

NIGERIA PIDGIN AS A VEHICLE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Effective interaction and communication of related policies occur through language, and effective communication occurs through a language that the communicants understand best. Therefore, to achieve national development in all areas in Nigeria, Nigeria Pidgin (NP) which is the combination of indigenous languages and English language becomes pertinent in effective communication of information related to national development goals. Since a number of development indices such as national cohesion, integration, unity, economic wellbeing and citizen participation are all linked to the use of indigenous languages that promote them, the NP which in the linguistic rallying force by which Nigerians can express their 'Nigerianness' should be used in the overall development communication.

INTRODUCTION

Communication occurs through language and effective communication occurs through a language that the communicants understood best. Given that language is the primary form through which messages (whether spoken or written) are expressed in communication, language is central and vital to effective communication. This has the implication that the language used in any communication process would have an impact on effective communication of the message. Despite the fact that many of the people involved in executing the development agenda in Nigeria predominantly use NP in their day to day development activities, development issues in all sectors in Nigeria are mostly communicated to these people through the use of the official language, the English language and rarely through Nigeria pidgin. Therefore, could it be stated that the reason as to why the sustainable development goals have not been sufficiently attained in Nigeria is because of the medium of communication employed in developmental activities. This study therefore is an attempt to examine the extent to which the Nigeria pidgin is used in communicating information regarding development issues in Nigeria.

Sustainable Development

Development has got to do with improving the well-being of the majority of the population, ensuring people's freedom and increasing their economic security. The key to the achievement of all these is language.

Development can also said to simply mean providing qualitative improvement in the lives of people or providing greater quality of life for humans. Development also means the act or process of bringing to a more advanced state, growth or progress; or progressed state or form.

There are different forms of development which include: social, political, economic, educational, environment, cultural, green development and so on. So development can also be described as: material progress or economic growth or reformation of social institutions and infrastructures.

The primary objectives of all types of development is to promote authentic human development. Catherine Walsh agrees with this by stating that development has recently shifted from economic progress towards a more humanistic view focused on the individual and the quality of life which is often referred to as "integral and sustainable human development". This focuses on the inter-connectedness of economics with political, socio-cultural and environmental spheres, as well as the necessities, capacities and potentialities of human beings.

Sustainable development could therefore probably be otherwise called "equitable and balanced". This means that, in order for development to continue indefinitely, it should balance the

interest of different groups of people, within the same generation and among generations and do so simultaneously in three major interrelated areas: economic, social, environmental and soon.

Sustainable development is also defined by the Brundtland commission as "a development which meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs". The United Nations 2005 World summit outcome document refers to the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development as economic development, social development and environmental development. Another dimension was added to it by UNESCO which is cultural development. Sustainable development therefore means a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come.

Therefore, for any meaningful development to take place and be sustained there must be a medium which the members of the community or any nation can be made to participate in the programs which will bring positive results. Language is the only means by which members can be conscientized and positive attitudes inculcated into them. This is because language has a central and rather crucial role to play in the mobilization of the rural population for specific national development program e.g agriculture, fishing etc, Language can make useful contribution in providing the skills needed for rural development projects as well as other aspects of life in a modern society in the following areas: health, education, family planning, child welfare, home craft, literacy, road safety, alcoholism, drugs etc. Everything considered, it is clear that when the appropriate language (aimed at the total mobilization of rural community) is used, the people will naturally be drawn into being totally involved in government policies and once the community members are captured, the states and the nations will benefit and societal ills will be corrected thereby achieving a high rate of development. Language has therefore become a viable weapon for sustainable development in the 21st century.

Communication, Language and Sustainable Development (the role of indigenous languages in sustainable development)

Knowledge acquisition is facilitated through communication and communication occurs through language. Understanding communication and how it works is important to human beings. This is because everyday activities and functions involve some form of direct or indirect communication. Regardless of the activity or functions, the participants in a communication event communicate with and through other participants. As a result, every participant's communication skills affect the effectiveness of any communication event. It, therefore seems reasonable to argue that one of the most inhibiting forces to the effectiveness of any communication event is a lack of effective communication and that good communication skills are important to one's success as a participant in a communication event.

Human communication, however is faced with a lot of problems and difficulties. Misinterpretation and misunderstanding arise more often than not. This is because whenever people try to communicate, something often seems to get in the way and they are not understood in the way they intended. Even when there is understanding it is often hard to get people to think or behave the way one would wish them to and this is largely dependent on the objective of the communication. For communication to be effective a message must be received (heard or read), understood, accepted and acted upon (change behaviour or attitude). If this does not happen, communication has failed and participants in a communication event get frustrated and resentful.

Language is a distinctively human system of communication based on oral and written symbols. It is the vehicle through which people's culture is transmitted. It is an identity which serves as a repository of a people's culture, industry and exploits. It is language that differentiates the Homo sapiens from other animals. As a tool of communication among the members of a society, language is influenced by the very society where it functions. Moreover, being the most significant tool of communication, a particular language which is mastered only by some people has often been the determining factor in turning these people into a separate group as a people, a nation or a state.

As a system, language is, therefore a general, abstract aspect and a sum of organization skills and principles that govern any concrete act of communication and acts as a means of communication.

Difference in language is the most obvious barrier to communication as two people speaking two different languages differ in their linguistic ability and can thus not communicate with each other. The message that is to be communicated occurs as a thought in the mind of the sender. This thought has to be converted into an expressible form (code), that is, words and/or gestures. Words constitute language, which is a code that one can only be understood if both parties give the same meaning to the symbols that are used. Language is stored in the brain of human beings in form of lexical items and rules that determine how these items structure and function. Therefore, language thought and culture are intertwined because thoughts and culture are expressed through language. To produce real speech or writing, lexical items are retrieved from the brain and structured according to language specific rules and culture. In this way language, thought and culture have to work together as a system in the production of speech or writing.

Therefore, for communication to be effective there is need to use a language that both parties understand factoring in the linguistic ability of the communicants in the language, the amount of vocabulary they share and their culture. In this case, in Nigeria, the best language to be used for communicating development agenda to the people concerned should be the Nigeria Pidgin as this is the language that they know, have high linguistic abilities in, understand best, identify with and express their culture.

Multilingualism

Nigerian pidgin (NP) and National development. Nigeria can most appropriately be regarded as a multinational, multi-ethnic, multilingual exoglossic state. The 2014 ethnologic data listed 529 languages for Nigeria. Among all these languages, the 1979 and 1999 constitutions recognize Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba as the three main languages and accorded them national status (*Uguru 2003*). Nigeria is therefore a nation with a conglomeration of cultural and linguistically differing groups. These differing groups have metamorphosed into ethnic groups due to the political unification by her colonizers. The unwholesome marriage of the different groups has led to each of the group trying to either assert itself or to being marginalized. Because of the differences in culture and language, conflicts arise among the ethnic groups (*Nwosu, 1977*). These conflicts often degenerate into violent clashes that have claimed human lives and destroyed properties. This situation destabilizes the polite and thus hampers development.

Looking at the Nigerian situation, one can easily see that the situation is a bit difficult because all the language groups want to be relevant and therefore assert their importance and resist any effort to impose any other indigenous language on them. Therefore, in order to promote linguistic equality, tolerance, social interaction and national development, in a multicultural country like Nigeria, Nigerian pidgin has been proposed as a possible choice that will enhance unity. It is a beautiful blend of the indigenous Nigerian languages and English. While commenting on the status of NP in Nigeria, *Osakwe (2005)* notes that NP is now competing fiercely with English for dominance in domains hitherto considered exclusive to English. She reiterates some linguistic argument that NP has since attained the status of a creole among the river line and adds that the social stigma associated with NP is now over as NP continues to influence the socio-political and economic life of many Nigerians.

There are high prospects for Nigerian pidgin. Presently, it is used extensively in advertisement in the radio and television, in jingles, political and health awareness campaigns, business and other vital activities of Nigerian economy. In the coastal areas, it acts as catalysts in educational development which is an important index of national development. Nigeria should thus consider it to be in the interest of national unity to make NP a national language. Unity means strength or power, and it is language that unifies people. Given that indigenous languages are the most veritable tools with which society is organized and that it is hardly possible to talk of national development without including the language with which the people formulate their thoughts, ideas

and needs, government's programmes and policies on development issues should reach the grassroots with the use of NP.

CONCLUSIONS

Indigenous languages are indispensable cultural legacies without which all forms of human interactions can be carried out. National development, that entails the development of individuals educationally, socially, politically, economically, and culturally, is achievable through interactions with government agencies that disseminates policies through various indigenous languages. Development indices such as internal cohesion, integration, unity, economic wellbeing and citizens' participation in governance need to be promoted through indigenous languages. Therefore, indigenous languages play a fundamental role in issues such as democracy, technology, agriculture, health, national cohesion and development as a whole. There are however some challenges in the optimum utilization of these mother tongues in national developments. The major problems are orthographic inadequacy, the multiplicity of indigenous languages endangerments. Nonetheless all is not grim. Indigenous languages can be developed for use in national development through designing of orthographies, robust language research, documentation and interpretation services. All these achieved through the joint efforts of the government, NGOs, international bodies, mass media and the native speakers of their languages.

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