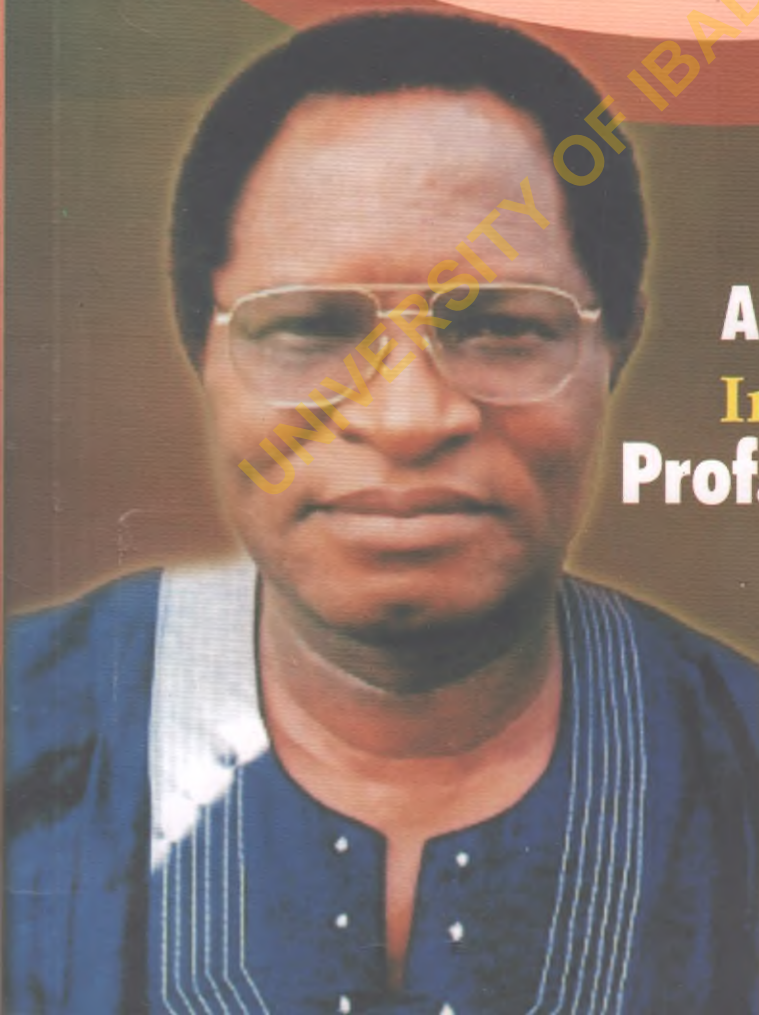


**LINGUISTICS AND THE GLOCALISATION  
OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



**A Festschrift  
In Honour of  
Prof. Kola Owolabi**

*Edited by:*  
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# 3

## Language: A Catalyst for National Development

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### **Abstract**

The author looks at strategies in the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages as second languages to foster peace and development in Nigeria. He observes that the Nigerian government has put some measures in place, just that some of these measures are poorly implemented and their aims defeated. The author makes some recommendations that would help to achieve a meaningful, peaceful co-existence, which is a catalyst for development.

**Key words:** Nigerian languages, national development, second language, language teaching and learning

### **Introduction**

Crises are inevitable in any progressive society because of diverse views and opinions. The best way to resolve these crises is through dialogue. In fact, “it is obvious that in the absence of language, there can be no society or even nation and, of course, national development would be a misnomer” (Eyisi 2009). If language is important to national development, then it must be the language of people’s identity. This paper, therefore, objects to the view that English language’s intervention in a multilingual nation like Nigeria brings about nationhood. Eyisi (2009), quoting (Hoffman, 1974), puts it that “the consideration of disadvantages of multilingualism in a country, what is known as the Nigerian nation today would be, but for the intervention of English, a huge joke if not a mirage.”

The question is, to what extent has English helped the heterogeneous Nigerians see a fellow Nigerian that is not of his/her ethnic, religious, cultural or language group in the way they really are? If the English language has actually helped, then inter-tribal, inter-cultural and political versus religious unrest experienced in the country should have been reduced to its barest minimum. How does English mediate in the ethnic and religious clashes in the rural areas using

Pleateau state as an example. The fact remains that English is the language of power and the elite while in some quarters, it is regarded as a language of captivity and deprivation in Nigeria (See Bamgbose 1971; 1992; Oladejo 1993; and Adegaju 2008). This left the discussion of the nation's progress in the hands of the very few privileged who enjoyed the dividends of colonialism via the learning of English that resulted in the inheritance of the offices left by the colonial masters. By implication, the elite adopted the inherited language. Bamgbose (2002:2) opines that the elite are those who point out that African languages are not yet developed enough to be used in certain domains or that the standard of education is likely to fall, if the imported European languages cease to be used as the medium of instruction at certain levels of education. Based on Bamgbose's view, Adegbola (2009:7) observed that:

Development goals cannot be achieved by the fulfillment of the aspirations of an elite minority such as the acquisition of formal education through the use of an exclusionary foreign colonial language. If an appreciable segment of the population is excluded from development processes due to the imposition of an exclusionary communication strategy, a few would be made to bear the burden of the totality and the development process which will manifest extremely low productivity, as we continue to experience in Nigeria

Hence, the concern of this paper is not just the industrial development but also how language teaching and learning can bring about peaceful co-existence that will foster sustainable national development, since development can only take place in a peaceful environment.

### **Language and culture**

Adeniyi and Bello (2006) note that national development cannot be attributed to economic buoyancy alone; other indices such as unity, education, mass participation in government activities, maintenance of law and order and equal accessibility to justice have tangible roles to play in promoting the industrial state of the nation. This has much to do with citizens' understanding about the concept above (i.e industrial state of the nation) within the context of citizenry's culture. But this is not the situation in the present Nigerian society. No wonder, Adegaju (2008:16) laments that:

To this end, one could argue that African communities might have regained their territories and consequently their sovereignty from colonialists, creating the impression that we have the physical empires in our possession, but it is rather pathetic that we are fast losing

and in some cases have lost the empire of our minds because we have lost touch with our local languages- the only tool with which we can explore, understand and dominate the African world.

By implication, African societies are yet to be liberated from the colonial brainwash which is affecting meaningful progress; hence sustainable development is yet to be noticed in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. This is in line with Okwudishu (2006:35-36) as quoted by Adegaju (2008:17) that:

It has been rightly observed that a national development that has not given a pride of place to indigenous languages as vehicles of national development is likely to be a wasted effort... development in Africa should focus on the cultivation of a literate citizenry that can participate effectively in the socio-economic, political and cultural life of the nation. Development in this sense is human-based and languages chosen for that purpose must be those that will facilitate access to information for the masses at the grassroots.

This suggests that the developmental drive in Nigeria should focus more on human and language, not necessarily infrastructure which is the present focus. If the citizenry are given opportunities to develop themselves to any capacity in order to make meaningful contributions to the development of the nation, there will be enough human and material resources for infrastructural development as opposed to the importation of expatriates as observed in some sectors of the nation's economy. The developmental drive should also be language-driven, focusing on the indigenous languages so as to allow an inclusive mass participation towards the realization of the nation's developmental goals as observed by Adegbola (2009).

But how could this be with the peculiar multilingual and heterogeneous nature of Nigeria? Should Nigerians relate with one another in indigenous languages? Should the Hausa relate with Yorùbá, Igbo, Tiv or Efik in the local language? This may be challenging but considering local markets in Nigeria where English has little or no use, when a buyer wants a reasonable bargaining price, the buyer identifies with the seller by speaking the seller's language. Conversely, when the buyer speaks English; such buyer is considered rather formal and will thus be given *the formal price*. Therefore, the advocacy is not just for the use of Nigerian languages in formal and informal situations but also in advocating for the learning of a Nigerian language as a second language aside one's mother tongue.

Learning a Nigerian language as a second language will assist a Nigerian to have better explanation for cultural differences, beliefs and world views since

language is inseparable from culture. Isola (2010:2) while emphasizing cultural understanding for good tolerance, explains that:

...what is missing so far is the lack of emphasis on the role of language as the centre of culture. Language is the hub of the wheel of culture while all other aspects like administrative, judicial, religious, educational and other system are the spokes. When a language dies, the culture dies.

In other words, proficiency in a language reflects how versed one is in the culture of the language. No wonder proficiency in culture is part of the Provisional Proficiency Guideline of ACTFL 1984 which implies that cultural acquisition is reflected in the communicative competence of the learner (Schleicher and Moshi 2000:114). When you speak a language without understanding the cultural values of the language, it is just like when a drunkard speaks. Such a speech is illogical, unrealistic and sometimes inhuman. Therefore, "language and its literature took centre stage acting like a standard setting and enforcing agent for the whole cultural society" (Isola 2010 p20). When there is language contact, definitely there will be exchange of cultural values, and language interaction expands the words of the language involved through borrowing.

#### **Evidence of language interaction before the coming of missionaries**

Chabal (1994:100) reveals that there had been cross boundary trade in the pre-colonial African society. He puts it thus:

Here again, it is important to point out that other than in the European fantasy, of the 'Dark Continent' there never was in pre-colonial African production without exchange. Even the pygmy and Bushmen communities (the most isolated of all African communities) for instance, traded with their neighbor. Trade was widespread in all parts of Africa and extra-Africa Trade (with, for example, North Africa, the Middle East and even Asia) existed long before the Portuguese 'discoveries', let alone the scramble for Africa.

If there were trades among Africans in the pre-colonial period, what language was their medium of communication? We assume definitely that it was either English or French. Then, how were they communicating despite speaking different languages? Language was not a barrier to their communication. People involved adjusted by learning the basic communication skills of their environment for the purpose of trade, commerce, religion etc. This still happens in the informal market

where traders learn to speak each other's language for the purpose of trade and in a situation where both traders could not communicate, then an interpreter is invited to bridge the gap. Because of this interaction, a trace of this language contact is noticed in the Nigerian languages to the extent that some of these words are nativized and even indigenized. For the purpose of this work, examples are sighted in the three major Nigerian languages and Arabic.

Oladosu (2003) and Akanbi (2004) prove that Islam got to Yorùbá land in the seventeenth century even before the holy jihad led by Usman Dan Fodio. Atanda (1980:37) also points out that visitors to Yorùbáland, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries found large Muslim communities in northern and western Yorùbá land notably in places like Old Oyo, Ikoyi, Ogbomoso, Iṣeyin, Igboho, Ketu and Lagos. Islam uses classical Arabic for the religious rites which necessitate the learning of classical Arabic to be a true Muslim. True Muslims who are Yorùbá are fond of using Arabic words even outside religious discourse. This then makes both Muslims and non-muslims to use Arabic words freely. Some of the Arabic words that were nativized and indigenized are shown in the table below:

Arabic words	Arabic words in Arabic letters	Yorùbá Transliteration	Meaning	Morphological manipulations	Remarks
Ad-du 'á'	الدعاء	Ádùrà	Prayer	Aládùùrà	Native speakers of Yorùbá now use more of Ádùrà than its equivalent in the language: <i>ire</i> ,
Al-'afiyah	العافية	Alááfíà	Good health or peace	àilálááfíà	We doubt if this word has equivalent in the language.
Al-'amānah	الأمّنة	Alùmòṣòṣì	Valuable	Aláilálùmòṣòṣì Alùmòṣòṣìkálùmòṣòṣì	This could also mean natural resources in the Yorùbá language
'allafa	الف	alúfáà	Priest	Áfáà	This is used in all religious circles without minding its origin.
As-sirr	السّر	Asírí	Secret	Aṣò-Ásírí (cloth-secret) meaning secret protection	We doubt if there is any known equivalent of this word in Yorùbá language
Dabarra	دبر	Dábírà	Perform wonders	Adábírà (a performer of wonders)	One would have thought that the word is compound word derived from dá + bírà but bírà in itself does not have any meaning in the language hence we take it that the word comes

					like the Arabic form
Sakan	سكن	Sákáání	Area or territory	Sákáání-olówó (territory-rich) Rich people territory	Equivalent of <i>sákáání</i> in Yorùbá are: <i>òdò</i> , <i>agbègbè</i> , <i>ègbè</i> etc
riḃá	ربا	Ribá	Bribe	Ribámóribá (multiple of bribe)	Owó-èyin, àbètélè, ègúnjè etc are equivalent of the word that are used inter-changeably in the language.

For more on the Arabic and Yorùbá language interaction see Malik (1995)

There is evidence of language contact between Yorùbá and Hausa people. Some historians have proven that the word 'Yorùbá' is a coined word from Hausa language (Yaruba)<sup>1</sup>. Our concern is not the origin of the word 'Yorùbá' but the fact that they both share words or concept which may and may not exist in their respective languages. An example is the words of wisdom in Yorùbá that *Dàndógó kii sèwù ọmọdé* literally meaning that *Dàndógó* is not children's cloth. *Dàndógó* has no morphological explanation in Yorùbá but does in Hausa. 'Dogo' means somebody who is tall while 'Dan' means 'child of' or 'something from' as in Dan-Bala etc. To a Yorùbá *Dàndógó* is a big traditional cloth meant for elders. Hence, it is not meant for kids. You will observe that there is similarity in the meaning of *Dàndógó* in the two languages which could have been a reflection of the language interaction. It is not Yorùbá alone that borrowed from Hausa, Hausa too borrowed from Yorùbá. The concept of 'ata rugu' a kind of pepper is best explained in Yorùbá. 'ata' in Yorùbá means pepper while 'rodo' means round, giving us round-pepper. The table below shows more examples

Table showing evidence of language contact

Source language (Hausa)	Target language (Yorùbá)	Meaning in both languages	Remarks
Bukata	Bùkàtá	responsibility	There is slight difference in meaning in both languages. i.e bukata in Hausa means you need something while in Yorùbá it means responsibility
Jinki	Jínkí	Give/donate /dedicate	The meaning here is the same in both languages
Danshiki	Dànshíkí	A type of Yorùbá Traditional Cloth	<i>Dan</i> means child and <i>siki</i> means big or dip in Hausa but in Yorùbá it means a type of clothe worn by men.

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of this word is unknown.

Rikici	Ríkísí	Conspiracy,	
dukiya	Dúkiá	Property	The equivalent of this word in Yorùbá is òrò which also means wealth
jisoro	Jí sòró	To fear	
Source language (Yorùbá)	Target language (Hausa)	Meaning in both languages	Remarks
Ọlẹ̀lẹ̀	Alele	A type of Yorùbá Traditional food	
Ìsàná	Asana	Matches	
Àpàtì	Aguati	box	
Gèlè	Gele	Head tie	
Pàànú	kwano	Pan	This is as a result of indirect borrowing of <i>Pan</i> to <i>pàànú</i> then <i>kwano</i>
Kẹ̀kẹ̀	Keke	Bicycle	
Mòtò	Mota	Motor	This is also as a result of indirect borrowing. It is originally borrowed from English to Yorùbá as Mòtò and then borrowed to Hausa

Arẹmọ (2006) argues that Yorùbá and Igbo have the same origin though different languages. He gives his numerous examples of items which are pronounced almost the same way in both languages. Below is the table which shows parts of the body pronounced almost the same way in both languages. We choose parts of the body because we believe that these items should not be borrowed.

Parts of the body	Igbo	Yorùbá	Remarks
Mouth	ọ̀nu	Ènu	
Nose	Ìmí	Imú	
Ear	Nti	Etí	
Arm	Àká	Apá	
Stomach	Áfọ̀	Ikùn	This does not in any way sound similar
Knee	Ìkpèrè ùkwù	Orúnkún	No similarity could be traced to this too
Leg	Ùkwù	Èsẹ̀	Ùkwù sounds more like <i>orúnkún</i> in Yorùbá and the short form <i>oókún</i>
Foot	Ùkwù	Èsẹ̀	
Toe	Mkpisi ùkwù	Ìka ẹ̀sẹ̀	
Head	Ísì	Orí	

Also Egbokhare (2011:29) opines that language is the archive of history; it does this most obviously by expressing, through the grammar and lexicon of its text, the events which form its

past. He gave examples from names and traditional titles which are influenced by Yorùbá, Edo, Ebira and Nupe/Igala on Edo North languages as shown in the table below:

Title	Origin	Communication	LGA	Language group	Remarks
Ogie-/oje	Benin	Emai, Ora, Uzairue	Owan, Etsako, Akoko-Edo	NCE NCE NEW	It occurs in its different modified forms. In Atte, Ogiawa is a recent development. Form is widespread in Esan and for Benin lords
Oba	Benin/Yorùbá	Agbede	Etsako	NCE	Agbede is an aberration since it is only in Benin that the term is used
Oni	Yorùbá	Ososo Okpe, Ibilo	Akoko Edo Akoko Edo	NWE NEW	
Dezi	Nupe	Ibilo	Akoko Edo	NEW	A defunct title predating Oni
Odafe	Local	Enwan, Akuku North Ibie	Akoko Edo	NWE	Term for head of a household
Ọkpashi	Local	Ojah	Akoko Edo	NEW	Could mean the supreme one
Ima	Local	Somorika	Akoko Edo	NEW	Recent, only after Otaru. Current Ima is second since creation.
Okumagbe	Local	Weppa-wano luleke	Etsako Owan	NCE	
Ukor	Local	Warake	Owan	NCE	
Otaru	Ebira	Auchi	Etsako	NCE	Traditional ruler of Etuno (Ebira) is Otaru

Egbokhare's claim substantiates language interaction before the coming of the Europeans which is to be enhanced in this period of the dominance of the English language. This will assist in removing the stereotypes experienced today. Some Nigerians see Yorùbá people as a timid and fearful group of people and are called *Ngbàtí ngbàtí*. The Igbo are seen as those who are keen to make money irrespective of the legality of the source. They are called *ajòkúta má mumi* by Yorùbá meaning 'those who eat stones without taking water' because of the hard form of their solid foods. Furthermore, people from the north see those from the south as *berebe* meaning 'people without religion'; while people from the south consider them as *gambari*, 'mere shepherds who are influenced by their animals'

behaviour'. Many also do not understand the reason Fulani people beat up a suitor or a prospective husband. They consider such an act barbaric.

Learning the language will expose the reasons behind these stereotypes and enhance better understanding which will serve as a base for good tolerance. For example, the Yorùbá have an adage that *wòn-ín ni èébú àgbà* (literally meaning that 'shut up' is a form of insult on the personality of the elder) which forbids a younger person to confront an elderly one publicly not minding where the elder comes from.

### **Prospect of Second Language Learning**

Arohunmolase (2006) is of the opinion that we can use the linguistic, historical and cultural evidence in Nigerian languages for our desired national development and unity. He explains further that if pupils/students in primary/secondary schools, Colleges of Education, and Universities are appropriately taught Yorùbá as a second language (L2), they would know all the factors that unite Yorùbá language with other Nigerian languages, socially, culturally, linguistically, and historically. It will also enable Yorùbá and other language scholars to be able to exploit the ancestral ties among Nigerian languages in order to show Nigerians that they have a common history.

Although Arohunlolase (2006) focuses more on Yorùbá as a second language but the concern should be on all Nigerian languages as National Policy on Education (NPC) has made provision for. This provision should be implemented as it will afford the nation the opportunity to protect its local languages from going into extinction. But beyond this, experience has shown that when languages are learnt there is deeper understanding of a people and this brings about peaceful co-existence.

Learning from other nations that are investing hugely on second language acquisition; most especially those learning Nigerian languages as foreign language may not necessarily love Nigeria and Nigerians to that extent. Rather they do so for security purposes and a bid to understanding them better. Language experts are invited from various countries of the world to teach their language in a foreign land. For instance, the United States of America's Government through the US Department of State and the Institute of International Education is expending millions of dollars to bring people of various languages to teach their languages in America as well as sending their students to various part of the world for language immersion. This affords Americans the opportunity of understanding the world better. This demonstrates the necessity for this advocacy which can equally be achieved in Nigeria if appropriate measures are put in place.

## Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned, we hereby recommend that:

- National Policy on Education should be implemented to the letter and all the escape clauses should be addressed as well.
- A commission should be set up to monitor the implementation of the provision (NPE) most especially language related areas.
- Acquisition of Nigerian languages as second language should be a requirement for employment.
- Any politician without the knowledge of another Nigerian language apart from his/her mother tongue should be disqualified from contesting any political office.
- There should be training and re-training for the teachers of languages on the new theories of second language acquisition.
- Language teachers should be encouraged in kind and in cash.
- There is need for the promotion of L1 and L2 among the elites'

## Conclusion

Though, we cannot do away with the English language yet, our local languages bring us together better than the foreign ones. We also notice that there are inter-tribal crises, yet non-indigenous observers can understand the reasons for the crises having studied the language and culture and appropriate help could be provided internally and externally. This will help us to see ourselves exactly the way we are, and then other developmental issues will be easy to address.

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