

The Role of the French Language in Democratic Governance in Nigeria

¹Olawoyin John Olajire, ²Adeyemi Adekemi Oluwatosin, ³Omotayo Gbenga Oluyemi, ⁴Adeyemo Rashidat Ayo, ⁵Adegbemi Esther Omolola, ⁶Olufunmi R. Debo-Ajayi

¹Department of Languages

²Department of Humanities and Social Science

³Department of Accountancy

⁴Juniour Establishment Unit

⁵Department of Languages

⁶SERVICOM Unit

Federal Polytechnic, Offa, Nigeria.

Email: ¹john.olawoyin@fedpoffaonline.edu.ng Phone No: +2348055220019

ABSTRACT

It is a fact that within the last six decades, the third world nations have experienced reconfiguration of their traditional systems of politics and governance, sociocultural formations and practices, and socioeconomic structures following their contact with the West. Unfortunately, one major aspect of the impact of this contact that is yet to produce positive effects is the role of political communication in stabilizing democratic governance. While issues that are not language-related such as an overambitious military leading to frequent coups d'états, military dictatorships that spanned for decades, loosely defined federalism, and weak political party systems in many nations—have been treated as constituting barriers to the establishment and sustenance of viable democratic governance in African and Third World countries, the role of political communication in developing a strong tradition of democratic practices has been overlooked. This work investigates the role of the French Language in stabilizing democratic governance by exploring and clarifying the inter-relationships between language, politics, and governance. The interplay of political communication and democratic processes in the multilingual Nigerian context is particularly explored to highlight the different roles of the interacting languages. It is argued that the dominance of an exogenous language over other numerous indigenous languages may portend grave implications for the young democratic governance in this third-world polity. Therefore, the search for linguistic equilibrium in the linguistic situation in the present Nigerian democracy requires more effort and commitment from the political class than the present academic debates on language policy and planning.

Keywords: Politics, Governance, sociocultural, socioeconomic and inter-relationships

Introduction

Shortly after being let loose from the chains of colonialism, Nigeria has been making efforts to practice and sustain democratic governance that is based on the principles of federalism. The political structure in Nigeria, which is supposed to reflect federal constitutionalism, has been criticized by many because of the over-concentration of power at the center to the disadvantage of the federating units. The initial experimentation with the parliamentary system of governance patterned after their colonial master, Britain, in the First Republic, failed. The country then turned to America for a solution and adopted the presidential system that has remained in practice but not without frequent military interventions. In fact, in the history of democratic practice in Nigeria, military rule accounted for twenty-nine out of its sixty-two years of nationhood.

While there has been much debate on the means to ensure the success of civil governance in the country, the role of political discourse has received very little attention. It is a fact that politics does not function independently of the instrument of communication. For instance, without effective and persuasive use of language, the primary goal of political campaigns, which is to gain and control power in a country and ensure good governance that is based on democratic principles, will not be realized. One of the processes of achieving power is the need to mobilize civil society to participate in the democratic process. Political communication and political education are thus pivotal to the attainment of effective social mobilization and political campaigns in a country that operates a system of governance that is based on Federalism.

The primary concern here is the exploration of how effectively political actors in and out of

government have been able to deploy language facilities available in the Nigerian multilingual speech community towards the success of democratic polity in Nigeria.

The data for the study include selected written political campaign texts, adverts, and media reports on political campaigns sourced from some Nigerian national newspapers. Selected rhetorical and persuasive strategies that are found in the campaign texts produced during recent elections in Nigeria are analyzed using the approaches of discourse analysis (e.g., Awonusi, 1996; Schiffrin, 1994).

Language remains the most potent vehicle for human communication. The ability to use language creatively as against the use of the same by other living creatures delineates human communities from other animal communities. It is very unique to humans. (Adebayo, 1999)

One of the definitions of language according to Greenberg, is of the view that: "Language is unique to man. No other species possesses a truly symbolic means of communication and no human society, however simple its material culture, lacks the basic human heritage of a well-developed language". The position of Greenberg is that language is a universal property of human quality and that every human language has the same utilitarian functions irrespective of race and ethnic nationality.

Edward Sapire defines Language as is "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". These symbols are, in the first instance, auditory and they are produced by the so-called "organs of speech." There is no discernible instinctive basis in human speech as such, however much instinctive expressions and

the natural environment may serve as a stimulus for the development of certain elements of speech, however much instinctive tendencies and other, may give a predetermined range or mold to linguistic expression.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines language as “a system of communication by written or spoken words, which is used by the people of a particular country or area”.

B-Block and G.L. Trager state that: “a language is an arbitrary system of vocal symbols by means of which human beings as members of a social group co-operate, interact and communicate”. The increasing social awareness resulting from increasingly sophisticated and dynamic forms of human activities led equally to the sophistication of language from merely a rustic means of communication to a very complex tool of modern information and communication Anumihe (2009). Thus it can be seen that language developed and kept developing as a factor of the natural human desire to make communication and interaction with one another in any social context easier and more effective.

The above definitions suggest not only the concept of language but also the meaning, the features or characteristics and the uses of language.

French in Nigeria and the Geographical Location of the Country

Nigeria is an Anglophone country that is surrounded by francophone countries (the Republic of Niger in the North, the Republic of Chad in the North East, the Republic of Cameroon in the East, and the Benin Republic in the West). For effective interaction with the neighboring French-speaking countries and the entire world, Nigerian leaders need the

knowledge of the French language as they need to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to remain relevant in the global village. Yet, the French language is given little or no recognition in the Nigerian democratic system of governance.

Though the French language was introduced into the education system of the country after the extinction of the Latin language. Asake (2006) and Ajiboye (2004) opined that the expatriates were brought into the country to come and teach the language in secondary schools throughout the country during the initial period. In recent times, the Nigerian government has started deemphasizing the teaching of the language. In schools, French teachers are no more employed and the already existing ones are not adequately motivated, according to Ayeomoni (2012), This attitude of the government has made both the parents and the students have an aversion to the language. Many parents now consider French language learning a waste of time. This was as a result of the attitude of our leaders toward learning the language

The geographical location of Nigeria as a country has made French language learning necessary in the country. Onyemelukwe (1995) observed that Nigeria needs the knowledge of French so as to have a healthy relationship with its francophone neighbors. Igonor (2011) opined that “... For Nigeria to enter a relation of mutual benefits with these nations, most especially, in combating terrorist acts of Boko Haram insurgency and banditry, it is imperative, at least to some extent, for her to communicate with these countries in their own official language - French”

Onyemelukwe and Adie Offiong (2004) buttressed the point by claiming that “Bilingualism is relevant to communication not only with our francophone neighbors but with other French-speaking countries of the world. In

short, it promotes global communication in all spheres of life - education, commerce, religion, and politics". Ogunkeye (2007) gave four reasons for the adoption of French in Nigeria:

- Nigeria is surrounded by francophone countries; therefore French as an official language will facilitate communication and interaction with the country's neighbors.

- The seat of ECOWAS is in Abuja, Nigeria; there are nine (9) Francophone and five (5) Anglophone countries in ECOWAS. French, therefore, is the natural choice being the language of the majority.

- In a world that is fast becoming a global village, learning French can only be an advantage. There will be access to foreign materials and other opportunities available in terms of communication, technology, and international politics. This point is also supported by Brahn et al (1988)

- There will also be job opportunities for individuals in organizations such as African Union, United Nations, UNESCO, and other multinational companies that require their employees to speak French, especially at various embassies.

Ogunbiyi (2012) also supports the opinion of the others by asserting that "Since Nigeria is surrounded by French-speaking countries, the importance of the language in Nigeria for social, political, economic and international relations cannot be overemphasized." In spite of the above-mentioned importance of the French language to Nigerian citizens, the language is yet to be taken seriously

Much has been said about the relevance of French language and the reason why our leaders should

adopt French as a pivotal tool in democratic governance. French is a modern language that is spoken, written and used like all the other world's modern languages. Despite its importance and easy access to learning, it is unfortunate that the wide use of French has often been overlooked by Nigerians leaders

French is a foreign language in Nigeria and has a stance of copious advantages as regards its pertinence in all spheres of life. The language has gained ascendancy among different international languages especially in Nigeria because of her geographical proximity with French speaking countries. Besides, French is the second most widely learned foreign languages in the world. We will in this paper discuss the emergence of French language in Nigeria and depicts its relevance which can be traced to the phases of economic, social, political, religious, educational, employment, and diplomatic benefits especially to Nigerian leaders. French is unusual in that it often exists alongside other languages in multilingual contexts; it shares with English the distinction of being taught as a foreign language in the educational systems of most countries around the world in which is not excepted from Nigeria . As a result of all these, Nigerian leaders are now kept abreast of the salient importance of the language, this is the reason they must be committed to learning the language irrespective of the tribe or political leanings. It has opened doors of opportunities to them nationally and internationally.

The aims of the French Language and Communication degree being awarded in universities is to allow individuals to develop an in-depth understanding of the French language and its role in the world as well as an in-depth understanding of communication in terms of how it functions at interpersonal, public, group and intercultural levels. The French language is one

of the dominant languages of international communication and with increasing globalization, it is important to have a refined understanding of the nature and structure of French and how one can use it to communicate with the speakers of the language. An understanding of the various dimensions of language and communication will give you the ability to communicate more effectively in this complex, globalised world.

Language does not develop in vacuum; it cannot be separated from culture. It is part of the culture of the people and the only available means by which the members of a society communicate. We may say that language is an embodiment, a component of culture and a central network through which the other components are expressed. Ajiboye (2004) buttressed the above view when he stressed further that language is a critical element of culture through which it reveals its fascinating power. All these inform the goals of learning a language as the ability to use it, understand its meaning and connotations, ideas and achievements. This could be the reason why Ogunbiyi (1998) insists that language is the key to the heart of the people, if we lose a key; we lose the people if we treasure the key and keep it safe it will unlock the door of untold riches which cannot be guessed out from the other sides of the door.

Efforts of Nigeria Government on the Introduction of French Language

As a result of the values of the French language in Nigeria, the federal government of Nigeria established The Nigerian French Language Village, Badgry Lagos in 1991 as an Inter-University Centre for French studies. The centre offers a variety of programmes and services with the mandate of providing language immersion programmes include: certificates, diplomas, NCE, and university degree programmes.

Furthermore, the importance of the language cannot be measured, as a result of this, the late General Sani Abacha in 1996 declared the new status of French as the nation's second official language. Therefore for Nigerians to interact effectively with francophone countries locally and internationally, they should not only be able to speak the language fluently but also be able to attend international seminars and conferences without much problem.

The declaration of French as the second official language of Nigeria during late General Sani Abacha's regime in 1996 paved more way for the recognition of French language education by some of our policy makers. Hence, in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004), the status of the French language was officially stated and documented as follows:

“For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French.

Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in Primary and Senior Secondary Schools, but a non-vocational elective at the Senior Secondary School.”

The good intention of the Nigerian government, as reflected in the declaration quoted above, is highly commendable. But it is yet a pity that, according to Akale et al (1998); after about twenty (20) years, the vision about making at least 70% of Nigerians internationally bilingual in English and French languages has not fully materialized. Despite the fact that the Nigerian government wants French to be offered as a core subject in both Primary and Secondary levels of our educational system, many public schools still remain adamant on the full implementation of the said policy (Falade, 2008).

Nigerian governments have on various occasions expressed their desire to adopt the French

language as Nigeria's second official language. At the end of the day, the adoption steps have been discovered to be politically inclined.

Recently, in some of our national dailies, there have been debates and reactions to the announcement by the present Minister of State for Education, Prof. Anthony Anwukah. Some respondents argued that learning a second official language is not necessary and is a pure waste of time.

It might interest Nigerians and Nigerian graduates to note that the announcement of the Minister during his meeting with the French Ambassador that "French was on its way to becoming Nigeria's second official language" is no news at all. Officially, French has been the second official language in this country for the past 19 years. It has also been made "compulsory" in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools across the country. French is also being taught at the tertiary level in the country.

Nigerians should not over-flog the notion that there are no benefits in making French a second official language; events have overtaken that. What is most important for us to know at the moment is the importance of bilingualism or multilingualism; that is having good knowledge of at least two international languages. While other neighbouring countries have at least two international languages as their official languages, others have three to four. Nigeria must join her counterparts in the trend of bilingualism, which without doubt, has many benefits.

We must understand that being bilingual has a positive effect on our intellectual growth and enhances our mental development. According to Nanduti (2009), "being bilingual opens the door to other cultures and helps an individual

understand and appreciate people from other countries." I can assure you that our political leaders will interact better and exchange better knowledge with their Francophone counterparts without interpreters if they have knowledge of both French and English languages. Nanduti also affirms that being bilingual increases job opportunities in many careers where knowing another language is a real asset.

Ludwing Wittgenstein clearly states that: "The limit of my language means the limits of my world." This simply means that we are limited to the world of whose language we can speak. Therefore, the more different international languages we learn, the wider our economic and political horizons. Edwards (2000). Being bilingual can equally make an individual have more executive control of whatever situation he or she finds herself by the simple ability to switch from one international language to the other.

During the course of this research, one of our respondents declared: "... relevance of French? It reminds me of the first time I attempted to get a visa. For days, I went to the embassy then at Onikan Abayomi but could not even see the colour of the gate due to the large crowd I met there. On the third day, I decided to use my knowledge of French to part the red sea of applicants already crowding the gate as early as 7.30am. And so, I straightened my dress, with my head held high and confidently approached the crowd speaking and chanting French. To my greatest surprise, the crowd parted ways for me to pass through; they obviously thought I was one of the embassy workers. I moved on until I got to the entrance where I equally introduced myself to the Frenchman in his language and the gates were thrown open for me to walk in majestically. Who says the language is not power?"

It is worthy of note that one may not be fluent, but can greet a dignitary and make a toast in the mother tongue. It's very helpful and makes you much more viable. Our leaders are strongly encouraged to take the study of foreign languages especially French as part of their training to stand out among their equals around the world as they can all benefit from the French language if taken more seriously.

To know the success or failure of a project or dream is the ability to take the first step toward achieving it. I, therefore, use this medium to call on Dr. Adamu Adamu, the Minister of State for Education, to put words into action and earn himself well-deserved credit in the educational sector by implementing the 1996 declaration of French as the second official language in Nigeria.

Essential Functions of French Language in Nigeria

Since French is a language, it performs all functions that human languages perform. Scholars and critics of different extractions (Owoeye, 2010; Essoh and Endong 2014) have examined the utilitarian functions of French language in Nigeria. In their different theoretical and empirical positions, they argue that French, as a language, performs communicative, interactive, diplomatic and informative functions. These functions have impacted positively on sustainable human development of the country. Some of the functions of French language are identified and discussed below:

French as a communication tool

The word 'communication' originated from the Latin expression 'communis' which means 'common'. Its derivation *communicare* means 'to share' 'impart' or 'partake' Inyang (1988). It is the transmission of information or ideas from one person to the other. Knezevich (1975: 66) defines communication as 'a process in which a communicator attempts to convey an image to

communicate'. Its essential entails the sharing of ideas, notions, feelings and experiences between the sender and the receiver of the message. Dalton E. (1974: 566) defines the concept as the process by which meanings are exchanged so as to produce understanding among human beings.

Without an iota of doubt, just like other foreign languages, French has been a useful instrument of communication in developing the 21st century Nigerian graduates. The beauty of a language is in its communication, Nigerian graduates are interested in the language for the purpose of communication. So many Nigerian graduates who specialized in different fields keenly wanted to develop themselves in the oral and written skills of the language. Therefore, it is a language of communication among the professionals and amateurs. It is often observed that graduates who are not specialists on the language are still in need of it. This is because it serves as a means to keep abreast with other foreign languages apart from the common English language. For learning to have more than transient utility, what is learnt must be kept available to day to day events and activities through communication. French language serves as a medium of communication in seminars, conferences, meetings and diplomatic gatherings. In fact, the language is becoming more popular in Nigerian Polytechnics due to its inclusion in some programmes' curriculum.

French Language as a Tool for Economic Development

The relevance of the French language to Nigerian leaders and people has been a topical issue in Nigeria since the sixties. Language, culture and economy are quite inseparable because of their intimate relationship. In the process of learning French as a foreign language, one learns French culture and tradition. Good knowledge of the French language may serve as catalyst for economic empowerment and development for

Nigerian graduates. The economic empowerment function of French does not solely depend on the contingency of Nigeria to neighboring countries such as the Republic of Benin and Togo that speak French as the official language. Aire (1993:4) argues further that:

“the importance of French does not depend only on the nearness of French speaking countries, France, the mother country of these neighbouring francophone countries has long since realized the necessity to disseminate her language in Nigeria as well realized its importance to her economy.”

Therefore, one of the principal functions of the language in developing the Nigerian society is to act as a base of commerce. Any graduate from Nigeria can easily venture into business with the neighbouring francophone countries. It is crystal clear that most graduates are now in France and in some French-speaking countries for the purpose of trade and commerce.

Without mincing any word, one can become a teacher, the so-called father of all professions. The learning of the language can give Nigerians the opportunity to be an instructor of the language in elementary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. In Nigeria today, we have a reasonable number of professors of French that are Nigerians. The language has really occupied an influential role in the formation of the national expectations and the integration of the nation and the neighbouring French-speaking nations.

Diplomatic Benefits of French Studies

Closely related to the role of the French language to develop the economy is that of political benefits of the language. French is a language of politics; it is as useful as English language. Before one can become an ambassador or the related professions, he or she must have the knowledge of the language. This is one of the

reasons that graduates must strive to have the knowledge and the culture of the language. Most political and international posts need French language, therefore; the knowledge of French will enhance the Nigerian graduates to fit in for the posts without denying them.

Equally, it is quite necessary to take note of the fact that French language is a language of conflict resolution and peacemaking. Language is necessary to promote absolute comprehension to settle the rising problems both nationally and internationally. Therefore, most Nigerian Polytechnic graduates are needed to be interested in the language in order to achieve political values.

Diplomatically, most Nigerian graduates think more than their environment, they believe that they need to press forward to keep their intimate relationships with the other countries of the world. Therefore, it is strongly believed that when they have the knowledge of French, this exposes the graduates to many opportunities that can order their lives better. French is one of the working languages of the European Union, along with English and German and the sole language used for the deliberations of the court of justice of European Union. It is the sole official language of the Universal Postal Union (UPU). It is one of the languages of many other international institutions: The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), THE United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) etc. All these placed a priority in the faces of the Nigerian graduates which will give them the chances to work with these great diplomatic

organizations and in order to better their lives internationally.

Socio-cultural Benefits of French Studies

French language needs to be studied by 21st century Nigeria simply because of its socio-cultural benefits. Emordi (2007). It is possible for Nigerian leaders and society to be keenly interested in French culture and civilization. Knowing French culture and civilization could bring about unity and solidarity. When one knows about a country, one can easily relate with the country, one can develop the economic transactions with the French-speaking countries; culture is inseparable from a language. The knowledge of French cultural will enhance easy access to French speaking nations for commercial and monetary benefits. Socially, the knowledge of French will help to develop a great rapport with other people from French-speaking countries.

Nigerian polytechnic and university graduates can attend seminars, conferences and meetings in French speaking countries if they have the knowledge of the language and they will be able to understand the bone of discourse in the programme. Buetas M.C (1976:10) Opines that there is no serious-minded organization political, scientific, philosophical or even athletic which does not have the ambition to associate with other groups, sharing its idea outside its national boundaries. Therefore, the language promotes inter-personal relationship among the speakers. Furthermore, those who engage in sports activities need to know more about French. This will help them in their careers. The role of French in developing Nigerian graduates is inestimable. They can plan and travel to France or any francophone country, there they can do exploits as a result of their knowledge of the language.

Educational Benefits of French Studies

As language is the centre of human life, French language is one of the most important languages that express one's love in the midst of the French speakers. It is also vital to achieve many goals and careers. For instance, somebody who studies French and works hard can become a French teacher. In fact, the language is very common in our secondary school nowadays; due to this there are lots of job opportunities for as many who study the language and willing to teach.

Recently, the Rivers state government set up some programmes that will promote the study of French language and creative arts in its primary and secondary schools. While students of two secondary schools in the state are undergoing a two-week holiday training programme on French, prior to the French training programme, which is organized by the state ministry of Education in partnership with Alliance Française under the public private arrangement, the state government had earlier donated a piece of land for the development of French Resource Centre.

The former state commissioner of Education, Mrs Dame Alice Nemi explained that the French training programme is intended to expose them to the study of French for the purpose of inculcating in them the rudiments of French language in a conducive environment, equipped with adequate facilities. This enabling environment will develop their interest in studying the language in tertiary institution in the nearest future.

Multilingualism in the Modern World

The proficiency in multiple foreign languages is a basic prerequisite for successful communication in the world. John (2004). In today's globalized world, the importance of knowing foreign languages is a necessity and multilingualism is viewed as an investment in the future. With the continued expansion of the African Union and European Union, European language policies are moving towards the

teaching of 'at least two foreign languages from a very early age' and describe the knowledge of foreign languages as a 'basic skill' (Euridyce 2005).

In the increasingly mobile and multilingual Europe, knowledge of foreign languages plays an important and sometimes a decisive role in the employability of graduates. It is also important to state that in today's world of globalization; French plays a significant and important role, where intercultural contacts contribute to the development of intercultural dialogue. The knowledge of foreign languages has evidently the key role in the development of tourism which has a multiple role and is viewed as economic, social and cultural activity. Therefore, it is indisputable to state that it represents one of the most important activities of the modern, contemporary society around the world.

All European educational systems are attaching ever-increasing importance to the learning of foreign languages. There is a strong need to educate multilingual and multicultural individuals in a context where the linguistic consequences of globalization are more and more evident. The globalization process is forcing European educational systems to pay more attention to the learning of foreign languages. This should also be applicable to the Nigerian education system. This means that we should promote the importance of learning more than one foreign language in the early age.

The last decade has witnessed a rapid increase in interest in multilingualism. This increase is certainly linked to the commitment of the European Union to a multilingual Europe (Jessner, 2008). The language policy supported by the Council of Europe promotes teaching and learning of several foreign languages in the European educational context. In accordance

with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) it was proposed that EU citizens should be proficient in three European languages, their mother tongue (L1) and two other community languages, to ensure multilingualism as an essential characteristic feature of European identity. This kind of policy can also be enshrined in the Nigeria context.

Language is a very valuable resource and those who understand only one go through life with a handicap. Multilingualism, studies have found, has both biological and cultural advantages. While we try to increase our quota in the world, we owe it to ourselves to take the teaching and learning of French language effectively and efficiently. Jibril (2015)

Nigerian students and graduates should wake up to this call to multilingualism - Nigerian companies (our banks, Dangote cement and so many others) are extending their tentacles to the francophone Africa and our University and Polytechnic graduates are crowding in on the few available vacancies here in Nigeria because of the language barrier preventing them from exploring the vast opportunities in Nigerian companies in francophone Africa. Nigerian graduates should be ready to be French compliant, if they want to remain relevant in this fast changing multilingual world. (Nwaogu 2015)

Promoting Intercultural Communication

It is evident that in all professions, beside the communicative language ability, it is extremely important to also develop the intercultural competence, or the ability of successful communication between members of different cultures. In the process of learning a new language it is important to be aware of its cultural aspect(s), because the knowledge of other

cultures helps a learner to learn a certain language and to assess cultural values of that language (Luka, 2007). In order to develop intercultural competence, students should not only learn a foreign language, but such a process should also include intercultural training and intercultural exchange of ideas. It is evident that the knowledge and the skills acquired in this learning process will highly contribute to the development of such an individual in general.

Graduates of our Polytechnics also have to acquire theoretical and practical cultural knowledge, which can be gained through intercultural communication and the development of intercultural competence (Sain 2011). If we transfer this into the area of tourism and hospitality, and try to distinguish what is important to know about the language that hotel and restaurant employees use, we will soon realize that it is not only the knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary that they need to apply but they need to be aware of the importance of socio-cultural aspect as well (Petrovska, 2010). Although their grammatical and their lexical competence of a foreign language may be outstanding, it still can cause cultural misunderstanding Onyemelukwe & Adie-Offiong (2004) or a final failure in communication with native speakers. Petrovska (2010) points out that this failure may be a result of lack of knowledge of cultural differences between the two (or more) societies, or the influence of their mother tongue and direct transfer of meaning in the other language.

Therefore, the programme of French studies and other related course in Nigeria Polytechnics and Colleges of Education needs to be adjusted in order to raise students' awareness of the importance of multilingualism as earlier as possible

Conclusion

This study has exposed relatively the relevance of French language to Nigerian society (leaders, policy makers, professionals, students and informed public) with particular emphasis on our political leaders and policy makers. Attempts has also been made to establish the popularity of French language in all professions in Nigeria as a multilingual and multicultural state where over five hundred languages exist together with English language which is the official language of the country.

For any democratized nation like ours, to attain greatness, the issue of second official language should not be handled with levity. French is supposed to be taught and made compulsory right from the nursery and primary school so that it will not be a great burden or task for the graduates to learn. Though, it has been found to be very useful and its utilization is across the globe. Learning the language does not only give one added advantage but copious advantages.

Equally, due to the tremendous role being played by the French language to develop the 21st century Nigerian political leaders and policy makers, we need to re-engineer the teaching and learning of the language at primary, post primary and as a general course in all higher institutions of learning in Nigeria in order to prepare various Nigeria graduates and professionals for the challenges of learning the language.

The status of French as the de facto second official language in Nigeria and the useful value of the language to all professions should not be over-emphasized. Knowledge of French language should be critically looked into as it has significant effect on the career development of students and Polytechnic graduates. All Nigerians

should be ready to be French compliant, if they want to remain relevant in this fast changing world.

Recommendations

All our leaders, policy makers, graduates of Polytechnics, Colleges Education and Universities should be re-educated to acquire certificates at French language centres (such as Nigerian French Village, Badagry and Alliance Française) to increase French literacy in order to add value to their chosen career as we have in computer today.

French language should be given more priority attention in the three tiers of education in fulfillment of the recent National Policy on Education. French language should be made compulsory in all secondary schools in this country from JSS1-SS3 and at first year of all tertiary institutions as a general course.

The attitudes of students in the Polytechnics and Universities to French language should be positively enhanced in order to improve on their knowledge of the language. Therefore, departments offering French at the moment, the Polytechnic Academic Planning and Quality Assurance Unit, all concerned professionals should embark on sensitization programme that would create an awareness of the relevance of French language as a veritable tool of development for our 21st century graduates.

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