

MODULE 3

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Unit 2	Language Situation and Language Management
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UNIT 1 LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT AND ENGINEERING

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

You will observe that in the last unit, Module 2 unit 6, you learnt about standard orthographies and the controversies inherent in the process of standardisation. In continuation, in this unit, you will learn about the nature and scope of language engineering and language management as imperatives in a multilingual and multicultural setting.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the nature of language engineering and language management; and
- discuss the relevance of language engineering and language management in a multilingual society.

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 Engineering

Language engineering involves the creation of natural language processing systems whose cost and outputs are measurable and predictable as well as establishment of language regulators, such as formal or informal agencies, committees, societies or academies as language regulators to design or develop new structures to meet contemporary needs.

It is a distinct field contrasted to natural language processing and computational linguistics. A recent trend of language engineering is the use of Semantic Web technologies for the creation, archival, processing, and retrieval of machine processable language data.

Springer (1956: pp 46&54), in Gadysa and Gabana (2011), argues that language engineering is used ‘with reference to the efforts of graphisation and of standardisation of the semi-standardised language in the Soviet Union.’

For Alisjahbana (1961), language engineering is seen as the “conscious guidance of development within the larger context of social, cultural, and technological change”. Alisjahbana (1972:14) also uses the term to refer to “the transfer of past experiences of codification of the European Languages – in the areas of spelling, vocabulary, and grammar – the newly developing languages by deliberate and rational planning.”

Thus, language engineering refers to applying scientific principles to the design, construction and maintenance of tools to help deal with information that has been expressed in natural languages (the languages that people use for communicating with one another). The tools can be of varying kinds: many are computer systems to help with such tasks as translation, language teaching, and abstracting and indexing,

information extraction and so on. Language engineering also leads to more intangible "tools" such as graphic presentation, development of orthography, standardisation, dictionaries and thesauri, guidelines for authors, and methods for the teaching foreign languages.

According to Adedun and Shodipe (2011), "The term 'language engineering' refers to the potential of a language to express new and emerging ideas, notions or concepts." Capo (1990:1) defines language engineering as "that domain of applied linguistics concerned with the design and implementation of strategies (that is, conscious and deliberate steps) toward the rehabilitation and optimal utilisation of individual languages."

Language engineering is, therefore, a conscious attempt to influence the form of a language, and this implies three phenomena that are related to lexical change (Ammon, 2005: p. 26). These are:

1. Standardisation of pronunciation, spelling and the meaning of words.
2. Creation of new names from organisations whose acronyms create easily pronounceable words and are semantically related to the organisation's aims.
3. Public use of language (for example in politics or journalism).

Adedun and Shodipe argue further "Languages are constantly engineered to meet the challenges of everyday communication often necessitated by changes in the social, economic or political life of a speech community." Dadzie (2004) notes that every human language is subject to change and several factors responsible for this may range from the historical to the cultural and the linguistic. The English language, for example, underwent significant changes as a result of various invasions of the British Isle by Angles, Jutes, Saxons, Normans, Danes and the French. These incursions have tremendously influenced the language so much that the English, which was spoken in the ninth century, has no resemblance to the present day English.

The Nigerian situation typifies what obtains in many Anglophone West African countries where English gained "superiority" over the Nigerian indigenous languages as an official lingua franca. It is acquired as a means of responding to several sociolinguistic needs which include the use of English as a medium of education, language of politics, administration, commerce and even religion. Some indigenisation and creolisation must occur as the language reflects its new environment and expresses ideas and concepts hitherto impossible to express in the language. This situation makes language engineering *sine qua non* (Adedun, 2005).

There are a number of areas where the impact is significant:

- competing in a global market
- providing information for business, administration and consumers
- offering services directly through tele-business
- supporting electronic commerce
- enabling effective communication
- ensuring easier accessibility and participation
- improving opportunities for education and self development
- enhancing entertainment, leisure and creativity.

3.2 Language Management

The term “language management” was introduced into sociolinguistic literature by Jernudd and Neustupny (1987) in their contribution to a conference in Quebec, Canada. The theory originated from the “language theory” (Neustupny, 1978) developed in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly by Neustupny and Jernudd, and it grew as an extension of language planning theory.

Spolsky (2009) argues that the third component of language policy is language management. To Spolsky, language management accounts for language choices. Secondly, language management provides examples of efforts to impose language practices on a lower domain.

Generally, management refers to a set of activities undertaken to ensure the goals of association are achieved in an effective and efficient way. Language management refers to the actions and strategies devised to achieve language policy objectives (Webb, 2002). A language management approach to language planning can be described as a top-down process.

Language management can be performed at two levels: simple and organised managements. Simple management is the management of problems as they occur in individual communication acts; for example, the problem of spelling a particular word or the problem of how to redress the use of an expression that a speaker has just uttered but now considers as not sufficiently polite. Language management within a family often relies on simple correction in discourse, which may be connected to ideologies of ethnicity. This example was noticed in some German families during the post-war period in the Czech Republic, according to Nekvapil (2003a). In principle, management theory states that language problem originates from simple management and is transferred to organised management.

Organised Management

Spolsky (2009) asserts that organised language management ranges from the micro (family) to the macro (nation-state) level. The most obvious form of organised language management is a law established by a nation-state (or other polity authorised to make laws) determining some aspect of official language use. This, for example, could be a requirement to use a specific language as language of instruction in schools and business and government agencies. The decision of the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II to change the policy that Latin should be the language for mass is another good example of organised language management. Language management also applies to specific domains such as family domain and efforts by immigrant parents to maintain their language. All these are seen as part of language management.

Language reform is an example of a highly organised language management process (Neustupny & Nekvapil, 2003). However, organised management is not a summary of simple management acts. Language reform takes place, both formally and informally, in many languages given official status in the modern world. Language reform includes lexical and orthographic reform as well as occasional syntactic reform. It is known as essentially corpus planning. The reform of the written Chinese in the People's Republic of China, reforms of Ibo and other indigenous languages in Nigeria.

3.3 Objectives/Strategies of Language Management

There is a list of rules or strategies to arrest all communicative problems within a community. Having been reformed, these features are called objects of language management (Neustupny 1987; 1997). These are:

1. *Participant strategies*

These determine participant and networks in communication process. These strategies are noted, evaluated, and adjustment may be carried out when management occurs.

2. *Variety strategies*

Variation strategies govern the use of language varieties and variables – what languages are spoken and what problems affect these languages and their individual rules.

3. *Situational strategies*

These strategies examine recurring sets of the use of language, problems and characteristics for language domains (daily life, family, friendship, education, work, and public and culture domain).

4. *Content strategies*

They select the content of communication and problems which occur when they do not function satisfactorily.

5. *Form strategies*

These strategies determine the form of communication, the form of routine components, or the order of components.

6. *Channel strategies*

Channel strategies govern the various channels through which communication can be turned into surface structures. These are problems of the spoken and written media which overlap with the problem of varieties.

3.4 Levels of Language Management

Language management emphasises management at a number of levels: the individual, associations, and social organisations, the media, and economic bodies, educational and international organisations. For example, the Czech Republic management of language takes place at all these levels (Nekvapil, 2002a; 2006b).

Language problem theories manifest in a space similar to theory of language management, though they may use different terms in different social systems (language acquisition, language therapy, literary criticism, critical discourse analysis, and so on).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Why is language engineering and management necessary?

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has examined the issues that surround language engineering and language management. It has also identified objectives, levels and strategies of language management that can be of benefit in a multilingual nation.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has dwelt on language engineering and language management as crucial aspects of language planning in a multilingual society.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Using any Anglophone African country, explain the concept of language engineering.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 LANGUAGE SITUATION IN NIGERIA

CONTENTS

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Language Situation in Nigeria
 - 3.2 Types of Languages in Nigeria
 - 3.3 Language Hierarchy in Nigeria
- 4.0 Conclusion
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- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit explains the nature and scope of language situation, language engineering and language management as imperatives in a multilingual and multicultural setting.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the nature of language situation and language management; and
- discuss the relevance of language situation, types of languages and language hierarchy in Nigeria.

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 Situation in Nigeria

In a recent UNESCO report (2010), it is observed that ‘Africa is the only continent where the majority of children start school using a foreign language’ (Quane & Glanz, 2010: 4). According to Adebija (2004: 37), Nigeria is an intriguing maximally multilingual scenario, which presents a case of linguistic and cultural diversity par excellence. He further states that multilingualism in Nigeria is certainly more complex and intricate than in multilingual European countries such as Belgium, Switzerland, or Sweden.

3.2 Types of Languages in Nigeria

Akinnaso (1991) asserts that Nigeria is multilingual. Therefore, the language situation is complex; and a description of Nigeria's language situation calls for a multi-layered analysis to reveal its complexity in a peculiar linguistic landscape. First, there are three major types of languages in Nigeria: (1) indigenous languages, (2) exogenous languages, and (3) a neutral language, namely, Pidgin English. Adebija (2004:46) identifies the three main categories of languages being used in Nigeria. They are as follows:

- (a) Indigenous or native languages: about 450; Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo have been constitutionally recognised as “major”. This recognition has given these languages a kind of celebrity status among Nigeria’s numerous languages.
- (b) Exogenous or non-indigenous languages: chief among these is English. Others are French and Arabic. Other languages like German and Russian have a rather restricted functional scope.
- (c) Pidgin: principally represented by Nigerian Pidgin English, with a dual status of being at once indigenous and exogenous. There are, however, different views on its actual status.

An endogenous language is one that is used as a mother tongue in a community and may or may not be used for institutional purposes. An exogenous language is “one that is used as an official, institutionalised language but has no speech community in the political entity using it officially” (Josiane & Michel, 2000:29). There are examples of exogenous languages in Nigeria. They are Arabic, French and English. Arabic is the first among these languages to arrive in Nigeria and it was accompanied by Islam and trans-Saharan trade in the northern territory of present-day Nigeria in the ninth century AD.

Arabic is the language of Islamic religion, judiciary and political administration, social and commercial interactions, and of literacy and scholarly activities. Predominantly, it is the language of Islamic worship and Quranic pedagogy, worship, prayers and *Medersa* (higher school and university) in Nigeria (Ogunbiyi 1987; Ogunbiyi & Akinnaso, 1990; Akinnaso, 1991; Adegbija, 2004). Adegbija (2004:55) argues that: “Arabic is an elitist minority language because most common people only know a few Arabic sentences, memorized in Koranic schools, whose meanings are soon forgotten thereafter. Very few can actually read or write Arabic”. Akinnaso (1991) observes that the decline in the status and functions of Arabic was caused by the increasing status and functions of English. English is the *de facto* and *de jure* official language of Nigeria because of its functions as the language of government, bureaucracy, education, commerce, mass communication, international trade, politics and science and technology.

French lacks historical roots and a range of functions unlike Arabic and English. It has the lowest number of users and the least appeal to learners. Its uses and functions are limited to diplomatic and educational contexts and border communication with Nigeria’s neighbouring Francophone countries such as Chad, Togo, Niger, Benin and Cameroon. Its impact on the nation has not increased despite the declaration by the Sani Abacha regime that French be recognised as Nigeria’s second official language. Other foreign languages such as German, Russian, Spanish and Portuguese have also not risen to prominence in Nigeria, except in diplomatic contacts and relations.

Pidgin English is a neutral language. It is Nigeria’s lingua franca in informal domains. It has developed from its origins in the early days of the contact between Nigeria and Europe to the stage of creolisation, trade language, and to the most popular medium of inter-group communication in various heterogeneous communities throughout Nigeria. It is widely used in public institutions, service centres, print and electronic media – regular newspaper columns, news broadcasts, and various entertainment programmes and comedies.

Pidgin English is used in advertisements on billboards, in newspapers, radio and television all over the country. It is a principal language of commerce which has now been creolised in Sapele and Warri and other parts of Delta state. It is a lingua franca among the youth and academia in an informal setting in Nigerian universities and non-western educated Nigerian masses (see Omamor 1983, Agheyisi 1984, and Akinnaso 1991).

There are various arguments on the description of Pidgin English. Adegbija (2004) sees Pidgin English as a hybrid Nigerian language. Akinnaso (1991) describes it as an exogenous language. Omodiagbe

(1992:21) says: “Pidgin is an offshoot of the “pure” English of the early missionaries and colonial administrators. It is the product of necessity and pragmatism, as well as a robust salute to the malleability and adaptability of the English Language”. Oladejo (1991) describes Pidgin English or Nigerian Pidgin as “the only truly neutral indigenous Nigerian language”.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Critically examine the language situation in Nigeria.

3.3 Language Hierarchy

At a different level, languages in Nigeria show different orders of hierarchical relationship and reveal shifting, contrastive and overlapping characteristics, functions and status. If taken into consideration factors such as degree of official recognition, prestige, contexts, and range of use; the three classifications of languages described above can be patterned into five-tier system of language hierarchy. While it is true that some of the languages perform certain exclusive functions and there are instances or occurrences and overlapping functions.

Akinnaso (1991) gives an insight into languages in Nigeria – their hierarchy and ranks as follows:

- ‘Official’ language: English
- ‘National’ languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba
- ‘Regional’ languages: Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulfulde, Efik, Kanuri, Tiv, Ijaw, Edo, Nupe, (Igala, Idoma)
- ‘Local’ minority languages: Over 380 languages
- ‘Neutral’ lingua franca: Pidgin English

Adegbija’s (2004: 50) classification shows the overlapping functions of languages in Nigeria and “fading or shifting” hierarchical functions as well as their changes in status with the creation of new states in the country.

An Illustrative Graduated Functional and Status Saliency of Languages in Nigeria

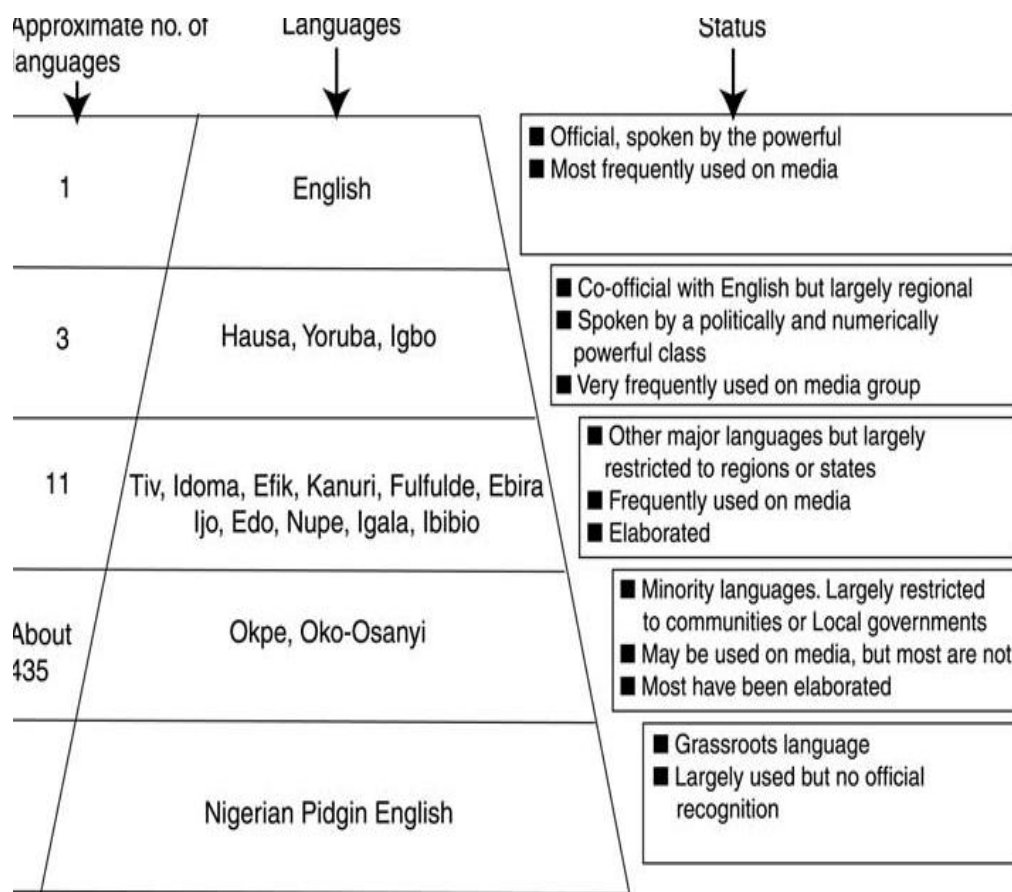


Fig.2.1: Graduated Functional and Status Saliency of Languages in Nigeria

Negash in Coleman (2011: p. 12) claims that:

The most important contribution which English has made in Africa is in education. However, this contribution has been challenged because of the limiting effect which it has had historically on the use of the indigenous languages, especially in primary education (Batibo, 2007). Many writers (for example, Clegg 2007 and Williams 2011) argue strongly for adopting the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, especially in early childhood education, because it facilitates cognitive, communicative and social skills development.

This means the nation needs to adequately and effectively manage the language situation in the country.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has examined the issues that surround the language situation in the country, the types of languages in Nigeria, the hierarchy that defines these and how these languages can be managed.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has dwelt on language situation, types and hierarchy as a crucial aspect of language planning, management and engineering in a multilingual society.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain how the language situation in Nigeria can affect national development. Use another Anglophone country to explain the language situation.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 LANGUAGE ATTITUDE IN MULTILINGUAL NATIONS

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Language Attitudes in Multilingual Nations
 - 3.2 Implications of Language Attitude
 - 3.3 Varying Attitudes towards Exoglossic and Indigenous Languages in Nigeria
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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit examines language attitude in multilingual nations, particularly attitude to minority and majority languages as well as the implications for national planning and development.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- differentiate between minority and major languages;
- describe language attitude towards specific languages; and
- identify the implications of language attitude for 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 Attitudes in Multilingual Nations

Garrett et al. (2003), state that the concept of attitude is a major point of interest in sociolinguistics. Social psychology, language attitude research and linguists interested in the socio-psychological aspects of language must be fully aware of the psychological complexity of attitudes (Baker 1992: p. 8 cited in Redinger, 2010). An attitude is a “psychological tendency” which calls attention to the fact that attitudes constitute a speaker- internal concept which explicates a speaker’s attribution of various degrees of “goodness” or “badness” to a given entity (Eagley & Chaiken, 1993:1-3).

Crystal (1992) sees language attitudes as the feelings people have about their own language variety or the languages or language varieties of others. Eastman (1983: p. 30) avows that language attitudes arise when “one social group comes in contact with a second social group possessing a different language and each group then develops ideas about the other group’s language *vis-à-vis* its own.” Similarly, Trudgill (2003: p.73) opines that language attitudes are “the attitudes which people have towards different languages, dialects, accents and their speakers.”

Speakers of a language or its varieties express their pride and identity through the language. Mukhuba (2005) gives an example of the Zulus of South Africa who take so much pride in their culture and language so much that they have developed a negative attitude towards other South African languages. They are so uncompromising in their attitude towards other languages that the need for jobs has not changed their perspective of second language acquisition.

Holmes (1992) expresses three levels of attitudes towards a social group or ethnic group: attitudes towards a social or ethnic group; attitudes towards the language of that group and attitude towards individual speakers of that language. Attitudes of people of different social groups have affected other social-cultural institutions or pattern of social characterization such as language. An attitude towards a group is carried over to the language of that group. Holmes claims that attitudes affect intelligibility. People find it easier to understand languages and dialects spoken by people they like or admire. Examples of these attitudes are given below:

- women talk too much;
- children can’t speak or write properly anymore;
- black children are verbally deprived;
- everyone has an accent except me.

Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) assert that reports and studies which pertain to language attitudes fall into three major categories:

- those dealing with language-oriented or language-directed attitudes;
- those dealing with community-wide stereotyped impressions towards particular languages or language varieties (and, in some cases, their speakers, functions, and so on);
- those concerned with the implementation of different types of language.

The first category is concerned with rating and evaluation of language or language varieties as “poor or rich”, “balanced or reduced”, “beautiful or ugly”, “smooth and sweet sounding or harsh”, etc.. The second category focuses on the social significance of language or varieties of language, attitude towards speakers of situationally peculiar or appropriate language varieties, attitudes towards speakers of different languages in multilingual settings, among others. And the third category is concerned with all kinds of language behaviour, or behaviour towards language, resulting from, at least in part, specific attitudes or beliefs. In this category, there are major topics such as language choice and usage, language reinforcement and planning, language learning, and so on.

3.2 Implications of Language Attitudes

1. Language attitudes usually entail positive or negative attitudes to the speakers of the particular language or dialect.
2. There is evidence that language attitudes influence sound change.
3. Language attitudes may influence how teachers deal with pupils.
4. Attitudes about language may affect second language learning.
5. Language attitudes may affect whether or not varieties are mutually intelligible

Adegbija (2004) identified various shapers of language attitude in a dense multilingual nation like Nigeria. He argued that the following five factors shape language attitude:

1. Language Provenance/Origin

The historical root of the language in question determines the attitude towards it. For example, the English language in Nigeria tends to generate ambivalent/contrasting attitude: love-hate attitude. It may be perceived by some Nigerians as a symbol of subjugation, colonialism, economic exploitation and domination by the British colonialists. This love-hate attitude attends to the language of ex-colonialists in multilingual communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. However,

the English language might be loved because of its political significance. It functions as a language of nationalism in inter-ethnic communication, administration and education.

2. Language Juridical Status

Language juridical status resembles the constitutional language function, that is, the specific status of a language. For instance, in Nigeria English, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo are official languages. The English language is being favoured because of its *de facto* functions.

3. Language Development State

The positive attitude toward a language in a multilingual nation could be influenced by the language development state. A more modernised, elaborated, and codified language with broad/adequate lexical expansion and a sizeable pool of literature tends to attract higher status, functions and national roles unlike less developed languages. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba languages in Nigeria are more developed than other Nigerian languages; this therefore, enhances positive attitudes towards them.

4. Native-speaker Stereotype

Language is an index of identity and belonging. The general impression or stereotype about the native speaker of certain languages might influence the attitudes towards the language. If a group of speakers of a language is disliked, definitely the language might suffer same. Adegbija (2004) cited an example of many Kenyans who are reluctant to learn Kikuyu because of its native speakers' supposed bossy, exploitative and domineering tendencies, particularly in the area of commerce. In Israel, very few are interested in learning German language because of their experience during Nazi holocaust agenda – anti-Semitism – where millions of Jews were killed in cold blood.

5. Depth of Religious Commitment

The extent of religious commitment or involvement can also shape language attitudes either negatively or positively. The Arabic language in which the Holy Quran is written in Nigeria is associated with Islam. Strong adherents to Islamic faith tend to demonstrate a great positive attitude to Arabic language. The English language tends to be identified with Christianity because English-speaking missionaries introduced the religion to Nigeria. There is likely to be a possible association between Jewish religion and the Hebrew language and most probably Hinduism and Hindi.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Critically examine language attitudes as demonstrated in Nigeria by many of its citizens in terms of their religious, social and geographical affiliations.

3.3 Varying Attitudes towards Exoglossic and Indigenous Languages in Nigeria

What is an exoglossic language? There are three notable exoglossic languages in Nigeria – English, French and Arabic. Languages such as German, Spanish and Russian, have limited domains of usage and influence in that they are mainly used in their respective embassies and chambers of commerce and most often for utilitarian purposes and goals.

- (i) English is the most functional and paramount language among other exoglossic languages in Nigeria, both from the societal/national and individual perspectives. It is Nigeria's official language alongside Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. It is the language of inter-ethnic communication and administration, the media, higher education, foreign relations, commerce and agencies.

These functions have entrenched positive attitudes towards the language and a continuous anxiety to use the language by all and sundry in the Nigerian multilingual context. It is perceived as a necessary credential in social climbing and power brokering processes. Adegbite (2010) observes that scholars such as Adegbija (1994); Bamgbose (2001); and Oyetade (2001), have identified several reasons for the attitudes of Nigerians to languages in Nigeria. Some of the reasons highlighted are: colonialism, elitism, mobility and job prospects, the level of language development, and lack of knowledge of the workings of language.

For political integration and national cohesion, the English language is used as a neutral language by various ethnic groups to avoid ethnic wrangling and likely conflict that may ensue in case any of Nigeria's indigenous languages is given priority over the others. There is a continuous fear of ethnic, social, political and cultural domination while the minority groups resent the dominance of the three major languages. Job security is a factor that determines attitudes toward teaching and learning of indigenous languages in Nigeria. The calls for the development of the Nigerian indigenous languages have been ferociously condemned by Nigerian English language teachers to protect their job. Obemeata (2002: p. 2) cited in Adegbite (2010) presents views of educated Nigerians on negative attitudes towards the indigenous languages as follows:

- children have no advantage in being taught in the mother tongue as the mother tongue has a negative effect on intelligent test performance of the children
- mother tongue learning does not lead to educational development and it does not seem to contribute to an improvement in the quality of education in the country
- mother tongue interferes negatively with the learning and usage of the English language
- the language project of NERDC (that is, developing indigenous languages) may, after all, be a colossal waste of resources.

However, sometimes, there could be ambivalent attitude towards the English language – love-hate attitude. The historical root of the language and the lingering evidence/artifact of Nigeria’s colonial experience evoke feelings of hatred for the language. Its neutral nature and role in social and political cohesion of Nigeria makes it *de facto primus inter pares*.

- (ii) Arabic in Nigeria is said to be characterised by ambivalence (Adegbija, 2004). Among Moslems, Arabic is God’s language *par excellence*. Moslems greet one another in the language to create belongingness and show their solidarity, religious identity and affiliation in different contexts, settings and occasions. To Christians, it is a language of a rival religious group. Non-Moslems exhibit a variety of attitudes towards the language, ranging from indifference to silent resistance and open hostility.
- (iii) French is mainly loved amongst its teachers and students in Nigeria. Its functions are notable in interpersonal and diplomatic contacts and relationships with Nigeria’s neighbours in Benin, Togo and Cameroun and probably with other French speaking countries beyond West Africa.

3.4 Attitudes towards the Indigenous Languages

Adegbite (2010) claims that the consequence of negative attitudes towards indigenous language is evident in the long existence of negative factors of underdevelopment – related language problems such as language inactivity or death, illiteracy and underdevelopment of education, communication, politics and the society as a whole. Even though the first Nigerian newspaper, *Iwe Irohin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba* (newspaper for the Egba and the Yoruba people) was published in Yoruba by the Rev. Henry Townsend in Abeokuta on 3 December, 1859, it is difficult to find papers in the indigenous languages on the news-stands now. Even when the NPE states that Yoruba, Hausa or Igbo should be taught at the secondary school level, the problem of lack of adequate supply of teachers in these three languages exists. This is because students prefer to study the more “prestigious” or lucrative

courses such as medicine, law, architecture, pharmacy, ICT, computer engineering etc, to the detriment of indigenous languages.

The ADB (2006) ranks Nigeria as the third nation on earth with the highest number of poor people and one of the least industrialised countries in the world. This is connected to the low level of literacy in the country, which has strong links with inadequate language planning and policies. Indeed, Abioye (2010) observes that decisive steps in language and literacy efforts provide an index for national as well as international advancement in capacity building, socioeconomic, political, technological, and even global advancement. Without these, our goals for social transformation and sustainable human development cannot be actualised. Literacy in *any* language (mother tongue or “father tongue”) is thus to be preferred to illiteracy.

Then, there is a high prestige status attached to the use of English in communication. This impression was created by the elite group who flaunted their knowledge and dexterity of English by the use of high-sounding vocabulary/words. People who cannot speak English in different domains are seen as belonging to the lower class in the society. This has become so pronounced that even at home, parents who have a mutually intelligible language speak English to their children rather than the indigenous language. Thus, semi-literates trying to copy the elite group, also speak English to their children, no matter how ungrammatical; since they see the ability to speak English as a step on the rung of the ladder of social mobility. But this may not have been the original intention, because it has been observed that after independence, some African leaders, including those in Nigeria, chose English over their indigenous languages, in order ‘to de-emphasise ethnicity and build up a sense of nationhood’ (Phillipson, 1996: p. 162).

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has examined what language attitude is, various attitudes and the implications of the different language attitudes.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- language attitude is basically a psychological tendency that has to do with factors that shape attitude;
- such factors include religion, stereotypes, origin or even geographical contiguity;
- some of the implications of these attitudes are that people may not want to learn a language; it may interfere with the way

learners perceive a particular teacher, and it may have religious undertones; and

- attitude can be positive or negative.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Differentiate between major and minority languages.
- ii. Identify at least three attitudes to language and the implications of these attitudes for national development.

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UNIT 4 MINORITY LANGUAGE GROUPS: PLIGHT AND DESTINY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition of Minority Languages
 - 3.2 Parameters for the Classification of Minority Languages
 - 3.3 Problems of Minority Languages
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit focuses on the definition and description of minority languages, the parameters that define these, and their challenges.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define minority languages;
- determine the parameters and classification of minority languages;
- identify some problems of minority languages; and
- suggest solutions to some of these problems.

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 Definition of Minority Languages

Different euphemisms have been employed to give positive connotation to the pejorative term “minority languages.” Some measure of manifest or latent disadvantage is embedded in the word as “...most usages of minority refer to group(s) or collection of people who are not adequately represented in the mainstream of socio-cultural, economic and political life of their society” (Abochol, 2011). He states further that:

The statuses of minority and majority are contextual and sometimes historical. Furthermore, the concepts, minority and majority have quantitative, economic, social and cultural dimensions. For example, a majority may refer to a group with small numerical population relative to another or other groups. But it sometimes conveys power-relation, and therefore refers to a group or groups relative to more powerful groups in society.

Minor Nigerian languages are those languages that are not in the major category. The major languages are in two groups; the foremost are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, closely followed by; Igala, Edo, Fulfulde, Izon, Kanuri, Efik, Nupe and Tiv. The major group of languages is made up of the developed and developing languages. The former is characterized by long traditions of writing “well established orthographies, standard written varieties, large and varied corpora of written literature, and sophisticated and dynamic metalanguage” systems. Thus, the term “minority language” is used here to describe “languages that have no standardised orthographies (if they do have orthographies at all), standard varieties, written literature and metalanguages” (Emenanjo, 1990; Bleambo, 1999).

According to Thornberry et al. (2004), in their report on minority languages in Europe, the term “minority language” refers to “languages that are traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state’s population and which is different from the official language(s) of that state” (p. 141).

3.2 Parameters for the Classification of Minority Languages

To Pandharipande (2004), a very broad definition of minority provided by the United Nations captures the salient features of minority languages: “The term minority includes only those non-dominant groups

in a population which possess and wish to preserve stable, ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics different from those of the rest of the population.” The two features, “non-dominant” and “different from the rest of the population”, are generally shared by the minority languages of India. In a number of cases, the factors that are responsible for rapid attrition of minority languages are: (a) language policies; (b) modernisation; (c) speakers’ attitudes towards their languages; (d) separation of the link between language and identity or a change in the speech community’s perception of its identity.

According to BBC English (2011), minority languages can be said refer to: (i) regional, indigenous languages spoken in certain areas, also called autochthonous languages, such as Welsh, Breton or Basque; languages that have come from other areas of Europe, such as Turkish spoken in the UK, or Estonian spoken in Sweden. (ii) a language spoken by a majority of the population in a particular area may be a minority language when looked at in a wider geopolitical context. (iii) the languages spoken by migrant communities from a different country are also known as community languages. The largest number of community languages in Europe can be found in the United Kingdom. Over 300 languages are currently spoken in London schools. Some of the most established of these are Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Cantonese, Mandarin and Hokkien.

Vallejo and Dooly (2009) identify the plights of minority language groups in Europe and the key areas that can signify inequality in education may be: functional literacy levels, exclusion and/or expulsion rates, rates of continuing education in post-compulsory leaving age and participation in higher education, employment rates after education, institutional segregation and evidence of social exclusion. All these interrelated factors attribute to inequality in education of members of minority language groups.

Fifty percent of the world’s out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home. This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving Education for All (EFA): a legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of dropout and repetition. In these circumstances, an increase in resources, although necessary, would not be sufficient to produce universal completion of a good-quality primary school programme (World Bank, 2005).

3.3 Problems of Minority Language Groups

Vallejo and Dooly (2009) point out specific disadvantages of minority language groups in education. To their disadvantage, the students are usually assessed in the school's language of instruction, not their mother tongues, resulting in lower placement and difficulties in the acquisition of other subject content. Secondly, studies have demonstrated that track placement is often inappropriate and minority language students are systematically placed in lower-level courses regardless of their academic ability. The placement practices can result in uneven representation of language minority students in lower level courses and lack of access to academic content courses.

It is thus, possible that minority language students have a higher representation in vocational courses or special education courses and even a higher rate of school drop-out. This effect has been directly related to lack of access to core curriculum areas and/or high percentage of school learning time spent on learning the vehicular language at the expense of their grade level curricular areas. The assessment of general academic progress can also lead to educational inequality for minority language students. Teachers generally use assessment practices designed for the majority language group to monitor overall language development.

Garland (2011) identifies a number of factors that could bedevil minority languages such as globalization, commerce, popular culture and telecommunications:

The increasing mobility of people, goods, and information has driven a powerful trend toward cultural uniformity and the extinction of local languages. But languages that have young people, business, and government on their side are alive and thriving.

Globalized economies and media are changing the face of culture around the globe, reducing the number of languages that humans speak. As the world economy becomes more integrated, a common tongue has become more important than ever to promote commerce, and that puts speakers of regional dialects and minority languages at a distinct disadvantage. In addition, telecommunications has pressured languages to become more standardized,

further squeezing local variations of language.

Over the past 500 years, as nation-states developed and became more centralized, regional dialects and minority languages have been dominated by the centrist dialects of the ruling parties. Cornish has given way to English, Breton to French, Bavarian to High German, and Fu-jian-wa to Cantonese. Linguists concur that minority languages all over the world are giving way to more dominant languages, such as English, Mandarin, and Spanish, among others. The realities of commerce and the seductive power of world pop culture are placing pressure on speakers of minority languages to learn majority languages or suffer the consequences: greater difficulty doing business, less access to information, etc.

He further notes that these pressures are resulting in a rapid death of languages around the world. For instance, about 3,000 of the world's languages are predicted to disappear in the next 100 years. The United Nations Environment Program states that there are 5,000 to 7,000 spoken languages in the world; and 4,000 to 5,000 of these are indigenous languages used by native tribes. More than 2,500 are in danger of immediate extinction, and many more are losing their link with the natural world, becoming museum pieces rather than living languages. Definitely, for example, the knowledge about unique medicines and treatments used by aboriginal groups could be lost forever if the language used to transmit that information is banned by a majority culture.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

How would you describe a minority language?

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has described the minority language phenomenon, looking at how these languages came to be classified as such, and the challenges faced by this language group.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- some languages are classified as minority;
- the classification is based on such criteria as: level of development, functions, number of speakers etc.; and
- this group has real challenges like delayed development, language extinction, and so on.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Based on the contents of this unit, do the following:

- i. Classify your language into either majority or minority.
- ii. Give reasons for this classification.
- iii. Suggest ways by which the problems of the minority can be alleviated.

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UNIT 5 NATIONAL LANGUAGES: SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 What is a National Language?
 - 3.2 The Problem of Choice of a National Language
 - 3.3 Criteria for Choice of a National Language
 - 3.4 Social, Cultural and Political Implications
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit touches on the issue of a national language, what it is, the factors contributing to the choice of a national language and some of the social, cultural and political implications of the choice of particular national languages.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define a national language;
- state the relevance of a national language; and
- examine the social, cultural and political implications of a national language for a sustained 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 What is a National Language?

Baldrige (1996) posits that “a national language is that which enjoys use throughout an entire nation in the political, social, and cultural realms. It also functions as a national symbol”. He argues that it is not uncommon for a national language to also be an official language, but it is less likely that an official language will be a national language.

Akindele and Adegbite (1999) define a national language as a language on which the government has conferred authority as the language of a number of ethnic groups in a given geo-socio-political area. This language is deliberately chosen as a symbol of oneness, unity and achievement of independence in an erstwhile colonial situation and for the sake of nationhood. The language, as a matter of necessity, has a vast geographical distribution across the entire strata of the society in its use and acceptance. For instance, the English language is a national language in United States of America, England and Canada.

Awonusi (1985: p.26) suggests the following reasons why a national language is needed: to foster unity in a nation; to enhance and promote communicative competence “in officialese” or bureaucratic language, to promote socio-economic as well as commercial activities and to express national pride and independence. For example, Hebrew in Israel is seen as “a symbol around which national sentiment could be mobilized” especially in the early days of its promotion by Eliezer Yehuda, a Russian Jew. National pride is best expressed in the national language because the latter carries with it the sentiments and the thought processes that would otherwise not be captured when one uses a foreign language (Villacorta, 1991: p. 34).

Fasold (1984:7) views national language as:

- (a) the emblem of national oneness and identity;
- (b) widely used for some everyday purposes;
- (c) widely and fluently used within the country;
- (d) the major candidate for such a role since there is no equally qualified alternative language within the country;
- (e) acceptable as a symbol of authenticity; having a link with the glorious past; fall under the second interpretation of “national” identified above (Fishman et al., 1968).

Also, Fasold (1988b:185) cited in Adegbija (2004) describes the importance of national language as follows:

It's good as a means of creating social cohesion at the level of the whole country; an apparent near-requisite for national development. But at the same time a national language is a symbol of national identity and of a nation's distinction from other countries.

3.2 The Problem of Choice of a National Language

Another obvious language/linguistic issue in Nigeria is the problem of the choice of a national language among various indigenous and exogenous languages in multilingual Nigeria. Nigeria's dense multilingualism, multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity pose a huge challenge in the desire and effort to choose a national language. Due to the existing roles of English, some people suggest English as the appropriate national language while also pointing inadequacies noticed in Nigeria's indigenous languages. Kebby (1986) argues that: "No Nigerian language can serve scientific and technological needs ... because none is complete." And the neutrality of English will deny any claim of ownership of national language by any ethnic group in the country.

However, some Nigerians have advanced the need for an indigenous Nigerian language as national language because of certain reasons: national consciousness, unity and pride. A break away with English will justify Nigeria's claim for political independence; put an end to the elitist society that English has created and the choice of an indigenous language will facilitate national integration as all members of the country speak the same national language. Olagoke (1982) argues: "There are many Nigerians who feel strongly that the country needs a "lingua franca" other than English, not only to foster national unity but also to facilitate self-discovery and pride convincing the world and ourselves that we are truly independent of Britain."

By way of recap, the proposition to choose an indigenous language as national language is laudable, but the problem is the choice of national language among many Nigerian languages. Attah (1987) identifies one of the paradoxes of the national language question. He writes that while many Nigerians express a desire for a national language other than English, few are convinced of the need to choose a language other than their own. The proponents of the national language therefore may be divided into three major camps based on their preferences/choices. First are those who want the national language to come from the major Nigerian languages. Second are those who reject the candidacy of the major languages and opt instead for a minor language, preferably one of these languages – Kanuri, Fulani, Tiv and Edo. Third are those who prefer an entirely new language created by mixing three or more of the existing Nigerian languages so that it would be neutral and no ethnic

group would lay claim to it. Different names have been suggested for the proposed new language; some people would want to call it WAZOBIA, formed by integrating the three major languages - Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. In fact, “WA,” “ZO,” and “BIA” - Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo words respectively - meaning “come.” But Igbeneweka (1983) cited in Attah (1987), who had constructed a new language by combining different local languages in the country, would want to call it “GUOSA.”

Gnamba (1986) cited in International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (2000) observes that the development of all peoples hinges on the development of their languages. “Economically powerful nations naturally wish to expand their languages as natural and normal vehicles of their thought, their cultural values, and their ideologies that they may want or even force other peoples to adopt.” The cultural and social values and ideologies of a nation or people are transmitted from generation to generation through language. Language unites and guarantees national unity. Language is one of the engines that drive the whole nation toward progress and development. It can also be observed that global development goes hand in hand with language development. For instance, the most developed nations are those whose languages have developed the capacity to deal with the details and dynamism needed for development. Examples of such countries are Japan, Canada and United States of America.

3.3 Criteria for Choice of a National Language

Adebija (2004: p. 191) states the following as likely crucial criteria for the choice of a national language: being indigenous; a wide geographic spread and being spoken by a large percentage of the population; having the potential to represent or symbolize the national heritage, constituting a rallying point for unity and national identity; being acceptable to a large majority of the citizenry; being pride – worthy and representing the spirit of the nation. The importance of these features prompt language planning, particularly in multilingual societies. Elugbe (1990) also shares the opinion that a national language should have a nation-wide geographic spread. Its use as a national language must tend to reinforce national unity.

3.4 Social, Political and Cultural Implications of a National Language

A national language serves as a major symbol of unity and attachment by bridging immediate loyalties with transcendent ones... Language provides a continuity and scope without which a sense of overarching nationality could not be constructed; it provides concrete emotionally significant products that the individual received from previous

generations and will pass on to the future ones and that, in the present, link him to a widely dispersed position.

A language may strengthen sentimental attachment to the national group by enhancing not only the continuity but also the authenticity of the national tradition. It is the vehicle for transmitting the sacred documents of the people in which its history and mission are spelled out. It is used to encode and concretise the cultural products of a people that can be studied in their own right.

A national language makes it easier to develop political, economic, and social institutions that might serve the entire population. This helps the government to plan with greater scope and efficiency. The existence of several language groups may necessitate separate administrative units, both to avoid language difficulties and minimisation of suspicion of discrimination. A common language also facilitates the development of an educational system that offers opportunities for participation to all segments of the population. As pointedly noted by Mazrui (2002:4):

... No country has ascended a first rank technologically and economic power by excessive dependence on foreign languages. Japan rose to dazzling industrial heights by scientificating the Japanese language and making it the medium of its own industrialization.... Can Africa ever take-off technologically if it remains so overwhelmingly dependent on European languages for discourse on advance learning? Can Africa look to the future if it is not adequately sensitive to the cultural past?

Perhaps, no argument is more salient in support of Mazrui's position as that of House (2003: p. 559) who makes a distinction between languages for communication and languages for identification. She posits that if nations have these two categories of languages, language problems will be highly reduced. What this means is that in the case of Nigeria, the language of communication would be English, while languages of identity would be our indigenous languages; both language categories having different and or sometimes, overlapping functions.

Weinstein (1990) states that in Canada, United States and other countries, language has been considered as a matter of government decision-making in order to bring about change in the company of other factors such as the spread of democratic ideas; the idea of mass participation; the independence of colonial territories as the result or the source of nationalism; increased urbanisation and urban occupations which demand high communications skills; industrialisation; the

expansion of education; the growth of bureaucracies; and a sharpened sense of national identity which has influenced leaders of oppressed to crave and demand their special identity. Language stands as one of the distinguishing symbols of these groups or nations. Many people around the world believe and they are convinced that choice of language as a symbol of political identity and an instrument in schools, the media, and the civil service to improve their material and political well being.

Weinstein (1990) also argues that a national language can help in building new loyalties and alter patterns of access. For example, Nationalist Movements in Morocco, Algeria, and Tanzania had to combat external forces promoting colonial languages in their respective countries.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have discussed why we need a national language, the problem of choice, some of the criteria for this choice as well as the various implications for national development.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- a national language is a symbol of unity and oneness;
- it is crucial for a nation to have a national language;
- there are problems associated with the choice of a national language; and
- there are social, economic and political implications for this issue.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Critically examine the views presented in this unit. What is the way forward for Nigeria?

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