

## **THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COALESCENCE AND MULTILINGUALISM IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The language scenario in Nigeria is complex, intricate and dense, leading to an extreme degree of multilingualism due to an array of aboriginal, exogenous and Pidgin languages. Nigeria is one of Africa's centers for language variety, which has metamorphosed into linguistic diversity. The need to break the language barrier in Nigeria to make for a free flow of mutual intelligible communication led to the introduction of the English language in Nigeria by the colonialists. The aboriginal languages lack the power to unite members of the varied ethnic groups in the country. The English Language in Nigeria has proven to meet the requirements of an official exogenous language to bond the varied ethnic groups in the heterogenous state together for lucid communication, which is fundamental to the economic, social and political unity of the nation. The role of any language in a multi-ethnic community is dependent on certain factors bothering on social relevance. The concept of multilingualism in Nigeria, levels of multilingualism, issues in multilingualism and the unifying role of the English Language in Nigeria, are critically examined in this paper. The paper presents the English language as a linguistic conjoiner in Nigeria and contends that this function is instrumental to the minimized inter-ethnic clashes.*

**Keywords:** English Language, coalescence, multilingualism, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is a multilingual nation with over 450-500 aboriginal languages with Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa constituting the major languages, with over 97 million speakers (Ethnologue). However, none of these has been adopted as a national language due to the apprehension of linguistic dominance and the associated ethnic rivalry. In the midst of such linguistic diversity, educational, political, economic and international activities must be actualized for the overall development of the nation. For these and many more reasons, the English language, through the instrumentality of colonialism, has inadvertently, become the official language of communication in Nigeria, providing a common

linguistic basis for socio-economic advancement. The essence of language is for communication and social relationships. According to Sapir (1921), language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. Adedimeji (2018) therefore, postulated thus: no man can survive fully without language, as such, no nation can fully progress and develop without a common linguistic basis. Isayev, cited in Yusuf (2012) further submits that “language is a nation’s most important asset, there is no such thing as a nation without a common linguistic basis”. Although the endorsement of the English language in Nigeria is considered purely neocolonialistic, it has, in no small measure eliminated the language barrier between the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, leading to multilingualism. Multilingualism is a language situation whereby multiple languages exist side by side. It can be individual dependent, when an individual is competent in more than two languages or societal when many languages are used simultaneously in a society. Multilingualism is a broad term. It appeals to scholars from many areas and disciplines. The term 'multilingualism' is derived from two Latin words namely “multi” that means many and “lingua” that means language. Thus, multilingualism is referred to as the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native like proficiency (Okal, 2014). Multilingualism is also known as plurilingualism. As Timayi and Mohammed (2015) asserted, multilingualism is a situation Nigerians had to contend with latently and constantly in their national lives. This is because it is a societal phenomenon that deals with language existing in a society. It is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that arises as a result of language contact. It is a situation in which two (i.e. bilingualism, specifically) or more languages operate within the same context and it is characterized by factors such as political annexation, marital relation, economic transaction, cultural association, educational acquisition and religious affiliation.

Multilingualism is a sociolinguistics phenomenon. Sociolinguistics is thus, the study of language in relation to the society. It explores how language interacts with a society. The different uses and functions languages are put to. According to Wardhaugh (1986), sociolinguistics is the linguistic domain that investigates the relationship between language and society with the goal of having a better understanding of the structure of language and how languages function in communication. In clear terms, “it is the study of language in relation to society” (Hudson 2001).

As a society uses several languages, that society becomes multicultural and multilingual. In any multilingual situation, there is tendency that one language would dominate the others, hence, becoming the most preferred while others struggle for survival. Hence, the dominant language or group imposes its language on others. Multilingualism is a dominant trait in Africa. Colonialism in Africa brought about contacts with German, Italian, French, Portuguese and English language among Africans. Language contact is one major factor that brings about multilingualism. As inferred by Adedimeji, language contact arises from the interaction between speakers of different languages, the result of which makes people to be bilinguals or multilinguals. Language contact does not just exist; it is occasioned by reasons. Five major reasons engendering language contact are political annexation or domination, cultural/religious affiliation, commercial transaction, marital relation and educational acquisition . The inception of English in Nigeria can be traced to the arrival of the British in the shores of Nigeria for trade, missionary activities and later colonialism, after the Portuguese, who were merchants were displaced. Multilingualism also evolves as a result of exposure to foreign cultures and religion. As people also leave their base, to pursue education in another country, they move with their language and culture. The English language was first introduced and taught to Nigerians for fostering of the gospel but later used as a language of colonialism. After colonialism, English, though some still view as neocolonialism in disguise, has strived, performing a variety of functions in Nigeria. One of such roles is its coalescing role; unifying the ethnic differences that make up Nigeria.

As already established, Nigeria is a multilingual nation with a vast land mass. Ajulo (2008) estimates that Nigeria is a West African nation with a population of about 140 million people. It covers an area of 923,766 square kilometers, with over 200 different ethnic groups. Presently, the country is politically composed of 36 States and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. It is estimated that over 400 languages are spoken in Nigeria (Crozier and Blench (1992) while Kari 2002 reveals the linguistic situation of Nigeria by stating that of the four phyla (Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, Afro-Asiatic, Khoisan) to which African languages are grouped, three phyla are represented in the Nigerian linguistic terrain. These language phyla are Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afro-Asiatic. Ogunyemi (2009) states that there is a lot of controversy on the actual number of indigenous languages in Nigeria. Greenberg 1971 stamps it at 248, Bamgbose (1976) also

evaluated it at 400 while Hoffman (1975) too puts it between 400 and 513 living languages.

Oyetayo (2006) identifies 510 living languages and nine extinct languages. Presumably, the total number of aboriginal languages in Nigeria according to him, for both living and extinct languages is 519.

To Yusuf (2012), Nigeria is a multilingual country where an estimated 505 languages are spoken, of which Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa are the major languages with about 18 million speakers each. The British first introduced English in Nigeria with the establishment of trading contacts on the West African coast in the sixteenth century. This resulted in a form of Nigerian Pidgin, which probably is the predecessor of present-day Nigeria English Pidgin, which is mainly used for inter-ethnic communication. English began to be formally studied in Nigeria from the middle of the nineteenth century on. It now has a geographical spread throughout the country as it is used in predominantly formal contexts such as government, education, literature, business, commerce, media, international communication and as a lingua franca in social interaction among the educated elite. It is treated as “the official language of the country” although there is no government statute or decree specifying this. Nigeria came into being after the forceful amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1941 by the colonialists. As a result, people of different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic groups were clubbed together.

### **The Concept of Multilingualism**

The term 'multilingualism', also known as plurilingualism is derived from two Latin words namely “multi” that means many and “lingua” that means language. Thus, multilingualism is referred to as the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native-like proficiency (Okal, 2014). As Timayi and Mohammed (2015) asserted, multilingualism is a situation Nigerians had to contend with latently and constantly in their national lives. This is because it is a societal phenomenon that deals with language existing in a society, and also a sociolinguistic phenomenon that arises as a result of language contact. It is a situation in which two (i.e. bilingualism, specifically) or more languages operate within the same context and it is characterized by factors such as political annexation, marital relation,

economic transaction, cultural association, educational acquisition and religious affiliation.

As Okal (2014) puts it, multilingualism refers to speaking more than one language competently and could be individual or societal. These languages are regulated and assigned different functions as either native, foreign, national, international language or a lingua franca. According to Okal, the linguistic consequences of multilingualism include:

- a. The creation and growth of *lingua franca* that normally develops because of the need for cross group communication.
- b. Multilingualism practice creates the development of mixed languages mainly due to intense language contact. As a result, speakers therefore tend to involve a mixture of languages during verbal communication. This contact may also result into the creation of slangs.
- c. Multilingualism practice generally develops cross linguistic communication strategies like code switching and code mixing. When people switch from one language used at homes to the other outside the home environment then code switching occurs.
- d. Multilingualism creates an aspect of Diglossia whereby one language tends to dominate the others. The dominated languages are generally referred to as subordinates. A glimpse of the diglossia situation in Africa indicates that English, French and Portuguese are characterized as the high languages (H) and the indigenous ones as low languages (L).
- e. Multilingualism practice tends to create the development and general acquisition of cross-cultural communication skills. In this regard, people tend to learn different skills of the languages in place, especially speaking, reading and even writing. These cross-cultural communication skills enable one to gain both the communicative and discourse competencies.
- f. Besides the linguistic consequences, there is also a political consequence that relies on the economic and political order of the society. This, in the long run creates the majority and minority languages. Some of the majority languages become more powerful than others.

## **Multilingualism in Nigeria**

There have been various discourses on multilingualism in Nigeria, with different scholars postulating different perspectives of the subject. However, there seems to be a consensus that bilinguals and multilinguals perform better academically, are multicultural and are able to reason from different world views. Okal (2014) corroborates this opinion and asserts that, people knowing more languages have been found to enhance intellectual flexibility and creativity. According to Akindele and Adegbite (2005), while introducing a peculiar dimension to the debate, emphasizes that the main issue about the language situation in Nigeria is the numerosity of languages (about 400) in Nigeria. Despite the pitfalls of multilingualism, it could impact positively on the nation if the diverse linguistic groups are pooled together and utilized for development. While Nigeria could be a country of uncoordinated multilingualism, it could be a nation of coordinated bilingualism, whereby all indigenous languages stand on the one hand, and the English language stands on the other.

Olagbaju (2014) aptly describes Nigeria as a linguistically fragmented and heterogeneous nation, and qualifies Nigeria as a good example of a multilingual nation with its accompanying problems of language choice, planning and implementation. Kari (2002) analyzed the linguistic situation in Nigeria and opined that of the four phyla (Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, Afro-Asiatic, Khoisan-African) to which African languages are grouped, three phyla are represented in the Nigerian linguistic terrain. These language phyla are Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afro-Asiatic. Olagbaju (2014) also affirms that Nigeria is a perfect example of a multilingual nation with the resultant effect of the majority of her citizens having access to a minimum of two languages. The functional differentiation of languages tends to give rise to other ways of classifying languages as mother tongue (first language of a speaker), vernacular (language spoken in a particular area or specific group of people but not generally an official), national, official and the global or international languages. Therefore, Olagbaju (2014) further argues that there are individuals who are bilingual or multilingual either in the indigenous languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) or indigenous languages and the English language (Igbo, Yoruba and English).

According to Adekunle (1976) and Olagoke (1982), the different indigenous Nigerian languages can be classified into four depending on their roles:

Group A consists of the major Nigerian languages which are spoken by at least six million people and used fairly widely outside their region of origin by Nigerians whose mother tongues are different. The languages in this group are Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Group B is made up of languages not much used outside their areas of origin, but which enjoy official recognition and are used at the national level. Examples of such languages are Fulani, Kanuri, Tiv and Edo. The number of the native speakers of each of these languages range from one to three million. Group C are minor or regional languages which are important only at the state level such as Idoma, Urhobo and Nupe. Group D are minor languages which are not officially recognized even at the state level, yet they are very important at the local government and district levels for the purpose of administration. They argue that eighty percent of Nigerian languages belong to this group, examples of these languages include Ogoni, Gwari, Igede and Angas. They further postulate that these categorizations have formed the reference point for all arguments about the choice of a national language in Nigeria.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, Nigeria has built a linguistic repertoire to sustain social, political, economic, educational, industrial and technological development in a multilingual nation. English has seen Nigeria through 33 years of political independence in which we had three civilian and five military governments, a civil war and tremendous development in the educational, economic and social life of the nation. Nigeria is a multi-lingual nation of varied ethnic groups. This reason paved a way for English Language to become the nation's *lingua franca* and a factor for its unification (Akujobi and Chukwu cited in Timayi and Mohammed, 2015). In Nigeria, languages are assigned different roles and Adekunle (1976) further classified these languages based on their functions.

Language categories	Cultural identity	Inter ethnic communication	Science and technology	Education, literature and art	Official transaction and mass media	National identity	International communication
English	—	* *	* *	* * *	* * *	—	* * *
Indigenous languages	* * *	* *	—	* *	* *	—	*
Pidgin English	—	* * *	—	*	*	—	*
French	—	—	—	*	*	—	* *

Arabic	—	*	—	*	*	—	*
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\*\*\* = Very high-frequently use

\*\* = High-frequently use

\* = Not so-frequently use

### **The coalescing role of the English language in Nigeria**

According to Cholakova (2015), Nowadays, English is the most spoken language in the world, not only as a first or as a second language, but also as a foreign language used to communicate with others. Hence, English has a special status and role that is globally accepted and as such, it has a positive and a negative impact. The English language is also the language of international relation and without it, Nigerians will be disconnected from the global community, with the majority as English speakers. To this end, Cholakova (2015) asserts that as an international language, English has a great impact on the political and economic growth of many nations, and there is enormous demand and need for English knowledge and proficiency. Nowadays, all business meetings and conferences use English as a means of communication and the positive effect of English as an international language can be noticed not only in the economic and political growth, but also in the development of the tourism of the country. For instance, English language fluency and proficiency of the citizens attract more visitors because they can achieve functional communication. Cholakova (2015) further suggests that, as an international language, the English language contributes to effective communication with foreigners, international singers, athletes, actors and actresses. Certain negative effects have been attributed to the English language:

- a. Its threat to minority languages: It may lead to language death. The global dominance of English in number of domains: internet, advertisements, commercials, music and film, etc. leads to excessive use of English and appearance of anglicisms, which again threatens minority languages (Cholakova, 2015).
- b. Discrimination against non-English speakers: People who could speak English feel that they are better off than people who could not. This is due to the recognition and opportunities mastering English offers, to the disadvantage of other languages.
- c. The exaltation of English leads to loss of a people's culture and identity.

Hoffman cited in Cholakova (2015) reveals that language extinction causes loss of culture as well. If there are no speakers of a particular language, then traditional songs, poetry, and other verbal art forms are only a piece of the cultural values that will be lost.

- d. It may lead to monolingualism: Philipson as cited in Cholakova (2015) talks about the influence of using only English. He laments, “the forces of globalization and americanization may be moving language policy in the direction of monolingualism”. When English is encouraged, people become nonchalant to learn other languages. Rohmah as cited in Cholakova (2015) reveals that the use of English in future will be parallel to the use of local languages and if local languages are not maintained by their speakers, this would confirm the global influence of English in creating an English - only nation.
- e. The influence of English as a global *lingua franca* can actually create linguistic gap between people who are native and non-native English speakers. In particular, the lack of English language proficiency and fluency may lead to ignorance of non - English creative works and important researches. Linguistic diversity gives people an opportunity to organize and share diverse experiences, knowledge, skills, and perspectives in a creative way (Cholakova , 2015).

Despite opinions which consider the English language as a remnant of colonialization, many scholars insist that the role of the English language in national integration and development cannot be set aside. These scholars infer that without the English language, national cohesion and ethnic compatibility would not have been achieved. Hence, Adedimeji, as cited in Timayi and Mohammed (2015) assert that: “Of all the heritage left behind in Nigeria by the British at the end of colonial administration, probably, none is more important than the English language. It is now the language of government, business and commerce, education, the mass media, literature, and much internal as well as external communications.” Furthermore, Ezema, as cited in Timayi and Mohammed (2015) confirms the indispensable role of the English language in national development in these words: “It is in order to diffuse inter-ethnic linguistic tension and for the fact that no single indigenous Nigerian language is spoken and understood throughout Nigeria than English; the language inherited from the colonial masters, that is English has been adopted as the official language of the country. The role of English in national life of an average

Nigerian is inestimable. In order to participate effectively in the social, political and economic aspects of national life, a Nigerian must attain some level of competence in the language. For him/her to follow intelligently in what goes on in national life, he/she has to read newspapers, listen to the radio, and also listen to and watch television programmes which are largely conducted in English language." Mantz, as cited in Cholakova (2015) argues for using English as European *Lingua franca*. Some of the advantages include: "it simplifies trade, it makes scientific reports and achievements more easily and quickly recognized, and it has advantages in political discussions... It is an easy means of communication, and the propagating and spread of English thus seems to be mankind's general task." English continues to serve as the language of law, government, education, media even after independence in 1960. No indigenous language in Nigeria is capable of the function English language assumed ever since. Timayi and Mohammed (2015) describe this state of the country, 'the entire nation fell into a dilemma of not having an official language. This was because no linguistic group had a right to impose itself on any other and every linguistic group whether major or minor feels sovereign and important. Apart from these, other points of disagreement exists. Capturing this situation, Igboanusi and Ohia (2001) conducted a study involving one thousand respondents (which include doctors, lawyers, teachers, politicians, civil servants and students) in four minority language zones in the country. It was observed that 74.3% of respondents dislike speakers of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba and 49.6% of them feel that the speakers of the three major Nigerian languages do not think well of the minority language groups. Most of the respondents (65.7%) showed preference for English as Nigeria's *lingua franca*. 19.3% of the respondents desired that their local languages become Nigeria's future *lingua franca*, while 5.3%, 3.6% and 6.1% of them want either Yoruba, Igbo or Hausa, in the respective order, to emerge as Nigeria's future *Lingua franca*. Nida and Wonderly, as cited in Yusuf (2012) assert that "In Nigeria, there is simply no politically neutral language. Infact, the division into three major regions reflects the three poles: Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba. The political survival of Nigeria as a country would even be more seriously threatened, that is, if any of these three languages were promoted by the government as being the one national language This is rather sad and unfortunate to note that such latent tension which does not make for national progress exists. This kind of situation creates suspicion, distrust, hatred and chaos in a nation that should be one." Yusuf (2012) confirms that, given the problem often associated with ethnic diversity, it is not surprising that adopting an indigenous Nigerian language as *Lingua franca* becomes a major

preoccupation among Nigerian linguists, language planners and the government in the 1970s and 80s. Since linguistic homogeneity (often) entails nationalism (which accounts for why people would first give up their lives before their languages), an indigenous national language was seen as one way of ensuring the continued oneness, or national integration, of the many ethnic groupings that make up the country. This is because each local language is intimately related to or equates an ethnic group, thus the use of a local language reinforces attachment to ethnicity thereby going against the current of national sentiment. However, adoption of a national language in any multilingual society like Nigeria, is a herculean task. Several proposals were considered for Nigeria. Many opted for the adoption of one of the three major languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) as the national language since the three languages have the highest number of native speakers. 'One factor is the criteria for this selection. Myers-Scotton, as cited in Yusuf (2012), noted, one of the reasons for official language dilemma in Africa is that there is usually no single group with both enough numerical and political dominance over the others to make its language the natural choice.' If the English language is removed from Nigeria's vocabulary, the language situation of the tower of Babel will be replicated. However, since only one language must be the official language (the language of administration and education at some level), the language of relevance for unifying the nation, English was adopted as the privileged language without which the unity of Nigeria as a nation is most improbable, if not out-rightly impossible (Yusuf, 2012). The amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates was premised on the English language being a common intelligible language of communication. If there was no language to bind the different segments of the country together, the amalgamation would not have been realized. Danladi, as cited in Timayi and Mohammed (2015) reports that the 'artificial' combination of the three regions (Northern, Eastern and Western) in 1914 gave the major languages in Nigeria, according to the British colonial point of view, as Hausa in the northern region, Yoruba in the western region and Igbo in the Eastern region. This craved an edge for English language as the only unifying solution to the newly merged country.

Yusuf (2012) identifies the following as the integrating and coalescing role of the English language in Nigeria:

- a. English can be said to be the language of integration in Nigeria. Amidst the compounding complexity of Nigeria, especially in relation to the

language question, the only language that indexes the spirit of togetherness is English. More often than not, activities conducted in indigenous languages are reprobated as being ethnic or tribal, except in cultural celebrations or entertainment displays. This explains why even during the first republic and even the colonial era, when English had not attained its present level of ascendancy in national and international affairs, political parties were formed in English. However, the parties might have regional bases; the fact that they were named in English entailed their collective import. The Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG), the NCNC (National Council of Nigeria Citizens, after the excision of Southern Cameroon), National Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) e.t.c were formed to integrate all Nigerians and give them a sense of belonging. This trend has necessarily survived until today with all the national political parties formed and sloganeered in English.

- b. The integrating role of English also extends to virtually all strata of Nigerian life. In sports, the function of English as its language gives room for integration, as it remains the only area where the syndrome of ethnicity/tribalism has not permeated. Most Nigerians do not care whether the national team is made up of members of the same family, not to talk of an ethnic group, as long as they can deliver the goods or goals. The use of English facilitates the absence of ethnic sentiments in this regard.
- c. English is also acceptable to all – even to those who clamour against its irresistible dominance. The language is not fraught with suspicions in any formal or literate context. It is the only language that does not generate suspicions of having a skeleton in one's cupboard or a 'hidden agenda' in inter-ethnic relationships or transactions.
- d. English also serves as the language of nationalism, concerned with political integration and efficiency. The language brings all the supposed 'nations' of Nigeria to function as one. Mention is often made of each ethnic group being a nation on its own with the Hausa nation, the Igbo nation, the Yoruba nation, the Edo nation, Jukunland, Tivland, Urhoboland, Ogoniland, Ebiraland etc. as examples. However, the cohesion of all under the subsuming Nigerian nation is possible through English. In other words, without English, the ubiquitous violent ethnic groups like Oodua People's Congress (OPC) Egbesu Boys, The Arewa People's Congress (APC), Ijaw Youth Solidarity (IYS), Bakassi Boys, and other militant groups would have found more justification for desiring to

secede from the Nigerian federation. Ironically, it is also the language of nationalism. This is because the love for the country as a whole has to be manifested through the language intelligible to all and sundry, lest the 'ethnic agenda' be implicated. This reason accounts for why nationalists like Herbert Macaulay, Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, Nnamdi Azikiwe had to use English language as a weapon of nationalist struggle. A nationalist bases his patriotic views in English. If English is not used to express the same ideas for which he is known as nationalist, he becomes an ethnic jingoist or a tribal apologist. It is the language of authenticity in Nigeria today.

- e. As a Language of Wider Communication (LWC), English is used for phatic communion, ceremonial purpose, and instrument for keeping records, information dissemination, self-experiment and embodiment of thought among the various linguistic groups of Nigeria. English provide the common linguistic basis that constitutes a requisite for the existence of any nation. Therefore, with English as the common tongue to all the ethnic groups, the collective sentiment of belonging together despite the individual or ethnic differences is forged. Related to the roles discussed is the fact that Nigerianism or collective identity is stamped on national institutions through the medium of English.
- f. The army, the navy, the air force and the police that all safeguard the territorial integrity of, and peaceful existence in Nigeria are controlled with English (unadulterated or adulterated - pidgin). The National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C) is aimed at bringing together Nigerian Youths with a view to reinforcing the sentiment of oneness. The constitution of Nigeria is written in English to create a level ground for all Nigerians to play, though the meta-language for the teaching of the three languages and their legislative terms was being developed (at a time in the past) in the three major languages.
- g. Writing in English by Nigerian literary artists has also created a distinctive Nigerian literature marked by its own characteristics imbued with features of inter-cultural communication and cooperation. English is also the language of international relations and diplomacy - the language that mirrors Nigeria to the world.
- h. In fact, there are obvious national symbols such as National Flag, The National Anthem, The National day/Independence day, the national associations as well as several national monuments of which are designed in English and all of which 'assert' that English is the foundation of the

magnificent structure called Nigeria.

- i. According to Cholakova (2015), When people who share different mother tongues and backgrounds meet, they need to communicate and use a particular language in order to understand each other. Therefore, the need for global communication and mutual understanding, led to increasing the number of English speakers and promoting English as the most widely spoken language.

Surely, if English is removed, the whole nation may automatically crumble and Nigeria may cease to exist because English serves as a mediating language. According to Obausi, as cited in Yusuf (2012), a common language is a mark of identification and a necessary powerful tool for unity for national consciousness – nationalism. In the words of Akindele and Adegbite (2005), “English should serve an expected coordinating role as a means of interethnic and international communication....” Yusuf (2012) therefore submits that “English is our new historical symbol of federalism and nationalism and so, let us incontestably use it for the Nigeria nation. So, let us domesticate it and get integrated.”

## **Conclusion**

The unity of a multilingual nation like Nigeria can only be guaranteed by a common and mutually intelligible language, which will engender cohesion and national integration, as well as, relegate and repress the perception of linguistic hegemony and subjugation in all forms and shades. The English language has continued to play this role effectively, providing the much-needed communication tool for national growth and development. Nevertheless, the local languages must be developed to the point where a functional and hybrid native language can suitably replace the English language as a national language. Effective discussions must persist, fruitful consultations must be initiated and appropriate political will must be engaged to achieve this laudable goal in the near future.

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