

## LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA: A NATIONAL QUESTION

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### **Abstract**

*Nigeria as a sovereign independent nation has a colonial history. This history which took its origin in 1914 with the colonial amalgamation histories, also marked the 'conglomerate' and assembly of a multitude of independent ethno-lingual cultures and thereby also historically the common register of the colonial political geography of 1960 Nigeria as 'Many voices one Nigeria'. This history begs for the national question in Nigeria - the key to this paper. The above noted national question of Nigeria is still today firmly entrenched in the grounds of indigenous languages and the 'colonial multi-national-lingual-amalgams'. This fact was effectively presented and got enshrined in our first National Anthem where it is freely and consciously expressed as follows: Though tribe and tongue may differ in brotherhood we stand! This same stanza in the first national anthem begs again for the question: Though we differ! How do we form a Nation? Furthermore, the above stanza with the inbuilt and powerful expressive signals of integrative doubts in matters of unity and co-habitation, heralds the common consciousness of multi-ethnicity, multi-tribes, multi-tongues etc., and therefore the national language/languages/linguistic, cultures, ethnicities, Nigerian nationalism - Quo Vadis? This paper intends to present indigenous languages as the tool of tools and key to the existential heart-beat of any given people which if any of such a language is lost or dies, the people's ethnicity and identity dies too and such a people will become partial contact and/or fringe dwellers when and where they are expected to have the natural rights of citizenship. The Nigerian national question can therefore be summed-up from the varied faces of the language albums of Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Language, National Question, Nationalism, Brotherhood, Human Nature

### **The General Nature of Human Language: Introduction**

It is not usually very easy to approach the problems of human language from the obvious natural human complexities of the 'given-ness' of 'Man in Society' and

his/her use-gears of the same disposed and available phenomenon called language as such. This is to say that the problem of language is language itself.

It may look simple to presume language as that ordinary 'nature and nurture' that qualifies human existentialism and phenomenology- as the *Homo sapiens*, *homo logos*, *homo intellectus*, *homo socialis*, *homo communalis*, *homo faber* etc.

When the examples above are factored into the simple existential modes of human world-hood as his/her 'being-there-ness', it raises the question about the principals of human communion and communality with the existential extensions of issues like what language means and stands for, especially when confronted with language/linguistic conveyances and variances made possible through nativities of any given language as a mother tongue, native tongue, vernaculars, dialects, lingua franca, colonial imposed language, multilingualism etc.

From the above platforms and socio-structuralisms, any human language must stand out as that single human-conventional symbolic system of social identity, human participatory membership organ of acculturation, enculturation etc., made expressive through the common ties of communication, emotional inter-plays and identities' skills that are mutually integral with the basic formulas of speaking(speech sounds), understanding, reading and writing through the ways and means of grammaticality for the creation of sense and meaning.

To this effect, every natural language must have the backgrounds of relevancies e.g. symbolic relevancies, cultural relevancies etc. and their imbued flexible elements in sociability's commands made possible and applicable through the same common language and linguistic arbitrary- ties and the ways and means of their systemic vocal and non-vocal sociologies and conventions needed for the guaranties of their *own-ness* human uniqueness in civility, civilization, identification etc.

On account of the above, the human mental being-ness and nature stand as reality made possible through the hermeneutics of human language/linguistic mental being-ness too.

According to Ernst Cassirer (1944, p.111), human language and its symbolic forms stand as the correct clue for the presentation and interpretation of all that are knowable and presentable within their existential cosmic orders and natures.

In the words of Cassirer, human language and/or speech occupies a central place for the meaning of the universe and the relegation of same means the failure of the 'gateway to all that is and stands as philosophy' which in his words would result

to the grievous impossibilities and missing links to what he calls the 'gateway to the meaning of meaning'.

The above provision implicitly indicates that human language calls up the modern philosophies of the linguistic turn in which Bell (1978, p. 130) says that:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'Real World' is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group.... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

The above reference indicates that language is key and most central in any given human history and metaphysics. Based on the above fact, it is easy to understand that any given human language stands as the 'people's book of history, metaphysics and identity' in spite of the relative attributive notations of being arraigned as major or minor.

On account of the above social commands of human language, it becomes therefore easy to appreciate the fact that any given human person within any language game, can be registered and known through a world-hood-web and conception that signifies the person (the user/speaker) along a tandem identification with that *own-ness* language qualification and confirmation, as well as the sociolinguistic indexing of a personal identity and metaphysics that equally guarantee belongingness, useable-permissibility, useable-possessiveness and useable-distinctive ontic-ontological fixations of linguistic rights that implicitly define his/her linguistic existential *fundus* as a natural self-assessments, self-assertiveness and self-certifications e.g., **I am Hausa, I am Yoruba, I am Igbo etc.**

The above conditions for the use-realities of any given human language made Heidegger to consider language/linguistic expressive use-distinctiveness as a 'world-hood-dealing' characterized by what he also calls 'ready-to-hand and in-order-to' equip-mental human causes characterized by applicable uniqueness in characters of operation, serviceability, conduciveness, usability, utilizable manipulations that are species specific to all human languages.

For Heidegger (BT, p. 143), any given human natural language is unique in its constitutive use-operation which makes and guarantees its constitutive-ness and tool-equip-mentality for the user. Any existing human language therefore, in spite of its uniqueness, can be called the *stuff for use* for a social constitutive assignment and for the user a frame-work of a socially constituted assignment in anticipation for the guarantee and disclosures of its unique-world-hood (Heidegger, M. BT, p.98)

All human languages therefore in their natural frameworks (e.g. Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, etc.) predicate their useable utensils, blue-prints, local standing, stigma, verbal arts etc, for their use-designations, use-autochthony, use-uniqueness, use-ontology etc.

It is important to note here that any given human language is an encounter designed to make the user-membership be uniquely worldly for the user and to be worldly means to be in a relational sociality and elucidation for the underpinning of all that have to do with human world-hood and relational whole.

Language is all about the functionalities concerning the articulations of the human modes of 'being-in-the world' made possible through the constitutive available structures of the 'tool-functions of the given and/or possible language-world in use-gear'. In the words of Magda (1964:73) human language places the human person in a relational-whole (i.e. Hausa as Hausa, Yoruba as Yoruba, Igbo as Igbo etc.) of his/her language/linguistic world for the possible understanding of his/her natural world-hood mentality and others.

As noted above, it is important to state again that the human person that uses language does so because every human person is *worldish* as his or her definitive clue for the human assignment of world-formation and world-disclosure.

The above definitive clue on the other hand stands as his/her being-there-ness as such in a world-hood nature. Man as man on account of this very existential disposition gives account of his/her naturalism through which the understanding of his/her world-being-ness becomes an existential function in his/her lingual-being-ness too. Again the *worldish* nature of man in *lingualism*, accounts for the human being-ness in nature and stands as a relational assignment with the given world of the own-ness language as such.

Human *worldish* relational functions stand also as that very special option as well as the *a priori* assignment for the understanding of his/her human instrumentalities through and with the limits of his/her intercourse with his/her language, noting very well that man as man needs language in order to talk about

his/her language world as a presentation through his/her language-use-ability data-base. To this effect Wittgenstein says that ‘the limit of my language is the limit of my world’.

On account of the above also, we can understand the UNESCO publication under Seam MacBride (1980) that speaks about **Many Voices One World**. MacBride presents the fact that every human language is: a great prize, a history, a fascination, a world, a world-hood, a worldview, a cultural richness, an identity-uniqueness etc.

Based on the above facts, all human languages are equal in their tripartite constitutive world-space of use-centralities as instruments for thought, instruments for communication and Instruments for social identity.

Gardner (1983) therefore stresses further the fact that all human natural languages (e.g. all Nigerian languages: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo etc.) are instruments and equipments that talk about language itself which made Wittgenstein (PI) supply that the limit of my language stands as the limit of my world as said above. And here, therefore, begins this paper’s query on language in Nigerian and how it has become ‘**A National Question**’.

### **Denizen-nation, Nationalism and Nationism: The Nigerian Question**

To register the above problem/problems of language as incubated, natured and nurtured in Nigeria as a country and the noted and adjudged issues as ‘A National Question’ or National questions’, there are facts and factors imbued and imbedded in ‘language use’ that are needed to be clarified and duly presented as road maps for expressivities of/for the issues, like truth-conditions and the state of affairs of language/languages in Nigeria and their bearings and qualifications as: National question and/or National questions.

It is very important also at this stage to understand that human language as such is generally very definite and distinct in its nature and application as against any suggestions of/about animal forms of language.

As it is known, human language is definite and distinct because of its implicit subjections in compositionality, expressivity, ideation, symbolic form, socially vocalic, structurally grammatical in conventionality, modifiability etc.

Human language in its nature and use is possible through its expressivities in sententiousness and compositionality among other attributes.

For the sake of clarity, direction and research focus, this paper will not be troubled by or about the ancillaries and relational tributaries of dialects (dialectologies)

despite their relevant aspects in human language referencing as such. It is also important to note in advance that this paper has consciously hyphenated the word 'Denizenation' to stand for the expressivities of Denizen-Nation through the course of this paper.

This paper has as its research focus on and about the inhabitants (denizens) in spite of possible Isoglosses and use inhibitions that have their distinctive/ definite sociologies, socio-linguistics, language rights, rights of citizenship, residence rights etc. within the Nigerian geo-polity.

This paper also is directly concerned with the Nigerian human language/linguistic dispositions in matters of their *use* uniqueness, arbitrariness, discreteness, transmission, domestication etc. within the multilingual existentialisms of the Nigerian geo-polity naturally designed by/through discrete cultural transmissions, communicable and productive language/linguistic identities that are naturally made possible through their written forms, oral and non-verbalized signs, significations etc.

Based on the above language/linguistic factors, what comes to mind is the question about how many languages (excluding dialects) are identifiable in Nigeria and how necessary they are for the building of any common human Nigerian language/linguistic community in relational thought-perception, communicative-perception, social identity-perception etc.

Since all human languages have the common intrinsic values/possibilities to speak the language, read the language, write the language, transmit/teach the language etc., it becomes undisputable that all human languages are equal and can be classified genetically and/or typologically within what we can call language families.

The question this paper asks therefore, is all about the *raison d'être* for the possibility and the authenticity rights of/for any language/linguistic 'use-ranking- e.g. major and minor' within the problematic faces of the obvious realities of denizenation (denizen-nation), nationalism and nationism in Nigeria. The burning question of this paper is therefore:

**Who has the natural rights to assess, decree, designate etc. a language as major or minor and what is the scientific definite instrumental-data-base for such attributive measurements?**

How is language through a language rating scale substantiated as to be identified as *major or minor*? Is language a game of numbers like the voter's card in politics?

Let it be said here briefly that this paper is firm on sociolinguistic terms that decrees that all languages are equal due to their expressive use in grammaticality.

In Nigeria as our common history, we all know that the officially recognized Nigerian languages are Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The question that linguists and philosophers of language are asking is: How did Nigeria consider and qualify only the above three languages as the major official national languages and what was the Nigerian authentic-body-authority for the declaration of major or minor qualifications.

On the other hand, this paper asks further about definitive/descriptive fate of the other naturally domesticated languages that still exist as minor and/or perhaps already dead within the same Nigerian socio-linguistic-polity.

On account of the above, Nigeria from her 1960 Independence history has an existential history that has decreed to exist on denizen-nation-hood, Nationalism and Nationism (Okonkwo, 1994).

It is common knowledge that when any given human language is threatened and relegated as such, sociolinguistics and philosophy of language dutifully signal the imminent processes of 'language death', and the consequential/implicit losses of inherited knowledge, nativity domesticated traditions and consequentially the language/linguistic cultures will gradually die too.

From the above references, the issue at stake in the light of this review therefore takes its forms from the investigations on/about 'which language/languages qualifies/qualify' in the Nigerian country as bedizened in line with their bedizened language-cultures that on another count would indicate and identify the applicable denizens/citizens and their nationalism/nationism affiliations.

The simple question that comes to the mind of this paper is:

*Are am I a Nigerian because I am Hausa, I am Yoruba; I am Igbo etc. based on the Nigerian official languages designations? What is therefore a denizen-data-base-qualifier/qualification for/of Nigeria?*

### **Denizens (Denizen-nations): The Problems of Multi-Language-Worlds in One-Nigeria**

The concept 'denizen' from very definition of the word, deeply references the natural existential cultivations of any human persons who can be identified as *someone* from and within a natural linguistic/ cultural habitat, a lawful occupant,

a native indweller, a resident of a particular socio-political lingual geography etc. like Nigeria.

A denizen has the rights of townsman-ship and the historical rights of physical indweller-ship, geographic location-able occupancy and the rights of a nationality and the implicit citizenship states of objective being, living, residency and the language and linguistic habitual naturalizations for the identifications of citizenship and sociolinguistic etc. belongingness.

Based on the above inferences, a denizen can no longer be identified as a stranger, immigrant, noncitizen, foreigner, fringe-dweller, etc.

Denizen-nation is world-hood compositionality for the human conditions of **making-sense-and sharing sense** based securely on the common socially constituted bedizened language/linguistic natural commerce that can be also configured in concord with the Wittgenstein's concept of linguistic trinity of: language-world-and life since language is behind mere words. This assertion can easily also be called 'denizen-nation' in other words denizenation.

On account of the above effects, Denizen-nation (denizenation) has meaning in and through the streams of life wherever the denizen registers his/her life as a life-world and a world of life in its steams of his/her language use and life. This expression can be called the language world of meaning in search of the human possible worlds that implicitly generate the language and linguistic designators of the composites of the world imbedded in denizens and their nationhood.

In line with the above, there is need to ask if Nigeria as the nation made up by various language/linguistic nationisms under one political shadow called the Federal Republic of Nigeria, has an authentic list of the languages/peoples within its political geography?

The available records from linguists and researchers are inconclusive and indefinite on the above matter so far. And this is to say that the Federal Republic of Nigeria as the very nation of her 'Denizen-nations', has so far no accurate record of the languages found within her political geography. This fact raises a million questions on and about Nigeria's nation-hood, nationalism, etc.

Braimoh Dele(1982, p.26), records that Nigeria has 395 different languages, Wikipedia records 525 native language in Nigeria, Ukpe (20210) records 515, Omodiagbe (1992, Adegbite (2010) record between 450 and 500, Bamgbose (1971), Osaji (1979), Brann (1990) record about 400 etc.



The truth is that Nigeria is yet to know how many languages are found within her republican political geography and also those that have died. Below is an incomplete sampling of the Nigerian languages' registers so far among some states of Nigeria.

### Sampling Denizen-Nations among some states in Nigeria

S/N O	STATES	LANGUAGES	NUMB ER
1	ABIA	IGBO	1
2	ADAMA- WA	BABUR, BACHAMA, BANSO, BATTI, BAYA, BILLE, BATLERE, ICHEN, JIBU, JIRAI, MENENGUBA, KANAKURU, KANURI, KILBA, GOMBI, GUDE, GUDU, GWA, GWAMBA, HOLMA, HONA, FALLI, GA'ANDA, GIRA, BWATIYE, YUNGUR, WAGGA, WULA, WURBO, SUKUR, TEME, TIGON, TUR, PIRE, NGWESHE, NJAYI, MARGI, MAMBILA, MATAKARN, MBOL, MBULA, MUCHAILA, MUNDANG, KURDUL, KWAHLAKKA, LALAUUBBO, LUNGUDA	49
3	AKWA IBOM	ORO, OKOBO, OBOLO, ANANG, EKET, IBIBIO	6
4	ANAMBR A	IGBO, ADUGE	2
5	BAUCHI	AJAWA, ANGAS, BAMBARA, BANKA, BARA, BARKE, BELE, BOLE, BOMA, BOMBORO, BULI, JARAWA, JERE, JIMBIN, KOMO, KARAI- KARAI, KARIYA, KIRFI, KUBI, GUBI, GURURNTUM, GYEMHAUSA, FULDE, GALAMBI, GERE, GERUMA, GINGWAK, DAZA, DENODUGURI, DUMA, BURAK, BUTA, CHAMA, CHAMO, DADIYA, WAJA, WARJI, SAYA, SEGIDI, SIRI, TANGALE, , TERATULA, PA'A, PERO, POLCHI HABA, REBINA, SANGA, NGAMO, NINGI, MIYA,	61

		<i>KUSHI, KWAMI, KWANKA, LIMONO, LONGUDA, ZARANDA, ZAYAM, ZUL</i>	
6	BAYELSA	<i>OGBIA, IJAW, ABURENI, IZONDJO</i>	4
7	BENUE	<i>AKWEYA-YACHI, IDOMA, IGBO, IGEDE, JUKUN, ETOLU, UTONKONG, YALLA, TIV, UFIA</i>	10
8	BORNO	<i>MANDARA, MOBBER, MARGI, NDHANG, SHUWA, TERAWA, BURA-PABIR, CHIBOK, CHININE, DGWEDE, FULA, GAMERGU, GOVAKO, GWOZA, HAUSA, KAMWE, DERA, KANURI, BUDUMA, SHUWA, KOTOKO</i>	21
9	CROSS RIVER	<i>AKAJUK, AFRIKE, ADUN, ADIM, ABANYOM, ANYIMA, BACHERE BEKWARRA, BETTE, BOKI, IKORN, IYALLA, ETUNG, AGBO, EKOI, UKELLE, UYANGA, YACHE, YAKO, QUA, NKIM, NKUM, OFUTOP, OLULUMO, MBEMBE, MBUBE</i>	26
10	DELTA	<i>OKPE, UKWANI, UVWIE, URHOBO, IZONDJO, IGBO, IKA, ISEKIRI</i>	8
11	EBONYI	<i>IGBO</i>	1
12	EDO	<i>OWAN, UNEME, EBIRRA, EBU, ESAN, ETSAKO, ETUNO, BINI</i>	8
13	EKITI	<i>YORUBA</i>	1
14	ENUGU	<i>IGBO</i>	1
15	COMBE	<i>HAUSA, FULBE</i>	2
16	IMO	<i>IGBO</i>	1
17	JIGAWA	<i>HAUSA, KURAMA, WARJA, AUYOKA, KANURI, FULFULDE</i>	6
18	KADUNA	<i>HAUSA, FULBE, GURE, GWANDARA, GWARI, KAMAKU, KANIKON, KANUFI, KANURI, KATAF, KIBALLO, KORO, KAJE, KADARA, KAFANCHAN, KAGORO, KAJURU, BAJJU, JABA, BINAWA, ATTAKAR, AYU, UNCINDA, SRUBU, SAYA, RISHUWA,</i>	36

		RUMADA, RUMAYA, NINZO, NUNKU, MADA, MANCHOKMORWA, KURAMA, CHAWAI, KAGOMA, KAIBI	
19	KANO	HAUSA, SHIRA, TESHENA, KANURI, FULFULDE	5
20	KATSINA	HAUSAFULBE	2
21	KEBBI	HAUSA, FULANCI, ACHIPA, UNCINDA, RESHE, ZARMA, KAMAKU, KAMBARI, DUKA, DANDA, DAKARKARI, CIPU	12
	KOGI	BUNO, IGBIRRA, EBU, GBEDDE, GBAGI, IGALA, IGBO, IJUMU, YORUBA, NUPE, ZA'AR, BASA	12
22	KWARA	YAGBA, OWE, OWORO, NUPE, OGORI, YORUBA	6
23	LAGOS	YORUBA, EGUN, AWORI	3
24	NASARA WA	ARUM, TIV, KORO, GWARI, MADA	5
25	NIGER	ACIPA, DAKARKARI, FULA, GADEGURMANA, G WANDARA, GBARI, HAUSA, KAMBARI, KANURI, KWARO, AD ARA, LAARU, LOPA, YUMU, ZABARA, RUBU, SAYA, ULA, BAUSHI, BOKO, BUDUMA	21
26	OGUN	YORUBA, AWORI, EGUN	3
27	ONDO	YORUBA, EBIRRA, IZONDJO	3
28	OSUN	YORUBA	1
29	OYO	YORUBA	1
30	PLATEAU	YUOM, YERGAN, TAROK, SURA, SIKDI, SHANSHAN, SHANGA, RUKUBA, RON, PYAPUN, PAI, NOKERE, NINZO, MUPUN, MUSHERE, MWAHAVUL, MONTOL, MEMYANG, MIAN, MILIGILI, MABO, MAMA, MADA, LIMONO, KWARO, KWATO, KWANKA, KWALLA, KULURE, KENERN, KANTANA, JIDDA-ABU, JERAWA, IZERE, IRIGWE, GWANDARA, GUSU, GEORNAI, GANAWURI, FYAM, FYER, EGGON,	59

		<i>CHIP, CHOKOBO, CHALLA, BWALL, BURMA, BUJI, BOKKOS(ON), BIROM, BASA, BASHIRI, BADA, ANKWEI, ANGAS, ALAGO, AMO, ANAGUTA, AFO</i>	
31	RIVERS	<i>ABUA, DEGEMA, EBANA, EGBEMA, EKPEYE, ENGENNI, EPIE, ETCHE, GOKANA, OBOLO, OGBA</i>	11
32	SOKOTO	<i>UNCINDA, HAUSA, FULBE, SHANGA, KYENGA</i>	5
33	TARABA	<i>ABON, GENGLE, CHAMBA, CHUKKOL, DANGSA, DIBA, KARIMJO, KENTON, KOMA, KONA, JAHUNA</i>  <i>JERO, JANJO, KABA, KUGAMA, KUNINI, KUTEB, KUTIN, KWANCI, LAMA, LAMJA, LAU, GORNUN, GONIA, GWOM, YOTT, MBUM, MUMUYE, NDORO, NYANGDANG, PANYAM, PKANZOM, POLL, POTOPO, SAKBE, SATE, SHOMO, TIKAR, VOMMI, WAKA, WURKUN, YANDANG, BAKULUNG, BALI, BAMBUKO, BANDA, BETSO, BABUA</i>	48
34	YOBE	<i>BOLE, BABUR, BADE, KOTOKO, NGIZIM, NGAMO, MANGA,, HAUSA, KAREKARE, BURU, FULA</i>	11
35	ZAMFARA	<i>HAUSA</i>	1

In spite of the above facts, Nigeria officially recognizes only three languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) out of the above and more naturally existing bedenizend languages that are yet to belong to the National official languages (NoL).

On the above note, it becomes very clear that the varied language/linguistic naturally existent *senses* of the ‘individual and collective denizens and denizen-nations’ stand as both unique and at the same time as the collective identity of the Nigerian federal national character memberships. These different languages as well as their own-ness language/linguistic independent world-hood *use-senses*, stand as indicators and sign-posts for the users’-language/linguistic composites’

natures and nurtures within the same Nigerian nationalism and her socio-linguistic conceptions.

In line with the above, there is a genuine feeling that asks the question about the other naturally gratified and existentially endowed Nigerian selected official languages that are not Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Are the three so called official languages more lingual, more socio-linguistic, and more linguistic than the others?

Furthermore, the natural question that comes to mind here is: Why and how do the other languages not qualify for this very national character recognition apart from the nationally consecrated and approved Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo as the qualification of/for Nigerian national use-gear-languages? What are the Nigerian language/linguistic 'electoral parameters and constitutionality' for the making, ranking, lifting etc. of our languages to the degrees of major or minor?

The question here again is how the so called *unofficial* languages born out of their naturalisms and **domain-rights** within the same Nigerian federal geography, in spite of their possible naturally inbuilt language/linguistic qualities/qualifications as human natural languages, as well as their manifests in language/ linguistic contingencies, expressivities, uniqueness, endowments in language world-hood, life-form etc, and while all these languages are so far living out their denizen-nation-(denizenation)--uniqueness as well as their supposed variegated existential claims, failed in their tests of nationalism and as such have become antagonistic, locally substandard and cannot qualify to be a language/for the Nigeria 'NoL' nationalism?

As already noted above, Wittgenstein teaches that the limit of any given language stands as the limit of the same language and its world. It is also assessable to say that the designation 'major or minor' implies a forceful setting up unnatural limitations to the 'use-gears' of the involved and affected languages.

The concept 'Equal validity' further teaches that through such a suppression of any given language-game, such a language/linguistic expressivity that should qualify the human life of the user, becomes rather a language in a life behind mere words and as such the language in question remains to exist in void and inactivity.

Based on the above effects, it must be noted again here that all human natural languages stand on equal validity-footing in spite of any given linguistic attributive arbitrariness. On account of the above, any human language qualification as minor or major implies the effectiveness levels of reduction in the 'use-gear' within the given human socio-linguistic components of use and

compositionality. Language effectiveness is rather measured by language-Use-effectiveness and not a game of numbers.

Because of the above, all natural human languages have equal existential validity-domain-rights based on the following reasons, facts and issues:

- A. Syncategorematic Nature of all Human Languages;**
- B. The Functions of Human Languages;**
- C. The Implicit Nature of the Universal Grammar in Human languages**

The above presented three basic facts/factors about language as a human co-existential definitive socio-fact and menti-fact are expressively and operationally the human reality founded in the synchrony-(or synchro) -system of human language use-gears and will be better to be handled in a tandem-sway.

To this effect, this paper feels strong to state that all that stand as human languages must stand equal as existent proof for the provisions of their real-presence within the above language/linguistic synchro-system of language nature, language function and language grammar.

Language is both the reason and the fact why all human beings are distinguished and defined as *homo logon ergon* (the being that uses language as a tool).

As a human tool therefore, human language is made out of words socially, communally, syntactically, syn-categorematically formed, for the users' universal interrelatedness structured in and through definite compositionality-ties for meaning, sense-formation, intentional consciousness, intentional subjects/objects, predication of objectivity, use etc.

Every human language has through its socially constituted universal ground known as *grammar*, the expressivity, communicability and the experiences of unity of signs/symbols etc. in the world-hood of the users. Human language is definite and possible in its nature based on the universal grounds of grammar and that is to say that every human language must have grammar.

For Hegel, the content of the universal ground is based on language as the theory of human communication and consciousness in sociality through which human thought can be processed and made to exist.

Therefore, it is only through the species-specific human language and its universal speech-factors for 'man as man', and also through the language/linguistic universal 'use-definitions' that also guarantee the understanding of his/her associated 'human-being-ness, background, origin, denizen-nation, self-consciousness etc, for the mutual actualization and uniqueness of the same human

‘own-ness-language’, that language itself becomes revealed to exist between the ‘user-subjects and/or denizens and the existential applications of their nation-hood as **need**.

The above note therefore implies that any definition or argument to pronounce and designate any human language as ‘Major or Minor’ has to be identified as a concept of subjugation, reduction, neglect, relegation etc. and not as an existential nation-hood **need**.

Such a linguistic gradation (minor/major) can make the affected language to be an instrument that does not qualify for the natural human inter-subjective use-communicability, -communality, existence, sociology, and to this effect may become rather an instrument of suppression **that may use language to get out of language**.

It is important to note that language as a national question is directly and indirectly asking the question about minor- or major-use agencies in the face of language/linguistic equal validity theories. Such a question stands as the agent of reductionisms.

Languages exist because of their natural existential being-ness and given-ness sociologies. The use/effectiveness of any given language should not be assessed or qualified based on the geo-location, number/census etc. of the ‘users’ because ‘thought, reason, intellection, knowledge, science, technology etc have no definite ‘language/linguistic absolute home-based hegemony’ as to apply or supply that it is ONLY in that language-use e.g. English (our colonial language) or in the use of Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo (our national official languages NOL) that the above facts are realizable.

Therefore, since all languages are equal as a common existential given-ness, all languages must be on the common assessment, qualification, equality etc. and must exist to articulate socio-linguistic use-abilities through which the language/linguistic universal ground provide services and guarantees of language/linguistic relatedness, use-abilities, uniqueness, world-view and use-gear effectiveness for all that have to do and be called communications.

The theory of equal validity in language-use is not a question about the number of ‘denizen-users,-nations’ but it is rather the ‘theory of the universality of grammar’, which remains basically the qualifier/qualification for any given natural human language to stand equal as a universal necessity and must also stand as proof for all the use-possibilities of human thought in any given human language.

Equal validity in language-use means that every expression of the language/linguistic use-gear is nothing more but the expression of a universal adequacy as well as the expression that any natural human language, minor or major, must stand definite syncategorematically and must also have inherently all the equip-mentalities to serve adequately with/through its inbuilt, prevalent /inherent historical contingencies in the nature of that same language for the guarantee of social communications.

Okonkwo (2014, p.134) proposes four major guarantees and foundations for the language/linguistic declarations of/ equal validity in language use.

The following are few facts about the consolidations and considerations for the theories of equal validity in language use:

- (a) Every human language has its **Form** identifiable by ways and means of its 'own-ness speech sounds and speech patterns as its mailboxes for the language/linguistic pictures/mirrors and propositions of the lived own-ness world, worldview and the own-ness communal hermeneutics, life-form or form of life etc.
- (b) Every human language has its own-ness **picture** which Wittgenstein (TLP, 4:112) expresses as 'picture theory of language' and thereby sees every human language as an album that contains the realities of their worlds and world-hood-designations etc.
- (c) Every human language controls **meaning and creates meaning** as that processes of communal knowledge-sharing, transfers of interpretations from the interlocutors to the interlocutors for their common creation of sense and essence as need for their world-hood existential configurations.
- (d) Every human language is by its nature an application, an appeal and clue to the **world** lived out by the user/speaker in denizen-nation.

In the views of Franz Fanon (Fanon, p.155), any natural own-ness language must be seen as a people's culture that must not be perverted by the logics/cultures etc. of oppressors designed by any type of colonial artificial histories of amalgamated nationalisms. This is what Fanon calls: The troubles of a tormented conscience.

For Fanon, this is the vision and mission of the colonially imposed languages e.g. English and French- the case in point of this paper.

The above can also, in the views of Fanon, be called the colonial national rhythm of oppression, distortion, devaluation etc. through which the whole body- effort made by the people (the denizen-nations) in their share of language/linguistic thought to use, describe, justify and praise appraise, etc., their actions through



which that same people create their self, keep their self, maintain their self etc. in existence and through such actions process their native brain in all forms and contents to avoid the colonial machinations that empty them into the forms and contents provided by the colonial masters' concept of language-use and nationalism(cf. Fanon, p.155).

The colonial/colonized blunders that instituted the National Question/Questions in Nigeria, for example, got commissioned and committed through the colonial political-language conception in nationalism, minor-language, major-language etc. powered by the imposition of English as a National official Language (NoL) (as in the case of Nigeria).

The above process can be recalled from the general failure of the colonizers/colonized to recognize the implicit universal necessity of the *senses* of equal validity of all human languages, their thoughts systems as a geo-historical *lebenswelt*, their unique contingency, their naturally and fundamentally linguistic-nature's expressivity-decoration-domains as *given* in all human natural languages including the languages of all denizens of a colonial nationalism like Nigeria.

A colonial language like English in Nigeria remains an imposition from an external abstraction on an already naturally made language world-civility. In the words of Hegel W 4, p.315) while considering the use of colonial languages as media for education in Germany of his time says that:

*The intimacy with which our language (German) belongs to us is lacking in the subjects we (Germans) possess only in foreign ones (Greek and Latin); these are separated from us (Germans) by a partition that prevents them from truly finding a home in (our-German) minds.*

We can now understand that true and permeable learning and teaching can only gain substantiations if and only if they are expressively presented in and through the 'own-ness language' known and recognize as the people's mother tongue. A Colonial language like English in Nigeria must remain an importation, imposition, abstraction and cultural distraction as against a natural denizen-rooted language hence English can never be transformed to become acculturated Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo etc.

Denizen-Nation in the context of this paper is an appeal that says: That the intermingling-intermediacy of any given human language through the amalgamation and/or assembly of different language/linguistic worlds and the suppression of the colonized in that denizen-nation, will always remain to mean and express the isolation of the denizen-nations'-user-life, their life-world, their

bustle of life and streams of life and no matter the depth of assimilation, that colonial language, remains an absolute interference into the denizen-nation's cultural fluxes which sooner or later will lead to what this paper calls the *linguicide* of the indigenous homeland linguistics and languages.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper reminds us once more that all human languages are equal in their totality-use-characteristics. Every human language by its nature and function guarantees for its users-effectiveness, the powers of expressions of identity, communicative expressivities for the showcases of the user's world-hood interplays that among other values present the user's images, emotional congruencies of thought existentialisms as the user's domesticated heuristic social formats, regulations, domain etc.

At this point therefore, it is important to underline once more the pointers towards language in Nigeria as a national question and recall the factors, organs and agents that represent the national questions.

Language as a national question in Nigeria has been so far presented from the socio-lingual factors and issues of colonialisms.

Colonialism is the major threat to the local and indigenous languages in Nigeria through their instruments of amalgamation and the enthronement of English as the effective official language of their claimed territory and has also become the major knowledge processing machinery/instrument in Nigeria too.

English in Nigeria has been domesticated to exist as the academic lingual-dependent-basement and therefore has been consecrated as a national *Alma Mater* credo.

It was Dr. Henrick Clark who described the traits of colonialism on the local languages as a language/linguistic enslavement. To this effect he says that:

To control a people you must first control what they think about themselves and how they regard their history and culture. And when your conqueror makes you ashamed of your culture and history, he needs no prison walls and chains to hold you. (cf. Okorie, 2020,p, 12).

On account of the above, English as a colonial language has structurally rerouted and retooled the natural nativity-knowledge of Nigeria and thereby paved the way for a new intellectually fractured and fragmented citizenry and the literary institutions in Nigeria too.

The above truth substantiates the literary institutionalizations of English language as the Nigerian intellectual base for literary assessments at all the levels of the Nigerian education systems.

This same crime definitely is the same crime that the author of this paper is committing while writing this paper in English and not in Igbo-the mother tongue of the author: The truth must be said!!

On the above note, we can understand M.J.C. Echeruo (1982) who said that languages survive and prosper if and only if they are preserved, generationally transmitted, transferred, gratified, appropriated etc as habits. **Nigerian Languages again: Quo Vadis?**

Based on the above, this paper informs that languages mostly are expected to fall in alignments with their ethnic diverse groups and/or divisions and in the words of Elugbe (1990, p. 11), they exist mostly as antagonistic ethnic nationalities while trying to form a nation of their own (cf. denizen-nation).

Furthermore, language is one of the most enduring artifacts of culture and unless forced by colonialism, conquest, superior numbers, socio-economic, political etc. dominations, a people can always trace and have their history perfected through their own-ness language.

Language as a national question experimented on the political face of Nigeria today, can be seen as the derogatory conceptual disadvantageous minimization of equals among equals, with the false claims that a language founded on existential rights, equal validity, and denizen-nation becomes **minor** within the same political geography and domain right.

To designate a natural human language as major or minor is an unacceptable assessment and/or gradation when displayed and adjudged in and through any given-ness of philosophy of language.

Bell (1983, p. 167) from his sociolinguistic review for example, cited the case of the unsuccessful attempt to recreate Bangladesh and says that:

The minority groups would feel themselves to be at a disadvantage and might argue **that independence for them had resulted in no more than an exchange of imperial masters** and might well attempt to secede from the union and set up an independent state of their own in which their mother tongue would be the national language.

Nigerian Languages again: Quo Vadis? It is on the right tracks of this paper to ask for the reasons why Nigeria has recorded series of ethnic violence in our history as a nation.

From all analytic language components, this paper makes bold to state that the acclaims of the so called 'major languages of Nigeria-Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo' have become to a large extent the politically designated imperial masters' -hood in Nigeria.

The above social feeling can also be cited as the remote reason for the civil war and series of feelings and rumors of civil strife in Nigerian today. The backgrounds to the said strife have their lineages/linkages on ethno-lingual historicisms which Obasanjo in his *New Year Message to the Nation* on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1979 registered as the evils and shortcomings of ethno-lingualism in the Nigerian politics.

From Obasanjo's (New Year Message to the Nation, on January, 1<sup>st</sup> 1979) statements, the shortcomings and failures of the civil administrations in Nigeria started where the human natural institutions like indigenous languages are not duly empowered to play out their civilities along the political administrations where the politics of the day keeps recognizing a part (Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo) to ignore the whole multitudes of the other Nigerian languages as practical structures of regionalism, tribalism, sectionalism, ethnicity etc.

On account of the above situation again, this paper as a result of the natural socio-linguistic implications in language use as a social identity commission, states that every language user owes naturally a communal inhabited loyalty to the own-ness language as an existential duty-law and right to ensure a group conduct in communality and functionality.

Maduagwu, (2019, p. 108) commenting on the actions/duties of the 1975 *Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) of Nigeria* reports among other related issues, that the composition of the Federal Government should have ensured fair and equitable treatment for all ethnic (language) groups and components as a national character-need for what should be practiced for the promotion of national integration of the ethno-lingual groups.

In consonance with the above therefore, any political will to select a few languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) to reign as national official languages and the conscious political will to overlook the relegation effects of the others as minor with no serious national political will to sustain their natural use-gears and avoid language death and extinction will always remain the most urgent concern of Nigeria as a national question. **Nigerian Languages again: Quo Vadis?**

The failures of the Nigerian political will, both constitutionally and institutionally, to keep, maintain and propagate even the other so-called minor languages and protect them from language death (*linguicide*) and/or extinction must become an urgent need that calls for a **Federal Character Constitutional Review Conference (FCCRC)**.

It is very important to recall that in 2004, the Federal Republic of Nigeria enacted a law CAP No.5, 2004 for the establishment of the National Institute for Nigerian Languages. This Law of the Federation Government of Nigeria also called the National Institute for Nigerian Languages Act, CAP No.50, (NINLAN) has the mandate of a perpetual succession with the main objective to promote the study and use of Nigerian Languages. This Law does not decree or mandate the Institute to house the teaching of the so called three politically selected and elected Nigerian languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) ONLY.

The above law did not exclude from the content and application of this law the promotion of the other so called minor languages of Nigeria. It is also worthy of note that since the establishment of NINLAN only a few Nigerian languages have most recently/lately been incorporated in the NINLAN teaching/promotion mandate: These are: **Efik, Ibibio and Tiv**. The question of note here is: What has Nigeria done for the existential domain rights of the other languages within the same geo-polity?

In spite of the above efforts to advance the incorporation of a few more Nigerian Language by NINLAN as presented above, this paper makes bold to express the unfortunate disaster/blunder committed by NINLAN most recently.

NINLAN as an Institute this year did not act as expected by law on the UNESCO International Mother Language Day 2022. UNESCO this year charged the member nations (e.g. Nigeria), language institutes and other institutions teaching same with the promotion of their own-ness local languages as they reflect on these issues:

- (a) To enhance the role of teaching and promotion of quality, multi-lingual teaching and learning in the member states;
- (b) To reflect on technologies and their potentials in supporting multilingual teaching and learning.

Unfortunate enough, NINLAN slept over this national and international need-urge-injunction-day with no *after-sense* apologies.

In conclusion, this paper reminds us once more that all natural given human languages are equal since they all stand as human ‘tool of tools’.

Again, in the words of John Dewy, every human natural language stands and remains as the *cherishing mother of all significances*.

According to Dewy also, all human natural languages are instruments, appliances and agencies for the user’s thought applications, in furnishing, developing and preserving their originalities, possibilities in *Dasein* and Being-there-ness in and through their own-ness worlds and world-hood interpretations, their natural-rights-appreciations for the presentation and preservation of their natural homes and platforms as their ‘use-gears’ for the assessments of other possible worlds.

Language as we know is the power that stresses and expresses the existential possibilities of human life based on its concatenations and interpretations as a human inescapable world-hood-web. To substantiate this point, this paper recalls the 1871 children’s literature book ‘Alice in Wonderland’. In this book Humpty Dumpty teaches the little Alice that *whoever controls the word has the power to name the world*. This may be why Austin (1952) published his work with the title ‘How to do things with words’. Based on the above, Okonkwo (2014) speaks also about the theory of LPP (Language-Power-Pedagogy).

On account of all above therefore, any given existing human language from its natural existential ground-rule in **Syncategorematic-Use-Naturalism**’ that upholds any relative designation like ‘major or minor political/user numerical-strength, defiles the foundations of philosophy of language and linguistics.

Finally, any language/linguistic reflection that upholds the political concepts of the language ‘major- minor- population-numeral/landmass- relativities’, has essentially failed the socio-lingual-use-gear-fundamental-tests and thereby voided the philosophy and ethno-cultural foundations of any given language competence, language performance, equal validity language-rights-assessments etc,. The language/linguistic designation of any given human language as ‘minor’ is a relative practical declaration of a socio-linguistic minimalism of which if care is not taken may lead such a language into the gradual processes of language death or extinction.

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