

MODULE 3 LINKING LANGUAGE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Unit 1	Tracing the Paradigms Shifts in National Development
Unit 2	The Relationship between Language and National Development
Unit 3	Language and Nigerian National Development Objectives
Unit 4	Language in a Multicultural Community

UNIT 1 TRACING THE PARADIGM SHIFTS IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous module, we examined the issue of development. We attempted a comprehensive understanding of development, theories of development, Millennium Development Goals, National Development, and Nigerian development objectives. In this module we shall look at the link between language and development. The first unit of this unit dwells on the paradigm shift in national development. In times past, the idea of language and national development would have sounded completely out of place. However, the fact that we are talking about it is a big recognition that development paradigm shifts from one base to another. Consequently, we identify the movement of national development paradigms from the physical paradigm to the foreign aid paradigm and finally to the human resources paradigm.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define paradigm shift;
- trace the paradigm shifts in national development; and
- discuss the various shifts in national development paradigms.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 What is Paradigm Shift?

The philosopher, Thomas Kuhn (1962) popularized the idea of paradigm shift in his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Kuhn used the concept of paradigm shift to express the path of scientific progress. He holds that advancement in science and knowledge occurs as a result of revolutionary break with a dominant worldview. Thus, Kuhn holds that a paradigm shift takes place when a dominant worldview or assumption is abandoned for a new worldview or assumption. Taking from the above, we define paradigm shift as a change from one way of viewing the world to another. For example, the movement from the Ptolemaic system which upholds the earth as the centre of the universe to the Copernican system which holds that the sun is at the centre of the universe is a paradigm shift. Kuhn applied the term, specifically, to science and epistemology. However, scholars have since noted that these are not the only fields where paradigm shifts occur. Indeed, they recognise that the same process, as described by Kuhn, takes place in almost all fields of study. Our examination of paradigm shift in national development is done based on this understanding. In what follows we examine the changes that have taken place in the understanding of what constitutes national development.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Define paradigm shift.

3.2 The Physical Paradigm

The physical paradigm in national development emphasizes the role of technology in development. The neoclassic theorists of development like Solow (1956) and Denison (1961) hold that investment in physical structures (technology) is the key to national development. The great advancement of the European societies that took place from 18th century is seen as consequence of great achievements in technological innovations. These were periods in which the steam engines, the cotton mills, the automobiles, and so on were invented and mass-produced. These inventions were seen as responsible for the advancement of society where they existed into industrial societies. Compared with societies that existed before it, the industrial society brought into focus a new way of satisfying human needs in large scale. For instance, the possibility of mass-producing goods for a large number of people was for the first time actualized. Besides the mass production, which it made possible, the technology that came with the industrial revolution meant that those nations that have invested heavily in technological productions were far ahead of other societies in taking care of their citizens as the technology also brought with it massive wealth for those nations that have invested in it. It also provided employment for a large pool of citizens of nations that have adopted it. The material well-being that accompanied this called the attention of other nations that investment in technology would bring tremendous transformation of their societies and improve the life of citizens. Thus, nations who lack capacity for original productions of technology sought avenues to transfer technology from technologically advanced countries.

The accumulation of physical capital did not better the lives of citizens of those nations who adopted that approach. This discovery led to rethinking of national development paradigm. Obasi (1987) writes that the “level of skepticism was even heightened when the world witnessed the speed and tempo with which the economies of war wrecked countries like Germany, Japan, etc. had recovered the devastating destruction and setbacks due to the second world war.” The consequence of this is that technology and its allied products were seen as not being enough to drive national development. Such African countries that bought wholly to it despite massive investment in technology witnessed a massive decline in industrialization. For instance, Ake (2003) is of the opinion that:

The growth rate in the manufacturing sector, which was 8.5 percent in 1960-65, declined to 3.6 percent in 1980-81 and to 0.4 percent in 1982-83. The growth rate of the mining sector, which was 18.5 percent in 1965, fell to -13.2 percent in 1981-82 and to -24.6 percent in 1982-83. In agriculture, the growth rate declined from 1.4 percent in 1960-65 to 0.4 percent in 1982-83. In the food sector, the growth rate declined from 1.6 percent in 1960-65 to 0.2 percent in 1982-83. Food self-sufficiency ratios dropped from 98 percent in the 1960s to 86 percent in 1980.

SELF- ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Show your understanding of the factors that led to the rise and fall of emphasis on the physical paradigm as the engine of national development.

3.3 The Foreign Aid Paradigm

As captured earlier, the experience of Germany and Japan in recovering from the most devastating destruction of World War II saw development experts attempt to discover what made those countries rise from the pit of destruction to world beaters in less than ten years. A number of reasons were professed for this. Two of these reasons stand out. Firstly, and especially with Germany, the nations were seen as having survived because of the Marshall Plan (a massive capital aid provided to Germany following the World War II years for national reconstruction). Secondly, some researchers feel that these countries' human resources were engine to their recovery.

For reasons unaccounted for, more emphasis was first placed on the foreign aid paradigm. The foreign aid paradigm was built on the understanding that development of the third world countries lies in their partnership with developed countries. Indeed it was felt that this sort of partnership would ensure the developed countries also amend for their imperial activities that impoverished the third world, especially in Africa, Asia and South America. It must be noted that amending for national imperial crimes was not the only factor that drove foreign aid to the developing countries. Another important factor was the Cold War. Both the Western and Soviet blocs gave massive aids to the third world countries in order to win to their ideological sides.

Generally, the thinking that foreign aids were key to development in developing nations seemed widespread. Thus, as reported by Ake (2003) the World Bank in 1989 said that for almost thirty years beginning with 1970 the foreign aid to Africa has increased annually by 7%. What prospered this increase was the thinking that with enough dollars in the hands of the citizens of the third world countries they would be able to invest heavily in economic activities that are life enhancing. Thus, in essence, the aids were targeted at the poor citizens of the undeveloped countries.

But did the aids achieve their targets? The answer is *no*. Three factors are responsible for this. One, most of the aids found themselves in the hands of corrupt politicians and private individuals who converted the aids into their private property. Two, the poor do not live in a place and this makes it difficult to assemble them together and dish out the aids. Third, the poor do not have different taste from that of the rich. Thus, the few who got the aids concentrated on meeting their luxurious tastes instead of investing the aids in a productive venture.

Thus, after about four decades of foreign aids, it is discovered that the undeveloped countries are still poorer. Their GDPs remain the lowest in the world and higher percentage of their citizens live on less than \$1 per day. Maternal and child mortality rates are still very high in the undeveloped countries and they have the highest number of uneducated citizens. This means that the foreign aids paradigm did not achieve the desired national development.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

List the three factors that influenced the failure of foreign aids national development paradigm.

3.4 The Human Resources Paradigm

The failure of the foreign aid paradigm in bringing about improvement in the living conditions of third world countries called for a rethink. This rethink led to the discovery that the role of foreign aid in the revival of Germany was overemphasized. Scholars then started to look out for a factor that was common both to Germany and Japan. Human capital was identified as something the two nations had in common: a national pool of educated citizens, a conscious and critical masses that could raise important questions at the appropriate time. This led to the conviction that human resources hold the key to national development.

This way the human resources paradigm became the most recent paradigm in national development. It places emphasis on human persons as agents of national development. One of the earliest expressions of this view is that of Harbison (1973) who states that:

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agents who accumulate capitals, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development.

Proponents hold that the gap between the core and periphery nations is the gap between emphasis on human capital. Thus, those western nations who have made great developmental strides are said to have done so on the heels of massive investment on human development. In this regard, Denison (1962) argued that the source of western development is neither economics nor technology but human. He demonstrated further (1985) that the economic growth of the United States between 1929 and 1982 owes 73% of it to human resource development whereas physical capital added 17%, land development added 0%.

Aziz (2003) used the examples of Japan and Germany after World War II to show that national development is propelled by human factors, not economics or physical. He shows that the two nations witnessed massive infrastructural destruction as well as high economic difficulties following World War II but were able to rise above these setbacks as a result of their pre- and post-war investments in human development. He writes thus:

The only resources that these two countries still had were their people. Through effective use, within thirty years, they became competitors of their erstwhile occupiers. Their example shows that human resources play a major part in the process of national development.

Consequently, nations seeking to develop are expected to invest heavily in human capital (Uppal, 2003). This investment as captured by Todaro (1993) and Uppal (2003) involves training in skill acquisition, abilities, health that result from investment on education, on-the-job training programmes and medical care, cultural outlooks, attitudes towards work and desire for self-improvement. It also includes morality, attitude towards corrupt practices, and so on.

Aziz (2003) emphasizes education as the most important way of improving human resources. He draws attention to the educational gap that exists between developed and undeveloped nations. The thinking is that if the undeveloped nations invest on education, the huge population of people within their territories will turn them into world beaters.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Mention two countries whose success is often used as justification of the human resources paradigm.

3.5 Nigeria and Human Resource Development: The Case of Humanistic Disciplines

The current thinking that human resources are the key to national development seems to be bought by our country, Nigeria. This is easily visible in the emphasis placed on education by Nigeria. Though funding remains minimal, teacher-student ratio is poor, and the teacher is poorly remunerated, Nigeria has witnessed a massive increase in the number of schools, primary, secondary and tertiary. This has led to increase in the number of school leavers and graduates in Nigeria. The basis of comparison between the situation as it is now and as it was in the 1960 at independence does not exist.

Despite the above noted increase and improvement in educational activities, Nigeria still remains one of the undeveloped nations of the world. This seems to be putting a lie to the human resources paradigm as engine for national development. Thus, the question is like this: Why has Nigeria remained a third world country despite improvement in education?

The question takes us back to the basics. The massive investment Nigeria has made on education is focused mainly on the technical disciplines. There is a disproportional emphasis on the physical science, technology and engineering education. The Humanistic disciplines of the Arts and the Social Sciences have been neglected. What this means is that we have concentrated our national efforts more on the production of skilled workers, without impacting in them, the humanistic principles.

The dexterity of Nigerian experts in their different fields of endeavours cannot be questioned. But we must go back to inquire about what still keeps our nation backward despite the efforts of its experts. The answer to this lies in the halfhearted advances Nigeria makes towards the humanistic disciplines. These disciplines are better suited for bringing out the critical

spirit in the human person. They help to bring out the best in man as agent of development.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

How do you account for the low attention paid to the the humanistic paradigm in Nigeria?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Development paradigm has shifted emphasis to human resources paradigm. Under this regimen, human resources are seen as the engine that drives national development. We traced all the previous national development paradigms projected in the past and showed the weaknesses that contributed to their inability to drive national development.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the meaning of paradigm shift. You have also studied the various paradigm shifts undergone by national developments. In this light, you were exposed to physical paradigm, foreign aid paradigm, and human resources paradigm. You also learnt the need for investment into the humanistic disciplines.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Demonstrate your understanding of the cause of the gap between the developed and the undeveloped countries.
2. Define paradigm shifts.
3. Describe how low attention paid to the humanistic paradigm affect national development in Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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- Edward, Denison (1962). *The Source of Economic Growth in the United States* New York: National Bureau on Economic Research.
- Edward Denison (1985). *Trends in American Growth 1929-1983*, Washington DC: Brooklins Institution.
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- Michael P. Todaro (1989). *Economic Development in the Third World*, 4th ed. New York: Longman.

UNIT 2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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 - 3.1 Language, Thought and National Development
 - 3.2 Language as the Tool for Communicating National Development
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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we studied the paradigm shift in national development. We also traced the shifts that national development has undergone. In this unit, we shall look at the relationship between language and national development.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the relationship between language, thought and national development;
- describe how language communicates national development; and
- identify the role of language in documenting national development.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to

Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Language, Thought and National Development

Languages are said to represent state of affairs other than themselves. This traditional view of languages captures adequately the fact that language is the tool used to bring realities into existence. The human achievements are said to be products of intensive thinking and reflections. This at times fails to recognize the role language also plays in thinking. Indeed, language is so central to thinking or thought that no thought is possible where language is absent. We refer to the lower animals as insentient beings, that is, beings that neither think nor feel. The ground for this assumption is the recognition that animals do not talk.

This understanding has led many scholars to conclude that the limits of language are the limits of thought. The implication of this is that human thought is only able to think those things which have only been fashioned by language. We recognize the term, national development as product of human thought. However, following our understanding that no thought is possible without language, national development is at the same time the product of language. Thus, the formulation of the term, national development, is made possible simply because as human beings we have the capacity to use language. This point should stand as the first proof of the relationship between language and national development, where language is seen as giving birth to the term, national development.

Actually, the relationship goes further than just noted. For beyond its capacity to name objects, to call into existence non-existent terms, language also assigns meanings to the products of thought. Thus, the definition of the term, national development, which we gave in Module 2 of this course is made possible simply because we have a language that makes it possible to assign meaning to invented words. To this end, our understanding of national development rests on language, without whose intervention, the term, national development will be an empty sound signifying nothing. The same applies to all the goals of development which we have encountered in this course.

The point being espoused here is that national development is only initiated with the use of language.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Trace the connection between language, thought and national development.

3.2 Language as the Tool for Communicating National Development

National development is not a private property of an individual no matter his position in a country. Thus, not even a president or prime minister of a nation can claim ownership of his nation's national development. An individual or group of them may be responsible for the formulation of what constitutes national development or its objectives for a country. But in so far as these have been appropriated by a nation such objectives ceases to be their personal property. It now belongs to the whole nation.

How then do we make this national property available to the whole populace? This is where language plays a role. Thus, the communication of national development is made possible only with the instrumentality of language. We communicate to our citizens the objectives we want to achieve in our national development. We use language to advance to them the best possible reasons in support of these objectives, projecting in the best possible manner the advantages which we expect to draw from the national development objectives. Also, we detail for them how the outlined goals should be achieved. Also, when progress is made with reference to the national development objectives it is also communicated to the citizens. All these are majorly done by the use of language.

Also, the process of criticising and assessing of national development are done with the instrumentality of language.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the role of language in communicating national development.

3.3 Language as a Tool for Documenting National Development

We can never overemphasize the importance of documentation. It is the tool with which we preserve the various human achievements. Preserving these achievements is quite important as it makes them available to future generations. Language stands out as the most important tool for this preservation. Think of the various books that you read whose history stretched from many years ago, your Bible or Qur'an for instance. Also

think of the many oral stories about past people from your tribe which you have heard. As you think of these remember the various use you have committed them into in the past. That powerful quote from the Bible or Qur'an or any other that suited your foul mood, and so on.

Johnson cited in Crystal (2002) points out the role of language in documenting development when he holds that “languages are the pedigree of nations.” Crystal emphasizes the word, *pedigree*, and holds that it refers to ancestry, lineage or descent. Thus what each nation has achieved, the mistakes it made as well as external relations it held with other nations are preserved by means of language for posterity to know, use and learn from. Edward and Sienkewicz (1990), in observing the importance of language in documenting national development, quote Mamadou Kouyate, a Malian griot thus:

We are vessels of speech, we are the repositories which harbor secrets many centuries old... We are memory of mankind; by the spoken word we bring to life the deeds and exploits of kings for younger generations.

The griots are human repository of history. The above passage reckons that they cannot perform their duties without the use of language.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the role of language in documenting national development.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Language is an important variable in national development. Indeed, it can be said that development will be completely impossible without the phenomenon of human language. Both the formulation of the term, *national development*, and the articulation of what constitutes it are only possible because there is language to express them.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you were exposed to the relationship between language and national development. You learnt that the formulation of national development as a term is only possible because of the phenomenon of language. You also learnt that language is the tool for communicating and documenting national development.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Discuss the role of language in documenting national development.
2. Discuss the role of language in communicating national development.
3. Trace the connection between language, thought and national development.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 LANGUAGE AND NIGERIAN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we examined the relationship between language and national development. In this unit, we look out for Nigeria's national development objectives and search out the roles language can play in bringing about those objectives.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the role language plays in ensuring a free and democratic Nigeria;
- identify the role of language in ensuring national unity;
- explain the role of language in building egalitarian Nigeria; and
- show the role of language in the Building of a Great and Dynamic Economy.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.

- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 The Role of Language in Building a Free and Democratic Nigeria

The relationship between language and democracy as well as language and free society may not be immediately clear to a casual observer. But the truth is that language is related to both democracy and free society that it can contribute greatly in building a free and democratic society.

First the relationship between democracy and language is visible in the fact that while democracy thrives on aggregating views and demands of diverse people and groups, language serves as the tool of assembling these diverse views. Wieman (1942) argues that the community nature of democracy makes language a condition sine qua non for democracy. Commenting on this, he writes that:

A democracy is a community that is governed by leaders who are ruled by the values which the people express. If the people cannot communicate their values with that fullness and efficacy by which their interests can become the ends sought and conserved by the government, we cannot have a democracy. Our contention is that such communication requires a language potent in the six ways noted. Language is democracy when language carries the full load of a people's most cherished meanings from each to all and back again from all to each.

This means that language is the tool with which the diverse perspectives of individuals and groups, their vital interests of all sorts are communicated to those in power. This makes communication, facilitated in every way by language, a necessity for democracy. And we can easily prove that, most of

the times, the difference between political requests acceded to and those not acceded to is the difference between the language used in packaging, presenting, and projecting the requests. This attests to the fact that one who wants to be heard and who seeks to have his needs catered for in a democracy must express so in language, in a beautiful language. This means that words do not command equal respects. One who has coined his presentation with good and beautiful words is more likely to have his requests attended to in a democracy. Experience easily tells us that not all persons are gifted with the ability to use language in a compelling manner. The inability to do so in itself is a stumbling block for one who wants active participation in politics. Such a one, if for instance he is elected to the National Assembly, may not be able to express the needs of his constituency in a coherent and competent manner. This relationship between democracy and language has always been the case even during the ancient period when success in the ancient Greek democracy depended on one's ability to put one's point in excellent language. Wieman (1942) expresses the point well with his view that language is activative. He writes that: "since democracy rests upon persuasion leading to action, it is obviously important that a language be fully activative." An activative language as used by Wieman here is a type of language that can move people to action.

Thus, since democracy is a government of citizens in union, the active communication of citizens is a sine-qua-non for its survival. The resolution of necessary differences that arise as a consequence of interpersonal differences are made possible by language.

Besides its role in helping to build a democratic Nigeria, language can also play a great role in ensuring a Nigeria where the freedom of citizens thrives. Commenting on the role of language in promoting a free society, Wieman (1942) writes that "this is not merely a matter of freedom of speech, press, assemblage, and worship. Such freedom may only magnify confusion and mutual frustration, if the language of expression is not effective in transmitting the real valuing of one group or class to the others involved."

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the relationship between language and democracy.

3.2 The Role of Language in Building Egalitarian Nigeria

There is a natural connection between language and equality. This can be seen in the fact that all human beings make use of language and that this use of language makes all human beings equal. Thus, despite the external realities suggesting otherwise, the natural situation is that we are all equal. The natural egalitarianism established by language can serve as impetus for Nigerians to view themselves as equals. This means that people are to be treated equally in the distribution of societal gains and pains. No person is to enjoy any advantage or disadvantage on account of his or her social status, ethnicity, religion, and so on.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the role of language in building an egalitarian Nigeria.

3.3 The Role of Language in Building a United, Strong and Self-Reliant Nigeria

Nigeria is often presented as a diverse nation. This diversity is manifest in the number of ethnic groups, religion, language and so on that exist in the country. Based on this diversity, some people arrived at the conclusion that Nigeria cannot survive as a united country. Positions like the above have fanned embers of division within the Nigerian polity. However, a closer look at the Nigerian languages reveals that they can be source of unity for the country. The language family trees studied in Module 1 show that most Nigerian languages belong in the same language family. For instance, such languages like Fulani, Igbo, Edo, Yoruba, etc. belong in the same Niger-Congo family of languages. This points to cultural and blood affinity between these groups. Obafemi (2012) comments on this issue thus: “What the above reveals is that most Nigerian languages are inter-related in the final analysis, and they ought really not to provide a basic reason for ethnic fractionalization and disunity.”

What the above shows is that language can be exploited in fostering a united Nigeria. When Nigeria is united, when all of its part sees themselves as the same because they take into account their interrelatedness, it will give room for cooperation. This cooperation will in no small measure make the country strong and self-reliant.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Describe how language can engender national unity in Nigeria?

3.4 Language and the Building of a Great and Dynamic Economy

The multiplicity of languages in Nigeria has been conceived by scholars in negative terms. This is only a manifestation of wrong understanding of the role language can play in national development. Indeed, language plays a major role in improving Nigeria's economy and can still play further roles. The multiplicity of languages in Nigeria has served as a source of employment to a good number of Nigerian peoples who serve as teachers of these languages. Also, another group of Nigerians serve as translators in order to mediate communication between different language users. This, equally, has served as means of employment to such people. Thus, developing more Nigerian languages will help in no small measure in diversifying the economy and creating more jobs for a new set of people.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Demonstrate your understanding the role language plays in building a great and dynamic economy in Nigeria.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Nigerian National Development Objectives articulates a number of development initiatives the country intends to pursue. Actualizing those objectives is quite important if the country will move from its status as undeveloped country and join the region of developed countries. In this unit, we have examined the role language can play in actualizing the nation's development objectives.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that language has important roles to play in the actualization of Nigeria's national development objectives. We examined the national objectives and pointed out the various roles language can play in bringing them into reality. Consequently you learnt that language can play a role in building a free and democratic Nigeria, in building egalitarian Nigeria, in building a united, strong and self-reliant Nigeria, in building a great and dynamic economy.

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UNIT 4 LANGUAGE IN A MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY

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 - 3.7 Importance of Multilingualism
- 4.0 Conclusion
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we studied the role language can play in the actualization of Nigeria's national objective. In the present unit we shall look at the role the community plays in human language. The interconnection of language and community is expressed in the fact that language is the product of the community, at the same time it is language that makes community life possible. In what follows, you will discover the mutual relationship that exists between language and the community. Besides this, you will be made to understand the use of language in a multicultural society like ours.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain relationship between language and community;
- describe the impossibility of private language;
- explain how to use language in a multicultural society; and
- articulate the importance of multilingualism.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Community and the Making of Language

Language is a community property. This means that it is the common agreement of community that gives meaning to our sounds, signs and marks. Community as being used here connotes users. Thus, anybody who can speak a language, who can converse meaningfully and coherently in any language is part of the ownership of that language. It is this community of language users that assign every word of a language the meaning it bears. Commenting on the above point, Ewelu (2008) writes that:

Language, as we know, is symbolic and, as such, it is made up of conventional signs whose significations are determined by the common agreement of the users. One comes to understand and use these signs correctly by the training given to one by the community. This same community agreement, the community way of using words and sentences, serves as a criterion for correct and incorrect use.

Besides the fact that the meaning of signs of a language is determined by community, the usage of these signs is also made in a community. What this means is that anyone who makes use of language makes use of it in the presence of others. But you might have witnessed a person conversing with himself and may think that his action invalidates our point. The truth is that such a person presupposes a community. He imagines a hearer in his mind and what you regard as his soliloquy is actually being addressed

to this invisible hearer. This understanding follows from our earlier discussion in unit 1 above that language plays communicative function. Thus, the community is supposed in the language function of communication. We do not communicate with ourselves. We do so with others.

Another factor that points to the community nature of language is the fact that language learning is done within a community. We have children and adults learning new languages as our example here. They learn the languages they speak simply because others taught them. No person staying on his own, without contact with at least one person speaking a particular language has ever mastered such a language. Consequently, we can also say that it is the community that gives its language to someone in order to integrate him as a member. Were the community to shut itself up from such a member, the language of the community will forever be unavailable to such a person.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Demonstrate your understanding of the role of the community in the making of a language.

3.2 The Impossibility of Private Language

The Austrian linguistic philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, was the first person to make reference to private language. And by private language he means a language whose words are invented by an individual, and these words refer only to what such individual alone knows. No other person can understand such a language except the one who has invented it. (Wittgenstein 1968).

We may have witnessed individuals draw up some codes. We may argue that these codes are for their own understanding and that the information which the codes convey is meant only for them. Based on the above, one may be tempted to regard such codes as private language. However, in the definition of *private language* given above, a code does not qualify. This is because, a code can be understood by others when explained to them and the objects about which the codes are made are also known. Also, codes are written in languages already known by others.

The discussion in the paragraph above helps us to understand that there is no such a thing as private language. Indeed, the term private language refers to no known language. This reinforces our argument that language

has a public or community character. It cannot be owned by one person alone. Thus, there is no such a thing that is known only to one person in the world. If such a language exists it will fail to meet the most important function of language which is **communication**.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Define private language.

3.3 Multicultural Community

The term multicultural is self-explanatory. It means many cultures. Thus, a multicultural community is a society where many cultures exist. If we allude to the definition of culture as our way of doing things, a multicultural context is about a society which has many ways of doing things. To explain our point in a simple manner, let us take transportation as an example. Air is a way of travelling, land is another, and sea is also another way of travelling. A society that can travel by air, land and sea can be said to be multicultural. Also, a society where more than one religion exists side by side can also be said to be multicultural.

The depiction above is quite simplistic even though it also captures the meaning of multicultural in its simplest form. In a more academic sense, multicultural refers to the existence of many distinct human groups in a society. The distinctive qualities here are skin colour, language, moral, belief system, ideology, ethnicity and so on. The most visible arena of multicultural is the urban centre. Urbanization opens up a place for people with different backgrounds and cultures. In most cases, these people arrive the urban areas with the cultural practices, ethos and prejudices of the groups they left behind. In a multicultural context, everyone is allowed to practise his culture without let or hindrance. He is also allowed to take from the culture of his neighbour or colleague at work any element that he fancies.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the view that the most visible arena of multicultural is the urban centre.

3.4 Language Use in a Multicultural Community

The use of language in a multicultural context is a careful activity. It is mediated with reason and caution as people are passionate with their

culture. They see culture as proof of their achievements as human beings. They feel that any denigration of their cultures is tantamount to the denigration of their humanity. Thus, the jealous protection which individuals accord to their cultures exists because they see their cultures as extension of themselves. Thus, to disparage a culture entails disparaging the owners of that culture.

A person who lives in a multicultural society is ever conscious of his use of language. Language use entails what is said and how it is said. It demands that a user of language is conscious of the various meanings words of the same language possess among different cultural groups that make use of the same language in the same society. This consciousness demands respect from the language user. What is required here is the recognition that his own culture and that of others are equal. Taylor (1994) holds that the reason for this respect is the fact that “all human cultures that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings.” This is the basis of the equality being advocated here.

The respect which a language user accords to other cultures does not imply that other cultures should not be criticized when their customs and practices fall below certain expectations. Rather what is called for is respect-in-criticism. This insists that one should not use foul language but should rather be constructive. For instance, one who wants to criticize the old practice of killing twins among certain Nigerian cultures does not begin to call those cultures barbaric. Rather, one should point out the fact that they violate certain human rights.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Discuss what constitute the proper use of language in a multicultural society.

3.5 Multilingualism in a Multicultural Society

Multilingualism depicts the existence of more than one language in a society. It also captures the ability of an individual to speak more than one language. The first depiction that deals with multiplicity of language within a society is the concern of this section. The problem of multilingualism in a multicultural setting is how to manage the tensions that accompany language contacts. Most of such contacts entail struggle for exclusive domination and supremacy between the languages. Expectedly, the major languages win. But we can as well inquire into

what makes such languages major. A combination of factors is responsible. The most prominent of these are population of speakers, power capital invested on the language and politics.

Indeed, multilingualism entails that the languages are encouraged to accommodate one another. Linguists observe that each of the world's about six thousand languages has something peculiar to offer the world. They hold a secret to how people using such language adapted in a harsh environment different from ours. The vocabularies, idioms, and proverbs of such languages are warehouse of information concerning the mechanisms of such adaptation. Thus, to allow such a lie to die as a result of domination by another language means that the world has lost an instrument of understanding the world. Such argument as we just presented is on top whenever multilingualism is urged.

However, the problem still remains how to maintain social relation and communication in such an environment of multiplicity of languages. Nations have responded to this question in a variety of ways. While some nations have projected one of the major native languages to the status of lingua franca others have adopted a foreign language to serve such purpose. In Nigeria, the English language plays that role. However, it must be noted that the adoption of the English language is not expected to hinder the progress and development of the other languages. It is advocated that while the English language mediates communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds in Nigeria as well as in official matters, the indigenous languages are to be used in communication involving two people from the same linguistic background. Such advocacy is what ensures variety and the sustenance of multilingualism.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Identify three factors that make a language to assume the position of a major language in a language contact situation.

3.6 Origin of Multilingualism

Researchers have shown interest in tracing the origin of multilingualism. In what follows a number of suggestions put forward to explain the origin of multilingualism are examined. They include the following:

3.6.1 Tower of Babel

The first reference to the origin of multilingualism as recorded in the book of Genesis 1: 11-19 credits the events in the Biblical Tower of Babel as the origin of multilingualism. According to the story:

At one time the whole earth had the same language and vocabulary. As people migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, “come, let us make oven-fired bricks”. They had brick for stone and asphalt for mortar. And they said, “Come let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let us make a name for ourselves, otherwise, we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth”. Then the Lord came down to look over the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, “If, as one people all having the same language, they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another’s speech”. So the Lord scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name is called Babylon, for there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth (The Between Pocket Bible)

This story shows that before long people spoke one language, understood each other and have one common interest. They cooperated among themselves but because God was not happy with them as regards their presumptuousness in erecting the tower, He confiscated their tongue and so linguistic diversity ensued. As a result, their cooperation ceased and their achievements became null and void. Because they could no longer understand one another, they scattered through all the face of the earth.

3.6.2 Political Annexation/Natural Disaster

This occurs when there is political crisis in a country ranging from seizure of power, military coup and other related problems. People often migrate and resettle in other places due to these problems. As such, they become

refugees and have to learn language of their new hosts while still retaining their own. This new development can have an immediate effect on the linguistic situation of the affected groups. On the other hand, natural disaster like famine, volcanic eruption, erosion, etc. can cause a group of people to relocate and find themselves in a new environment. In a press release of 11 September 2012, it was stated that some residents in Anambra, Delta and Kogi residing around the River Niger should relocate for safety as there was going to be an adverse effect of flood on such residents. In this case, when they migrate to a new language environment, they'll be faced with the acquisition of the language of their new environment.

3.6.3 Education

Since education is an access to knowledge, one can learn a new language in order to acquire such knowledge. Typical examples are the use of Latin in the middle ages which was learnt by the educated and influential elites as well as the use of English in the modern era in many countries of the world.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

Discuss two factors that gave rise to the emergence of multilingualism.

3.7 Importance of Multilingualism

Of what importance is the existence of many languages in a society? There is a strand of literature which posits that multilingualism is of great disadvantage to any society. The tower of Babel story feed this type of position. In the tower of Babel story, multilingualism is seen as a punishment from God. One who toes this line of viewing language will conclude that multilingualism is evil as all punishment is evil as erodes mutual understanding, and peace. Despite such views as the above, multilingualism is quite important in our society. Crystal (2002) adduced a number of reasons for this. They include:

1. Multilingualism Ensures Diversity

Evolutionists emphasize the importance of diversity in our world. They view it as “the result of species genetically adapting in order to survive in different environments.” (Crystal 2002). Since our environment is highly diversified, Crystal (2002) argues that our ability to survive in the world is due mainly to “our ability to develop diverse cultures which suit all environments.” In the same manner, multilingualism provides insight into the many ways different people of the world were able to adapt to the

need of their specific environments. Their language, so to say, emerges as a response to the challenges posed by their specific environments. Following this line of argument, we can see that besides the fact that language is an aspect of non-material culture, the transmission as well as preservation of cultures of the world's diverse environments is made possible only with the use of language. Bernard (1992) supports this point with his argument that "A native language is like a natural resource which cannot be replaced once it is removed from the earth." The same point is expressed in another way by Pound(1960) when he writes that: "The sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is capable of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension."

2. Multilingualism Protects Identity

In our world people assume the identity of the language he speaks. Think of these statements: Chinedu is Igbo; Ebelemi is Ijaw; Boluwatife is Yoruba; Audu is Hausa. In such expressions, we identify the named individuals with the language they speak.

Once we eliminate multilingualism and adopt one language many people in the world will lose their identity. They will also lose the healthy attachment to a root which propel people to perform great actions.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 7

Multilingualism ensures diversity in a society. Discuss.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Language is a community property. It is produced in a community and sustained in a community through communication. The range of communities where language plays a mediating factor is an enlarged one. A successful language user is expected to learn how to adapt his language to any community he finds himself.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt that language is a community property. You also learned that it is impossible to have a private language. Equally, you studied about multiculturalism and multilingualism. You were also exposed to how to use language in a multicultural society.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Language is a community property. Discuss.
2. Define private language?
3. List the advantages of multilingualism.
4. Define multiculturalism.
5. List factors responsible for the emergence of multilingualism.

7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING

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