

LANGUAGE EDUCATION NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA – THE TEACHERS VIEW POINT

BY

MBU DICKSON MBU, (Ph.D)
+2348055625732; +2348062571569;
mbu2md@yahoo.com/mbu2md@gmail.com
Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology,
KM/6 Rumueme, Port Harcourt, River State , Nigeria

Introduction

Language can be described as the sole instrument for effective communication and propagation of cultural unity and ethnic identity in various climes. The power behind any national development is language (Olofin, 2012). Nigeria is a multilingual nation but English language is the accepted official language used in the country (Olofin, 2012). The various current issues on language education basically need the concern of education policy makers' implementers, language teachers inclusive of language students/users. Language education is focused on national development in Nigeria from the Federal through the states to the Local Government Area (LGA) levels. The importance of language is such that in Nigeria, a credit pass in English Language is a major prerequisite for entry into any University to read any course (JAMB 2018). English language promotes National Unity in Nigeria as it forms the basis for communication. Again, the subject links us with the international community as it forms the basis for communication and negotiation in all issues. It can easily be said that if you remove the English Language from any aspect of the Nigerian society, everything will run into crises.

Language and Language Education

Language is basically a system of communication which could be in the spoken or written form conveyed through the use of sound, words, gestures and symbols. Language is the ability to learn and use a system of complex communication by a given people. Language is used to describe the set of rules that guide communication (Anukam, 1999). Language can further be said to be the behaviour which uses the body parts that include the vocal apparatus and the auditory system. (Olofin, 2012). It is a system put into use by a person or group of persons to express inner feelings, minset among other things. Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-

sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences by expression among the users. Language interacts with every part of human activity in the society and it can be known when it is considered in relation to the society.

Language Education

Language education can be described as the process and practice of acquiring a second language or foreign language. It is a branch of Applied Linguistics which offers solutions to language related real life challenges (Olofin, 2012). There are four main learning categories in language education. They are (i) communicative competences (ii) communicative proficiencies (iii) cross-cultural experiences, and (iv) multiple literacies. Language education refers to the teaching and learning of a language. It includes the various efforts and commitment made by a language learner to improve his/her language competencies.

In Nigeria, English language is majorly the Second Language (L₂) of many learners in institutions of learning (FRN, 2013). However, English language is the language of instruction in the classroom. All disciplines, various infrastructural development, educational and administrative advancement, technological and economic growth of every nation are projected through man power development with the official language of communication in Nigeria being the English Language. The human capacity development centres on language as the basic foundation (Olofin, 2012). Language is responsible for national development of any given nation, Nigeria inclusive, and are brought into light by the utilization of English language in the schools and Colleges. The effectiveness of every professional is dependent on the power of communication which is apparent in the individual use of English and communication in English. This expresses the usefulness of language education in Nigeria.

National Development

The role of language is beyond communication. It plays a fundamental role in the development of a nation. National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of its people by providing social amenities like quality education, portable water, transportation infrastructure, medical care, good housing units and effective political will toward good leadership administration (Unicef, 2018).

National development entails the general welfare of the people which result from rapid and sustainable economic growth and development. It relates to improving the quality of the people's

life, empowering the poor and marginalized and encouraging social cohesion as one nation. (Bawa, (2018)

National development is a comprehensive concept which includes every aspect of an individual and his society and nation at large. It involves the holistic approach of reconstruction and development in diverse aspects of a nation and the development of the individual. National development includes full-growth and expansion of industries, agriculture, education, social, religious and cultural institutions. National development basically is the development of the nation as a whole. It is the all-round and balanced development of various aspects of the nation which include political, educational, scientific, social, cultural, economic, agricultural aspects etc.

National development is the total effect of all citizen forces and addition to the stock of physical, human resources, knowledge & skill. The aim of UNICEF's education programme is to support the government in achieving SDG 4 by 2030 through improved planning and by addressing some of the systemic barriers that hinder the implementation of an effective education strategy. UNICEF's integrated C4D programme provides overall support to strategic planning and dialogue that leads to collective problem identification, goal-setting, decision making, community-based implementation and evaluation of solutions to several issues related to child survival, development, protection and participation. The education system at federal and state levels has strengthened capacities to deliver quality basic education. (Unicef, 2018)

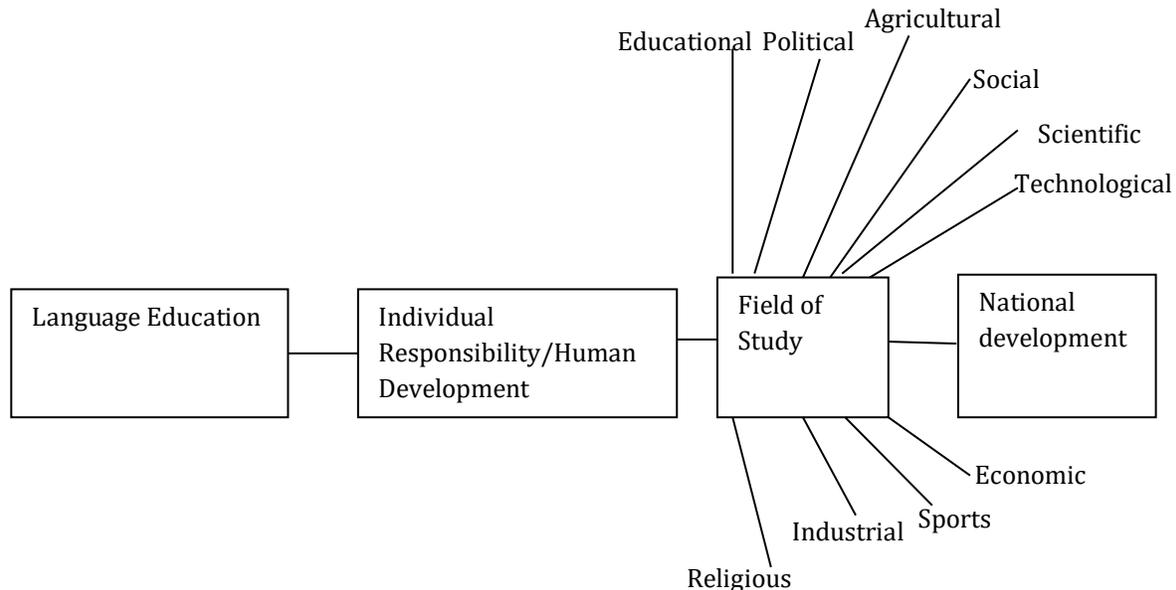
Language Education in Nigeria

Nigeria as a multilingual country has more than five hundred and sixty languages. However, English language has been the official language even before independence. This is for the easy flow of communication among the different ethnic and linguistic groups in Nigeria. It is for the effectiveness of the administrative process and the unity of the nation.

According to the British Council (2016), the question is which language will be the best to instruct learners in their formal education in Nigeria and other African countries. Research has demonstrated that children learn best in a language they understand and speak fluently. Learning in such language environment carries significant cognitive, socio-emotional and cultural benefits. Nigeria is a linguistically complex environment and the best language policy that supports and encourage teaching and learning should be put in place. The question remains: What are the

solutions that language can provide to the learner that will result to the development of the nation?

Fafunwa Foundation (1996) noted that English language has for well over a century now continued to enjoy the pride of place in Nigerias educational system. In this way, indigenous languages are scarcely given any attention in the class room situation as English language is always considered the medium of instruction. According to (Olofin, 2012), the importance of the relationship between language and society cannot be over emphasized in the overall development of any nation. Language has become part of everyday life. Language education in this regards, is a strong factor that promotes unity, national consciousness and facilitates the mobilization of its resources for national development. Language education therefore provides speedy access to modern development.



Structure of Language Education and National Development

According to United Nation Decade Report (2015), national development is growth plus change. Change in turn is social and cultural as well as economic and quantification as well as quantitative maturity, development of the nation encapsulates such parameters as:

- i. Development through a planned national economy
- ii. Increase in agricultural production through application of modern technical know-how
- iii. Harnessing industrial production
- iv. Development of human resource
- v. Application science and technology in production sector and

vi. Provision of various facilities to meet the needs and aspiration of disadvantaged, deprived and poorest of the poor segments of population in science, technology that entails the development of a nation. (United Nations Decade Report, 2015).

Politics in Nigeria would have a difficult business but for the ease of communication brought about by use of the English language. Societal development is enhanced through education and it is through education that the knowledge for all fields of human endeavour is protected. The use of language cannot be neglected in considering national development.

According to Olofin (2012), English language has contributed greatly to the rapid growth and development taking place in Nigeria. English language is the dominant language of international business as well economic development and that dominance continues to grow with the continued globalization of business through mergers and international investment. English language actually serves as a means of facilitating communication, political activities social and academic guidance from its historical perspective. Despite the agitation for the implementation of mother tongue in the Nigeria society, the prospects for English language in Nigeria are largely promising.

Importance of Language Education

Learning a language allows the learners to think in a holistic manner. It gives room for learners to think, feel, speak, listen, read and write in ways that are encompassing. Intellectual understanding is brought into focus because of language education. The importance of language education cannot be over emphasized. It is obvious that there are daily advantages in learning and speaking a second/foreign language.

Learning a new language is a strategic way of making yourself more employable and ensures one stands out from others. The labor market is highly competitive and job seekers are at advantage because of their proficiency in the official language as is the case in Nigeria.

Skills improvement cannot be ruled out as an advantage of language education, learning a new language demonstrates that you have a couple of skills. Research has shown that bilinguals and multilinguals are better at problem solving, more creative and are better in making meaning contributions. It makes way for open mindedness and the language speakers are more attractive.

Traveling opportunities are opened to language learners. They are now proficient in the second language. Possessing more than one language opens up the world of entertainment. That is the ability to understand international art and literature of different nationals.

Brain benefit is an importance of language learning. It causes the brain memory to be more activated. Thus the individual becomes clearly outstanding in his profession.

In national development, as the individual stands out, he or she becomes an agent of dramatic growth of the nation. They excel in their areas as they individually and collectively contribute to the growth and development of the nation.

The impact of Language Education

There are several studies that have displayed that learning another language can enhance knowledge of English structure and vocabulary as well as learners to improve extremely in their studies. According to Ramirez (2018), there is improving language skills which enhances academic and social benefits for learners both early and later life of their existence.

Indeed, learning a second language ignites learning. It exposes researchers from the Institution of Language and Brain sciences development. It stresses social development through interaction, plays and high quality and quantity of language from the teachers. Again, there is fast increase in English comprehension and production and prominently outperformed the control group peers in all the various levels of English Language Test.

Language Education comes up as a strong predictor across subject areas. The ability of learners to perform well in other subject areas could be due to their understanding in the vocabulary of such subject areas.

Challenges in the Development of Language Education for National Development in Nigeria

According to I-project, (2018) The inadequate level of attention that has often been given to the language situation in Nigeria tends to reflect on the level of general development. Nigeria is one of the countries with the largest number of indigenous languages. This situation should be seen as blessings rather than a curse. Contrary to this expectation, countries of this nature has rather turned into ethnic and religious struggles.

Considering the multilingual and cultural differences, the issue, of adopting an indigenous national language in Nigeria is described as complex in reality. The relevance of language to

development of any society cannot be over emphasized. Development cannot be achieved in any society unless the linguistics reality of such a society is put into play.

It is evident that different languages in Nigeria coexisted in peace before the advent of the colonial masters which brought together the diverse socio-cultural, backgrounds into one fold through the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914. This act resulted into the imposition of English language as an official language in Nigeria Adenipekun, (2010).

In reality, there are two possible reasons that neglect language issues. The first reason is that development is often conceived of in a rather narrow turn to the calculation of the Gross Domestic Product and Gross National Product and other economics metrics of income.

The consequence of this quantitative approach to development are that economic indicators are often erroneously equated with national development and societal well-being. In this narrow sense, the role of language in national development may rather be seen as a bit too marginal to be taken into reality. The second challenge is why the language issue has not featured well in Nigeria's development discourse. This is as a result of the nature and role of language in the society which is often completely misunderstood. Probably, it may be from the irresponsible declarations of some Nigeria writers and intellectuals. However, Nigerian languages can be used for effective expressions, irrespective of the diverse cultural situation. Contesting all these positions and challenges, this chapter therefore reviews the concept of "Multilingualism" and other concepts relevant to the topic of the research. It covers; Meaning of Language, Characteristics of Language, Strengths and Weakness of Language Diversity, National Development, National Language and Theoretical Framework.

Pathway to Developing Language Education in Nigeria

According to Dahiru (2018), in every part of the world, thoughtful members of the human community are recognizing that our earth and its people are crossing the path of a new era of inter-relatedness and mutual need. While it is impossible to foresee with precision what the future holds, many of the developments that are shaping the closely interlaced world of the nearest future can be identified readily. These developmental forces have a definite and direct bearing on English language acquisition for politico-economic, scientific and technological, as well as human development it is ironically the main means whereby people fail to communicate. The discovery that language can be a barrier to communication is made by all who travel, study, govern, or sell. Hether the activity is tourism, research; government, business, or data dissemination, the lack of a common language can severely impede progress and can halt it altogether. Although communication problems of this kind must happen thousands of times each day, very few become public knowledge.

National Policy on Education (2018) captures the need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria. To this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in the education system. Furthermore, the policy is based on the development of the individual into an astound and effective citizen and the full integration of that individual into the community. One of its goals is the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.

(i) Create awareness on the importance of English Language/ Language Education

One of the basic understandings that can drive your learning forward is to understand that for language learning to happen, there must be an awareness or even multiple awarenesses about what it is that you are going to learn.

Language learning is seldom accidental. There are just too many things that have to come together for that to happen. And with every element that is required, awareness is a necessary component. The big mistake that many learners make is to try to learn something without fully appreciating the key role of awareness.

Studying grammar, for example, may not prompt everyone to be watchful. Being watchful whilst you are studying something changes the activity into something quite different. This is one reason why some people can learn the target language doing virtually anything with it, whilst someone else doing the same kinds of things gets nowhere. One is working with their awareness, whilst the other is busy doing activities but is not being attentive and hence is not really letting those activities impact who they are.

The quality of watchfulness can be stimulated when we are unsure of ourselves when we are being challenged or, for e.g., when we are inspired to do something. Once we realise that awareness has such a key place in language learning then we can move our attention from studying to putting the emphasis on becoming aware of such things as:

The role of awareness in language learning and how it can be encouraged and used is much more thoroughly explained in the book *Language Learning Unlocked*.

(ii) Reward good Language Teachers especially those in Rural Areas

Improving the working conditions of teachers in rural areas

Research has shown that the quality of teachers in our classrooms is the most important school-related factor in boosting students' achievement (Adedeji, 1998; Lewin, 2004). Therefore, policymakers are focusing on teachers' quality at all levels – specifically on the issues of teachers' recruitment, preparation, licensing and certification standards and professional development. However, it has been observed that the working condition of teachers in many rural schools across the SSA place them at a disadvantage in providing adequate teaching activities. It is necessary to put in place some mechanisms supported

(iii) Provision of financial incentives

According to Segun & Olanrewaju (2011), the main source of improving the working conditions of teachers lies in enhanced salaries and wages. Many governments are quick to point at the size of teachers' salaries in their total expenditure. Yet, they remain underpaid when compared to other professions even within the same environment. As a result, many teachers indulge in moonlighting, which affects their commitment and quality of teaching. The strategy to pursue is not only to increase teachers' salaries, but to examine the way salaries are organised, how the teachers are being paid, and their promotion structure that will determine the increase in salaries over time. The idea is to review the general salary system, remuneration patterns and appreciation of teachers' role. This should necessarily include the design of a special salary scale for teachers which will take into consideration their qualification and experience.

(iv) Provision of non-financial incentives

In other areas, the incentives may be non-monetary, including special study leave or better training opportunities (Craig, Kraft, and du Plessis 1998; Gaynor 1998). A major incentive for teachers to be located in rural areas is the provision of housing for the teachers. Where teachers cannot live near the school, they are likely to spend a lot of time travelling, often to the detriment of their school work. Housing is particularly important for female teachers.

Since many rural areas are remote and not easily accessible, special transportation allowance to the remote areas should be given to rural teachers.

(v) Career development of rural teachers

Given the obvious importance of the problems in supporting newly qualified teachers and the lack of career development opportunities in rural settings, which often combine to make teachers' effectiveness difficult in rural areas when compared to their urban counterparts, there is need for career development incentives package for rural teachers

(vi) Teacher professionalism

There is the need to encourage teacher professionalism in order to improve the working conditions of teachers. Although virtually all countries have teachers' union, they have failed to organise teaching as a profession. Hence, outside factors and others who are not necessarily teachers have taken over control and regulate the profession. Unlike other professions such as medicine, finance, banking, accountancy, engineering and law that have professional bodies that control and regulate the actions of their members, the teaching profession does not appear to have such a cohesive professional body to control and regulate the conduct of teachers Nigeria.

(vii) Improving the conditions of teaching in rural areas

The teaching environment is a major factor that determines not only the learning process but also the performance of the students. The effectiveness of rural schools in producing quality graduates therefore lies in a good teaching environment. Hence, any country that hopes to develop its education must provide a conducive teaching and learning environment. This is a missing gap that African governments must fill to enable their schools face the challenges of this present ICT era.

(viii) Special Salaries for Language Educators

There should be special salaries for language educators. This will serve as a high incentive to the teachers. A special salary for language educators is a motivational factor that improves the teacher effectiveness in all assigned responsibilities. Language educators give in their best when motivated. Language educators are those that train all other personalities, professionals and experts in different fields of specializations. This is expected to drive home development in Nigeria. The salary welfare of a language teacher is a situation that needs improvement for the achievement of all educational objectives (British Council, 2016).

Conclusion

The teaching of English language as a second language has tremendously, improved the development of Nigeria as a nation. Through the use of English language there is national understanding, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is standing the taste of time because of the use of English language. Most potential graduates from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds are succeeding in the labour market because of their communicative skills in English language. Interviews for job applicants are done in English language. CVs are written in English language. Politically, English language is the language of power and control from the federal, state to the local government levels. Economically, English language is the basic language for official transactions in banking sector, industries, institutions, etc. The national development is largely dependent on language education.

REFERENCES

- Anukam, H.O. (1999). *English Language Teaching in Schools*, Owerri; Springfield Publishers.
- British Council (2016) *Language and Education in Nigeria* retrieved on 23/12/2019 from <https://www.britishcouncil.org.ng>.
- Fatunwa Foundation Internet Journal of Education (1996) *Language Education in Nigeria*. Retrieved on 12/1/2020 from *Fatunwa foundation from.tsipod.com>faf...*
- National Development (2014) Retrieved on 20/12/2019 from <https://www.slideshare.net/7>
- Bawa, B. (2018) National Development: meaning and problems Retrieved on 20/12/2019 from <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com>
- Olofin, A.O (2012) Effects of English Language on National Development. Retrieved on 12/01/2020 from <https://www.researchgate.net>>
- Ramirez (2018) The Educator. Retrieved on 4/6/2020 from <https://www.theedutoronline.com>
- The importance of language Learning-Education.com (2019) retrieved on 2/2/2020 from <https://www.educations.com>
- Oruwari, J (2017) Contemporary Issues in Language Teaching and Learning. Contemporary Issues in Education, Essay in honor of Dr. Mrs. Mgbore Obasi. Owerri: Hysab Prints and Publishers. (87-112)
- United Nations Decades Report, (2015) Retrieved on 3/2/2020 from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>
- The impact of language policy and practice on children's (2018) retrieved on 4/6/2020 from <https://www.unicef.org/esa/sites/unicef.org/esa/files/2018-09/UNICEF-2016>
Language and National Development: Challenges And Impediments In A Multilingual Society: retrieved 4/6/2020 from <https://iproject.com.ng/>

Dahiru Isa, (2018), English Language for Human Development in Nigeria. Retrieved on 15/6/2020 from https://www.academia.edu/27026544/English_language_and_human_development_in_Nigeria_docx.

Awareness in Language Learning (2011) Retrieved on 15/6/2020 from strategiesinlanguagelearning.com/awareness-in-language-learning/

Segun O A. and Olanrewaju O, (2011) UNESCO: Improving the conditions of teachers and teaching in rural schools across African countries, *International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa*. Retrieved on 14/6/2020 from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/>