

# LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

*Henry E. Asemota*

## **Abstract**

The challenge before independent nations is how to evolve a master plan of national development. Nigeria, as a nation, suffers such lack of development. This situation will however be changed when Nigerian languages develop democratic knowledge and powers essential for national growth, since language policies generally set development process in motion. To attain such an objective, languages should be made bilingual and unique, kept standardized and modernized. There should be consideration for educational framework under which teaching normally occurs. Nationally, the cardinal aim should be to involve parties in evolving a participatory approach to teaching and learning, which makes education a primordial need for every Nigerian, and which has since eluded Nigerians. To avoid any form of impediment, joyful educational experiences and collateral learning should be encouraged. Above all, the society should demonstrate a vital, interweaving role. Some other positive suggestions are made and the work is concluded.

## **Language Education for Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance**

In the industrialized nations, it has long been recognized that education is not merely a social service but a necessary national investment. In the words of Bamgbose (1982), 'education is an investment in the stock of human skills'. Olagoke (1982) emphasizes the same idea, even more pointedly in economic terms, when he says, 'education is an investment in the formation of human capital'.

The challenge before the independent nations therefore has been to evolve a master plan of national development that is truly national and redemptive by redefining the goals of education in the direction of the national development needs of the citizenry, individually and collectively.

## **Language Engineering**

Language engineering is that domain of Applied Linguistics concerned with the design and implementation of strategies such as, the conscious and deliberate steps toward the rehabilitation and optimal utilization of individual languages. In fact, it is a mechanism of language planning that recognizes problems and proceeds to "engineer" solutions to such problems.

Nigerian languages, as can be clearly seen, have problems. Since there is no common Nigerian national language, even though Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa were since prescribed (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

## **Present Language Situation in Nigeria**

1. Most Nigerian languages are not adequately identified. Every speech community is highly self-conscious at the local level and scarcely agrees that it speaks a dialect of a language the name of which is already used to refer to another existing dialect. As a result, the same language may have many names, such as dialect names, names coined by neighbouring communities, names invented by ethnologists. A working definition of a language must therefore be arrived at. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, since prescribed as the national languages, have marginal status. They are generally discriminated against. Majority of Nigerians believe that English has since served as the national language. Even those Nigerians who cannot utter a sentence in English (language of

colonialist Africa) oppose the teaching of Nigerian languages (Capo, 1980). This situation must change so that Nigerian languages can be used to democratize knowledge and power.

3. English, rather than the Nigerian languages, is taught and used as medium of instruction almost throughout the formal school system. Worse than that, it is bound to impede economic take off of our country and misdirect our priorities, since English is mainly an instrument of foreign domination and of our under-development.

Most Nigerian languages as yet have no written forms and those that do are not, as a rule, widely used in different contexts of literacy, especially formal education. Many of the orthographies in existence are far from being optimally linguistic. Linguistic studies ought to be oriented toward devising optimal orthographic systems of individual languages.

- (4) Until recently in primary and junior secondary schools, the very few Nigerian languages prescribed and introduced into the curricula were not used as languages of instruction. Even today, linguists have not sufficiently educated their colleagues in other disciplines, such as Literature, Science and Technology, on the possibility of, and need for, using Nigerian languages in their areas of specialization. They should also make the majority of the native speakers of a language aware of their responsibility in rehabilitating and elevating their language through constant use.

### **Language Policies and Language Planning**

According to Coulmas (1990), the process of selecting a single national language, or multiple national languages, and developing the chosen language(s) for designated administrative uses is the province of language policy-makers and language planners. A newly official language, if it was not previously used for administrative or educational purposes, must be developed before it can be used effectively. In practice, this means - among other things - first, it is necessary to devise or choose a writing system, if the language was completely unwritten: select or codify a standard variety that will be used in official documents and teaching materials; write and print documents; and educational materials, including grammar books and readers; which will promote and support the use of the language for all desired purposes, a process that is likely to involve training of civil servants and teachers in order to switch from languages that were previously used for these purposes; and, very often, in coining and publicizing new words for things that people had previously not talked about in the relevant language(s).

Language policies, either covert or overt, set the development process in motion. They also affect the status, and thus potentially the use for official and unofficial purposes, of both dominant and minority languages.

### **Comparative Linguistic in Language Engineering**

According to Fishman (1993), a government choice to forbid, permit, encourage, or require bilingual education is one important factor in minority language maintenance. A result of this policy would be a major government effort to produce writing systems for previously unwritten languages and to introduce many more languages into the schools. This, also, implies the standardization of their orthographies and their re-intellectualization (Asher, 1994).

#### **Writing System**

##### **Choice of Writing System**

1. Where there are several major regional languages in one country or where more than one language has official status, it is of value to have relative uniformity in the way in which such languages are written. To the extent that they are similar, the learning of additional language is facilitated.
2. An ideal writing system should be in agreement with the actual system of sounds, recognizing that some languages make distinctions of sounds that pass, as it were, unnoticed in other languages.
3. In so far as possible, unification between orthographies should be sought, especially among languages within a country. If possible, the writing of a local language should agree with that of the official language, so as to facilitate transition from one to the other.
4. For example, it is not advisable to use English or French vowel spellings in other languages.
5. A choice in matters of orthography prefers:

- (a) Spelling in conformity with contemporary pronunciation.
  - (b) Agreement with phonemes of the language.
  - (c) Derivation of new characters from prevailing scientific usage.
6. New alphabets are required principally:
- (a) To provide for the first time a means of writing languages as yet unwritten or virtually so;
  - (b) To provide alternatives to standardized but for some reasons inadequate writing systems.
7. An alphabet is successful in so far and only in so far as it is scientifically and socially acceptable:
- (a) An orthography is scientifically acceptable when:
    - (i) The alphabet represents the language system economically, and consistently unambiguous;
    - (ii) The alphabet achieves strictly the utilitarian aim of economy of time and labour in learning to read and write;
    - (iii) The alphabet respects the psychological and physiological processes involved in the reading and writing acts;
    - (iv) The alphabet suits the needs of modern techniques of graphic representation - machine writing etc.
    - (v) It is generally accepted that, on all grounds, an alphabetical system of writing is best (Schiffman, 1996);
    - (vi) A "phonetically regular alphabet" with a single letter for each phoneme is best (Schiffman., 1996).
  - (b) Agreement with other writing system in use for neighbouring trade or official languages is desirable where possible on pedagogical and economic grounds.

### **Standardization**

Another process of language engineering refers to the development of a standard that overrides the regional and social dialects.

When a language gets standardized, it starts to be a vehicle to cope with the communicative needs of a modern technological age. It will be used in all formal education and becomes the accepted normal written medium. The standard form serves as a model or symbol of either religious, state or national identity. Arabic, for example, is a symbol of Islamic propagation while Christianity mainly utilizes English language.

Standardization is an important landmark in language development and any language that has inclination to grow must recognize that (Shuy, 1973). The eventual acknowledgement of language as the lingua franca, be it regional or national, must at one time or the other undergo the process of standardization. It is true that since languages are dynamic, the standardization process imperceptibly goes on all the time.

### **Modernization**

Language modernization is one of the stages in the process of making something suitable for the present day needs. It is also the idea of engineering a language into becoming an equal to other developed languages which serve as a medium of communication (Scarcella et al, 1990).

It is concerned with the design and implementation of strategies (that is, the conscious and deliberate steps) towards the rehabilitation and optimal utilization of individual languages.

Modernization in a simple sense refers to the creative or borrowing of new lexical items and their incorporation into the basic standard language. The dynamic nature of languages makes it exceedingly imperative that new concepts should be introduced into the lexicon of language.

Language should therefore be such that will satisfy, according to Chomsky (1986): "The linguistic needs of communities, class, occupations and interest groups; must in fact stand the test of modern learning including Science and Technology".

### **Re-Intellectualism**

The objective of language engineering is to allow the language concerned to acquire intellectualization. By intellectualization is meant the ability of the said language to be used as a means of expressing the most abstract and most modern notions of science, technology, law and philosophy.

When Nigerian languages were not battered to give preference to Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo in the National Educational Policy, for example, they were optimally utilized, they certainly had the property of intellectualization. Their being 'under-developed' today or their present 'disability' is simply the result of their being relegated to a marginal status. Their re-acquiring that property of intellectualization must follow from their 'liberation'. Of this Hale (1992: 36) expressed a satisfaction of joyfulness when he said,

Of supreme significance ... is the simple truth that language - in the general, multifaceted sense - embodies the intellectual wealth of the people who use it.... The loss of local languages, and the cultural systems they express, has meant irretrievable loss of diverse and interesting intellectual wealth, the priceless products of human mental industry.

### **The Functional Perspective on Language Education**

For many language learners, the language is first and foremost a means of achieving certain functional goals:

#### **(a) Economic and Technological Development**

Language learning itself demands an economic investment, and a society may have to weigh up the importance of language learning against the importance of other educational needs.

Much of the language teaching in advanced industrialized societies has been characterized by an abundance of teaching materials and of electronic audio and video equipment. Many developing countries, particularly in the Third World, lack such materials or equipment and cannot afford to buy them. They may also lack the skilled manpower to install and maintain such equipment. It is therefore important for an analysis of the content of language teaching to take account of the economic and technical capabilities in determining curriculum materials or in recommending techniques or a technology. Most countries outside the highly developed areas of Europe or North America maybe more interested in a simple technology of second language learning than in elaborate gadgets partly for reasons of economy and partly because of the shortage of technological skill to service equipment.

#### **(b) Educational Framework**

Another aspect to consider in the analysis of the context of language education for economic rehabilitation and reliance is the educational framework in which the teaching normally occurs.

Dunkin and Biddle (1974) distinguish four main categories of variables for concept of language teaching. They are presage, context, process and product variables:

- (i) Presage variables are the characteristics which teachers, as individuals or as a group, bring to teaching, which they as teachers exhibit in their own formative experiences, and which they demonstrate in their training, and which they perpetuate in their personal qualities.
- (ii) The context consists of the conditions within which the teacher must operate: the community, the school, its environment, and the pupils themselves. The central focus of the scheme is the classroom: what teachers do and what pupils do in the classroom.
- (iii) The classroom behaviour and pupil classroom behaviour are collectively described as process variable.
- (iv) Lastly, the product variables refer to the outcome of the teaching-learning process: those changes that come about in pupils as a result of their involvement in classroom activities with teachers and other pupils.

Thus, the educational framework must be such where government must have a choice to evict Anglicism that may creep into the new native languages. Effort should be made to produce writing systems for previously unwritten languages and many more languages should be introduced into the schools. Formal as well as non-formal education can make an important contribution in achieving this objective.

Notwithstanding it would be impossible to replace English with native languages overnight. It would

inevitably take much time and immense amount of work to prepare documents, train teachers, and do all the other things required to implement the transition. To overcome such problems, a Board of Scientific and Technical Terminology to device native language terminology in these domains should be established. Opposition to English should be blunt. A positive way educational system could adopt this is to learn to forget English as quickly as they can, especially, if the constitution could name English as a temporary official national language.

Sasse (1992) predicts, "Lexicon in English will be lost when the language is excluded from domains where it used to be employed, as elders generally forget names of some plants and the terms for their former uses". Story telling in the tribe's language can be made a common activity in the classroom.

### **Role of Individuals Who are Involved in the Process of Language Study**

Tudor (1996) suggests, 'the goal is to help learners assume a more active and participatory role in their language study.' The goal of learner training is to help learners to get into and to negotiate a path through the learning process in an informed and self-directive manner. Learners also need to be helped to see that they can play an active and self-directive role in their learning, and that they need not view their role as merely following someone else's (probably the teacher's) directions. It also involves persuading students to assume this role. The two elements are equally important. Awareness of one's potential is one step towards autonomy, but has to go hand in hand with the willingness to exploit this potential actively. The latter can assume the form of the explicit negotiation of a learning contract between teacher and students or a more implicit agreement between the two parties to adopt a participatory approach to teaching and learning. On this basis, it is then possible to work at raising learners' awareness of the various aspects of the learning process and gradually to initiate their active involvement in it.

According to Tudor (1997), there are many different ways in which learners can be "involved" in shaping their learning programme. One area which offers considerable scope for learner involvement is that of goal-setting. Even if teachers and students have to work with a pre-set syllabus or course book, students can develop their own individual or class lists of vocabulary which can then be used as the learning goal for at least part of their study programme and possibly also for purposes of evaluation. Furthermore, if students or teachers subscribe to a view of language as self-expression then the learner involvement in the choice of topics, materials, and language resources is probably the only coherent approach to goal-setting.

Nunan (1997) also believes that another potential area for learner involvement is that of methodology. This is not about what learners are to learn but how they are to go about learning. In this respect it needs to be borne in mind that teachers may generally be assumed to have a fuller vision of language learning options than learners, and are thus likely to have more to contribute in terms of knowledge of the options available. Teachers thus have their own specialist knowledge to contribute to the negotiation of methodology, even if the relevant methodological choices need to take account of the learners' own preferences and insights into their learning needs. This point shows that learner involvement generally remains a shared undertaking which engages the professional experience and knowledge of the teacher and also the insights and emerging self-directiveness of the learners. The pursuit of learner autonomy can influence teacher-students relations and thus classroom dynamics in a significant manner.

### **The Curriculum and the Self-directed Learner**

Added to the above, Mitchell (1979) proposed that, "the creation of networks which put people in touch with opportunities for self-development, including the school as one of those opportunities, should become the new mission of schooling".

The central goal of schooling, and therefore of the curriculum and its planning, is the development of self-directing continuous learners. Historically, the goal of education was to liberate the learner; hence, the derivation of the term liberal arts education. Although statements of the goal to produce self-directed liberated learners are not often found in the literature, the hard facts of practice all but deny its existence. Yet, the need to achieve the goal increases.

One certainty in an otherwise uncertain future is that mankind will continue to be faced with social, economic, and technological changes, probably of an unprecedented nature.

Humanity's survival will depend upon the ability to influence these changes when possible and adapt to changes that are immutable. The ability to learn becomes crucial to survival, and education

will be more and more a primordial need for each individual. Individuals need to take increasing responsibility for their own education, where the act of teaching gives way to the act of learning - where individuals become less of an object and more of a subject. Thus Edgar (1972: 56) remarks:

The man submitting to education must become the man educating himself: education of others must become the education of oneself. This fundamental change in the individual's relationship to himself is the most difficult problem facing education for the future decades of scientific and technical revolution.

In a rapidly changing world, we cannot give people the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they will need in a future we cannot possibly foresee. We can, however, give them the ability to be self-renewing, to create themselves and their societies in an ever-changing world, if we help them to become self-directing learners.

How can we achieve the ultimate goal of an educational system: to have the individual assume the burden of pursuing his own education? Three approaches will be described:

(1) There is need to have individuals take increasing responsibility for their own learning. That is educational experiences that provide joy and meaning will stimulate learners to take increased responsibility for their own learning.

Joyce (1972) emphasized the role of curriculum workers in creating options:

Our efforts should be to increase on a continual basis the options that are available to the population and the flexibility with which they can be made available. As more options are developed, making more and more kinds of education commonplace, and giving students the power to educate themselves in increasingly human ways, then the curriculum worker will be making his contribution to the search for an increasingly humanistic education".

(2) There is need to attend to collateral learning, which are unanticipated outcomes that are the by-products of the experience and are not outcomes sought. Dewey (1965) recognized the importance of these outcomes and referred to them collectively as collateral learning:

Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time. Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future.

Thirdly, not only do educational institutions influence attitudes learning to self-directed learners, but society itself plays a role. If education is a primordial need for each individual, then not only must we enrich schools and universities, but we must broaden the educational functions of society as a whole. What is needed is a social configuration that provides a "close interweaving between education and the social, political, and economic fabric, which covers the-family unit and civil life." Thus, Hutchins (1968) describes, "Such a configuration as a learning society. Such movement towards a learning society is irresistible and irreversible. It is the cultural revolution of our time".

## **Evaluation of Training Programme in Business and Industry**

Woodington (1980) indicates, "Effective evaluation is often missing because there is no clear understanding of the training program as an instructional system. In some instances, there is a lack of a clear perception of what constitutes the evaluation of training." There are, however, exceptions to Woodington's generalizations.

The purposes of training programmes in business and industry include directing and orienting new personnel, improving the performance of present employees, and enabling employees to gain new knowledge and skills required by changes in operations. Since these purposes are generally shared with in-service or continuing education programmes in the professions, similar evaluation models may be used. Since the purpose of training programmes is usually the development of specific competencies, either the behavioural objective model or the decision-making model of evaluation is appropriate.

### **Recommendations**

- (1) Language is fundamental to cultural identity. This is so for all people everywhere. People's unique world is expressed in their language. For this reason, it is important that people keep their own language alive. More importantly, people should always realize that language and land are linked.
- (2) "Of supreme significance ... is the simple truth that language - in the general, multifaceted sense - embodies the intellectual wealth of the people who use it... The loss of local languages, and the cultural systems they express, has meant irretrievable loss of diverse and interesting intellectual wealth, the priceless products of human mental industry (Sankoff, 1980).
- (3) Raymond (1998) states,

Total immersion program should be introduced. This is because people who take up the hard, long-term work that goes into restoring an ancestral language to the descendants of its original speakers are testifying to a fundamental truth that everyone already knows deep down: the ancestral language connects a people to its heritage in ways that there is simply no substitute for ... There is something inexpressibly said about watching the disappearance of a unique local language that will never again be heard flowing in its full magnificence from the tongue of a verbally gifted speaker.

- (4) There is need to select a variety of appropriate student learning activities, including many based solely on uses of instructional media, because media well used bring people closer together.
- (5) Authorities who wish to extend the benefits of instruction through the mother tongue to many different language-groups under their control will naturally want to deal with those offering least difficulty first, gradually encompassing the more difficult as time and funds permit.
- (6) It is to be clearly understood by a power that might be that there is nothing in the structure of any language which precludes it from becoming a vehicle of modern civilization.
- (7) Educational authorities should aim at persuading an unwilling public to accept education through the mother tongue, and should not force it (Fortez, 1997).
- (8) Where there are several languages in a country, it is an advantage if they are written as uniformly as possible.
- (9) UNESCO should investigate the possibility of coordinating scientific and technical terminology in world languages so as to help the developing languages to create their own terminology as far as possible in conformity with the terminology in world languages (UNESCO, 1983).

### **Conclusion**

It is obvious that all these endeavours must aim at providing the native with a means of linguistic expression enabling him to make contact with modern thought without thereby emasculating his own. To make it possible to adapt, under the best conditions, languages suffering deficiencies in grammar and vocabulary should have a sound educational policy that would be the foundation of schools or study centres

where specially qualified natives could receive the scientific training fitting them to undertake tasks for their own native languages. Such institutions could be the scene of fruitful collaboration between the learned of all countries and representatives of those peoples whose languages have not yet developed sufficiently to express modern thought.

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