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Faculté des Lettres, des Langues et des Sciences du Langage
(FLSL)

tenues les 18 et 19 Janvier 2023 sise à Kabala



Thème : Langue, Politique et Société



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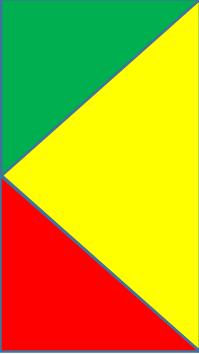
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The journal publishes only quality articles that have not been published or submitted for publication in any other journals. Each article is subjected to a double blind reading. The quality and originality of the articles are the only criteria for publication.



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Sur le thème :
**LANGUE, POLITIQUE ET
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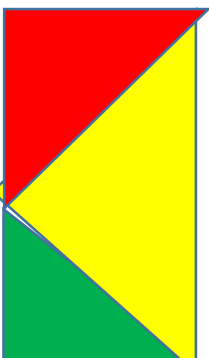
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Argumentaire de l'appel à communication de la 8^{ème} Edition des journées scientifiques de la FLSL

La langue est un fait social qui représente pour le politique un enjeu national et international. Partout dans le monde, langue et société sont l'objet d'une politique. En Afrique, la plupart des états, au lendemain des indépendances, tout en conservant les langues étrangères comme langue officielle, se sont engagés dans une politique linguistique visant la promotion des langues maternelles. Plusieurs voix s'élèvent sur le continent pour clamer haut et fort que les langues maternelles doivent accéder à un nouveau statut, celui de langues officielles, au même titre que la langue de communication internationale. Les tenants de ce choix politique avancent comme principal argument l'occupation par les langues maternelles, en fonction des besoins et des nécessités, de l'espace linguistique au même titre que les langues étrangères. Ce qui procurerait aux langues maternelles le privilège d'être des langues d'ascension sociales et d'intégration. Dans cette optique, les langues maternelles officialisées seront désormais des langues de travail dans tous les domaines de la vie publique : Institutions de la République, structures administratives et politiques, entreprises publiques et privées, établissements scolaires et universitaires, presse écrite et orale, associations culturelles et de développement, etc. Un regard porté sur la situation des langues maternelles et étrangères en Afrique sous cet angle, manifeste une différence d'approche politique et de représentation sociale.

Au Mali, par exemple, depuis 1960, le français, introduit dans le pays avec la colonisation, est la langue officielle. Ce statut de langue d'expression officielle est reconnu et formalisé par la Constitution du Mali de 1992, dans son article 25. La loi N°96-049 du 23 août 1996 portant modalités de promotion de treize langues nationales a octroyé le statut de langue nationale au bamanankan (bambara), fulfulde (peulh), songhay (sonraï), tamasheq, soninké, bozo, bomu (bobo), syenara (senoufo), mamara (minianka), dogoso (dogon), khassonke, hassanya et malinke. Le français demeure quant à lui la seule langue officielle.

On voit bien que la politique linguistique du Mali va du principe que toutes les langues se valent en dignité. De ce fait, elle se garde de choisir une langue parmi les treize langues reconnues du pays. Elle permet à toutes les langues d'avoir les mêmes chances. La plus dynamique sur le plan économique, démographique et politique s'imposera d'elle-même. Ce que Louis-Jean Calvet appelle « la politique linguistique par défaut » car ne pas choisir est également une façon de choisir.

Les questions qui se posent aujourd'hui sont de savoir :

- Nos langues maternelles, introduites dans l'enseignement, sont-elles suffisamment instrumentées de nos jours pour adosser les statuts de langues officielles ?
- Qu'est ce qui explique le maintien des langues étrangères comme langue officielle dans la plupart des pays africains.

Les journées scientifiques de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences du langage (FLSL), qui sont à leur 8ème édition cette année, se proposent d'approfondir la réflexion sur le rapport trilatéral entre Langue, politique et société.

Les communications s'articulent autour des axes suivants :

Axe 1 : les enjeux des politiques linguistiques en Afrique

Axe 2 : politiques éducatives et langues maternelles dans l'enseignement

Axe 3 : langue maternelle et système d'écriture

Axes 4 : littérature et langue maternelle

Axe 5 : l'aménagement linguistique en Afrique

Axe 6 : langue maternelle et traduction

Axe 7 : langues en danger

Axe 8 : langue maternelle et TIC

Axe 9 : langue maternelle et inclusion scolaire

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NIGERIAN PIDGIN AND THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE QUESTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to examine Nigerian pidgin status in Nigeria's complex sociolinguistic landscape. Although it is widely spread, Nigerian pidgin is still not officially recognized. The language is still viewed as a debased form of English, not sufficiently stable, derived of expressions that can help fulfil communication needs. The paper argues that Nigerian pidgin is a language in its own, a language with characteristics and potentialities of a natural language. Besides, Nigerian pidgin is the language of millions of Nigerians, it is neutral as it belongs to no particular ethnic group. As such, Nigerian pidgin deserves official recognition and could rightly be candidate for national language in that highly multilingual Nigerian society.

Key words: language policy; national language; Nigerian language; Nigerian pidgin; status.

Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est d'examiner le statut du pidgin nigérian dans le paysage sociolinguistique complexe nigérian. Malgré sa grande expansion, le pidgin nigérian n'est toujours pas officiellement reconnu. La langue est encore perçue comme une forme dégradée de l'anglais, non suffisamment stable et dépourvue d'expressions permettant de répondre aux besoins de communication. L'article soutient que le pidgin nigérian est une langue à part entière, une langue pourvue de caractéristiques et de potentialités d'une langue naturelle. Par ailleurs, le pidgin nigérian est la langue de millions de Nigériens, il est neutre en ce qu'il n'appartient à aucun groupe ethnique particulier. En tant que tel, le pidgin nigérian mérite d'être officiellement reconnu, et pourrait, à juste titre, être présenté comme langue nationale dans cette société nigériane fortement multilingue.

Mots clés: politique linguistique; langue nationale; langue nigériane; pidgin nigérian; statut.

Introduction

Nigerian Pidgin is commonly used in various domains of social life in Nigeria. With over 75 million speakers¹, Nigerian Pidgin (NP) stands out as one of the African languages with the largest speech community. However, NP still does not have official recognition. Some questions may thus arise, as to what exactly is NP? What are attitudes to NP? The issue of evolving a national language in Nigeria still dwells though efforts have been made. With its spread and the increasing number of its speakers, can NP be candidate for national language in Nigeria?

The objective of this paper is to consider the national language issue in Nigeria and show that NP is a potential candidate that could provide answers to Nigeria's national linguistic yearnings. Our research objective is guided by the hypothesis that, in a highly multilingual environment, a majority creole has better chance of being adopted as national language. The paper is

¹ IHEMERE 2006: 294.

structured into three main parts: the first part defines NP, the second reviews the national language question, the third examines NP as a potential candidate for national language.

1. Defining NP

What exactly is NP? One would answer a language with a contact language background. Indeed, NP emerged from contact between Nigerians and Europeans. The Portuguese were the first to trade with Nigeria; as a result, few Portuguese-derived items (pikin, sabi) are adopted in NP. In the 16th century, Great Britain became Nigeria's new trade partner and English words were adopted. Besides, with British colonialism, the European education brought to Nigerians by Krio-speaking missionaries reinforced the integration of more English words.

According to ADEKUNLE (1975:25), if the European languages from which NP originated can be identified, this is not the case of the Nigerian languages involved in that pidginization process: "(...) in the Nigerian pidgin English situation, the superstrate(s) in the pidginization process cannot be really identified. The Nigerian languages over which NPE is spoken are many and varied despite degrees of structural similarity." However, FARACLAS (1996:3) argues that some pidginized versions of Nigerian languages existed in many Nigerian areas before the arrival of Europeans and NP probably originated from the contact between European languages and those pidginized Nigerian languages:

Nigerian Pidgin may very well have developed from one or several such pidginized Nigerian languages that were spoken along the coast before the Europeans arrived. Because of the importance of the European trade and the reluctance of Europeans to learn other languages, European words would have been substituted for Nigerian words to facilitate communication (FARACLAS, 1996, p.3)

Defining NP may raise questions as the following: NP is called 'a pidgin', however is it a pidgin? Does the name of the language make it a true pidgin? HALL (1966) in ELUGBE and OMAMOR (1991: 45) states that "for a language to be a true pidgin, two conditions must be met. Its grammatical structure and its vocabulary must be sharply reduced ... and also the resultant language must be native to none of those who use it." SPOLSKY (2004:64) similarly points out:

a pidgin language is one that evolves in circumstances where there are limited relations between the speakers of different languages, such as a market, or where there is a special situation of power relations, being typical of the kind of master, slave relation in a plantation. It is a variety of language that is marked by the fact that it is not a native language, of anyone, but is learned only in contact by people who normally continue to speak their own language inside their community.

These definitions would have been true of NP at some point in time in its development. Indeed, at some point in time in its development, NP was a pidgin; it was used for urgent communication needs and was the first language for neither of its speakers.

However, NP has metamorphosed into a language with recognizable characteristics. It is no more a true pidgin; it is no more a contact language with limited social functions. New features have emerged in the language and NP now calls on to deal with wide range of social needs. What is more, NP now has native speakers as MARCHESE and SCHUNAL (1980) in ELUGBE and OMAMOR (1991: 47) mention:

- (i) There is at least one generation of people for whom NP is a first language.
- (ii) NP as of today clearly has an associated linguistic community.
- (iii) The language displays evidence of the kind of rapid linguistic change associated with the acquisition of native speakers by a pidgin.
- (iv) Its range of usage seems to be more extensive than that of any of the other local languages with which it may be said to be in competition.”

NP has, indeed, developed into a creole and it is to some extent misleading to call the language ‘a pidgin’. Nowadays, NP has first language speakers, that is, speakers who acquired the language in their childhood at home in the same way that children acquire any other language. To define NP, I would paraphrase ELUGBE and OMAMOR (1991: 73) and state that “NP is not a pidgin in the technical sense of the term, it is not a sub-standardized English. It is a language that has a contact language history and an independent distinct language with a characteristic system that operates on the basis of well-defined and discoverable principles.”

2. Dealing with the national language question

The concept of ‘national language’ has been variously defined. According to HEINE and NURSE (2004:379), a national language is “a dominant language in a multilingual environment, used for regional or even national communication (de facto national language). It can also be chosen by decree to fulfil some official functions (de jure national language)” [our translation]. Following this definition one may assert that many Nigerian languages can be designated de facto national languages. Nigerian languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, Edo, Tiv, Efik, to name just a few, comply with Heine and Nurse’s definition but none of them is adopted as national language. BRANN (1994) offers four distinctive meanings of national language:

- i. a territorial language of a particular people (chtonolect)
- ii. a regional language (Choralect)

- iii. a language-in-common or community language used throughout country (demolect)
- iv. central language used by government and perhaps having a symbolic value (politolect).

This definition is not enough precise as not all territorial or regional languages are adopted in a country. I perceive ‘a national language’ as defined by AKINDELE and ADEGBITE (1999) in OLATAYO (2015: 2):

a national language refers to a language which has the authority of the government conferred on it as the language of a member of ethnic groups in a given geo-socio-political area. It is deliberately chosen as a symbol of oneness and unity and achievement of independence in an erstwhile colonial situation and of the state nationhood. Such a language must, as a matter of necessity, cut across the entire strata of the society in its use and application, e.g. the English in England, Canada and USA. It can also be qualified as a language that is both elite and mass oriented integrating everybody in the political community.

Thus defined, one may assert the national language issue is still topical in Nigeria. ELUGBE (1990) identified over 400 languages in Nigeria; that is, one fourth of the total estimate of languages spoken in Africa². If multilingualism is said to be the norm in Africa, Nigeria obviously does not make an exception. As many former colonized African countries, Nigeria has faced conflicts over language choice since independence. After independence, the country has opted for exoglossia. English is thus given the status of official language. Accordingly, English is at the top of the language hierarchy in Nigeria; it is the language with the heaviest functional load, the language Nigerians use in various public functions, the language every parent wants his/her children to learn in school.

A suggestion has been to adopt English as Nigeria’s national language. According to AKINDELE and ADEGBITE (1990: 6) “English has been serving as official language as well as the language of wider communication in the country. Whatever may be the criticisms against it, the choice of English as Nigerian national language is one of the wisest language decisions that Nigeria as a nation can take”. There are in fact criticisms against English as a possible national language. English is often viewed as the language of the colonizer, the language of the elites, and is thus perceived as a language that cannot be a bridge for national integration. As NDOLO (1989:679) points out ‘In the absence of a national language, (...), there is undoubtedly widespread resistance in Nigeria to the formal adoption of English as the national language’. Another proposal to tackle the national language question is the use of indigenous languages. However, the diverse crises among socio-ethnic groups have not made things easier for

²Heine and Nurse (2004) identifies roughly 2000 languages in Africa.

Nigerian language planning decision-makers. Indeed, which language(s) should be chosen as national language, for this culturally and linguistically heterogeneous Nigerian population without creating frictions? To SOFUNKE (1990: 43), “only a language which can adequately serve as the cultural, political, and linguistic bridge between the cultural north of Nigeria and the cultural south of Nigeria can seriously be considered as a candidate in the national language race”. On that point, I would agree with IHEJIRIKA (2017:34) that “no indigenous Nigerian language can satisfy this requirement. The reason is that Nigeria is a geographical entity made up of several nations with different cultures and languages.” This may be why OLAGOKE (1982), for instance, would have a multilingual view of the question and suggest the adoption of all the three ‘major’ languages as Nigeria’s national languages.

Another attempt has been to consider ‘Wazobia’, a hybrid of the three ‘major’ Nigerian languages as national language. However, the proposal has been rejected; ‘Wazobia’ is an artificial language, what is more, it is based on the three major languages and thus excludes the other Nigerian languages that is, many ethnic groups’ languages.

There is thus no denying that the national language issue is still of concern in Nigeria, and more voices are calling for national language to be adopted in Nigeria; as OLATAYO, (2015:3) rightly points out:

The question may arise as to why clamouring for national language when the nation has existed for a century without it and when many countries are doing without any. Adopting a national language is necessary because of certain advantages inherent in having one as a nation. One of such advantages is the ability of a national language to foster unity. With a national language, the nation, in spite of the degree of diversity, will have a common tongue and speak with one voice.

Adopting a national language may thus mean adopting a language that would attest Nigerians ‘oneness’, a language that would strengthen national unity. This implies making the decision to give that language a particular status which, indeed, is first of all a political activity. Members of the Nigerian government or parliament are the ones who have to make the decision about which language(s) to be used as national language(s). One outstanding feature of Nigeria’s language-planning model has been to assign important roles to Nigerian languages, particularly the three major languages. This is clearly mentioned in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution and the National Policy on Education (2004 Revised Edition). The 1999 Nigerian Constitution stipulates that

- (i) ... the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba when adequate arrangement have been made therefore.
- (ii) ...the business of the House of assembly shall be in English but the house may in addition to English conduct the business in one or more

other languages spoken in the state as the House may by resolution approve. (Culled from the 1999 Nigerian Constitution)

The National Policy on Education (2004 Revised Edition) states that

- (i) Section 1, paragraph 10 (the importance of language) (a) Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion, and preserving culture. 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.
- (ii) Section 5 paragraph 24 (Junior Secondary School): (a) Every student shall offer English, French, language of the immediate environment (LIE) and one major Nigerian language other than that of the environment as core subjects, and Arabic as an elective. (the language of environment shall be taught as L₁ where it has orthography and literature. Where it does not it shall be taught with emphasis on orally as L₂).
- (iii) Section 5, paragraph 25 (Senior Secondary School): (b) every student shall take English language and a major Nigerian language as core subjects. And any Nigerian language that has orthography and literature as an elective.

(Culled from the National Policy on Education [2004 Revised Edition]).

This model gives special attention to English which remains Nigeria's de facto official language, carrying the highest symbolic value. A special status is accorded to the three 'major' Nigerian languages at regional and state levels. The other indigenous Nigerian languages are not neglected; their right to exist and be developed is respected. However, by giving more roles to the three 'major' Nigerian languages (as they are to be learned in school in addition to the mother tongue and English, as the Nigerian languages to be used in legislation), the policy unfortunately lowlights on the numerous 'minority' Nigerian languages. As a result, one objective behind this language policy that was to create a favourable environment which would facilitate the rise of national language was not reached.

3. Examining NP as a potential national language candidate

NP, if given a chance, can be a good candidate for national language in Nigeria³. NP is a possible candidate for national language, first of all, because it is an indigenous Nigerian language and as such, can take part as any indigenous Nigerian language, in the national language race. Nevertheless, few Nigerians consider NP as a language in its own and attitudes towards the language are regrettably often negative. Indeed, many educated Nigerians have prejudices against it. Because it is English-based, NP is indicted for being a marginal language,

³ See ELUGBE and OMAMOR (1991), FARACLAS (1996), OKOH (2006).

a wrong version of English, a sort of unfortunate result of a defective learning of the English language. Consequently, the language is often viewed as not structurally, functionally and socially capable of competing with English or other indigenous Nigerian languages; and, though it has become more elaborate in terms of vocabulary and grammar, NP still unsuccessfully parts with prejudices. However, it is worth mentioning, NP is a language in its own, a language with all the characteristics and potentialities of a natural language and a number of works has demonstrated it. MAFENI (1971), for instance, describes NP phonology; ELUGBE and OMAMOR (1991) analyses NP phonology and grammar, FARACLAS (1996) describes NP grammar basing on the Port Harcourt version. Consider the following NP utterances⁴.

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|---|
| (1) | Kom kwik | ‘come quickly’ |
| | Folo am go | ‘go with him’ |
| | Mek una getop | ‘you (pl.) should stand up.’ |
| | Una sidon | ‘you (pl.) sit down |
| | Mek we go nau | ‘Let us go’ |
| | Mek wi liv am fes | ‘Let us wait a while/ Let go for now’ |
| | | |
| (2) | Shebi una bin go? | ‘Isn’t it the case that you people went?’ |
| | Shebi dem si yu? | ‘Isn’t it the case that they saw you?’ |
| | | |
| (3) | A de haus | ‘I am at home’ |
| | A layk nyam | ‘I like yam |
| | A de go haus | ‘I am going home’ |
| | A de chop nyam | ‘I am eating yam’ |
| | A bin de haus | ‘I was at home’ |
| | A bin layk nyam | ‘I liked yams.’ |
| | | |
| (4) | A don chop | ‘I have eaten’ |
| | A de wet yu sins | ‘I have been waiting for you for a long time’ |
| | A de wet yu taya | ‘I have been waiting for you for a long time’ |
| | A do de wet yu (sins) | ‘I have been waiting for you for a long time’ |

⁴ The utterances in (1) and (2) are extracted from ELUGBE and OMAMOR (1991: 106-107); they are illustrations of imperative and interrogative clauses in NP. The utterances in (3) and (4) are extracted from FARACLAS (1996: 196; 200; 202); they are illustrations of temporal and aspectual marking in NP.

These utterances are structurally different from their corresponding English utterances. One is thus inclined to believe that NP is basically independent of English. Indeed, NP is English-based, but it is not English. The language has been phonologically, syntactically, morphologically influenced by Nigerian languages, making it a new system. It is a language in its own, an indigenous Nigerian language, which has successfully borrowed from Nigerian languages. The following items are examples of loans from Nigerian languages.

Some Yoruba-derived items

wahala ‘trouble’	yawo from iyawo	‘wife’
akara ‘bean cake’	oyibo	‘white man’
padi ‘friend’	oga	‘master, superior’
jaguda ‘a raffian’	ashawo	‘a prostitute’
shakara ‘to show off’	sebi	‘right?’
shele ‘to happen, to take place’		

Some Igbo-derived items

yeye ‘crazy, useless’	sha	‘please (sacarsm)’
una derived from unu ‘you plural’	abi	‘right?’
biko ‘please’	iba	‘fever, malaria’
obodo ‘land, country’	ugu	‘pumpkin leaves’
obi ‘the large living quarters of the head of the family’		

Some Hausa-derived items

jara ‘bonus’	turenchi	‘long, boring ineffective harahgue’
wayo ‘tricks’	gwooro	‘kola nut’
saraa ‘sacrifice’	suya	‘spicy grilled meat’
dabaru ‘to destroy’	shege	‘bastard’
dogo ‘a tall person’	gobe	‘trouble’
dogon-kafa ‘long leg’		
ba ‘right?’		

Some Edo-derived items

kpangolo container	ozeba	‘a big problem’
kpekere plantain chips	ororo	‘vegetable oil’
okada motor-bike		

Another advantage NP has as potential candidate for national language is neutrality. NP is detached of any ethnic group, it has no strong marks of one particular Nigerian language. Consequently, it belongs to everyone and to no-one. In this extremely multilingual Nigerian society, adopting such a language as national language would avoid frustrations among ethnic groups since ethnic groups use language as one of their most significant identifying features. Wearing some specific clothes, for instance, may be a sign to show a person's membership in a social group. Indeed, the Yoruba from the south-west of Nigeria or the Hausa from the north are identified as such with their traditional '*agbada*' and '*babban riga*' clothes. Clothes are, among others, important identity markers. However, as SPOLSKY (2004: 57) justly mentions, 'language has a special role, in part because it organizes thought and in part because it establishes social relations'. Indeed, ethnic groups vow great importance to the language they speak. First it is through language that humans organise ideas. Next, as social beings, humans necessarily belong to a group of individuals that share certain characteristics and are involved in social interactions which is very commonly, done through language. Last but not least, ethnic groups are generally called by the name of the language they speak. Therefore, in a country like Nigeria, where hundreds of socio-cultural groups co-exist, each undoubtedly considering its language to be the best medium for preserving and expressing its culture, the project of adopting a language that is not neutral deserves to be seriously thought over.

The non-adoption of one or all the three 'major' languages as national language is thus revealing. Indeed, the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo languages have been officially recognised as the Nigerian languages to be learned at school in addition to the mother tongue and English. What is more, they are the Nigerian languages to be used in legislation in addition to English. As a result their speakers have been propelled in stronger position as their languages are used for national communication, which may be considered as a kind of domination the other Nigerian languages speakers. Besides, the English language which is linguistically rich and belongs to no ethnic group, is not perceived as a response to the national question because many Nigerians are of the opinion that the national language of Nigeria has to be Nigerian language; that is, a language that conveys the culture of Nigerians (see SOFUNKE 1990). This condition, the English language clearly does not fulfil it. Thus, since:

- Nigerian languages are not neutral;
- English is not a Nigerian language;
- Wazobia is artificial and not neutral;

if the Nigerian Government were in need of a national language that is neutral, the Nigerian Government could look at NP as a possibility. NP, indeed, is culturally related to no one group.

Another point in favour of NP as a potential candidate for national language is undeniably its expansion. NP is widely spread in Nigeria. Yet before 2000, FARACLAS (1996:1) estimated that more than 40 million Nigerians speak NP as their second language while over 1 million speak the language as their first language. IHEMERE (2006:297) points out: “there are 75 million people who speak Nigerian Pidgin as a second language and the number of first language speakers is roughly at between 3 and 5 million, on a total population of about 133 million”. However, current estimates assess 4.7 million NP first language speakers, 116 million NP second language speakers⁵ for a total Nigeria 2020 population estimated to about 207 million. These figures tend to suggest that, slightly more than one half of the Nigerian population speaks NP, thus pointing to NP as more widely spoken than any Nigerian language, even the so-called three ‘major’ languages. It is thus rightly that FARACLAS (1996) states that “it is even the most widely spoken language in Nigeria”. The NP speaking community is constantly enlarging as the language is very popular with young people who constitute a greater part of the Nigerian population.

One remarkable thing about the NP speaking community that is worth mentioning is the diverse backgrounds of its members. NP, indeed, is spoken by Nigerians, independent of their ethnic group, level of education or social status. Few Nigerians unjustly claim NP is the language of the illiterate. AGHEYISI (1971:30), for instance, describes typical speakers of NP as “the majority of people who have little or no formal education”. This description would have been true of the speakers of NP at some point in time of the history of the language, they bear no relevance whatsoever to the situation of NP in Nigeria today. NP is widely spoken among Nigerians from different ethnic, social or educational backgrounds and I would totally agree with OMAMOR (1982a) in ELUGBE and OMAMOR (1991: 52) that “NP is spoken almost anywhere and in all the places where it is spoken by illiterates and by university graduates the lowly as well as the high”.

NP is actually used in many domains of social life. In communication area for instance, NP is increasingly used in advertisement, on radio, on television and in the media to get closer to masses. Most radio and television broadcast programs in NP, even BBC now broadcasts news in the so-called West African pidgin. Besides, though not official, NP is used in education as OFUANI (1981) observes: “the available data indicate that, at present, when communication breaks down between pupil and teacher in early classes of primary schools in some parts of Bendel State, the teacher tends to resort to NP”. ELUGBE and OMAMOR(1991) argues this

⁵ Statistics from The Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 26th ed., 2023.

situation is not restricted to Bendel State and may be true of some other areas in the southern part of Nigeria where NP is used to facilitate communication in classroom. NP is variously used in many other domains of social life and builds a bridge between Nigerians of diverse backgrounds.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that, NP, if given a chance, would be a response to the national language question in Nigeria's multilingual sphere. The issue of evolving a national language is still topical in Nigeria in spite of efforts made. English, the official language, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, the Nigerian major languages, and 'Wasobia' a hybrid language have all been suggested for national language. However, none of them has passed without criticism.

The paper has demonstrated that, in the highly multilingual Nigerian context, NP, a widely spread creole, may rightly be a candidate for national language. Indeed, NP is a language in its own, with all the characteristics and potentialities of a natural language. What is more, it is a Nigerian language, commonly used by more than half of the total estimate of the Nigerian population. Last but not least, NP is neutral, it is a language of reference for no ethnic group in Nigeria. Such a language deserves official recognition and could be a choice to solve Nigeria's national language question.

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