

Mother Tongue Eclipsing in the Linguistic Repertoire of Yoruba/English Bilingual Children in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines a trend in Nigeria whereby children of Yoruba-speaking parents acquire English as their First Language and Yoruba as their second language. It assesses the socio-cultural implications of this practice on the country's socio-political development. Forty school children and their parents were purposively selected and administered questionnaires aimed at eliciting their language preferences in different domains. The results showed that English was the preferred language used by the children in eight out of the twelve domains of language use. The paper concluded by recommending that indigenous languages be used for legislation, administration, and education in Nigeria.

Keywords: bilingualism, domain, Yoruba, language policy, mother tongue

The institutionalization of English as Nigeria's official language and language of education is a major consequence of Nigeria's colonial history, multi-ethnicity, and multilingualism. While the choice of English as the country's official language seemed logical, inexpensive, and convenient at the time of the nation's independence in 1960, a critical look at what obtains in developed nations and emerging economies across the globe

shows that the time is ripe to revisit this choice. According to Egbe (2014, p. 58), the institutionalized use of English in Nigeria has contributed to the decline in the use and development of most indigenous Nigerian languages. Indeed, the rate at which English, in partnership with Pidgin, is strangulating and snuffing the life out of indigenous Nigerian languages has reached alarming dimensions in many southwestern Nigerian cities.

Aside from English being the language of opportunity and achievement in Nigeria, the language is also the country's official and national language. This reality has resulted in the predilection by many educated Nigerian parents to propel their children towards the mastery of English at the expense of their native languages. According to Setati (2008, p. 106), it is "the preferred language for schools and businesses, as it is a passport to social goods, tertiary education, fulfilling jobs, and positions of influence and power." Notwithstanding Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2004) which stipulates that "the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years," English has taken over, not only in many nursery and primary schools in Nigeria, but also in many homes. Consequently, many Yoruba city children acquire English as their first language (L1), thereby effectively displacing their mother tongue(s) or the language of the immediate environment (LIE). This linguistic experience can be described as "subtractive bilingualism" instead of "additive bilingualism", which is the ideal as it enables children to acquire both English and the language of the immediate environment (LIE) simultaneously. For Cummins (2000, p. 246), cited by Phaaahla (2014, p. 35), additive bilingualism occurs when the L1 of a child "continues to be developed and the first culture to be valued while the L2 is added". In subtractive bilingualism, on the other hand, the second language is used at the expense of the first language and culture; not only does the L2 displace the L1, but it also eclipses the child's culture.

The children used as respondents for this study grew up in a peculiar speech community where many parents speak Yoruba,

the LIE and mother tongue of southwestern Nigeria, between themselves, but switch to English when communicating with their children. This trend started with the educated elite and it is now being mimicked by the lower classes in the Yoruba-English bilingual speech community. Although Yoruba is one of Nigeria's three major languages (the other two being Hausa in the North and Igbo in the south-east and south-south), a good number of Yoruba parents refuse to expose their wards to the language apparently because they believe it is in the children's best interest not to do so. Indeed, too many Nigerian children and youths are generally not keen on using their indigenous language. Most of the members of this group of Nigerians are incapable of reading and writing in their native language. According to Soneye (2003, p. 9), Nigerian youths "sometimes feign ignorance of their native tongue and confirm that ignorance with pomp and pageantry". Isola (2000) also bemoans the relegation of the Nigerian native languages when he observes that only few Nigerians can converse in the mother tongue for a reasonable length of time without (un)consciously or embarrassingly code-mixing and code-switching.

For Omego (2014, p. 148), in a bilingual or multilingual family, "a child develops a 'first' language rather than a mother tongue." Soneye and Ayoola (2015, p. 120) observed that the use of the LIE by children is almost a taboo in many homes and nursery-primary schools in Lagos, a major southwestern Nigerian metropolis and the former capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In their words,

Children from lower-middle class and middle class homes often have access to satellite television, computer games, Playstations, cartoons, videos, storybooks, and other educative materials most of which are usually produced in English. The consequence of this is that the children (and wards) of educated elites, more often than not, use English naturally amongst themselves when they are at play. (Soneye & Ayoola, 2015, p. 120).

Moderately-educated parents, adults, teachers, and pastors, as an unwritten rule, opt for English when communicating with pre-school and primary school-age children. This is the pivot on which many southwestern Nigerian nursery-primary schools base their practice of using English instead of the children's native languages or LIE to teach pre-school and school age children. This situation has led to a huge imbalance in Nigerian bilingualism to the extent that many educated Nigerians are not fluent in their native language. This paper examines the growing preference for the use of English by Yoruba-speaking Nigerian parents for their children and assesses the implications of this practice on the development of the children as Nigerians or Africans. It also draws attention to the implications of this practice on the future of indigenous Nigerian languages.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Adegbite (2010, p. 48) observes that “a human being without competence in his or her mother tongue is deprived and dehumanized.” He attributes Nigeria's language problem to lack of a comprehensive language policy. In his view, where there is a policy, it is either not well formulated or well-implemented (Adegbite, p. 42). In his assessment of what he describes as the “overuse” of English and “underuse” of the mother tongue in the linguistic repertoire of Nigerians, Adegbite blames “elitist interests” for the “inferior status” of the mother tongue in Nigeria (See also Oyelaran, 1988; Oyesakin, 1992; Oyetade, 2001; Bamgbose, 2006). This explains why many Nigerian parents, especially those in southwestern Nigeria, “forbid their children from speaking the native language at home,” even when both parents speak the language to each other (Adegbite, 2010, p. 37). He further observes that less educated parents in the lower classes, who are often incapable of speaking good English, emulate this practice in their homes. Very much like other respected Nigerian linguists and scholars before him (e.g. Essien, 2003, 2006; Fafunwa, 1982; Bamgbose, 1990; Afolayan, 1994, 2001; Jibril, 2007), Adegbite asserts that Nigeria has very little chance of

survival in the globalized economy if she fails to give primacy to the development and use of the mother tongue in the educational and socio-political spheres (Adegbite, p. 41). He continues:

in addition to the need for government authorised long-term sustained efforts, a combined effort of individuals and groups to promote, develop and utilize the language resources of the nation appropriately, through micro- and macro-policies, planning and action measures, is a *sine qua non*-of qualitative and quantitative education, positive socio-cultural dynamism, creative technology, vibrant economy, social justice, medical innovations and political sovereignty (Adegbite, p. 41).

The above can be summarized by Essien's observation that the power of developed nations is rooted in their ability to develop their languages and utilize them gainfully (Essien, 2003; 2006).

Like Adegbite, Nnolim (2007) notes that the current status enjoyed by the English language in Nigeria has an adverse effect on Nigerian child. He argues that the continued education of Nigerian children in a foreign language will continue to produce children and adults who can neither read nor write in their indigenous languages. According to him, no matter how indigenized, "vernacularized", or "pidginized" English is adapted in Nigeria, its undiluted use as the nation's official language at all levels of government means "perpetual bondage to a foreign power" (p. 3). Nnolim further suggests that for Nigeria to develop its indigenous technology and make its mark as an independent nation, the present role of the English language will have to be de-emphasized and the indigenous Nigerian languages given greater prominence. Notwithstanding Adegbite and Nnolim's Africanist ideologies and idealistic arguments in favor of the mother tongue, their views run at cross-purposes with the dream of parents for their children. This latter view is captured accurately by Baker (1998) who argues that in a country where opportunities for

improving one's life are minimal, insisting on education in the country's dominant official language becomes the order of the day because it empowers children to utilize available opportunities better.

According to an empirical study carried out by OlaOlorun *et al* (2013, p. 35), parental attitudes towards the mother tongue or the LIE largely determine the choice of English as their children's L1. The study investigated parental attitude to the mother tongue in relation to their choice of English as their children's L1 and how this had influenced the children's negative perception of their mother tongue. According to them, contrary to the parent's expectation, such children often perform poorly even in the English Language paper in public examinations. Reacting to the widespread practice of relegating the mother tongue to the background in most southwestern Nigerian private nursery-primary schools, OlaOlorun *et al* (2013, p. 36) argue that enforcing the Nigerian National Policy of Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004) is in the best interest of the children and the nation as a whole. They predict that this move will meet with some resistance from parents who prefer that their children are taught in English, on the one hand; and private school proprietors whose phenomenal success was built on thwarting the policy, on the other hand. OlaOlorun *et al* and other Nigerian linguists and educators who champion the cause of adopting the mother tongue as the language of education in Nigeria tend to gloss over the fact that most major Nigerian cities, including those in southwestern Nigeria such as Lagos Ibadan, Osogbo, Ado-Ekiti, and Akure, have a good mix of Hausa, Igbo, Ijaw, and other Nigerian nationals who do not speak Yoruba fluently. While it will be impracticable to teach the children of such residents in their parents' language, there is the challenge of imposing the LIE as the language of education on the children of such citizens in a country that takes pride in the intermingling of people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In their investigation of the domains of language use and choice by the Kinubi-speaking community in Kibera, Kenya,

Adams, Matu, and Ongarora (2012, p. 99) observe that in spite of Kenya's linguistic diversity, Kinubi, a minority language in the country, has remained the natural choice in most homes in the Kinubi-speaking community. According to them, the Kinubi indigenous group has retained and maintained the richness of their linguistic heritage over the years, in spite of the dominance of English and Kiswahili in Kenya. The three researchers referred to the sociolinguistic notion of "domain" used by Fishman (1972) that different settings characteristically call for the use of different languages in a multilingual society. Domain, according to Egbe (2014, pp. 56-57), refers to "institutional contexts in which one language is more likely to be appropriate than another and are to be seen as constellations of other factors such as topic, location and participants". According to Adams, Matu, and Ongarora (2012, p. 99), the home is the "anchor" domain; other domains are social events, cultural events, education, business matters, travel, writing, neighborhood, religion and so on. In the case of the Kinubi-speaking community, the home, neighborhood, religion, and business matters are the key domains in operation (Adams, Matu & Ongarora, 2012, p. 103). The reality on the ground in southwestern Nigerian cities is that English, the language of Britain and the US, the dream-countries of many southwestern Nigerians, has so penetrated most of the domains of language use in the region. Consequently, one cannot use what obtains in the Kinubi-speaking community in Kenya to generalize for Yoruba-speaking cities in southwestern Nigeria.

Webb (2012) also examines the impact of the English language on the teaching experience of teachers in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, who are compelled to teach mainly in English, a language that is not their home language. The study reports how multilingual teachers are encouraged to write poetry in their home languages about their perceptions of the dominance of English in their lives in order to elicit their inner voices on language conflicts and contradictions in their classrooms. The poetry collated in the study revealed the teachers' perception of English as a powerful and dominant outsider that subordinates the home languages.

Webb argues that the fact that school teachers in Eastern Cape are under compulsion to teach in English does not establish excellent performance of their pupils in terms of the acquisition of English; even if they are taught through the medium of English from the outset. According to him, the pupils they teach become culturally disintegrated, such that serious social and educational problems occur. The reason being that they lack native (or native-like) competence in both the L1 and L2 which is detrimental to their cognitive development and academic performance. And lastly, such children are often incapable of expressing deep indigenous thoughts and nuances of meaning in the foreign language (2012:c).

Omego (2014) undertook a study on the patterns of language acquisition exhibited by children born in multilingual environments. His study attempted to ascertain the influence of the child's immediate environment on the acquisition of a second language and the ultimate effect of this acquisition on the child's native language. He argued that "language as a living organism grows if it is being spoken, but dies if people stop speaking it" (p. 148). He observed that so long as African environments do not favor the use of indigenous languages in homes, schools, and businesses, the future of African indigenous languages is very bleak (p. 148). In a study that centers on predicting the future of the English Language in Nigeria, Egbe (2014, p. 53) discusses Nigerian university undergraduates most preferred language for communication and interaction at home. The main languages in question are English, indigenous Nigerian languages and Nigerian Pidgin. Egbe explains that language choice and preference arise when a speaker in a bilingual or multilingual geo-political domain has competence in more than one language being spoken in his/her environment and has to choose when to use any of the languages in his or her daily interactions. Citing Adams, Matu and Ongarora (2012, p. 100), he asserts that people who are proficient in two or more languages often make a choice as to when and where to use any of the languages in their repertoire. The choices such speakers make can be explained by their attitude to the language (Egbe, 2014, p. 53). His paper concludes that the new generation of

Nigerians prefers the use of English as first language in a non-host second language context and that this group of Nigerians is advancing in the direction of “monolingual English-only proficiency”. This conclusion resonates with the present authors’ observations with respect to primary school pupils who speak English only in almost all domains of language use in the southwestern Nigerian Yoruba/English bilingual community.

Scholars, such as Fafunwa (1982) and Afolayan (1994; 2001), have demonstrated the cognitive advantage of educating children in their mother tongue through the “Ife Six-year Primary Project”. Other Nigerian linguists and educators, such as Bamgbose (1990), Essien (2003), Nnolim (2007), Jibril (2007), and Adegbite (2010), have all argued in favor of encouraging the use of Nigerian mother tongues in education and governance. Scholars like OlaOlorun *et al* (2013) have highlighted the negative attitude of parents towards the use of the mother tongue by Nigerian primary school pupils, while Egbe (2014) has shown that Nigerian tertiary institution students’ preference for English as L1 over their mother tongue. In spite of the compelling research findings and sound arguments in favor of using the mother tongue in many more domains in Nigeria, the new generation of southwestern Nigerian children seems to be advancing towards English-only proficiency. While most studies have focused on Nigerian authorities, schools, and grownups for empirical data on the challenges confronting the use of the mother tongue in Nigeria, this study seeks to establish why the mother tongue is becoming increasingly unpopular with Yoruba/English bilingual children. This is with a view to describing the roles played by parents and schools in the declining use of the mother tongue by primary school children in Nigerian cities where Yoruba is the dominant language. This is the knowledge gap the study intends to fill.

Research Methodology

The study is a qualitative research that investigated the preferred linguistic choices of a homogenous group of Yoruba /English bilingual children and their parents, all of whom are of

Yoruba extraction, in different domains of language use. The children's parents had to be involved both for ethical reasons and the purpose of validating the children's responses in view of the children's tender age. The study, which focused on urban centers, sought to know why children of Yoruba extraction spoke English naturally instead of Yoruba in domains outside the classroom or school environment. Hence the study sought to answer the research question: why do some Yoruba/English bilingual children acquire English as their First Language (L1) and Yoruba as their Second Language (L2). Data was gathered from Yoruba/English bilingual communities in three southwestern Nigerian cities, namely Lagos, Ibadan, and Ile-Ife. These cities were chosen because English and Yoruba are used freely by many residents and the population has a good mix of people with diverse educational, linguistic, and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Data was collected through the participant observation method and the administration of questionnaire. Participant observation enabled the researchers to identify children who spoke English amongst themselves in natural situations outside the school environment. Forty children, all of Yoruba extraction aged between eight and ten (8 and 10) years old, who were observed to be speaking English naturally amongst themselves at play, were purposively selected as respondents for the study. The term "children", in this study, refers to pre-school and primary school pupils whose age falls between three (3) and ten (10) years old. This age bracket, according to Osanyin (2002), is crucial to the individual's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development. This is the stage at which children are most impressionable and the foundation for the development of their basic language skills is laid.

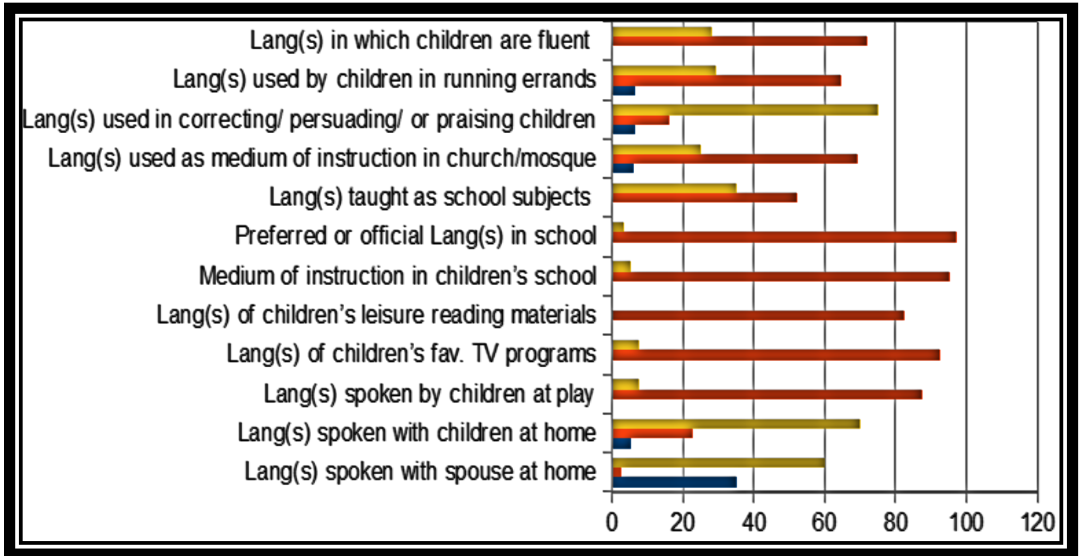
Two sets of questionnaire were designed for the study: Questionnaire A was for the children's parents; Questionnaire B was for the children. The children's parents were contacted for the family's participation in the study. After their willingness had been obtained, the parents were administered Questionnaire A, while the children were administered Questionnaire B. The

questionnaire sought to elicit the language(s) used for communication by the children and their parents in different domains, such as at home, leisure or play, and during religious activities. It also sought to know the language of the children's reading materials and favorite television programs. This was with a view to identifying the reasons for the children's preference of English over Yoruba. The responses to the questions in the two questionnaires were collated and this formed the basis for the ensuing discussion on the children's language preference. The results were used to elicit the implications of the study after which recommendations were made and conclusions drawn.

Findings and Discussion

This section, which centers on data analysis, supplies answers to the research question: why do some Yoruba/English bilingual children acquire English as their L1 and Yoruba as their L2? Forty parents and forty children duly filled in and returned the questionnaires making a total of 80 respondents in all. The summary of the responses of both groups are presented in Figures 1 and 2 below. The data analysis opens with a summary of the parents' responses in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Language Preference of Yoruba/English Bilingual Parents



- Yoruba
- English
- Yoruba & English

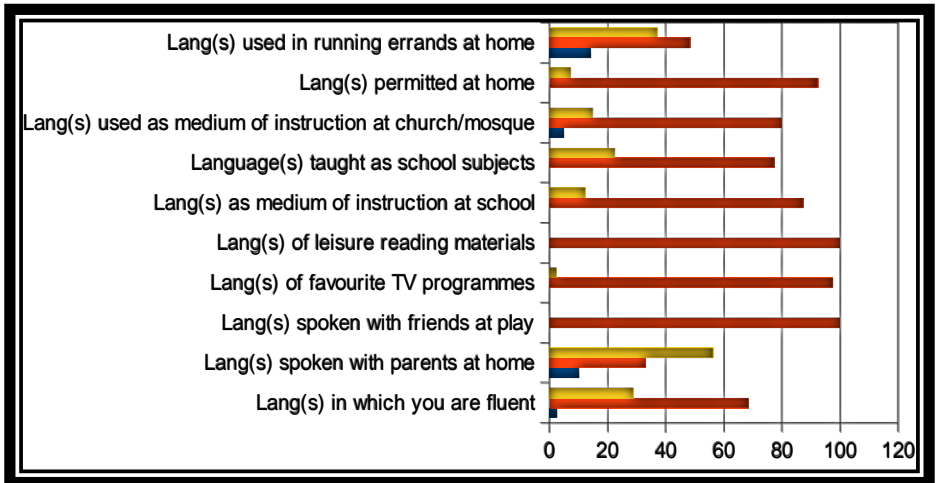
A cursory glance at Figure 1 above shows that English is the preferred language (medium of communication) in eight out of the twelve domains presented to the parents. Using simple percentage, one notices that the parents' language preference for their children can be summarized as follows: English = 66.6%; Indigenous Language = 33.3%. While 60% of the parents agreed that they use their mother tongue to communicate with each other, 70% of them admitted that they use both English and their mother tongue to communicate with their children in the home environment. 95% of the parents admitted to making their children attend schools where English is the sole medium of instruction and the only language permitted in the school environment. 92.5% of them observed that their children's favorite television programs are broadcast in English and 82.5% admitted that their children's leisure reading materials are also written in English. Only 35% of

the parents admitted that Yoruba is taught as a school subject in their children's school. In view of the above scenario, it is not surprising that the parents indicated that 87.5% of their children speak English instead of Yoruba while at play with their peers in the community.

Aside from the dominance of English usage in the school and home environments, 68.5% of parents responded that it is the language used for teaching their children in churches and mosques. It did not come as a surprise, therefore, that 71.9% of the parents admitted that their children are more fluent in English than Yoruba. In sum, it can be deduced from the general response of the parents that the children did not have sufficient exposure to their parents' native language to make them develop fluency in it. It is therefore safe to conjecture from the above that some Yoruba/English bilingual parents place English above Yoruba; hence their choice of English for interacting with their children at home.

Figure 2, below, summarizes the response of the children and it largely corroborates the response of the parents in Figure 1.

Figure 2: Language Preference of Yoruba/English Bilingual Children



■ Yoruba
■ English
■ Yoruba & English

Figure 2 reveals a dismal picture of the use of Yoruba by the Yoruba/English bilingual children who served as the main source of data for this study. In spite of the fact that all their parents were of Yoruba extraction and notwithstanding the children’s ethnic origin, 68.2% of them claimed that they were more fluent in English than Yoruba; 28.95% claimed to be fluent in both English and Yoruba, while only 2.63% claimed to be more fluent in Yoruba. This response is further reinforced by the dominance of English in the children’s response in respect of other domains of language use. According to them, English is the language used for communicating with them in 92.5% of their homes. They also declared that the language of their favorite reading materials is 100% English and that they speak only English when at play with friends. They indicated that the language of their favorite television program is 97.5% English, while the medium of teaching in their churches or mosques is 80% English. The summary of the above is that the main avenues for

first language (or mother tongue) learning and reinforcement available to the children such as interaction at home, leisure reading activity, audio-visual media, religious activities, and playground activities are mostly in English. It is only natural to expect Yoruba/English bilingual children to have preference for English in their linguistic repertoire.

The findings also revealed that while all the children were taught English as a school subject, only 25% of them claimed that they were taught Yoruba as a school subject. The children also claimed that the medium of instruction in the churches and mosques they attended was mainly English (80%), except in a few instances where both English and Yoruba were used simultaneously. Perhaps, mention could be made at this juncture of the fact that the multilingual mix of the membership of religious associations in southwestern Nigerian cities often makes it an uphill task for many churches and mosques to adopt Yoruba for teaching the children and for worship. In sum, the findings of the study revealed that the children surveyed chose English over Yoruba because it is the dominant language in most of the domains of linguistic opportunities available to them. Another reason for the children's preference for English is the prevailing multilingual context of many southwestern Nigerian cities that play host to millions of Nigerians from other parts of the country. Unlike most of Northern Nigeria where Hausa is the lingua franca and much of the southeast and south-south Nigeria where Pidgin dominates, the lingua franca in southwestern Nigeria is a mixture of standard/non-standard English and Nigerian Pidgin.

Implications of Findings

A major finding of the study is that the psychological, linguistic, and situational contexts of Lagos, Ibadan, and Ile-Ife, all in Nigeria, representing different points on the continuum of urbanization in the Yoruba/English bilingual southwestern Nigerian community, generally favor the choice of English over Yoruba by Yoruba children. This implies that if the situation is not reversed, succeeding generations of Yoruba children and youths

who grow up in urban and suburban Yoruba/English bilingual cities and towns in southwestern Nigeria are likely to select English instead of Yoruba as their L1. This development will effectively point Yoruba in the direction of irrelevance, probable extinction, and death in less than one hundred years. A corollary of this implication is that if Yoruba, or any other indigenous Nigerian language for that matter, is not empowered in its domain to share in (or assume) some of the socio-political and economic functions associated with English, subsequent generations of Nigerians will find their native language moribund and irrelevant; hence more Nigerians, especially those that grow up in cities, will advance in *English-only* proficiency.

A pertinent question that arises from this study is that if ethnic Yoruba children and youths living in Lagos, Ibadan, and Ile-Ife grow up with English as their L1, what are the chances that native Hausa, Igbo, and people from other ethnic groups resident in southwestern Nigerian cities will learn or use Yoruba? A related question is: if Yoruba, the major language in nine² out of Nigeria's thirty-six states, is being eclipsed by English in a vast geographical domain that plays host to at least a quarter of Nigeria's 175 million people, the trend has serious implications for the future of Hausa, Igbo, and Nigeria's over-250 other indigenous languages.

As already observed in this paper, in spite of the sound arguments in favor of using the mother tongue, the reality on the ground is that the new generation of Yoruba/English bilinguals seems more interested in developing their children's proficiency in English, the world's foremost global language, than their native language. For the sake of argument, if Yoruba were adopted today and enforced as the language of primary education in the Yoruba-speaking region of Nigeria as recommended by Nigerian linguists and educators (e.g. Afolayan, 1994; Fafunwa, 1982), will such an act not amount to an infringement on the fundamental human

² Yoruba is the major language in the following states in Nigeria: Ekiti, Kwara, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, parts of Edo and Kogi states.

rights of Nigerian citizens who may not want the language to be used as their children's medium of education? The same question can be posed for Hausa, Igbo, or any other Nigerian language that is being put forward as the language of education or as the regional or national language.

The final implication that we wish to draw from the findings of this study is the need for Nigeria to faithfully implement the provisions of its National Policy on Education (2004), which stipulates that the language of the environment shall in the first three years of the primary school be the medium of instruction. Unless this provision is enforced, Nigerian parents will always find reasons why their children should not be educated in a language other than English. This is without prejudice to the fact that Nigeria's federal structure rests on the foundation of free movement of citizens from one part of the country to another. This scenario raises a few difficult questions.

For instance, what will happen to children whose parents happen to be civil servants or company personnel, are transferred to regions where a language other than their mother tongue has been instituted as the state or regional language or the language of education? If Yoruba, for instance, were adapted as the state language or language of education in Lagos, Oyo, and Osun States, the location of Lagos, Ibadan, and Ile-Ife, respectively, will this decision not have a negative effect on Nigeria's socio-political integration?

English-speaking Yoruba children grow up with the mindset of second class global citizens who have to spend a life time struggling for recognition and acceptability by native speakers of English. It is socio-culturally unsafe for the future leaders of a developing nation like Nigeria to grow up with indifference or disdain for their mother tongue. Such children grow up placing a higher premium on foreign ways of life and overrating foreign cultural values. The inferior status given to Nigerian mother tongues by the Nigerian authorities has serious implications for the children who grow up with the mindset that Nigerian languages do not count. Not only do they run the risk of

losing their identity and sense of loyalty and commitment to Nigeria, but that they will discover too late in life that they are neither accepted as authentic Europeans/Americans nor seen as legitimate Africans.

Recommendations

The most significant finding of this study is that the children used as respondents for the study are more fluent in English than Yoruba because parents speak English to them at home, their leisure-reading materials are in English, their favorite television programs are invariably in English, and they attend schools where English is the only language used. This implies that if Yoruba people are sincerely desirous of making their children use their mother tongue, they would do things that would motivate their children to develop interest in the language. For instance, they could sponsor the extensive production and dissemination of books and films that tickle the fancy of different categories of children; encourage the elite class to interact with their children in the language; make their children participate in socio-cultural activities involving the use of Yoruba at the communal level; and institute awards for good performance in Yoruba, among others.

The growing tendency to despise Nigerian mother tongues can be arrested not only by a change of attitude, but by firm legislation. The following are some recommendations:

- The Nigerian National Assembly should enact a law that makes the language of immediate environment (LIE) the language of instruction for all the nine years of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria;
- The Nigerian National Assembly should enact a law that would mandate all states and local government councils to conduct all their businesses and keep all their records primarily in the LIE as approved by their respective state Houses of Assembly;
- State Houses of Assembly and Local Government Legislatures should identify the LIEs in their domain and legislate on the aspects of social and public life where each language will be used;

- Examination bodies in Nigeria should be compelled to come up with a time table for the conduct of all their examinations in the three major Nigerian languages by year 2025;
- The primary language for conducting the affairs of law enforcement agencies, such as the Police and Civil Defense Corps, and all Magistrate Courts in all states of the Nigerian Federation should be the LIE;
- Every state should establish a Bureau of Translation that will take charge of promptly translating text books, world classic literary texts, leisure reading materials, educative videos and materials of interest to young people into as many indigenous Nigerian languages as possible.

Conclusion

Nigeria has to brace up to the challenge of nationhood and nation-building by anchoring its educational, social, and economic values on its indigenous languages. The arguments that have been used for the elevation of English as Nigeria's national/official language can equally be deployed for its relegation. The death of an indigenous language is tantamount to the death of a civilization and the loss of the culture and identity of a people. The widely held notion that the English language is so inextricably tied to the destiny of Nigeria and that it cannot be replaced by indigenous Nigerian languages as the country's official language and language of education is a fallacy. No matter how good Nigerians are in their use of English, it is not in their collective or individual interest to uphold a foreign language to the detriment of their native languages.

The consequence of the apathy towards the use of indigenous languages for instruction in southwestern Nigerian primary schools is that an increasing number of Yoruba children are growing up without communicative competence in their native language. This assertion also applies to children from other parts of the country with similar experiences. The paradox whereby children born of Yoruba parents, living in southwestern Nigerian cities and attending school there acquire English as L1 and Yoruba as L2 calls for a decisive review and firm enforcement. Although

it requires much investment and determination to enact and enforce laws on using indigenous Nigerian languages, it is in the best interest of Nigeria to raise the status of its indigenous languages by using them for serious activities, such as education, governance, and business, at least in their primary domains. With this, children and youths will be compelled to acquire their native language and subsequently discover the value one's native language adds to one's cognitive and socio-cultural development.

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