

Harnessing Linguistic Resources towards Sustainable Language Development

C. N. Anyagwa
*Department of English,
University of Lagos, Akoka*

Abstract

'Sustainable development' is often discussed with emphasis on social, infrastructural, economic and technological development, in many climes. The question of language development is hardly ever mentioned and when it is, it is subsumed under culture. All over the world, language suffices as that aspect of culture which marks a people out among other groups of the same species. It often remains the inheritance of generations after generations and guarantees the perpetuity of the common goals and aspirations of the people. Given the central role which language plays in the individual and communal lives of the people, it is often surprising that linguistic aspects of a people's existence are often treated with levity. In this study, adopting a purely library-based methodology and focusing on the linguistic resources that abound in two indigenous Nigerian languages (Igbo and Yoruba), we investigated their state of development and their prospects. The study sought to establish the place of Language Development within the larger picture of Sustainable Development focusing on the principles of graphisation, standardisation and modernisation. It was argued here that any integrated development that affects other areas of a people's life must of necessity also pay attention to the crucial issue of Language Development since language is central to national development. The study concluded by emphasising the need for collaboration among stakeholders – the media, the academic and the everyday language user - to ensure that the results of our individual researches are adequately publicised and implemented towards sustainable language development.

Keywords: Language development, Linguistic resources, Metalanguage, sustainable development, Indigenous Nigerian languages

Introduction

Development, particularly sustainable development, has remained a major concern of most governments and people in the world today and often constitutes the crux of manifestoes presented during political campaigns. This is particularly true of the Third World. However, development plans and strategies hardly ever take into consideration the position of language as a double-edged-sword with the

make-or-break power in human interactions. Prah (1993:50) captures, in very clear terms, how language barrier, for instance, can hinder development:

When people speak of developing countries, they immediately think of economic backwardness. To deal with that, projects are conceived and technicians and money sent. When the projects fail, blame is put on the social and cultural practices of the people...Only rarely do people (from the donor countries) realize that the language barrier is the culprit which prevents new ideas from taking root...the fact that the inherited colonial official languages, French and English, operate more as inhibiting than facilitating factors, is a point which in my estimation is poorly appreciated by both the local governmental authorities and the international agencies.

Many countries in post-independence Africa have explored different programmes and economic packages with little or no impact. Interestingly, these development plans are often conceived, designed and implemented in the language of the country's colonial heritage, in total defiance of the indigenous languages of the people. Correspondingly, the question of how to develop these indigenous languages to be able to accommodate and adequately express the realities of the present world as regards technological and scientific innovations hardly ever arises. The consequence has been the gradual but steady death of the mother tongue and, with it, the indigenous knowledge and skills that reside in the individual groups. As Roy-Campbell (2006:2) rightly observes, "a wealth of indigenous knowledge is being locked away in these languages and is gradually being lost as the custodians of this knowledge pass on". In this study, we set out to make a case for the place of indigenous languages development in sustainable national development using two Nigerian languages – Igbo and Yoruba. Our argument is that language development is a necessary pre-requisite for sustainable development for it has the advantage of equipping the indigenous languages to address the technicalities of our development plans to a depth at which even citizens at the grassroots begin to understand them and take responsibility for them as stakeholders.

The Linguistic Situation in the Country Nigeria

The Nigerian nation has been described as a linguistically heterogeneous one. Although there is currently no generally-accepted figure on the number of indigenous languages in Nigeria, the figure has been placed at over 400 (Akindele & Adegbite, 1999) with some scholars recording a figure well above 500 (e.g. Blench, 2014). Interestingly, the country is not only multilingual but is also multicultural with about two hundred and fifty ethnic groups (Ogunwale, 2013). In the midst of all these languages, three, namely: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are recognized as the principal or national languages based mainly on the strength of their population, the political influence of the speakers, their level of development as written languages and their status in education. To a large extent, these three languages are identified with relatively standard orthography and a vast body of literature. This notwithstanding, superimposed over all these is the English language, a legacy of European colonialism which has come to dominate the indigenous languages in governance, education, commerce, media etc. Banjo (1985:97) however opines:

The case for English has always been overstated. It is true that English in Nigeria is a common language, but only for the educated elites; perhaps as many as 90 percent of our people in both the urban and rural areas are untouched by its communicative role.

Over three decades later, this assertion can hardly be said to be representative of the actual status of English in Nigeria. Over 60% of the Nigerian population today aspire to and actually speak some form of English. It today stands as the most viable means of inter-ethnic communication in both formal and informal settings.

The provisions made in the National Policy on Education (NPE) for the use of the indigenous languages or languages of the immediate environment as languages of instruction in early or basic education do not in any way affect the dominance of English over Nigerian languages. As Bamgbose (1991:6, 111) rightly observes, Language Policies in African countries are characterized by one or more of the following problems: avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation and declaration without implementation. This last feature can be illustrated with the condition attached to the policy mentioned above, viz, that the use of the indigenous languages is dependent on the availability of teachers. Thus, while it is taken for granted that instruction in English is guaranteed, same cannot be said of

the indigenous languages even in their immediate environments and no provision is made for training of teachers to guarantee implementation.

Phillipson (1996) describes the situation in African countries as diglossic but is quick to observe that this 'diglossia condemns dominant African languages to the private domain'. He observes that:

their exclusion from the official domain, and from education in particular, serves to deprive the population of access to the modern world, to democratization and development; instead of encouraging authentic national development it has led to the decline of national cultures and languages.

This remains the situation in Nigeria today and, by extension, many other African countries; the English language occupies a place of pride in the socio-economic and educational lives of the country. Thus, while Nigeria is unarguably multilingual, the fact that English is superimposed over the existing indigenous languages reduces the level of individual multilingualism mainly to the use of English and some other Nigerian language(s).

Sustainable Development and the Language Question

In the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, also known as The Brundtland Report (1987), the term 'Sustainable Development' was defined as a development which meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. As clear as this definition seems, it might also be necessary to look at the word 'development' and what it means. Coetzee (2001) defines development as:

a form of social change that will lead to progress, the process of enlarging people's choices, acquiring knowledge and having access to resources for a decent standard of living, and a condition of moving from worse to better (p.120)."

However, within the fields of governance and human resources management, development is synonymous with improving the well-being of the majority of the population, ensuring people's freedom and increasing their economic security. Thus, it is conceived of, in a rather narrow sense, focusing mainly only on GDP, GNP and other economic variables, such as income per capita (Okafor and Noah,

2014). It is on the basis of this that countries of the world are divided into developed, developing or under-developed countries. Bodomo (1996) in a study titled “On Language and Development in Africa” however suggests that once we liberate the notion of development from the narrow corridors of GDPs, GNPs and the like and reinterpret it in newer paradigms involving a comprehensive transformation of Africa's socio-cultural, economic and technological structures, we can begin to appreciate the importance of language in such a transformation. Limiting the meaning of development to economic, social or infrastructural advancement has never and will never be in the interest of any human community. Djite (2009) argues:

No matter how one defines development it cannot be achieved without reference to language as an important factor, and real development is not possible in Africa without the integration of all her human capital. The critical aspects of development are affected by language choice. Critical thinking ability is an important aspect of community-owned sustainable development since target populations need to be able to sort out the truly helpful development knowledge and programmes from those which neither meet felt needs nor are likely to benefit the community over the long run. For such critical thinking to take place, maximal comprehension of the issues is necessary and this has direct implications for language choice.

This error has thus been the undoing of Africans over the years as the basic phenomena without which there will be no communication and which constitute the people's identity are consistently relegated to the background. As observed by Prah (1993), “in their search for solutions to the development problems of Africa, students of African development have often ignored linguistic and other socio-cultural resources”. The sustainability of any developmental project usually lies in its ability to carry along the people in whose interest it has been devised. A number of scholars (Bangbose, 1991 and 2003; Chumbow, 1990 and 2005) have argued that the economic and social development of Africa depends crucially on the development and use of African languages in the enterprise of national development. Chumbow (2005:168), for instance, laments:

An evaluation of the efforts of African countries in the enterprise of national development shows that in

most cases, there has been what we may call growth without development because despite visible signs of economic progress (along with considerable population explosion), African countries are characterised by a massive presence of abject poverty in the rural communities (villages) and the outskirts of urban areas (where most city dwellers live) surrounding a few affluent villas capped by token sky-scrapers in the city centres.

Chumbow (2009) further clarifies this claim. According to him, The fact that the sum total of the knowledge, technology, skills and techniques relevant to and required for national development are confined to and transmitted in a foreign language used by a relatively small fraction of the population means that the majority (60 to 80 percent) who do not speak the official foreign language are literally marginalised and excluded from the development equation.

The subjugation of Nigerian indigenous languages can be inferred even from the conditions attached to their use in certain domains, as stipulated in the Constitution. Section 55 of the 1999 Constitution, for instance, states:

The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba **when adequate arrangements have been made thereof.** (6) [Emphasis mine].

The obvious implication of the above is that the 'straight for English' policy which was promoted by the newly independent Nigeria in the 60s in a bid to de-emphasize 'ethnicity' and build up a sense of nationhood has been counterproductive. It has resulted in the stigmatization of our indigenous languages, unconscious linguicism and/or linguistic imperialism. This linguicism lies in the uneven allocation of power and functions between English and the indigenous languages obviously in favour of the former. If the essence of sustainable development as defined above is really the establishment of a stable relationship between human activities and the natural world without diminishing the prospects of future generations also enjoying a quality life, then, it should also

enlarge rather than limit people's choices. Promoting English to the detriment of our indigenous languages in our quest for sustainable development is not, and will never be, in the interest of Nigerians both in the present and in future.

Exploring Sustainable Development via Indigenous Languages

There is no doubt that language can be used effectively to galvanize the populace into participating in national development through the adoption of a level of language intelligible to the majority of the people. In fact, language and community participation are crucial to socio-economic development. In the history of mankind, a number of countries have explored the development of their languages as a means of achieving internal sufficiency as well as making global impact and have achieved massive successes. The Asian tigers, prominent among who is China, readily come to mind. Till date, all documentation and training in China are done in Chinese. Ahamefula et al. (2013) note:

Most countries in Asia, especially China, encourage and make proper and adequate arrangements for the use of indigenous languages in their pedagogic and scientific/ industrial ventures. They have several cottages and home-based factories scattered all over their countries whose language of operation, training, distribution and marketing is the indigenous language.

The result is the continuous spread and boost in the global relevance of the language. Less than a decade ago, the teaching of Chinese was integrated into the curriculum of a department in the University of Lagos, expanding the scope of that department to include Asian Studies while still retaining the initial Linguistics and African Studies units. With time, students willingly began to opt for Chinese as a course of study while the indigenous languages arm remains stigmatized and derided, fit for mostly candidates who fail to make the cut-off mark for their preferred courses (many of whom abscond midway into the programme). It is high time we looked inward towards promoting Nigerian indigenous languages.

Ezikeojiaku (2007:114) insists that all technologically advanced countries develop their scientific impetuses and technologies in their respective languages. He further stresses that the efforts at the scientific process in Nigeria will work better by imparting of science literacy in the indigenous languages which are obviously understood by the majority of the masses. Chumbow (2009) adds:

...in nation building, the national development enterprise, to be effective, requires that the languages of the nation are developed, revitalised, revalorised and instrumentalized to assume development-related functions as language of education and language of communication in the economic sphere, etc.

He likens the languages of a nation to its natural resources on the same level as its cocoa, coffee, gold, diamond or petroleum. He stresses that, like all natural resources, they have to be exploited (planned, developed) and used for national development.

In a study on projects carried out in five communities from five Local Government Areas by the Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EBCSDA), Nigeria, Okafor and Noah (2014) investigated how the adoption of local languages can facilitate community participation in socio-economic development. They observed that the use of a language that was foreign to the development target groups, as well as the failure to involve the target population in development programmes, had remained an obstacle to sustainable socio-economic development in the state. However, the consistent 'low achievement of the objectives of the agencies, which in turn affected the development of the communities' led to their 'recourse to the use of the local languages of the target community'. They found that open and more accessible discussions in local languages create a collegial and congenial atmosphere for community participation, adding that there is little doubt that over-centralization is inconsistent with community participation as key decision-making is almost the exclusive preserve of bureaucracy.

The findings of their study are considered very relevant to our topic of discourse. Notable is the fact that the expected success in the developmental programme was achieved not just by adopting the language of the immediate environment but by narrowing it down to the local dialects of the people with the consequent inclusion of the target groups in the execution of community development projects. Thus, it is an experiment on the relationship between language and development, the implication of which needs to be extended to the national level. The study simply revealed that successful implementation of sustainable socio-economic development projects is better achieved through both the use of local languages and participation of the target population.

Linguistic Resources and the Development of Nigerian Languages

Natural languages are often identified with a number of resources which mark them out from other languages e.g. computer language. In ascending order, these resources include the phonological (sounds), the morphological (words), the syntactic (sentences) and the semantic (meaning). Elements of all these, in addition to the discursal, abound in virtually all the indigenous Nigerian languages with different levels of development. An additional resource, considered more advanced than all the others, is the orthographic (writing system) which can only be acquired as a sequel to at least one or a combination of two or more of the others.

At the level of phonological resources, every human language is primarily spoken. This simply means that a message is passed across from the speaker to the hearer through a combination of sounds transported via acoustic waves. Commenting on the nature of sounds (phonemes) used in languages, Crystal (2008, 361-362) states:

Each language can be shown to operate with a relatively small number of phonemes; some languages have as few as fifteen phonemes; others as many as eighty.... No two languages have the same phonemic system.

While phonemes constitute the segmental component of the phonological resources of a language, the second component, the supra-segmental, includes all other sound features of a language which extend over more than one sound segment in an utterance. These include pitch, stress, tone, intonation and rhythm. Every language selects from this pool what is relevant to it.

The morphological resources in a language are the most observable distinguishing elements. These are the words, the building blocks, of that language. Words are the units of meaning in a language which are combined to form sentences and other larger structures. The word is not a very easy concept to define as it may be viewed orthographically (as being bordered by spaces in writing), phonologically (as bearing one primary stress or identified with a pause or other juncture features), semantically (as expressing a unified concept) or grammatically (as belonging to a word class). This multi-dimensional approach notwithstanding, it can hardly be contested that *come*, *wa*, *zo* and *bia* are words in English, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo respectively used to express the same semantic concept. Just as there is an imbalance in the number of phonemes attested in each language, the words of different languages are more so with mutual borrowing between

languages being an age-long trend. Besides borrowing, languages also boost their word stock through processes like compounding, blending, clipping, affixation, conversion, back formation and coinage.

The syntactic resources in a language derive from a combination of the morphological resources to make meaning. These syntactic resources are the sentences of the language. Simply and traditionally speaking, a sentence is a unit of language which expresses a complete thought. Bloomfield (1933) however adds that a sentence as a structure is 'not included by virtue of any grammatical construction in any larger linguistic form'. Different languages communicate in sentences which may vary in terms of word order. However, Chomsky (1957) summarises sentence structure in the REWRITE RULE: $S \Rightarrow NP + VP$ (where S = sentence, NP = noun phrase and VP = verb phrase).

While the NP can be expanded to Determiner + Adjective + Noun in English, NP's in languages like Igbo and Yoruba have the structure: Noun + Adjective + Determiner e.g.

That (Det) + dark-skinned (Adj) + man (N)
nwoke (N) + ojii (Adj) + ahụ (Det)
ọkùnrin (N) + dúdú (Adj) + yẹn (Det)

All the earlier linguistic resources culminate in the semantic as in meaning lies the entire essence of language. The meaning-making resource in a language is the only reason individuals can communicate in that language, understand others and be understood by them. Semantic relations explored in languages include the paradigmatic relationships of synonymy, antonymy, etc., and the syntagmatic relationships of collocation. Every language prides itself in its meaning-making ability, hence, non-native speakers of a language can, by learning the language, integrate into that speech community without any hindrance.

The orthographic resource in a language is the only resource which is acquired through formal training. Noteworthy is the fact that while virtually all natural languages possess phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic distinguishing features, not all languages possess the orthographic. This is simply because the development of the orthographic or writing system of a language is a specialised field which can only be handled by language experts. As speakers seek to use their language in written materials, alphabet development is often needed. This involves identifying the sounds of the language that will need to be represented and using these to devise symbols for a writing system.

While all the resources highlighted above, with the exception of the last, are unconsciously acquired, conscious effort is often required to develop and describe them. Hence, language development is an essential factor in the sustenance of any language. In the fields of psychology and education, language development refers to the phenomenon of child language acquisition. In this paper, however, the term is used in a societal sense to refer to the series of planned actions that go into ensuring the effective use of a language in the social, cultural, political, economic, and spiritual lives of a language community. Ferguson (1968) defined language development as primarily dealing with three areas of concern:

- graphisation —the development of a system of writing,
- standardization —the development of a norm that overrides regional and social dialects, and
- modernization —the development of the ability to translate and carry on discourse about a broad range of topics including those that are new or foreign to the local community.

Graphisation

The development of the writing systems of Nigerian languages has been rather interesting. Tracing the Igbo orthography story, Igboanusi (2006) records the efforts made by the missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries and the consequent controversies which discouraged both writers and publishers from creating any serious work in Igbo. However, these were resolved in 1961 with the emergence of Onwu Orthography, instituted following the resolution of the committee headed by Dr. S. E. Onwu. This orthography, consisting of 36 letters remains till date the standard writing system for Igbo. Similarly, early efforts towards the development of Yoruba language orthography were initiated by English missionaries and priests. Although an earlier system using the Ajami script was developed by members of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS hereafter) for Yoruba, Bishop Samuel Crowther's publication of the first Yoruba grammar and his translation of the Bible to Yoruba in 1884 using a Latin alphabet set the pace for what exists today as Yoruba orthography. However, Modern Yoruba Orthography has its roots in a 1966 report of the Yoruba Orthography Committee, which worked to bring the spoken and written Yoruba languages more closely together. The Latin-based Yoruba alphabet recommended by the committee includes the use of diacritics placed with certain letters to produce distinct sounds found in the Yoruba language.

The 1966 orthography was subsequently revised and published as ‘Revised Official Orthography for the Yoruba Language’ in 1974, by the Federal Ministry of Education Joint Consultative Committee on Education. However, recently, in 2017, another version jointly created by Oladélé Awobuluyi and Olasope Oyelaran was published by Kwara State University Press as *Ìlẹ̀wó Ìkòwé Yorùbá Ode-Òní*.

Standardization

The development of a norm that overrides regional and social dialects has been a major issue and a source of controversy in the Igbo language in particular. Igbo is unarguably a language with multiple dialects, some of which are mutually unintelligible. As a consequence of the missionary efforts mentioned earlier, a different standard was promoted at each point. For instance, while J. F. Schön and Rev. J.C. Taylor (1840 – 1871) published in Isuama Igbo, CMS upheld and promoted the Union Igbo – an amalgam of features from various Igbo dialects including Onitsha, Bonny, Unwana, Arochukwu and Owerri (1905 – 1941) for religious publications and the Owerri dialect for school texts. Considering that the said Union Igbo was not spoken anywhere in Igboland, Ward (1941) introduced Central Igbo after a research conducted to:

...examine a number of Igbo dialects from the point of view of sound usage and constructions in order to find out if there is a dialect which would be used as a literary medium for African writers and for school publications, which would be acceptable over a considerable area of the Ibo country which might form the basis of a growing ‘standard Igbo’ (Ward 1944:7).

Amidst the controversy, the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) settled for the Onitsha dialect using it to produce both religious materials and school texts. However, with the revival and empowerment of the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC) in 1972 and the setting up of the Igbo Standardisation Committee in 1973, what exists today is a gradual evolution of a Standard Igbo (Igboanusi, 2006) which can hardly be traced to any particular dialect and this is the variety taught in schools, adopted by writers, radio and television broadcasters.

Dialects within the Yoruba language also vary by geographical location. In discussing the standardisation of Yoruba, the contributions of Samuel Crowther are still invaluable. Crowther's adoption and promotion of a particular Yoruba dialect provided a viable starting point for the development of the language. Contrary to the artificial standards explored in Igbo, the fact that the said dialect had a home base in Yorubaland must have led to its success. Fabunmi (2013: 1) notes that the Oyo dialect was the basis of Yoruba standardisation although, according to Adeniyi and Bamigbade (2017), the present-day Standard Yoruba (SY) has diverged so much from the Oyo dialect that it is now regarded as different. Today, this standard Yoruba is used in most Yoruba language literature, taught in schools and used by media outlets including Yoruba language newspapers, television broadcasters and radio stations.

Modernisation

This third area of concern is a major challenge to both languages. It is concerned with the development of the ability to translate and carry on discourse about a broad range of topics including those that are new or foreign to the local community. This area has witnessed some landmark developments from both government and the academia but is bedevilled by implementation. A major step was the creation of the National Language Centre in 1975. This Centre organised a Terminology Workshop in 1978 at the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) with the aim of compiling an official standardised glossary of technical and scientific terms. The workshop gave rise to the publication of *A Vocabulary of Primary Science and Mathematics* – a three volume publication which had, in each volume, over a thousand entries each from three languages. Nine Nigerian languages were involved: Edo, Efik, Fulfulde, Hausa, Igbo, Ijo, Kanuri, Yoruba and Tiv.

In line with the constitutional provision for the use of indigenous languages for legislative purposes, the National Assembly, in 1980, commissioned the National Language Centre to develop terms in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba to enhance the prospects of their use for legislative business. This resulted in the publication of the *Quadrilingual Glossary of Legislative Terms* (English, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) with 18,000 entries.

Another celebrated project is the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC)-supported Metalanguage project (1981) which gave rise to the publication of *Hausa Metalanguage*, *Igbo Metalanguage* and *Yoruba Metalanguage* in each of which were listed an average of two thousand terms. A

metalanguage is a higher-level language for describing language itself. It enables language users to teach their languages in their languages. The Igbo Metalanguage project, for instance, has produced two volumes of terms dealing with education, linguistics, language, literature, history and culture. These efforts have expanded the lexicon of the language by close to 25,000 words and phrases.

A more recent development is the Tertiary Education Trust Fund-sponsored project in which a team of language and medical experts from various Nigerian universities and specialist hospitals, led by Professor Herbert Igboanusi of the University of Ibadan, created new names for HIV and AIDS in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. This project, besides modernising the lexicon of these languages in line with current developments around the world in the management of the two health conditions, had as its aim the elimination of stigmatisation and discrimination of persons living with HIV and AIDS. The two-year research produced the publication *A Metalanguage for HIV, AIDS and Ebola Discourses* in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The researchers were spurred by the belief that 'behavioural change is only possible when the people are familiar with the appropriate terminology for HIV and AIDS in their own languages'. The project was therefore designed to facilitate communication behaviour which has hitherto undermined the management of the diseases.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The efforts reviewed above reveal that although a lot has been done in the area of developing our indigenous languages, a lot more still needs to be done in the area of implementation and translation of research outcomes into actual language use. That is the only way our languages can meet the requirements in terms of orthography development, standardisation and modernisation. The paradox of using the English language as a doorway to western culture, education, science and technology while at the same time also using it to shut the door of opportunities for millions of indigenous Nigerian people is long overdue for review. This can only be done if these local languages are developed to express notions from a variety of fields. This study aligns with Bodo (1996) who opines that concepts in mathematics and science presented in the mother-tongue would be more easily grasped than if they were taught in a foreign language. The six-year primary project carried out in 1970 at the Institute of Education (in the then University of Ife) also buttresses this point.

The positive effect of language development cannot be over-emphasized. Ezikeojiaku (2007:114) observes that people think more productively in their indigenous languages and posits that:

A scientific impetus or technology acquired in a learner's indigenous language becomes second nature to the person. Nigeria and indeed Africa can only achieve mass scientific literacy needed for her technological and scientific development through the medium of the indigenous language(s).

By implication, exploring the indigenous language as the language of instruction will be a major step towards developing it. By so doing, our graduates and researchers will first be able to tender the results of their academic inquiries (in the arts, science or technology) in their indigenous languages, accessible to their people before translating them to English, if need be. These are the future agents of technology transfer and of general development.

A few salient questions however arise from our discussion so far:

1. To what extent are the standard dialects of these languages accessible to native speakers as regards intelligibility and pragmatics?
2. To what extent are the outcomes of researches on the modernisation of these languages publicised and made accessible to the actual language users?
3. With particular reference to Igbo, given the state of its orthography, can the language really lay claim to standard orthography? These and many more questions call for urgent attention in our attempts towards language development.

There are three key players in the language development project. First, language users, in their day to day activities, consciously or unconsciously, add to the lexicon of their languages. Such innovations gradually penetrate the speech community and are eventually accepted. However, more effective is the effort of the second group, the media, particularly the broadcast media. Usages and terms heard repeatedly over the radio and television are over time accepted as the norm. The third and very important group is the academic/researcher who invests time, money and energy endlessly to scientifically modernise the language. Obviously, our researches, publications etc. are useless if they are confined to the pages of the books in which they are published. It then becomes pertinent that the language development project involves joint effort. This implies harmonising the efforts made by each group of players. A practical example is the case of AIDS which in

the Igbo Metalanguage for HIV, AIDS and Ebola discourses compiled by Prof. Igboanusi et al. is called *Mm̄inwu* (a condition that causes emaciation) but in the media -*Obirin'ajaocha* (a condition destined to lead one to the grave). Possibly, native speakers of the language also have a term for the ailment. Such a situation certainly does not augur well for the future and development of the language and can only lead to unnecessary multiplication of lexical items.

The above example underlies the need for a sustained campaign of educating or re-educating the national population about the inherent or potential practical utility of Nigerian languages. Nigeria is a peculiar setting and this peculiarity must be accommodated in designing its development plan. This includes even her multilingual structure. Suffice it to conclude by reiterating that viewing development as a simple replication of the western experience within the Nigerian context is tantamount to 'mission impossible'. Conscious effort should be made towards breaking the barriers to our accessing the development plans as represented by the foreign language which has so far enslaved us.

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