

**LINGUISTIC COLONIZATION IN NIGERIA: THE IMPACT OF THE
TEACHING AND LEARNING OF FRENCH ON INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGES IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

French, though a “colonial” language, is seen as a “gift” of providence to Francophone Africans and a far better choice than any African language. The aim of this paper is to critique aspects of colonization in relation to language which brought about the degradation of many indigenous African languages. It is also to evaluate modalities for a sustainable leverage of indigenous Nigerian languages. This paper adopts the Sociolinguistics principle of Thomas Hudson (1996) which is the descriptive study of the effects of all aspects of society on language. Nigeria is embarking on a gradual voyage of language degradation as a result of its speakers entering into an increasingly intense contact with French language and culture at the expense of indigenous languages. The practices of France will certainly bring about the eventual disappearance of almost all the Nigerian languages. Thus, Nigeria must counter this linguistic colonization by providing the opportunity for the local languages to be taught and treated as socially equal to the French language in all the functional French centres and Alliance Française in Nigeria. We posit that Nigerian linguists should work to preserve indigenous languages through the use of modern technologies; summer camps should be introduced to promote fluency in mother tongues, parents should also be encouraged to share their culture and traditions with their children. The lessons learned in the classroom and camps on Nigeria indigenous languages can be put into practice to ensure a smooth and successfully interaction with others as well as the survival of these indigenous languages in Nigeria.

Key-words:Indigenous languages, linguistic colonization, Nigeria, French Teaching.

Résumé

Bien que le français soit une langue «coloniale», elle est considérée comme un «don du ciel» aux Africains francophones et un bon choix que n'importe quelle langue africaine. L'objectif de cet article est de critiquer certains aspects de la colonisation en relation avec la langue qui a entraîné la dégradation de nombreuses langues autochtones africaines. En même temps, c'est d'évaluer les modalités d'un développement durable des langues autochtones nigérianes. Cet article adopte le principe sociolinguistique de Thomas Hudson (1996) qui est l'étude descriptive des différents effets des aspects de la vie sur le langage. Le Nigéria a entrepris un voyage progressif de dégradation des langues autochtones du fait que les locuteurs ont toujours contact intense avec la langue et la culture françaises au détriment de les leurs. La présence de la langue française entraînera certainement la disparition éventuelle de la quasi-totalité des langues nigérianes et le Nigeria doit tout faire pour contrer cet impérialisme linguistique pour que les langues locales soient enseignées et traitées comme socialement égales à la langue française dans tous les centres de formation du français et les Alliances Françaises au Nigéria. Nous affirmons que les linguistes nigériens devraient travailler pour préserver les langues autochtones grâce à l'utilisation des technologies modernes; des camps d'été devraient être mis en place pour promouvoir la maîtrise des langues maternelles, les parents devraient être encouragés d'enseigner leurs cultures et leurs traditions aux enfants. Les leçons apprises en classe et dans les camps d'été des langues autochtones peuvent être mises en pratique pour assurer une interaction élevée et réussie avec les autres ainsi que la survie de ces langues au Nigeria.

Mots-clés: Langues autochtones, colonisation linguistique, Nigéria, enseignement du français.

Introduction

Literature on colonialism tends to focus on Europe's economic exploitation of many regions and peoples around the world and Europe's use of excessive force towards achieving that goal. While these issues are undoubtedly of great importance, it is equally crucial to understand the cultural and specifically the linguistic practices that came to be associated with European colonial rule (Léglise, 2008). The colonial status quo in relation to language has not only remained but has also continued to intensify. As such, scholars have come from such academic disciplines as literature and linguistics to lend their voices to correct this situation. Their works focus on drawing Africans' attention to the linguistic and social inequalities that emerged in the formerly colonized regions of Africa due to European imperialistic expansion and how they continue to affect the linguistic and social setting of these regions. In their quest to create

awareness, they exposed the extent to which the imposition of colonial rule and the concomitant education and language policies have negatively affected the linguistic and social make up of these areas.

Long after the independence of African states, French language, rather than being replaced or relegated to the background in Francophone countries, has consolidated its position on the African continent through the extension of its sphere of influence to Anglophone countries including Nigeria. Thus, Nigerians are gradually being initiated into believing that learning French is an essential prelude to every intellectual activity. Consequently, Kim Willsher (2018), declared that Emmanuel Macron, the President of France wished to launch a global campaign to promote the teaching of French language and culture:

The president's language crusade is not confined to the club of French-speaking countries known as "La Francophone" alone but also the traditionally English-Speaking commonwealth countries as the Ambassadors of Nigeria and Ghana will be invited. Macron is expected to announce that money will be poured into teaching French, especially in Africa (6).

Similarly, in a speech to students in Burkina Faso in November 2018, President Macron promised to promote French as part of his election campaign, which included measures to make French more widely used in the global media, the internet and the digital economy, and to encourage artists, writers and musicians to use French in their works. He claimed French could be "the number one" language in Africa (7). Population estimates suggest that there will be more than 700 million French speakers by 2050, 80% of them in Africa. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, like in other English-speaking West African countries, the government does not seem to be bothered about such developments, as there are no clear-cut policies enunciated by government to raise the status of our national or indigenous languages whose existence is being threatened by English and now French. No doubt, the implementation of French language and culture in Nigeria highlights a more global rivalry between English, French and Nigerian languages. It is against this background that this paper posits, through a sociolinguistic approach that the imposition of the teaching and learning of French by enticement poses a threat to the Nigerian indigenous languages as this will further devalue them in the Nigerian society.

Theoretical framework

This paper adopts the Sociolinguistics principle of Thomas Callan Hudson (1996) which is the descriptive study of the effects of all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations and context through which the society's effect on language is evaluated. As Nikolas Coupland (2002) puts it:

Sociolinguistics has established the theoretical significance of language variation, not only within or in criticism of theories of language itself but also, it is as a core dimension of social policy and planning as well as in the analysis of social inequality (5).

On one hand, the Sociolinguist studies the extent to which language varieties differ between groups separated by certain social variables such as ethnicity, religion, status, gender, level of education, age etc. And on the other hand, he studies how the establishment and adherence to these rules are used to categorize individuals in social classes. Based on these laid down approaches, the French Government, conscious of the fact that language is not only influenced by family, but also supported by the larger local surroundings (such as school, sport team or religion), has through the Sociolinguistic approach, given the Nigerian society the impression that Nigeria can be superior only if Nigerians can express themselves in French. As such, the French government has continued to entice the Nigerian government to use French for educational instruction.

Teaching and learning of French language and culture in Nigeria

French language and culture was introduced into Africa largely in the wake of colonization. Since the 1789 revolution, France had based her colonial policy on the strategy of assimilation where Africans could identify with the French language and assimilate French culture in order to be treated as social equal to the Frenchman if he accepted it (Kwofie, 2008). Based on this condition. One would have expected the colonies to relegate it to the background many years after the attainment of independence. But a compelling force of obedience by the French Government through huge sums of monies poured into the teaching and learning of French culture and language in Africa, has made the African society to value French till date more than African languages. French governments have even taken further steps by crossing the borders of francophone countries into her Anglophone counterparts which Nigeria is inclusive.

In a statement to mark the fifth anniversary of the Nigeria French language village, Ajara, Badagry, the former Minister of Education, Dr Ibrahim Liman (1997), described the development as a step towards promoting the teaching and learning of French. He stressed that: "The enhancement and promotion of the

teaching and learning of French language and culture had assumed an urgent dimension in Nigeria for numerous reasons which include the reality of the global neighbourhood and the need for Nigerians as a people to be able to cross the barriers that have separated them from their neighbours, especially the French speaking countries" (8)

Tar Adejir (2018) in his keynote address titled "*The French Teacher as an Agent of Regional Co-operation and integration in Sub-Saharan Africa*" presented at the 21st Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the University French Teachers Association of Nigeria, maintained that Nigeria could not do without the French language if we were to participate effectively in regional organizations starting with ECOWAS:

It may sound trite to say that for Nigeria to thrive in any regional cooperation and integrate into associations, French has to be taught and learned. Many educated Nigerians know and appreciate that fact. No one has presented a strong argument refuting the fact that French language is important to Nigeria and Nigerian to be (17).

Adejir believes that Nigeria and Nigerians have too much to lose if the teaching and learning of French language do not expand in the country: "The language needs to be spoken by a greater number of people in all the hierarchical levels of public and private sectors " (19).

Bamisaya (1997) quoted in Olaosebikan (2004) considers the acquisition of French language education in Nigeria as a tool for national integration and development. He advocates for the teaching of French language ahead of other disciplines like Medicine, Engineering and Computer Science. To him, a vast majority of the Nigerian society sees these aforementioned courses as more prestigiously promising than the study of French language which is reserved for the abnormally dull and unintelligent ones. To buttress Bamisaya's point, Olaosebikan (2004), posits that the teaching of French language and culture in Nigeria has further strengthened the economic and political ties between France and Nigeria.

If the teaching and learning French language is effectively and objectively sustained in the school curriculum and in strict compliance with national objectives of education, eventually, it would nourish and perpetuate societal ideas which would take Nigeria to the pedestal of national development (14).

Worthy of note is that, Olaosebikan, in his advocacy for the sustainability of French language and culture in Nigeria, narrowed his attention to the material

benefits that await the country but did not take into account the negative effects of French language on Nigerian indigenous languages.

In a public lecture series titled: The French Studies and the making of the total man, Kwofie (2008) views the teaching and learning of French language and culture as a "wise political strategy" (27) which has been a strong factor in the creation of regional or continental organisations like the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), and a host of others. Kwofie (2008) believes that the French language does not only symbolize the Francophone Blackman's acculturation but also provides every black man who can use French language access to world civilization:

The Nigerian society has to embrace French language and culture owing to the fact that the nation is surrounded by Francophone countries and cannot be effectively involved in the economic development of the West African sub-region without the use of French.(29)

Taking into consideration the views by Liman (1997), Adejir (2018), Olaosebikan(2004) and Kwofie(2008), it is imperative to note that their high regards for the teaching and learning of French language gives no special consideration to the future of the Nigerian indigenous languages which is the gap this study focused on.

Nigeria and French Language Education in the Post-Colonial era

Nzuanke & Inyang, (2018) state that they are not ignorant of the fact that French has been officially introduced into the school curriculum, but insist that French was never a compulsory subject in the same way as English in the Nigerian educational system. Rivalry of preeminence between English and French in Africa has necessitated curiosity. For Rodney (1972), quoted in Nzuanke & Inyang (2018), "Before the balkanization of the African continent, French leaders had set themselves the task of creating schools in some parts of the continent. The aim was to establish and promote the French language and culture in order to establish zones of influence favorable to France and thus to limit the advances of Great Britain and any other European country " After the official introduction of French into the school secondary education programs in Nigeria, the teaching of the subject has moved from simple "*student guide on French culture and civilization by the grammar method and translation* "Motazé, (1994) Afolabi (2006) to the second official language of the country, through various attempts to professionalize the language in the country. Motazé (1994) therefore emphasizes that this situation has encouraged the development of the language in Nigeria

(17). Subsequently, several symposia on education that brought together teachers from Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, were organized with a view to introducing the Oral practice in the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) program. The recommendation of the WAEC Symposium in 1966 on the oral language in French was subsequently adopted by the institutions(19).

The period of decline of French in Nigeria is synonymous with the period of political crisis in Nigeria during which the country was virtually isolated by the international community. But thanks to the coming into power in France of Jacques Chirac who succeeded socialist François Mitterrand in 1995, France, whose economy needed a whiff of oxygen, has opened up a lot more in the world and especially in Nigeria. Onyemelukwe (2004) reports that there were cooperation agreements signed between the French Embassy and some Federated States of Nigeria in 1995 on the promotion and teaching of French (12) This start of renewed cooperation between Nigeria and France has been reinforced by two presidential statements, on 14 and 31 December 1996, which gave new impetus to the Franco-Nigerian cultural and linguistic cooperation. These are the Chef's policy speeches of the then Head of State, the late General Sani Abacha, whom Onyemelukwe (2004) took care of propose an extract as well as. "We have seen that we are virtually surrounded by French-speaking countries. And these French-Speaking countries are our kith and kin. But, because of the difference inherent in the language of our colonial masters, there has been a vacuum in communication with our neighbours. It is in our interest to learn French"(20-21).

This eventually led to the surprise announcement in December 1996 by the then late Nigerian Head of State, General Sani Abacha, at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, that "Nigeria is resolutely launching a programme of national language training that would in a short order, permit our country to become thoroughly bilingual" (Igboanusi, Putz 2008). This pronouncement led to the subsequent recognition of French as a Second Official Language (FSOL) as laid down in section 10 of the National Policy on Education (1998): "For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria, and it shall be compulsory in schools" (235) This was followed by an initial committee set up by the Ministry of Education to work out the modalities for making FSOL a reality.

Following this declaration was France's willingness not only to equip Nigerian schools but also to train Nigerian French language teachers either in Nigeria, Francophone African countries or France. An accord was also signed with State governments where over 200 secondary schools as well as 18 Colleges of

Education and 6 universities were established with full support from the French government. Several items like books and other learning materials were donated. These were done with the aim of facilitating the training of more French teachers for efficient teaching of the subject in all secondary schools in Nigeria. More so, in an interview Carasso (2004), Counsellor for Cooperation and Cultural Affairs at the French Embassy in Nigeria, notes that, "The future of West Africa and Nigeria leans towards stronger regional integration which will necessitate French-English bilingualism".(7) The Nigerian government has long towed the route of Carasso's opinion because there have been enormous developmental steps(though supported by France),since the policy was pronounced. These advancement strides are visible by way of the establishment of organizations to encourage the teaching and the progress of French language. This was done through the provision of teaching and learning materials and explosive campaign of awareness for French language teaching in schools through recruitment of teachers. In the area of higher education, the National Universities Commission (NUC) requires that French language be taught in all Nigerian universities as a General Studies (G.S) course. This is contained in the NUC benchmark minimum academic standards for undergraduate programmes in Nigerian universities (BMMAS 2007). It is imperative to state that about 80% of universities in Nigeria have adopted this policy. An investigation by Obioma (2007) in Abuja as stated in Igboanusi & Pütz (2008) shows that French language teaching is rapidly expanding even in Nursery and Primary Schools. By his finding, out of twenty (20) schools, eighteen (18) private and two (2) public schools to be precise that were investigated, French is taught as a subject in Nursery 1 to 3 in six (6) schools while in Primary Schools it is taught in all the twenty (20) schools from Primaries 1 to 6. Judging by the analysis above, the awareness which this study aims to create is shown that the expansion of French language and culture in Nigerian schools has endangered the indigenous languages.

French government efforts to make French language and culture functional in Nigeria.

The following specialized structures in Nigeria by the French Government shall be discussed as enlisted

- ***Centre for French Teaching and Documentation (CFTD).***

The Centre for French Teaching and Documentation (CFTD) is a recognized international education and cultural structure controlled by the French Embassy in Nigeria. The CFTD had Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria as her first host in 1990 before two additional centres were established in Enugu in 2002 and Ibadan in 2004 . Today, the CFTD has expanded both in size and in content as zonal offices have been established in the six geopolitical zones across the country. Worthy of

note is that this CFTD was established under the Foundation of the Franco-Nigerian Project with the aim of improving the teaching of French in Nigeria. The agreement signed between the French government and State government of Nigeria was basically for the State governments to provide an enabling environment while the French government provides the funds to get the centres working effectively to achieve her goals. Its major functions according to the French government include the following:

- To award scholarships to Nigerian French teachers as well as students for a fixed duration in France.
- To reduce unemployment rate and provide employment opportunities for Nigerians.
- To be responsible for the organization of conferences and seminars to promote the teaching and learning of French in Nigeria.
- To be responsible for the training and retraining of teachers of French at all levels, both within and outside Nigeria.
- To make available teaching materials for individuals and institutions across the country, for the smooth functioning of the learning process.
- To guarantee technical support and partnership with the Nigerian government on challenges affecting the French language and technology.
- To ensure capacity building in language and didactics of French lecturers in Colleges of Education.

• **Nigeria French Language Village (NFV).**

Located at Ajara, Badagry, in Lagos State, the Nigeria French Language Village is an Inter-University Centre for French Teaching (ICFT). It was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1990, as an alternative centre to France or Francophone countries where French students must compulsorily spend their language immersion programme, also known as "Year Abroad" programme. After the successful creation of the village, the Government of France, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation makes adequate provisions for documentation and equipment in the centre. This has tremendously enhanced the institution's profile in terms of relevant books and other pedagogical materials as well as Information and Communications Technology (ICT) back-up. Furthermore, the Government of France offers scholarship for the training of the NFLV lecturers and librarians in "Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Besançon" in France. In the summer July and September of 2017, several groups of Nigerian teachers were trained in different language centres in France (Paris, Vichy, Besançon and Royan). In addition to the annual embassy scholarships awards for Teachers of French language at primary and secondary school levels, professors also benefit from a cooperation project between the Ministry of

Education of Nigeria and the French Embassy tagged "support for French language in higher education" with the Nigerian French language village as a link to achieve their goals. It is pertinent to note that the establishment of French Centre has continued to serve as an agent of linguistic colonization haven trained several Nigerians to communicate fluently in French to the detriment of the Nigerian indigenous languages.

- **Alliance Française**

This is a branch of the educational structure of the French Embassy in Nigeria with its headquarters in Lagos. The activities of Alliance Française are interwoven with those of the Centre for French Teaching and Documentation (CFTD). They also function as interpreters and translators of business, medical, legal and technical documents from French into English and vice versa. Alliance Française is said to be a non-profit-making international organisation whose major aim is to promote the French language and culture worldwide. This French language project was established in 1995 as part of her willingness to train French language teachers, when the French government noticed an increased level of interest for French language in Nigeria. This is evident as we see both military and paramilitary personnel, legal practitioners, medical doctors, applicants, pastors, businessmen as well as students regularly visit the centres across Nigeria, seeking for proficiency courses in French language. It is basically a cultural and language education network, composed of one Institute for African Research (IAR) in Ibadan, two schools known as École Française Marcel Pagnol in Abuja and Lycée Louis Pasteur in Lagos, and eleven(11) Alliance Françaises structured in the following cities: Enugu, Ibadan, Jos, Owerri, Lagos, Kaduna, Abuja, Ilorin, Port Harcourt, Maiduguri and Kano.

Some of its functions include:

- Serving as a link between the French Embassy and the Nigerian populace.
 - Serving as an agent of poverty alleviation by creating job opportunities for the Nigerians
 - Impacting French language and culture at affordable cost.
 - Providing of books and other important pedagogical assistance for individuals and organizations to promote teaching and learning of French as a foreign language.
 - Serving as counsel to French Embassy on the need of learners and techniques to focus on.
- **French Language Centres:** Nzuanke (2014) states that throughout Nigeria, there are, to date, nine other French-

language centres as chronicled thus: Akure (Ondo State), Asaba (Delta State), Bauchi (Bauchi State), Benin City (Edo State), Calabar (Cross River State), Ibadan (Oyo State), Ilorin (Kwara State), Uyo (Akwa Ibom State) and Yola (Adamawa State). Nzuanke maintains that these centres are generally under the supervision of the governments of their respective States and serve both as complements and relays for the nine French Alliances in each of these States (275).

These different centres provide training in French to prepare candidates for examinations sanctioned by:

- i. Le Diplôme de langue française;
- ii. Le Certificat d'études françaises préliminaires (CEFP) premier degré et second degré;
- iii. Le Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF) premier degré et second degré ; or
Le Diplôme approfondi de langue française (DALF).

These examinations are managed at the local level by the Alliances Françaises twice a year, in June and December respectively.

Generally, training programme in French-language centres focus on three main elements. They include:

- i. To promote the acquisition by participants of the general competence to communicate orally or in writing in their second language, as prescribed by their employer;
- ii. To contribute to national unity, integration as well as economic, social and cultural development through promoting both official languages and;
- iii. To encourage participants to manage themselves, given their peculiar needs, and considering their professional skills, and at their own pace,

These provisions are in line with the realistic project. It falls under realism for Nigeria to seek to preserve its national interests in terms of national unity and integration of Nigerians. Nzuanke (2014) conclude that, these training programmes were initially reserved only for civil servants and agents in the public and para-public sectors. Subsequently, they extended to all citizens from various socio-economic sectors, students inclusive (278).

Degradation of indigenous languages in Nigeria

One would have thought that adopting English, a language of the colonial master in a multi-ethnic country as Nigeria, which parades over 521 indigenous

languages was a sure route through which all ethnic groups could communicate and comprehend each other. English which became the official language of Nigeria was chosen to facilitate the cultural and linguistic unity of the country. As such, English Language is till date taught from the first year of primary education with the aim to teach the individuals to communicate meaningfully and correctly in English from infancy to adulthood. The social significance attributed to English Language has in the same vein been extended to French language. Contrary to what was obtainable a decade ago when Nigerians spoke with their indigenous languages fluently with pride and prestige, today priority is given to English under the pretext of official language and now French. These colonial languages have continued to attract more learners in Nigeria. It is imperative to note that agents of socialization such as schools and families play key roles in degrading these indigenous languages. Most parents often frown at their children expressing themselves in their native languages as they believe that it will be of no value to their children. These parents advocate for teaching and learning of English and French to the detriment of indigenous languages which could have helped in inculcating some cultural norms and values in them.

The school as a social group, on the other hand, has consciously obstructed the smooth flow of native languages in Nigeria. Adeleke (2016) testifies thus:

In a greater degree, students are prohibited from speaking native languages (Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba) mostly in primary and secondary schools and failure to abide by this could attract some punishments from the teachers and sometimes, a fixed fine is paid by any student that goes against the instruction. With this, the students are forced to speak English Language and neglect their native languages which have unconsciously been portrayed as a taboo by their teachers (2).

Hence, with the adoption of the western languages and cultures, many families and households have purposefully or unknowingly abandoned their cultural heritage which are embedded in their various indigenous languages. According to Pulse.ng (2019), expressing oneself in an indigenous language is as important as one passing oral traditions, heritage and diversity through generations in so doing. But there is a growing trend of Nigerians shying away from their indigenous languages:

Language is the key to the heart of the people and if we lose that key, we lose the very essence of the people. Sadly, it seems these generations of young Nigerians are well on their way to losing their command of traditional languages. It is quite common to see

young Nigerians who cannot have a simple conversation in their mother tongue. It may be the overbearing influence of Western culture that has caused us to lose our mother tongue. When the globally understood language is English, is it any wonder that some can't be bothered to learn Fulfude or Igbo language(Pulse.ng 2019).

While some parents simply do not care about preserving their precious indigenous languages, others attribute this trend to upbringing, that is to say raising children in the diaspora, government language policy, fear of persecution and of being tagged "uncivilised" speakers of our indigenous languages are dwindling by the day due to persecution and lack of preservation. But it is the duty of Nigerians to upturn this cultural lapse, though some believe that, since the societal norms are not static, Nigerians should accept and embrace dynamism in culture and language in order to fraternize easily for the purpose of speedy development. Worthy of attention is that if the above position holds sway, Nigeria's small ethnic groups will not only lose their cultural identities and languages, but will also become lost tribes which will be relegated to the history books in the nearest future. Furthermore, Nigeria's linguistic future is far from flourishing as over twenty (27) languages have been listed as close to extinction by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), while Igbo is currently an endangered language. Though some languages are currently being taught as subjects and used as the mediums of education in many schools, the main challenge is getting people to actually use these languages! Many people ask 'Why should I speak my language if my friend probably doesn't speak it back to me?' or 'Why should I speak it if it is not cool to do so?'. Extrapolating from these analysis, it is logical to say that the Nigerian government need to create more awareness to Nigerians on the importance of learning and speaking the indigenous languages.

Conclusion

Colonization gave rise to a new language hierarchy in which the language of the colonizer was inscribed as the most prestigious language, while African languages were firmly confined to the bottom of the language hierarchy. The aim of this paper was to first, critique aspects of colonization in relation to language which brought about the demise of many African indigenous languages. Secondly, to evaluate possible modalities that can be implemented to sustain the Nigerian indigenous languages. We have posited that these practices have a crucial impact on the local linguistic settings in Nigeria. We have identified that Nigeria is embarking on a gradual voyage of language degradation as a result of

Nigerians entering into an increasingly intense contact with French language and culture at the expense of our local languages. The study has also established that the rate of functional illiteracy among the educated who have opted to raise their children in the colonial language (French) rather than the Nigerian languages is on the increased. One may want to believe that France does not specifically plan to eradicate the Nigerian indigenous languages but to rather systematically limit their role to an increasingly fewer domains and functions. But on the whole, this will certainly bring about the eventual disappearance of the indigenous languages. If caution is thrown to the wind, this will essentially freeze the opportunities for functional development of almost all the Nigerian languages. This may also eliminate linguistic competition between languages for access to new domains.

Recommendations

Nigerian linguists should work hand in hand to preserve languages through the use of modern technology. This can include recordings and mobile phone applications, which may have particular appeal to the younger generation. Rather than being made to feel ashamed to speak a minority language, fun learning such as summer camps should be introduced to promote fluency in what was once many of these children's mother tongue. These efforts continue to grow successfully through some of the Western world. Parents should also be encouraged to share their cultures and traditions with their kids and not shy away from relating to them in their languages, as the best way to learn is by being immersed in the culture of the desired language, being able to practice it and hear it constantly. The lessons learned in the classroom and camps can be put into practice which makes learning the language a necessity to interacting successfully with others. In conclusion, for Nigerian indigenous languages to make a truly sustained recovery, it will have to be through our current and future generations' display of dedication and tenacity. There is much to be gained from the amazing and unique features of a language that continue to fascinate and inspire researchers and linguists from around the world, and still much more to be uncovered about our history. The real mission is not how a language continues to survive today, but how it will grow and thrive well into the future.

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