The State of Nigerian Languages in the Globalization Context

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Abstract

One of the devastating menaces that is bugling in the mind of Nigerian linguist is the status of Nigerian languages in the context of globalization over the years. There have been loud cries concerning the underdevelopment of Nigeria indigenous languages in terms of their roles and functions in human co-existence, enhancement of civilization and national development. The effects of globalization on Nigerian language(s) on national growth and development cannot be underestimated since Language is an important phenomenon in human existence, as it is one of the vital attributes of the human race. Every society needs language to exist and coexist economically, politically and socio-culturally. It is such realisation that this work examines the significance of the Nigerian languages in the context of globalization, the multiplicity nature of the Nigerian languages and how the Nigerian languages can be enhanced to a global status reflecting the interrelationship among the concept of language, culture, globalization, and meaning. The outcome of the findings reveal that non of the Nigerian languages is ready to bend for the other. Based on this, conclusion and recommendations were made for further studies.

Introduction

Language, culture and globalization are indivisible entities. Language is like a big tree with a shade under which the society exists. Language is at the centre of human life because it is the bond that ties members of a speech community together in continuing interrelationship. Fakeye (2001) opines that language is a vehicle of communication and prevalent common instruments among human beings and Nigerian languages are not exception. Lawal (2009) explains that language is a tool through which a community, or sub-culture interacts and attains meaningful communication with regard to their common experience and expectation. It equally leads people and peoples from instinct to inspiration, through variegated processes and systems of enquiry, common and controlled; it creates a pool of ideas, strengthens the feeling of togetherness through exchange of messages, and translates thought into action. Olajide (1998) looks at it from a more practical perspective and concludes that a society without the means of effective communication is not in full existence. So, human existence and development largely depend on the existence and development of language for communication. In a nutshell, language, be it in written or in oral form, functions

in the society to convey meaning which leads to the "sharing of ideas, facts and data" (Babatunde, 2005) in (Lawal 2009:14). Any language that does not make itself available and accessible for natural communicative value (transaction ally or interaction ally) is a dead language. The interrelationship of language, culture, globalization, and meaning is captured in Figure1.

The interaction of the variables of language, culture, globalization and meaning, is required to set on fire, direct and determine the functional relationship among language, culture, globalization and meaning in the case of Nigerian languages. The qualitative assessments of any language embraced intelligibility and the level of acceptability of such a language. The above model shows the interrelationship among language, culture and meaning as indivisible concepts all pointing at globalization at the centre to determine the level of the acceptability and the wider coverage of the language.

Linguists across the globe agreed that language is an ancient heritage of human race which is universal, meaning that language is common to all human beings, functions and exists across the globe. This is affirmed by Babatunde (2005),Olajide (1998,2002), Akinjobi (2002) and Lawal(2009). Language, particularly in its spoken form is as old as mankind, and it has been firmly established that there are very many languages being spoken in the world today. Illiyas (2004:7) has this to say:

> It is believed that more than five thousand languages are spoken in the world today. The knowledge and use of language therefore, is a phenomenon which is common to the experience of every normal human being in his or her ability and capability to distinguish his or her use of language phonologically, syntactically and lexicon-semantically.

In spite of this multiplicity of languages, the fact is that languages have similar characteristics. Globally, every language is systematic and unique that is, a system exists in its operation at all linguistic levels, i.e. phonological (sound), morphological (word), grammatical (sentence), and semantically (meaning). Any person, however, who has acquired knowledge of a language, has internalized a system of rules that relate sound to meaning in a particular way. Symbolically, human language is highly representational and unique. The sequence of sound and letters naturally possess meaning. Meaning emerges when a group of speakers conventionally agree on what the symbols, spoken or written, should represent. Consider the following symbols for the English word "come" in selected Nigerian languages:

S/N	Language	Spoken form	Written form
1.	English	K >:m	Come
2.	Yoruba	Wa	Wa
3.	Igbo	Bia	Bia
4.	Hausa	Zo	zo

Generally, a language performs the following communicative functions as it is used to: assert, describe, promise, ask questions, make statements, express surprise, and to command, etc. We use language, among other things, to interact with market women, gossip with friends, contract and discuss religiously. It is a tool of intellectual purpose as the medium of instruction at all levels of education, etc. Ayodeji (2006) sees language in a specific context as habits of communication that predispose the choices of interpretation, because it is a guide to social reality and the existence of people rested on the world of language.
Language is culturally transmitted and it varies from culture to culture. It is the culture that shows the uniqueness of a particular language, compared to other languages. Pragmatically, since language is social, the nature and form of each language reflects social requirements of the society that uses it, and there is no standard for judging the effectiveness of a language other than to estimate its success in achieving proportionally the social tasks that are demanded of it. Looking at the dynamic nature of human language, (i.e. subject to change from culture to culture), the fact that language is subject to change is a justification of the saying by Ogunleye (2008) that there are no primitive and corrupt languages. Languages change, but they do not decay. At any time and stage, a language is adequate to its functional purpose since it is a product of change. This may be slow, but inevitable, except, which is not possible, if all the speakers of the language are dead.

Language varies from culture to culture and the challenges the user of such language(s) face are problem of communication gap resulting in the use of body language. Language as a social instrument has basis for social action and plays a vital role in interpersonal and inter-group cooperation. Thus, language is part of culture .and part of the social norms (David, 2005). Over the years, British culture and lifestyle have continually dominating local customs and traditions in Nigeria due to the problem of choosing one of the indigenous languages as the lingua-franca due to multilingual nature of the Nigerian society. Spoken language is unconsciously exhibited and functions beyond human imaginations. Opinions are formed instantly in the customers' or receivers' mind. Watching body postures, gestures, and facial expressions could help the user of a language to communicate

more effectively and correctly. The gesture of approval when we meet people from our ethnic background and that of disapproval reflects the acceptability and rejection in that culture or the other and shows the interrelationship between culture and language.

Culture is all encompassing that captures, among other things, beliefs, way of life, art, customs, religion and language that are shared among people in a particular society (Longman dictionary of contemporary English2003:382). Culture is the values and beliefs of a societyand it is so broad in its scope that it is reflected in such things as greeting, eating, showing, feelings, dressing, keeping certain physical distance from others, maintain body hygiene, even the way people approach and actually carry out their sexuality (Oladosu 2010).

The original concept, "global village", was coined by Marshal McLuhan, to describe "a world closely interconnected by modern telecommunication which greatly reduces the intellectual cultural and trading isolation formerly caused by geographical separation" (Oduenyungbo, 2006:5) Globalization is, therefore, an expanded concept from "global village", making use of the same ideas. According to Ogunkeye (2006), the general belief about globalization is that it engenders a symbolic relationship between a county and the rest of the world and opines that globalization as what encourages a symbolic relationship in which a country is influenced by the outside world, and in return, is able to influence other countries by a way of inter-cult ration through a language. Globalization is "the closer integration of the countries and the peoples of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breakdown of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge and (to a lesser extent) people across borders. (Eisenberg & Good all 2004:216). Globalization embraced different definitions at different times by different scholars in diverse contexts in the academic literature either to describe a process, a condition, a system, a force and an age (Tunde 2006). Linguists tend to see globalization as the capacity of a language in an environment as phenomenon that embraces the increasing in social political, economic, cultural, religion, educational interaction and integration based on the technological development that are changing the pattern of humans interaction. Tunde (2006) exemplifies the following as the characteristics of globalization:

a. Globalization involves the creation of new and the multiplications of existing social network and activities that increasingly overcome traditional political economic cultural and geographical boundaries.
b. Globalization is reflected in the expansion and the stretching of social relation activities and inter-independencies

c. Globalization involves the intensification and acceleration of social exchanges and activities and
d. Globalization processes also involves the subjective plane of human consciousness.

Streger (2003) views globalization as what is based on neo-liberal capitalism which carries with it the classical system of beliefs upon which neo-liberal capitalism is built and pointed out the following as some of the prominent parts:

I. Globalization is about liberalization and global integration of markets
II. Globalization is reversible and irreversible
III. Nobody is in charge of globalization
IV. Globalization benefit every one
V. Globalization furthers the spread of democracy in the world.

Serah and John (2011) link these beliefs on globalization with what history teaches Africans to be powerful individuals, powerful communities and how powerful nation or nations should always guess to control less powerful individual communities and nations and further advocates for modern ICT of radio TV, and film to moderate oral communication. Musa (2011) observes that to survive in live, is to live quality life and participate meaningfully in politics, enjoy economic fairness and be socially acceptable and, have personal satisfaction/fulfillment as an individual and as a nation. When it comes to dissemination of information, these are done through media and the less privilege ones feel marginalized because of their in ability to avoid buying TV and radio. Musa (2011) reveals that Nigeria constitutes 5% of the world illiterate going by the statistics of specialists in each area of educational endeaviour. To enhance globalization and participation in national development, the people could be made literate and educated so that they can be well informed.

Serah and John (2011) affirm that written text as means of transferring thought and information is highly efficient but speech should be the most preferred means of human communication because of the percentage of the number of illiterates who cannot read or write. For Nigerian languages to attain the status of globalization and enhance national and international development and intelligibility, the country should take full advantages of the capacity of modern ICT to develop oral communication among Nigerians in Nigeria languages and there should be a drive in promoting community radio in all indigenous languages. This will go a long way in improving the wide spread use of the Nigerian languages and greater national development.

Sager (1994) in Tanda and Chia (2006) observes that globalization post challenges to linguistic habits and further stresses the importance of communication and information technology having greater impact on language domain and capable of putting their survival at risk. The global bodies that have facilitated globalization are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). From critical examination of the impact of globalization on the third world countries, focus seems to be only on the economic disadvantages of the concept. Tanda and Chia (2006) identify factors militating against indigenous language becoming a global language as language shift, emigration of youths, mixed marriages, emergence of lingua-franca, cultural assimilation, globalization and poverty, globalization and protection of and minority languages, globalization and language protection, current directions of linguistic research, attitude and language loyalty, electronic technology, language development and all their devastating effect on the minority languages. The minority languages in the third world are being gradually wiped out by the globalization of English. In these circumstances, the third world is equally at the receiving end linguistically as the African languages and Nigerian languages in particular are facing global challenges.

The conventional acceptability of people on a language to be use determines the values of that language and the position of the users of the language add more flesh to the bone of the concepts of language, culture, globalization and the meaning the language would offered the society. The global acceptability of a language also determines the position of language in a given society. All languages are intelligible and meaningful before the users. Meaning in this context is about the roles via the position the language is occupying in the society. Igboanusi and Ohia (2001) in Isah and Salihu (2011) see language as the most practicable and acceptable tool for inter-ethnic interaction in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria.

New Trend in The Development and Globalization of Nigerian Languages

Nigerian starts on a good note in 1960 as a nation with high hopes of national development. Different commissions were put in place towards the actualization of this remarkable vision and mission. The Nigeria education programs were seen as instrument par-excellence for effective and effecting national development (NPE2004). The concept of development is very broad and multi-faceted which embraced among other things the quality of available human resources, education, economic, social, scientific, and technological, industrial, political, cultural and language development (Musa 2011:2). Musa's findings about the three major Nigerian indigenous languages reveal that there are significant ethnic differences

in motive orientations and pointed out that the Ibos are ranked first in achievement motivation followed by Yorubas and then the Hausas in that order. The Yorubas were highest in affiliation motive while the Hausas are ranked first in and compliance power motivation. Nigeria is ranked in the same category as Brazil, Malaysia and Indian in the early 1960s as emerging nations heading towards development status. The progress assessment reveals that the differences or gap is highly enormous in term of globalization of indigenous language. Most African languages, Nigerian languages in particular, were developed by the European authorities starting from orthographies, coining terms, compilation of dictionaries and grammars, translation of books (Bible) and Arabic Quran in Nigerian languages. This is an essential component of the effort of the British to empower Nigerian languages. This legacy rendered most of the Nigerian languages completely impotent.

Birgit Brock-Utne (2000) points to the invalidation of African languages and tagged them as handicaps rather than been resources oriented and further affirms that the uses of African languages are restricted to Africa environments when compared to that of the European languages, their respectability of conveyor of important issues bring know prestige and their knowledge of high status is in question. These and other reasons responsible for Nigeria as a nation using English language as the primary language in all facets of human endeaviours including education. Musa (2011) gives some tips on how to "unlock language forts" thus:

By enabling the knowledge contained in English and other languages to be made available to a wider population in Africa by using African languages as media for reproducing this knowledge for creating, encoding, sustaining, and ultimately transmitting indigenous knowledge, the cultural knowledge and pattern of behavior to the society.

When Nigerian languages continue to be devalued in this trend, much of the indigenous knowledge contained in these languages also devalued in like manner. This and other reasons maybe are what motivates Musa (2011) to point out that the use of English language in the planning and implementation of Nigerian educational programmes and the problem of their interpretation in Nigerian languages is responsible for this menace. One of the consequences of the disuse of these Nigerian languages in actualizing the country's educational goals is the positioning of Nigerian languages as receiver rather than contributors to the knowledge pool globally (Zaline, 2001:13). On the issue of multiplicity and mutual intelligibility, Babatunde (2005) opines that these languages are to be

capitalizing and grouping into cluster since the efforts are on going toward the harmonization of their orthographies and the standardization of Nigerian languages.

Globalization Problems of Nigerian Languages

Nigeria, like most countries in Africa, is faced with the problem of choosing a national language because of its multilingual/multicultural nature. The colonial experience has influence on the low development of Nigerian languages which brought about the use of English as official language in Nigeria. English language has been accepted world wide as a medium of wider communication, either as first, second or foreign language in many continents of the world. In Africa, even countries not originally colonized by the British have adopted English either as a second language or as a foreign language (Musa, 2006). A good example is our next door neighbors Cameroon. English is used side by side French and Arabic as second languages, the language of their colonial masters. English plays a highly dynamic role in Nigeria and provides a tool for the cohesion of educational elite from different indigenous language groups as it is making for increased mobility of skill within the nation across tribal boundaries. In spite of all these numerous advantages, the phenomenon has remained an issue of worry and concern in the society as it is affecting the globalization of Nigerian languages. English has come to compound and increase the globalization problems of Nigerian languages not just by adding to the linguistic pattern of Nigerian Languages, but a new dimension of complexity. It has equally, beyond reasonable doubt, affected economic, political and socio-cultural development. David, (2005) is of the view that continuous retention and promotion of English inhibits the growth and development of Nigeria's local languages and culture and in turn, affects their globalization status.

Another scholar, Olajide (2002) feels that English has helped to unify as an integrative force; put off the fear of domination among the various ethnic groups. But, despite all these identifiable values attached to the use of English language in Nigeria as official or lingual-franca, the language is still generating numerous problems to Nigerians and Nigeria languages. The need for the effective development of the country's languages in consonant with the global political, economic, and cultural trends can only be actualized through concerted effort of both the government and the Nigerian populace. Effective national development is linked with literacy development. Nigeria thus needs to face and resolve the national language dilemma so as to foster national cohesion and unity, and enhance international interaction. Zaline (2006) opines that 30% of the world's

languages are spoken in Africa. He further identified over two hundred languages with only 18% users in Europe.

The problem of using African languages as a medium of instruction in our educational institutions is the multiplicity nature of Africa languages. Since the time Nigeria gain her political independence, it has been realized that there are too many languages in the countriy to select one as the national language or as the language of education is very difficult because of its aftermath problems such as general acceptability and ethnic rivalries etc. The position of English language today in Nigeria was not influenced by any of the ethnic groups as the language found its way into Nigeria society through religion motive. But what has been the cost of this alleged neutrality?

1. The history of Nigerian languages
2. The relationship between Nigerian languages and globalization.

In fact, by history, the most valuable resources African continent has contributed to the Western world is over 70 million human beings who were ripped from its womb, shipped to the western world, and sold as a source free labor (Zaline, 2006). Zaline (2006) further talks of how African languages and Nigeria in particular are taught in Nigeria universities for academic credit alone. The very fact that these Nigeria languages are being taught at all level of education does not grant them levels of responsibility and respectability, as it increases their visibility beyond the Africa continent. The colonial legacy has rendered Nigerian languages impotent in almost all the African countries. Brock-Utne (2000) and Bright (2000), in Zaline (2006), point to the invalidity of Nigerian languages by viewing them as handicaps rather than being resources. While Nigeria languages are spoken more widely throughout African countries than the European languages, their respectability and responsibility are highly insignificant and of less importance, high status knowledge is in question. This is because the country is still faced with the dilemma of selecting an indigenous language that will foster socio-economic interaction and cultural integration among the diverse linguistic and cultural elements in the geo-political entities and at the same time promote national unity. This is manifested clearly in the fact that most African countries continue to use the English language as the primary language of formal education, language of government, national and international interaction, economic as well as social-cultural aspect of their life. Martha (2003)(p.47) opines that lack of use of African languages particularly in the educational domain, their values are being locked and lost away as the users of the languages are passing on.

One of the ways in which the loss of some of the indigenous knowledge occurred was through formal education which was fashioned by the Europeans in their languages and their interpretation of the written form of Nigerian languages. One of the results of the disuse of Nigerian languages in education and in other aspects of human endeavors is that they lost their knowledge values in term of international acceptability, accessibility and intelligibility. Kahombo (1980), a past director of the former OAU Bureau of African countries, points out that the African languages are underdeveloped in scientific and technical expression because of the ethnic hostilities and geocentricism. Also, non of these Nigerian languages embraced political neutrality and the capacity of surviving the challenges of globalization. For a language to assume a global status, it must be capable of functioning around the following contextual variables globally: socio-political, psychological, administrative, governmental, economical and educational. What it means is that the language must be used as a medium of communication in all sorts of communicative contexts and for many different purposes. In view of all these catalogue of problems identifiable with all Africa languages, Nigeria in particular, and the emergence of English language as a internationally acceptable, accessible, and intelligible language in all human endeaviours, becomes the national language in Nigeria. The language, beyond reasonable doubt, brings the whole world together in a hall.

The way forward

The use of English language in Nigeria for national and international purposes is constantly threaten to choke and completely strangulate the most dynamic and foresighted of language planning in Nigeria (Adegbija, 1991).Thus, the extreme points on globalization problem of Nigerian Languages are communication gap and lack of ability to effectively bring people of diverse ethnic groups together in a peaceful atmosphere which gives English language the opportunity above Nigerian languages in Nigeria. And, Illiyas (2004) agrees with this and submits that this is the situation of English language today in most parts of the world. He further describes English language as the worldwide lingua-franca. Globally, English has gained a dominant role in the world politics, business negotiations, cultural and scientific conferences, workshops, symposia and international organizations, where ever members of smaller, exotic, less commonly taught language speakers like Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo have occasion to talk to members of large language communities, they were compelled to communicate in English. According to Akinjobi (2002), English language seems set to take over the world in the course of the twenty first century and become the global language. Sheriff (2003) opines that almost in all countries of the world, English is used as a first, second, or as a foreign language performing different functions. More notable is

the increase in the international and technological functions of the English language as the dominant language of cyberspace as it is the most used to internet (Momorodion, 2002).

There is worldwide recognition of the development of the world Englishes such that one may talk about Indian English, Ghanaian English, Nigerian English, etc. Despite all these numerous advantages of global English, there is no gain saying the fact that there are still numerous challenges confronting the globalization of English language. The future speakers of global English are however employed to strive to encourage themselves to enjoy the freedom of being able to bend and shape English language in order to reflect correctly their life experience. This freedom does not advocate that teachers of English be more liberal in their acceptance of what constitutes correct usage, nor does this liberty aim at encouraging laxity or incompetence in the use of English. Instead, the proposal aims to bring newness into the world by infusing linguistic creativity through various linguistic and cultural experiences.

The ideal Nigerian speaker of global English should only be desired to be able to use or achieve international intelligibility and national acceptability in his use of English. But aiming to learn to speak like an English man should be far from part of his goals.

Conclusion

So far, literature has revealed that due to aforementioned problems of globalization of Nigerian languages, English as a matter of policy in Nigeria has absorbed all Nigerian languages and is learnt for occupational and communication needs. Teachers and learners of English should therefore strive for equilibrium of language, culture, literature and occupation; apply to Nigerian English language teaching context since it is true that Nigerian culture is already being projected through the use of English as a key player, in shaping globalization as much as it is being shaped by it. The global dimension of English demands therefore, requires that some aspects of the cultures of major native English countries be learnt along with their varieties.

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