Discursive Constructions of Multilingualism in Educational Language Policy for Lower Primary Schools in Nigeria

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The paper examines the attitudes of lower primary school teachers in regard to the educational language policies stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) of Nigeria. The federal government and its agencies created the NPE to regulate teaching practices and languages of instruction across the various levels of education. The policy requires pupils in the lower primary school classes to learn in the languages of immediate environment for the first three years of their primary education. Furthermore, it is mandatory for the pupils to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. The study investigates the adherence of primary school teachers to these policies. It also explores how multilingual discourses are constructed in a multilingual and multiethnic Nigeria by analyzing the NPE text and two interviews conducted with lower primary school teachers by using discourse-historical approach (DHA). The Vienna Oxford international corpus of English (VOICE) transcription conventions was employed to transcribe the interviews, while Critical Language Policy (CLP) and Ethnography of Language Policy (ELP) serves as the theoretical frameworks.

Keywords: multilingualism, discursive constructions, educational language policy, Critical Language Policy (CLP), Ethnography of Language Policy (ELP), discourse-historical approach (DHA)

Introduction

Nigeria is multilingual and multiethnic with over 500 indigenous languages spoken by the various ethnic groups. English became Nigeria’s official language due to its neutral status among the hundreds of indigenous languages. Nigeria has three major indigenous languages: Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. The Pidgin English is widely spoken in all parts of Nigeria because of its informal linguistics characteristics. People mostly identify with their ethnic communities when issues of national debate or discourse arise. The Yoruba people are called the Oduduwa and Igbos are the Biafra, Hausas is the Arewa, and so on. English plays the role of official language to unify the various ethnic groups. According to Nida and Wonderly (1971, p. 65), “The political survival of Nigeria as a country will even be more seriously threatened if any of these three major languages (Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa) are promoted by the government as being the one national language.” Any attempt by the federal government to promote one of these indigenous languages as the official language would further divide Nigeria by jeopardizing the unity that is already in place.

Language policy “involves all the language practices, beliefs, and management decisions of a community or polity” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 9). Language policy is employed at different stages of generalization. According to Johnson (2013, p. 7), “Language policies existed across many different layers or levels, from official
government law to the language practices of a family.” For instance, the federal government of Nigeria in collaboration with the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) developed the *National Policy on Education (NPE)*. However, other administrative bodies and policy actors at the meso- and micro-level of language policy hierarchy can also develop educational language policies when it becomes necessary. Johnson (2013, p. 4) pointed out that, “Language policies do not need to be enacted by an authoritative body—They can emerge from a bottom-up movement or grassroots organizations and not all language policies are intentional or carefully planned.”

Many multilingual countries, such as Nigeria clearly defines their educational language policies. These countries enact explicit polices for instructional purposes for various reasons, such as colonial history, lack of technical and economic resources, search for regional national coherence, desire to improve educational outcomes, the product of political ideology, and the claiming of social and cultural identity (Walter & Benson, 2012, pp. 284-288). There are different types of language policies. There are top-down language policies which are “developed by government authorities at the top and there are bottom-up language policies developed by and for the communities they are meant to impact” (Johnson, 2013, p. 10). There is also “explicit/implicit distinction which refers to how a policy is documented—whether formulated and detailed in some written document or not” (Johnson, 2013, p. 10).

Primary school education is crucial to the overall academic development of the child. However, education researchers are yet to reach a compromise over the most suitable languages for teaching the pupils in the primary schools, particularly in the first three years of their primary education. Musa (2012, p. 663) pointed out that, “Instruction in the indigenous language will help the child to understand the concept easily because he is familiar with their vocabularies.” Similarly, Walter and Benson (2012, p. 279) asserted that, “Policy makers tend to use complex cases as a pretext for abandoning sound educational practice in the much simpler contexts where large population could truly benefit from mother-tongue based schooling.” Based on the foregoing, we can argue that mother tongue (MT) medium of instruction is imperative in a child’s educational development. In Nigeria, children mainly use the MT to communicate with their parents at home and sometimes speak it with their peers in school. The majority of the children only get to learn English as a second language in school. The children will easily learn in the MT, which they have already mastered than in a second or foreign language.

**The Purpose of the Study**

The study investigates the implementation of the *NPE* in the lower primary school classes in Nigeria. The section requires lower primary school pupils to learn and be taught in their MT (see Appendix I, Section 4, 19[e]). In addition, the section demands primary school pupils to learn the language of the immediate environment and one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba (see Appendix I, Section 1, 10[a]). The government assumes that a child would easily learn in their MT than in a second or foreign language they have not fully learned. According to Ndimele (2012, p. 12), “The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around us is best done and realized in the languages, in which the students are more familiar in.” The paper explores how discourses on educational language policies are constructed in a multilingual and multiethnic Nigeria by examining the *NPE* text and two telephone interviews conducted with teachers of lower primary school classes. The interviews were performed to find out teachers’ point of view on the *NPE* and the languages they employ to teach their pupils. The interviews were conducted in Ibillo.
with both public and private school teachers. It is important to note that there are observable differences in the operations of public and private primary schools. Therefore, teachers from both schools were interviewed to elicit the most representative data for the study. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using Vienna Oxford international corpus of English (VOICE) transcription conventions. The interviews and the NPE were then analysed using discourse-historical approach (DHA), Critical Language Policy (CLP), and Ethnography of Language Policy (ELP) were employed as the theoretical frameworks in the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used as investigative tools to determine teachers’ compliance to the educational language policies stipulated in the NPE. The answers to these questions will be very instrumental to the overall goal of the study.

1. Does the teaching practices of lower primary school teachers differ from those stipulated in the NPE?
2. What are the factors affecting teachers’ compliance with the educational language policies outlined in the NPE?
3. What are the teachers’ perspectives regarding teaching the pupils in their MT or language of the immediate environment and teaching them one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba?

The following section consists of the theoretical frameworks that were employed in the study. The discussion of these conceptual frameworks is imperative to the study.

Theoretical Framework

The CLP

The CLP conceptualizes language policy as a mechanism of power with the ability to marginalize (especially) minority languages and minority language users (Johnson, 2011, p. 268). It originated as a substitute to previous language planning archetypes, which endeavoured to analyse language as an object without social-cultural context. Tollefson (2006, p. 42) pointed out the objectives of CLP research as follows:

1. It is of a traditional apolitical language policy and planning (LPP) approaches and instead acknowledges that policies often create and sustain various forms of social inequality, and that policy makers usually promote the interests of dominant social groups;
2. It seeks to develop more democratic policies that reduce inequality and promote the maintenance of minority languages;
3. It is influenced by critical theory.

Tollefson (2013, p. 27) argued that within critical approaches, “Language policies are viewed as mechanisms for creating and sustaining systems of inequality that benefit wealthy and powerful individuals, groups, institutions, and nation-states.” A later reformation indicates how language policies create systems of inequality, but also how they resist such inequality (Tollefson, 2013, p. 27). As an approach that examines language policies from multiple critical perspectives, the CLP notes that orientation is important to language policy, because it “determine what is thinkable about language in society” (Ruiz, 1984, p. 2). Orientation regulates how we discuss language issues across the various levels of policy creation. It helps to determine the kinds of attitudes that are acceptable in a language and “to make certain attitudes legitimate” (Johnson, 2011, p. 268).
The ELP

The ELP “captures policy processes across multiple levels of policy activities, provides a balance between a focus on policy power and educator agency, and reveals how macro-level policies relate to educational practices” (D. Johnson & E. Johnson, 2014, p. 228). Johnson (2011, p. 269) asserted that:

The findings from ethnographies of language policy provide much needed empirical testing of LPP theories, and documentation of LPP processes all over the world. The ethnography of the language policy also contributes its own theoretical and conceptual orientation that combines the macro-, meso-, and micro-level, provides a balance between policy power and interpretative agency, and is committed to issues of social justice, particularly pertaining to the rights of indigenous and minority language speakers.

The ELP takes cognizance of the power of policy agents “to interpret and appropriate language policy in creative and unpredictable ways” (Johnson, 2011, p. 269). Language policy interpretation and appropriation take place across different settings and, at each level of these processes there are negotiations which may change what a policy signifies in a specific context.

Structure vs. Agency

Educational language policy is a complex social practice, “An on-going process of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse social and institutional contexts” (Sutton & Levinson 2001, p. 1). The preceding definition de-centres the power of educational language policies outside the official texts and emphasizes the agency of policy actors. For instance, the creation, implementation, and appropriation of the NPE have to go through different levels and institutional authorities. The notion of appropriation here means “a form of creative interpretative practice necessarily engaged in by different people involved in the policy process” (Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009, p. 768). According to D. Johnson and E. Johnson (2014, p. 225),

Language policy power is divided between those who get positioned as arbiters and those who are positioned as mere implementers and the same language policy can be recontextualized in different ways because of the unique socio-linguistic and socio-cultural features within a particular context.

A language policy arbiter is “any language policy actor (potentially: teachers, administrators, policy-makers, etc.) who wield a disproportionately amount of power in how a policy gets created, interpreted, and/or appropriated,” in relation to other individuals in a similar position or setting (D. Johnson & E. Johnson, 2014, p. 225). The amount of power displayed by educational language policy agents varies, however, teachers are perceived as powerful agents because they can influence or change a macro-level policy during implementation or appropriation process. According to Cincotta-Segi (2009, p. 32), “Teachers do reproduce the official discourses through particular classroom language practices and this production is never total and in some cases eclipsed by strong adaptations and contestations.” However, it is noteworthy that “decisions made by educators that fall in line with dominant ideologies about language and language education will be privileged” (D. Johnson & E. Johnson, 2014, p. 225).

Johnson (2013, p. 24) asserted that “language policies are created, interpreted, and appropriated across multiple levels of layers.” The federal government of Nigeria enacted the educational language policies and delegates some decision-making powers to the state government. The federal and state ministries of education are the administrative bodies in charge of the NPE. The administrators in both ministries oversee the implementation and/or appropriation of the policies. The teachers are accountable for implementing those
policies that relates to teaching, while the directors and other administrative members of the ministries of education handles the administrative aspects. The teachers are also called the final arbiters of educational language policies, because they can use their power to change a macro-level educational language policy enacted by the federal government to fit the demand of a particular learning context or create a micro-level educational policy to replace it. For instance, a teacher may decide not to teach his/her pupils according to the school’s curriculum or the teaching instructions stated in the NPE because of his/her language beliefs. From the foregoing, it is imperative for the federal government to consult language policy actors and seek their opinions and contributions before developing an educational language policy.

MT Education

MT is “the language which a group of people considered to be inhabitants of an area acquired in the early years and which eventually becomes their natural instrument of thoughts and communication” (Olanipekun, Atteh, Zaku, & Sarki, 2014, p. 3). The federal government of Nigeria created the NPE to engender optimal education quality, unite the various ethnic nationalities, and preserve the numerous indigenous languages in Nigeria. The policy aims to promote multilingualism as a national goal. The government also believes that promoting the three major languages in Nigeria will help to gain self-reliance and if possible take over some of the functions currently performed by English in the government and education sectors. Unfortunately, the idea of promoting Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba to replace English seems unrealistic because of the multilingual and multiethnic nature of Nigeria. Any attempt to accord one of the three major languages official statuses will be resisted by other ethnic groups.

Language and culture are inseparable. Khatib (2011, p. 1704) pointed out that, “A person’s socio-linguistic identity depends on several factors, such as language, ethnicity, and environment.” When a child is knowledgeable in his/her MT, he/she would imbibe cultural values that will assist him/her to hold on to the essential values of his/her society. The MT is an essential tool for sustainable development in the society. Therefore, when the MT serves as the language of instruction in the lower primary school classes, it would engender development, particularly in rural communities. The government trusts that MT education would help to improve educational outcomes and develop the indigenous languages. These policies were also created by the government to preserve the cultural heritage of the ethnic groups. According to Ndimele (2012, p. 12), “Every language is a reflection of a particular view of the world, pattern of thought, and culture.” Every ethnic group in Nigeria is peculiar in terms of language and culture and these values embody their identity and way of life.

The Aims of the NPE

The following are the three main ideologies behind the NPE:

1. To provide access to quality education;
2. To protect the national unity of Nigeria;
3. To preserve the cultural heritage of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

It is in pursuance of these goals that made the government to adopt the MT as a medium of instruction in the lower primary school classes. The MT is fundamental to the child’s educational development. When a child learns in his/her MT, he/she acquires important concepts very fast because of his/her prior knowledge of the language. When a child is taught in the language of his/her immediate environment, it will help him/her
develop a solid linguistic background and maintain his/her cultural values. It is common knowledge that any language, which is not consistently spoken or written for a long time may likely be extinct. Baker (2000, p. 4) asserted that “children absorb concepts more easily in their own familiar languages and can gain a fundamental understanding of them.” Adopting a foreign or second language as a medium of instructing pupils in the lower primary school classes would be detrimental to their educational development. It is imperative to maximise the linguistic resources of Nigeria by encouraging MT education. A proper implementation of the policy will improve the quality of education and reduce dropout rates in schools. The government should work assiduously to resolve the challenges affecting the implementation of the policy.

MT instruction in the lower primary school classes is important to the preservation of the cultures of the ethnic groups in Nigeria. The policy would help the pupils to maintain their cultural heritages and this can only be achieved through the school system. According to Musa (2012, p. 663),

The challenges, therefore, are for educators and policy makers to shape the evolution of the national identity in such a way that the right of the primary school children are respected, and the cultural, the linguistic and the economic resources are maximised.

Children can easily learn about their cultural values by reading storybooks and other educational materials written in their MT. When a child is knowledgeable in his/her language and culture, he/she would be able to express himself/herself without much effort. However, it is important to point out that the policy of learning one of the three major languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba would be difficult to actualize due to the multilingual nature of Nigeria. Nigeria does not have any other political neutral language but English, because no indigenous language can function in the place of English due to ethnic consciousness. The role of English as the official language has contributed immensely to the unity of the various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

Material

The NPE official policy text and telephone interviews conducted with two lower primary classes teachers are the primary data sources for this study. One of these teachers teaches in a public primary school, while the other teaches in a private primary school. The interviews were recorded with a mobile telephone recording device. The teachers consented to the recording of the interviews. The VOICE transcription convention was employed to transcribe the interviews. The transcribed copies of the interviews are available in the appendix section.

Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity

Texts are generally intertextual because they comprise of elements from other texts. Andrea (2004, p. 10) pointed out that “discourses are therefore characterized by intertextuality, that is, texts contain within themselves evidence of the history of other texts.” According to Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. 90),

Intertextuality means that texts are linked to other texts, both in the past and in the present. Such connections are established in different ways: (a) through explicit reference to a topic or main actor; (b) through references to the same events; (c) by allusions or evocations; and (d) by the transfer of main arguments from one text to the next etc..

Intertextuality “points how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing convention to generate new ones” (Fairclough, 1991, p. 270). In other words, all texts refer to other texts utilizing textual features. Texts are comprised of elements from other texts and they make use of these resources for various purposes.
On the other hand, interdiscursivity means that texts consist of language conventions. Discourses are mostly interdiscursive, because they usually connect elements of one discourse to the other. Bakhtin (1986) argued that “each kind of utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication.” According to Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. 90),

Interdiscursivity signifies that discourses are linked to each other in various ways. If we conceive of “discourse” as primarily topic-related (as “discourse on X”), we will observe that a discourse on climate change frequently refers to topics or subtopics of other discourses, such as finances or health. Discourses are open and often hybrid and new sub-topics can be created at many points.

The difference between both concepts is that, intertextuality obtains textual information from other texts, while interdiscursivity involves discursive formations, such as the combination of different genres, styles, registers, and discourses that are consistent with the construction of interdiscursive relations (Fairclough, 1992, p. 124).

The study establishes intertextual and interdiscursive links across the research data. There are intertextual links between NPE text and the two interviews. Some of the textual features in the NPE are also present in the first and second interviews, and vice versa. The intertextual relations between the NPE is partly, because the interview questions were formulated according to the educational language policies stipulated in the NPE. The two thick arrows connecting the first interview, the NPE, and the second interview indicate intertextual links among them. While the five thin arrows pinpoint interdiscursivity between the NPE, the first interview, and the second interview. The data share some communicative topics, which make up the discursive formation. The dotted arrows in the diagram link together the discourse topics in the NPE, the first interview, and the second interview. The diagram below represents the intertextuality and interdiscursivity among the NPE, the first interview, and the second interview (see Figure 1).

The DHA Methodology

This research employs DHA methodology to analyse its data. The DHA is a branch of critical discourse analysis (CDA). It holds a different view from other approaches to CDA as it complies with the Frankfurt School (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001, p. 32). According to Wodak and Reisigl (2001, p. 34),

Being part of this tradition led DHA to outline its call for emancipation, self-determination and social recognition which is motivated by the perhaps utopian conviction that unsatisfactory social conditions can, and therefore must, be subject to methodological transformation towards fewer social dysfunctional and unjustifiable inequalities.

DHA established three-dimensional conceptualization critique (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001, p. 65):
1. Immanent critique: Problematizes contradictions in the text/discourse’ internal structure. This kind of critique can be objective as semantic contradictions are perceivable by every competent language user.
2. Socio-diagnostic critique: Intends to demystify propagandists, populist, etc. and discursive practices. This kind of critique takes a normative standpoint insofar as the critic refutes such positions.
3. Prognostic/retrospective critique: At this level, the DHA explicitly tries to transform the current state of affairs via direct engagement by referring to guiding principles, such as human rights or the rejection of sufferings.
Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. 93) pointed out that,

The DHA is three-dimensional: (a) after having identified the specific contents or topics of a specific discourse; (b) discursive strategies are investigated; and then (c) linguistic means (as types) and the specific, context-dependent linguistic realizations (as tokens) are examined.
The DHA is focused on language-in-use and “perceives discourse as a form of social practice which implies a dialectal relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institutions, and social structures which frame it” (Wodak & Fairclough, 1997, p. 258). The research data will be analysed to ascertain how multilingual discourses are constructed in a multilingual and multiethnic Nigeria. According to Backledge (2005, p. 35), “In multilingual societies, language choices, usage, and attitude are intrinsically linked to language ideologies, relations to power, political arrangements, and speakers’ identities.”

**Units of Analysis**

There are three dimensions of analysis in the DHA: discourse topics, discursive strategies, and linguistic means.

**Discourse Topics**

A discourse topic is the central idea of a specific discourse. The following discourse topics were identified in the research data: government, national cohesion, social interaction, national unity, Nigerian languages, language of environment (MT), regional languages, primary school, English, teachers, pupils, Montessori Method, school curriculum, Okpameri language, and Etuno language.

**Discursive Strategies**

The research data will be analysed based on five discursive strategies. Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. 94) pointed out that “by strategy, we generally mean a more or less intentional plan or practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological, or linguistic goal.”

**Referential/Nomination.** Referential strategy is used to refer to social actors, events, and/or objects. It consists of “the discursive constructions of social actors, objects, phenomena, event, and/or processes or actions” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 95). The following are some of the referential strategies identified in the research data,

- **NPE (2004):** Government, the language of the immediate environment, the three Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba).
- **Interview 1:** The original language, the teacher, and the children.
- **Interview 2:** The association of private school owners (APSO), the children, and the curriculum.

**Predication.** Predication strategy is employed to pinpoint the characteristics ascribed to actors, events, and/or languages. It comprises of “discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and/or actions (more or less positively or negatively)” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 95). Some of the predication strategies pinpointed in the research data are as follows,

- **NPE (2004):** Language promotes social interaction and national cohesion.
- **Interview 1:** It is not easy to teach the children these languages.
- **Interview 2:** It is not in the school curriculum.

**Perspectivation.** Perspectivation strategy is used to indicate the perspective of the utterance that has been expressed. It aims at “positioning speaker’s or writers’ viewpoint and expressing involvement or distance” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 95). The following are some of the perspectivization strategies pointed out in the research data,

- **NPE (2004):** Government appreciate the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and notional cohesion.
Interview 1: None of these languages is spoken here. Hausa is not spoken here as well as Yoruba and Igbo is not spoken here. Even the teachers, too, you do not have anybody apart from few who understand these languages.

Interview 2: We do not speak the same language, we do not understand each other, and we have children from different places, if possible, from other states in private schools.

**Intensification/Mitigation.** Intensification/Mitigation strategy is employed to determine the status of a statement. It aims at “modifying (intensifying or mitigating) the illocutionary force and thus the epistemic or deontic status of utterances” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 95). Some of the intensification strategies identified in the research data includes the following,

*NPE* (2004): The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment. Thus, every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment.

Interview 1: Lessons are not taught in any of these languages.

Interview 2: It cannot be taught.

**Argumentation.** Arguments are structured around topoi. The objective of this strategy is the justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 95). Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. 102) pointed out that,

Within argumentation theory, “topoi” can be described as parts of argumentation, which belong to the required, premises. Argumentation schemes are reasonable or fallacious. If the latter is the case, we label them fallacies. There are rules for rational disputes and constructive arguing which allow discerning reasonable topoi from fallacies.

The following are some of the argumentation strategies identified in the research data:

*NPE* (2004): (a) Topos of unity: In the interest of national unity every child shall learn it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba); (b) topos of relationship: Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting culture; (c) topos of relationship: Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting culture; and (d) topos of authority: The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment.

Interview 1: (a) Topos of ethnicity: Those who are natives use the language of the environment; and (b) topos of insufficiency: Books are not readily available, even teacher too.

Interview 2: (a) Topos of multilingualism: In my local government for instance, we have different languages; and (b) topos of authority: It is not allowed in private schools, APSO took the decision.

**Linguistic Means**

The discourse topics and discursive strategies in the study were realised through linguistic means. The following are some of the identified linguistic means and their realizations.

**Deictics and pronouns.**

*NPE* (2004): Shall be the language of the environment for the first three years.

Interview 1: (a) None of these languages is spoken here; and (b) They are not even used to their own language.

Interview 2: (a) We do not speak the same language; and (b) We do not understand each other.

**Modality.**

*NPE* (2004): Thus, every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment.

Interview 1: (a) We may still have some challenges; and (b) That too can also be a challenge.

Interview 2: They will differentiate alphabets from sounds.
Lexical choices.

Interview 1: Natives, non-natives, original language, interaction, instruction, possibility, and across.
Interview 2: Common language, curriculum, adopted, differentiate, allowed, and quickly.

Metaphor/Metonymy.

Interview 1: The original language.
Interview 2: The APSO.

Discussion of the Findings

The *NPE* states that the medium of instruction for pupils in the lower primary school classes shall be the language of the immediate environment (MT). According to Musa (2012, p. 663), “The best medium of starting the child’s education is the indigenous language and it is when a sound linguistic foundation has been laid in it that there can be a change to a foreign one.” However, the study reveals that the teaching practices adopted by lower primary school teachers sometimes contravene with the provision regarding the language of instruction in the *NPE*. The constraints which result to the teachers’ non-compliance to the policy emanate from several factors. As a multilingual country with over 500 languages, there are less than 100 standardized orthographies. There are insufficient books and teaching materials for the numerous indigenous languages except for the three major languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba (see Appendix II, No. 28, S2). Many indigenous languages have shortage of adequate vocabulary, particularly in the areas of sciences where indigenous languages cannot literally describe scientific concepts.

There are no trained and qualified teachers in the indigenous languages, which has affected the implementation of the policies. The *NPE* recommended that teacher—pupil ratio should be one to 35 but currently most primary school classes are overwhelmingly crowded with approximately one teacher to 80 pupils. In some cases, teachers who are deployed to schools outside their state or communities usually have communication problems with the pupils due to lack of mutual intelligibility. Since the teachers are not natives of the communities, it will be difficult for them to teach the pupils in the language of the immediate environment (see Appendix II, No. 20, S2). Some pupils travel out of their states or communities to other parts of Nigeria to study, particularly in private boarding schools. The MTs of these pupils might be different from those of the schools’ host communities. In this case, it would be insensitive to teach these pupils in the language of the immediate environment, which is unfamiliar or foreign to them (see Appendix III, No. 10 & 11, S2).

The implementation of the policies has suffered setbacks in the private primary schools. Private primary school teachers are indifferent to the provisions in the *NPE* due to the inferior status accorded indigenous languages (see Appendix III, No. 6, S2). Some parents are not in support of the idea of using the MT as a medium of instruction for their children. They assume that teaching their children with a local language would affect their acquisition of the English language thereby limiting their socio-economic opportunities in the global world. According to Cenoz and Gorter (2012, p. 302), “English is considered a resource which opens doors for better opportunities and it is associated with social and economic mobility.” There is no gain saying the fact that English is a valuable language due to its international reputation. However, lower primary school pupils would easily acquire basic academic knowledge when the MT or a familiar language is used to teach them.
The section of the NPE which stipulated that the pupils should be taught one of the three major languages (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba) is widely criticised for its insensitivity to the multilingual status of Nigeria. The government’s claim that pupils’ knowledge in these three major languages would engender national unity is not well-founded, because the policy would further polarize the various ethnic groups and destroy the fragile unity that is currently in place. Other ethnic groups, particularly the minorities, assume that the policy marginalizes their indigenous languages and promotes those of dominant ethnic groups. All the ethnic groups value their language and any language policy that would subdue them would meet with a stiff resistance. The nepotism and prejudice attitude of most government is what give rise to in-groups and out-groups. A good policy should be all-encompassing and favourable to all the ethnic groups. Primary school teachers and other educational administrators who are opposed to the policy have accused the government of insensitivity to the multilingual posture of Nigeria (see Appendix III, No. 33, S2). Teachers are fellow policy actors, thus, they have to be consulted whenever a policy is to be developed. The teachers are responsible for the implementation of macro-level policies and without their support, these policies cannot be actualized.

Conclusions

This paper investigated the attitudes of lower primary school teachers concerning the educational language policies enacted by the federal government of Nigeria. The educational language policies stipulated in the NPE have encountered some setbacks due to the factors discussed in the preceding section. Researchers in the fields of language policy, education, and linguistics have often disagreed about the language of/or medium of instruction for pupils in the lower primary school classes. However, previous studies, such as the Ife primary education project favours MT medium of instruction for primary school pupils\(^1\). As can be seen from the foregoing sections, the paper consists of both theoretical and empirical portions. The theoretical concepts were discussed in the theoretical part, while the analysis, interpretation of the research data, and discussion of the findings were carried out in the empirical part. The results indicated that the policies were not thoroughly implemented because of some constraining factors which were specified in the previous section.

It is important to note that the results of this study have its shortcomings, therefore, it would be unrealistic to draw a general picture of the attitudes of lower primary school classes teachers regarding the implementation of the education language policies stipulated in the NPE based on the outcome of this research. Some of the aspects that may have limited the results of this study include the number of participants and the depth of the data analysis performed. Nevertheless, the investigation provided appropriate answers to the research questions, which is the primary goal of the study. Since the study has established the major challenges affecting the proper implementation of the policies, it is essential that the federal government of Nigeria examines them to proffer a lasting solution these problems.

The government have to consider the interest of every ethnic group when enacting educational language policies, because it is important to be conscious of the multilingual composition of Nigeria. The government have to involve fellow policy actors, particularly teachers, and educational administrators in the processes of developing educational language policies. The government should also train sufficient teachers in the various indigenous languages and develop adequate and up-to-date teachings materials in them. It is imperative for the government to enact overarching educational language policies that are all-inclusive and acceptable to all and

\(^1\) For more information on education in MT, see the Ife Primary Education Research Project 1970-1978 (Fafunwa, Juliet, & Funnso, 1989).
sundry. The study has given us insights into the major challenges confronting the implementation of the educational language policies stipulated in the NPE. It has also provided us with significant recommendations that are pivotal to resolving these problems.

References


Appendix I: *NPE 2004*

**Section 1**
No. 10—The Importance of Language:

a. Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction, national cohesion, and preserving cultures. Thus, every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba.

**Section 4**
No. 19—In pursuance of the goals above:

e. The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject.

f. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects.

Appendix II: Interview 1 (Public primary school teacher, see Figure)

S1: thank you for agreeing? (.) to participate in a telephone interview (.) my name is [name 1], I am conducting this interview (.) for my seminar paper on language policy from a critical discourse perspective (.) the purpose of this interview? (1) is to help me better understand (.) how? and with which language (.) you teach (.) your pupils (2) it is important that you respond to to all the interview questions. based on you: r experience (.) as a teacher of lower primary school (2) you should have received a message? that containe: d an overview of the types of questions (1) that I would like to ask (2) toda: y (3) did you receive that

S2: yes, I have it.

S1: okay, (3) do you ha:ve any question befo: rei begin

S2: er::m you can start let me (.) maybe in the course of erm the interview if I have anything I would ask you.

S1: okay, (2) u:h (3) as a teacher of lower primary school. (2) do you use (1) the language of  the immediate environment in teaching your pupils?

S2: yes? ii would have to explain that because (.) you know (.) the:: as a teacher. when I was in my own place i: did that directly with my language but where I am now (2) and with the other teachers who are non-natives <1>i e::rm </1> the they use english mainly

S1: <1> yes </1>

S2: whereas those who are (. ) natives they use the the language of the enviroment to to give instruction to the children.

S1: okay (.) what you are (. ) telling me now is that (1) it depends on the teacher.

S2: yes.

S1: and the enviroment the school is located.

S2: yes.

S1: so? if (.) you are a teacher that is not from (1) you are no: that is not a native of the enviroment (1) definitely you use English to teach your teachers <2> for the fact </2>.

S2: <2> children </2> the children.

S1: yeah (1) for the fact that you don't understand the native <3> language </3> yeah

S2: <3> the language </3>

S1: but if you are from there (1) you use (. ) <4> native </4>
LANGUAGE POLICY FOR LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

S2: <4> yes </4>
S1: and er::m (3) so? what (. ) are there challenges. concerning the use of er::m native languages to teach your pupils
S2: well (. ) there are? challenges (. ) like likei've just told you now (. ) number one the challenges there? one of them is that if
the teacher is not a native er: especially those who are just coming in (1) to pass the message across to them in english language is
always difficult until (1) maybe they spend some time
S1: okay
S2: in the class (. ) when they now begin to get use to the: language of the teacher
S1: okay
S2: then (1) secondly (. ) er: because of er: er: the teacher not being a native. a- apart from that there other children too who
are non-native
S1: okay
S2: And because those children are non-native (. ) the teacher who is from that environment cannot use completely (. ) the
language of the children (. ) because he would be denying the other pupils? who are not native. the::if you know getting the best
from the class
S1: okay (. ) is that the only challenge (1) if i may ask
S2: er::m well (. ) we may still have some other challenges like the teacher himself (. ) even if is a native er:: sometimes (. ) not
every? er: who is a native is also very? er: used to the to his/her own language (. ) some of them (. ) because of er: the interaction
with other people before (. ) they are not too good in their own language (1) that too can also be? a challenge (1) then the: books
are not readily available? (1) materials er: that contains the language apart from just (. ) one or two (1) that is just there (. ) say
maybe touching every aspect of the aspects of the language (1) the books are not really available
S1: okay okay
S2: then (. ) anoth::er thing I saw there is that even people who are native (. ) instead of giving their children the original
language. they prefer speaking er: Pidgin English some of those children who are native they don't even (. ) they do not eve::n er:::
they are not even used to their own language
S1: okay (1) okay er::: but well thank you (. ) my second question is er: is that do you teach your pupils (. ) the languaue. of the
immediate enviroment. and any of the three (1) and any of these three nigerian languages (. ) hausaigbo and yoruba
S2: well of course the:: language of the: immediate environment is still opkameri anywhere. (. ) apart from maybe? for other
places that there their own languages are a bit different though they are opkameri people (1) then (2) with that now (. ) whichever
one as you are speaking or teaching with er: er: the the [place1] language (. ) other children (. ) children from other environme
that is the the other communities around that still understand you
S1: okay (1) how <5> about the </5>
S2: <5> then the </5> the hausaer: yorubaer:: and igbo (. ) because of the place where we are (2) none of these languages er:
is hausa not spoken here (1) igbo is not spoken here yoruba is not spoken here Igbo (. ) is not spoken here so? (. ) the possibility of
er: one (. ) even the teacher too you don’t have anybody that is er: apart from few who understand these languages is not easy to to
teach the children with these languages so the language the lessons are not taught in any of these languages
S1: okay <6> because </6>
S2: <6> this only </6> operates in secondary schools
S1: okay so? alright (. ) there are not teachers for these er:: three:: three regional languages er: in the lower primary level
S2: no? not at all
S1: okay (2) so? u:h well (2) these are all the questions i have for you today (1) are there any other comments you would like
to provide
Appendix III: Interview 2 (Private primary school teacher, see Figure)

S1: thank you for agreeing? (.) to participate in a telephone interview (.) my name is [name1] (.) i am conducting this interview? for my seminar on language policy from a critical discourse perspective (.) the purpose of this interview is to help me better understand how and (. ) with which language you teach your pupils ( .) it is important that you respond to all the interview questions based on your experience as a teacher in lower primary school ( .) you: should have received a message that contain an overview (. ) of the types of questions i would like to ask you today (2) did you receive that

S2: yes exactly
S1: okay (1) do you have any question before i begin
S2: not really go ahead sir
S1: alright (1) as a teacher of lower primary school ( .) do you use the language of the immediate environment in teaching your pupils
S2: no sir because where er: the school i am a private school teacher and is not allowed in the private school
S1: okay (. ) so who? took the decision
S2: yeah the apso the apso (. ) that is er:m the association of private school owners (. ) is called apso
S1: okay <1> so </1>
S2: <1> so the decision </1> was taken because (1) you know in private schools we have children from different places. (. ) if possible from other states <2> coming <2> to private schools
S1: <2> okay </2>
S2: for instance we have a boarding school. in our private school now (. ) so they are from different states (1) so? you cannot afford to teach them in a particular er: language of the environment because they came from different environments
S1: okay
S2: yeah
S1: okay (1) u:h so? is the apso that took this decision (. ) <3> can you </3> please spell er: er: tell me the er: the full meaning of apso again
S1: <3> yes yes</3>
S2: association of private (2) association of private (1) school owners (3) of Nigeria association of private school owners of Nigeria
S1: okay association of private school owners of Nigeria okay good
S2: yeah
S1: that's interesting (. ) u:h my second question u:h is is that do you teach you pupils the language of the immediate
S2: no sir because the state (. ) the my state for instance (. ) we do not have a common language (. ) we do not have a common language in my state which is [name2] state (. ) for instance er:m if my local government for instance in my local government for instance we have different languages (. ) we have the opkameri language. you understand we have the er: etuno language (. ) so we don’t speak the same language we don’t understand each other <4> you understand </4> 

S1: <4> okay <4>

S2: that is why this er: it it cannot be taught

S1: okay (. ) so? is not in the curriculum <5> your </5>

S2: <5> no at all </5> is not in the curriculum no at all at all 

S1: okay

S2: at all is not in the school curriculum at all 

S1: okay so? there is no possibility of (. ) teaching your pupil the language of immediate environment 

S2: at all at all at all is not even in the curriculum of the: primary schools most especially from age one to age three (. ) is not there is not included

S1: okay (1) okay <7> okay </7>

S2: <7> is not </7> included 

S1: you mean for private schools 

S2: yeah for private schools yes most especially from age 1 to age 3 

S1: okay okay alright 

S2: yeah 

S1: okay well (1) these are all the questions i have for you today (. ) are there any comments you would like to provide 

S2: well like er: you know (. ) in er: for instance in my school <8> now </8>

S1: <8> so sorry </8> sorry what's your school you said is a private school can can you tell me the name of your school 

S2: [name3] nursery and primary school 

S1: okay okay go ahead sir 

S2: okay for instance there is a method (. ) there is a method we have adopted (1) to aid the learning of those children most especially in area of reading most especially in the area of reading 

S1: okay 

S2: and er: (. ) that method is called er: the montessori method 

S1: the what 

S2: the montessori method 

S1: okay montessori 

S2: montessori method 

S1: what is what is it all about 

S2: yeah (. ) the montessri method is a a method er: that er: of er: introducing some signs (. ) introducing some signs to aid
the children for learning for instance (1) if you want to call er: in montesorrier: they will differentiate alphabets from sounds
   S1: oaky okay
   S2: yes (. ) they differentiate alphabet from sounds like in like in the other one they will just say capital letter a and small letter a
   S1: okay
   S2: no in montessori there is no there is nothing like capital letter a and small letter (. ) so <un> xx </un> is a why the small letter they call small letter is a letter is a sound
   S1: okay okay
   S2: for instance (. ) a is pronounced in montessori (. ) that's the small letter a is pronounced in montessori as ar
   S1: okay? okay. oaky.
   S2: yes yes (. ) and er: and it has a sound there is a sound (. ) there is a sound you know and a demonstration (. ) for the children to be able to quickly get what we are: saying?
   S1: okay (. ) alright
   S2: so that is that is one of the methods we are using to help those children to aid them in learning
   S1: alright?
   S2: that is the only er:m
   S1: oka:y okay (. ) thank you very much for your time
   S2: you are you are welcome
   S1: alright alright
1. **speaker IDs**

| S1: | Speakers are generally numbered in the order they first speak. The speaker ID is given at the beginning of each turn. |
| S2: |
| ... |

2. **intonation**

| Example: S1: that’s what my next er slide? does | Words spoken with rising intonation are followed by a question mark “?”. |
| Example: S7: that’s point two. absolutely yes. Words | Words spoken with falling intonation are followed by a full stop “.”. |

3. **pauses**

| Example: SX-f: because they all give me different (.) different (_) points of view | Every brief pause in speech (up to a good half second) is marked with a full stop in parentheses. |
| Example: S1: aha (2) so finally arrival on monday evening is still valid | Longer pauses are timed to the nearest second and marked with the number of seconds in parentheses, e.g. (1) = 1 second, (3) = 3 seconds. |

4. **overlaps**

| Example: S1: it is your best <1> case </1> scenario (_) S2: <1> yeah </1> S1: okay | Whenever two or more utterances happen at the same time, the overlaps are marked with numbered tags: <1> </1>, <2> </2>,... Everything that is simultaneous gets the same number. All overlaps are marked by **bold**. |
| Example: S9: it it is (_) to identify some<1>thing </1> where (_) S3: <1> mhm </1> | All overlaps are approximate and words may be split up if appropriate. In this case, the tag is placed within the split-up word. |

5. **lengthening**

| Example: S1: you can run faster but they have much **more** technique with the ball | Lengthened sounds are marked with a colon “:”. |
| Example: S5: personally that’s my opinion the: ex::m | Exceptionally long sounds (i.e. approximating 2 seconds or more) are marked with a double colon “::”. |

6. **repetition**

| Example: S11: er i’d like to go t- t- to to this type of course | All repetitions of words and phrases (including self-interruptions and false starts) are transcribed. |

7. **speaker noises**

| Example: S1: yeah <1> what </1> i think in in doctor levels | These noises are transcribed as part of the running text and put between pointed brackets < >. |
| Example: S8: he get the <L1cs> diplom {diploma} <L1cs> of [name1] university () and french university can give him also the <L1cs> diplom {diploma} <L1cs> | Other names or descriptors may be anonymized by [name1], etc., as in e.g. Charles University. |

*Figure.* Transcription conventions: Mark-up conventions.