Developing Teaching & Learning in Africa

Decolonising Perspectives

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Chapter Eleven

Lost in Translation? Revisiting Language Decolonisation Project in Nigerian Education

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Introduction

Education is an important instrument in the development of a society. It is a means of transmitting knowledge, experience, and instruction from one generation to another. Education is also one of the yardsticks of measuring the growth and development of a country. It is one of the ways of understanding the world. Most of the time, acquiring and imparting knowledge through one's indigenous/native language helps retention. Evidence shows that students comprehend better when they are taught through their mother tongue or indigenous language. However, in a situation where the indigenous language is jettisoned for colonial language as a medium of instruction, it creates an endemic colossal loss of the richness that is embedded in the indigenous language. Thus, such a society will witness a situation whereby students cannot boast, speak, or write in their indigenous languages. Hence, the knowledge, experience, and instruction that is supposed to be transmitted from one generation to another gets lost in transit. This is the situation of the Nigerian education system. The government and stakeholders in education pay more attention to the colonial language education system than the indigenisation of Nigerian indigenous languages in education.

The National Policy on Education (2014) states that the government will ensure the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or language of the immediate community to teach students from early childhood to the first three years in primary education. However, this is just a policy on paper that is not enforced by either the government or those in the education sector. Thus, this chapter

seeks to examine the loss in translation of indigenous language for the colonial language in the Nigerian education system. Why lost? Can African (or Nigerian) language(s) be used as a medium of instruction? Can the English language be decolonised? The chapter will also examine the prospect of indigenous languages in Nigeria.

Pre-colonial Education Language

The pre-colonial education language deals with the era when indigenous language was used as a medium of instruction for students in informal educational settings. It should be noted that many scholars (Majasan, 1967; Occiti, 1973; Fafunwa, 1974; Tiberondwa, 1978; Taiwo, 1980; Ozigi & Ocho, 1981; Omolewa, 1981; Datta, 1984) have written on the pre-colonial era of African education, which was based on the functionality of the society and the preservation of Africanness (i.e. African culture, language, and identity).

During this period, each ethnolinguistic group used its language for children's education, which was culturally contextualised. Hence, the content of traditional educational systems emanated from the physical, social, and spiritual situations of pre-colonial African society. The physical environment influenced the content of the curriculum in that what was taught in the local language was meant to assist the child to adjust and adapt to the environment in order to exploit and derive benefit from it. Castle (1966) argues that whether the child's habitat was dominated by mountain, plain, river, or tropical forest, he had to learn to combat its dangers and use its fertility. To come to terms with the physical environment, the growing child learned about landscape, the weather, and about both plant and animal life. Thus, the intention of education in the traditional African society was to set afoot a student with functional skills that would help the student in contributing his/her quota to the overall development of the community.

Okoro (2011) argues that African traditional education emphasises social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual, and moral values. Traditional education is a lifelong education and functionalism was the main guiding principle. Functionalism refers to practical-oriented, felt-need education that is aimed at identifying and providing solutions for societal needs, as well as the empowerment of the educated. African societies regarded education as a means to an end and not as an end. Fafunwa (1991) states that children and youth learned by participatory education through demonstration, recitation, ritual ceremony, and imitation. In traditional African education, the method of teaching

emphasised learning by doing. For instance, the subjects are wrestling, dancing, drumming, racing, local history, proverbs, riddles, and storytelling. The traditional system of education was integrated in such a way that unemployment was minimal. Wagner (1999) states that the indigenous education in Kenya, Nigeria, and other African countries brought about skill acquisition and apprenticeship training system began as a part of the wider education process in which the African indigenous societies passed on their cultural heritage from one generation to the next. The skill owned by a family was highly valued and in some professions such as native medicine, secrets were jealously guarded as they are indeed today. Learning a craft often began with personal service to the master. Young boys would become house servants to a closer relative who would feed and clothe them and after some years of promising usefulness, they would then gradually be introduced to the craft of the guardian. Given the above, education being of great importance to all nations of the world is not an invention brought to Africa from Europe as claimed by the Europeans (Omolewa, 2001; Osokoya, 2003).

Invariably, the traditional language education system in Nigeria aims at equipping individuals with necessary skills; attitudes and linguistic abilities that would help them function effectively in the society. The linguistic ability helps in providing functional training and experience in artistry, farming, fishing, and other vocational skills, which are needed for the survival of the society. Every responsible member of the community serves as a transmitter-teacher and trainer of the societal norms and skills to the younger generations. They are looked upon as models of good virtues to be emulated by the young ones. The system has demarcated learning experience for each age grade which culminates in the acquisition of desired values and attitudes, and the specialisation of individuals in some specific vocations. Thus, the pre-colonial language education in most parts of Nigeria trained individuals to fit usefully by learning and producing economic skills for self-sustenance, adapting to the role expectations and contributing to the development of the society.

Therefore, the forms of knowledge acquired during this period made Africans to be unique as a continent. Education was transmitted using African languages to preserve the originality of the knowledge of different types of occupations that existed during the pre-colonial era. Thus, African traditional education was culturally, religiously, socially, and occupationally based on the needed skills that kept the society active. Hence, the education offered is African-oriented. Also, in the absence of recognisable institutions like schools, acquisition of knowledge

was taught in an informal setting in which home, community, and the society formed the theatre of learning. The school was the society and the individual was taught through the oral tradition of the norms of the society.

Conclusively, the pre-colonial period of the education system in Nigeria produced intellectual life and activity in the society. It is important to note that intellectual life/activity does not depend on literacy. Intellectual life or intellectual activity in any society is a function of the intellect, i.e. “the power of the mind to grasp ideas and relations and to exercise dispassionate reason and rational judgment” (Falola, 2017:192). Thus, has Edward Shils (1968) and Falola (2017) rightly said that this can be present in any human society, be it literate or illiterate, and that every society has its intellectuals. Primitive societies also have their intellectuals or at least their proto intellectuals. Intellectuals, based on this context, are the aggregate of the persons in the society who employ in their communication and expression with relatively higher frequency than most other members of their society symbols of general scope and abstract references concerning man, society, nature, and the cosmos. Hence, indigenous language creates an atmosphere of intellectualism and distinction, which edifies the society.

Postcolonial Education Language

Several scholars (Bowen, 1857; Burns, 1929; Graham, 1966; Taiwo, 1980; Datta, 1984; Ajayi, 1984; Freeman, 1968; Kupferman, 2013) have examined the advent of Western education in Nigeria. This period ushered in the use of English language as a medium of instruction, by displacing indigenous language. However, this study examines the place of indigenous language during the postcolonial period. It should be noted that in the early phase of colonial administration, some missionaries in Africa believed that they were bringing education to entirely uneducated peoples, a supposition which would have been valid if education were equated with literacy and formal schooling. Detailed accounts of African peoples by anthropologists leave one in no doubt that African societies did possess a kind of customary education, a system that worked reasonably well, given the limits imposed by society within which it had to operate.

The day-school curriculum of Western education in Nigeria includes reading, writing, arithmetic, and singing. The schools were maintained with grants from the missions, donations from groups and individuals outside the country, contributions by local Christians and children’s parents, and with the fees of the children. The annual, fixed, unconditional grants made to the missions by the government since

1877 till the period of inauguration of the Phelps-Stokes Commission, were used to promote mushroom multiplication of small schools. However, the Africans were critical of the denationalising tendencies of the education introduced by the missionary. Because of this, a bill was proposed for the promotion and assistance of education in the Gold Coast Colony. The bill was passed into an Ordinance for the Promotion and Assistance of Education in the Gold Coast Colony on 6 May 1882 (Hussy, 1930). The subject taught in all these schools include scripture, English composition, English grammar, arithmetic, geography, music, singing, reading, writing, dictation, catechism, ciphering, dictation, algebra, geometry, Latin, Greek, English history, Roman history, Greek history, book-keeping, physiology, geography, Bible history, Yoruba reading, and Yoruba composition. Sewing and needlework were taught to girls. The medium of instruction in the infant classes was Yoruba and in the elementary schools English.

From the aforementioned analysis, it is glaring that the Education Ordinance and the curriculum were Western-oriented without considering the language background of the children. The subjects taught functioned as a kind of indoctrination on the African children, which serve as a form of physiological, and mental exploitation for, indirectly, their advantage – propagating Western culture and civilisation to the detriment of Nigerian indigenous languages. Besides, there was no provision for the teaching of local languages despite the spadework already done by the missionaries and the fact that English, the main subject and the medium of instruction, was foreign to the student. Also, the 1882 Ordinance was enacted at a time when African nationalism was being awakened and whipped up. The process of English education had been going on for 40 years in the Lagos Colony and produced Nigerians who had assimilated European ways of life. Many of these Nigerians had become disillusioned with the attitude of Europeans toward them and Europeanised Africans generally. They realised that, no matter how well fluent they were, there was racial discrimination against them in social relationships and even in the Church. Africans were looked down upon as inferior and African institutions were down-rated and condemned.

Briefly, Sanda (1972) asserts that Western education was not designed to be particularly functional for Africans; it was in its inception designed both as an instrument of alienation and as a vehicle for exploiting the governed, as well as for the realisation of the coloniser's cultural imperialism. The nature of restructuring of African societies, which followed the advent of Europeans, was derived from the objectives of three main categories – missionaries, merchant traders and administrator – either of colonisers that came to different parts of Africa together

or in succession. The missionaries were openly committed to the spread of the gospel and hence their immediate needs were for interpreters and indigenous lay preachers who could read, write, and teach the words from the Bible. The merchant traders were mainly concerned with exploiting the natural resources of the continent, but they needed intermediaries, as well as clerks and elementary teachers who would keep records, make simple additions and subtractions, and re-interpret commercial policies in ways that would placate the dynamics of the African population. And the administrators were mainly concerned with keeping the flag of the home country flying in the African colonies as well as in 'civilising' the supposedly uncivilised 'natives' even though the economic and military-strategic potentials of the different colonies were also sufficient incentives. All three categories of colonisers were not in any way or at any time working in isolation from one another; in fact, each represented a part of the whole process of colonisation.

Hence, colonial education in Nigeria, operated jointly by the church and the state, was meager, both in terms of quantitative and qualitative standards. Colonial education was characterised by a pronounced European bias. This was reflected in the provision for the medium of instruction and the curricula. Teaching was generally conducted in the language of the colonial power. Thus, students were prevented from expressing themselves in their mother tongues within school premises (Datta, 1984). Furthermore, the colonial language policy was not aimed at developing an indigenous language system that would be linguistically and economically responsive to the needs of the Nigerian population. Rather, colonial schools were created to serve European economic and political interests. The use of European languages and European-based curricula were necessary conditions for this endeavour (Alidou, 2004).

Despite the above assertion, the practice of Western education has not been without challenges. Nearly two centuries of the practice of Western education has been greeted by sporadic calls for educational reforms in Nigeria; it has been found, that while Western education has served to globalise Africa, its processes and contents suffer from partial incongruity with African realities when thoughtlessly operationalised within the Nigerian environment. The pragmatic needs of the colonisers, therefore, dictated the spread of literacy and general education, an emphasis on de-traditionalisation or de-Africanisation of the African. That is why Sanda (1972:77) argues:

[...] indirect rule of the British [...] exhibited [...] elitist orientation in their colonial education policies [...] The monetary incentive (wages) which is the strongest base of this new educated class created a basis for subsequent

social divisions of African societies not only into the literate and the illiterates or the educated class and the uneducated class but also into the wealthy, culturally distinct, spatially segregated, educationally distinguishable class and the poor, uneducated, 'primitive' tradition-oriented and socially alienated class of peasants.

Therefore, the spread of Western education in Nigeria not only involved the spread of religion, but also the transmission of foreign language and elitist orientation of colonised Nigerians. Besides, this also brought about the linguistic division in which the English language superimposed on Nigerian indigenous languages. Those who can speak and write in a colonial language get access to more opportunities than a typical Nigerian. However, as time goes by, the rate of unemployed westernised graduates increased in which those that cannot secure a job now become dependents on those that are literate in indigenous languages. This shows the gap between pre-colonial education language and Western education language systems. As mentioned earlier on, with pre-colonial education, language makes students fit into the society – culturally, linguistically, and professionally because the skills needed are taught in indigenous languages. This makes them independent and innovative, contributing meaningfully to society. In addition, it should be noted that the needs of the society could only be met when the problems are understood indigenously. Thus, a foreign language cannot either explain the indigenous problem or bring a solution. Nigerian education problems can only be solved through Nigerian indigenous languages. However, Western education language produces white-collar employees and income earners instead of building on the existing foundation laid by the African informal education language of producing employers of labour that are specialised linguistically in different professions. Hence, this shows the pitfalls in the Western education language system.

Challenges of Language Decolonisation in Nigerian Education

After independence, the choice of language for education and administration became problematic due to the multi-ethnic setting of the country. Since the English language has become the dominant means of communication in all spheres of the country, Nigerian elites found it difficult to replace colonial language with any of the three major ethnic languages (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo). Moreover, because each ethnic group is fighting for supremacy, no ethnic group would succumb to another ethnic group in making use of its language as the official language.

Thus, the retention of colonial language as the official language of government becomes the most practical, linguistically and politically preferred choice, and by extension medium of instruction in education. Invariably, the challenge of language decolonisation in Nigeria started from the post-independence period.

Alidou (2004) examines some challenges faced by African countries over the retention of colonial languages. Some of the challenges that are peculiar to Nigeria will be considered. The first major challenge is the lack of corpus planning (including orthography). Nigerian indigenous languages lacked a long tradition of literacy right from the time they were spoken. The language(s) were only spoken; they were not codified early enough before the arrival of the colonial language. Thus, most Nigerian indigenous languages did not acquire orthography early enough before the postcolonial period and publications in indigenous languages were scarce during this period. Despite the fact, the government and policymakers on education stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) that “[...] will ensure develop the orthography of many more Nigerian indigenous languages, and produce textbooks in Nigerian indigenous languages”, this has not been achieved to its optimum level. This brought a setback in the actualisation of formal and literate Nigerian indigenous languages or mother tongue environments that can be used as a language of convenience in place of colonial language in politics, economy, and education spheres. Thus, Nigerian indigenous languages suffer international deficits from being elevated to official status. In other words, this affects the Nigerian children in developing literacy skills and eager to learn or to be taught in Nigerian indigenous languages. Moreover, access to job opportunities, gaining admission into the universities and all forms of business opportunities is only possible through colonial language. However, Nigerian indigenous languages can fulfil this role through the proper implementation of the policy on the development of orthography of Nigerian indigenous languages and the production of textbooks in Nigerian indigenous languages.

The need for languages of wider communication that could allow Nigerians to engage with the international world is another challenge. Because Nigeria is a developing country, including its education sector, access to foreign education, scholarships, fellowships, grants, and aid are only possible with the acceptance and usage of colonial language. Nigerian students cannot compete with their fellow counterparts in the developed countries without fluency in the English language in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (even if such students cannot speak a complete sentence in their mother tongue). In addition, since the English language is one of the international languages in the comity of nations,

the medium of teaching and learning can only be carried out through the colonial language. Hence, the impact and effect of globalisation on medium of instruction policies is evident in Nigeria whose national languages are not among the major languages. This posed a serious challenge in decolonising education language in Nigeria. However, Nigeria can overcome this challenge by first carrying out the process of Africanisation of Nigerian education language. When this is done, its development to be part of the global languages will be possible because teaching and learning will be carried out using Nigerian indigenous languages. Curriculum planning, textbooks, and all materials related to education will be based on the internationalisation of indigenised education. By so doing, the Western world would be forced to reckon with this form of education that is very African-based.

It is important to note that sub-Saharan African countries that have maintained colonial languages in education continue to be among the poorest, illiterate, and most poorly educated countries in the world (UNESCO, 2000). UNESCO's experts report extremely poor student performance all over Africa. Concerning student performance on tests taken in English in Nigeria, for example:

In Nigeria when researchers administered cognitive tests of literacy, numeracy and life skills to fourth graders as part of the Monitoring Learning Achievement project, the results were described as generally poor. The mean percentage of scores was 32% in numeracy, 25% in literacy and 33% in life skills. In one test item, pupils were instructed to copy a five-line passage into a given space. Only 8% of them were able to do so accurately, and 40% were unable to copy a single word or punctuation mark.

UNESCO, 2000:34

To address such problems, in 1990, UNESCO, the World Bank, and the European Community sponsored the World Conference on Education for all in Jomtien, Thailand. Most developed and developing countries were represented. All governments and development agency representatives at the meeting recognised that educational provision is qualitatively and quantitatively inadequate in sub-Saharan Africa. The conference highlighted the need in Africa to develop quality education that is socially equitable and culturally relevant. The promotion of African languages as media of instruction was announced as one of the best strategies for promoting effective learning in formal basic education. The 10-year action plan developed after Jomtien by the national ministries of education anticipated the expansion of the use of national languages in all elementary schools in these countries. Unfortunately, since 1990, little public debate has focused on popular reaction to the use of national languages for formal basic education. Since Jomtien, African governments have held only two major conferences on language

policy in education and development (in Cape Town, South Africa, and Accra, Ghana). These gatherings were academic and political, re-emphasising the need to invest in the development and use of African languages. Unfortunately, at the national level, most policymakers are reluctant to implement a new medium of instruction policy. Therefore, bilingual schools in sub-Saharan Africa merely remain experimental projects (Alidou, 2004).

Another factor in the challenge of language decolonisation is the lack of specialisation in bilingual education in schools. This depicts to lack of infrastructural facilities. Nigerian Colleges of Education and tertiary institutions lack both teachers and students that can specialise in this area. And the needed instrument and materials are not available. There is the dearth of libraries and laboratories schools in achieving bilingualism. It should be noted that such an area needs to be considered by the policymakers in the education sector and the government. This is because such an area can bring synergy between the colonial and Nigerian indigenous languages. It can improve the status of indigenous languages in teaching and learning. This will aid students in Colleges of Education to be fluent in the English language and Nigerian indigenous languages. This will add up to the quality of education that graduates eventually possessed after their period in the tertiary institutions. By so doing, the Nigerian indigenous language system will achieve quality literacy both colonial and indigenous languages. Concisely, adequate financial resources and willingness on the path of the government to promote indigenous languages as a medium of instruction will render bilingual education realisable in Nigeria.

Privatisation of Nigerian education has hindered language decolonisation. Private schools, both at primary, secondary and tertiary school levels, outnumber public schools in Nigeria. Additionally, many of the private schools are faith-based establishments. These schools are fashioned toward propagating Westernisation, creating a colonised generation that is misinformed about Nigerian indigenous languages. Such an action has succeeded in producing a set of new class of students who are deeply separated from their communities. These students failed in acquiring mastery in colonial languages and yet lost fluency in Nigerian indigenous languages. Owing to this, the government needs to strengthen the National Education Policy by insisting that all private school institutions give paramount attention to Nigeria's indigenous languages. This will be in terms of speaking, writing, and teaching. Furthermore, all higher education institutions should establish a bilingual centre to underscore the critical nature of indigenous languages.

Alidou (2004) argues that there are three main sets of factors (economic, political and pedagogical) that trigger the problem of medium of instruction in African schools. Economic factors include the retention of textbook markets for Western publishing companies. Political factors include African elites' reluctance to implement a language policy that may reduce the gap between two unequal social classes – a tiny privileged minority of educated Africans who have access to political and economic power and the underclass of non-educated masses deprived of economic and political resources. Pedagogical factors include inadequate preparation of school personnel in bilingual education, ongoing corpus planning (the codification of African languages), and the need to develop qualified human resources in publishing educational materials in African languages. These three sets of factors devalued the essence in Nigerian indigenous languages and the inability to become a developed country. This is because no country can be fully developed using only a foreign language as a medium of instruction.

It should be noted that the medium of instruction is the most powerful means of maintaining and revitalising a language and a culture, additionally it is the most important form of intergenerational transmission (Fishman & Fishman, 2000). The political, social, and economic forces shape the choice of medium of instruction. The medium of instruction policy is an integral part of educational policy and pertains to educational efficacy. Thus, equipping Nigerian education with indigenous language as a medium of instruction, put the country abreast with the developed countries. This will not only make Nigerian indigenous languages to have value in the labour market but will assist in globalising Nigerian indigenous languages and the decolonisation project.

Conclusively, the challenge of language decolonisation is due to irresponsiveness to the call of the project by the stakeholders in education. This is because colonial language has perpetuated every aspect of the government. Besides, the government does not see the need and the possibility of getting off the grip of the colonisers owing to lack of political will and taking decisive steps towards developing Nigerian indigenous languages. The lack of political will comes from the fact that political elites do not see the advantages that are inherent in the development of indigenous language. In addition, they are not willing to go through the rigorous process (such as overhauling the curriculum, producing bilingual materials, codification and standardisation of Nigerian indigenous languages, funding, etc.); it takes a lot of time and such agenda cannot be achieved within the minimum of 4-year political tenure of a government. In fact, due to the tribalisation of the country, Nigerians might find it difficult to believe

in any government that might want to take such a step. However, the challenge of language decolonisation is surmountable when there is a collective effort by the government and the masses to indigenise local languages in education for globalisation output. Such an output will bring global economic advantages and recognition.

Decolonising Nigerian indigenous Languages: Steps taken thus Far and Why They Have Failed

In 1970, an educational research project was carried in developing a curriculum where the mother tongue would be used to teach students in schools. The Ford Foundation funded the project. The project was called Ife Primary Education Research Project and lasted eight years (1970-1978). The aim of the project included training bilingual curriculum specialists, the production of relevant educational materials in Nigerian indigenous languages and English as a second language, and systematic initial and in-service training for all bilingual classroom teachers. The project, which was carried out by Fafunwa and his team, was successful. Unfortunately, the activities of the project were abruptly brought to an end when funding from the Ford Foundation terminated. The Nigerian government and educational agencies failed to carry on with the project with necessary funding that might have improved not only the quality of education and producing bilingual teachers, but also in decolonising and decentering the English language as a medium of teaching and learning in schools. The government forced Fafunwa and his team from the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) to reduce their activities to teacher training and curriculum development for mother tongue education. With this singular action, the project was lost and since that time, neither the government nor the academia in the country ever revived a similar project (Fafunwa, Macauley & Sokoya, 1989).

From the above analysis, the chapter examines factors that have hindered decolonisation of Nigerian indigenous languages, which include:

Lack of commitment on the part of the policymakers: Less than 30% of Nigerian budget goes to education though Nigeria has invested heavily in Western education and language to the detriment of bilingual education that fit the system. Pennycook (2002:91) observes:

The spread of western knowledge and values was of equal, if not greater, importance to securing goodwill toward the colonizers and producing a loyal working force. Consequently, formal education was made available

by colonial governments through the indigenous languages (to a greater or lesser extent), either as an alternative or as a transitional medium of instruction. No matter whether the colonial language or the indigenous languages were used as the medium of instruction, the goal remained the same – to subjugate the colonized.

This assertion is in line with the fact that the government prefers that Nigerian indigenous languages should be subjugated under the Western epistemology. In addition, they see it as the only means to bring neutrality among diverse languages. This non-committal attitude is motivated by avoiding ethnic conflicts, the economic agenda of exploiting the market of postcolonial countries, and the socio-political agenda of protecting the interests of the elite. Thus, the government does not see any need to make policy concerning decolonisation projects because Nigerian policy itself is suppressed under Western policy.

Lack of continuity, parochialism, and inadequate resources for implementation:

The 1970 educational research project was supposed to be a continuous exercise. After the first successful attempt, a similar project should have been carried out in other parts of the country by testing the validity and reliability of the instrument used. However, this was not the case. The project was stocked and the student that was experimented using Yoruba language later found it difficult to cope in the tertiary institution because the English language is the sole medium of instruction. Invariably, the project was futile. In addition, government and private establishments do not see the political and economic gains in funding such a project. This leads to inadequate resources for achieving bilingualism for the efficacy of indigenous languages in teaching and learning.

Lack of codification and standardisation of indigenous languages: Standardisation is not possible without codification of all Nigerian indigenous languages. It is only through standardisation and codification that Nigerian indigenous languages could be used in the domains of education, law, and government. However, the scarcity of teaching materials in indigenous languages and the lack of enabling environment for professionals, make standardisation and codification of Nigerian indigenous languages difficult to realise. Moreover, the age-long low status attached to indigenous languages as not modern and the prestige accorded to the English language gave rise to reluctance in speaking indigenous languages. These surmountable challenges have been the excuse of government and policymakers for their non-committal stand toward the introduction of mother tongue education.

Nonconformity and ineffectiveness of the National Policy on Education: National Policy on Education of Nigeria (2004), Section 1 and Section 4 state:

Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion, and preserving cultures. Thus every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian indigenous languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba [...] ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community [...] The medium of instruction in primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject.

However, these sections of the policy are not implemented. English language is used exclusively as the medium of instruction at pre-primary school and the first three years (Grade 1-3) in primary school, in either public or private schools. This renders not only the policy ineffective, but weakens the value of Nigerian indigenous languages as a key in the education sector and as a means of communication that students can boast about. The prestigious status of English is most evident by the way students and teachers take pride in it than their mother tongue or indigenous languages. It should be noted that the English language is one of the compulsory subjects that must be passed before a student can be promoted from one class to the next across different levels of education. It means that students can fail any of the three major Nigerian indigenous languages as a subject, but must pass the colonial language. It shows the higher status the government and policymakers give to colonial language to the detriment of Nigerian indigenous languages. Thus, we are not only faced with class-based inequality but also faced with language-based inequality.

Other reasons why the decolonising of Nigerian education project failed are the gradual decline of enthusiasm for African languages and cultures. In addition, this is encapsulated in the belief in the lack of political, economic, and global values of Nigerian indigenous languages. This belief is not only deep-seated in the minds of the English-speaking elite, but also among the policymakers, and even the native speakers due to the long-standing low status of Nigerian indigenous languages. Regardless of the well-crafted National Policy of Education, Nigeria's education sector has failed to enhance the values of indigenous language. It has also failed to produce learners with multilingual skills that could make them fit into the African society.

Prospect of African Language in Teaching and Learning

The prospect of African language in teaching and learning lies in dealing with the challenges of language decolonisation and addressing the reasons why previous projects have failed to achieve its set out objectives. In addition, writers, linguists, and local publishing companies should work hand-in-hand in codification, standardisation, full orthographies, grammars, and dictionaries of all the Nigerian indigenous languages. They should promote and produce all types of literary work and invest in the production of materials that will enhance indigenous languages. This will help the development of a literate culture of indigenous languages. Also, materials produced must be of high quality linguistically, culturally, and pedagogically. Literary works, books, and textbooks that will be produced should not be a mere translation of Western works which will eventually undermine African language and culture. In addition, writers and publishers should desist from describing African culture and language as archaism while tagging Western culture and language as modernism. African language is classic and evergreen; books written in African language should be viewed from an analytical pedagogical standpoint that is necessitated in challenging Western and African elite dominance. In addition, they should consider that African education seeks to develop global learners and workers who are globally competitive. This complexity should be reflected in the textbooks produced in national languages (Alidou, 2004).

Conclusion

The loss in the transition of local languages in Nigeria illustrates the endemic phenomenon and the supremacy of the English language. It shows the unwillingness on the path of government and the lack of unity amongst diverse ethnic groups due to the conflict that might ensue in the future if such a step is taken (i.e. conflict of language hegemony); the social status of the elite, and the Nigerian economy that is determined by the West. Thus, for the English language to be decolonised in teaching and learning lies on the concerted effort by the government, policymakers in the education sector, academia and all concerned citizens in actualising the project for the benefit, preservation, and globalisation of Nigerian indigenous languages.

It should be noted that globalisation and decolonisation are two different concepts. Edward Shizha (2005) argues that globalisation is consistent with colonisation or neo-colonisation in that it seeks to 'universalise' and 'internationalise' the

Western concept of knowledge and science, thus continuing the marginalisation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. 'Global' technologies have condensed time and space to create a postmodernist consciousness that has accelerated Euro-American political, economic, social, and cultural processes at the expense of other cultures. Globalisation has tended to universalise, validate, and legitimate Western knowledge while trivialising Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Therefore, to achieve language decolonisation, Africans must first de-globalise every trait of Euro-American globalisation in the African education system and create African globalisation (or Africanisation), i.e. globalisation that evolves from the African continent (that includes indigenous economic, political, social, and cultural homogenisation), serving as African international worldview. It would be a kind of a benchmark that would be acceptable worldwide. This huge step will place the continent from a unique perspective from the rest of the world because Africa will be rebranding itself from its worldview, rather than the Euro-American worldview.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. Provision of universal education through the medium of Nigerian indigenous languages. This will ensure that these indigenous languages are not only being used in a formal setting but give prominent status in the education sector. It will also increase publications in indigenous languages.
2. The development of a literate environment and literate culture using Nigerian indigenous languages. This will elevate indigenous languages beyond local usage. It will be a medium of communication among both the illiterate and literate classes. It will also help people to freely identify with their language without being ashamed.
3. The government should be committed to policies that will give strong value to Nigerian indigenous languages and multilingualism and must ensure the conditions for implementation are satisfied.
4. There must be concerted efforts by elites in the major ethnic groups in the realisation of the decolonisation project of Nigerian indigenous languages so that the richness that is embedded in each ethnic groups' culture and language are transmitted to the next generation through decolonised education.
5. Providing material and teaching resources for indigenous languages medium of education so that teachers will be well equipped with the instrument that is needed to impart indigenous knowledge to the students.
6. Indigenous language should be made compulsory as a medium of instruction in nursery and primary school education and as an added prerequisite for secondary school students in gaining admission into tertiary institution regardless of their choice of study. This will ensure that students, regardless of their background, will not have any choice than to be literate in their indigenous language. It will put abreast

indigenous language with the English language. It will give strong value to it in the global world. Fellowships and grants will be placed on those that can intellectualise Nigerian indigenous languages.

7. There should be bilingual training programmes in colleges of education in such a way that prospective teachers will specialise in indigenous languages.
8. Establishment of bilingual primary and secondary schools in all the six geo-political zones. The major language of the geo-political zone with the English language will be studied in depth. This will ensure that every part of the country is carried along in decolonisation of the Nigerian indigenous language. Thus, the national curriculum must be indigenised and overhauled.

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