

# The Role of the Indigenous Languages in Policy Planning and Implementation: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the National Rebranding Programme of Nigeria

Anayochukwu Leonard Okoli

**Abstract**—The nexus between language and culture is so intertwined and very significant that language is largely seen as a vehicle for cultural transmission. Culture itself refers to the aggregate belief system of a people, embellishing its corporate national image or brand. If we conceive national rebranding as a campaign to rekindle the patriotic flame in the consciousness of a people towards its sociocultural imperatives and values, then, Nigerian indigenous linguistic flame has not been ignited. Consequently, the paper contends that the current national rebranding policy remains a myth in the confines of the elitists' intellectual squabble. It however recommends that the use of our indigenous languages should be supported by adequate legislation and also propagated by Nollywood in order to revamp and sustain the people's interest in their local languages. Finally, the use of the indigenous Nigerian languages demonstrates patriotism, an important ingredient for actualizing a genuine national rebranding.

**Keywords**—Appraisal, Indigenous Languages, Policy, Rebranding.

## I. FRAMEWORK

LANGUAGE attitude refers to the people's collective attitude towards a language, or towards the speakers of a given language. Fasold has extended this definition to include "attitudes towards language maintenance and planning efforts" [1]. In fact, the subject-matter of this study is anchored on the theoretical frame of the latter (i.e. Fasold's extension of language attitude), more especially as the indigenous Nigerian languages are not supported by viable national policies, and as a result, they are hardly maintained as languages for interpersonal and wider communication. This, perhaps, explains why the present policy of national rebranding has brazenly undermined the potency of the indigenous languages to paint a better picture of our national identity both locally and internationally.

Presenting an analysis of language attitude and its overall impact on language development, Agbedo notes that "attitudes are crucial in language growth or decay, restoration or destruction: the status and importance of a language in society and within an individual derives largely from adopted or learnt attitudes" [2]. It follows from the above viewpoint that language attitude is an individual psychological disposition

L. A. Okoli is with the Institute of Management and Technology, (IMT), Enugu, Nigeria, (phone: +2348098346880; e-mail: maaziokoli@yahoo.com).

towards a language which derives from the collective linguistic interest of a social group. However, the social status of speakers and the solidarity which the group enjoys very largely determine the overall status of a language. The stratification of languages along the poles of standard versus nonstandard typifies the impact of social status of speakers on the widespread acceptance of a language.

Generally speaking, attitude towards a language may be positive or negative. A language enjoys positive attitude when its users adopt it, at all times, for interpersonal communication. On the other hand, if a language is plagued with negative attitude, the speakers feel psychologically inferior to use it as a medium of interpersonal communication. This kind of attitude usually results in language shift, and this may eventually lead to language endangerment and ultimately culminate in language death. Today, the fate of the indigenous languages in Nigeria is precariously hanging on this perilous pendulum, because they are plagued with negative attitude. Discussing the impact of negative attitude on Igbo, the most endangered indigenous language in Nigeria, Agbedo has metaphorically captured the situation with the following:

*... the fate of the Igbo language in contemporary Nigeria can be likened to that of Jesus Christ, whose crucifiers are gradually but steadily approaching the Calvary, where sooner than later the blood of the language may be shed unless something in form of Divine intervention happens and pulls the chain to stymie the language from trotting down the precipice of death* [3].

In fact, language attitude determines the status of a language. While a positive attitude enhances the acceptability, use and maintenance of language, a negative attitude adversely affects the use of a language, endangering its life and eventually crucifying it on the altar of oblivious existence.

Apart from the general apathy and display of nonchalant attitudes towards the indigenous languages, there are no viable policies in Nigeria that favor their use and sustenance, especially in the discourse of national matters and policy formulation. In fact, in Nigeria, the ruling class has always emasculated the indigenous languages through the development and application of unfavorable, obnoxious policies, with the result that the vast majority of Nigerians are excluded from participating in all national programs. This point is emphasized by Oyelaran in Agbedo as follows:

*The ruling minority ... is daily devising newer ways of marginalizing the non-literate majority, better methods of stripping their language of all values and of all roles in disseminating to Nigerians requisite information about the affairs of the nation. The efforts of the Nigerian state ... seem to complement those of the power incumbents in the same league with the colonial and neo-colonial oppressors to further promote English and lately French at the expense of the Nigerian languages [4].*

This calculated act of linguistic sabotage is as unpatriotic as it is apartheid and cannot be sustained in view of the global ideological imperative which compels Nigeria to showcase her brand identity to the rest of the world. In fact, the current policy of national rebranding will definitely amount to futility, if the indigenous languages - our linguistic brand identity - continue to play a second fiddle to English in national matters, like the issue under discourse which borders on marketing our national values and ideals to foreigners and future generations. If language still remains the most effective means of communication and information dissemination, no language will capture our national values and ideals better than our indigenous languages.

## II. PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL BRANDING AND THE TASK OF BRANDING AND REBRANDING NIGERIA

Some scholars have written extensively on the concept of national branding and its regulatory principles. Prominent among them is Simon Anholt who has developed a theory on the country-of-origin effect and its impact on national economies. According to Anholt in Nworah, "part of the challenges (which) the developing world is facing today besides poor governance and weak infrastructure is the issue of weak national brands and identities (and) this reduces their attraction in the international community and places them in low positions as potential brides in the competition for tourism and investment dollars"[5]. In alliance with this view, Frost in Nworah remarks that "there's no arguing that the image we have of another country says a lot about how we view it as a tourist destination, a place to invest or a source of consumer goods"[6].

It follows from the above-expressed viewpoints that national branding goes beyond creating attractive and fanciful logo designs, chanting melodious and harmonic slogans, displaying some aesthetic and hilarious sights and sounds, and packaging some captivating advert clips in the media, as it is erroneously conceived and brazenly pursued currently in Nigeria. All these are inconsequential symbols, propaganda and intrigues skewed up by sycophants and egg-heads to commit the Federal Government to a herculean task of a capital intensive image-laundering campaign, when such funds could have been used to provide some basic social amenities to better the lives of the teeming populace. In other words, branding does not create a false impression as it goes beyond political gimmickry, panegyrics or sycophancy. As the brand management expert, Simon Anholt, puts it, in branding, you are not successful if you sing your praises. Branding is better applied when others (i.e. nations) sing your praises, and best if

you actually demonstrate your worth. This explains why the image of Nigeria still stinks, having been infested with some indelible stains of monstrous stigma, notwithstanding a plethora of propaganda, and an array of activities that orchestrated the earlier image-laundering project - *Heart of Africa*.

National branding has become necessary because every sovereign state has a set of values and ideals which are reduced to a kind of philosophical mission statement to characterize the vital peculiarities of her national life. For example, America is known as *God's Own State* because her citizens are altruistically committed to an American state; India takes on *Incredible India* because her citizens are totally dedicated to its seemingly implausible values; Malaysia has adopted *Truly Asia* because her people are proud of their indefatigable Asian blood and floral splendor; Kenya is known as *The Magic Of Africa* because her citizens have the corporate duty of preserving the unique African heritage of tropical vegetation and wild-life, while South Africa is celebrated as the *Land of Possibilities*, for surmounting so many seemingly impossible hurdles, especially the political barrier of apartheid. For over a decade now, Nigeria has made several fruitless attempts at national branding, apparently as a remedial strategy, as we can no longer live up to our earlier claim as *The Giant of Africa*, owing to what is assumed to be a wrong impression created by the murky image of the country both locally and internationally. Suffice it to say that national branding is born out of necessity in Nigeria because, for some time now, the nation is viewed with suspicion and disdain, owing to the magnitude of corruption that reigns in the country, especially among the leaders. Consequently, the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo flagged off the campaign for national branding exercise through a project known as *Heart of Africa*. The target was to repackage the image of the nation positively through value reorientation and attitudinal changes so as to rekindle the increasingly dwindling hopes of the citizenry on Nigerian polity and also to restore the confidence and respect of the foreigners for the nation.

However, after gulping a whooping sum of 1.7 billion naira, the project - *Heart of Africa* - could not produce the desired results, because the creators of the campaign, as revealed by Prof. Dora Akunyili, copied a campaign slogan, which does not neatly apply to Nigeria. Besides, its credibility was marred because it was externally contrived and nurtured with monopolistic tendencies by its creators whom Adeoya described as "'egg heads' locked up in their corporate laboratories and concocting 'brilliant' ideas to sell our country's image to the world" [7]. Akunyili also blamed the failure of the project on the way it was flagged off and sustained. According to her, it took off on the wrong premise and did not seek to tackle the root causes of our country's foggy image. All the same, the failure of *Heart of Africa* is a clear testimony that launching a grandiose and an expensive image-laundering campaign does not enhance our perception either locally or among the international communities. What is important in this connection is a real change of attitude by the

people and their leaders. As Obama remarks in his campaign slogan, "Change, we need," and we definitely need to effect some changes in our social and political systems in order to restore the reputation of this great nation.

It seems that late President Musa Yar'Adua was driven by Obama's clarion call for change when he reshuffled his cabinet and appointed Prof. Dora Akunyili the Minister of Information and Communications, owing to some positive changes which the former NAFDAC boss brought to drug business in the country. Perhaps, her appointment as Information Minister is informed by Mr. President's conviction that, if Dora could effectively combat fake drug business in the country, she can also deal with our "fake" national brand. However, the task of positive image creation given the realities of our national life is as paradoxical as it is replete with an avalanche of contradictions. The following rather rhetorical questions quintessentially illustrate the matter: How does a country so richly blessed with natural resources still depend largely on imported goods? How do we explain the paradox of living inside a country that stinks with rot, yet we advertise our hypocritical cleanliness to the foreigners? Why do we wallow in debilitating poverty while we are surrounded by abundant wealth? Why do we stifle our national ideals only to copy alien and incongruous values? Why do we kill talents in Nigeria only to celebrate foreign stars? Why do we brand our nation with the slogan "Good People: Great Nation" yet we revere and celebrate criminals? Why do we supply electricity to neighboring nations when there is perpetual blackout in our country? Why do we have numerous indigenous languages in Nigeria and still conduct our official and private businesses in English? The list is endless. In fact, the image of our country, at present, is obscured by so many contradictions that needed to be resolved, if we are going to restore her past glorious, but currently picturesque, perception as *The Giant of Africa* (since many countries have dwarfed our height). Consequently, rebranding is conceived as a panacea to illuminate positively the present misty image of our nation.

Ever since it was launched till date, the rebranding project has got more debilitating knocks than cheering kudos. Some have strongly criticized and questioned its application to Nigeria at this moment when our leaders have consistently failed to provide the enabling infrastructural facilities and socio-political substances necessary to improve the lives of the citizens. In this league is Ogbodo who has argued that rebranding presupposes the existence of a brand that requires an improvement," stressing that "for now, Nigeria does not readily fit into any known socio-economic-political brand in the civilized world" [8]. Moreover, some have criticized the composition of Rebranding Committee, especially the appointment of Nollywood icons as Executive members. Challenging the involvement of Nollywood bigwigs in Rebranding project, Nwosu observes that "... their inclusion at this stage is rather premature because those she needs now are the core professionals who would evolve the strategy, framework and a peculiar *modus operandi* for her rebranding project" [9], arguing that rebranding in the face of socio-

political quagmire cannot ignite the desired patriotic flame in the consciousness of the people, because "patriotism is a vital component in a sincere country branding" [10].

Similarly, others have challenged the application of the new rebranding slogan – *Good People: Great Nation* – to the present Nigeria. For Adeoya, the slogan represents the national identity vision which is right now as elusive as it is so overwhelmingly eclipsed by the accumulated evils of the past and even the present administrations that it requires a thorough cleaning and cleansing process before we showcase ourselves to the outside as "Good People" and "Great Nation". The slogan, Adeoya further argues, does not 'pull the right string' as we have "no exclusive claim" to the brand identity. If it can be shared by other nations like USA, Ghana, India, Malaysia, then, we certainly have no superior claim to the expression. On the strength of this argument, he strongly feels that "'Good people: Great Nation' is the most generic description for a nation that anyone can imagine!"[11].

Another significant opposition to the project is witnessed in its timing. Some people strongly believe that it is ill-timed. After a careful analysis of expert views on the rebranding project, Nwosu discovers that "majority are of the opinion that Professor Akunyili's kind of media rebranding, aside from being premature ... is an undesirable distraction and perhaps a waste of scarce resources in this difficult times when the priority should be on how to wedge the sagging economy" [12]. She further stresses with absolute vehemence that "you don't brand a vacuum. In the same vein, you don't waste resources branding a bad or negative product." [13] Nwosu believes that Nigeria's image problem is similar to every other daily social problem which we need to tackle instead of garnishing it with some cosmetic and artificial decorations, like the rebranding project is meant to achieve. This argument gathers impetus from the fact that no matter the decorations of a refuse dump, the filth still stinks up to the high heavens, if nothing is done to cleanse it.

Also in a recent ceremony of Education Watch Awards for Excellence (EAE), Prof. Oye Ibidapo-Obe and Major General Leo Ajiborisha (rtd) in Edukugho believe that rebranding is unnecessary "if education sector is adequately catered for, and people are properly educated and gainfully employed ... If graduates get jobs, there will be no frustration, no drug dealing, no 419 and other nefarious activities that bring bad image to our nation" [14]. In fact, the consensus opinion of these latter interest groups is that rebranding the nation in the face of our present socio-economic and political depravity is as ill-timed as constitutes a window-dressing. For them, it is like playing to the gallery – an exercise in futility.

Given the above pictures which paint the sordid and squalid realities of our national life, we feel inclined to endorse the views of the latter group, especially as our indigenous languages, which supposed to be instrumental in the rebranding process (as our linguistic identity), have suffered long years of national neglect as a result of unfavorable and unorthodox national policies with the attendant negative attitudes which they inspire in the collective psyche of the people. As Prof. Ibidapo-Obe rightly observes in Edukugho,

“all educational (including national)” policies have failed because the vision is not national, but personal. It is the vision of a family.” [15] If branding or rebranding exercise invites the citizens of a country to adopt and sustain the values of the nation with an unflinching patriotic zeal, then, a good number of Nigerians, especially the ruling class, are not linguistically patriotic. Suffice it to say that our leaders are guilty of linguistic alienation, because they have completely excluded the vast majority of Nigerian from the current match towards national rebranding through the instrumentality of English, a foreign language. However, it is pertinent to note at this juncture that in this struggle for self-determination and search for proper brand identity, we have to be guided by an Igbo adage which says that: “*Onye yiri uwe mbibi, o naghị agbasi egwu ike n’ogbo.*” literally meaning: if one is dressed in a borrowed costume, one does not dance vigorously in the public. The philosophical significance of this adage clearly indicates that one is not usually comfortable with a borrowed item, and as a result, we cannot pretend to be comfortable with English – a borrowed language!

In the light of the foregoing, one may be compelled to ask the following questions:

1. What then should be a good brand identity for Nigeria?
2. Does Nigeria need a favorable brand in the face of increasing socio-economic and political decadence?

Frankly speaking, a genuine brand identity for Nigeria at this moment when our country is politically holed up in a quandary will be as bizarre as her name is currently eccentric before a committee of nations. Secondly, Nigeria does not need a favourable brand because, according to Amadi, “the failure of leadership is so increasing and depressing that one may be tempted to put down every government initiative” [16]. He further argues that the chant of 7-point Agenda without a corresponding action plan has become mere rhetorics, stressing that Nigerians need positive substances to commit their hopes for a better nation. In this connection, our leaders must, first of all, address the fundamental issues that are responsible for our unsavoury national image, rather than lavish the tax payers’ money on a face-saving campaign at this period of global economic melt-down.

If we accept the fact that we have to deal with our fundamental problems before we embark on the rebranding process – a process of self-determination – the starting point is to resuscitate our badly battered value system, in what Adeoya has called “cleaning and cleansing process” [17]. The cleaning and cleansing process, Adeoya suggests, should start with curricular overhaul of the primary and secondary schools’ teaching programs. Using a number of revealing questions, Adeoya takes the honorable minister through a memory lane of our glorious past as follows:

*Is the honourable minister aware that the history of Nigeria has been virtually wiped off the teaching curricula of primary and secondary schools? That our children are no longer taught West African history? That they do not know about Ghana, Mali and Songhia empires? That they have never heard that there were thriving civilizations right here in Nigeria that lasted for many centuries before the white man*

*set foot on our shores? ... Is the honorable minister aware that our languages and literature are no longer or hardly ever taught in our schools, and that our kids are told, both by their parents and teachers, that it is a thing of shame for them to speak their own languages when they can speak in English?*[18].

These questions vividly elucidate the monumental decay of our ideals and values occasioned by failure of leadership to create an enabling environment that will promote and sustain our indigenous belief systems. Consequently, the citizenry generally feel disenchanting and completely disillusioned towards our indigenous values, and this adversely affects our sense of patriotism, especially our commitment to our linguistic identity.

In alliance with the above-expressed view on the nonchalant attitudes of Nigerians towards our national course, Ekpe notes the following:

*The sense of patriotism in Nigeria is zero ... There is a general hatred ... for anything called government in Nigeria. The first thing any rich Nigerian (including the ruling class) does is to send his children to study abroad because he strongly believes that there is no future for them here in Nigeria. Our native languages are dying away because very few Nigerians speak them today. The Nigerian cultural heritage is disappearing* [19].

These observations are significant reactions to the premature introduction of rebranding process when we actually need concrete reforms that will address some contentious issues which smear our country with a negative image. If concrete reforms are implemented in the areas of sundry infrastructures, healthcare delivery, road construction, transportation scheme, unemployment, security, language policy, education and general mass literacy, then people’s lives will be more meaningfully touched. The outcome of such intervention, as Nwosu notes, is that the common people “will eventually become the country’s unwitting brand ambassadors that will better drive the rebranding effort in a manner that will convince the international audience who are the Federal Government’s primary target audience”[20].

### III. THE POLICY OF REBRANDING NIGERIA: THE IMPERATIVE OF LINGUISTIC PATRIOTISM

“You don’t brand a vacuum,” as Nwosu earlier revealed, clearly indicates that there are vital antecedents to national rebranding. Apart from the presupposed availability of international market opportunities, goods and services provided in a secure environment created on the template of our people’s values, needs and aspirations [21], the antecedent of patriotism constitutes an essential ingredient of national rebranding. Lamenting on the general decay of infrastructures and absence of patriotism and nationalism among Nigerians, Prof. Ibidapo-Obe in Edukugho, strongly challenges Nigerians’ dispositions towards nationalism and patriotism with the following: “How many people can die for Nigeria today? Is the national pledge said sincerely? People just recite it. But this is not so in America and Britain. If people lose faith in Nigeria, no rebranding can change the situation.” [22]

It follows from the above-expressed viewpoint that Nigerians currently lack, in absolute terms, the spirit of patriotism and nationalism. However, if we accept that national rebranding is woven around patriotism, we will better appreciate the importance of linguistic patriotism in what supposed to be our collective search for self-determination and brand identity, but erroneously restricted to the esoteric elitist minority through the instrumentality of English – the linguistic brand of Britain – our colonial masters.

In fact, our colonial experience has dealt a repugnant blow on our cultural life, and has continued to determine our perception of value systems. Our indigenous languages are the most vulnerable as they are considered primitive, barbaric and ineffective for national development. That is why we gained our political independence for almost five decades ago, but up till now failed to gain our linguistic independence from Britain. This ugly situation is further aggravated by the current globalization of the world through which other foreign nations made incursions into Nigeria, with their alien cultural values, bulldozing through the fragile frame of our economic, political, and social systems, distorting significantly our placement of values. Again, our indigenous languages are not inoculated against the pervasive impact of the plague occasioned by this new Scramble for Africa. Consequently, they are emasculated, despised, and completely relegated to play a second fiddle to other foreign languages.

It seems the Federal Government is very comfortable with the insignificant and loathsome status of our indigenous languages; hence successive administrations have not taken any positive actions to change it. Rather than promote the status of our indigenous languages, our government has used its highest legal machinery to stifle their growth. This is witnessed in the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (unabridged section) quoted in Oyeralan as follows:

*... (an individual) is proscribed from expressing his opinion about the laws or the process of making the laws under which he is governed, or the ones under which he is being arrested unless he practices the English language. Even when arrested, he may just be informed in a language other than English about the nature of his offence and not all about the law which authorizes his arrest [23].*

In fact, our leaders have consistently used some statutory enactments to annihilate our indigenous languages in order to “circumscribe the citizens' inalienable rights to know and participate in important aspects of national life,” [24]. But such constitutionally endorsed hostility of government towards our indigenous languages cannot inspire in the people the desired linguistic patriotism which is needed to assert our identity.

At this juncture, it becomes pertinent to emphasize that in our march towards national rebranding, we must resist the temptation of appropriating to ourselves the linguistic identity of other countries, no matter the pressure or whatever promptings. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o has buttressed this point, asserting that “it is axiomatic that the renaissance of African cultures (is ineffective) in the languages of Europe” [25]. It is most unfortunate that some Nigerians, especially our leaders,

are still controlled by “the prejudice that ... (our indigenous languages) cannot be effectively used for national development. Only English, French and Portuguese can perform such a task since they are perceived as languages of civilization,” [26]. However, we cannot allow such unwholesome notion to hold sway, given the linguistic fact that no language is superior to others. This point is supported by Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams who note the following:

*No language or variety of a language (called a dialect) is superior to any other in a linguistic sense. Every grammar is equally complex, logical, and capable of producing an infinite set of sentences to express any thought. If something can be expressed in one language or one dialect, it can (also) be expressed in any other language or dialect. It might involve different means and different words, but it can be expressed... therefore no language is either superior or inferior to any other. While we admit that the grammars and usages of particular groups in society may be dominant for social or political reasons, they are neither superior nor inferior, from a linguistic point of view, to the grammars' and usages of less prestigious segment of the society [27].*

It is evident from this observation that, in our sociolinguistic environment, English is not superior to our indigenous languages by whatever parameter of assessment. Politically, majority of Nigerians are native speakers of the indigenous languages, and the social functions of language, including mutual intelligibility, mass mobilization, information dissemination, cultural transmission, propagation of indigenous technology, etc are better achieved, using the indigenous languages.

The validity of the above claim is portrayed by Uguru who notes that “our indigenous languages embody our indigenous technology. Indigenous technology is best studied, (preserved), transmitted, and transferred in the indigenous languages embodying it” [28] It is pertinent to observe that all technologically advanced countries have anchored their scientific researches, inventions, and creativities in their respective languages, such that Germany uses German, France uses French, Russia uses Russian, Japan uses Japanese, etc. The reason for developing technology, using the tool of the indigenous languages “is not necessarily due to nationalistic considerations but because it is natural to think more creatively in one's mother-tongue than in a second language. A scientific impetus or technology acquired in a learner's indigenous language becomes a second nature to the person,” [29]. On the strength of the afore-mentioned viewpoints, the current national rebranding campaign will yield more positive results if its programme contents are translated in the indigenous languages to reflect the despised values of our desperate people. For according to Prof. Ibidapo-Obe in Edukugho, “If Nigeria is rebranding, it should re-brand on contents. By rebranding the contents ... (means) looking back at what was done before and find out how they were doing it. (For now), they are rebranding the container, not the contents”[30]. The contents, in this context, represent our real values: our national ideals which also entail our indigenous languages, while the container is the corporate image of the

nation. Certainly, it is altogether very dangerous and hypocritical to re-brand the container without rebranding the contents, because the beauty of the container derives from its contents. In other words, the collective well-being of the vast majority of Nigerian citizens created through improved infrastructural facilities and good leadership largely facilitates the positive perception of the country.

However, the failure of our indigenous languages to flourish in Nigerian soil results from mischievous machinations of the ruling class who have continued to use English as a strategy to alienate and deify themselves, thereby widening the already cavernous social gap that separates them from the marginalized illiterate majority. This view is also emphasized by Agbede as follows:

*... the exclusive appropriation of (the) English language by the ruling elite as an instrument of oligarchy control constitutes a formidable barrier to the emergence of a type of social structure, whereby distinctions are not based on linguistic abilities but one that ensures class mobility and safeguards the individual's inalienable rights to self determination. This sorry situation has persisted in spite of the demonstrable communicative functions of local languages and their information dissemination potentials* [31].

It is by now very clear that our leaders have consistently used some statutory provisions to stunt the growth of our indigenous languages, spoken by the masses, so as to safeguard their hedonistic interests in the seemingly participatory democracy. Denying one's freedom of expression does not only constitute a breach of one's fundamental human rights, it is also ungodly. There is no free and egalitarian society where the indigenous linguistic potentials of the teeming citizenry are statutorily scuttled in order to promote a foreign language.

If a genuine national rebranding is honestly anticipated in Nigeria, our leaders must pursue a "vertical integration" of the indigenous languages theorized by Bamgbose which focuses on "the adoption of one or more indigenous languages" [32] as a tool to enlist the participation of the illiterate majority in the prevailing national matters. It is our hope that Nigeria will proudly identify with the new rebranding slogan – *Good People: Great Nation* – if our leaders will honestly apply themselves to the imperatives of linguistic patriotism through the development of sound policies that encourage the use of indigenous languages in all national matters, especially the current policy of national rebranding, which touches on identifying with our real national values and ideals.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have assessed the current efforts being made by the Federal Government of Nigeria to forge a new identity label for the country, given the mockery that tarnishes her corporate image both within the country and abroad. We have also mirrored the present rebranding struggle in the light of the principles which underscore national branding and discovered that "marketing communications (which was earlier pursued) is the last stage to consider in the series of actions to rebranding," [33]. This observation clearly reveals

that there are antecedents to national rebranding, especially in Nigeria where every aspect of our national life seems to agree with a weird national image which a popular Nigerian musician, Idris Abdulkarim, has captured in his ever-green music, which sings:

*Nigeria jagga-jagga!  
Everything scatter-scatter!  
Poor man na suffer-suffer!  
Gbozaa-gbozaa...*

There is no doubt that our country is in topsy-turvy, and must be carefully structured and thoroughly cleansed before we think of rebranding.

Among the antecedents to national rebranding is the imperative of linguistic patriotism. This is necessary in order to rekindle the indigenous linguistic flame in the consciousness of Nigerians. Unfortunately, the national rebranding policy is vigorously pursued in defiance of the potency of our indigenous languages. Consequently, the goal of the project remains unattainable in so far as our indigenous languages do not enjoy the much needed linguistic loyalty from Nigerians. In this connection, we strongly believe that the development of positive attitudes towards our indigenous languages is a demonstration of linguistic patriotism which is important in actualizing a genuine national rebranding. Finally, in our collective search for a national brand, we must always remember that our indigenous languages constitute our linguistic identity, and we must use them to propagate and preserve some other national ideals and values with patriotic drive and passion. If, however, we chose to despise them, the current national rebranding campaign remains an illusion.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

If we accept the validity of our indigenous languages towards national rebranding exercise, we can assess the efficacy in the light of the following recommendations:

1. That government should strengthen the policy on the use of mother-tongue to teach primary school pupils by adopting a legislation which sanctions offending schools, including the private ones. That way our children will have the benefit of acquiring authentic skills in using the indigenous languages, especially in the four areas of language development: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2. Our primary and secondary schools' curriculum should be carved on the template of our people's values, needs and aspirations. This has the advantage of giving a functional education to our children, the type that will enable them fit into the society; the type that inculcates the requisite skills necessary to identify and solve practical problems in our environment.
3. Government should very urgently expunge the constitutional provisions which have banned the use of indigenous languages in official and national matters. This should be done in the overriding interest of the illiterate majority whose collective participations are vital in our search for our corporate national brand.

Accordingly, public interest takes precedence over individual hedonistic tendencies.

4. Government should give research grants to linguists who are committed to the study of indigenous languages for the preservation of our indigenous technology. This point is exigent, especially as majority of our indigenous technologists are predominantly illiterate and we urgently need to tap their innovative skills and creativity, if we must preserve such values for posterity.
5. If we accept that language is the most effective tool for cultural transmission, our national image can be better enhanced through production of films couched in our indigenous languages. We have to recall that, between early 70s – late 80s, Indian films scripted in the indigenous Indian languages flourished in Nigeria, showcasing the Indian values, especially the potency of Indian medicine. Today, India is celebrated as one of the leading names in medicare. Perhaps, the efficacy of the indigenous languages in this connection justifies the appointment of Chief Pete Edochie, and Hilda Dokubo, who are veteran and professional film producers, into the Executive of the rebranding committee. However, their success largely depends on their readiness to showcase Nigerian values and indigenous technology to the rest of the world, by producing films scripted in our indigenous languages. This will certainly rekindle our people's interest in using their mother-tongue since film actors are essentially role models whose communicative prowess, speech forms, articulatory mannerism, paralinguistic performances, dress codes, etc are usually emulated.
6. The scope of the Rebranding Committee members should be widened to involve linguists who are experts in various indigenous languages to facilitate the translation of rebranding program contents into indigenous languages. This guarantees effective representations of our values and belief systems in a language of wider communication.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] R.W.Fasold, *The Sociolinguistics of Society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- [2] C.U.Agbedo, *Problems of Multilingual Nations: The Nigerian Perspective*. Enugu: Fidgina Global Books, 2007.
- [3] Ibid. 49.
- [4] Ibid. 140
- [5] U. Nworah, "Why we must re-brand Nigeria." *Daily Champion*. March 16, 2009, p. 11.
- [6] Ibid. 11.
- [7] A. Adeoya, "Rebranding Nigeria: the parable of the apple." *The Guardian*. March 29, 2009, p. 27.
- [8] A. Ogbodo, "The task of rebranding Nigeria." *The Guardian*. February 15, 2009, pp. 21 – 24.
- [9] N. Nwosu, "Issues here and there: An Essay published in Marketing Matters." *Daily Sun*. March 11, 2009, p. 30.
- [10] Ibid. 30.
- [11] Op. cit., 27
- [12] Op. cit., 27
- [13] Op. cit., 27
- [14] E. Edukugho, "How education can re-brand Nigeria." *Vanguard*. April 16, 2009, p. 39.
- [15] Ibid. 39.
- [16] S. Amadi, "Rebranding: Between cynicism and patriotism." *Daily Sun*. May 6, 2009, p 56.
- [17] Op. cit., 27.
- [18] Op. cit., 27.
- [19] P. Ekpe, "Akunyili and Nigeria's Image." *This Day*. February 18, 2009, p. 18.
- [20] Op. cit., 27.
- [21] M. Odu, "The futility and waste in rebranding Nigeria" (1). *Vanguard* April 22, 2009, p. 21.
- [22] Op. cit., 39.
- [23] O. Oyelaran, "Language, Marginalization and National Development in Nigeria." In E. N. Emenanjo (ed.) *Multilingualism, Minority Languages and Languages Policy in Nigeria*. Agbor: Central Books Limited.
- [24] Op. cit., 140.
- [25] N. Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind. The Politics of Languages in African Literature*. London: James Currey, 1981.
- [26] C.T. Maduka, "The clouds are Thickening: Nigeria Languages and Literatures in National Development." In Anasiudu, Nwaozuzu, and Okebalama (eds.) *Language and Literature in a Developing Country. (Essay in Honour of Prof. Benson O. Oluikpe)*. Onitsha: Africana-First Publishers Limited, 2007, pp. 91-102.
- [27] V. Fromkin, R. Rodman & N. Hyams, *An Introduction to Language*. Massachusetts: Thomson Wadworth.
- [28] J.O.Uguru, "Scientific Study of Language for National Development." In Anasiudu, Nwaozuzu and Okebalama (eds.) *Language and Literature in a Developing Country. (Essays in Honour of Prof. Benson O. Oluikpe)*. Onitsha: Africana-First Publishers Limited, 2007, pp. 103-113.
- [29] P.A. Ezikeojiaku, "Indigenous Languages for Science and Technology." In Anasiudu, Nwaozuzu and Okebalama (eds.) *Language and Literature in a Developing Country (Essays in Honour of Prof. Benson O. Oluikpe)*. Onitsha: Africana-First Publishers Limited, 2007, pp. 114-124.
- [30] Op. cit., 39.
- [31] Op. cit., 168.
- [32] A. Bamgbose, *Language and the Nation: The language Question in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.1991.
- [33] B.J. Folayan, "Rebranding Nigeria: between professionalism and enthusiasm." *Daily Champion*. March 25, 2009, p. 11.