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ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION, GLOBALISATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

INNOCENT NASUK DAJANG
Department of English,
Faculty of Arts
University of Jos

And

PATRICIA NATHAN BWAI
Department of General Studies,
Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi
Jos

\BSTRACT

Language is a vehicle that promotes social change, social mobilisation, social reconstruction and national development in any society. It sets the path for the socio-economic development of any nation and therefore is central to sustainable national development and globalisation. Owing to the vital role of language in national development and in promoting equal opportunities and fairness for all, there is the need for a functional and equitable plan for the improvement of English language teaching and learning in Nigeria. This should be in a manner that considers and encourages economic development, respect for the culture of the people in the midst of rapid globalisation, which accounts for systemic and fundamental improvement of the public system based on improved teaching and learning content in both public and private sectors in Nigeria. It is in this regard that this paper explores the connection between globalisation, English language, and Nigeria's sustainable development and submits that possessing good competence and performance in English, a global language, will contribute to Nigeria's human and technological advancement and cement the place of English education for sustainable development. To arrive at the conclusion and submission in this paper, ontinefocus group discussion involving 25 academics from the University of Jos and the Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi was used to determine the place of English language education in globalisation and sustainable development in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Language, English language, Education, Globalisation, Development.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a vehicle for human communication and a tool for greater human understanding and cooperation. Uzoma (2016) explains that language is the major means of communication among a people as it provides a critical rallying point as well as anun mistakable form of identity for its users. Since language is the means through which human beings communicate, language can therefore serve as a vehicle through which nation scan rise to global recognition. This is because, for wider communication in the global world that has virtually become a global village, language will not only facilitate, but also enhance and promote crossculturalactivities.English language has become a major force of globalisation. It has become the language of international trade, entertainment, education and culture. The globalisation that is celebrated the world over has a lot to do with the colonial era when European languages such as English, French and Portuguese were imposed on colonized countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon. Today, in this post colonial era, these languages have come to unite not only the colonized countries with one another but with the rest of the world. English language has facilitated global relations by breaking linguistic barriers around the world. It has also shaped the way people perceive events around the world through various cultural events created in the language.

With the global nature of English language especially its place in Nigeria, it becomes pertinent to devote some attention to English language education in the country. This will properly place the country in a firm position to compete favourably in the intemational community with the attendant force ofglobslisation, which has brought the countries of the world together into one big village. To achieve this objective of devoting more attention to English language studies in Nigeria, there must be a deliberate policy of extensive training and retraining of English language instructors in the country. It will equally be beneficial to establish centres of excellence in Nigeria's universities or in some selected universities in the country across the six geo-political zones with hIlly functional facilities such as language interactive classrooms fully equipped with skyping abilities to link all centres of excellence and the rest of the world, digital libraries and language laboratories, etc. To achieve this task, collaboration between the Federal Ministry of Education, universities in the country, the British Council, English language associations in the country such as the English Scholars' Association of Nigeria (ES AN) and English Language Teachers' Association ofNigeria (ELTAN) becomes imperative.

–-- is paper believes that repositioning English language teaching and learning in • g:ria for effective competence and performance will set the country on a better == towards global collaboration and the sustenance of development in Nigeria s;€ially since the country has recognized English as the official language of ==inistration and importantly, of education. This will promote technological :=-5fer, development and sustenance.

\ lgeria's Language Situation

'-;eria is the home of about 400 languages with 'extreme diversity' (Elugbe inAttah, : : : D). Attah (2010) states that most scholars concur that about 20 per cent ofAfrica's :' := than 2000 languages are spoken in Nigeria, which is a multilingual nation with =guages grouped into two main classes – minor and major. The 'supposed' minor =guages are those recognized at the state and local government levels such as Pan, • ;b, Idoma, Tiv, Youm, Urhobo, Nupe, Gwari, etc. The 'supposed' major languages - H3usa, Igbo and Yoruba - also called regional languages are used fairly outside their =as of origin, especially by those whose mother tongues are different. The L-grment surrounding this categorization has obviously provided researchers and =guage experts with a reference point on the choice of a national language for '.:geria. However, the question is, can the national language question of Nigeria be -solved easily with such complexity in its multilingual state?

'_:ah (2010) submits that English, which was imposed on Nigeria when it was a 3 nash colony, has functioned as the official language of Nigeria. Citing Bamgbose : 971) and Kebby (1986), he states further that because of its past and present roles in :e administration and social life of the country, some Nigerians presently think that ::glish is the greatest heritage bequeathed to Nigeria after the British colonization of == country. English language in Nigeria occupies an exalted position; as such, '.:gerians and language scholars advance reasons to justify its retention as the =Son's national language. Kebby in Attah (2010) supports this position stating that 3: \'igedan language can serve scientific and technological needs because none is : :mplete. In any case, English is an international language, a global language, which -.I = widespread use in world trade and communication.

::glish language has proven to be a better option for Nigeria's language problem and : has played a key role in Nigeria's growth and development. English language in "-!geria is the interconnecting language that brings together all Nigerians from all ;n-political zones and ethnic groups. As the language of education in Nigeria, it is =,luired that students pass it with at least a credit if they must move from the k-condary level of education to the tertiary level. This is to ensure that students attain s:me level of competence and proficiency in the use of the language for expressing

themselves in a multi-ethnic community like Nigeria.

The Concept of Globalisation

The process of globalisation is a reality and can be seen as one of the most important forces impacting on world economy. According to Brittan (1998), globalisation is viewed "as a whirlwind of relentless and disruptive change which leaves governments helpless and leaves a trail of economic, social cultural and environmental problems in its wake." it is accepted that the world economy has become more integrated due to the process of globalisation (Neuland en Hough, 1999), and despite the fact that globalisation is not a new phenomenon, the intensity of the process of globalisation has been increasing tremendously. The increasing intensity in the process of globalisation is evident in the increase in financial transactions in the world markets. Yiakoumetti (20 14) points out that:

> We are now, in late post-modernity, experiencing the effects of globalisation and transnationalism on societies in general and on education in particular. As we continue to travel and/or migrate, there is a heightened inter connectivity between people which breaks the traditional boundaries associated with national states For many, the congruence of social and geographic spaces has become blurred because of their transnational ties to multiple spaces. These ties are, no doubt, facilitated by increased globaltransportation and telecommunication technologies. (p. 13)

It is important for Nigeria's development and growth that policy makers in the country understand the process of globalisation and alsoknow how to deal with the impact ofglobalisation on the growth and development ofNigeria.

The Concept of Sustainable Development

Development is a positive change that affects the social, economic, political, cultural and human aspects of life aimed at making them better than they were, and fit for the actualization of the goals of a particular society. Sustainable development(SD) on the other hand, is a pattern of resource use that aims at meeting human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its 1987 report titled "Our Common Future" in Obiegbu (2015) defines sustainable development as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p.83).Nigeria is interested in sustainable development. Obiegbu (2015) explains that for Nigeria to achieve sustainable development, it would require"making the necessary decisions now to realize the

i.:n of stimulating economic growth and tackling the denclt===== :e=g and protecting our environment, without affecting the ability of future ;=erations to do the same" (p.83). The government sees the issue of sustainable ='.-:lopment as part of its policy development which has so much to do with how it : : :ducts affairs within and outside the country. It is in line with this that all sectors of ;:-.'ernment are saddled with the responsibility ofmaking sure that their own policies = J activities contribute to sustainable development, and the English language has a t::' role to play in this regard through proper conceptualization of ideas and transfer : f3ppropriate technology for sustainable development.

English Language, Globalisation and Sustainable Development

=.:cording to Yiakoumetti (2014), globalisation is inextricably linked to the ::minant role of English and the growing literature on English as an international aguage. A number of factors offer English unprecedented power including (i) the =onomic and political dominance of English-speaking countries (United States, -_'nited Kingdom, Australia, Canada), (ii) the employment of English as the lingua hnca ofthe internet, and (iii) the retaining of English as a working language in many :ostcolonial countries. English is the language ofbusiness and the language in which 30st technical and scientific knowledge is distributed. English is perceived as the language of mobility and its presence in educational systems all around the globe is ience immensely prominent (Yiakoumetti, 2014).

Globalisation has so many sides which include the economic, political, and social sides. It is rather difficult to define 'globalisation' for a number of reasons - one of the :easons isthat today, television, radio, phones and the internet supply a huge amount ofinformation, and this has brought people even closer to one another thus making :ife somewhat easier. In this regard, it is strongly believed that the world is in the age of globalisation where it seems to be doing business in one small room. In this room, English language takes the front stage as the language of communication, a global language in a globalised world. In short, there is a sense that becausethis is the age of globalisation, one must learn to speak English to succeed. Yamada (2005) submits that English competence is a powerful tool to survive the age of globalisation. Globalisation brings about development, and once there is development, there is equally the need to sustain it. In other words, it is difficult to talk about sustainable development without first talking about development. Uzoma (201 6) explains that,

> Development has got to do with improving the well-being of the majority of the population, ensuring people's freedom and increasing their economic security. The key to the achievement of all these is language. Development can also be said to simply mean providing qualitative improvement in the lives of people or providing greater quality of life for humans. Development

> also means the act or process of bringing to a more advanced state, growth or progress; or progressed state or form. There are different forms of development which include: social, political, economic, educational, environmental, cultural, green development and so on. So development can also be described as: material progress or economic growth or reformation of social institutions and infrastructures. (p.9)

The basic aim of all types of development is to encourage and promote human development. Sustainable development therefore, as Uzoma (2016) describes it, means a pattern ofresource use that aims to meet human needs while at the same time preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for future generations.

For any meaningful development to take place and be sustained, there must be a medium through which the members of the community or any nation can be made to participate in the programmes which will bring positive results. Thus, if we seek development, it is very important to talk about sustainability otherwise it will be impossible for any nation to continue to develop.

In this era of globalisation where there are technologies that have strengthened man's ability to connect to the rest of the world beyond man's immediate environment to share ideas and resources for development of human and material resources, English language presents itself as a global language, which helps in fostering global citizenship and promoting good attitude towards sustainable development through sharing resources, for example, technology transfer.

English Language and Nigeria's Development

Development according to Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2012)is closely tied to language since it is through language that developmental policies of government are articulated and executed. As a matter of fact, language permeates all facets of human life. For a nation like Nigeria with a multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic nature, the only language that can foster even development is English. Onuigbo and Eyisi (2009) state that,"the English language will continue to be at the centre of the Nigerian development because there is no immediate alternative among the various indigenous languages" (p.48). English language is useful to Nigeria because it meets her needs. These can be economical, political, social or educational. It serves the diverse ethnic groups without cries of bias or marginalization. It has equally ensured the advancement and sustenance of other endeavours that English language dominates such as media, internet, diplomacy, education, health, etc. It serves as Nigeria's language of international cooperation which has opened up the country for

g :baI exchange of services. English language has provided Nigeria with a fertile ;:md for the development of human and material resources which have been the : _:=-orm for the country's development. English language has served a positive cause :- : : \igeria's development in a wide range of areas that include:

L Education

:::cation is the bedrock of a nation's development and developed countries of the .' ::ld have succeeded because they have built a successful educational system ::=lish language, with its global status and influence in world education, is the =guage of education in quite a number of countries in the world. Akpata (2000) :-=3lains that "education constitutes an important ingredient of development and is -_-_:refore a crucial factor for even development within a nation such as Nigeria" ;.i58). The language of education in Nigeria is the English language, though ::vernment recognizes the need for Nigerian students to be taught their own mother ::=gues as it is through them that what is good in their culture is promoted and :=served.

Tae mere fact that the English language functions as the language of education in \-jgeria shows and reflects that the language is an indispensable tool in the growth =d development of the Nigeria. It is in recognition of this that NPE(1981) maintains eat "government will see to it that the medium of instruction in primary schools is _=itially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community, and at a _ ner stage, English" (p. 13).

b . **Unity in Diversity**

:ngjish language is the language of science and technology, education, etc, and :.3cause it is the official language of Nigeria, it has resolved the language issue of the :ountry since it is a language no one in Nigeria can lay claim to. Therefore it acts as a Jifying factor and places the country on the path of development. Supporting this :,)sition9 Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2012) explains that English is the only language in .,-hich the numerous tribes that constitute Nigeria are united. Unity of purpose in any aven country fosters progress and development and Nigeria being a diverse and !eterogeneous population with numerous languages and tribes needs a language that nines her population for her to achieve national growth. The English language is the 3nly language that fosters unity in Nigeria in spite of her great diversity. Citing Dnuigbo and Eyisi (2009), Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2012) states further that:

> It is unrealistic for anybody in Nigeria today to think that national unity can be forged in thecountry without recourse to the utilization of the English language . . . it has been the languagefor the creation of the political entity itself, and also the language of its politics, economicunification and administration. . .Furthermore, the fact that it is now functioning as thelanguage of Nigerian nationalism

cannot be denied. (p.4)

c. Administration

English is the official language of Nigeria used at all levels of governance in the country: federal, state, and local governments. It the language used extensively id the deliberations of the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government, NnamdiEruchalu (2012) explains that

> the language provisions that raise the English language to this status are enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. For instance, Section 51 of 1979 and 1989 Constitution and section 55 of the Amended 2011 Constitution stipulate that 'the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and inHausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made thereof . Also, Section 91 of 1979 and 1989 Constitution as well as Section 97 of the Amended 2011 Constitution stipulate that, 'the business of a House of Assembly shall be conducted in English, but the House may in addition to English conduct the business of the House in one or more other languages spoken in the state as the House may by resolution approve. (p.5)

Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2012) explains fUrther that the inclusion of Nigerian vernaculars in the language provisions has been of little value since no visible effort has been made to actualize their use. This establishes that English is the sole language for conducting government businesses. In fact, politics and politicking in Nigeria would have been almost impossible but for the use of the colonial language. This position is reaffirmed by Akindele and Adegbite (2005) who acknowledge that

> English is used as a matter of political expediency. It is relajned so as to bring about political stability in the country. The choice of one of the indigenous languages may create some problems, Thus in order to allay the fear of domination, there is the need for a neutral language that will serve official purposes. (p.60)

d. Politics and Economics

English is the language of politics and economics for a good number of countries **of** the world. English language has contributed immensely in the entrenchment **of** politics and in ensuring that the economic prowesses of countries like Britain **and** America are viable through proper articulation of policies. It is only natural for countries like Nigeria to seek and promote relations with these developed nations using the English language and these have translated into Nigeria gaining from the

:'::ideal experiences and economic policies of these countries. These developed = = =ntries have so carefully designed their policies and interests in such a manner that ::glish language becomes the medium to achieving them

& Science and Technology Transfer

:3glish is the language of science and technology. Many literature in the field of =lence and technology are written in the English language. In other words, access to e: many literature in the sciences is gained through English language. Since Nigeria 5es and understands the language appreciably, it has gained in this area in the id\'ancement of science and technology. Nigerians are now achieving successes in ae area of science discoveries and in advancing technology. Nnamdi-Eruchalu ' 2012) cites Broughton, Bnrmfit, Flavell, Hill, andPincers (1978) who note that:

> Apart from political and historical considerations, English language has continued to developbecause it is the language of science and technology. In fact, half the world scientificliterature is written in English. By comparison, languages like Arabic, Italian, Yoruba havebeen little equipped to handle the concepts and terms of modern sciences and technology. (p.5)

Therefore, as Nnamdi- Eruchalu (2012)affirms, the key to the wealth of knowledge of modem sciences and technology lies wholly in the English language. Verghese (1989) supports this position by submitting that,

> A very important reason for regarding English as a world language is that the world's knowledge is enshrined in English. Countries i'. .\sia and Africa that were till recently under the British rule get their scientific knowledge and technological know-how from English books. It is knowledge of English that helps these countries maintain the high level of their intellectual and scientific training and achievement. (p.5)

It is through the medium of English that technologists learnt to use locally produced raw materials to create new things. For instance, Nigeria's Innoson Motors recently produced state of the art armoured vehicles using locally produced raw materials. This was made possible through the scientific knowledge they acquired through the English language. Knowledge of English has also given us access to the numerous findings of genetic engineers and their importance in the production of improved varieties of crops and animals.

t Global Lens

English language has permeated all aspects of life in Nigeria, and as NnamdiEruchalu (2012) describes it, it is Nigeria's window on the world, being a global language. It is the language through which Nigeria views the world. NnamdiEruchalu (2012) explains further that,

> it is one of the major languages in which the affairs of the United Nations and its numerous agencies are conducted. It is the language of the world media. World mediagiants like the Voice of America (VOA), Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), etc. all broadcast in English. Through English language, Nigeria joins other countries in world trade. (p.6)

With the opportunities opened to Nigeria in linking up with the rest of the world especially through the world and regional international organisations, it is pertinent to conclude that Nigeria is a fortunate nation to have had English as an official language. It opens up Nigeria to the rest of the world and enables the nation see and understand the world and this shapes how the nation engages the world in businesses that add value to the country.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that there is a relationship between English language, globalisation and sustainable development. For Nigeria to attain its desired level of development and sustain the development that comes with the fire of globalisation, it is important to set the educational system of the country on a functional path that will encourage and promote economic development. This is achievable if due attention is given to the teaching and learning of English language in both public and private schools ofthe country.

Since Nigeria is part of the global village through globalisation, and English language is the front burner language, repositioning English language teaching and learning in Nigeria for effective competence and performance will set the country on a better path towards global collaboration and the sustenance of development English language education for sustainable development is considered a learning process based on the ideals and principles that underlie sustainability and **is** concerned with all levels and types of learning to provide quality education **and** foster sustainable human development – learning to know, learning to be, learning **to** live together, learning to do, and learning to transform oneself and society. It **is** important to state at this point that possessing good competence and performance **in** English, a global language, will contribute to Nigeria's human and technological

. _ =:ement and cement the place of English education for sustainable _,' :_:?ment. It will further help in fostering global citizenship and promote good _ - -_ ie towards sustainable development in Nigeria.

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