

**Challenges of diversity in languages:  
the dilemma of using English as a medium of learning in Nigeria**

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Nigeria, just like many other African countries and Asian countries were colonized by the first world countries, The British adopted the policy of assimilation, which the learning of 'English language' by Nigerians was one of them. The reason was not far-fetched from the fact that we needed a united language for political, economic and social stability and convenience because of our diversity in cultures and languages.

This however was an accomplished agenda because everyone had no option but to learn English language right from childhood and pass mark of this language subject was a criterion to get into the higher education. My experience as an educational instructor of English language, I discovered that students find it easier to express themselves in their native languages than English language, there is stigmatization, disdain or discriminatory expression given to a student finding it hard to make correct grammatical expression by his or her colleagues. Students even feel embarrassed to make presentations, debates and even engage with their colleagues in extracurricular activities because they consider it a deficiency and an embarrassment.

Many educationists in the past have suggested that one of the best ways to improve the educational system in Nigeria is to accept other Nigerian languages as a medium of learning in the formal education setting. They argued, it will be the way to evaluate educational competence of children and youths. My sojourn in the entrepreneurial space has given me the opportunity to meet different gifted entrepreneurs and tech experts and they are willing to transfer this knowledge to their generation but the English language syndrome is preventing them from making deliberate efforts. Yes, it is true most Nigerians communicate with English but how many of us really comprehend majority of the information passed, I would say quite a few. When I was growing up, there is this popular TV station, which is Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) they brought an initiative of casting news in Pidgin English, Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. the viewers became more interested in the news because they found it easier to watch the news in a well-known language than foreign language, same goes to soap operas and series in Nigerian languages rather than foreign languages, these native languages' soap operas tend to enjoy wide mass viewers.

One of the reasons why the structure of educational institutions is more convenient and comfortable for the youths than the ones in Africa should be traced to these language deficiency. Most European institutions adopt their native languages as medium of learning; they only adopt the second language as optional. This promotes the culture and also results into improvement of the educational sector. The fun fact that is most of these countries, they give conditions of offering scholarships to African students aspiring to study in these European institutions, which is to learn the language for a period of at least one year because they have no option but to study in these languages. Most of the doctors and health workers trained in Europe under scholarship learn with these European languages and this has improved the educational systems of these countries.

There is a clear practical illustration I can give in terms of evaluation of performance and admission process in higher education in Nigeria. A bright student has grade five in his science subjects like

chemistry, physics, biology and mathematics, he aspires to study medical science in the college but could not be admitted into higher education because he failed English language. Judging from this appraisal, can we say this is fair screening process? In connection to this young adult knowledge capacity. Obviously, I do not agree, the bone of contention is his inability to read and write efficiently in a foreign man's language which is understandable. This same person for instance gets a scholarship in one of the European institutions, learns their language and studies medicine in that same language, it causes brain drain to the nation, which is not a good omen for the future of the youths in Nigeria.

The process needed to study in colleges in United Kingdom before it was regulated was also surprising, after studying in English for many years, we must get an acceptable score for IELTS, TOEFL and other English proficiency screening bodies. The same country that gave us this educational curricula for learning English language, which was not similar for those African countries that know French language.

It is important to note is that this is not to undermine the importance of English language to the growth and development of educational system in Nigeria but it is just a wakeup call for our policy makers to be open minded to suggestions from educationists and see how we can make educational system competes with that of the developed nations.