment providers

Nigerian indigenous languages are expected to provide employment opportunities for Nigerian citizens. If the language provisions of the NPE are implemented, Nigeria is going to require the services of Nigerian indigenous languages teachers in great numbers. Services of translators would be enlisted to translate information and materials into target languages. Terminology developers would be needed to develop the terms that will enhance the capacity of the native languages to meet the science and technology needs of the curriculum and daily communications in the various domains of life. Consider the current situations in the Colleges of Education across Nigeria. With the relaxation of the L₂ language provision in the NPE, L₂ lecturers and teachers have their jobs threatened owing to little or no patronage from students.

Nigerian indigenous languages as tools for mass communication, entertainment and advertising

Nigerian society reserves the right to be informed and entertained in her indigenous languages. Mobilizations and advocacies have greater impact in the masses, grassroots when driven in the native language. Casting movies, beautiful advertisement, music and dances in Nigerian

native languages will bring out the beauties in our native languages as well as showcase the Nigeria's rich cultures.

Nigerian indigenous languages as tools for security management

One of the uses to which Nigerian indigenous language could be put is security management. In this period of insecurity in Nigeria and across the globe, ability to hear, understand and speak other native languages other than one's MT is a huge advantage. It will help in timely information dissemination, dislodgement of anti- social plots, reduce hostility and promote cordiality in the face of danger and crisis. Many people have given testimonies of how they averted danger, molestation and death with the power of the language. We can go on and on but for the scarcity of time. Right we shall consider the present states of the Nigerian indigenous languages and why repositioning is an option.

What are the justifications for repositioning Nigerian Indigenous Languages?

The importance of indigenous languages cannot be undermined. Indigenous languages not only serve as identity of the origin and membership of the indigenous peoples in the community, they carry the ethical values of their ancestors, preserve and transmit their culture from one generation to another, make the organized indigenous knowledge and heritage that are pertinent to their survival and to the hopes and aspirations of their younger and succeeding generations available (UNESCO). The native languages are worth preserving and promoting. For reasons of preservation, revitalization and promotion of indigenous languages, the United Nations (2019) declared 2019 the International year of indigenous languages.

In trying to ascertain if Nigerian indigenous languages need repositioning, we would try to project the Nigerian indigenous languages as sellable products and try to draw allusions from the marketing perspective. Indeed Editorial Team (2020) in analyzing how to know if a brand, product,



service would benefit from repositioning raised the following reasons for consideration:

When you want to target a different audience

If a company or organization is no longer able to make substantial profits by targeting its original audience, customers or clients, it may want repositioning the brand to target a new audience entirely or increase the audience scope. This is applicable to the Nigerian native languages. For example, the use of Nigerian indigenous languages as a medium of instruction is targeted at a particular level of education- early basic education (NPE, 1977, revised 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007and 2013). Both observation and experience have proved that policy a mere principle. If actually, the native languages have any import in the process of education, in cultural integration and national unity, repositioning Nigerian indigenous languages to target wider audience than just the early primaries for their use is not only pertinent but imperative.

Consider the case of French in Nigeria before 1998. In the 1981 Edition of the National Policy on Education (NPE), French was only an elective subject at both junior and senior secondary education. This gave many learners waver to finish secondary education without learning French at all. It is indeed obvious that many French scholars and teacher available today started learning French at the tertiary level of their education. However, at the instance of General Sani Abacha, French assumed a new status both in the school system and in the whole nation for it was recommended that every Nigerian speaks French for smooth interaction with our neighbours. French also was proclaimed the second official language in Nigeria as well as a compulsory school subject (NPE, 1998 Edition). Thus French shifted from being an elective school subject to a compulsory subject at the middle basic education (primaries 4-6) and upper basic education (JSS 1-3). By this singular policy, French was repositioned to target not only a different audience from the original but a much wider audience in Nigeria. Nigerian indigenous

languages deserve such compelling policy touch and repositioning to change their outlook at the educational, national and global contexts?

When you have updated the brand, product, good, service

Indeed Editorial Team reveals that as companies age, their products or services are subjected to some updates or changes. These updates could be driven by federal regulations and policies, cultural shifts and technological advances. When these are the case, repositioning becomes a veritable measure for notifying the public about the changes in other to market the products, services etc. effectively. In the case of Nigerian indigenous languages, some updates are taking place. Initially, emphases were on the three major languages- Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Over time, about 11 other native languages were upgraded to regional languages including Efik-Ibibio, Kanuri, Fulfulde, Tiv etc. Apart from these, more and more indigenous languages are being developed. It will be necessary to assign roles and functions to these languages as they emerge the list of developed languages. Going further, languages that are not modernized would loose their place globally. To catch up with technology advances, a great number of Nigerian indigenous languages would not only require developed and standardized orthography to survive, but would need to give expression to the technology novelties that dominate the present world. Achieving these is a precursor to dismissing the assertions and fallacies that Nigerian native languages lack sufficient vocabulary to express their immediate and extended world. In this sense, Nigerian native languages require repositioning in readiness for greater functional utility

When you need to compete with other brands, products and services

In the business or marketing world, competition is one of the most common reasons for repositioning products, brands and services. A company or organization that



relaxes when her competitors are flooding the market with new or similar products for lower prices has failed and indeed about to be acquired. In every domain of life, competition is present. It brings about changes around the dispositions of stakeholders, producers, consumers and beneficiaries of brands, products or services etc.

Nigerian indigenous languages are facing competition. First is among themselves (native speakers) and second, among the official languages. Native languages cannot be assigned formal or official functions at the state or national level if they have not achieved substantial literacy development. For a native language to be taught as a school subject at any level of education, it must have substantial quantity and variety of texts and primers written in it. There also must exist, impressive number of native speaker- teachers of the language. One of the reasons why the language provisions of the NPE have remained a paper tiger till today is lack of healthy competition among the indigenous languages speakers. Many indigenous people would neither develop their native languages nor allow the developed native languages to thrive. The kind of competition required for repositioning the native languages is the one that propels the indigenous people to try, seek help as well as support the development of their languages to enable the languages satisfy the indices for inclusion in the school curriculum as a subject of study at different levels of education beside being used as a medium of instruction at the stipulated levels.

Against the competition among indigenous languages, obviously, there is a stronger competition between the Nigerian indigenous languages and the official languages like English, French and even Arabic. Apart from the exalted status these three languages enjoy in the NPE at the detriment of the indigenous languages, it is a common scenario for the indigenous people to give up their native languages to adopt English specifically and Nigerian Pidgin in most cases for their regular communication. Statistical curve of Nigerian students at the tertiary

education level studying the official languages (English and French), Arabic and indigenous Languages is skewed against Nigerian native languages studies. Shouldn't such competition occasion repositioning of Nigerian indigenous languages?

d. When the Sales are Decreasing or Profits Earnings are Dropping

In the marketing domain, repositioning is a strong option when a company notices dropping in sales of their products, brands and services. When products no longer earn the expected profits, a good company re-strategizes and comes up with may be, aggressive adverts, enlisting celebrities as product influencers, new looks for their products (re-packaging), quality enhancement, attractive incentives and premium (promo) etc. to bring about improvement in sales and profits optimization.

Can we pause a bit and ponder upon the level of subscription of Nigerian indigenous languages? Are they not undersubscribed? Who are enlisting their use? To what use are they put? Who are neglecting them? The indigenous people themselves are marginalizing the native languages. The linguistic situation in homes, schools, worship places, music and entertainment industry, communication industry, Nollywood, publishing industry, social media etc are not in favour of the indigenous languages (Ikonne, 2016, Ohiri-Aniche, 2008 & Ejiofor 2010). These are pointers that the sales and profit margins of our indigenous languages are dropping and repositioning the best option to attract the desirable patronage?

Constant adverts in Nigerian native languages by individuals, cooperate local and international organizations in Nigeria, producing music and promoting music produced in the native languages by playing them during government functions and all national TV and Radio programmes, making sponsored jingles in native languages, ensuring that all federal/state government sponsored announcements are made in the



national/regional languages, enforcing announcements and notices in public offices and the aviation industry (like local and international flights taking off and landing in Nigeria) are made in the Nigerian indigenous languages and interpreted/translated into English and other languages, making and promoting movies in Nigerian languages with subtitles in English and other languages, encouraging and promoting publishing in Nigerian languages, providing incentives like admission preferences; tuition rebates, bursary awards, scholarships and immediate employment to the indigenous people who are willing to undertake studies and careers in the indigenous languages, formulating realistic and implementable policies in favour of Nigerian native languages (policies that make the well-developed indigenous languages compulsory subjects from Basic to Post-Basic levels of education); mounting aggressive advocacies for sociolinguistic relevance of Nigerian languages are veritable measures in repositioning the Nigerian indigenous languages for greater functional utility.

When Your Brand or product does not Appeal to Younger Generation

Companies consider repositioning when their products, brands or services do not appeal to younger generation. It is worthy of note that the fact that the brand or product does not attract the younger generation currently does not mean it will never ever again. So, companies just find a way to attract the younger generation to their brand by adding or removing features. This plays out vividly in the fashion world where it is noticed that fashions do not die rather they revolve and evolve. And when they do, they are trendy with craze.

Isn't it the plain truth that the younger generation of Nigerian indigenes does not care about their native languages? Intergenerational transmission of many of the native languages is either slow or not happening at all. Negative attitude towards the native languages abound.

Pejorative reference to the languages and their users occur. Preference of the English and Nigerian Pidgin to the indigenous languages is prevalent among the younger generation. I witnessed a scenario in a commercial vehicle where a young man borrowed his friend's phone to make an important call. The moment that young man finished his pleasantries and switched over to his native language, his friend interjected, 'don't speak that nonsense language with my phone' and snatched the phone from the user. The lesson from that action is far beyond embarrassing, it reveals how vulnerable our indigenous languages are to linguicide. Nigerian indigenous languages require repositioning to appeal to the younger generation. If I have my way, I will make the ability to speak a Nigerian native language fluently to be a Federal government regulation/national prerequisite for granting Nigerians Visas to any country of the world. If this becomes a policy, you will notice that the Nigerian youths who wish to leave Nigeria would stampede themselves in Nigerian languages proficiency centers. Parents on their part will not only ban English in their homes, they would begin to interact with their children in their native languages. They will also employ the services of Nigerian languages teachers for private lessons for their wards/children in preparation for prospective Visa interviews.

Having justified the essence of repositioning Nigerian indigenous languages, what follows are the recommended measures for repositioning the languages.

What Measures could be effective in Repositioning Nigerian Indigenous Languages?

In repositioning Nigerian indigenous languages, here are some tit-bits:

Attitudinal change

Speaking and learning any language be it indigenous or foreign has emotional, social and psychology undertone. Individuals would naturally commit their time, energy and money on things they consider beneficial to them. Nigerian peoples require serious re-orientation about the importance



of their native languages for their identity, security, regeneration, internal cohesion, unity, educational benefits etc. it is high time Nigeria peoples dismissed the fallacy and stereotype that speaking, thinking and acting in English language is more prestigious and intellectual than doing same in their indigenous languages. The more indigenous languages programmes are considered prospective, the scholars perceived geniuses and nationally celebrated, the better the attitude of the speakers. If attitudinal change in the right direction is achieved among Nigerian peoples and their government, definitely Nigerians will speak and learn their native languages with patriotic and nationalistic enthusiasm knowing that the extinction of their native languages is the disappearance of the native speakers in the global context (Ikonne, 2016).

Development of Nigerian indigenous languages

It is a fact that the many Nigerian indigenous languages are not developed and at such cannot perform functions beyond interaction or communication within the immediate community. Languages develop in three stages. The first is codification or orthography development. This is the stage of prescribing the writing system (the letters of the alphabet, the diacritics, the spelling rules etc). The next stage is e standardization, where texts and different materials are developed. Where all the conventions are tested and adopted. The last stage is the modernization. It is the modernization that builds for the language, the capacity to do everything for the speakers. It is for instance, modernization that qualifies a language to be functional in all domains and for any possible purposes. It is the stage of vocabulary expansion and meta language development. This has to be done for many Nigerian languages to be upgraded for optimal functional utility. Only languages with well-developed orthography would be assigned roles in the national language policy. Native speakers, language associations, National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN), Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NRDC), all other stakeholders

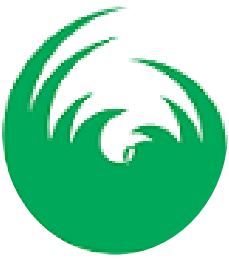
should invest in the development of Nigerian indigenous languages.

Formulation of Realistic Language Policy on Education

As has been observed by Bamgbose (2016) and Ikonne (2020), the language provisions of the NPE are mere paper tigers. According to Bamgbose, they are no implementable declarations. Many of the declarations have dangerous clauses that provide alibi for those who find no reasons to enforce the policies. In the 2013 edition of the NPE, MT is no longer the medium of instruction in the early primaries but the Language of the Immediate Environment (LIE) in monolingual communities. How many regions in Nigeria are monolingual? It subtly encourages use of English medium in the beginning of education. Notice also that the NPE (2013:8) stipulates concerning the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) that government shall ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the MT or language of the immediate community. This policy is made for a segment of education that is provided by the private sectors. Incredible!

Again, the policy declaration that places a child's MT and a second indigenous language compulsory at the Upper Basic education level was expunged from the 2013 edition of the NPE. It was indeed replaced with French language, I would say. This is a nation that seeks national unity, cultural preservation and integration via her indigenous languages. Relaxation of the L₂ declaration of the NPE is the major reason the COEs are experiencing dropping in students enrollment in the L₂ programme. These policies need to be reviewed and declared in realistic and implementable manner. NINLAN too has to be fully supported and funded to achieve her mandates. This way, NINLAN will be a front liner in repositioning the Nigerian indigenous languages.

Finalizing, Approval and implementation of the national language policy



Since 1977, Nigeria has relied on the language stipulations of the NPE for language applications in the business of education. Nigeria has never developed a national language policy for her citizens until the past four years when the Hon. Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu inaugurated the National Technical Committee for the production of the National Language Policy for Nigeria. The committee has finished its job and submitted to the Minister. Finalizing and approval of the national language policy are awaited for possible implementation. This is critical for Repositioning Nigerian indigenous languages because the functions of the different native languages will be structured, appreciated and applied.

Restoration and Enforcement of Acculturation Programme

Acculturation is an important bench mark of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). NCCE is the supervisory agency for Colleges of Education (COEs). In keeping with NCCE benchmark, students offering Nigerian languages at second language level must attend a minimum of 12 week immersion programme to touch base and interact with the native speakers and the culture base of the language. This is a condition for the award of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) in the L₂ discipline. There are three designated centers of Acculturation for the Nigerian languages L₂ programmes in Nigeria. They are: FCE Kano for Hausa, NINLAN, Aba for Igbo and FCE Oyo Special for Yoruba languages respectively. It is indeed appalling to notice that while Nigerian French as second language students do not default acculturation in the designated center (French language village, Badagary), their Nigerian languages counterparts display all manner of ploy to avoid acculturation. While some colleges negotiate for abridged duration, others visit one nearby market square in the name of acculturation. This they do even when students have duly paid for the programme. Little wonder such COEs graduate students who can't call a taxi in the second language while their French

counterparts are already teaching French in private schools. Repositioning acculturation programme is a positive strategy in repositioning Nigerian indigenous languages.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would say that everything is wrong with the Nigerian indigenous languages. From the attitudes of the indigenous people towards their languages to language policies that give no protection to the languages. From dearth of indigenous languages teachers to relegation of Nigerian languages teaching in schools and so on. Howbeit, if the languages will receive attention in the area of orthography development, approval of a national language policy, review of the existing language policies on education, revitalization of acculturation etc, the languages would benefit from repositioning and thus promise greater functional utility.

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