



## INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE EDUCATION AS A VIABLE TOOL IN THE SOCIETY FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OLAYINKA OMOLAYO ATURAMU(PhD)

*Department of Languages & Linguistics, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science  
and Technology, IkereEkiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria*

Phone No: +2347030594409 ;

Email: [aturamuolayinka@bouesti.edu.ng](mailto:aturamuolayinka@bouesti.edu.ng)

---

### ABSTRACT

*This study examined how indigenous languages such as Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo are helping in unifying and integrating the society. The relationship between languages and society is essential to improve quality education for national development. Hence, the study used cross sectional survey data, where the respondents were taken from the three senatorial district of Ekiti State. The hypothesis were tested with chi-square. The findings showed that language and society co-exist in the sample area, encourage their children to read and write with indigenous language.*

**KEYWORDS:** Indigenous language education, society, National development.

### INTRODUCTION

“Language as Anyanwu (2007:11) puts it “is social phenomenon and as such it is closely tied up with the social structural and value systems of the society”.

Opoola (2010) in Afe & Olusa (2012) defines language as, the only avenue through which human beings communicate their thoughts and feeling to their fellow human beings.

From the various definitions given above we can decipher that language is the basic factor for effective communication. It is quite evident from the above language that language is the basic factor for effective communication in any society setting be it School or any other social setting.

Language is a particular phenomenon that is common to all mankind. The fundamental function of a language in a society is its use as a tool in interaction, it enables humans to use their linguistics abilities to communicate knowledge, ideas, desire, skills and information in spoken or written forms. The affinity between language and society in such that one cannot exist without the other.



According to Oworihó (2009) language has an inseparable relation with the culture of a society, it is medium for cultural transition for some cultural heritage is expressed and transmitted verbally musically and artistically. Language is such as the only instrument with which a community can unite and the tools for development. It is used as the medium of communication, learning and transmission of culture from one generation to another.

Indigenous language has been defined extensively by different scholars and it has been affirmed that Mother Tongue (MT) is the initial context in which a child can best express himself or herself and in which he can best understand when he or she is taught.

Mother Tongue is seen as the best medium for teaching a child for some reasons which are: psychological, sociological and educational. Psychologically it is the system of meaningful signs that works automatically in ones mind for expression and understanding of facts. Socially, it is a means of identification among the members of a community in which one belongs and the language of such a community is the most potent symbolic representation of its culture. Educationally, one learns more quickly through it than in an unfamiliar linguistics medium. It is believed that Mother Tongue act as a suitable avenue for the acquisition of another language any person maybe interested in. Awodun & Joshi (2022) asserted that mother tongue is the “inborn” language of a child because most of the communication of the mother to her child will be done in the language of the mother. This is normally the language that the child speaks at home with their family. According to Ogunwale (2013) the number of indigenous languages ranges from 250 to 400 and are also classified into major and minor regarded as vernaculars). The nation witnessed the imposition of English Language as the official language and invariably the language of official business and intellectual activity. For the purpose of national development there are little or probably nothing to be achieved within the Nigerian setting for national unity and nation building without the indigenous languages. In essence, the status of the mother tongue as to be looked upon.

The idea that normally comes to people’s minds when national development is mentioned is that of improvement of the conditions of the lives of the citizens of that country.



Opoola (2010) in Afe & Olusa (2012) defined development as “a process of economics and social advancement which enables people to realize their potentials, build of confidence and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment, it is a process aimed at freeing people from the evil of wants ignorance, social injustice and economic exploitation. This connotes that development is the process by which something goes through to reach its full capacity or potential. According to Eriba (2005), development for any nation is about improving the total circumstances of her people. When this is done poverty is reduced, standard of living improves and there will be mass participation in practical and socio-economic affairs of the country. Section 1:3 of the National Policy on Education (2004) states that there are five main nation goals for Nigeria, which are the building of a: free and democratic society, just and egalitarian society, united, strong and self-reliant nation. Also, great and dynamic economy and land full of bright opportunity for all citizens.

Regarding indigenous language issues in national development, it is imperative to understand it from Nigeria perspectives. Nigeria as a country is blessed with numerous languages of about over four hundred languages, but the most disappointing part of it is that only three out of these languages have been developed so far. The Federal government ought to embrace all these languages for effective participation in the national development. It is saddened that even those that have been developed have not been effectively utilized. To one greatest surprise it is still English language that it is still focus on for means of communication to utter neglect of the indigenous language that have a wider usage.

In the word of Ilori (2012) eminent scholars in the field of logistic and language education (i.e. the Bamgboses, Fafunwas, Awobuluyi, Emenanjo’s, Awoniyi’s, Okon Essens and Kola Owolabi of this world just to mention few) have continued to show right from the late 1960s in numerous researches and finding that The problem of underdevelopment in Nigeria and indeed the whole of sub Saharan African is traceable to the fact that this countries are using language that are not native to their people to achieve development something which is not practically achievable.

The politician made use of English for debate both at national assembly and state house of assembly for political discourse. This defeat the very objective of developing



Nigeria languages. It is even noted that the other indigenous language are not being used in education by the speakers of the language as conceived in the national goals.

Indigenous language play an important roles in the politics of the country. They are utilized at different level for adequate comprehension of programme among the people. Example of the area in which indigenous language are indispensable are enlightens campaign, electoral mobilization etc.

As rightly observed by Bamgbose (1994), Hausa have the largest number of speakers in Nigeria(roughly twenty million native speakers and fifteen million non-native speakers) the language is also spoken in countries such as Niger, Ghana, Togo etc. while Yoruba language has a total number of about twenty-five million. This probably explained why in the national language debate in the house of Representative in November 21, 1961 an amendment was seriously proposed urging the adoption of Hausa lingua franca (Bamgbose, 1977).

In order to foster national development through the use of indigenous languages, the Nigeria government declares in the national policy of education (1998) thus: In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process and as a means of preserving the people culture. The government considers it to be in the interest of the national unity, that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his mother tongue. (NPE, 1998).

From this pronouncement we can infer that Nigeria indigenous languages Yoruba and Hausa inclusive in national development, becomes very obvious. This language policy is believed to be designed so that a child would grasp simple sentence structure that would enable a great part of his own linguistic boundary. This can even be ascertained with brook (1964) who believes that everybody speaks language whenever he finds a man.

Also, in the area of international broadcast indigenous is a language to reckon with, as its being used in many radio station across the globe: such as British broadcasting corporation (BBC), Deutsche Welle and international radio of France.

Mass media also has a great influence in the national development. Establishment of F.M radio station becomes a matter of urgency in almost all the state of the federation to



relay the government policies and programmes in indigenous language. Something of such happened during Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's regime in 1999-2007.

At present, indigenous language are not left behind as a result of recent technological development in the field of internet. There are a number of websites where one can get information on indigenous language and culture namely: UCLA, Hausa Home page, Hausa net.com, Hausa Voice.com, Gumel.com, Gamji.com and other, that are still coming up. All these are effort geared toward using indigenous language as a language of national and international integration.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The problem to which attention is directed in this study is to investigate how major indigenous language such as Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo are helping in unifying and integrating the society.

Specifically, the study is designed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Does indigenous language have significant difference on the national development
- 2) Is there any significant relationship between indigenous language and national development in Nigeria?

The following hypotheses were postulated on the basis of the problem identified in the study:

- 1) There is no significant difference between administrator in the use of indigenous language to aid national development in Nigeria.
- 2) There is no significant relationship between indigenous language and national development in Nigeria

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design used in this study is survey, an aspect of descriptive design. The population for the study considered of all civil servant in the three senatorial district of Ekiti state from where a manageable sample was drawn, simple random sampling technique was used to select one local government from each district. Using multistage random sampling,



50 respondents were selected from each local government making a total of 150 respondents. The research instrument use for collecting data was self-design questionnaire tagged indigenous Language Education Viable Tool for National Development (I.L.E.V.T.N.D.). The face and content validities of the instrument was established by expert in test and measurement. Hence, test retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and the co-efficient was obtained by using descriptive statistics (percentage and mean) and chi-square at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

**Research Question1:** Does an indigenous language have any significant effect on the national development in Nigeria?

The method employed in analyzing the question involved the use of frequencies and percentages. The data was derived from the perceived Administrators use of indigenous languages reported by the civil servants.

**Table 1: Civil Servants perception of the administrator's use of indigenous languages.**

S/N	ITEM	F	%
1.	Language use brings about change in people's orientation on national development	55	36.66
2.	Language can be used to foster national unity and development	53	35.33
3.	Indigenous language has really contributed to Nigeria's debased value system.	42	28
	Total	150	100

As shown in table 1.36.66 % of civil servants agreed that their administrators used of language brings about change in people's orientation on national development. While 35.33% of civil servants agree that language can be used to foster national unity and development, and 28% of civil servants agreed that indigenous languages has really contributed to Nigeria's debased value system.



**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between indigenous languages and national development in Nigeria?

The method used in analyzing these questions was frequencies and percentages. The data was derived from the perceived relationship of the use of indigenous languages by the administrators for national development in Nigeria as reported by the civil servants.

**Table 2: perception of civil servants on the relationship of use of indigenous languages by the administrators in Nigeria.**

VARIABLE	MINISTRY		df	X <sup>2</sup>	X <sup>2</sup>
	FEDERAL	STATE		Cal	Crit
JUNIOR STAFF	18(18.13)	50(49.87)			
SENIOR STAFF	12(13.33)	38(36.67)	2	0.545.99	
PERMANENT SECRETARY	10(08.53)	22(23.47)			
TOTAL	40	110			

$P > 0.05(14.5)$

Table 3 shows that the Chi – square calculated of 0.54 was less than chi – square table which was 5.99 at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom. The result was not significant and the stated hypothesis was, therefore accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between indigenous languages and National development in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Chi – Square for language and National development in Nigeria.**

Variable	N	Favorable	Less favorable	df	X <sup>2</sup> cal	X <sup>2</sup> crit
Use of language	50	30(17.33)	10(22.67)	1	22.28	3.84
National Development		35(47.67)	75(65.33)			
Total		65	85			



Table 4 shows that the chi – square calculated of 22.28 was greater than chi – square table which was 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom. This result was significant and the stated hypothesis was, therefore rejected.

## **DISCUSSION**

Indigenous language has been revealed in the study as an instrument aiding national development in Nigeria. The finding of the study show that there is significant between indigenous language and national development. National development of the citizen of the country should be done through the use of indigenous languages. This study agrees with national policy on Education (2004) where the policy indicated.

They made us to understand that there is no significant difference between administrators in the use of indigenous languages to aid national development. This results was not surprising because the administrators as regarded as being in the center of administration in the country. The permanent secretary are at the apex of the ministry and they initiate most of the activities making up organizational climate on the parastatals.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the above discussions, we can deduce that indigenous languages and culture are not separable, they co- exist, fort a community to develop, language is like fire in the hands of a good manipulator it becomes a very useful and problem solving if one knows how to manipulate it very well, we will be in a position to appreciate the noble role being played by language in education which is of course, multi – dimensional and indispensable.

If the objective of using indigenous languages as one of the means of attaining our national goals are to be realized, both government and stakeholders in indigenous languages should work together to produce more teachers who will teach these languages in our schools. So, we suggest that: parent should not discourage their wards or children from learning their mother tongues. Automatic jobs opportunity should be given to language teachers as an incentive to encourage more people to go for the courses. Also,





states and local government should be mandated with the responsibility of developing the languages within their areas. University undergraduates' students studying any of the indigenous languages other than his own should be given automatic bursary to support his or her program of study. More importance should be attached to the studying indigenous languages in carrying out government policies for it to be more-result – oriented. Also, there is an urgent need to re-educate Nigerian citizens in having national pride. Actually, people should be proud of their indigenous languages.

## REFERENCES

- Afe, C.T. & Olusa, K. (2012). The Role of Language in National Security and Sustainable Development in Nigeria. *Zonal Journal of Women in Colleges of Education*. 1.
- Anyanwu, O. & Yusuf (ed) (2007). "Basic Linguistic for Nigerian Languages Teachers"  
Port – Harcourt: Grand Orbit Communications.
- Awodun, A.O. & Joshi, R.B. (2022). Effects of Mother Tongue Interference in teaching on Students' Academic Performance in Basic Science in Junior Secondary Schools for Sustainable Development. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE)*, 14(06), 1006-1013.
- Bamgbose, A. (1994). Nigeria's Choice Language Policy. UNESCO.
- Bamgbose, A. (1997) Language in National Integration: as a Case Study, Colloquium Paper 4/12/NG 37.
- Bamgbose, A. (2001). *Language Policy in Nigeria, Challenges, Opportunity and constraints*, Paper presented at the Nigerian Socio-Linguistics Millennium Conference, University of Lagos, Akoka.
- Brooks, N. (1964). *Language and Language Learning: Theory and Practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.
- Chumbono, B.S. (1990). *The Place of the Mother Tongue in the National Policy on Education*. In Emenanjo E.N. (ed). *Multilingualism, Minority Languages and Language Policy in Nigeria*. Agbor: Central Books Limited.
- Eriba, J.O. (2005). *Ethical consideration in Educational Research for National Development*.



*Journal of National Association of Science Humanities and Educational Research,*  
3(1), 23-28.

Ilori, J.F. (2012). *Role of Linguistics in National Development in Orientation Program.*

Paper for Newly Admitted Undergraduate Students of the Department of  
Linguistics and Nigeria Languages, Ekiti – State University, Ado – Ekiti, page  
5.

National Policy on Education. NERDC Press Ltd.

Ogunwale, J.A. (2013). Harnessing Multilingualism in Nigeria Development: The  
Challenges and Strategies. *International Journal of English and Literature.*

Olajuyigbe, O.A. (2004). National Unity and Language Policy. Abia: ANLAT

Opoola, B.T. (2010). Development Nigeria Indigenous Language in coping with the Current  
Global Economics Realities. *Journal of School of Languages, Adeyemi College of  
Education, Ondo.* 5.

Owoniho, K.R. (2009). The Role of Indigenous Languages in Nation Building and National  
Unity in Nigeria. *Zonal Journal of School of languages.*