SIMILAR LANGUAGE POLICIES, DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT STYLES, DIFFERENT RESULTS: NIGERIA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA IN COMPARISON

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Abstract
The mother tongue based multilingual policy in education is stipulated in the Nigerian National Policy on Education. This is a natural fall-out from the ample evidence in research that early education given in children's mother tongues provides more solid foundations for commendable academic success later in life than that given in borrowed languages. Literature is, however, replete with evidence of widespread non-compliance with the policy among Nigerians who demonstrate inordinate preference for the English language. The neglect of the policy stipulation has been found to be responsible for the ever-increasing rate of mass failure of Nigerian students. Papua New Guinea that records high rate of compliance with the same language policy in education experiences better academic achievement of students. The paper thus compares and contrasts language policy, management and practice issues in Nigeria with Papua New Guinea because of both countries' multilingual nature. Both similarities and dissimilarities are found in the language policy management styles of both countries. Papua New Guinea, sometimes referred to as PNG, is found to manage the plurilingual situation much better than Nigeria. The Papua New Guinean government is found to have practised its language policy implementation in accordance with the principles of Language Management Theory from the field of Linguistics and Human Relations Theory from the field of Management. But Nigeria seemed to have been completely oblivious of such theories in its approach to language policy formulation and implementation, hence the great difference in success

levels. The implications of the findings for Nigeria are also considered to point the way forward for the nation.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Language Management Theory, Human Relations Theory, Language Policy

Introduction

Nigeria is a West of African country with a population of about one hundred and twenty million people speaking about five hundred major languages (Lewis, Gary and Charles, 2013). In another study, Nigeria was discovered to have 521 languages, of which 510 are living, 2 are second languages without mother tongue speakers while 9 are already extinct. Connell (1997) observed that Nigeria and Cameroon are the two most linguistically heterogeneous in Africa. The existence of many languages in the entity known as Nigeria gave rise to the obvious need for clear cut language policy to regulate language use in various aspects of public domains. This is to prevent a situation of Tower of Babel.

Nigeria, however, has been accused of not coming up with any well articulated and comprehensive language policy to spell out issues of language use in all spheres of national life. For example, Emenanjo (1998) expressed doubt about the statement on language in the National Policy on Education, asking if it is not "just a statement of intent rather than a serious programme for implementation", pointing out that the policy is sometimes, explicitly and, sometimes obliquely, stated. Adegbija (2004: 213) too observed that there is no document that is specifically devoted to language policy and language planning by the Nigerian government except the few sentences included in the National Policy on Education and the stipulation on the language to be used in the National House of Assembly, which survived "acrimonious debates" to be included in the nation's constitution. These, according to Adegbija (2004), are what some people refer to as Nigerian language policy.

Papua New Guinea is a small island north of Australia and south of the equator in the South Pacific with over eight hundred (800) languages. Literal (2000) put PGN languages at about 816. It is said to have the greatest number of languages of any country in the world (Klaus, 2003). This is amazing considering the fact it has just a population of about five million (Rushbrook and Wanigasekera, 2004).

Since both Nigeria and Papua New Guinea are linguistically heterogeneous, comparing and contrasting the two could be expected to occur naturally. Therefore, areas of similarities and dissimilarities in the language policies, management and practices of the two entities shall be attempted in this paper.

Language Management

Management is defined by Olum (2004:2) as "the art, or science, of achieving goals through people", and "the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims". This underscores the principles of adequate communication, clearly stated goals arising from commonly felt needs, specific roles and team work. A language management situation, it must be noted, is not exempted from the afore-mentioned principles, if any meaningful success is to be recorded. Failure to make collective decisions arising from deliberations by all stakeholders to address jointly identified felt language needs with clearly stated aims and duties, linguistic crises become inevitable in a multilingual society.

Theoretical Framework

There is no single theory that adequately explains language policy and planning (Kingsley, 2010). So, two theories were employed to jointly constitute the basis for this study. It is to be noted that the selected theories are not the only relevant ones, considering the far-reaching implications of language behaviours in human existence. The theories chosen for the current study, therefore, are Language Management Theory from the field of Linguistics and Human Relations Theory from the field of Management.

Language Management Theory

Language planning became an issue subsequent to the attainment of independence by developing countries that, many of them multilingual, had to pay attention to assignment of statuses and roles to their indigenous languages as well as those of their erstwhile colonial masters (Nekvapil, 2006). Language Management Theory was propounded by Jiří V. Neustupný and Björn H. Jernudd and later built upon by other scholars (Nekvapil, 2016). Its origin is linked with

Language Planning Theory in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, Language Management Theory is said to have developed through some additional features to Language Planning Theory (Nekvapil, 2009). Spolsky (2009) explains language management as one of the three major components of language planning. At a point both terms (language planning and language management) were used interchangeably but the slight differentiation and common preference for language management started in the beginning of the 21st century (Ozolins, 2013). Language management occurs at both individual (micro) and societal (macro) levels.

The theory recognizes the role of an authorized agent that identifies a language use problem and is required to proffer solutions that takes cognizance of all parties involved, applying bottom-up and or top-bottom approaches as deemed appropriate but not sticking to only one rigidly. The authorized agent may be the government at any level or a designate. It is noteworthy that at the micro level (like a family unit) the authorized agent may be the head of a family (the father).

One of the strengths of this theory is that it encourages pro-active actions in which prospective language use problems are envisaged and solutions worked out ahead of the manifestation of the problems in reality (Dovalil, 2014). It also recommends a comprehensive approach to language problem-solving procedure to take care of three levels namely, sociocultural/socioeconomic, communicative, and linguistic management, stressing that failure will be inevitable if any aspect is neglected (Dovalil, 2014). The place of negotiation cannot be overemphasized. The problem-solving agent must recognize that its power or authority is premised on its persuasive prowess as much as its education and social capital (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012). The agent should be wary of imposition of any idea, no matter how noble, lofty and beneficial it promises, on any section of the society.

Various approaches to Language Management Theory have been identified and according to Nekvapil and Sherman (2015), Mwaniki's theory of language management is a mix of precepts from decision-making theory, sociolinguistic theory, modernisation theory, systems theory, management theory [especially as advanced by the public value management paradigm], phenomenology, and human development theory that is pre-occupied with interest in understanding

and explanation of the interactive dynamics of language in society and language and society. This thus shows that for any language management approach to be successful, bits of knowledge, ideas and principles must be gleaned from various fields of human endeavour.

The Human Relations Theory

This theory arose from experiments conducted by a professor at Harvard named Elton Mayo in the 1920s. In the experiments known as the *Hawthorne* because they were carried out at the Hawthorne plant of Western Electric Company, some social and working conditions that could be easily overlooked were found to significantly and positively affect employees' productivity (McNamara, 2015). This approach to management emphasises the indispensability of group dynamics, teamwork and social interaction to organizational success. Organisational goals are easily achieved as co-workers are convinced of their managers' sincere concern about their well-being and care for the personal needs and development of all.

This theory's relevance to a language planning or management scenario is underscored by the success recorded in some countries that preceded implementation of their new language policies with extensive and intensive public enlightenment and advocacy in comparison with the failure of others that jumped into language policy implementation without adequate consideration for the need to appeal to the yearnings and preferences of the populace. Examples of the former are Australia and Burkina Faso (Oyetade, 2015). Nigeria obviously typifies the latter as exemplified by the failure to follow up on the policy statement that designates French Nigeria's second official language and recommends its extensive teaching till the end of secondary school education (Olatunji, 2013). The neglect of the language policy stipulations for the early primary school level of education is another manifestation of such "policy somersault" (Ogunjinmi, Ajibola and Akah, 2009; Yakubu, 2011; Awoyinfa, 2013).

Language Policies and Management in Nigeria and Papua New Guinea Compared

While it is disputable to claim that Nigeria has a well articulated, extensive and comprehensive language policy, Papua New Guinea has clear cut and explicitly articulated language policies. Nigeria is yet to

evolve an independent white paper to exclusively address language issues; all of the language related pronouncements of the Nigerian government are a little fraction of the National Policy on Education and the constitution. It can, however, be safely argued that if the policy statements scattered in the different documents have been successfully managed by the Nigerian government, the "no clear cut language policy" cries may not have arisen.

It is also noteworthy that the Nigerian government has been severally accused of low level commitment or outright non-commitment to the implementation of the few policy statements included in the NPE (Aminu, 2005; Hassan, 2005). For example, Emenanjo (1998) describes the inclusion of the conditional phrase "subject to availability of teachers" as reeking of lack of commitment. Other statements described as couched in "vague, effeminate and cautious escape" phraseologies are exemplified in the use of "government considers it to be of interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn …"

The phrase "considers it" implies that the government is not convinced while be encouraged to fails to show whose responsibility it is to "encourage" each child and how it is to be done. An imperative expression would have shown greater commitment on the part of the government than to be encouraged. The government is obviously not ready to give all it takes to employ enough language teachers roaming our streets unemployed.

The Papua Guinean government, on the other hand, has confronted the challenge of availability of teachers in practical terms by allowing each community to choose local people who have completed Grade 10 but no lengthy formal teacher training to be teachers as a result of their mother tongue competence in the indigenous languages. They are trained in about ten modules with practical teaching sessions to equip them to teach in the languages of the communities. Such people are paid 25% to 60% of that received by a certified primary school teacher with substantial incentives to go for formal teacher training (Klaus, 2003).

It is noteworthy that there is a similarity in the policy statements of both countries. The Nigerian government recommends the use of indigenous languages of the immediate environment of schools to be the languages of instruction up to the end of the third

year in the elementary school. Similarly, in Papua New Guinea, indigenous languages are used in the kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2 to provide basic literacy and equip children with both cognitive and emotional requirements to learn the second language (English). This means the two nations share the same principle of language use in education but the point of departure is in the number of formal schooling years in which indigenous languages are to be employed for school instruction. While the switch-over is to begin progressively as from the fourth year of formal elementary schooling in Nigeria, it is in the third in Papua New Guinea.

The statement that a child's mother tongue or the dominant language of the immediate environment of a school should be employed for school instruction as from the end of the third year seems to give a picture of promoting as many languages as possible for school instruction in Nigeria. But in actual practice, only languages of wider communication in plurilingual communities are imposed on all children in such communities. In fact, less than twenty Nigerian languages are used for mother tongue medium education at the primary school level (Oluwole, 2008). Adegbija cautions against this because it "smacks of linguistic assimilation" (Adegbija, 2004: 227). For example, Awonusi (2007) identified hundreds of local languages, example of which is Koma, that are mother tongues but hardly ever used for school instruction. Only three languages designated "national languages" (namely, Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo) seem to enjoy much patronage by Government (Emenanjo, 1998; Adegbija, 2004). This is not so in Papua New Guinea (PNG) as no effort is spared in ensuring that every language, no matter the minority status of its speakers, is employed for school instruction up to the stipulated time. According to UNESCO (2007) early primary education is provided in some 350 – 400 indigenous languages in PNG, thus justifying the claim that "no other country in the world uses local languages as widely as PNG." (p.10). Nigeria thus exemplifies the observation by Spolsky (2009) that language management has often taken the form of imposition of language practices on a lower domain and repression of factors that are non-linguistic in the process. But PNG is a positive exception to that seeming rule.

As pointed out by Klaus (2003), each community was particularly consulted and the proposed language reform was discussed

in detail, with individual parents given the opportunity to express their fears about it in PNG before implementation. Questions bordering on the cooperation expected from community members, the comparative prospects of jobs for children taught with indigenous languages and those taught in English only, and others were freely discussed. If any community expressed strong reservations about the literacy with indigenous language policy, the policy was not forced on them. International organisations were also consulted for advice and needed resources. Rushbrook and Wanigasekera (2004) too gave examples of Papua New Guinea's tradition of conducting a lot of research and advocacy before embarking on any educational reform. This has not been the case in Nigeria as most stakeholders are never consulted before Government's white papers are released on language issues, among other policy pronouncements (Olatunji, 2000; Kolawole, 1996). The declaration of French's elevation to the status of Nigeria's second official language in 1998 which Olatunji (2000) found that most secondary school principals were yet to be aware of up till late in the year 2000 is a case in point. Since most of such important expected implementers of the policy statement were unaware of it, one could safely conclude that a ridiculously overwhelming percentage of parents, students and other stakeholders too had never heard of it. This accounts for "stalemated" policies (Ohia, 1998).

Most guilty of non-conformity with the Nigerian government's stipulation of indigenous language based early primary education are private nursery and primary schools. Olatunji (2013) found that such schools go for the straight-for-English practice in response to the demands of their prospective clients who would eagerly withdraw their children if they find out that their children are being taught in an indigenous language. In fact, many private nursery and primary schools do not even teach any Nigerian indigenous language as a school subject, not to talk of making it medium of instruction. Sulaiman (2005) too observed a rapid growth in the number of private primary schools because parents rate such schools highly. Of course, the language factor is not the only reason. However, the use of English, believed to be a gateway to international relevance, has been proved to be a major factor (Olatunji, 2013). This shows Government's failure at enlightening the public on the advantages of the use of a child's mother tongue as

medium of school instruction over that of a borrowed or imposed language.

The description of the implementation process of the language policy in PNG shows gradualism. It was not given a blanket implementation nationwide. It spread progressively from community to community. The programme implementers thus never lost focus. This is unlike the much more populous Nigeria where similar programmes are supposedly kick-started nation-wide while many communities get little or no attention. This is a gross management error on the part of the Nigerian government.

Before the policy of the use of PNG's indigenous languages at the lower basic education level could kick off at all in 1993, it had been discussed for at least twenty years, with many pilot schemes carried out, relevant international influences utilised, and provincial as well as national inputs absorbed (Litteral, 2000; Klaus, 2003). The Nigerian government, on the other hand, hastily embarked on the release as well as half-hearted implementation of the use of indigenous languages for school instruction at the lower basic level while many scholars and other stakeholders were still raising questions about the Ife Six-Year Yoruba Project. The decision to make French a compulsory subject in the primary and junior secondary school but Non-vocational Elective at the Senior Secondary School (FGN, 2004:5) was taken with neither due consultations nor preparation. Therefore, it is not surprising that it has not been implemented at all twelve years after.

The PNG government acknowledges the widely accepted realization of governments' weakness as planners of language policies and the need to leverage the committed cooperation and contributions of the grassroots (Baldauf, 2012). This spells the effective management that has resulted in the success recorded. But the Nigerian government ignored this all-important fact and thus imposes language policies produced by parochial committees on the populace. Such policies are therefore not understood, appreciated or accepted by the generality.
UNESCO (2007) reported that English is used as language of instruction later in the primary school and continues through university education in PNG. Rushbrook and Wanigasekera (2004) noted that English for Vocational Purposes coded HLAN 144 with a 3 units credit status is one of the courses offered in the Bachelor of Education Degree in Technical and Vocational Education programme in PNG. This is similar to the

practice in Nigeria where it is impossible for a person to graduate from a university in any course whatsoever without passing at least one English Language course or the other. For example, The Use of English is a course that is very popular in monotechnics, polytechnics and universities throughout Nigeria. Even a candidate cannot gain admission to read any course in a Nigerian tertiary institution without a credit pass in English Language in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (Iroegbu, 2006; Oladunjoye, 2005; Olatunji, 2000).

English is Nigeria's first (but the only functional) official language in Nigeria, while French was announced by General Sanni Abacha as the second official language in 1998 (Olatunji, 2000). Papua New Guinea too has more than one official language: English, Tok Pisin (the widely spoken Melanesian Pidgin), and Hiri Motu (http://wwww.pressreference.com/No-Sa/Papua-New-Guinea.html). However, while only one of Nigeria's two official languages actually functions in that capacity (Olatunji, 2000), all of the three in PNG are really operational (Narokobi, 2008), a sign of being more realistic and committed to policy implementation and management than the former.

In the area of media language, both nations operate a multilingual policy. As there are news media using English language and others using indigenous languages in Nigeria, there are English medium newspapers like Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*,* The National*,* and The Independent (dailies), and Eastern Star *(biweekly) in PNG.* The indigenous language medium newspapers include Wantok Niuspepa, Nu Gini Toktok*,* and Hiri Nius (Narokobi, 2008).

Conclusion

This paper has shown that both Nigeria and Papua New Guinea share some features, such as multiplicity of languages as well as multilingual policy in language and communication, in common. The policies of both nations also indicate a preference for early primary education in the indigenous language medium. Papua New Guinea has, however, been shown to be more committed the language policy, resulting in more aggressive implementation and much more result-oriented management of its languages than Nigeria. This "gap between policy and practice" in Nigeria (Aminu, 2005) calls for attention.

Implications for Nigeria and Recommendations

The Nigerian government needs to know that the provisions made for indigenous languages in the National Policy on Education are not unattainable as some apologists of the Nigerian government's non-performance may want to suggest. If PNG, a much smaller nation with about five million people but many more languages (over 800), could successfully implement a multilingual policy in education, Nigeria that has fewer (about 500) languages to manage should be able to do better.

The PNG government was able to enlist the support and cooperation of its various community people through massive and intensive advocacy and deliberations. This is good language management in operation. The Nigerian government too needs to embark on serious advocacy among the citizenry to enlighten all that early education in the various indigenous languages would not make children forfeit any prospect of international level accomplishments. Conversely, it will help them have a good footing in their education.

The Nigerian government needs to commit more funds to proper implementation of her language policy in education, employ more teachers of and in indigenous languages in the primary schools and encourage more people to go for teacher training in indigenous languages of their choices, and ensure proper monitoring and management of the scheme.

Nothing should stop Nigeria from soliciting financial and material aids from international organisations concerned about indigenous languages for education in order to make a great success of the policy implementation. Papua New Guinea has a good story to tell the whole world as a result of such assistance.

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