

## MULTILINGUALISM AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Over the years, Nigeria has been plagued by multiplicity of languages and this has remained a bane to our national development. There is no gain saying the fact that we need to develop and organize our numerous languages for the betterment and growth of our nation. To neglect this fact is to live in a fool's paradise. Diverse languages that exist in Nigeria, gave rise to the need to choose among these languages, which one or ones to be used as the national language(s) in Nigeria. The multilingual nature of Nigeria has been examined in relation to the provisional result of 1991 census conducted in Nigeria and the status of language policy in the country, which eventually led to the discovery of the fact that Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba Languages, have the highest speakers in terms of population, and are already made co-official languages in Nigeria, alongside the English language. If eventually a language policy emerges in Nigeria, which of them should be considered as the national language. In the pursuit of this study, theories of multilingualism and language planning shall be discussed. Five research questions are formulated to guide the study. The collection of data for this study shall be based on secondary sources, which includes textbooks, books, newspapers, lecture notes, magazines and so on. The sources are both foreign and local ones, and then information collected shall be applied to the Nigerian situation. Finally the study identifies the effect of multilingualism in Nigerian development especially on the economy, politics, education and society at large.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the colonial administration in Africa, one great mistake of the colonial masters was the joining of state boundaries without much regard for traditional, political and cultural or ethnic unities of the Africans involved. The colonial administrators were only considering their own convenience and did not weigh its far reaching effect on the new nation. Nigeria consequently, is one of the countries that are suffering from the effects of this selfish act. Nigeria is conspicuously lacking a common language, common culture and common historical background. All the above mentioned attributes are necessary for national development. In the absence of these, political integration, economic growth, cultural growth, has been very hard to achieve. The above mentioned factors help to reduce cultural and relational tensions. If there were homogeneity in language, the gap between the elite and the masses would have been reduced or bridged to some extent.

It is generally believed that there are three dominant languages in Nigeria, namely; Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. This does not imply that only three languages are spoken in the country. There are really very many languages used here in Nigeria. We shall see the extent of this diversity later.

However, in Nigeria today, English is the only popular choice for education. Its elitistic status in Nigeria has resulted in the knowledge of the English language becoming synonymous with material success. This means that before you can lay hands on any reasonable job in Nigeria now, the knowledge of English is a must. You cannot make any head way educationally, without the knowledge of English language. People tend to look down on you, if you are unable to express yourself very well in English. A radio station in Nigeria said that third major requirement for employing a person is the ability to speak the English language perfectly well. These days, parents even prefer the English language as the first language to their mother-tongue. In short, parents prefer sending their wards to schools that will teach them a sound knowledge of English. This attitude is mostly guided not only by loyalty to the language but by the fact that they have appraised the

situation of things in Nigeria and the place given to the English language as the official language of this multilingual nation.

English in Nigeria is not only accepted as a language of communication, it is widely used in various spheres of life; training, administration, ceremonies, mass communication, educational many others. With English as the official language of Nigeria, this study will examine the extent to which multilingualism has helped to achieve or determine national development in this nation, Nigeria.

## **MULTILINGUALISM AND NATIONAL LANGUAGE PLANNING**

### **Multilingualism and Language Contact**

John Edwards, in his book titled: *Multilingualism* asserts that “Multilingualism is a perfect fact of life around the world, a circumstance arising at the simplest level, from the need to communicate across speech communities” John (1994:1).

Multilingualism is a societal phenomenon that deals with languages existing in a society. When many languages exist in a society, such society is said to be multilingual in nature. A person, who is proficient in many languages, is referred to as a multilingual.

Appel and Muysken (1987:2-5), further explains the fact that varieties of the same language may be used in a given situation. The idea of language contact is a situation that concerns two or more languages co-existing in a particular society.

Language contact precipitates some phenomena, such as code mixing, code switching, language shift, language loss, interference, transfer and so on.

### **Language Contact in Nigeria**

There are several reasons why languages come in contact. John Edwards (1966:33) explains that “there is simply movement of people. Immigrants to a new country bring their languages into contact with each other and with those of existing population”.

It can be noted from the above expression, that migration is a factor, responsible for language coming in contact. Migration, which involves the movement of people, is precipitated by several factors.

*War:* During this time people move from the battle place to a safer place.

*Education:* In search for knowledge, people move from one place to another, for instance, moving from the Northern region, to Western region in Nigeria.

*Business:* To transact business and for the sales of goods and services, a trader might decide to move from one place to another. For example an Igbo man moves from Owerri to Ogun, in order to transact business. As people move, they move with their languages. And on getting to their aimed location, their languages come in contact with the language of the people inhabiting their new abode.

*Cultural Contact:* Another factor responsible for language contact situation is the cultural contact. Ekeh (1989:3) defines culture as a construct (with direct applications) used in an attempt to analyze and interpret events and ideas on a broad spectrum of areas of society. Ultimately, language contact brings about multilingualism in a nation or society.

### **Effects of Language Contact Situation**

Language contact situations have various effects which include:

- *Code Switching:* Grosjean (1982:59) says code switching is the juxtaposition within the same speech, exchange of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub systems. This can occur in both spoken and written text. Traugott and Pratt (1980:70) are of the opinion that, code switching in literary texts provide an interesting field for analysis, both in terms of social reality and manipulation of literary device. Code switching can then be said to be an alternation between two languages.
- *Code Mixing:* Hamers and Banc (1989:35), have the opinion that, code mixing is the use of elements of one language, (for instance, the use of English lexemes in a Yoruba conversation). In another language, Hudson (1996:53) says, the purpose of code mixing is to symbolize ambiguous situations.

Oloruntoba-Oju (1999:30) asserts that, code mixing occurs when elements of two or more linguistic system are used. Code mixing occurs when lexical or phrasal elements of two or more languages are blended within a given sentence.

- *Disglosia*: In Charles A. Fergusons' *Diglossia*, (1998:22) diglossia was described as a kind of bi-lingualism in a society, in which one of the languages is (H), has high prestige and another of the language is (L) has low prestige. Also as the pioneer scholar of diglossia, he has observed that native speakers proficiencies in the high prestige dialect, will commonly try to avoid using the vernacular dialect with foreigner.
- *Pidgin*: Hall (1972:141), states that pidgin is a language variety type whose structure and lexicon have been drastically reduced, and which is native to none of those who use it. Mahl-hausler (1986:33) states that, pidgin evolves out of low status "substrate" languages. Pidgin is as a result of formation of languages, the fusion of low language, which is mutually understandable for both speakers. It is thus regarded as an inferior and corrupt version of donor language. Romain (1988:6) Pidgin English is the inferior form of English language.
- *Language Shift*: Pauwels, in Nwabanne and Makinde (1994), generally refers to "language shift as the process by which one language displaces another in the linguistic repertoire of a community" (72). It implies the rapid or gradual change by a speaker, a group of speakers, and /or a speech community from the use of one language in almost all spheres of life to the use of another language in almost all spheres of life. Wherever two cultures/populations with different languages come into intense contact, shift is a possibility. Fishman (1968:18), names 3 main classes of factors to account for language shift. These include:
  - Changes in the way of life of a group that weakens the strength of its social networks;
  - Changes in the power relationship between the groups;
  - Stigmatized attitude towards the minority group values and language share by minority and majority alike or various combination of all.

Language shift is used to describe a change from the habitual use of a language, to another. This then results in language loss, because when a language is abandoned and not used, it will not develop new vocabulary, which can lead to language death or such language going into extinction.

### **Language Planning**

Language planning is usually concerned with application in highly controversial issues involving small languages at risk, the establishment of a lingual franca, large degrees of linguistic diversity and so on. Language planning is commissioned and implemented by those in power, John Edwards (1994:194).

### **National Language Phenomenon**

A nation exists on the basis of mutual identity. The features of a nation include language, culture and history. National language is a symbol of national identity. CMB-Brann, with particular reference to Africa suggests that there are four distinctive meanings for national language in a polity. These include:

- A territorial language (*clithonolect* sometimes known as *chfonolect*) of a particular people;
- A regional language (*chorale*); language in common or community language;
- *Demolect* used throughout a country and
- A central language (*Politolect*) used by government and perhaps having a symbolic value.

A national language cannot be chosen in a particular country without examining the languages in such society. These languages have to be planned, this and only be done by the language planning process.

### **Types of Language Planning**

There are two types of language planning: the instrumental approach and the sociolinguistic approach - Fasold (op cit. 250-1), Appel and Muysken (1987:49).

The instrumental approach, regards languages as a tool which can be perfect to fill certain functions. The sociolinguistic approach sees all language as being equal. Apparently, obvious differences in their functional adequacy are a reflection of socio economic and socio-political factors and are not ascribable to the languages themselves. All languages have the same potential for development, and the approach chosen or employed is sensitive as well as largely determined by the social factors underling the language choice. The major features of language planning were presented in a model by Einar Haugen M 1966. There are four aspects to model.

- *Norm Selection*
- *Functional Implementation*
- *Norm Codification*
- *Functional Planning*

The implementation often called status planning, are extra linguistic features, societal in nature.

Codification and elaboration (corpus planning) on the other hand, deal directly with language itself. The operation of language planning along these lines is theoretically, at least quite straightforward. A linguistic problem arises such that a choice has to be made between or among varieties.

Implementation involves spreading the variety through official pronouncements, education, the media and so on. Various evaluations procedures are often employed at the stage to monitor the degree of acceptance of the chosen norm. Finally, elaboration means keeping the norm viable in a changing world through obvious necessities.

Language planning takes place in several stages. The following are taken from Appel and Muysken (op.cit. 50:8) incorporating those provided by Joan Rubin (1975, 217-517).

*Standardization:* This involves selection of dialect or dialects of a language, then the establishment of norms of usage at all linguistic levels.

*Modernization:* Modernization of language can be done in two ways. Firstly, development of language structure and the development of language functions, which will entail assigning roles to the language. The already modernized language can then be implemented.

*Implementation:* Implementation is the most important aspect of the language planning process, because it shows the usefulness of the planning process. This can be done by the government through the educational system and also through the passage of law and the usage of such language in the press, radio and television. All these efforts can only be positive, when the people who the planning is aimed at accepts it.

### **Language Policy in Nigeria**

For a language or languages to be chosen as a national language, such language or languages has to go through several procedures in language planning as determined by the language policy.

A document specifically called the *Language Policy of Nigeria* has not yet emerged. However, given the fact that the country has witnessed an endless wave of national polices, on different aspects of governmental business, there is every reason to surmise that one day a “National Language Policy” might be formulated and launched.

There are different documents that need to be consulted if a national language policy is to be formulated. These documents include:

- Nigeria’s successive Constitution (1960-1999)
- The National Policy on Education
- The Cultural Policy for Nigeria.

In the process of language planning, language or languages to be considered as the national language or languages, must have already been chosen. The already chosen language(s) should be made to pass through the process of standardization. This involves selection of a dialect of the language(s)

considered. Then such language or languages should be modernized through the allocation of roles to such languages in the society in order to enhance its usages. Also, the development of its lexicon should be advanced so that such language(s) will be well developed, in the aspect of sentence formation and pronunciation. It is only modernized and standardized language(s) that can be used for education purpose. The already standardized and modernized language or languages should then be implemented. The implementation of these languages can be successfully done by an official pronouncement, usage of this language in the educational sector, and also in mass media.

### **Colonial Issues**

*Colonial Legacy:* One of the greatest issues is that Nigeria is a heterogeneous society. Before colonialism, the territory known as Nigeria today was inhabited by different people, empires, tribes and kingdoms. These peoples have different cultures, traditions and religion. The colonialist did not consider these divergent issues, but went ahead and welded them together as one country. Until 1977, when the only cultural show was performed in Nigeria (FESTAC) there had never been attempts to nationalize Nigerian cultural heritage. So when we talk or plan for globalization of the heritage, it is pertinent to start at home, at the domestic level before internationalization that is cultural nationalization.

*Cultural Diversity:* Nigeria is a society with abundant rich cultural heritage that are scattered within the diverse ethnic nationalities. These cultural heritages include language, marriage rites, burials rites, birth rites, dressing, greeting, music, folklore, religion, and other tangible cultural monuments, natural sites and cultural landscapes. Some of these cultures have died due to western cultural influence and therefore need to be revitalized and uploaded onto the internet – that is, assuming those familiar with their usage and performance are still alive.

*Information Technologies:* The advent of ICT has forced libraries and librarians to operate with such concepts and phrases like information society, digitalization, computer or information explosion, globalization, cyberspace and information superhighway. These technologies have forced the developed world to operate in a context of change that automatically affects the ways our cultural heritage are documented, preserved and practiced. It has brought the culture, folklore and heritage of western countries to our doorsteps, reading tables, desktop with just a press of the computer keyboard or a click of mouse. Where are Nigerian cultural heritage in the world cultural arena?

*Cultural Policy:* Efforts to globalize Nigerian cultural heritage have not been fully discussed, evaluated or strategized by the Nigerian government. There is serious lack of co-ordination of Nigerian cultural heritage between the Federal government and the Ministry of culture. Many Nigerians are not aware of the Nigerian culture due to the fact that cultural knowledge and practices are not included in Nigerian education curricula. These are some of the contending issues that Nigeria is facing in terms of its cultural development. Diversity of language has affected the nation's cultural development in both positive and negative ways.

### **Positive Impact of Multilingualism on Cultural Development in Nigeria**

The understanding of a language or another person's language will bring the people close through culture. Also if one is able to understand the culture of a particular people, the tendency is that the person will be fully integrated into them. Culture is a complex phenomenon which has many definitions. It cannot be genetically transmitted. Language is a unifying factor. It is a weapon for peaceful coexistence. One of the strings that tie the people together is language. If human beings can explore, discover, and extend knowledge through their language and also if exploration, discovery and extension of knowledge are the prerequisites of development, the languages of Nigeria must be then organized and developed for the societies to blossom in Nigeria. As a result of the fact that there are different cultures and ethnic groups, we have cross cultural communication and economic exchange. Resulting from the need to communicate, cultures even borrow words from other cultures - that is, they borrow from each other to develop and communicate. In the Nigerian situation, this is clearly evident when we find the same word in different cultures meaning the same thing. Also, the need for economic exchange (trade) has also brought about cultural development in Nigeria. Cross cultural communication is the dissemination of information of cultural contexts and background across

cultural boundaries. It refers to an interaction involving members of different groups with different cultural orientations with the intent of drawing a common pool of cultural relationship.

Now when one is able to speak another person's language, there is this close relationship between them. Knowing the fact that you are speaking the same language, sometimes he or she may even refer to you as his brother or sister. This is the reason why the Federal Government in Nigeria thought it wise for every citizen to learn at least one of the major three Nigerian languages for easy communication, unity and integration in the country. Moreover the need for economic exchange is another factor that brought about cultural development in Nigeria. Economic exchange (trade) is one essential activity of a county and this activity cannot take place if the two parties involved, speak different languages. In order to have economic exchange, there is the need to learn other people's language and culture. This is also another reason why the Federal Government wants us to learn at least one of the three major Nigerian languages. Although the Federal Government of Nigeria specified only three (major) Nigerian languages, out of many languages in Nigeria, this policy has been difficult to implement because many people in Nigeria (the citizens) view this diversity of language and ethnicity negatively.

### **Negative Impact of Multilingualism on Cultural Development in Nigeria**

The negative implication of multilingualism on cultural development are:

*Language/Cultural Death:* This is a situation whereby a particular language or culture stops existing due to the fact that, either the people who know the language or culture are dead or the language is no longer used in the community or society at large.

This is what many ethnic groups in Nigeria is avoiding, no one wants his or her cultural heritage to be extinct, that is why most minority languages in Nigeria feel intimidated and do not want to give in to whatever the government is saying about the three major Nigerian language.

*Cultural Implementation:* The dynamic nature of culture makes it an easy tool of manipulation. Cultural imperialism is the systematic penetration and domination of the culture of a given race by another culture that claims superiority. Ethnocentrism is an art of using one's ethnicity or cultural as a parameter for measuring other cultures. This means in essence that cultural imperialism occurs when one culture dominates another culture of the extent that the culture being dominated gets into extinction over time. The citizens of Nigeria who are from the minority groups view the policy made by the government on the three majority language as a means of ethnocentrism and that will lead to cultural imperialism.

### **Multilingualism and Political Development in Nigeria**

After the colonization of Nigeria by the British in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the political influence was paralleled by western British culture. The influence of western culture on Nigerian was both conscious and unconscious. The conscious influence arose by the numerous colonial polices, administrative systems and social behavior of the colonizers copied by Nigerians. The unconscious influence came through the various media of western (formal) education and also through the gradual acquisition of western attitudes and tastes.

### **Political Integration and National Unity**

Now, when the National Political Reform conference convened, one would wish to believe that the conferees were aware of the enormous burden of their responsibility which was to reinvent and reconstruct Nigeria: in other words, to forge the unity and integration of Nigeria. Unity connotes a social and political process. Integration is organic; anthromorphic. Notionally, you have to morph the people together. Integration is deeper, and can be the basis of unity, Nigeria needs both. But if we should aim at full integration, unity will automatically follow. All this is familiar enough, but it is the other thing that has eluded us all of the 60 years of our independence.

The unremitting effort for national unity and integration curiously began with the breaking up of Nigeria into pieces to weather domination. First, the three regions inherited from colonialism - the North, West and East, in which the North preponderantly dominated the two (later four). Other regions, were broken up into six, with another six in the south, making twelve in 1967; going to 19 in 1976; 21 in 1987; 30 in 1991; 36 in

1996 plus the Federal capital territory of Abuja, which brings to 37, the total number of unites enjoying same status in all respects, especially allocation of Federal resources.

We inaugurated a National Youth Service Corps scheme in which our youths spend the first year of their lives after graduation, giving free services to states outside their state of origin. We moved the capital base of our Federation from Lagos in the Southwest corner of the country to the centre of the country, Abuja, so that all Nigerians will be near enough to it, and will have a sense of belonging, free movement of people, freedom of expression and freedom of possession is guaranteed to every Nigerian wherever he chooses to stay. All the ingredients of unity and integration of our country are there on ground, though we failed in unity and integration.

### **Multilingualism and Economic Development in Nigeria**

Because Nigeria is a multilingual nation, its economy keeps diminishing as the days go by. Currently, Nigerian's economy is nothing to write home about. Different ethnic groups suffer daily, especially the Niger-Delta region, whose land is being destroyed because of the national resources found in the land. Using the Niger-Delta region as an illustration, their land is being destroyed and still they are not compensated for the use of their land. This is the reason why the people of that region are angry, restive and bombing all the pipe lines in the country. This invariably damaged the economy of the country. There is scarcity of resources and the little left, is facing a lot of competition among the ethnic groups. This has led to the death of many of the citizens. Poverty is now the order of the day as there is little or nothing to be distributed of the resources and funds of the country.

Although Nigerian is the giant of Africa, its citizens suffer greatly. Funding is assured by the provision of section 162 sub 2 of the constitution, but the Federation share can even be increased as the centre will now assume responsibility for even development, the formation and implementation of which the President and the State Governors sit together and discuss one-on-one. This is not abrogating Federalism because State Governor will still remain responsible for the management of their states.

This may also be seen as a crazy and unworkable proposal. But it does not seem crazier than the present situation where, never more than 50% of the Federal Budget ever gets implemented even as the president puts federating geo-political units, which are always contending with each other for "fair share" of the "Federal cakes", which at the end of the day never seem to be from to any of the States.

Ultimately, even if the different ethnic groups start producing things, they may not be able to communicate with each other unless they learn each other's language and culture, thereby limiting the chances of economic growth.

### **Multilingualism and Educational Development in Nigeria**

1. In the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999: section 51 and 91) what is contained in the National Policy on Education stipulates the following; "The (Federal) Government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major language, other than his own mother tongue (the major languages in Nigeria being identified as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba)"
2. The medium of instruction at the pre-primary level will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community. This would oblige the government to:
  - a. Develop the orthography of many Nigerian languages
  - b. Produced text books and other materials in Nigerian language.
3. The government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, English.
4. A promise by the government to supply specialist teachers via teacher training colleges.
5. At the secondary level, English fully becomes the language of instruction while Nigerian languages are taught as subjects.

Although Nigeria has a very nice language policy on education, the problem affecting Nigeria in terms of education is the implementation of this language policy. The citizens see the policy as not being favourable to them, simply because no one wants his or her own culture/language to become extinct. The government is also not helping matters when they ignore the policy. Instead of forcefully implementing the policy which they made, they sit down and watch while the fund for the implementation is consumed.

The situation of language education matters in Nigeria is therefore proof that Nigeria is merely high and rich in policies but very low and deficient in implementation.

### **Language Policy and National Language Development Objectives in Nigeria**

To a great extent, the provision above relate the Nigeria's political and educational objective in the opening of this section. Provision "A" states expressly the national objectives to which it relates, viz. preservation of people's culture and achievement of national unity. Language service to preserve a people's culture cannot be doubted since culture itself is transmitted via language, Hymes (1964:15).

Obviously, Nigeria is a multilingual national with an estimated number of about 500 languages Bamboos (1976:32). Each one plays a very significant role in the community where it is used. Existing proposal of national languages in Nigeria can be categorized into three groups. The first group proffered various suggestions such as combining different languages to makeup a word (either from the three major languages in Nigeria which are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba or the minor languages. Like KANURE, Tiv, like "Wazobia" and "Gusoa", and so on. The second group, on the other hand, suggested that the three major languages Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba be the national languages and the English language should retain its present official status. Olugoke (1982:18). The third group, however suggested a totally new language other than the languages of the nation, to be learnt and adopted as a national language such as Swahili suggested by Wole Soyinka (1977:12). Meanwhile, the current position of the Federal Government of Nigeria is in support of the multilingual arrangement, as stated in section 51 of the 1979 constitution and paragraph 8 of the 1977 (revised 1981). The different suggestion above although well argued, has received various criticisms.

Pidgin English is an unlikely candidate for national language because it lacks prestige. Even though it serves as lingua franca among different groups in Nigeria, mostly in the southern part of Nigeria, it has a low social status as it is associated with semi-literate members of the society. The variety is not associated with educated usage because it is non-standard.

But Hausa has emerged as a language of commerce in Kano. Even officially, it has come to assume the status of their lingua franca. This is mainly because it is easier to have a lingua franca or national language in a mono-lingual setting than in a multilingual setting. The economy of cooperation among speakers of different languages result in underdevelopment, but in an enhanced economic prosperity. The economy's prosperity is the result of tolerance and this even manifest in politics. For instance, it was the same tolerance and national interest that mobilized the party congress to form a national body for the pursuance of a collective political interest, it can be applied to the various languages to mobilize them toward a common language goal for national development.

Even looking at our original National Anthem, multilingualism is a fact in that "though tribe and tongue may differ" and though the linguistic division are popular along ethnic lines, these language can be developed for national integration and unity so that "in brotherhood we stand" (Nigeria National Anthem 1960).

Thus, National integration is promoted and speakers of the language will have participation roles in the development of both the national and its national languages.

### **Benefits of Multilingualism**

Multilingualism in Nigeria is a blessing because of the advantages it affords the speakers.

*Communication:* If a person is multilingual, communication becomes very easy. If the person travels to a country which is not his own, by knowing the spoken language there, the individual is able to communicate and feels no difficulty in travel and other needs. This is the most important benefit of knowing more than two languages.



*Income Generation Potential:* The individual who speaks more than two languages has an edge over others as he is able to earn more because of various job opportunities in different countries. They have additional income generation potential if they work in a set up where the translation of various languages is essential. On the internet these days, there are various opportunities for people who know more than two languages.

*Recreation:* A multi-linguist is able to watch programs in various languages on the television. The individual is always abreast with the current happenings around the world by watching news in another when he finds himself in another country that speaks another language.

*Jobs:* There are various job opportunities for people who know more than two languages. Purveyors of jobs that require traveling to various places (countries) are always on the lookout for people who know and speak more than two languages. Companies that have multi-national presence will benefit a lot from employing people who are multilingual.

*Exposure to Another Culture:* Rather than thinking there is only one way to everything, multilinguists stay open - open to possibilities. Fabulous, is not it? They know and understand that different people do things differently.

*Building bridges to New Relationships:* Multilinguists have the ability to build bridges to new relationships because they can talk to diverse people, they associate and make friends with different people. For example, they can be the bridge between two people who cannot communicate with each other, they can translate or interpret.

*Flexible and Divergent Thinking:* Research has shown that individuals who grow up speaking several languages think of one thing in different ways. They know there could be more than one word to a concept, so their minds are more flexible. This often results in the fact that multilinguists do better in school than their monolingual counterparts.

*Self-identity:* A multilinguist sees himself as a language or culture bridge. The self-image an individual adopts increases his self confidence and self-esteem.

Based on the above highlighted advantages and opportunities eventuated by the positive sides of the phenomenon multilingualism, we maintain that its existence favors Nigeria. The truth is that since her independence, "linguistic imperialism" had to be sustained in the interest of the nation because there has been no indigenous language that could perform the function of English due to mutual suspicion and ethnic consciousness among virtually all Nigerians. Multilingualism, therefore, should be viewed as an asset, an embodiment of the cultural diversity and linguistic enrichment of the country.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Multilingualism is the national potential available to every normal human being rather than an unusual exception. "Given the appropriate environment, two languages are as normal as two lungs", Cook (2002:23). It need not even require the ability to speak two unrelated languages.

The advantages/benefits of multilingualism should encourage us to see multilingualism as a blessing to our country, not as a curse. It should also motivate us to help our country attain great development in all aspects.

Hence, if the citizens begin to view multilingualism positively and also if the government of Nigeria firmly implements the Nigerian language policies, the nation will develop rapidly. In order for the national will to develop, or in order for there to be an increase in the development of the nation, we need the support and cooperation of the Nigerian citizens that the government's commitment for it to be a reality.

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