PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL FOR A MINORITY LANGUAGE IN A SPEECH COMMUNITY: A STUDY OF THE TIV LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Nigeria is a multilingual speech community with an indefinite number of languages. Some of these languages are described as major, while the majority of them are regarded as minority languages. The differentiation is arbitrary; it is a notorious kind of distinction that has come to stay with no concrete reasons. This research proves, within a sociolinguistic frame work, that the so-called minority languages in the Nigerian community are faced with a number of challenges. The Tiv language is made the focal point with which some of these problems are identified. Facts from personal observation as well as oral interviews show that speakers of the Tiv Language show no interest in their language and would, therefore, not give attention to what is necessary for the development of the language. Besides, the scarcely available literature in the Tiv language is not widely circulated and distributed as it might be expected of a nation. Yet, the position of the government on language policies is also found to be a hurdle to the expected progress of the Tiv Language. The research is suggested in two phases: in addition to finding out the problems is proving that there is a prospective future for the Tiv Language, irrespective of the numerous challenges associated with its existence.*

KEYWORDS: Language, Linguistics, Minority Language, Majority Language, Tiv Language, Speech Community, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The multilingual state of Nigeria is observed to have more disadvantages than any advantage(s) that might be claimed for it. Apart from the general problem of dis-unity which has taken prominence, among others, those individual languages in the linguistic repertoire of Nigeria have certain challenges that are capable of hindering the expected growth and development for a language. Some of these problems are external, while some are internally rooted. Research would have probably shown that all languages in Nigeria have their specific problems irrespective of whether a language is minor or major in the Nigerian sense of description. This dismisses any possible feeling and perception that a language as chosen and identified with problems is an only unfortunate language.

We speak of development for a language in terms of recognition and standardisation: When the natives of a language realise and accept that such a language exists and deserves love and respect, the language is said to be recognised by the speakers concerned. The existence of that language should also be noticed by those outside the community of speakers. By standardization for a language, I remember wardhaugh (1988) with the following words:

> Standardization refers to the process by which a language has been codified in some way. That process usually involves the development of such things as grammars, spelling and books, dictionaries and possibly a literature …. Standardisation also requires that a measure of agreement be achieved about what is in the language and what is not (29, 30).

Connecting to what has been said earlier of recognition; the process of standardisation is equivalent to an overall development of a language. Short of this is when and why we speak of problems for a language. The Tiv language is made the focal point with which some of these problems are identified.

The research is suggested in two phases; in addition to finding out the problems is proving that there is a prospective future for the Tiv language, irrespective of the numerous challenges associated with its existence.

METHODOLOGY

This research relied principally on the researchers' practical knowledge of the Tiv language within the Nigerian speech community. The intention to work on the whole problem had intensified attentiveness to people's opinions at interactive sessions, taking into consideration their general attitudes concerning the issue in research. Personal observation method is considered, therefore, to be the primary source of information.

In addition to that is the general literature on Tiv language, which comprises textbooks, research papers, and any written material in, and about the language that could provide relevant information for the success of the study. Indeed, a good look at the presentation would affirm that this secondary source of information-gathering is of great significance to the whole investigation.

The Nigerian Linguistic Situation

Nigeria is a multilingual society. It is estimated to have more than four hundred languages spoken by members of more than two hundred and fifty ethnic groups that inhabit the country. The sociolinguistic situation becomes more complex with the multiplicity of dialects identifiable within these languages. The Hausa language, for instance, has two main dialects which are further divided by geographical compass points of North, east, and western Hausa. Under these are several other sub-varieties like Hausan Katisna, Hausan Hadeijia, Sakwatanci, Gumel, and others. The case is applicable to many other Nigerian languages.

In addition to the indigenous languages is English, which has been domesticated in the Nigerian community. This is a language that was imposed on Nigerians by expatriate bodies through colonialism. Though foreign, the English language has successfully hegemonised all the other languages indigenous to the Nigerian nation.

Consequent upon this multilingual existence, there have been linguistic sentiments and feelings of superiority among languages over others. The question of which language to be used, when and where, often brings a lot of arguments among Nigerian scholars. It is in a lack of consensus that the English language which is alien to the country continues to play more prominent functions than the main national languages.

Today, the notorious distinction between minority and majority languages is found in the study of language. This, in the face of other consequences, is to be sure, an offshoot of multilingualism. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have been identified as main or major languages. The implication is that the rest of the other languages are non-major or minority languages. The contrast is noted to have no clearly defined criteria.

> short of clearly stated criteria for classifying a language as major in this country, we can only say that it is simply assumed that some languages are spoken by a relatively larger number of people and are therefore major languages" (Essien 1990).

The development of a language is probably considered a criterion for its major position, and it is certain that the so-called major languages in Nigeria have developed to meet an acceptable standard. That claim does not suggest that the minority languages in the country hitherto have not attained any level of development. The point is that these minor languages are not as developed as those of the majority.

Tiv language, the focus of this research, is one of the minority languages. Speakers of this language have been identified as the fifth most populous ethnic group considering the 1991 National Population Census. A high level of intelligibility exists among Tiv dialects, and this appears to be a special quality among the Tiv people, especially when placed in comparison with speech communities like Hausa, Igbo, Edo and some other ethnic groups. It might be expected that this particular status should lessen the work of standardisation in the Tiv language. In contrast to expectations, what we encounter is what we may describe as dialect loyalty; a condition where each of the dialects turns out to claim superiority over the other dialects. How then can the Tiv language be harmonised to have an acceptable standard? This is one big problem that is discovered in this investigation. But it will be clear at the end of the discussion that the Tiv language is not hopeless, irrespective of the problems it is said to have; there is a prospective future for the language to attain what we have acknowledged to be the status of development for a human language.

Minor and Major Languages

Nigeria is a multilingual speech community with an indefinite number of languages. Scholars only make conjectural statements regarding the number of ethnic groups and languages in Nigeria. The differences in their conjectures do not go against the single fact that Nigeria is a plurilingual speech community.

Some of these languages are described as major, while the majority of these are regarded as minority languages. The differentiation is arbitrary; it is a notorious kind of distinction that has come to stay with no concrete reasons. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have naturally been identified as major or majority languages. The implication is that all other languages outside the three are minor languages. A Nigerian scholar would, therefore, define a major language simply as "any of the three main languages of Nigeria, i.e. Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba" (Jibril 1990:109), and minority languages as, "those languages indigenous to Nigeria too but other than Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba" (Olayemi 1990:99).

Certainly, there is no definite criterion for the major-minor classification of languages in Nigeria. Linguists of varying categories have different approaches in the attempts to make this categorisation. Many of these people define this in terms of population while some consider it in terms of popularity regarding the use of languages. Yet, others account for the

distinction on the basis of development. Essien (1990) recognises Olagoke's (1982) attempt to define major languages as those that claim millions of speakers. As Essien would say, in criticism; this definition "merely begs the question" (156). Tiv Language, for example, is said to be spoken by more than six million speakers but is still regarded as a minority language. Olagoke's definition of major languages as "those that claim millions of speakers" is questionable.

For Pat Ndukwe, the term 'minority' is normally used not merely with regard to relative numerical size but also to the condition of being inferior or subordinate to some specified (dominant) majority. He adds that, "a minority group can be so designated only within the community or society of which it is part" (1990: 81).

It is a mere attempt to provide universally suitable criteria for the determination of major and minor languages, when Ferguson (1966) claims that a minor language in a country should have one or more of the following features:

a.   It is spoken as a native language by not more than 25% of the population and by either more than 5% or more than 100,000 people.

b.   It is used as a medium of instruction above the first years of primary school having textbooks other than primers published in it (160).

It can be observed that a good proportion of Nigerian languages do not fit this classification. Indeed, there are no criteria for the major/minor categorisation of languages that are universally applicable. Some scholars even prefer something different from the majority/minority dichotomy in the discussion of Nigerian Languages:

> Dissatisfied with the two-way classification of languages favoured by sociolinguists such as Gavin and Mathiot (1960), Haugen (1966;1983), Kloss (1977), Weinstein (1953) or Stewart (1968), Emenanjo (1983; 1986a) preferred a crosscutting three-way classification of Nigerian Languages in terms of developed for those with well-established orthographies, standard written varieties, corpora of written literature among other types of texts, and sophisticated and dynamic meta languages, developing for those with recent traditions of writing, incipient standard varieties, some amount of written literature among other types of texts, and recent meta languages, and undeveloped for those languages that have no standard(ized) orthographies, no standard varieties, no written literature and no meta languages. (Emenanjo, 1990:88).

That some languages are major and others are minor is, therefore, simply a matter of convention. In the absence of clearly identified criteria for categorising a language as major in Nigeria, it is simply assumed, we would say, that some languages have a relatively greater number of speakers and so, are majority languages. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are described as such, on the basis of the number of speakers. Each of these languages has a larger number of speakers than any of the other languages described as minor, and the three languages in combination are ascertained to have over 60% of the Nigerian population. Government's recognition and use of the languages at different levels for different purposes also counts in the classification. The rest of the languages, like Essien (1990) would describe, are by implication, deemed to be 'minor' in a vague indeterminate sense.

Problems

One thing, found to be the major challenge against the development of the Tiv language is the general lack of interest in the language on the part of the speakers. This is accompanied by the problems of circulation/distribution of the literature, the problem of standardisation, and the position of the government in the making of language policies.

Lack of Interest

The attitudes of the speakers in relation to their language are generally observed to be negative. From personal observation and responses from particular interviews, it is discovered that there is absence of interest in the language, as many speakers have no interest in it. To speak the language is a problem, not to talk of giving attention to what is produced in the language in the name of literature. Even in the towns where there is literacy, the educated people on whom the written literature would have counted for, the majority of its readership tend to have a disdainful attitude to both the Tiv Language and its literature.

Investigation has also shown that many speakers of the Tiv Language are not even aware of the existence of the language's literature. Some know but do not care to know, as they feel it is not important in any way to have the knowledge of such a literature. They do not read the Tiv language texts, therefore, and they make no patriotic efforts to promote the literature in any way.

There are, among the Tiv people, a number of individuals who are completely not interested in the Tiv language, in a negative feeling that it is a local language. This is to mean that any individual who associates themself with the language and proves any knowledge of it in any way is a local person. Consequently, majority of the Tiv speakers now turn to anglicise their entire lives.

There are several instances where the speakers are observed to make contemptuous and other negative comments about the language, clearly exhibiting lack of interest, an attitude that is negative in nature. A lady, for instance, openly and proudly told an old woman that she could not read any material in Tiv language, when she was requested by this woman to read for her a letter that was written to her in the language. Many such cases are witnessed among the speakers, especially the contemporary youths of the Tiv society. It may be clear from the foregoing that lack of interest in the Tiv language on the part of its speakers is a challenge to the Tiv language.

Availability of Literature

The Tiv language literature also suffers actually from circulation and distribution. It is the fact that today efforts are being made by many more individuals to write books in the Tiv language. There are several books and literary works in the language. Unfortunately, however, even in Benue State where the majority of the Tiv people reside, texts in the language are hardly found. In many bookshops in Makurdi, for instance, one would only think of Lamp and Word Books and the Benue State University Bookshops out of the very many bookshops as the only places where written texts in Tiv language can be accessed easily. As a matter of fact, it is not just an issue of walking to a bookshop to ask of a Tiv novel, play, an anthology or any text, written in, and about the Tiv language. It is now left

with enthusiastic Tiv readers of a few individuals who are keen that the Tiv language gets adequate recognition as other languages to see that the language is adequately developed.

Less enthusiastic though, there are speakers of the Tiv language who would give attention to the Tiv language literature, at least by reading the books if they were easily accessible. This has been the claim by many individuals who have always explained that their inability to make use of the literature results from the fact that they do not know where and how to reach it. Circulation/distribution of written material is really observed to be one of the challenges against the Tiv language.

The Position of the Government on Language Policies

A policy is a government declaration on the intended course of action, written in documents, such as the Constitution and the National Policy on Education (NPE). Such a declaration can be made on the position of languages. If a community sees that the work of planning is adequately important to call for the authoritative attention of the political system, then the issue of language becomes a matter of public policy. This usually takes the form of the government issuing a green paper or policy statement on the planned course of action with respect to the language resources in the community.

The most widely quoted policy in Nigeria on Language is that which is contained in the National Policy on Education (1977). It stipulates that the Mother Tongue (MT) should be used as a medium of instruction for the first two years of Primary School and the attainment of basic literacy in the MT is officially encouraged. Consequent upon this stipulation, the National Language Centre in Lagos, now a department of the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), seeks to establish orthographies for as many Nigerian languages as possible, and encourages the writing of material in them. But not many languages from the minority groups have achieved this, and the Federal Government has not yet taken steps to ensure the execution of its policy on the MT.

At the Junior Secondary School, the National Policy on Education requires that one of the three major languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba), be studied compulsorily in addition to the mother tongue. Even at the Senior Secondary Level, the core subjects on the curriculum include one Nigerian language, notably Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and Efik so far. The need for an MT is also emphasised in the revised edition of the primary school curriculum as specified in the NPE (2004).

According to the 2004 edition, the medium of instruction in primary school shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject (11, 12). Even at the Junior Secondary School level, language of the immediate environment is to be taught. It emphasizes that, "the language of environment shall be taught as L1 where it has orthography and literature. Where it does not have, it shall be taught with emphasis on oral as L2" (14).

It may be seen from practical experience that the policies on the use of the mother tongue in general are mere proposals. Taking Benue State for instance, the Tiv language, the focus of this research, is hardly used as spelt out in the NPE. The implementation is made, largely in favour of the major languages, thereby giving them more advantage over the minority languages.

One aspect of the policy on language found in the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (1999), as amended in 2011, states that "the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefore" (section 55, p. 52). In another part of the Constitution, a similar provision is made that "the business of a state House of Assembly shall be conducted in English, but the House of Assembly 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. 68). These particular aspects appear in other sections of the 1979 constitution, after which they were partly implemented. In the unit states, recourse was often made to the provision which allowed the use of local languages. A case in point is Kano in whose House of Assembly, Hausa functions as the medium for the conduct of its business.

The position of the government on language policies is actually a problem to the Tiv language and indeed, other minority languages. The mother tongue as a medium of instruction as contained in the NPE, for instance, is skeletally implemented. Moreover, there seem to be no criteria for selecting a particular mother tongue or language of immediate environment as the medium of instruction as recommended by the policy. What we encounter in consequence is that the minor languages are overshadowed by the three so-called majority languages. The literatures of these languages, particularly those of Hausa and Yoruba, enjoy various natural advantages of demographic strength and wide geographical spread which help to boost their readership within and outside Nigeria. In the same way, the federal government now favours the so-called major languages through the making and implementation of policies as contained in the National Policy on Education and the Constitution where the use of the three languages is made compulsory. The syllabi for the teaching of these languages have also been published by the same government.

The Problem of Standardisation

A language is generally not spoken in the same way by the people that are identified with it. This means that the concerned speakers must have their different ways of speaking the language. Akmajian et'al (2007) have their words:

> No human language is fixed, uniform, or unvarying: all languages show internal variations. Actual usage varies from group to group, and speaker to speaker, in terms of pronunciation of a language, the choice of words and the meaning of those words, and even the use of syntactic construction (275).

It is when speakers of different groups are identified with different ways of expressing the same ideas in their language that we speak of **Dialects.** A dialect may be defined, therefore, as a variety of a language that is used, somewhat in a different way, by a group of speakers who belong to the same language with other groups which also have their specific and different ways of expressing ideas of the same meaning in the language.

Out of the different varieties that exist for a language, one is usually chosen as a central variety that represents the others in formal situations. Such a **variety** becomes a **reference point**, and is technically referred to as a **standard variety.** The standard form of a language is the prestige variety that has been institutionalised, and is used centrally within a speech community. Such a variety of language must be accepted by the different dialects of the same language as a unifying code.

If general acceptance is a criterion for the standardisation of a language, it is also expected that the language should have:

- Well-developed literature

- Well-developed orthography

- Standard dictionaries &

- Well-developed grammar

(See wardhaugh, 1988: 29 - 30)

Unfortunately, the Tiv language as it concerns our discussion has a general and well-known problem of standardisation. In the first place, speakers of the specific dialects of the language do not refer to a particular variety to be a central point of communication within the language system. Rather, each of those speakers uses a particular variety, and believes in same to be the best of varieties. Obviously, one should not expect a harmonised system of spellings, and consequently, the available texts on the grammar of Tiv language lack uniformity. It is only when recognition is given to a particular variety that standard dictionaries can be produced. A dictionary handles not just orthography and grammar, but also takes care of pronunciation, with an over-all aim of providing the meanings of words in a language. Speakers of this language cannot claim to have well developed literature with all these deficiencies in place. The problem of standardisation contends seriously with efforts of the scholars among the community, to develop the language.

Potential for the Tiv Language

There is a prospective future for the Tiv language, in spite of the numerous challenges it is said to be facing. The dominant position of the major languages over those of the minority as found in the Constitution has been considered a problem. This, however, does not suggest a total condemnation of the entire policies in the use of language in the Nigerian constitution and the National Policy on Education. A fact remains that the National Policy on Education recognises the importance of studying the mother tongue in our educational process and recommends its use in the first three years of primary school. This continues to give hope for the minority languages in the different parts of the country. The recommendation on the study of our mother tongue is made easier by a declaration that, "Primary Education shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory".

Most importantly, there has been a demand elsewhere in the policy for the development of 12 Nigerian languages including the Tiv language. Indeed, if this aspect of the national policy is meaningfully executed in the Tiv speaking areas of the country, it would definitely give a good stand to the progress of the language. It is good that the Tiv language is now studied as a course in some Colleges of Education in Benue, and even at the State University where it is offered as an elective course in the Languages and Linguistics Department of the University. The Tiv language syllabus for primary schools has been prepared by the Zonal Inspectorate Office of the Ministry of Education at Gboko in which titles of Tiv language literature in the Tiv language were prominently featured. The teaching of the language had even commenced at a few primary schools like L G E A, Walomayo East, Makurdi; L G E A, Primary school, Kuha, Makurdi; and Unicord Cantonment Army Children School, North Bank, in Makurdi among others.

Today, the people's awareness is reawakened: there is consciousness arising from a number of educators and the educated, from the Tiv Community who see the need to write books on the Tiv language. Different campaigns are being carried out in respect of the Tiv language, which involve preaching to people and organisations at conferences and seminars where papers are presented by different scholars on different topics for the development of the Tiv language. The Tiv Language Studies and Development Association (Mzoo u zwa Tiv) is one that is formed for the upliftment of the Tiv language. As it is made explicit in the name, issues involving the study and general development of the language are considered at the meetings of the association. As an instance, an approved Tiv orthography was considered by the 'Mzoo u zwa Tiv' at an organized workshop on Tiv orthography by the school of Languages of the College of Education, Katsina-Ala. The meeting considered some spelling issues as found in the following:

a.   Letter 'C' (not 'ch') represents the /tʃ/(sound). Therefore, words like *lcigh, cieryol, cii, canca, icugh, icegher*, etc, would be written without letter 'h'.

b.   Letter 'z' represents the /z/ (sound), and there should be no combination as 'dz' for the voice alveolar fricative. So, we have zua (not dzua), zwa (not zdwa), zar (not dzar), etc.

c.   The plural form of 'or'(human being) should be written as 'ior' (-'y') just as it is found in the Tiv Holy Bible.

d.   Words like *Aondo, songo, nombo, tondo*, etc, which are given 'e', o, or 'u' at the end by different writers, should uniformly be written with an 'o' at the end.

e.   Letter 'a' should appear instead of 'e' in words like; Ashiakaa (not Ashiekaa), Ikyerave (not Ikyereve), Mguater (not Mgueter), Nguamo (not Nguemo), Zeramo (not Zeremo) etc.

Those and other resolutions were also witnessed at the National Conference on Tiv language by the Language Studies and Development Association held at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Makurdi, and subsequent meetings.

Efforts of individuals and associations of Tiv origin in company of the Government plan (in the NPE) as described in the fore-going are signs for the prospective future of the Tiv language. The hope is that the negative attitudes of students and the generality of Tiv speakers towards the Tiv language will be eliminated with the numerous efforts, thereby meeting the desired success.

The development of Science and Technology is an added advantage. It involves the development of visuals and phonographs which contain the various forms of oral literature. On the prospects of Tiv-phone literature, Gundu (1990) reminds us of the dramatised story of "Kwagh-hir" in Tiv, which is characterised by songs and body movement in company of riddles and several other traditional forms of dance, that can always be recorded for audio-visual effects. It is the hope that the interest of many more people would be sustained as they continue to listen and watch such stories on the relevant electronics. It is recalled that D.T Kashima of the N.K.S.T (church) had introduced teaching of the Tiv language on the Television. Only recently, an international conference was held on Tiv language, for the development of same, in Gboko, the headquarters of Gboko local government of Benue state.

Gundu, as earlier acknowledged, unveils the relevance of the stories and events in the Tiv literary works which are based on the experience of the Tiv people. The events with characters are imagined in accordance with the Tiv ways of the life and set in Tiv land to avoid the distance between readers and the read. In *Adan-Wade Kohol ga* for instance, the events centre on 'Imborvungu,' a popular artifact among the Tiv nation, which is believed to be a source of riches and prosperity. The events are noted to have chiefly taken place in, and between fictitious clans whose names and topography have been created from the Tongov and Ikyurav – Tyev, in Katsina-Ala local government of Benue State. The authors of the Tiv literary works make comfortably domestic expressions that can encourage reading. Let us also look at Akasi's allegory, *Ankwagh Va sha Swem. A*lmost every reader would be interested in the mention of non-human characters like 'ivo' (goats), ibua (cows), 'igyo' (pigs), etc, and what is likely to be the end of the story as it begins:

> Myongum, mhar za ungwa mliam ma Nomiyongu shin zwa. Chimin ma kpishi, gadia ve myongum vande fan, Ivo, ibua, igyo, ikegh, iywa, iyongu cii ngi soon u zan toho ape tsombur ve mbainyon man mbainyam ve lu ga. Ka ve zaan yo I lu ikyaa i kwaghyan. Kahan man ve, Nomiyongu a lu va vaan ikuaikua ken ya u Nor kyoroo?" Iyongugh ki imon kaa a ki gen kira er, "Nomiyongu ngu tse-tse er ka bagu nahan, man kwagh za tsule un yo a kera tema ityem I ichogonor er un a sor ya naga, vaan a vaa er ka kwase yo. Aluer ishir a za hemba ve mbaiyongu ken uumache yo, guda ve hide ken toho ken tar u mbainyam shaachi u se mba ken toho kpa se mba soon u hungur a anterev asev mba ve za lu uumache ikpan ken uya yo (1).

What this section of the research proves, in summary, is that the Tiv language has hope for an improved development. That the language has been identified with a number of problems does not suggest absence of a chance for survival. Indeed, a careful look at the preceding analysis would mean to every reader, that the Tiv language is not hopeless irrespective of the numerous challenges it is said to be facing. There is potential future for the language as duly observed in the presentation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The general lack of interest possibly leads to the misapplication of spellings by many people in their attempts to have a written communication in the Tiv language. The language literature too, would not be well circulated and properly distributed as it only attracts the interest of few individuals. This work is one that stands to correct the above and other challenges as discovered from the research.

We begin by calling for the interest of Tiv speakers to their native language as against the existing attitude of disregarding it as observed earlier in the analysis. A very mature person known to have grown up in Tiv land, among the Tiv people, was heard saying "too kwa tema va mi" (Bring a seat) instead of; "too kwagh teman va a mi", under the pretext of his inability to understand and speak the Tiv language effectively. The man's four-year education at the University made him feel that it was not good for him to be using grammatically correct expressions in the Tiv language as his fellows at the village. It's sad! Ladies should avoid using "you mbu kaan" (fried yam) for "iyou ki kaan", "nyare wam bee" (My money has

finished) for "inyaregh yagh bee", etc. The overshadowing presence of pidgin and the English language is capable of making the Tiv language an "easy candidate to extinction".

Noam Chomsky, an American Linguist, is remembered with his views on the notion of competence and performance, in which language competence is associated with native speakers. Like Adegbile and Alabi would say in support of this: "for second language learners, attaining native-speaker proficiency is almost a state of utopia". That is very true, and it may not be out of place, therefore, to associate one without a perfect knowledge of one's native language with absence of linguistic competence, since one cannot also express oneself perfectly in other languages which are hardly our mother tongues.

"Ka or nan nongon a kwagh u nan ye", the Tiv would say. Speakers of this language should pay attention to this. They should think for the development of the language through literature and other ways. Writing should increase and the people should be willing to read and appreciate the Tiv language literature. The concerned people should always attend and seek resolutions of the Tiv Language Associations in respect of the language to avoid dis-unity and inconsistency in speech and writing among these speakers of the same community.

On the making of policies by the government, it can be observed that penalties are not available to aid, by way of imposition, the implementation of the policy. Teacher-preparation to meet the demands of the policies is also a problem that continues to linger, without any serious attack from the responsible government. The negative results of the language policies cannot be gainsaid. The mother tongue as a medium of instruction as contained in the NPE for instance, is (if at all) skeletally implemented. Moreover, there are no criteria for selecting a particular mother tongue or language of immediate environment as the medium of instruction in the early education.

In the light of the above defects, there is every need for a revision of the national policy on education. Instead of an attempt to develop all Nigerian languages and use all of them as media of instruction as stated in the NPE document, the new policy should make clear the criteria of selecting a language as a medium of instruction. The learning of the mother tongue, we would suggest further, should be made compulsory not only in the Primary and Junior Secondary Schools, but also at the Senior Secondary Schools, and passing of the mother tongue as a subject should be made a determiner or a condition for obtaining the senior secondary school certificate. Government of the federation should take it upon itself as a responsibility to train, recruit and deploy teachers in the Nigerian languages that would meet the criteria for selection as the media of instruction. The three major languages should be studied in addition to the mother tongue and instructional materials should be designed specifically for this project.

To have a stronger foundation, there should be internal training of children by the parents; an informal kind of education that can prepare them for the formal school.

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