

ISSUES ON GLOBALIZATION AND LANGUAGE TEACHING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Language is an important variable in the concept of globalization. Millions of non-native speakers in periphery countries, such as Nigeria, are shaping the English language teaching profession substantively as they learn English in response to the economic and cultural pressures associated with globalization. The concept of globalization cannot be kept in isolation of English language if its objectives must be achieved effectively. This paper is focused on the intricacies associated with language as a vehicle for the transmission and actualization of globalization in Nigeria. It discussed the dangers of extinction which Nigerian indigenous languages are about to suffer due to the clamour for globalization. Issues on globalization as well as the impact of globalization on language teaching in Nigeria were also discussed. Conclusions and recommendations were given on ways of actualizing globalization in Nigeria through effective language teaching.

Introduction

Nigeria is a country of great diversity and its people are equally diverse. This is because it is made up of more than two hundred and eight (280) ethnic groups with different cultures and tribes. The people's culture and values are embedded in their language. Language therefore is a very important variable in the concept of globalization. These two concepts language and globalization cannot be kept in a water tight compartment. They are complimentary. Nigeria has three major languages- Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba being spoken by the largest ethnic groups. Then we have the minorities mostly found in the Niger Delta and the middle belt of Nigeria. The federal government of Nigeria in its constitution, is entrenched to protect the interest of these minorities.

The English language of course permeated into Nigeria during the colonial era. The Portuguese had their own impact, on the coastal people by introducing pidgin/creole, which is widely spoken by most Nigerians today. So, Britain had the main language while the Portuguese had the minor one. English language cannot be separated from globalization since it is the language of the globe as stated by Crystal (1997). Some issues worthy of discussion have been raised of Kachru (1986), Bisong (1995), Bruff-Gliffer (2002) and Lowenberg (2002). All contributed in explaining issues relating to globalization and language teaching in Nigeria which is the major concept of this paper.

Definition of Globalization

The world has become a global village with the advent of globalization. Globalization, according to Water, (1995) is a condition that brings about "the systematic interrelationship of all the individual social ties that are established on the planet". This definition does not suggest the quality of such interrelationship but in the minds of many, the move towards globalization predicts an interconnected world of benign hybridization and pluralism. McGraw, Goldbalt and Parraton (1999) viewed that "whereas utopians tend to characterize the effect of globalization as an intense ultimately and universally empowering global culture, most analysts agree that globalization entails a standardizing effect that is intensified by new technologies.

From the foregoing it is crystal clear that globalization according to McGraw, Goldbalt and Parraton (1999) involves a continuous flow of people, products and ideals across national borders, enabling unprecedented access between centre and periphery countries. We assert that the omnipresence of American culture, that characterizes ambiance of globalization arises from an imperfect but inescapable dialogue as embodied by this assertion.

Globalization can be seen in this way as a transcultural postmodern condition whereby ideologies continuously flow between the culturally dominant and less dominant, though more insistently from former to latter, and are conveyed primarily by means of English in any of its countless world varieties. One of the few certainties of globalization is the linguistic medium. Numerous theories attempt to account for the ascendancy of English to “global language” some of which are centre-driven (Widdowson 1985, Crystal, 1997, Graddol 2002) among others, some of which are periphery driven, (Kachru 1985, 1986, Canagarajah 1999, Penny Cook 1994, Philipson 1992) and some of which are conciliatory (Jekins 2005).

The Concept of Language

English is a global language, and language could be seen as a unifying factor among people of a geographical area, who have one orientation and understanding of their own way of life. It is said that language acts as a vehicle for cultural transmission. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with many dialects and languages. The Nigerian major languages are; Igbo of the South-East Nigeria, the Hausa of the Northern Nigeria, the Yoruba of the Western parts. The languages of the minorities are the Tiv, Igala, Idoma of the Middle Belt, the Nupes and the Fulanis of the extreme North of Nigeria.

It could be best seen that each of these ethnic groups has its own language, which act as a vehicle for transmission of culture to posterity. It is seen that these dots of language have brought diversity in culture and unification. In the Nigeria context we say unity in diversity and that is why we have problem in political stability of the nation. The diversity in Nigerian culture and its multi-lingua nature gave rise to the inclusion of using English language as an official language and language of instruction in schools in the constitution and school curriculum. The school curriculum also includes the study of any of the three major Nigerian languages of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba in addition to English language at the secondary level of education (NPE 2004).

Language could be seen as a medium of instruction in schools. Natural language has a dual purpose within the former education systems. Thus, it features on one hand as a subject in the school curriculum and accordingly permits one to talk of language education in much the same way that one would talk of physical education, science education, etc. On the other hand and completely unlike any of the other subjects on the curriculum, it also serves all over the world as the medium of instruction in all subjects.

Language is a means of communication. In Nigeria, English language was used during the colonial era by the white traders in transaction with the local people of West Africa. English language was used by early missionaries in converting Africans to Christians.

Language Teaching in Nigeria

In the informal sector, our children were taught our indigenous languages in preparation for the formal education in the school. But their mother tongues existed as an optional subject on the curriculum, particularly in the case of those indigeneous languages like Efik, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo that were lucky enough not only to have been reduced to writing but to also have sufficient reading materials both sacred and secular for use in teaching school children. Dowies (1994).

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Not only have some indigenous languages thus been taught in schools since formal western type of education was first introduced into the country, after the attainment of political independence in 1960, but, the wisdom of government and education also began gradually to be questioned. Thus some people felt, and openly canvassed in parliament for English to be replaced as official language by one of our indigenous languages some twenty years after independence Bamigbose (1976). Others, who were particularly worried by the problem most people in the country actually have in understanding English and communicating well in it advised that more efforts should be put into the teaching of major indigenous language to enable them serve as an alternative to English as official means of communication in government and business Osaji (1979) quoting the white paper on the Udoji Report.

The overall effect of suggestions and pressures of this kind was to bring about an important shift in the attitude of government particularly at the federal level to the indigeneous languages. The shift took the form of an admission by government of which had long been known to linguists and anthologists; that language is simultaneously a vehicle for a people's culture, and a means of maintaining and indefinitely preserving that culture. The implication being that if we are not ultimately to lose our national identity together with our rich indigenous cultures, then we must begin with, the form of admission, and begin to pay more attention to the teaching of our indigenous languages, in addition to seeing the relationship between language and culture. The government also saw communication in English language as what could very easily be harnessed for effective national integration, as a matter of paramount importance for a country all struggling to consolidate its independence. With all these considerations made somewhat explicit in National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004), the Federal Government began from the late 1970's onward to take official interest and make policy pronouncements on the teaching of indigenous languages, instead of concerning herself solely with English as hitherto. Thus in an official document, the Federal Government for the first time, laid it down as a policy for the whole country that:

- a. Primary schools lasts six years, each child must study two languages, namely (a) the mother tongue (if available for study) or an indigenous of wider communication in his area of domicile.
 - (i) Just any one of these major indigenous language in the country namely: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba provided the language chosen is distinct from the child's mother tongue.
 - (ii) In Senior Secondary School (SSS) which also lasts three years, the child must study two languages namely:
 - a. An indigenous language and
 - b. English language.
- French and Arabic exist under the policy as language options at both the Junior and Senior Secondary School levels.

Issues on Globalization

Globalization is a concept of twenty-first century. The world in which we live is on the period of growth both in human technology and cultural transformation. Towards this, there are issues to be discussed here, which influence humans on the planet earth. These issues according to Crystal et al (1997) are;

- a. English as a vehicle of cross-cultural understanding symbol of dominance.

At the inception of the first global century, most speakers of English are non-native or second language speakers Crystal (1997, Graddol (2000). Today the majority of world speakers of English are no longer monolingual speakers living in the center countries. Communication is therefore, most

likely to be carried out between people of the outer and expanding circles of some countries across the globe.

b. An Exploratory Study

This comes to the question of whether, in the African continent the same type of English is spoken as in the US or Britain or even other European nations of the world.

The Impact of Globalization on Language Teaching in Nigeria

Nigeria as one of the developing countries of the world has diverse cultures and tribes. The culture of its people are embedded in their language. As it has a variety of languages, it is also affected by the global phenomena. It has three major languages- the Igbo, the Yoruba and the Hausa languages. During the colonial era both the culture and language were influenced by the Europeans especially the British. The Portuguese impact were only felt at the coast, they never ventured to move into the hinterland. The British introduced the English language, while the Portuguese introduced the Pidgin or creole which widely influenced the people's life (Umera-Okeke, 2009). The newly introduced languages highly influenced the people's indigeneous language. Churches were also introduced so that the church will not be separated from schools-thereby beginning of Western education and Christian religion. This concept of globalization has made a lot of changes not on the lives of its people but also in the advancement in Technology. In this advancement, the teaching of languages has become a panacea so that there were policies on education, through the Teaching of English language as a medium of communication. The pidgin was introduced among the local people and its goal was to influence both the English Language and the people's indigeneous languages.

This English language issue has been entrenched at the Federal house as a language of communication but in the northern and western Nigeria, where indigeneous languages are used as a medium of communication. In the South-East of Nigeria among the igbo speaking people, their indigeneous language is not used because of the influence of western culture, which has permeated greatly into their lives. In their schools, their indigeneous languages are gradually going into extinction. From the analysis already made, one can clearly see the impact of English language, which was introduced by the colonial masters influenced Nigerian culture. Therefore they have colonized our minds and now "we cannot act as one" as Achebe puts it in "Things Fall Apart" – (1958).

Nigeria as a rich country must have advanced more in the global world only for the government policies in education. The curriculum were not well-shaped, the minds were not drilled and most Nigerians develop their minds only on the acquisition of material things. It is on this note that we hear of pipeline vandalization, the case of 419, the stealing of electricity cable, internet fraud, bribery and corruption which have all made Nigeria a laughing stock world-wide.

Recommendations

- a. Our values should be re-shaped through sound educational system by better training and re-orientation.
- b. Our school curriculum should be re-shaped to fall into local needs.
- c. Qualified teachers should be employed in our educational institutions.
- d. Teachers should be encouraged through provision of seminars, workshops; etc to procure relevance in the system and those not competent should be sacked or redeployed.
- e. Policy implementation, monitoring and control should be paramount in our system.
- f. Relative languages should be upheld in classroom instructions.

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- g. Emphasis should be laid on the teaching of our indigenous languages as also a unifying factor in our ultimately informal and formal sector.
- g. Language should be seen as a vital tool for communication, and so should be well taught at all levels of education.

If these are implemented, Nigeria will be updated to the globalized world as other countries of Europe, escaping from those countries of Africa, who are groping in ignorance and disease.

Conclusion

Now we have discussed issues on language teaching and globalization, the issues raised can only be favourable if the educational policies of Nigeria will automatically be re-shaped to help us advance technologically as other nations of the world.

We have to first of all, teach our indigenous languages as the people's culture is embedded in their language. In the South Eastern States where the Igbo speaking people predominate, the Igbo language, within the next ten years may go into extinction. Most of the schools in this part of the country have no Igbo teachers and instead of the real English language being spoken. Pidgin has taken root. Globalization with regards to language education has myriads of problems confronting it. The following are some of the problems so discovered,

- a. Our indigenous language will soon go into extinction
- b. Non-viable educational policies and their wrong implementation is a foe to globalization.
- c. Half-baked graduate teachers are parading themselves as elites.
- d. Most rush to overseas for better working conditions are aimless therefore constituting brain-drain syndrome.
- e. Unguided quest for wealth is anti-globalization.
- f. Wrong values system by fellow Nigerians is the contemporary menace.
- g. Wrong people in governance begets wrong policies and implementation.

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