

TRANSLATION, A PANACEA TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION WITH REFERENCE TO INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

By

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Abstract

The Nigerian National Policy on Education Stipulates that the Mother-tongue (MT) and / or Language of Immediate Community (LIC) should be the language of initial literacy at the pre-primary, junior primary levels, and non formal education. This objective has not been implemented over the years. Bearing in mind the importance of mother-tongue in the development and understanding of a child, this situation could negatively influence our children educational performances in schools. The thrust of this research is to study the role of translation in the implementation of this noble policy. This work also tries to proffer solutions that will help in the implementation of the National Policy of Education.

Key words: National policy on Education, Translation, Indigenous languages.

Introduction

In Nigeria, as well as most West African nations, formal education is traceable to the advent of European missionaries who saw education as an important tool for the spreading of the gospel. To this effect, they established and ran schools with a curriculum drawn to suit their aims and objective. The following subjects were taught: English composition, English grammar, arithmetic, geography, reading and writing. Infact, education was interwoven with Christianity. The Methodist Church of England, the CMS and the Catholic Church were all involved in the early establishment of schools. Each of them ran schools based on their own personal curriculum hence there education lacked uniformity.

Today, education in Nigeria is a huge venture that has witnessed the intervention and active participation of the government. Hence, the contradictions, ambiguities and lack of uniformity in educational practices that were prevalent in the early stage of formal education have been corrected by the presence of government.

However, the British system of education inherited after the Nigerian independence was no longer able to satisfy the national aspiration of the nation. Hence in 1969, a national curriculum conference was organized. The inherited curriculum was reviewed and new national goals for education were identified. As a nation with higher educational aspiration, in 1973, another seminar comprising of distinguished experts in education and related domains chaired by Chief S.O. Adegbo, former Permanent Representative of Nigeria at the United Nations was summoned by the government. The outcome and recommendations from this seminar constituted a major part of the 1977 National policy on Education (N.P.E). This document cuts across all domains and levels of education: pre-

primary, primary, secondary and tertiary. Since the publication of the 1977 edition, four other editions have been published.

This paper tries to evaluate and proffer solutions to the effective implementation of the NPE that has to do with indigenous languages.

1.0 Research questions

- a. What are the factors militating against the implementation of indigenous language policy
- b. This lack of implementation, is it traceable to faulty planning or faulty implementation
- c. What is the way forward?

2.0 Indigenous languages and the National Policy on Education

It is pertinent to have a clear understanding of the concept “policy” for a better appreciation of our corpus. The Business dictionary defines policy *as the basic principles by which a government is guided or the declared objectives that a government or party seeks to achieve and preserve in the interest of the nation*. Terry (1977) goes further to posit that *it is an overall guide that gives the general limits and direction in which administrative actions will take place*. It can be said that a policy is the lamp that lightens and direct the actions of a nation. In the view of Hoy and Miskel (1978:125), *policies are not only formulated but are also programmed, communicated, monitored and evaluated*. Hoy and Miskel are trying to make us realize that it is not enough to promulgate a policy. It should be monitored and evaluated after a period of time. Hence there are different policies for different domains.

2.1 Educational policy

Educational policies are initiatives mostly by the government that determine the direction of educational system Okoroma (2000:190). As it concerns education and indigenous languages, the NPE 1977 section 2 number 3 ... states that the objectives of the government is to:

- a. *ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will*
- b. *develop the orthography for many more Nigerian languages and*
- c. *produce textbooks in Nigerian languages.*

In section 3 number 4 of the same document, it goes further to explain that, *the 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*

The sixth edition of the NPE 2013: section 1 number 8g has this to say *...every child shall be taught in the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community for the first four years of basic education. In addition, it is expected that every child shall learn one Nigerian language.*

Section 2 number 16j of the same document states that

...ensure that the medium of communication will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will:

- a. *develop the orthography of more Nigerian languages*
- b. *and produce textbooks, supplementary reader and other instructional materials in Nigerian languages.*

A closer look at these two statement shows that both documents are saying the same thing but in 2013 edition, there is an addition which the government is not ready to enforce. Hence the statement is loose without power and authority of implementation.

*In addition, it is **expected** that every child shall learn one Nigerian language.*

What is expected of someone may not be what he does. He cannot be reprimanded for not doing it because from the statement he has the choice to do or not to do what is expected of him. It is just a wish. The above statement lacks the power of *monitoring and evaluating advocated* by Hoy and Miskel (1978:125). In the course of this study, the researcher tried to evaluate the implementation status of the NPE in Aba metropolis. Eighteen schools were randomly selected from both private and state schools. Most of the schools have primary and secondary. Data for this work was collected via oral interview from both staff and students of the selected schools.

Data

Table 1

Selected schools	No students in SS3	indigenous language students SS3	Percentage
1	40	5	12.5%
2	88	10	11.4%
3	40	5	12.5%
4	60	12	20%
5	100	17	17%
6	95	13	13%
7	45	6	13%
8	25	0	0%
9	35	5	14%
10	39	0	0%

Total number of students = 567

Total number of students offering Igbo = 73 Total percentage 13%

Table 2

Question – Which language (s) is your medium of instruction?

schools	Teachers response
1	English
2	English of course. We need our pupils to be fluent in English practice makes perfect
3	English and a little of the language of immediate community
4	English .vernacular is not spoken in the school except during Igbo studies
5	English and Igbo are used concurrently
6	English. We consider other tribes in our school.
7	English
8	Personally, I can't speak fluently the local language. I think most of us have the same problem

2.2 Our findings

From the above tables, we can deduce the following:

- a. In schools where they offer indigenous languages, majority of the students drop indigenous by the end of SS1. They manage to offer it in SS1 because every subject is compulsory at that level. They quickly thereafter.
- b. 13% of the students in SSCE offer indigenous languages in their WAEC/ GCE examination where it is expected that every child must offer a Nigerian languages.
- c. In some schools, Nigerian languages are not offered even at the junior WAEC level. In most schools indigenous languages are prohibited. Children are made to pay fine for speaking local languages in the school.
- d. In their pre-nursery and early primary schools, English is the medium of instruction.
- e. In one of the primary schools, Ogbor-hill Primary School II, a teacher stated that one cannot teach in the language of the immediate community with instructional materials such as books written in English. According to her, there should be a correlation between what the pupils are hearing and what they are reading. Hence for it to be implemented, books written in the mother tongue should be made available.
- f. Another teacher informed the researcher that even if they want to explain the topics in the mother tongue there are many concepts and terms in the primary science and other related subject which they are not familiar with in the mother tongue.

Based on the above result, the national policy on education as it concerns indigenous languages is not adhered to basically due to the following.

- Poor societal value for indigenous languages
- Lack of qualified teachers
- Lack of adequate instructional materials
- Lack of terminology in the indigenous languages.

This is in agreement to an earlier research by Okoroma (2003) cited in Okoroma (2006:251) who identified the following as the constraints that impede effective implementation of the NPE.

- inadequate qualified teachers
- insufficiency of funds
- inadequate teaching and learning facilities
- poor motivation of teachers, and
- lack of guidance and counseling services.

We must not fail to bring to our notice that this situation is principally not the fault of the planning but the poor adherence to what was planned. Hence, the production of qualified teachers which was why the National Institute of Nigerian Languages was instituted is been suffocated by politics. The development the orthography for many more Nigerian languages and production of textbooks in Nigerian languages advocated in the policy saw the light of the day and died immediately after birth.

3.0 The way forward

There is no problem without a solution hence, the researcher is of the opinion that translation can be of help in the effective implementation of the NPE. We are advocating the translation of the existing texts because most of the science teachers who could have written the needed instructional materials in the local languages are not familiar with the local languages in speech and in writing.

3.1 The concept of translation

The term translation has been defined differently by many translators and linguists, each of them supporting their point of view and the school of thought they belong. To the interpretative theorists of translation, translation has to be interpreted and the message therein is what should be translated (Lederer 1994:17) hence translation is not transcoding. In this process, a text has to be deverbaised; the deverbaisation will lead to comprehension. It is at this stage that the text is translated to achieve a positive and acceptable result. To the linguistic theorist, translation is a process of substitution (Catford 1965:95) that is why he sees translation as the replacement of textual materials in one language by equivalent textual materials into another language. On the other hand, the propagators of the semiotic theory are of the opinion that whatever is said in one language could be said in another. It is important to note that all these processes are involved in the act of translation. No one theory is able to cater for all the processes needed. There are other theories which we did not mention here. For the purpose of this work we define translation as *“the transposition as faithful as possible the message of a written text from one language to another.”* Transposition here does not imply one of the translation strategy propagated by Vinay and Darbelnet (1967:48-50). It involves an indebt study of the text which handles all the above mentioned processes of translation. It will take into consideration the culture of the language involved, the nature of the text, the style of the author, the domain of the text, the pragmatics information in the text and everything that surrounds the text. The purpose of the work is to make available the needed teaching material in Nigerian languages through the process of translation. Our main target is the preprimary and the first three years in the primary school which the NPE stipulates that their medium of instruction should be the mother tongue and/or the language of the immediate community.

As a case study we have chosen to translate a text for Basic Science two pupils titled Evans Modular Primary Science and Technology written by A.T Hassam, D.A. Maxwell and A.S. Falaiye

3.2 Lesson 7 Air Flotation

<p>Air floatation</p> <p>Air flotation is the process whereby some objects move about in the air before dropping on the ground. In this chapter, we shall learn about things that float in the air, and how to make things float in the air.</p> <p>We have learnt in book 1 that air has weight and occupy space</p> <p>When an object is thrown into the air, it displaces some volume of air from the space it was occupying. The volume of air displaced has weight.</p> <p>When the weight of the air displaced is equal to the weight of the object, the object floats in the air. Also, If the weight of the air displaced is greater than the weight of the object, the object does not only float but continues rising in the air.</p> <p>If however, the weight of the air displaced is less than that of the object, the object does not float: It drops to the ground immediately.</p>	<p>Nrùghàrí íhé n'ìkùrkù</p> <p>Nrùghàrí íhé n'ìkùrkù bụ úsoro íhé jì</p> <p>èjéghàrí n'ìkùrkù òtákirí ogè túpú ọ dàá n'àlà.</p> <p>Nà àgbà nkà, ànyí gà- àmù gbàsàrá íhé ndí</p> <p>nà - érugghàrí n'ìkùrkù, n' àkwà òtù èsì èmé kà há</p> <p>rùghàríá n'ìkùrkù.</p> <p>N'ákwùkwọ nké m bụ ànyí mātàrà nà n'ìkùrkù nwèrè</p> <p>áru na- éwèkwa ọnọdu.</p> <p>Á tūlīé íhé n'élú é were ógó ikùrkù íhé áhu nà - ènúpù</p> <p>nà ọnọdu yá. Ikùrkù áhu é núpùrú nwèrè áru. Mgbè</p> <p>áru ikùrkù é núpùrú n' ọnọdu. yá dī nhātàhà yá nà áru</p> <p>íhé áhu á tūliri élú, íhé áhu á tūliri élú gà ná-érughàrí</p> <p>n'ìkùrkù.</p> <p>Ọzọ, ọ buru nà áru ikùrkù é núpùrú kàriri áru íhé áhu á</p> <p>tūliri. Ọgbúghí nāāni nà íhé áhu gà nà- érugghàrí</p> <p>n'ìkùrkù ọ gākwa ná àbágo élú élú ikùrkù.</p> <p>Ọzọkwa ọ buru nà áru ikùrkù é núpùrú dī ntà má á</p> <p>átùyeré yá nà íhé áhu á tūliri élú. íhé áhu á tūliri élú</p> <p>ágāghí érugghàrí n'ìkùrkù ọ gà ádā</p> <p>òzùbgo òzùbgo.</p>
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NB. Some of the diacritics in the Igbo version are not included because they can't be found in the conventional keyboard. (Igbo scholars take note).

3.3 Commentary on the translation

- a. **Air floatation.** A word for word translation (literal translation) of the title of the topic will send a wrong message to the readers of the target text. To arrive at the intention of the writer or the message, the method of explanation was employed. From the text it is not the air that is floating but the object thrown into the air. Hence for air floatation, we have “*Ńrughàrí íhé n'ìkùkù*”. another option would have been “*Íhé irughàrí n'ìkùkù*”
- b. The terms “**space**” “displace” was a little difficult to find. But a qualified translator is capable of creating a new term in a situation where he could not excavate the needed term in the target language. For these terms we had the following options:
 Space - *ohere* , *onodu* *Ohere* could mean space as in *nyetu m ohere* (give me space) which is somehow figurative.
Ohere : Time as in *e weghi m ohere* (I don't have time)
onudu : position as in *onudu m dirim* (let my position be for me)
onudu: condition- *onudu adigi mma* (my condition is not good)
 We preferred to choose *onudu* because it is closer in meaning to the message. This is so because something that has a position is also occupying a space
- c. **Displace:** In this context, the term displace implies the removal of an object from its position with a push. The Igbo term “*nwepu*” will not produce the same effect as in the target language. It will mean taken an object and putting it in another position. The effect of push will not be felt. This will result to a great loss in meaning. Hence the word “*inupu*” was chosen. Many other translation procedures were employed to arrive at an acceptable translation

4.0 General analysis

A closer look at the translated text shows that

- a. A text is provided in the mother tongue within a short space of time
- b. Terms that were not familiar to the pupils have been provided
- c. The reading of such text in the indigenous language will awake the nostalgia for our mother tongue.
- d. By reading texts in the indigenous languages, our children will unconsciously and effortlessly learn to speak, read and write in the indigenous languages.

Conclusion

Based on the above stipulated observation from our corpus, it is not an over statement to say that the availability of reference or instructional materials via translation attracts multiple benefits. In the book of proverbs 22:6 the Bible says “Train up a child in the way he/she should go and when he/she is old they will not depart from it” if these advantages are harnessed and inculcated into the life of our children, we will not be facing the near extinction of most of our indigenous languages which stares at us. It is important to note that all hands must be on deck. Translators, linguists, lexicographers, technicians, professionals from all woks of life should all come together and speak with one voice to salvage our mother tongue.

The government should inaugurate committees which are made up of the above mentioned class of people. The committee should be financed and mandated to translate some of the already existing books for onward usage for teaching and learning. The National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN) which stands as the melting pot of Nigerian languages should arise and take such responsibilities also because they have qualified translators that could handle this problem and move the indigenous languages forwards. People who studied indigenous languages in their bachelor degree should be encourage to study translation at the PdG and Master's level. This will make available enough hands to handle this problem. It is also important to note that good bilingual and monolingual dictionaries are very necessary. The government should also look into that direction if they really want to implement what is stipulated in the NPE.

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