To a country like Nigeria with over five hundred living languages, the relevance of language policies and planning, at least educationally, economically, politically and socially has never been in doubt. Indeed, attempts have been made in the past to harness the linguistic resources of Nigeria for national development. This paper therefore seeks to appraise and review the major developments recorded since 1979. Issues examined in the paper include legal provisions, steps taken by the government towards implementation of the National Policy on Education as it affects language. Having examined issues arising as a result of the multiplicity of languages, and efforts made to resolve the issues, the paper advises on appropriate strategies in order to ensure a materialization of the nation’s language policies.

**Background**

Language is a unique property that belongs to the human race. It is a means of communication between two or more people and to a very large extent, the development of man – politically, socially, economically, etc., depends on the use of language. Indeed, language permeates all aspects of human endeavour. Language is an integral part of culture, a reflection of many features of a given culture. Thus, like culture itself, it is a learned behaviour, which can be enhanced through direct or indirect contact. The formal and functional complexity of language is such a distinctive human trait that many scholars think the designation ‘homo loquen’ (man the speaking animal) to be a better way of identifying the species than any other simple criterion (such as tool using) that has been suggested.

In spite of the importance of language in any society as described above, Liberson (1982:41) asserts that “languages do not differ among themselves in their inherent power but the users of languages do. Accordingly, the carriers of different languages differ in their ability to alter the existing language usage pattern, thereby affecting the fortunes of their language.” Thus, the fortunes of a language are closely tied to the fortunes of the people who speak it. The link between language and polity is best understood in the sense in which language is a symbol of group identity. George (1976:3940) describes language as “a powerful instrument for identifying cultures... It is the most important system of culture”. Indeed, language is a symbol of cultural identity, a marker of solidarity among its speakers, a vehicle of values and even the history of its speakers.

It is against this backdrop of the interrelatedness of language and nation building that the present paper examines the problem of language policy, planning and application in Nigeria with a view of finding a lasting solution to the problem.

… attempts have been made in one way or the other to harness the linguistic resources of Nigeria for national development. But much has not been achieved not necessarily because of her multilingual nature but because, as it were, policies are made to fail or are designed in such a way to make
implementation difficult because of some obvious pitfalls built into them (Oyetade 2002:53).

Thus, it is the aim of this paper to find out empirically if language provisions in the National Policy on Education is effective or not. And if not, why not?

The Languages of Nigeria

That Nigeria is extremely linguistically diverse is evident from the number cited in each classification done on the number of languages in Nigeria. To Bamgbose (1971:35-48) there are about 450 indigenous languages in Nigeria.

However, the recent 2005 Ethnologic Data listed 521 languages for Nigeria. Of these, 510 are living languages 2 are second languages without mother tongue speakers, and 9 are extinct.

The five hundred and ten indigenous living Nigerian languages, as expected, cannot all function as the official language of Nigeria. Nigeria, just like any other African nation, is not like some modern European nations that are linguistically homogenous. These Nigerian languages have been variously categorized and recategorized as major or minor or class I, class II or class III, etc., using a number of factors such as the population of speakers, range of functions/domains of use, level of linguistic analysis, etc. (Adekunle, 1976; Bamgbose, 1985; Aghayisi, 1981; Odumuh, 1993; Oyetade 2002 among others). For instance, Brann (1992) classifies Nigerian languages into three levels as follows: major languages, state languages and local languages, based on their status as dominant languages, their territorial spread and the population that speaks them. With this categorization, there are three major languages in Nigeria, thirteen state languages and over forty-four local languages while those languages considered as either two small or non-dominant speech forms in any existing political or administrative territory were unlisted.

Indeed, going by the Ethnologic data report for Nigeria, some of these five hundred and ten living Nigerian languages have as low as 400-100 speakers. Examples include: Janji, Benue-Congo language spoken in Bassa LG, Plateau State, Jilbe, Afro-Asiatic language spoken in Borno State, Ndunda, Niger-Congo language spoken in Taraba State etc. Thus, such languages can be rightly categorized without sounding derogatory anyway as minor languages used mainly at home, village and local community levels. About 75 percent of the total figures of the Nigerian indigenous languages belong to this core.

Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo are the three major languages in Nigeria. The 1979 and 1999 constitutions recognize them as national languages. They are used as regional languages or lingua francas in Nigeria with the Hausa language in use in the North, the Yoruba language is in use in the West and the Igbo language is in use in the South-eastern Nigeria. They are, however, not restricted to intra-group communication. ‘Although the exact population of mother tongue speakers of the major languages is not known, the population of each of the three languages, is probably over 20 million people’ (Igboanusi & Peter 2005:5). Hence, they are the mother tongues of about half of Nigeria’s population, acquired at home but also taught in schools as subjects.
It is interesting to note that apart from the many indigenous languages, which are of course the mother tongues of Nigerians, non-indigenous languages such as English, French, Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Russian and German also exist. Spanish, Italian, Russian and German have limited roles compared with English, French and Arabic. The first set is commonly found among the elite and university students while the last set occurs as a medium of communication within learned and unlearned circles. Indeed, Arabic is highly associated with the Islamic religion, although, it exists as a school subject especially in the Northern part of the country. Today, English has become a second language in Nigeria, while Pidgin English, with probably the largest number of speakers, has also emerged as a result of the contact of English and the indigenous languages. The linguistic situation described above proves that Nigeria is a multilingual country par excellence.

**Language Policies and Planning**

Language planning, according to Weinstein (1980:56), is “... a government authorized long term, sustained and conscious effort to alter a language.” In other words, language planning involves long term conscious efforts and government commitment. To Koul (2006:27), language planning “denotes a deliberate attempt in resolving language related problems necessary for the development of a particular language.” Language planning, as used by Haugen (1966), involves all societal attention towards language problems. Thus, the approach must be systematic and future-oriented in view of the challenges involved. Originally, the term has been used to cover *selection of form, codification, implementation*, and elaboration. Recently, the term has been expanded to include evaluation (Rubin 1973).

Koul (2006) discusses types of language planning relevant to our enterprise here: status planning and corpus planning. The status planning is concerned with the standing of one language in relation to others. In the corpus planning, the shape of a language is changed by proposing new technical terms, spelling reforms, a new script or even changes in morphology. The former is thus concerned with policy and the latter with cultivation or development (Koul 2006:27). Koul states further that status planning is usually the work of politicians and bureaucrats, whereas corpus planning is done by linguists, language experts and by academies, institutions or by special interest groups under a well-defined charter.

To Adegbija (1994), corpus planning includes aspects such as the preparation of orthographies, the commissioning of primers, and the publishing of newspapers in indigenous languages through processes such as compounding, derivation, combination of compounding and derivation, a borrowing in a phonologically adapted form, expansion of meaning of existing words, use of words from dialects, lexical change, and spontaneous formation of new words. This paper hopes to discuss the level of achievement already recorded with respect to graphization, standardization and modernization of indigenous languages in Nigeria.

Ruiz (1995) in line with Cobarrubias (1983) identifies three language policy types: endoglossic (community-oriented), exoglossic (externally-oriented), and mixed policies. Endoglossic policies are those that give primacy to and promote an indigenous language of the community. Exoglossic policies are those that give primacy to and promote an outside, frequently a former colonial language; the
adoption of a language in a non-native context is a major indication of LWC status. Mixed policies are essential bilingual policies; they accommodate and promote both indigenous and outside languages. Without doubt the Nigerian situation is of the exoglossic type in practice although a mixed policy on paper. This shall be evident here in due course.

Language Policies and Planning in Nigeria
Language policies and planning efforts in Nigeria can be discovered from Nigeria’s official language policy and her educational language policy.

Official Language Policy
The national language policy contained in sections 51 and 91 of the 1979 constitution, as well as in sections 55 and 97 of the 1999 constitution states as follows:

The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefore.

The business of the 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.

The constitution of Nigeria as of now lists four major languages namely, English, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo as official languages. At the state Government level, the major languages of each state are similarly recognized. However, the fact remains that English is the principal official language, while the Nigerian languages only play a complementary role either at the federal or state level.

Educational Language Policy
According to section 3:15 (4) of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1981,

“Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, English”.

This educational language provision (see section 1:8, 2:11 (3) and 3:15 (4)) stipulates further for Secondary Education, at the Junior Secondary School, students will be required to learn English as well as Nigerian languages, composed of (a) “the language of their own area” (b) “any of the three main Nigerian languages, Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba, subject to availability of teachers”. At the Senior Secondary School stage, students will be required to learn English and one Nigerian language.

Officially, this educational language provision in NPE makes provision for the use of the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment as the medium of instruction at the pre-primary school stage or the first three years of primary school. Indeed, the language provisions in NPE are firmly predicated on the four principles of national unity, equality of opportunities, permanence of literacy and
numeracy and linguistic competence required for communication and higher education (Fafunwa et al. 1989).

To a great extent, the provisions above relate to Nigeria’s political and educational objectives. These are the two major ways of looking at the issue of language in relation to political and educational policies in most African countries (cf. Oyetade 2002, Akindele & Adegbite 2005).


For instance, many scholars have written on the dominance of English as the official language in Nigeria. According to Oyetade (1992:34),

… consequent upon our colonial experience under the British, English has become Nigeria’s official and dominant educational language. It is used in its written form as the language of administration from the federal to the local government level. It is the language of commerce and industry, its knowledge therefore is an essential prerequisite for effective participation in the day-to-day running of Nigerian government.

According to Igboanusi and Peter (2005:11),

In Nigeria, the dominance of English is overwhelming in practically all domains: government and administration, education, the mass media, the parliament, the judiciary (excluding Sharia courts and customary courts), science and technology and literary creativity. It is also a language of inter-ethnic communication.

With regard to the foregoing, English is used in all and at all levels of official business: in education, in commerce and industry, in the dispensation of justice, in all government departments and parastatals at the state or federal level. Official records are kept in English and official information is given principally in English Government activities are published in the gazette and transmitted in the mass media, the press, radio and television in English. English is the language of the National Assembly as well as the state House of Assembly. Recently, however, precisely in the year 2004, Yoruba was introduced for use in the Houses of Assembly of Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo and Oyo states. And again, the business of the House of Assembly is currently being conducted in the media of Hausa in Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa, Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger and Plateau states (cf. Owolabi 2006).

Further still, a comprehensive list of flaws in the policy is available on http://fafunwafoundation.tripod.com/fafunwafoundation/id9html. The Internet journal presents at least seventeen flaws out of which ten are presented below:

(i) Don’t the statement on language constitute just a statement of intent rather than a serious programme for implementation?
(ii) If the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate community is considered so important at the pre-primary level as an integral part of the child’s culture and the link between the home and the school, why should it be “principal” and not “solely” used at this level?

(iii) How do people identify the language(s) of the immediate community in pluralistic settings like urban centres or International communities like universities?

(iv) Aren’t the pronouncements on the three major languages vague and effeminate?

(v) Further on the choice of language, by whom and at what level is this choice of one of the three languages to be made? By the Federal, State or Local Government? By the parents, the School or the pupils?

(vi) If the government is serious about implementing the policy, shouldn’t there be a definite chronogram for all states to follow in the implementation of the programme? Why is the implementation of the language provisions couched in cautions ‘escape’ phraseology: ‘subject to the availability of teachers’.

(vii) If the government considers the learning of the three languages crucial for national integration, where are the legal and other sanctions for defaulting Federal, State and Local Governments or their agencies?

(viii) Practically, all Nigerian languages can be used as mother-tongue or language(s) of immediate communities. Is it pedagogically feasibly to organize initial literacy in 400 odd languages?

(ix) How do just three or the major languages serve the need of the educational process and become the media for preserving the people’s cultures – 400 autonomous peoples’ cultures?

(x) The total number of teachers required in 1988 for the three major Nigerian languages was 55,237. Only 6,383 or 11 .6% of these were available. How and where are the remaining 48,854 teachers to be produced? Is the recruitment or training of these teachers to be by chance or to a coordinated programme involving all agencies concerned?

With certain visible flaws of this policy presented, we shall now examine the strategies employed by the Federal government for implementation of the policy. These include the following resources developed by the Federal Government agencies such as NERDC, NTI, NLC and the WAEC; for the meaningful use of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa languages in the educational and official settings:

- L1 Primary School Curricula (NERC, 1982-3)
- L2 and LI JSS Curricula (NERC, 1982-4)
- L1 SSS Curricula (NERC, 1984-5)
- L1 Teachers Grade II Curricula (NERC, 1975-6)
- L1 TTC Curricula (NTI 1986)
- Primary Science Terminology (NLC, 1980-3)
- Legislative Terminology (NLC, 1980-88)
- Metalanguage for the three major Nigerian languages (NERC, 1981)
- Braille Orthography (NERC, 198 1-4)
- Orthography Manuals and Pan-Nigerian typographic resources (NLC, on-going)
- L1 Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba SSC Exam Syllabus (WAEC, 1985-6; 1991)
Other efforts at modernizing indigenous Nigerian languages have led to the assemblage of fairly large stock of technical terms in some Nigerian languages notable among which are the following works (Owolabi 2006:20-22):

(i) **A Glossary of Technical Terminology for Primary School in Nigeria (henceforth, GTTPSN):** The GTTPSN comprises mathematical and scientific terms in Edo, Efik-Ibibio, Hausa, Igbo, Izon (a form of Ijo), Kanuri, Yoruba and Tiv. Areas covered by the work, which was sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education, are sets, numbers, operations, geometry, measurement, physical science and biological science.

(ii) **Metalanguage (henceforth, ML):** There is ML for each of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba for the purposes of facilitating the teaching and learning of each of these three languages in its own medium. The terms cover various aspects of linguistics (e.g. phonetics, phonology, syntax, sociolinguistics, etc.) as well as stylistics, literature (including culture), and methodology. The project was sponsored by the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC), now (NERDC).

(iii) **A Quadrilingual Glossary of Legislative Terms (henceforth, QGLT):** The QGLT is an assemblage of terms in English and their equivalents in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The project, which was facilitated by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), covers a wide range of areas which legislative discourse can be centred on (e.g education, politics, revenue collection and allocation, industrial, commercial or agricultural development, information, sports, etc.).

(iv) **Yoruba Dictionary of Engineering Physics (henceforth, YDEP):** YDEP is a bilingual English-Yoruba/Yoruba-English dictionary. Apart from its main entries on Engineering Physics, the dictionary also contains entries on physical laws, rules, theorems and principles as an appendix.

In effect, all these resources collectively provide the wherewithal for the effective teaching and learning of at least the major Nigerian languages among others. The cumulative effects of all these should show in the language use of Nigerians in various domains. In what follows, we present the result of an on-going research work on language use and language attitude in Nigeria as a way of assessing the effectiveness of the language policy in the nation.

**Language Use Scenario in Nigeria**

In presenting our findings on language use in Nigeria, we present first the methodology adopted in gathering the data for the study.

**Research Design and Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research method, using questionnaire to collect data from 300 individuals. For the purpose of the investigation, Nigeria was divided
into three major language zones – the Northern part with Hausa language in use, the South-eastern part with the Igbo language in use and the Western part with Yoruba language in use. Because of time with its concomitant constraints and the fact that language attitudes are seen as a highly sensitive political matter (Schmied, 1991), informants had to be drawn from only the Western part of Nigeria where the researcher could easily assure the informants of his positive disposition towards their language for them to agree to answer the question objectively.

The instrument for the study was a twenty-eight point item questionnaire with sections A, B and C. Section A elicited information on demographic variables. Section B was meant to gather information on the language background and the language behaviour of respondents with various interlocutors. Section C aimed at eliciting information on the views, opinions and attitudes of respondents in respect of the languages in the community’s repertoire. Section C contained some open-ended questions since as opined by Adegbija (1994:54) “attitudes... like many aspects of life, are far more complex that merely agreeing or disagreeing with particular statements”. For the analysis of our results, we used simple frequency counts and percentages.

The questionnaires were distributed among people of various status and background. In line with Omojuwa’s (1982) suggestion on research survey on language policy, a comprehensive survey of homes, schools and offices in the urban and rural areas was conducted so as to ensure representativeness. Again, it afforded us the opportunity to observe firsthand the language behaviours of respondents with various interlocutors. The respondents included professionals (teachers, doctors, lawyers, politicians and nurses), civil servants and students. Variables for the study included mother tongue, occupation, sex, age and level of education. Virtually all the respondents were literate in English and Yoruba which is the common situation in Western Nigeria.

There are 300 respondents in all. Of this population, the males constitute 44.67 percent while the females are 55.33 percent. Several age groups were tested which made it possible to classify the sample into different age groups. This is to show and compare their linguistic choice, attitude and performance especially as youths versus adults with respect to the languages in question. Although, the age of the respondents ranged between 11 and 75 years, the adolescents (11-20) constitute the highest percentage (31%) in the sample. A clean break into two generations, that is, youths versus adults, results into 53.3 percent for the 11-30 age groups and 46.7 percent for the 31-75 age groups respectively.

There are three categories of people according to levels of education. There are those who have below the West African School Certificate (WASC); those who possess WASC or its equivalent, and those with post secondary education.

Findings
The bilingual status of our respondents is not in doubt in any way. In question number (12), sections B of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate the number of languages they speak out of these four: English, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. The results show that 82.67 percent of the respondents are bilingual (English and Yoruba) while the remaining 17.3 percent are multilingual having the knowledge of Hausa or/and Igbo in addition to the first two. Respondents seem to be of the opinion that of
all the languages in use in Nigeria from which one may choose, only two are very essential – English and Yoruba. In other words, any other choice like Pidgin English and Arabic for Muslims, are but variants of this choice. Moreover, non-Yoruba indigenes were not even enlisted at all for participation in the research.

On language use, participants were tested on various context of situation. For instance, they were asked to report on how frequently they do use the mother tongue for communication. And again, to indicate the languages with which they communicate generally. Consistent, with the objectives of this research, we asked respondents to indicate their choice of codes with respect to two important domains (unofficial / official). Respondents’ responses to these questions are presented as tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 below.

Table 1: **Respondents Self-Reports on Mother Tongue Use in percentages** (N=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: **General Language Use Pattern in percentages** (N=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Yoruba</th>
<th>Yoruba + English always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>57.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: **Respondents Self-Reports on Language Use in the Official Domain in percentages** (N=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Yoruba</th>
<th>English/Yoruba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: **Respondents Self-Reports on Language Use in the Unofficial Domain in percentages** (N=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Yoruba</th>
<th>English/Yoruba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pattern of language use evident from the foregoing is that of semi-exoglossic bilingualism. Semi-exoglossic bilingualism refers to bilingualism involving English
and indigenous languages. Indeed, every participant in the study is bilingual in English and Yoruba. This is a pointer to the influence of the exoglossic language policy adopted for the nation on the citizenry.

The general language use pattern here (except for the 11-20 age group) seems to be Yoruba. However, with respect to the regular use of the mother tongue we discovered a split between the young and the old. For instance, while those above fifty years use the mother tongue regularly, only 38.6% of the youths under 20 years do this. Again, while no respondent above 50 years of age used English for unofficial matters, at least 31 percent of the adolescents do this while 18 percent normally code-mix making a total of 49 percent that are using English unofficially in some forms. Thus, the present situation where the regular use of Yoruba (MT) decreases with age holds implications for language maintenance, shift and death.

In table 3, we discovered a preponderant use of English in the official domain even across the ages. If the official domain witnessed such a preponderant use of English, we expected the same situation to be true of Yoruba in the unofficial domain (table 4) which of course includes the home. This, however, did not happen. Language mixing (Yoruba and English) as widely reported in answer to question no. 9 of the questionnaire has taken over this domain, indeed, code-mixing also has implications for language maintenance and shift. In the next two tables (5&6), we present the analyses to question numbers 9 and 11 of the questionnaire. Question 9 says “what changes have you noticed in your mother tongue recently”? While question 11 says “how did you come to speak English?”

Notice that the two questions were designed to capture the competence of our respondents in the two languages. A direct measurement of the proficiency of our respondents through self-rating scales becomes difficult here for some reasons. In the first place, the English language is a status symbol of education and civilization in Nigeria. Hence, if these subjects were asked directly to rate their abilities in this language, they would be obliged to rate themselves very high even when this is artificial. Secondly, Yoruba language happens to be the mother tongue of these respondents which means they already have a particular mindset with regards to their abilities in this language.

In accordance with the objectives of the research, we were thus able through these simple, yet penetrating questions (9&11) to establish the abilities of the respondents in both languages.

Table 5: Respondents Self-Reports on Yoruba use and Maintenance in percentages (N=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-Group</th>
<th>Less spoken especially among the youth</th>
<th>Always spoken code-mixed with English</th>
<th>People are no more comfortable speaking it</th>
<th>Renewed interest in it by scholars in Nigeria</th>
<th>No essential change/I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Respondents Self-Reports on mode of English acquisition in percentages (N=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Acquired naturally right from birth</th>
<th>Learnt it at school through teaching</th>
<th>Picked up in the neighbourhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident on table 5, 90 percent of the respondents know that the contact of English with their language has adversely affected its use as well as their proficiency in it. For instance, 32 percent of the adults who are over fifty years are of the view that Yoruba is now less spoken, especially among the youths, 55 percent opined that Yoruba is always spoken, code-mixed with English. To about 13 percent of this age group, people are no more comfortable speaking it. Only about 2-4 percent of the respondents are with a positive comment which is that scholars in Nigeria now have a renewed interest in it. Table 5, simply presents a gloomy picture of the Yoruba language maintenance situation in this community.

Evident on table 6 is the fact that the learning of English by these respondents is after the acquisition of the mother tongue. Thus, linguistic interference (or negative transfer of the forms and meanings of structure of the native language and culture to the target language (cf. Wilkins 1982:199)) is a major obstacle to their perfect mastery of the English language. Indeed, question number 13 of the questionnaire says: Do you speak one of the languages more fluently than the others? 97 percent of the respondents said yes. What is more, Yoruba was picked as the one better known. However, table 5, has sufficiently revealed the deteriorating standards of the Yoruba language in this community. As a participant observer who speaks the two languages, it is no exaggeration to say that the results presented in the two tables reflect the true position of things in the community. The tables have simply confirmed our observations.

In other words, there is a correlation between language use and language proficiency. It is expected that an average Nigerian who has a considerable minimum education, will be able to speak English, the official language of the country to an extent, pidgin to a certain extent and his mother tongue efficiently. To another who is not so educated he would at least be able to use his mother tongue efficiently and a pidgin language. The third set of people who can be vast in only one language are mostly the aged members of the community who were not exposed to formal education at all. Since this study is situated in South-western Nigeria where Yoruba happens to be the mother tongue, we expected the respondents to be proficient in English and Yoruba since they are all educated. Thus, we conclude by saying that while the bilingual status of these subjects is not in doubt, their proficiency and efficiency in these two languages are subject to doubts as a result of the source of their knowledge. Again, the foregoing brings into question the effective implementation of the language policy.
The foregoing has simply revealed how language use in this community has in turn affected proficiency in each of these languages depending on matrices of proficiency such as the domains of use, respondents’ age and source of knowledge.

**Ethnicity and Language Related Attitudes**

In order to be able to draw a safe conclusion based on our findings, let us consider the language attitude of our respondents. Since language attitudes can only be ascertained through the use of indirect question (Baker, 1992), the attitudinal questions posed to our respondents are of these types:

i) Is it necessary for your children to learn Yoruba?
ii) Can you or your children speak Yoruba like your parents and grandparents?

We present below as tables 7 and 8 respectively respondents’ answers to these two questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Yoruba Ability generation-wise in percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses from subjects on these two attitudinal questions are both positive and negative. For instance, virtually all the respondents across the ages wanted their children to learn Yoruba. The reason they gave for this is “for cultural continuity”. Thus, the respondents are quite conscious of the link between language and culture. Indeed, the few who picked “No” did not quite understand the question for they gave reasons such as “it (Yoruba) is acquired and not learnt” for picking “No”.

However, in table 8, a different picture from that of 7 has emerged. The table depicts a negative attitude in that majority of the respondents can no longer speak Yoruba like their parents, with the youths (11 20) mostly at fault. Their reasons for this defect include the influence of education, civilization and the environmental factors.

Responses to these questions based on ethnic identity, language shift and maintenance present a case of incipient language shift and maintenance at the same time. The positive attitude displayed towards the English language by Nigerians could
he attributed to some factors such as education, civilization, colonization globalization. And what is more, the exoglossic language policy of the nation.

Two other questions used to probe further into the hidden language attitudes of our respondents are:

i) Would you like English to remain Nigeria’s official language?

ii) a. If no, would you prefer a Nigerian language to be chosen as Nigeria’s only language?

b. If yes, which language?

In response to (i), 99 percent ticked “yes” and gave “For unity sake” as their reasons. In (iia), the response here is 100 percent “No”. The majority reasoned that to pick one of the three languages will lead to pride on the part of the tribe whose language was chosen. Their answer is very important to our study, since it is a pointer to the psychological state of the Nigerians. To answer the other part of the question, i.e. (iib), 99 percent picked the Yoruba language while the remaining one percent preferred Hausa. Those who picked Yoruba said because it is their ethnic language while those who picked Hausa said because it has the highest number of speakers.

Discussion

The diversity of languages on the linguistic terrain of Nigeria is archetypical of the aftermath of Babel. Until recently, English was recognized as the only official language in Nigeria. It is the language of administration, instruction and communication in every sector of the country. Thus, the linguistic diversity in Nigeria offers an average Nigerian citizen the opportunity of learning one or more languages in addition to his or her mother tongue and English. What is more, this is the very position favoured by the nation’s language policies. However, the present scenario as evident in our data proves this assumption wrong. Indeed, the result reveals that Nigerians are not learning any other indigenous language in addition to their mother tongue, in spite of the multilingual language policy. This could be traceable to the fact that (cf. Dada 2007):

- English is compulsory for every Nigerian, being the de Facto official language in the bureaucracy and all tiers of formal education in Nigeria and as an international language for that matter,
- The utilitarian value (socially, economically and academically) of the English language vis-á-vis any of our indigenous languages is high.
- The over bearing status of the English language over the indigenous languages in Nigeria today makes even mother tongue learning a perfunctory exercise.

Indeed, Nigeria can be described as a nation that is very high and rich in policies but very low and deficient in implementation. In this regard, our findings here simply corroborate the situation in Imo State where in 1985, the Imo State government set up a “Panel on the Teaching of Igbo, the Imo State School System and the Implementation of the National Language Policy”. The panel observed that although
there are appreciable changes since 1986 with regard to the policy on Igbo in particular and languages in general, but then cogent lapses noticed include:

(a) Lack of awareness on the part of highly placed ministry officials (Supervisors/Inspectors of Education, Principals/Headmasters of Schools and practicing teachers) of the language policy as stated in the NPE. And that this lack of awareness is responsible for the relatively inferior status accorded Nigerian languages in the school system in particular and the society in general. Igbo is not being taught or tolerated in most nursery schools in the state, nor is it being seriously and consistently used as the medium of instruction in the ‘junior’ primary classes. Again Igbo is not being seriously taught as a ‘core’ subject, as the NPE stipulates, in the upper primary classes through to the secondary school where it has fewer periods a week on the time table than any other subject in the curriculum.

(b) Under-utilization of trained teachers and even, inadequacy of trained teachers that is, in spite of the inimitable efforts of the Colleges of Education of Owerri, Awka, Nsugbe, Ehamufu, Okene and Abeokuta to produce NCE teachers of Igbo for the school system.

A summary of the state of indigenous language studies and practice in Nigeria is presented below as in Egbokhare (2006:2-3):

- Low self-esteem by student and teachers of indigenous languages.
- Low enrolment in Nigerian languages programs.
- Poor performance in school certificate results by students
- Closure of language Departments, merger or change of nomenclature due to low demand.
- Low employability of language graduates
- Lack of professionalisation of indigenous language teaching.
- Incompetent and poorly trained teachers
- Poor instructional materials
- Poor and outdated instructional materials
- Generally poor attitude towards indigenous languages
- Low literacy levels in indigenous languages
- Lack of acquisition and transmission of indigenous languages
- Loss of language
- Absence of viable professional networks
- Displacement from traditional domains by English language
- Non enforcement of policy
- Low economic value of the language
- Shrinking domains of use due to several factors

The plight of an African language has been succinctly captured by Egbokhare’s analysis presented above. At this juncture the pertinent question to ask is: which language and whose language is Nigeria actually developing? The simple answer based on data on language use and language proficiency here is none. Another
question that naturally comes to mind is: what is the status of the language we are
talking about? Is it indigenous or exogenous? Is it a mother tongue (MT), a first
language (L1), a second language (L2) or a foreign language (FL). The status will
definitely determine so many things because the status or the role of a language has
sociolinguistic implications (cf. Osisanwo 2006).

Notice that the pedagogical requirements of teaching an MT are different from
those of an L2 or those of an FL. On status and functions, we need to ask: Is the
language just a school subject or a school subject and a language of instruction? Is it
an official/national language of the country? Is it a lingua franca (local/regional/
global)? Genuine answers to these pertinent questions seem to elude Nigerians with
respect to the teaching and learning of our languages, foreign or indigenous. If not,
why is the standard of English in Nigeria, that is, let alone the indigenous languages,
so poor.

The picture should become clearer if we examine two pieces of information from
two levels. Table 9 below adapted from Osisanwo (2006:5) presents statistics of
performance in the school certificate examination, which indicates an average failure
rate of about 64.3% per year between 1995 and 2000.

Table 9: Secondary School Certificate Examination in Nigeria Performance in English
in Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of candidate</th>
<th>Credit &amp; above</th>
<th>Ordinary Pass</th>
<th>Fail</th>
<th>Absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>464.270</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>576.196</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>24.03</td>
<td>64.62</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>618.139</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>26.77</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>636.777</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>65.53</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>752.233</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>64.91</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>784.129</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics collected for these six years show not only a massive failure in English, they
also show declining performance in the six years. Since at least a Credit in English is
required for admission to Universities, Colleges and Polytechnics, only an average of
about 9.7% of all students per year may be said to have done well in English to merit
admission. The rest either have an ordinary pass or an outright fail (cf. Bamgbose
2006).

Historically speaking, the spread of English language, in Nigeria is correlated
with the spread of Christianity and Western Education. After independence, English
remained a colonial legacy, graduating from its use as language of administration to
the rank of the most prestigious and the most widely used language in the country.
Today, the English language in Nigeria functionally outweighs all of the country’s
indigenous languages. Its functions include that of a national language, an official
language a lingua franca plus its use in mass media, commerce, religion and
education. Alas, in spite of all this, the evidence before us clearly indicates that there
is a problem with language teaching (especially English) in Nigeria. If English with all
its acclaimed resources suffers this type of fate in Nigeria, then what hope has any of
the indigenous languages?
Suppose we argue that the problem exists at the secondary level, consider Adegbija’s (2004:4) report of the findings of two consultants from the British Overseas Development Administration who visited five Nigerian Universities to find out the problems of English language teaching in Nigeria.

Below are their findings:

- The standards of the teaching of English were poor;
- Teachers of the use of English needed to be more familiar with modern teaching techniques, strategies and methods;
- Both students and teachers lacked adequate materials;
- The standards of learning were poor;
- The poor standards of English had a negative impact on the general standard of education, and indirectly, on socio-economic development, since English has an immediate relevance to all disciplines taught in Nigerian Universities.

A cogent point emanates from the above issues which is the link between language and national development. Should we, like an official, who wants to remain nameless, ostrich like, seek refuge in the excuse that our underdevelopment is as a result of our “Intelligence Quotient” or should we rather call a spade a spade and put the blame where it truly belongs, and which is, lack of competence in English affects performance in all subjects taught through the medium of English.

Before we conclude this section, it must be patently clear that one thing that holds a society together is communication. Communication, competent verbal communication is imperative for the development of any human society, hence, the emphasis placed on it in education generally, all over the world. Language, a human essence and the most effective human means of communication, makes sense in the context of knowing a language well through acquisition so that language and mind are truly integrated. To Essien (2006:4)

... the language one knows well is usually one’s mother tongue. Unfortunately because of the dominance of English and the colonial mental hangover, most Nigerian parents do not teach their children their respective mother tongues. Yet the English language eludes these children as their WAEC performance in English and worse still their abysmal proficiency generally in this language shows.

“What kind of English do we have in Nigeria” asked by Essien (2006:4) still begs for an answer. What has been happening due to government ineptitude since he who plays the pipe dictates the tune is a steady decline of the whole process of language learning in Nigeria. Essien (2006) further observes that:

A people who are limited by the language they consider to be their lingua franca are linguistically under-nourished. Like under-nourished children, they cannot grow and develop properly. That, I am afraid, is the reality of our situation.
Thus, the present paper is a clarion call on all Nigerians, in particular policy makers/executors to embrace the nation’s language policy wholeheartedly in order to stem the ruination of the state given the progressive erosion of the country’s culture and historical heritage consequent upon the internal language conflict being experienced by the youths. We end this section with the words of Essien (2006:3) ‘If we want great thinkers, we must give those gifted in thinking adequate language. If we want great artists-poets, playwrights, novelists, musicians, etc., we must make it possible for such talented people to acquire such facility in language as will enable them to express their imagination, feeling and insights freely. If we want great scientists and inventors, language must not inhibit those who have the innate abilities. If we want great politicians, economists, historians, linguists, etc., language should not stifle those who are gifted’.

Conclusion
The present paper is an overview of language planning with special reference to the multilingual situation in Nigeria. It specifically examined the National Policy on Education in the light of what obtains among the citizenry. The various strategies adopted to deal with the situation as examined here include legal provisions, concrete steps already taken on the policy by the government and use of language in various domains – this involved an examination of the nature of bilingualism among our subjects. The study reveals that English is dominating the indigenous languages in various domains in spite of the fact that children were first introduced naturally to their mother tongue. Moreover, their performance is very low in their mother tongue just as it is in the English language when compared with that of their parents or adults. This anomaly is evident in our children – even on the streets.

Consequently, the use and status of the English language in Nigeria affects the development of the Nigerian languages and the culture is hampered. English now determines so many aspects of the life of the people. Indeed, English is a major and significant medium of communication in Nigeria today. It is widely used in every part of the country and has grown beyond being merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication.

It might be important to ask: Is the language policy on Education being implemented in favour of the indigenous languages and for their development? Although the National Policy on Education stresses and encourages the development of the Nigerian languages, its implementations is rather dragging. Thus, the present study has once again shown that the policy still lives largely on paper. Despite all these problems, bilingualism is adjudged by many as a good development. As a result of the numerous functions of language within the society people aspire to learn more languages (or become bi-/multilingual) so as to communicate wider and more effectively across their immediate speech communities. Thus, what do we do as a nation to sustain the multilingual language policy? We recommend as follows:

Government should address the issue of language attitudes in Nigeria seriously. “Language attitudes in many African nations are seen as a central element in language policy, language use and language learning” (Shmied 1991:163). The negative attitude of the elitist members of the Nigerian society towards the use of mother tongue even here in Nigeria is the bane of our language policies. For instance, the Guardian of
Friday, December 10, 1999 reported that a member of the Lagos State House of Assembly sponsored a motion urging the House to adopt Yoruba as the official language of the House. However, this was vehemently opposed by the elitist members of the House. To this set of people, the use of Yoruba is capable of demeaning and reducing the intellectual capacity of the legislators. Suffice it to say that in other countries of the world, legislators are builders of their cultures and heritage.

Obviously, those so-called ‘elite’ are not well-informed and so are profoundly ignorant of the state of development of Yoruba of all languages in Nigeria, the expressive and expansive capacity of language in general to accommodate all new needs of its users aside from all the morass of ideas of everyday life... The prospect of implementing a policy like this in the immediate future is a matter for conjecture if policy makers that are supposed to know better and guide the populace on the path of self-reliance can still hold views like these (Oyetade 2002:55),

that is, two decades after the inauguration of the purporteds language policy.

Thus, we suggest that government should take drastic measures to redeem its citizen from ‘linguistic imperialism’ (Ansre 1975) or ‘colonial mental hangover’ (Essien 2006) or ‘Native Language Prejudice Syndrome, NALPS’ (Owolabi 2006). To Ansre, linguistic imperialism is the phenomenon whereby the minds and lives of the speakers of a language are dominated by another language to the point in which they believe that they should and only use that other language when it comes to transactions dealing with education, politics, law, etc.

Simply defined, NALPS is an attitude of dislike for the use of native languages as media of expression particularly for official purposes, and in effect, as major instruments of national economic, social and political development (Owolabi 2006:16).

Our elitist members should be educated until they realize that:

... Our state of underdevelopment has remained for so long due largely to our use of English and French. We impart knowledge and skills almost exclusively in these foreign languages while the majority of our people, farmers and craftsman perform their daily tasks in Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Nupe, Ijaw, etc. The question is: why not help them to improve their social, economic and political activities via the mother tongue? Why insist on their learning English or French first before modern technology can be introduced to them? In most developing countries, a few towns and cities operate in English ,French, etc., while many rural villages and hamlets operate in the mother tongue; ... (Fafimwa et al (eds.) 1989:vii).

Indeed, several factors have been identified in literature as being responsible for the failure or non-implementation of the language policy in Nigeria of these two have been isolated for serious attention. These are:
1. Inadequacy of African languages to express scientific inventions.
2. Lack of political will by those in authority, since it is generally believed that English is the language of unity in multi-ethnic Nigeria.

The following excerpt is a perfect illustration of this linguistic syndrome expressed as (1) above:

If anything our local languages are constrained in a number of ways. Most of them are not developed enough to accommodate the intricacies and inflections that a dynamic language should have. New ways of doing things especially in the areas of science and technology as well as information technology can hardly be captured by the lexis and structures of our indigenous languages. (Editorial comment of *Sunday Sun* of March 28, 2004, p. 2)

This set of Nigerians as well as the policy makers should please listen to Essien (2006:3),

Languages differ in time in space and social structure. This means language follows the people who speak it, grows and develops, or even dies with them. That is why the English language described some centuries ago as “vulgar... immature, unpolished and limited in resources”, according to Baugh (1951:244), is undeniably the most widely spoken and most prestigious language in the world today.

Another very important attribute of human language which we Nigerians, in particular policy makers, need to know is the creativity of language. This linguistic quality enables us to use language to express anything we wish to express, whatever the language is. “Hold on”, someone is almost saying this to me, Essien (2006:3) continues,

... can you use your mother tongue, Ibibio, to teach chemistry even at the secondary school level?” My answer would be, “No and Yes”. “No and Yes”, “No, if you want me to do so here and now.” But clearly “yes, if you begin to prepare the language for this task, or any other task you would like it to perform.”

For every language can be enriched and used to play the role its speakers want it to play. That’s what the English did to their “vulgar..., immature, unpolished and limited” language centuries ago. That’s what the Russians did. That’s what the Asian tigers have done to their respective individual languages for their countries to be able to arrive where they have now. And that’s what we need to do to our languages if we want to truly develop.

Needless to say, within creation there is inherent order. Violating it has inherent consequences as already evident in the foregoing. In other words,
... if Nigeria is to make a distinctive contribution to human civilization, it will have to be as a result of the symbiotic relationship between English and the indigenous languages, a pooling of the resources of all the languages without foreclosing the contributions that any of them can make (Banjo, 1995:187).

Obviously, with two and a half decades of the institution of this language policy, it is now evident that English is not our own, that is, no matter how hard we rebel against what nature has richly bestowed on us.

On point Number 2, this is that of political will, Nigerians should just stop and reason for a moment by listening once more to Essien (2004:12).

... the language of European nations and Asian nations have kept pace with the national development of these nations on both continents. While these nations involve their mother tongues in the development enterprise and succeed, Black nations of Africa rather withdraw their own language from this very vital enterprise and it eludes them.

Evidently the way forward is the development of the indigenous languages. Thus, we recommend as follows (cf. Dada 2007):

- Languages such as Yoruba and Hausa should be mandatory in schools up to the senior secondary school level.
- The monopoly presently being enjoyed by English as a basic requirement for admission must be broken by a corresponding basic requirement of Yoruba for admission to higher institutions for certain courses.
- A credit pass in the Secondary School Certificate Examination in languages like Yoruba and Hausa must be required from every teacher trainees before being given any official appointment.
- Government should increase the admission quota of applicants for Nigerian languages in Nigerian universities.
- Courses in indigenous languages should be run in our universities free of charge.
- Graduates of such disciplines should be given automatic employment immediately after graduation.
- New entrants into the federal or state civil service and parastatals must either have a credit pass in their mother tongue at the Secondary Certificate Examination or obtain a Certificate of proficiency in it from a higher institution.

In addition to the above, government should embark on an aggressive sensitization programmes by using the modern day technology to preserve and promote the acquisition and use of these languages. Such methods include the internet, the print and electronic media, conferences, workshops, public meetings, theatre, etc. The rate at which the youths patronize browsing centres should be tapped and used as an asset. After all, once these kids are properly motivated, the sky becomes their limit. Nigeria should borrow a leaf from the example of the Georgetown University US.A. According to Adegbija (2004:8), the centre:
Promotes independent language study;
Stocks audiotape players with individual headphones, computers, laser disc players, TVVCRS, Video-editing station, desktop computers and projection sound system playback... create audio CDs, CD-ROMS and DVDs for use by students.

Indeed, Nigeria should aspire to have something like this at the National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN) Aba, and in each of the Federal University in the Federation as a way of promoting language teaching and learning in Nigeria. Not to involve our youths in this matter at this stage is completely dangerous. In this regard, Egbohkare (2006:3) outlines the following important questions:

- How do we make indigenous languages interesting to youths (Entertainment value)?
- How do we make them profitable (Economic value)?
- How do we make them hip (Prestige)?
- How do we make them relevant (Functional value)?
- Where does technology feature in these?

His solutions are: two principal interventions:

1) actions that will promote use and transmission of indigenous languages;
2) actions that will integrate the languages with information technologies.

He states further that in order to achieve (1),

- (a) we need to tie the languages into the local economic;
- (b) key them into the educational process;
- (c) key them into mass media, especially radio and television;
- (d) key them into transportation;
- (e) key them into sports, especially running soccer commentaries in them.

In order to achieve 2, we need to develop local content in indigenous languages.

In conclusion, Adegbija (1997) states that prior to solving all other problems that bedevil the development of some group languages, there is the need for a strong, unshakable policy and commitment of the will to the philosophy that all languages, no matter the number of their speakers, qualify for, and should be given, a chance to survive, develop, and grow to their maximum potential without being stifled by government policy actions. In other words, government should absolve itself from all blames by providing constitutionally for the equality of all languages, in principle as well as in practice, through the enactment of positive policies. It should recognize all these languages as national resources without giving the impression that some are inferior to others, etc. According to him, in Papua New Guinea, with its population of 3.5 million and about 869 languages a policy of this measure already exists.

Again, Adegbija argues that there is the need for the development of a small, even if informal, language development co-ordinating body for each language in a
multilingual context. According to him, Obolo in Rivers State has an active language committee. Some other examples include the Ibibio language Panel of the Akwa Esop Imaisong (Ibibio Cultural Association); the Ogbakor Ikwerre Convention and its Language Committee; the Itsekiri Communal Land Trust and its Language Board (cf. Emenanjo 1990:90). The existence of such bodies, according to Adegbija, is the very raison d’etre that has kept some of these languages alive. To him that smaller languages than the ones mentioned here, need and should be encouraged by the government, to emulate them by setting up their own bodies. And that it is very useful if a national governmental body also exists in a multilingual context to co-ordinate and provide support for language – development efforts within the country. The two methods suggested above by Adegbija has been tagged ‘redefining language planning’ by Koul (2006). This involves Language planning that focuses on the development of all languages in the multilingual context so that they become successful vehicles of communication in all subjects including science and technology at different levels as opposed to a hegemony of one language or a few against many as being practiced for now.

These and many other measures not even mentioned here if embraced by the Nigerian Government will definitely lift these languages and what is more Nigeria as a nation to enviable standards.

References


