

Language attitude in nigeria essay



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According to Longman's English dictionary, language is a system of communication by writing or spoken words which is used by the people of a particular country or area. Another source says, the method of human communication, either in spoken or written consisting of words, language is the human capacity of doing in a structured and conventional way. Language is the human capacity of acquiring and using complex system of communication.

In the generative grammar tradition, language also is believed to refer to the knowledge that native speakers have which together with other facilities, enable them to communicate, express their thoughts and perform various other linguistic functions. With all these definitions of language, language attitude therefore means the way Nigerians feel about different languages either positive or negative. The name Nigeria is said to be morphologically derived from a blend of 'Niger' and 'area'.

Nigeria came into existence in 1914 as a result of the amalgamation of the northern and the southern protectorates of the British territory around the River Niger area. Nigeria is a multidimensional vast landmass, culture, population, language, beliefs, tradition and lifestyle practised by different people from different areas and there are about 400 native languages in Nigeria (Bamgbose 1971, Osayi 1979) many of them out of which only three are recognized as major: Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo.

One of the dominant and pervasive problems in Nigeria is the language question. Language being a potent vehicle for transmitting culture, norms, values and beliefs from generation to generation, remains a central factor in determining the status or nature of any nation. This informs the submission of

Isayen (1997: 1992) that language is a nation's most obvious and most important attribute. In Nigeria where like many other Africa nations, multilingualism is a rule rather than an exemption. The problem of 'foregoing ahead' is of crucial input.

Among the competing languages that scramble for national recognition or official status whether indigenous or foreign, one must emerge as the official language (the language of administration and education at some levels) the language of relevance from the competitor for the purpose of unifying the nation. Fortunately or unfortunately, English language has emerged as the privileged language without the unity of Nigerians as it is mostly improbable or not outrightly impossible. Multilingualism is a social linguistic phenomenon that arrives as a result of language contact.

It is a situation in which two (bilingual) or more languages operate within the same context. Factors such as political annexation, marital relations, economic transactions, cultural associations, educational acquisition and religious affiliation bring about multilingualism. All these factors underpin the social political landscape of Nigeria today even through the combination of political annexation and economic transaction or exploitation originally brought the people referred to as Nigeria today in contact with the English language and its people.

Through overt and covert means such as trade and commerce, educational policies and ordinances, missionary activities, schools, literature, constitution and, job opportunities, English was successfully entrenched in Nigeria, with the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1914, came

the need in a more clinical dimension to have a common language for the country.

When Nigeria her political independence in 1960 linguistic imperialism had to be sustained in the interest of the nation, this is because there was no indigenous language that could perform the function of English because of the mutual suspicious of ethnic consciousness among virtually all Nigerians. Multilingualism which should be viewed as an assert an embodiment of cultural diversity and linguistic enrichment of the country, because a liability and the popular attitude to it is that associated with " the curse of babel". It is evident from the above that multilingualism in Nigeria is not accorded its positive values.

The exact advent of the English language in Nigeria is not known, neither do we know the first Nigerian to speak the English language (Ogu, 1992: 65) it is however believed the English language has been in existence far more than three decades as such it has therefore stayed for such a long period of time that it has become domesticated and acculturated into our society because of its historical antecedent, English still enjoy a prime of place in Nigeria ' s linguistic firmament. It is well received among Nigeria people and it is the most widely spoken.

In Nigeria, English is the language of intergration . amidst the compounding complexity of Nigeria especially in relation to the language question, the only language that index the spirit of togetherness is the English language. More often than not, activities conducted in indigenous languages are reprobated as being ethnic or tribal, except in cultural celebration or

entertainment display. The use of English facilitates the absence of the ethnic sentiments in this regards, English is acceptable to all even to those who glamour against its irresistible dominance.

It is the language that is not fraught with suspicion in any formal or literate context. During the military regime of general Sani Abacha for instance, there was an allegation or insinuation that the apex ruling council meetings were sometimes conducted in Hausa, which the second in command Diya did not speak, at a time that relationship between them became frosty. English served as the language of nationalism concerned with political integration and efficiency (Bamgbose 1991: 20) it is the language that brings all the supposed nation of Nigeria to function as one.

Ironically, it is also the language of nationalism, this is because the love for the country as a whole has to be manifested through the language intelligible to all and sundry, lest the ethnic agenda be implicated. This reason accounted for why nationalist like, Herbert Marcuse, Obafemi Awolowo, DSir Ahmedu Bello, Nnamdi Azikwe had to use English language as a weapon of national struggle. If English is not used to express the same idea for which he is known as nationalist, he becomes an ethnic "Jingoist" or tribal apologist.

Today in Nigeria, the English language is used in most situations ranging from education, economic, commerce, political, administration and all other sectors for both formal and informal interactions. In the media today English is mostly used because not only means that information and communication can reach every part of the country. All the above mentioned

reasons have caused Nigerians to preference of the English language to their indigenous language, English has now become the language of authority in Nigeria today due to its importance.

Nigerians have developed a positive attitude towards the English language and with this pertinent to state that the English language has come to stay in Nigeria and has become the Nation's lingua franca. Foreign language are those language spoken in a place where it is not its original language. In Nigeria today, although English is a foreign language but because of its importance to Nigerians it is no longer believed to be a foreign language but a second language to Nigerians.

So therefore languages like French, Spanish, portuguess, Arabic, german, Italian, and other languages are what we refer to as foreign languages in Nigerian society. Of all the foreign lsnuages in Nigeria, french is the most widely studied and used by Nigerians. The former Head of State of Nigeria, the l; ate General Sani Abacha in 1996 decleared the new status of French as the nation's second official language. From then on, most private schools introduced French to its pupils, but public schools did not teach French due to lack of French teachers.

Pupils from public schools had to learn French in their secondary schools level. Even in our universities today, French is course on its own under the language and linguistic department or international studies. Therefore, for Nigerians to interact effectively with francophone countries, locally and internationaly, they should not only be able to speak the language fluently

but also attend international seminars and conferences without much problems.

French is one of the international languages most widely used in commerce, scientific and technological research, administration, education, literature and many more, Nigeria and francophone countries would be able to work together in area of science and technology. The need for French in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized, Nigeria's geographical, economical and diplomatic as well as her educational research needs made it imperative for her to give adequate attention and priority to the learning French.

A good number of Nigerians are sufficiently informed about the usefulness of French in our system or its importance as an international language. They feel that people who study French language especially in tertiary level are slow learners or they see French as a course for dumping students who did not pass their intended course of study and therefore it is a waste of time. Apart from French, portugess, german and Spanish are studied in some institutions in Nigeria but the number of students who study these languages are usually small compared to those who study French.

In Nigeria today some media programmes are carried out in French, this also is of more importance because some Africa countries like Senegal, Cameroon, togo, abijan, Mozambique are francophone countries and Nigeria being an african country carry out business transactions with them, with that most Nigerians learn the language in order to communicate with their business partner. Arabic is another foreign language taught in Nigeria, but

because it is a muslim language, it is mostly restricted to the northern part of Nigeria language, because that area consist of muslims brethren.

This is so because Arabic is the language used in the Koran. In general, Nigeria's attitude towards the foreign language is gradually becoming positive with more and more people having access and interest in foreign language. The Nigerian indigenous language are among the cherished cultural values and norms that are gradually into extinction due to neglect and globalization. Language can be defined as arbitrary oral symbols by which a social group interact, communicate and self-expresses, it is enriched with culture, customs and secret of the people.

By indigenous language we mean the various languages spoken in locality. These are "aborigine" to the people. According to onlinenigeria.com, out of 521 indigenous languages in the country, 510 are living, 2 are second languages without mother tongue speakers and 9 are in extinction. The extinct languages includes ; Ajawa spoken in Bauchi, Auyokawa in Jigawa, Basa Guma in Niger, Gamo-Nigi in Bauchi, Kati in Taraba, Kubi in Bauchi, Mawa in bauchi and Tsehenawa in jigawa state respectively. Investigation revealed that Nigerians indigenous language is affected by negative attitude of Nigerians.

This is so because parents that should act as custodians to preserving our indigenous languages by teaching and communicating to their wards in native language, , prefer communicating in English language at the detriment of their indigenous languages. Most Nigerian children learn English first in their family and it is believed that charity begins at home.

Before now, indigenous languages was basis of communication such that very few children if any at all understood or spoke English before actually entering school.

There were times parents took pride in communicating to their children using indigenous languages rather than the English language, these were days, when parents told entertaining and educating stories and taught their young ones proverbs and idioms using indigenous language. But now this trend is fast going down the drain as parents no longer communicate to their children in their indigenous language which is rich in cultural values and norms. A research was carried out in warri where 15 parents were asked if they would like their children to be taught in their mother tongue in school and what they communicated with their children at home. parents said they prefer their children to be taught in English language at school, 7 said they would prefer their mother tongue. 10 of those same parents said they speak English to their children at home and 5 said they use their indigenous language at home but with some difficulty, because the children cannot respond unless they have to use English to interpret what they are telling the children. In DELSU, Abraka site 2, another research was carried out among student asking them if they can learn their mother tongue as their course of study here in school.

Out of 11 students, 7 said "NO" with reasons that; no job opportunity, the language is archaic, it causes enmity, and that it's a waste of money to go and study their indigenous languages in the university. While 4 students said "YES" with reasons that; its my passion, I can work in the media house, it reflects my way of life and it would help me project my culture out of Nigeria.

These were respons and their reason we got from thiese student. With this little research, kit is pertinent to say that Nigerians have a negative attitude towards indigenouse languages and its use in Nigeria.

One of the reason Nigeria prefer the use of English by their children is to enhance the competence of their young onse in the language which is the formal means of communication in the country. According to Dr Sola Osoba, a lecturer in department of englisp at the university of Lagos, "many of Nigerians have a negative attitude to our indigenouse languages" thus, this languages are gradually going into extinction and the English language gaining upper hand in our society.

CONCLUSION Conclusively, language is that means of communication between individuals, it can be actualised either through symbols, signs language and verbal means. In this work, we have carried out a thorough research on the language attitude patterns of Nigeria and we have seen nigerianns attitude towards each field of study; its attitude towards English language, its attitude towards foreign language, and its attitude towards indigenouse languages.

It is observed that the English language is indispensable in Nigeria. This is as a result of the fact that the English language is mainly used in communication due to the heterogenous nature of the country. Inspite of this, the promotion of indigenouse language can be encouraged so that the English language and the language of the immediate environment can be used side by side. This will lead to foster effective competence in both the English language and of our indigenouse languages.