

Impact of Indigenous Language as a Pre-Requisite for Ethnic Integration in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study assessed the impact of indigenous language as a pre-requisite for ethnic integration in Osun State, Nigeria. The study employed descriptive survey research design where questionnaire was used to acquire necessary data for the research work. Population comprises of all primary schools in Ayedade Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) primary schools in Ayedade Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria. Fifteen (15) teachers were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of one hundred and fifty (150) teachers as sample for the study. Two (2) research hypotheses were raised and tested in this study. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data in order to test the hypotheses, Mean, Standard deviation, t-ratio. The research findings concluded that the use of indigenous languages is central to the holistic development of any nation and the issue of indigenous languages be handled with total commitment and seriousness. It was further revealed that, local language is the pride of any Nation's development that promote cultural heritage so as not to go into extinction. The paper therefore recommended that, a body of committed linguists be set up in Nigeria and that amendment of National Policy on Education be done to integrate the use of indigenous language for teaching-learning purposes across all levels of education in Nigeria and Nigerian indigenous languages should be made official languages at state levels while maintaining English language as the official language at the federal level.

Background to the Study

Language is a conduit for transmission of people's culture, norms, ideas and belief. The repository of a people's identity and way of life is encapsulated in their language as well as transferred to other people and newer generations, via the means of language. This therefore posits that a lost language is a lost identity as well as a lost race and people. Eyisi (2000) notes that every conceivable human activity revolves around language. According to her; we use language to express love, hatred, anger, happiness, praise, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, to comment on the political, social, educational or economic situations in the country; to confirm or express religious beliefs, to comment on the weather and even to fill a vacuum when there is nothing else to do especially in the exchange of pleasantries.

Language makes us human; it is inseparable from the users (society). It does not exist in vacuum but lives in the lips of the speakers. Human beings, therefore, are naturally endowed with the tendency to always talk, to use words, to employ language for a mutual social relationship with their fellow individuals and for the achievement of their daily objectives for their well-being and for the well-being of their community. People get on well when their communication flow. The same way, if there is no proper communication, activities in a given community would definitely crumble. Sapir-Whorf in Adediran and Lijadu (2019), hypothesis draws a cursory link between language and culture (ethnicity), of which an individual or group represent the culture via linguistic resources. This situates language as a pivotal resource for meeting the communicative needs of the members of the society. Every human language is sophisticated and highly developed to meet the need of the community of speakers that use it.

National integration according to Adediran and Lijadu (2019), has long been seen as an important focus of Nigerian state since post-colonial era. The term “national integration” consists of two words – 'national' and 'integration'. The word national is the adjective of the noun nation. The definition of nation can be approached from three perspectives; cultural, psychological and political. Wellman (2003) captures these three perspectives in his definition of a nation, “a nation is a cultural group of people who identify with one another and either have or seek some degree of political self-determination”. The cultural aspect of a nation demands the common possession of certain cultural elements like language, dressing, values, etiquette, traditions, crafts, mores, history etc. The psychological aspect emphasizes the consciousness of these possessions and the collective identity which they foist on all possessors. On the other hand, it is the political aspect that calls for self-determination. The word integration means the fusion of the people into one. National integration means national unity; that is unity in diversity. It refers to unifying all the forces in a country so as to give the idea of “One Nation”. It also entails social, political, economic, linguistic and cultural unity.

National integration is also known as nationalism. It is the ultimate goal to be achieved in a multiethnic country like Nigeria if there's to be any reasonable development. Nigeria adopted federalism as a means of achieving its much needed goal of national integration. In essence, the federalism so adopted is expected to reduce the immensely aggressive inter-ethnic competition and tension, allaying the usually alleged fear of domination,

bringing government nearer to the people and give the different groups more opportunities, thereby integrating the country (Chime 2001). National Integration is a positive notion that promotes the growth and advancement of a particular nation. It builds up national unity and harmony, which is not enforced by any authority. National integration can be attained only with the unified effort of all individuals with the collaborative efforts of the government to fix the obstacles to national unity thereby securing the national interests.

Language plays a vital role in any human community. The language of any human society tells a lot about that society and therefore can be further emphasized that language and any society are intertwined. The functions of language in any human community include the following: expression of thought, political administration, education, social, religious, legislation and so on. Language is a means of communication between individuals and different groups of individuals in a given society. It is a socializing tool capable of breaking barriers of inter-ethnic communication and mistrust (Ezeani,2015). Stork and Widowson in Adediran and Adu (2013), affirm that all languages are highly developed and sophisticated communication systems, capable of meeting the demands of the society in which they are used and the personal needs of the individual of the society in terms of expressing emotions, giving and receiving information. Through language, man is able to trace the history and way of life of his people from the distant past. Through language, people get to know why their culture is different from other people's culture. By so doing, they would have respect and regard for the culture of others. The communication of national development is made possible only with the instrumentality of language. It goes further to underscore the importance of making a right choice of language for communication as that will determine how effective communication would be.

An indigenous language which is also known as native language according to Adediran and Adu (2013) is a language that is native to a region and spoken by indigenous people. It is the language spoken uniquely by an indigenous community or country. It is a language from a linguistically distinct community that has been settled in the area for many generations. The ability to communicate clearly is a key function for all people. Being able to communicate effectively in an individual's first or home language connects a person to their ethnic group and helps to shape a persons' identity.

Local or indigenous language can be construed to mean a language spoken of belonging or connected with a particular place or area which one is talking about or with the place where one lives. Indigenous languages are the tribal, native or local language spoken. The language would be from a linguistically distinct community that has been settled in the area for many generations. Language being a potent vehicle of transmitting culture, norms, values and beliefs from generation to generation remains a central factor in determining the overall status of a nation (Yusuf, 2012). Indigenous language refers to the various native languages spoken in Nigerian; they are languages that are aboriginal to the people.

Language is an essential part of, and intrinsically linked to indigenous peoples' ways of life, culture and identities. Languages embody many indigenous values and concepts and contain indigenous peoples' histories and development. They are fundamental markers of indigenous peoples' distinctiveness and cohesiveness as peoples. Government's programmes and policies reach the grassroots with the use of indigenous languages.

National integration is the recognition of a common identity among the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different castes, religions and regions and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one. This understanding is very crucial in the building of a strong and wealthy nation. National integration is the recognition of a common identity among the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different castes, religions and regions and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one. This understanding is very crucial in the building of a strong and wealthy nation.

Jacob and Tenue in Edosa (2014), define national integration as “a relationship of community among people within the same political entity, a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive; to act together; to be committed to mutual programmes”. In their contribution, Coleman and Rosberg (2004) view national integration as the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community. Also, Deutsch (2006) define national integration as “the attainment within a territory of a 'sense of community' and of institutions and practices strong enough and wide-spread enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful community”. According to Chime (2001) national integration is “a process of cohesion between two or more social units whereby these units come together to constitute a political whole which include among others the joining of various parts of society into a functioning whole, the growth of obedience and loyalty to its parts and the emergence of shared national values”.

Eisinger in Atanda, Adelegun and Adediran (2019), looks at national integration as a situation in which diverse groups in a political system have been successful in developing common institutions and norms by which to settle conflicts peacefully or pursue collective goals cooperatively, depending on the situation. Going a step further, he describes national integration as a psychological and educational process involving the development of a feeling of unity, solidarity and cohesion in the hearts of the people, a sense of economic citizenship; a feeling of loyalty to the nation”. Samuel (2015), observes that the following ideas come to mind whenever we talk of national integration or nationalism: feeling of brotherhood in the midst of the people, feeling of oneness, feeling of cohesion, feeling of harmony in thought and action, a feeling of loyalty to the country, feeling of solidarity, feeling of patriotism, feeling of unity of the country, feeling of tolerance with others ideas and beliefs and feeling of 'WE' and 'I'

Commenting on the foregoing, Nikky (2010), emphasizes that national integration has to start in the minds of the citizens of a country; it has to be cultivated, sown and watered in

the consciousness of the individuals in a nation. Shona (2013), says national integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. In his words, Edosa (2014) sees national integration as a situation where the members of a state see themselves as one; treat one another fairly and work together cooperatively and freely give to and resolve the differences peacefully in the overall interest of the nation. Contributing to the meaning of national integration, Miah (2016) says it is “that awareness of a typical identity amongst the voters of a rustic”. It follows that although citizens belong to totally different castes, religions and regions and have totally different linguistic backgrounds, they have an understanding of the actual fact that they are all one. This implies the feeling of togetherness towards ones' own country irrespective of their individual differences with regard to religion, race, culture or caste. Singh (2017) says national integration is not only about national spirit. It involves a feeling that brings people from all areas, dialects and beliefs together in a common endeavour. When national integration occurs, individuals are likely to work together to build systems that enhance the prosperity of a nation and its people.

Indigenous languages are inherent interface to the people's existence and philosophy of life in general. Ake (2003) holds that the quest to imitate other cultures is a consequence of lack of self-confidence. He finds concrete expression of this on the decision of some African governments to disallow the speaking of African languages and the wearing of African traditional clothes in parliaments. He makes clear that, the states of mind that produce such behaviour and attitudes cannot be conducive to development. Development requires changes on a revolutionary scale; it is in every sense a heroic enterprise calling for consummate confidence. It is not for people who do not know who they are and where they are coming from, for such people are unlikely to know where they are going.

According to Nwadike (2004), indigenous language “is the key to the heart of the people. If we lose the key, we lose the people. If we treasure the key and keep it safe, it will unlock the door of wealth or affluence, thus bringing about national development”. Solanke in Adediran and Lijadu (2019), upholds Nwadike's conviction repeating that “indigenous languages are treasures of culture and self-identity”. The National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO) (2014) reveals that “The survival of our indigenous languages required our collective efforts and strong will as well as the supportive policies of government especially in the field of education”.

Conveying his view, Obafemi in Adediran and Adu (2013), remarks that Nigeria is often presented as a diverse nation and the diversity is manifest in the number of ethnic group, religions, language and so on that exist in the country. Based on this diversity, some people arrived on the conclusion that Nigeria cannot survive as a united country. Positions like the above raises dust within the Nigerian polity. Obafemi in Adediran and Adu (2013), emphasizes that a close looks at the Nigerian languages reveal that they can be source of unity for the country. The language family tree shows that most Nigerian languages belong in the same Niger-Congo language family. For instance, such

languages like Fulani, Igbo, Edo, and Yoruba etc. belong to the same Niger-Congo family of language. This points to cultural and blood affinity between these groups. This reveals that indigenous languages can be utilized in fostering a united Nigerian. When Nigeria is united, when all of its parts see themselves as the same because they take into account their relatedness; it will give room for cooperation. This cooperation will in no small measure make the country strong and self-reliant.

Okoye (2013), opines that individuals develop educationally, socially, economically, politically and culturally through their interaction with government agencies that disseminate ideas and policies through various media in the languages that the individuals' best understand. This brings to light the fact that people responds better to information when it is circulated in a familiar language. Airing from his view, "if concrete national development must take place within the context and essence of grass-root mobilization and participation, then the question of utilizing the language of the people, the indigenous languages without resorting to ethnic nationalism, cannot be side-stepped". It is a requisite cultural heritage with which all forms of human interaction are carried out.

It is the opinion of this paper that the nation should adopt one of her indigenous languages as the national lingual Franca. By so doing, the nation will have a total emancipation from her colonial legacy. This is beneficial considering the fact that Nigeria has over five hundred languages none of which is used at any national capacity. Therefore, the adoption of an indigenous language would obliterate the elitism created by English and engender a level playing ground for equal intellectual, political and economical participation by the masses. This generally holds the view that suppression of English will be the promotion of indigenous languages and culture.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the research was to assess the impact of indigenous language as a pre-requisite for ethnic integration in Osun State Specifically the objectives are to:

1. Examine the significant difference between the impact of indigenous language and ethnic integration in Osun State.
2. Examine the significant difference about the role of Language in National Development in Nigeria.

Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the impact of indigenous language and ethnic integration in Osun State.
2. There is no significant difference about the role of Language in National Development in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all primary school teachers in Ayedade Local Government, Osun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 primary schools teachers in Ayedade Local

Government, Osun State. Fifteen (15) teachers were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of one hundred and fifty (150) as sample for study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire contained items on the main title of study. The instrument was given to experts for construct and content validation. Reliability of the instrument was analysis through test-retest method which ascertains its reliability of 0.98. The statistical techniques was employed to analyze the data in order to test the hypothesis, mean, S.D and t-ratio

Presentation of Data Analysis and Results Discussion

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the impact of indigenous language and ethnic integration in Osun State.

Table 1: The mean, S.D and t-ratio of impact of indigenous language and ethnic integration in Osun State

Impact	Indigenous language	Ethnic integration
Mean	41.3678	41.2122
Standard Deviation	3.534	3.866
t-ratio	0.2673	

Table 1 shows the value of t with difference of 0.2673. The critical value of t at 0.05 level is 1.98 and 0.01 level is 2.63 and the obtained value is 0.2673 which is less than the table value, this indicates that, there is no significant difference between the impact of indigenous language and ethnic integration in Osun State. The hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference between the impact of indigenous language and ethnic integration in Osun State. The findings are in line with Yusuf, (2012) that indigenous language being a potent vehicle of transmitting culture, norms, values and beliefs from generation to generation remains a central factor in determining the overall status of a nation. Similar findings with Stork and Widowson in Adediran and Adu (2013) affirm that all languages are highly developed and sophisticated communication systems, all capable of meeting the demands of the society in which they are used and the personal needs of the individual of the society in terms of expressing emotions and giving and receiving information. Through language, man is able to trace the history and way of life of his people from the distant past. Through language, people get to know why their cultures different from other people's culture. By so doing, they would have respect and regard for the culture of others.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in Role of Language in National Development in Nigeria.

Table 2: The mean, S.D and t-ratio of Role of Language in National Development in Nigeria

Role	Indigenous Language	National Development
Mean	42.67	39.8
Standard Deviation	3.38	3.75
t-ratio	5.089	

Table 2 shows the value of t with difference of 5.089. The critical value of t at 0.05 level is 1.98 and 0.01 level is 2.63 and the obtained value is 5.089 which is greater than the table value, this indicates that there is no significant difference in Role of Language in National Development in Nigeria. The hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference in Role of Language in National Development in Nigeria. This result is supported by studies of Okoye (2013) opines that individuals develop educationally, socially, economically, politically and culturally through their interaction with government agencies that disseminate ideas and policies through various media in the languages that the individuals' best understand. This brings to light the fact that people responds better to information when it is circulated in a familiar language. Airing his view, Adeniran in Atanda, Adelegun and Adediran (2019) declares: "If concrete national development must take place within the context and essence of grass-root mobilization and participation, then the question of utilizing the language of the people, the indigenous languages without resorting to ethnic nationalism, cannot be side-stepped".

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the role of language in human society is indispensable; it provides means for social function, cohesion and organization. Language therefore serves as a catalyst for national development. The use of indigenous languages is central to the holistic development of any nation. It is in this view, that the author posits that, the issue of indigenous languages should be handled with total commitment and seriousness. It should be a long term project since language will continue to endure in human society.

Recommendations

1. Amendment of National Policy on Education should include the use of indigenous language for teaching-learning purposes across all levels of education in Nigeria
2. Nigerian indigenous languages should be made official languages at state levels while maintaining English languages the official language at the federal level.
3. Inter-tribal and inter-ethnic marriages should be encouraged and promoted as this will encourage multilingualism among Nigerian citizens.
4. Widespread use of indigenous languages to cultivate the sense of oneness and togetherness in citizens from childhood to adulthood.
5. Introduction of a national integration day in which indigenous languages will be used as official language of the day.
6. Translation of the Nigerian constitution into major indigenous languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yourba).
7. All official work at state level should be carried out in the standard indigenous language.
8. Government should support the National Institute for Cultural Orientation in their effort to train more Nigerians in indigenous languages.

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