THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF LANGUAGE DIVERSITY ON DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF KOGI STATE

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Abstract

Language plays a key role in the development of every state. The way and manner in which speakers of another language regard speakers of other languages could impede development. Language loyalty and refusal to accept and tolerate languages other than one's own language has continued to cause inter-ethnic crisis and other language related problems which retard development. This paper is hinged on Social Identity Theory. In the methodology, questionnaire method was adopted for collection of data. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to respondents around Kogi state and the data collected was analysed using a simple frequency table. In the findings, it was observed that a language difference is a major cause of underdevelopment in Kogi state. The paper recommends that language tolerance and acceptance should be encouraged in the interest of the state.

Introduction

Human beings are social animals and language is the instrument through which they interact. It is a symbol of unification and a mark of identity. Language is a very important and indispensable tool available to man for the facilitation of his day to day activities. Whatever language we speak helps to define us as humans

and identify the community we belong to. The ability to use language in speech makes us human. 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 here refers to 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 the community of language users that assign every word of a language the meaning it bears.   In spite of these important aspects of language, the problem of man's development and growth become increasingly complex and intricate when the individual is not monolingual or monocultural or when one's language has to co -exist with several other languages (diverse languages) within a speech community.

Language diversity refers to the number of different languages spoken in a given area. It deals with multiplicity of language within a society. The problem of language diversity in a multicultural setting is how to manage the tensions that accompany language contact. Most of such contacts entail struggle for exclusive domination and supremacy between the languages. However, multilingualism entails that the language are encouraged to accommodate one another. Another problem associated with multilingualism remains how to maintain social relation and communication in such an environment of multiplicity of languages. A multicultural community in its simplest form is a society where many cultures exist. Culture is a people's way of doing things. Hence, a multicultural context is about a society which has many ways of doing things. Multicultural again 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 practice their culture without let or hindrance.

The use of language in a multicultural context is a careful activity. It's mediated with caution and reason 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 culture 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.

In spite of all efforts to unite and develop Kogi State politically, economically and socially, the state remains an underdeveloped one. This is as a result of the challenges facing the state due to her multi-lingual and multi-cultural nature. Language diversity has generated a lot of problems in the state such as aggravating political sectionalism, hindrance of inter-group cooperation, unity, impedes political participation, political support for the authorities and the regime, and holds down government effectiveness and political stability. Similarly, language diversity slows economic development, by for example, braking occupational mobility, reducing the number of people available for mobilization into the modern sector of the economy, decreasing efficiency, and preventing the diffusion of innovative techniques. This research intends to address these problems caused by language diversity so as to enhance even development in the state.

A Brief Background of Linguistic Composition in Kogi State

Kogi is a state located in the North Central Nigeria created in August, 1991. It is bordered by ten states namely; Abuja, Anambra, Nassarawa, Benue, Enugu, Ondo, Edo, Ekiti, Kwara and Niger. It is popularly called the confluence state because the River Niger and Benue respectively meet at Lokoja, its state capital. According to Adegbija (2004), Kogi state is made up of the following languages: "Agwara-Kamberi; BARUBA; Baatonun, Bassange; Barutun; Bisanya; Boko; Busa; Ebira; Ebira-Koto, Eganyin; Fulani; Hausa; IGALA; Kambari: Auna, Agara'iwa, Kupa; Nupe (Kakanda); Oko-Osanyin (Ogori-Magongo), Okun: Bunu, Ijumu, Owe, Yagba" (p.44). However, three notable languages are spoken in Kogi state: Igala, Okun and Ebira languages. Adegbija went further to say that "The Igalas, dominated by the Tivs in their former Benue state, became, in Kwara, a predominant language group that now constitute a political and linguistic threat to other language groups in the newly created Kogi state" (p.33). This is because "owing to the creation of new states from time to time, some neglected languages have gained sudden significance. Igala, for instance, has become a major language in Kogi state"(48). Thus, "in Kogi state, Igala and Ebira have become major languages because their speakers are numerically and politically buoyant" (49)

The co-existence of these different languages in the state has led to a lot of developmental issues. Development here applies to all facets of human endeavours- health, medicine, information, communication, education, justice, politics, trade, transport. It also implies the extent of mutual participation of individuals, male or female, high or low, rich or poor in all these social and political endeavours of one's land. According to Adegbite (2003), "development is the ultimate goal of national aspirations and individual efforts but it is most apparent that the nations of the world and individual persons either attain or fail to attain this goal in varying degrees" (p.156). It is these developmental problems which the state encounters as a result of her multi lingual and multi- cultural composition that this research intends to address.

Theoretical Frame Work

This paper is hinged on Social Identity Theory. Social Identity Theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) to understand the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination. It has a considerable impact on social psychology. It has also been tested in a wide range of fields and settings including prejudice, stereotyping, and language use. Tajfel & Turner (1979) proposed that the groups (eg. social class, family, dialect groups, etc.) which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self esteem. As a result, it gives us a sense of social identity as well as a sense of belonging to the social world. Therefore in order to increase our self-image, we either enhance the status of the group we belong or discriminate and hold prejudice views against the "out-group". Consequently, we divide the world into "them" and "us" based through a process of social categorization which implies putting people into social groups known as in-group (us) and out-group (them).

The basic assumption of the theory is that group members of an in-group will seek negative aspects of an out-group through discrimination and prejudiced remarks in order to enhance their self image. Such prejudiced views between cultures could result in racism (anti-Semitism and Xenophobic tendency) and the extreme form of racism has resulted in genocide in Germany with the Jews, in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis, in the former Yugoslavia between the Bosnians and Serbs, in Nigeria between Modakeke and Ife, Ijaw and Itshekiri. Following Tajfel and Turner (1979), stereotyping is based on a normal cognitive process. We have the tendency to group things together and while doing this, we

exaggerate the differences between groups and the similarities of things in the group. According to them, three cognitive processes are involved in evaluating others as "us" or "them' (i.e. "in-group" and "out-group"). These are social categorization, social identification and social comparison.

In stage one, we categorize people, including ourselves, in order to comprehend the social environment be it Christian/Muslim, migrants/landowners, central language/dialects, blacks/whites, etc. If we can assign people to a category, then we can tell things about them. In the second stage, we adopt the identity of the category we have categorized ourselves to belong. For instance, if we categorize ourselves as Muslims, we begin to adopt the identity of a Muslim and start to act in the ways we believe Muslims act and conform to the norms of the group. We also lace our emotions to the identified group as our self-esteem is bound up with the group membership. Finally, having categorized and identified ourselves with a group, we then tend to compare that group with other groups. Our own group must compete favourably with other groups if we must maintain our self-esteem. Competition and hostility between two rival groups is not only an issue of competing for resources but also of competing identities.

Methodology

The method used for the collection of data for this study was through the administration of questionnaires to respectively selected respondents within an area of the state being Kogi State University, Anyigba. This is because the university environment is representative of speakers of diverse languages, including the three major languages: Igala, Ebira and Okun which are relevant to this study. Concerning the data collected for the work, a total number of 150 questionnaires were distributed to the selected respondents around the university, 50 speakers of Igala, 50 speakers of Ebira and 50 Okun speakers. In terms of the nature of questions, they were designed to elicit from the respondents issues linked to the sociolinguistics of language in relation to the ideal thrust of the research.

A total of 150 questionnaires were given out and collected, the respondents were chosen from the three major linguistic and ethnic groups in Kogi state, 50 Igalas, 50 Ebiras and 50 Okuns. The selection was to avoid a kind of duplication of ideas, since people of the same ethnic group seem to think and see issues alike. Items on the questionnaire ranged from information like names, sex, age,

occupation, language, to marital status. All respondents are proficient in one or two indigenous languages besides English and pidgin. For the purpose of analysing data for this research work, a simple frequency table is used based on the respondents' answers to questions on the questionnaires. The frequency distribution and analyses of responses of the 150 respondents are presented below.

Presentation of Data and Analyses

Question 1: Is language an instrument for development?

Table 1: Summary of Responses to Question 1.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	85	56.7
No	55	36.7
Not sure	10	6.6
Total	150	100.0

Table 1 above indicates that 56.7% of respondents said yes, 36.7% said no while 6.6% are not sure. This shows that language is an instrument for development.

Question 2: Do you think the coexistence of many languages in Kogi state is a hindrance to her ethnic unity?

Table 2: Summary of Responses to Question 2

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	120	80
No	25	16.7
No response	5	3.3
Total	150	100.0

The result in table 2 above indicates that 80% of respondents said yes, 16.7% said no while 3.3% are not sure. This means that the co-existence of many languages in kogi state is a hindrance to her ethnic unity.

Question 3: Do you think multiple languages have any adverse effect on efficient communication in the state?

Table 3: Summary of Responses to Question 3

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	53.3
No	68	45.3
No response	2	1.4
Total	150	100.0

Table 3 above shows that 53.3% of respondents think the existence of multiple languages in the state have adverse effects on efficient communication, 45.3% think it does not while 1.4% gave no response. This means that the existence of many languages have adverse effects on efficient communication in the state.

Question 4: Do indigenes of Kogi state who are native speakers of different languages live in peaceful harmony with one another?

Table 4: Summary of Responses to Question 4.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	40	26.7
No	100	66.7
Not sure	10	6.6
Total	150	100.0

Table 4 above shows that 26.7% indigenes think members of the state live in peaceful harmony with one another, 66.7% think they do not while 6.6% are not sure. This shows that indigenes of kogi state do not live in peaceful harmony with one another.

Question 5: is multilingualism more of a blessing than a curse in kogi state?

Table 5: Summary of Responses to Question 5

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	55	36.7
No	90	60
Not sure	5	3.3

Total	150	100.0

The result in Table 5 above shows that 36.7% of indigenous think multilingualism is more of a blessing than a curse in the state, 60% do not think so while 3.3% are not sure. This shows that multilingualism is more of a curse than a blessing in Kogi state.

Question 6: Does language diversity hinder scientific and technological invention in the state?

Table 6: Summary of responses to question 6

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	110	73.3
No	25	16.7
Not sure	15	10
Total	150	100.0

The result in table 6 above show that 73.3% of respondents said yes, 16.7% said no, while 10% are not sure. This means that language diversity hinders scientific and technological invention in kogi state.

Question 7: Do you think multiple languages in Kogi state is a threat to your own progress?

Table 7: Summary of Responses to Question 7

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	53.3
No	60	40
No response	10	6.7
Total	150	100

The table above shows that 53.3% said yes, 40% said no, 6.7% gave no response. This means that the co-existence multiple languages in kogi state threatens the progress of indigenes of the state.

Question 8: Do you think picking a common language in a multilingual place like Kogi state is easy?

Table 8: Summary of Responses to Question 8

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	16.7
No	115	76.7
Not sure	10	6.6
Total	150	100.0

Table 8 above shows that 16.7% of respondents said yes, 76.7% said no, while 6.6% are not sure. This shows that picking a common language in a multilingual society like kogi state is not easy.

Question 9: Do you think Kogi state would be better off with one common language?

Table 9: Summary of responses to question 9

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	130	86.7
No	18	12
Undecided	2	1.3
Total	150	100.0

The table 9 is that 86.7% tilts toward a better Kogi state if composed of a common language while 12% tilts toward a worse condition if Kogi state is made up of a common language as 1.3% is undecided on the issue.

Question 10: Do you think there are possible solutions to the problems of language diversity in the state?

Table 10: Summary of responses to question 10

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	82	54.7
No	60	40

| Not sure | 8 | 5.3 |
| Total | 150 | 100.0 |

The result in Table 10 above indicates that 54.7% of indigenes think the problems of language diversity in the state can be solved, 40% think it cannot be solved, while 5.3% are not sure. This shows that the problems of language diversity in the state can be tackled.

Research Findings

Based on the analyses carried out above, it is obvious that multilingualism or language diversity poses a great threat to the development of Kogi state, as well as to the peaceful co-existence of indigenes within the state. Members of the state harbour suspicion about others who speak different languages from them, the result of this reflects in every sector of the state, hence, language diversity hinders political, economic, social and technological development in Kogi state.

Summary

By and large, this study has been specifically concerned with the issue of language diversity as it affects development in kogi state. Concepts relating to language diversity such as language and its functions, multilingualism as well as development have been reviewed. Data used for the analyses of this study was collected through distribution of questionnaires to selected respondents within an area of the state being Kogi State University and the analyses of data was carried out using a simple frequency table, leading to the findings that language diversity actually affects development in Kogi state.

Recommendations

Multilingualism, if properly harnessed, is more of a blessing than a curse. Kogi state is everybody's own, Igala, Ebira, Okun and others, we should consider one another as citizens of a single state and family.

Government policy that promotes one language above the other should be stopped. This will reduce the level of hatred among our competing linguistic groups.

A multilingual and multicultural approach should be adopted concerning language policy in the state. Where there is a state function, it is better to use all languages in the state side by side for conducting the affairs of the state. Thus, all citizens should be encouraged to use all languages in the state, this does not tamper with the fact that the English language remains the official language of the state, since no acceptable indigenous language has emerged.

Language and ethnic feelings should be relegated to the background in deciding positions for political leaders; employment should be based on merit rather than tribal affiliations, only then can development or even development be ensured.

Natural and man-made resources should be equitably distributed across the state without any bias; this will reduce the problems of ethnic disunity in the state. Monolingualism alone will not solve all our economic, political and social woes; there are monolingual societies around the globe where there is lack of peace due to one problem or another. An example is the conflict between the Ooni of Ife and the Alaafin of Oyo over the Egba monopoly of political power in western Nigeria. There is bickering between Anambra North and South, there are conflicts between the Turks and Greeks in Cyprus , Iraq versus Kuwait, the collapsed Soviet Union, etc. are all examples of societies that have or had common language yet eroded by crisis.

Therefore, the masses should be adequately sensitized on the need to tolerate one another and accept languages other than their own. There should be no dichotomy between major and minor languages; every language should be treated with as much respect as possible.

The interest and development of Kogi state as a whole should be at the forefront of every indigene's heart irrespective of other factors such as tribal or language differences, only then can we have a peaceful and well developed Kogi state.

Conclusion

Having carried out the analyses of data collected for this study, it is safe to assert that language diversity or differences in language threatens even development in a multilingual society. Members of the state harbour suspicion and fail to unite with others who speak different languages from them. This tribalism is more noticeable in the political and economic sectors, incompetent leaders are voted into power simply because majority of voters are from the same ethnic group as

them and these leaders in power tend to channel development plans towards certain areas of the state as against other areas. Similarly, incompetent persons are given employment not based on merit, but tribal reasons and this slows down the rate of development in the state.

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