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Language and education in Nigeria

A review of policy and practice
Barbara Trudell

Abanyom
Abon
Abua
Abureni
Acipa, Eastern
Adara
Aduge
Afade
Agatu
Agoi
Agwagwune
Àhàn
Ahwai
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Alumu-Tesu
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Barikanchi
Basa
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Bassa-Kontagora
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Bauchi
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Bekwarra
Bena
Berom
Bete
Bete-Bendi
Bille
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Biseni
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Bo-Rukul
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Bu
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Bumaji
Bura-Pabir
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Cakfem-Mushere
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C'Lela
Como Karim
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Dza
Ebira
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Ekajuk
Eki
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Emai-Iuleha-Ora
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Esan
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Ivbie North-Okpela-Arhe
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Kir-Balar
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Kofa
Kofyar
Kohumono
Koma
Kono
Koro Wachi
Korop
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Kpasham
Kubi
Kuce
Kudu-Camo
Kugama
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Leyigha
Lidzonka
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Limbum
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Miship
Miya
Mom Jango
Montol
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Mumuye
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Nungu
Nupe-Nupe-Tako
Nya Huba
Nyam
Nyankpa
Nyong
Nzanyi
Obanliku
Obolo
Obulom
Odual
Odut
Ogbah
Ogbia
Ogbogolo
Ogbronuagum
Oko-Eni-Osayen
Okobo
Okodia
Okpamheri
Okpe
Okpe
Oloma
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Oruma
Ososo
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Pa'a
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Pe
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Pyapun
Rang
Reshe
Rigwe
Rogo
Ron
Ruma
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Sambe
Sanga
Sasaru
Saya
Sha
Shall-Zwall
Shama-Sambuga
Shamang
Shanga
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Foreword

The question of which language to best instruct children in during their formal education is a long-standing debate in Nigeria, and across Africa.

Research carried out in African and non-African contexts has clearly shown that children learn best in a language they understand and speak fluently. Learning in such a language environment carries significant cognitive, socio-emotional and cultural benefits. The alternative is often a learning environment of confusion and failure, which has been the unfortunate experience of millions of African children.

On the other hand, the social and political realities facing countries with multiple languages complicate this otherwise clear pedagogical solution. 'Local language' choice is an immensely complex task, particularly in a context of great language diversity, such as that of Nigeria. In addition, the infrastructural realities of education systems also make implementation of local language-medium instructional programming a challenge.

In such a challenging environment, what is the best language policy for supporting and enhancing student learning? What are the language solutions that will provide real quality education to Nigerian children, giving them the knowledge and skills they need for economic well-being and lifelong learning?

In order to answer some of these questions, the British Council, in partnership with UNICEF, is conducting research into the impact of language of instruction policy and practice on student learning outcomes in Nigeria. The first part of the research is a literature review of the current situation, drawing on the experience of academics, policymakers and programme implementers across the country.

This research builds on the British Council's Language Policy Dialogues, which started in 2016 in Nigeria and brings together experts in the field of language use in the classroom. Working with other international development partners, the Language Policy Dialogues have provided a regular forum for a community of practice to debate the latest evidence from programme implementation, strategies that can develop best practice, and how to best work with government at all levels to scale these up.

Our ambition is that this literature review and the research project will contribute significantly to addressing the question of how best to utilise Nigeria's language diversity as a tool to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for all students.

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Glossary

Code-switching, code-mixing: the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation. Some scholars use the terms 'code-mixing' and 'code-switching' interchangeably; others distinguish the two practices in various ways.

EGRA: Early-grade reading assessment, a classroom-based assessment of specific reading skills.

ELL: English language learning.

Junior Secondary School/Junior Secondary Education (JSS): The last three years of Basic Education in the Nigerian NPE, succeeding one year of pre-primary and six years of primary education.

L1: An individual's first language, usually in terms of fluency or being the first language learned by the individual.

L2: An individual's second language, usually in terms of fluency or order of learning.

Language as subject: A specific language being taught as a subject in the curriculum.

Language of instruction (LoI): The language medium used in teaching curriculum content.

Language of the immediate community (LIC): A language that is recognised and spoken by a community, even if it is not their first language.

Language of the immediate environment (LIE): Synonymous with 'language of the immediate community'.

Language-in-education policy: Policy that addresses choices of language medium and language as subject in a formal education system.

MoI: Medium of instruction.

Mother tongue: An individual's first language, originally defined as the language taught to an individual by their parents. It is a contested term in more multilingual environments, however. In Nigeria the term is used regularly to refer to Nigerian languages spoken in the home.

National Policy on Education (NPE): Nigeria's education policy, currently in its fifth version (2013).

National language policy: An official statement by national authorities regarding language choices for education, governance and public life.

Nigerian Pidgin English: an English-based pidgin and creole language, spoken as a lingua franca across Nigeria.

Primary 1–Primary 6 (P1, P2, etc.): The six years of primary education in Nigeria.

Senior Secondary School/Senior Secondary Education (SSS): Three years of post-Basic Education.

Standard Nigerian English: the variety of standard English spoken by Nigeria's anglophone elites (as opposed to Nigerian Pidgin English). Also called *Nigerian Standard English and Nigerian English*.

Translanguaging: an interpretation of the way multilingual speakers use their entire language inventory, treating language choice as an integrated communication system rather than as the use of two distinct languages.

Preface

The British Council, in partnership with UNICEF, is undertaking a research project into the impact of language of instruction policy and practice on student learning outcomes in Nigeria. The idea of collaborating on this research project emanated from the Abuja Language Policy Dialogues, a series of discussions and debates initiated by the British Council, which brings together key stakeholders interested in language policy in Nigeria.

The first part of the research project comprises a literature review of the current situation. The findings from the literature review will inform the research focus for the second part. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the complex issues involved, focus group discussions were convened with key Nigerian academics, policymakers and practitioners.

The question of language of instruction in the formal education system is a long-standing debate in Nigeria as well as across Africa generally. Research carried out in African and non-African contexts has clearly shown that children learn best in a language they understand and speak fluently. Learning in such a language environment carries significant cognitive, socio-emotional and cultural benefits; the alternative is a learning environment of confusion and failure, which has been the unfortunate experience of millions of African children.

On the other hand, the social and political realities of multilingual nations complicate this otherwise clear pedagogical solution. 'Local language' choice is an immensely complex task, particularly in a context of language diversity such as that of Nigeria, a country that has more than 500 languages. Not only so, but the infrastructural realities of education systems also work against easy implementation of local language-medium instructional programming.

In this challenging environment, what is the best language policy environment for supporting and enhancing student learning? What are the language solutions that will provide real quality education to Nigerian children, giving them the knowledge and skills they need for economic well-being and lifelong learning? This research project therefore aims to shed light on the complex topic of the impact of language of instruction on learning outcomes in Nigeria, and by so doing it will attempt to answer these questions.

1.

Introduction

In many African contexts, the choice of language medium for formal education is a challenging issue. The language medium of any learning event plays a central role in the extent of information uptake, depending on how well the learner understands the information being conveyed. However, in the formal education context, where political, sociocultural and historical factors dominate the choices made, the cognitive aspect of language choice for the delivery of curricular content tends to be relegated to a minor role. Nevertheless, medium of instruction choices play a significant part in the learning, or lack of learning, that takes place in Africa's classrooms.

Nowhere in Africa is this more evident than in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The effects of colonial-era governance and education choices can still be seen in the language attitudes and education choices being made by Nigerian citizens and government today. To a certain extent, Nigeria's current national language policy statements support the value of Nigerian languages for learning; however, this support is not generally being confirmed in the language choices made in classroom practice. Instead, local appropriation of policy (the local beliefs that guide the actions of parents, teachers and local education authorities; see Trudell and Piper, 2014; and Johnson and Freeman, 2010) is considerably strengthening the role of English-medium teaching.

The goal of this review is to explore the links between the current Nigerian language policy context and student learning outcomes. The review, carried out between July and November 2018, is based on the following research activities (see Appendix 1 for more detail):

• An extensive literature review on the subject of language and learning in Nigeria, totalling more than 100 published works, in both print and online forms. (see References and bibliography section for a complete listing.)

• Additional grey literature on the subject, useful for its currency and informational content that cannot be found in formally published sources.

• Input and perspective gathered from a total of approximately 12 hours of group interview with 40 experts and practitioners in the field of language and education in Nigeria: linguists, policymakers, educationists and implementers of internationally funded education programme interventions in Nigeria. The most salient issues arising in each of these discussions can be found in Appendix 4; the names of the experts and practitioners interviewed are listed in Appendix 5.

• Processing and analysis discussions with British Council and UNICEF colleagues in Nigeria were extremely valuable in assessing the issues arising. Clarification was also gained through email correspondence with a handful of professional colleagues in the field, on issues related to language and education programmes in Nigeria and the more general language development situation in Nigeria.

The review consists of the following sections:

• Section 2 examines the current language policy environment in the country

• Section 3 reviews a range of research studies, other scholarly work and pilot programmes on Nigerian language-medium learning

• Section 4 presents and assesses the perspectives of four discussion groups of experts and practitioners

• Section 5 contains observations and analysis on the data and issues arising in the review

• Section 6 presents some conclusions

• Section 7 gives recommendations.

2.

The wider context

2.1 Multilingualism in communities and the nation

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation. The World Bank estimates its 2017 population to be 191 million people, with one of the largest youth populations in the world.[1] The country is also home to more languages than any other African nation. *Ethnologue*[2] lists 526 languages in Nigeria; other estimates place the number between 500 and 600, though the lack of current census data on the nation's languages hinders a more accurate count. The three major language families found in Africa (Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Niger-Congo) are all represented among Nigerian languages. Language community sizes range from a few thousand speakers to more than 48 million speakers.

As the most linguistically rich nation in Africa, Nigeria is also a highly multilingual society. The degree of multilingualism is highest in urban areas and the linguistically very diverse southern states, as well as in the states of the North Central zone. However, even in the North East and North West zones where Hausa is seen to be the dominant language, Kaduna, Bauchi, Gombe and Borno and Adamawa states are home to dozens of smaller languages.[3] Nigerians rightly see themselves as a multilingual people, and their attachment to their ethnic languages can be very strong.

Multilingualism with English, on the other hand, is less common. While the country's elites are both highly fluent in, and strongly supportive of, the English language (Adegbite, 2003), English fluency is much less strong among other sectors of the Nigerian population. Certainly, fluency in Standard Nigerian English,[4] used in Nigeria's government and education system, is uncommon among rural and less affluent families and classrooms (Dikwa and Dikwa, 2016; Anota and Onyeke, 2016).

Nevertheless, the desire for English remains strong across the nation. In a study of language use in education in Cross Rivers State, Ndimele (2012) describes the social pressure to learn English language and culture at the expense of the indigenous languages of the area. As a result, Ndimele argues, many language communities in the state are attempting to move away from their own language and towards English as medium of instruction.[5]

1. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=NG
2. https://www.ethnologue.com/country/NG
3. Ethnologue (2017) https://www.ethnologue.com/country/NG/maps
4. Standard Nigerian English, Nigerian English and Nigerian Standard English are all terms referring to the variety of English spoken by Nigeria's anglophone elites. The language is also called 'West African English' (McArthur et al., 2018).
5. Given the language ecology of the region, the English being used orally is actually not Standard Nigerian English but Nigerian Pidgin English, which offers significant opportunities for trade and business.

2.2 The current language policy environment

Despite Nigeria's status as the most language-rich country in Africa, there is no single document that specifically describes a national language policy for education, governance and public life (Adegbija, 2004: 210). This approach to language policy is not uncommon; Spolsky (2004: 8) observes that many countries and institutions lack formally written language policies, so that their de facto policy must be derived from a study of their language practices and language beliefs. Spolsky further notes that 'the most difficult to locate, describe and understand are countries where there is no single explicit document' (page 13). In such cases, periodic initiatives may be taken by institutions such as ministries of education to specify expected language practices in given environments.

Spolsky's description captures the policy situation in Nigeria. Formalised national language policy has been limited to a series of language provisions, found in the Nigerian Constitution and the National Policy on Education (NPE). The brevity of the language provisions in the Constitution, and the lack of national-level statements on language use outside the realm of education, have resulted in a vague national policy environment on the use of language in critical areas such as governance, health and legal institutions, the military, the workplace and public spaces (Spolsky, 2009). This is not to say that language policy choices are altogether absent from the public sphere: for example, a Language Policy Bill was passed by the Lagos House of Assembly in October 2017,[6] with the intention of strengthening the status of Yoruba language and culture in the highly multilingual, multicultural state.

Nigerian scholars and education practitioners also argue that the NPE does not provide a clear, coherent, feasible language-in-education policy. The language provisions suffer from a lack of internal consistency within the NPE, making them difficult to implement with fidelity (for example, comparing sections 1.8 and 2.2 in the 2013 NPE; see Table 1). Changes in the language provisions from one version of the NPE to the next have not been accompanied by clear rationales, nor by guidelines for implementation of the new policy. Mbah (2012: 53) notes that this situation results in a de facto language policy environment rather than a de jure one.

Adegbija (2004: 181) discusses this language policy paradox in Nigeria:

Language policy and planning in the country are of prime importance, first because of loyalties to different languages, and second, because of the implications for other multilingual contexts all over the world. Policy is needed, as is the case for many other multilingual contexts, for official, national, educational, inter-ethnic, and international functions... [However] Because language issues in Nigeria are often quite explosive and conflict ridden, censuses never have items or questions on languages. Thus, reliable statistics relating to issues like number of languages, their spread, the number of speakers of each, or what percentage of the population they constitute are rarely available.

2.2.1 The 1999 Constitution

Two language provisions are found in the 1999 Constitution; these provisions first appeared in the 1979 Constitution (Elugbe, 1994: 65), and have remained through two revisions of the Constitution since that date. In the 1999 Constitution, they are expressed as follows:

Section 55: *The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made.*

Section 97: *The business of a House of Assembly[7] shall be conducted in English, but the House may in addition to English conduct the business of the House in one or more other languages spoken in the state as the House may by resolution approve.*

Section 55 establishes a special status for Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba among Nigerian languages in national governance; Section 97 establishes the possibility that languages other than English may be used in a House of Assembly at the state level.

2.2.2 The 2013 National Policy on Education (NPE)

Nigeria's NPE was first adopted in 1977. Revised versions of the policy appeared in 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2007; the most recent version of the NPE was published in 2013.[8] The language provisions of the NPE are threaded throughout the entirety of the document, rather than being addressed specifically in one section. Appendix 2 of this review contains excerpts of the 2013 NPE, with all the statements in that policy that are related to language and learning.

Several statements about language use in educational contexts mark a change from the 2004 version of the NPE to the 2013 version. Three particular changes are notable:

• the deletion of Section 1.10, entitled 'The Importance of Language', from Section 1, *Philosophy and Goals of Education in Nigeria*

• the deletion of specific requirements for learning Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba

• the limiting of instruction in the language of the immediate environment (LIE) to monolingual communities.

It is difficult to know the actual intent of these particular changes; the first and third listed here could be the result of content editing decisions in the new document, and not necessarily reflective of policy direction. Lacking a rationale clarifying the authors' intentions in each case, it is difficult to be sure. However, all are potentially very significant indicators of government intention where language of instruction is concerned.

Table 1 compares the language provisions in the two documents.

Table 1: Comparison of language provisions in 2004 NPE and 2013 NPE

2004 NPE	2013 NPE
Section 1.10: Every child is required to learn 'one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba'	Section 1.10 does not appear
Section 5.24 and 5.25: 'One major Nigerian language' listed as a core subject for junior and senior secondary school	No reference in the document to Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba or 'major Nigerian languages' Junior and secondary school subject lists include 'one Nigerian language'
Section 1.10: 'every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment'	Section 1.8: 'Every child shall be taught in the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community for the first four years of basic education' [including pre-primary and P1–P3]
Section 2.14: Pre-primary education is to be carried out in the mother tongue or 'the language of the immediate community'	Section 2.16: For early childhood care development and education, 'Government will ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community'
Section 4.19: 'The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject' From P4 to P6, 'language of the immediate environment' is a subject (as is French), with English as medium of instruction	Section 2.20: 'The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years *in monolingual communities* [author's emphasis]. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject' Arabic added to subject languages in P4–P6
Section 5.24: As a core subject in JSS, 'the language of environment shall be taught as L1 where it has orthography and literature. Where it does not have, it shall be taught with emphasis on oralcy as L2'. French is also a core subject; Arabic is an elective	Section 2.23: Junior secondary education curriculum subject list includes 'one Nigerian language'. French and Arabic ('optional') also included
Section 5.25: Senior secondary school non-vocational elective includes 'any Nigerian Language that has orthography and literature, etc.' French and Arabic are also elective courses	Section 3.38: Senior secondary education curriculum includes an optional subject of 'any Nigerian language that has curriculum'. French and Arabic are also elective courses

6. http://dailypost.ng/2017/10/20/lagos-house-assembly-passes-yoruba-language-bill-law/
7. The state-level legislative body.
8. See https://educatetolead.wordpress.com/2016/02/22/national-policy-on-education-6th-edition-2013/

2.2.3 Institutions engaged in policy dialogue

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC),[9] and its Language Development Centre in particular, is the primary government body engaged in language policy and implementation issues. The NERDC is responsible for educational strategic planning and development, quality assurance, and policy formulation and implementation.

The NERDC assists and approves language development efforts among Nigeria's language communities, including orthography and curriculum development in Nigerian languages. Working alongside the communities of speakers, the NERDC has approved orthographies for up to 52 Nigerian languages. In addition, the NERDC is working with the National Assembly to translate legislative terminology from English into Nigerian languages.

Several other Nigerian institutions are actively involved in discussions of Nigerian language policy and learning. These include:

• the National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba (NINLAN), a university-level institute

• the Linguistic Association of Nigeria (LAN)

• the Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN)

• the English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria (ELTAN)

• the English Studies Association of Nigeria (ESAN).

A *Technical Committee on the Nigerian Language Policy*, with representation of most of the institutions listed above, was launched by the Minister of Education on International Mother Language Day 2018. This launch was actually a reinvigoration of the committee, which was first constituted by the NERDC in 2010, but had lost momentum through various changes in government since that time. The 2018 committee has been given a mandate to investigate, evaluate and make recommendations on the various language provisions in the NPE and the Constitution, including their applications to education, government and public life.

9.   http://nerdc.org.ng/eCurriculum/AboutNERDC.aspx

3.

Research, scholarly study and pilot programmes on Nigerian-language medium learning

A great deal of scholarly activity has been published on the use of Nigerian languages and English in the formal education system. Numerous field programmes centred on the use of these languages in Nigerian classrooms have also been carried out since the 1970s; those that took place between 1970 and 2000, and those taking place after 2000, are distinct in many ways. The range of this published work is discussed in this section.

3.1   Research studies

A number of research studies related to language of instruction in Nigeria can be found in the literature. The great majority of these studies examine issues of language attitudes and practices among education stakeholders, rather than student learning outcomes as such. The geographical areas of these studies range across the country. A synopsis of 18 recent studies can be found in Appendix 3.

These studies highlight linguistic issues, stakeholder perceptions and implementation challenges of the NPE. Some studies report findings that indicate positive contexts for the use of Nigerian languages in the classroom, while others report the opposite findings. Taken together, these studies point to the complexity of citizens' opinions regarding the use of Nigerian languages in the formal education context, as well as the inconsistency of implementation of the NPE's language provisions in Nigerian classrooms.

Studies that focus specifically on the impact of the language policy environment on student learning are much less common. The following recent studies are among them:

• Ogunsola's (2016) study of the impact on language of testing on reading fluency and comprehension among dyslexic students in Ibadan

• Anyadiegwu's (2016b) study of the impact of activating learners' background knowledge on reading comprehension in Anambra State

• Adebayo's (2016) study of the impact of code-mixing and switching strategies on the P1 pupils' numeracy learning in Kwara State.

Early-grade reading assessments (EGRA) have been carried out several times in English and Hausa, as part of international development initiatives being implemented across the country. Results of these reading assessments are used in planning and reporting of the projects of which they are a part. Specific links between language use and EGRA outcomes have not been elucidated, however (see Table 2).

Table 2: EGRA assessments carried out in Nigeria[10]

Language	Assessor	Date
English	DFID/ESSPIN	June 2010
English	RTI/NEI	June 2010
Hausa	RTI/NEI	March 2011
Hausa, English	RTI/NEI	May 2013
Hausa	RTI/RARA	Nov 2014
Hausa	RTI/RARA	June 2015
English	University of Calabar/Jolly Phonics	2011–15
English, Hausa	Creative Associates, EDC/Baseline for NEI Plus	May 2016
Hausa	DFID/UNICEF/RANA	2016, 2017, 2018

3.2   Other scholarly activity

In addition to the studies listed above, themes related to language and education have generated a great deal of scholarly writing in Nigeria. This dynamic academic space is partly to do with ongoing concern with the lack of an explicit, overall national language policy that extends to public life as well as the education system. Dissatisfaction with national-level academic performance is also a strong motive for engagement in the language debate by members of both academia and civil society. The linguistics departments of universities such as Ibadan, Lagos, Abuja, Uyo, Obafemi Awolowo and others have generated significant study and publication on this topic over the past nearly 50 years.

The major themes of the publications gathered in this extensive but not exhaustive bibliography include:

- accounts and analyses of the three major pilot programmes described in sections 3.3.1 to 3.3.3

- analyses of the poorly defined language policy situation in Nigeria, with significant dissatisfaction being expressed

- observations of the interplay between language and learning at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the education system

- descriptions of specific language competencies and behaviours of teachers and students, including significant attention to code-switching

- a variety of arguments for the prioritisation of one or another language of instruction at every level of the education system, whether Standard Nigerian English, specific Nigerian languages, Arabic or Nigerian Pidgin English.

A handful of overviews of the language and education system in Nigeria stand out for the quality and breadth of their analysis. These include several relatively early works: Adegbija (2004); Akinnaso (1991b and 1993); Bamgbose (1991 and 2000); and Elugbe (1994). In addition, three important edited volumes on the topic were (coincidentally) all published in 2016: Ozo-Mekuri Ndimele's *Language Policy, Planning and Management in Nigeria: A Festschrift for Ben O. Elugbe;* the British Council's *Abuja Regional Hornby School: Language Lessons from Africa*; and volume 3/1 of *NILAS – A Journal of the National Institute for Nigerian Languages.*

3.3   Pilot programmes between 1970 and 2000

Four relatively large Nigerian language development and education programmes were carried out in the 1970s: the *Primary Education Improvement Project*, the *Six-Year Primary Project*, the *Rivers Readers Project* and the *Bendel State Project*. In addition, a smaller, single-language pilot bilingual education programme was begun among the Obolo community of Akwa Ibom during this time; it is included here because it is a follow-on of the Rivers Readers Project, and because it demonstrates the possibilities for locally managed development and use of local languages. These five programmes were all initiated and carried out under Nigerian leadership; limited levels of international funding were involved in most cases.

3.3.1   Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP)

This programme was carried out in the 1970s in primary schools of what were then Nigeria's six northern states (Adegbija, 2004: 217), with funding assistance from UNICEF and technical support from UNESCO.[11] The programme aimed at:

the production of new instructional materials, the revision, updating and standardising of existing ones, and an effective use of materials, which carried with it the responsibility of training teachers. (Bamgbose, 2000: 51.)

Bamgbose further notes:

The ultimate goal was to improve the low educational attainment standards that had been caused by poor teaching, inadequate materials, lack of professional supervision and guidance of classroom teachers, ineffective use of languages used as media of instruction in the educational process, and the limited nature of the contents of the primary school curriculum. (*Ibid.*)

Bamgbose describes this programme as not being intentionally about language development, but 'its implementation resulted in considerable language development effort' (*Ibid.*). In Kano, Sokoto, Katsina and Bauchi, the programme consisted of Hausa-medium instruction and English language subject instruction for the first three years of primary school, followed by English-medium teaching and Hausa subject instruction for the next three years. (In Kwara, Benue and Plateau, English-medium curriculum throughout was chosen.) The focus on Hausa-medium instruction resulted in the development of pedagogical materials in Hausa, a task that was new to the curriculum developers at the time. Omojuwa (1978) notes the difficulty of getting Hausa specialists to produce instructional materials in Hausa, which they were not accustomed to doing. Omolewa observes:

There was hardly any IM [instructional material] to be used with Hausa as a language of instruction. We had to start from scratch to write materials in all the subjects introduced into the primary curriculum in both English and Hausa. (Page 367.)

Arabic was also offered as an optional subject, through all six years.

By 1974, the programme was rolled out in 500 schools of the six states. By 1976, the number had expanded to 800 schools.

Omolewa notes that the unique feature of this programme was that it succeeded in strengthening the primary school curriculum and enhancing its relevance to the Nigerian context. The language component of this curriculum was significant as well: 'language planning, which affects all aspects of a school curriculum, turned out to be a major component of this apparent innovation, and herein lies its chief strength' (page 368).

3.3.2   Six-Year Primary Project (SYPP)

The SYPP also began in 1970, at the former University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Also called the *Ife Primary Education Research Project* (Fafunwa et al., 1989), the project was formally started in 1970 and continued for six years – the time needed to complete the primary education cycle. It continued afterwards with more classes and follow-up research (Aaron, 1998: 3).

The project, funded by the Ford Foundation, was developed to address the fact that 'primary education in English all over Nigeria left pupils, after six years, virtually ignorant and functionally illiterate' (Adegbija, 2004: 220). Yoruba-medium instruction in all subjects, through all six years of primary education, was at the heart of the project:

The SYPP aimed at developing a better curriculum, better materials and appropriate methodology; to teach English effectively as L2 through specialist teachers, and, most importantly, to use the Yoruba language as the medium of instruction in all subjects, except English, throughout the six-year duration of primary education. (*Ibid.*)

English teaching was handled through specialist teaching as a second language (Adeniran, 2016: 21).

The project began in St Stephen's 'A' Primary School in Modakeke, Ile-Ife in 1970, with two experimental groups totalling 80 children, and a control group of 40 children. In 1973, the positive results led the project to expand to ten 'proliferation schools' in the region, three of which were control schools and seven experimental schools. In this way, a total of 700 new pupils were admitted to the programme that year (Fafunwa et al., 1989).

10.   From https://globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata/egra-tracker. Also UNICEF Nigeria.

11.   (No author) (1977) *Primary Education Programme – Northern Nigeria.* Unpublished document. 23 pages.

Importantly, and uniquely for the time, the SYPP was subject to rigorous testing throughout. Bamgbose (2000: 51) notes that:

> regular and very elaborate evaluations of the project were undertaken. The results, overall, indicated that the experimental groups did significantly better than the control groups, even when given the same treatment, except for the language variable.

SYPP findings influenced the formulation of the NPE, and Osun and Oyo states both used the results to support mother tongue-medium learning in their primary schools.

3.3.3 Rivers Readers Project (RRP)

This project also had its genesis in 1970. The area of the then-Rivers State [12] was home to approximately 30 relatively small language communities (Adegbija, 2004). The RRP aimed to provide linguistic support for 'introducing initial literacy in all of the small languages in the state, which ranged in size from 42,800 pupils for the Ikwere language to 1,200 pupils for Degema' (Adegbija, 2004: 221). The project goal was to develop orthographies and materials for P1–3, which would resource an early-exit transitional bilingual education programme in these languages (Aaron, 2018: 157).

The project was initially hosted by the University of Ibadan, and later moved to the University of Port Harcourt (Elugbe, 1994: 68). The linguistic work was led by Professor Kay Williamson, with the assistance of graduate students from the area and elsewhere. Aaron notes:

> Linguistics students as well as visiting researchers were co-opted to describe the phonology of the languages and to draw up tentative orthographies for them. Many of these students worked on their own native languages (Aaron, 2018: 157).

The project published orthography manuals, reading instructional materials, teachers' guides and dictionaries; a total of 62 publications were eventually produced in 21 languages as a result of the project (Adegbija, 2004: 222). Small grants from UNESCO and the Ford Foundation provided the financial resourcing (Elugbe 1994: 67).

However, though the Rivers State Ministry of Education sponsored the project, it actually had little to do with the project (*Ibid.*). In addition, the reading pedagogy was not consistent across the materials, and no other written materials existed in these languages for further use. As a result of these inadequacies in materials and methodology, as well as a lack of financial support for the project, teacher motivation to continue it was meagre (Aaron, 2018: 159).

In the late 1980s, the project was discontinued, largely for lack of human and financial resources. In the early 2000s, the Association of Rivers State Languages was formed and a bill was signed into law to enforce the teaching of local languages in Rivers State schools. The newly named Rivers State Readers Project came to the fore at this time; Aaron notes that:

> building on the work of the former RRP, accounts of the orthographies of 14 Rivers State languages were submitted to NERDC and were then officially approved by them (2018: 159).

The Rivers State Readers Project has since been discontinued. Nevertheless, the project was an important landmark; it demonstrated that 'where there is the will to do it and determined leadership, the [mother tongue-medium] policy is possible, even for the so-called smaller languages' (Bamgbose, 1977: 23, quoted in Adegbija, 2004: 222). Indeed, the Obolo Bilingual Education Project, described in Section 3.3.5, represents one offshoot of the RRP.

3.3.4 Bendel State Project

Elugbe records that, as the RRP was gaining momentum, a similar initiative was begun in the highly multilingual Bendel State (now Delta and Edo states). Responding to Edo-language orthography discussions, the state government 'set up a language committee to propose an acceptable writing system for Edo and… to determine the dominant languages of the State and propose alphabets for them' (Elugbe, 1994: 69). The committee proposed an orthography for Edo, and for 14 of the more dominant languages of the state as well. Further, the committee recommended that these languages be used as medium of instruction in early primary grades.

This initiative was short-lived, however, since the language committee dissolved once it had fulfilled its mandate and its recommendations were not taken up for implementation.

3.3.5 Obolo Bilingual Education Project

The Obolo language community numbers about 250,000 speakers, located in Akwa Ibom State. The Obolo Bilingual Education Project grew out of requests from the Obolo language committee for primary education in the language of the community (Aaron, 1998: 21). These requests were inspired by work being done in the RRP at the time. A pilot Obolo-language reading programme was carried out in three schools from 1985 to 1991 (Aaron, 2018: 161); evaluation of the programme indicated that children were learning to read in Obolo as early as P1, and that parents, teachers and local leaders were pleased with the programme outcomes.

Despite this evident success, the programme lapsed in the 1990s due to funding challenges and inadequate support from local education authorities. From 2007 to 2014, an effort was made by the Obolo language committee to re-institute the teaching of Obolo in the schools, with teacher training and promotion of the programme (Aaron, 2018: 162). In 2014, a privately run Obolo bilingual education centre was established to continue Obolo-language literacy among the community's children. At the 2016 UNESCO International Mother Language Day celebration held in Rivers State, the Obolo language was recognised for its level of language development and use in literacy learning (Aaron, 2018: 178).

3.4 Language/education initiatives since 2000

Several large education initiatives have been implemented in the last two decades, led by international development agencies in collaboration with the Nigerian government, and with funding from international donors. Eight of these initiatives have language and reading components, and are described below.

3.4.1 Northern Education Initiative (NEI), 2010–14

Location: Bauchi and Sokoto states
International implementer: Creative Associates
Funder: USAID
Languages: Hausa, English

NEI worked with the government to adapt policies, enhance systems and develop tools and procedures to address five key elements common to effective schools: learning, teaching, school management, parental participation and responsiveness to children's needs.

Basic education programmes were offered at integrated Koranic centres in Bauchi and Sokoto states. They provided nine months of accelerated teaching of basic literacy and numeracy; this was the equivalent of the literacy and numeracy content covered in P1–P3. Hausa, as the LIE, was used as the medium of instruction. NEI also provided an additional two years of accelerated teaching of literacy and mathematics, equivalent to that taught in P4–P6. The medium of instruction in these two years was English.

NEI also established 'Community Coalitions' to support orphans and vulnerable children. The project built teachers' professional skills through school-based training and activity-based manuals. It also provided support and training to Koranic schools, encouraging them to enrich their curricula with core basic education subjects like literacy and numeracy, and to periodically examine their pupils and graduate them into formal schools.

The project saw a 33 per cent boost in student enrolment in the project schools. More than 3,500 classroom teachers and facilitators were trained, in four thematic areas: literacy, mathematics, life skills and psychosocial counselling. Activity-based training manuals were developed in core subjects including literacy, and 3,568 teachers were trained on how best to teach these subjects.

For more information on this project, see https://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/past-projects/nigeria-northern-education-initiative/

3.4.2 Education Crisis Response (ECR) project, 2014–17

Location: Adamawa, Bauchi and Gombe states; later, also Yobe and Borno states
International implementers: Creative Associates, International Rescue Committee, Florida State University
Funder: USAID
Languages: Hausa, English

To address the primary education needs of internally displaced children living in communities affected by the crisis in North East Nigeria, the ECR project implemented an accelerated nine-month basic education programme (equivalent to the first three years of primary education) using a non-formal/alternative education approach, delivered in Hausa. This education component was in addition to a range of other support activities that the ECR project provided to the crisis-affected populations.

International experts designed an early-grade literacy scope and sequence for Hausa, and then a set of scripted, early-grade literacy lessons to guide facilitators in the non-formal learning centres. The lessons were designed to align with the non-formal curriculum used by Nigeria's State Agencies for Mass Education.

In the first year, 296 learning centres were set up and reached over 14,000 learners. In the second year, 408 learning centres reached over 25,000 children, and in the last year, 746 learning centres were reaching more than 49,000 children. Reading gains of 49 per cent were reported on the year three endline assessment, as well as numeracy gains of 39 per cent.

For more information on this project, see https://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/past-projects/nigeria-education-crisis-response-program/ and https://lsi.fsu.edu/2017/08/07/fsus-learning-systems-institute-aids-education-crisis-response-project-in-northern-nigeria/

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12.   The Rivers State at the time has since been split into Bayelsa State and the present Rivers State (Aaron, 2018: 157).

3.4.3 Reading and Access Research Activity (RARA), 2014–15

Location: Bauchi, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto states
International implementer: RTI
Funder: USAID
Language: Hausa

RARA's research activities were designed to provide stakeholders with a better understanding of effective instructional approaches in the Hausa-language context of northern Nigeria. To do this, RARA conducted a randomised controlled trial of 120 P2 classrooms in Bauchi and Sokoto states. RARA collected data using an early-grade reading assessment and pupil questionnaire, a lesson observation form, a classroom and school inventory, and a questionnaire for head teachers, teachers and school support officers.

The intervention included the following components:

- developing and providing teachers and pupils with materials for teaching and learning Hausa in the early grades
- training teachers and head teachers on effective strategies for teaching reading in Hausa, and providing them ongoing, school-based support
- training and supporting school supervisors to serve as reading 'coaches', to provide in-class pedagogical support to P2 Hausa teachers
- informing parents and school-based management committees of the importance of early-grade reading.

A randomised control trial was carried out in schools of Bauchi and Sokoto states, to determine the following:

- Does the RARA-developed approach to Hausa reading instruction lead to changes in teachers' instructional practice?
- Does the RARA-developed approach to Hausa reading instruction lead to improvements in foundational reading skills for P2 pupils in public primary schools?
- Does the RARA-developed approach to instructional leadership lead to more effective coaching and support by supervisors and head teachers?

The findings indicated that teachers implementing the RARA approach devoted approximately 30 minutes to literacy instruction, compared to 12 minutes for control school teachers. Treatment classrooms were also observed to be significantly more print-rich than were control classrooms. A positive shift in the distribution of EGRA reading scores was seen, though the increase in mean scores remained low. In addition, reading outcomes for children who reported Hausa as the language they most commonly speak at home were found to be better than the reading outcomes of their peers who reported not speaking Hausa at home.

For more information on this project, see
https://www.rti.org/impact/reading-and-access-research-activity-rara

3.4.4 Reading and Numeracy Activity (RANA), 2015–20

Location: Katsina and Zamfara states (expansion to Kebbi and Niger states in 2018–19)
International implementer: FHI 360
Funders: DFID and UNICEF; part of *Girls Education Project Phase 3*
Language: Hausa

Building on the research findings of RARA, the RANA project is providing literacy and numeracy instruction in P1–P3 in both public schools and integrated Koranic schools, with the ultimate goal of increasing literacy outcomes for learners – and girls in particular.

Project activities include Hausa-language materials development in P1–P3, teacher training, community mobilisation, and early-grade reading policy work. Sixty coaches have been trained to monitor lesson fidelity and student engagement, and to provide pedagogical support in 200 schools. Community reading hubs have also been established in the communities where RANA operates. RANA has also mobilised mothers' associations, conducted reading festivals and appointed reading champions in each community.

In addition to Hausa-language reading instruction for P1–P3, RANA has developed a series of more than 50 Hausa read-aloud stories with numeracy themes, using them to teach numeracy to 50,000 students in 199 schools.

In the 2016–17 school year, RANA assessments indicated that pupils had improved their letter-sound knowledge by 51 per cent and improved their oral reading fluency by 32 per cent. The numeracy read-alouds resulted a 17 per cent gain in solving word problems and a nine per cent increase in listening comprehension scores.

RANA has also developed the *Hausa Early Grade Reading Implementation Guidelines* (HEGRIG), which outline government agencies' goals and commitments related to Hausa-language reading. The HEGRIG recommendations include teacher professional development, materials provision, community engagement, and monitoring and evaluation for enhancing Hausa reading skills of students in early grades. HEGRIG has been adopted in Katsina and Zamfara states, and the documents are planned for wider dissemination.

For more information on this project, see
https://www.fhi360.org/projects/reading-and-numeracy-activity-rana

3.4.5 Northern Education Initiative Plus (NEI Plus), 2015–20

Location: Bauchi and Sokoto states
International implementer: Creative Associates
Funder: USAID
Language: Hausa, English

NEI Plus aims to strengthen the ability of Bauchi and Sokoto states to provide greater access to basic education, especially for girls and out-of-school-children. The project aims to significantly improve reading outcomes among more than one million children in schools, as well as more than 400,000 out-of-school children in approximately 11,000 learning centres.

The project's Hausa- and English-language Mu Karanta! and Let's Read! programme has been designed as a mother-tongue based early reading programme for P1–P3 (Mu Karanta!), with transition to English-language reading in P2 and P3 (Let's Read!). The programme follows global best practices in learning to read in mother tongue and early-exit transition to English-medium learning.

NEI Plus is also collaborating with the NERDC and the National Commission for Colleges of Education to develop a national reading framework, which will provide guidelines for teaching reading pedagogy in teachers' pre-service training. The project is actively equipping colleges of education to teach early-grade reading concept and pedagogical techniques.

The project strategy further includes strengthening technical and administrative capacity, as well as accountability, among federal, state and local government education authorities.

NEI Plus aims to address systemic challenges, including language-based constraints, in collaboration with government and other partners. For example, the project will gather evidence to determine whether the transition to English in P4 is an effective strategy, and then help to develop a policy on transition to English based on global and local evidence.

For more information on this project, see
www.neiplus.com

3.4.6 Teacher Development Programme (TDP), 2013–18

Location: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Zamfara states
International implementer: Mott MacDonald
Funder: DFID
Languages: Hausa, English

The goal of the TDP is to improve the quality of teaching in primary schools and junior secondary schools and in colleges of education at the state level in northern Nigeria. TDP targets in-service training for primary teachers, reform of pre-service teacher education and strengthening evidence-based research on teaching. The programme began in Jigawa, Katsina and Zamfara states, and was later extended to Kaduna and Kano states.

The TDP aims to improve the skills of 66,000 teachers, including their language-teaching skills. The TDP's scope covers key subjects such as English, mathematics and science. *The Strengthening Teachers' English Proficiency in Northern Nigeria* (STEPIN) programme, designed by the British Council, was implemented from December 2015 to July 2018 as a component of the TDP. STEPIN was designed to meet the need of teachers in Northern Nigeria who have to provide English-medium instruction from P4 onwards, but who do not have adequate English language proficiency to do so. The programme was intended specifically to improve the English language proficiency, classroom English and teaching methodology of 62,000 teachers. The programme offered a self-study course in English language, supported by peer mentoring groups. Periodic English forums for teachers were established at each target school.

The TDP has also provided support for in-service reform. Latterly, the TDP has developed teaching and learning tools for students and teachers in Hausa.

Overall, the TDP has been seen as effective by a wide range of stakeholders; it has also had a positive impact on teacher performance. However, overcoming the key issues of teachers' limited subject knowledge and teacher absenteeism has been extremely difficult, as has improving student learning.

For more information on the TDP, see
https://www.tdpnigeria.org

3.4.7 Revitalizing Adult and Youth Literacy (RAYL), 2011–16, 2018–

Location: Nationwide
Implementer: UNESCO
Funder: Federal Government of Nigeria
Language: English

The RAYL project was committed to eradicating illiteracy in Nigeria by strengthening national capacity for designing and delivering quality literacy. The project aimed to provide basic literacy skills for adults and youth who have been excluded from the formal educational system, and included a pilot digital literacy scheme that was launched in 2015.

The RAYL project has been implemented in a total of 36 states and FCT, in four local government areas per state. More than 290 communities have been mobilised and 4,801 grassroots literacy facilitators trained, targeting more than five million people for literacy learning. Capacity development has been carried out among university staff, state agencies for mass education, NGOs and community-based organisations. The project has also distributed the following resources to local government areas: 683 laptops, pre-loaded with 40 *Literacy by Radio* lessons; 700 copies of the *Literacy by Radio* primer; 200 copies of the *Literacy by Radio* facilitator's guide and training manual; 5,000 pencils; 5,000 exercise books; and 16 flash drives containing the literacy programme. RAYL has also established and equipped 18 Model Community Literacy Centres across the nation.

For more information on this project, see http://uil.unesco.org/literacy-and-basic-skills/revitalizing-adult-and-youth-literacy-nigeria

3.4.8 Story Making West Africa Workshop, 2018

Location: Abuja
International implementers: British Council, SAIDE African Storybook Initiative
Funders: British Council and SAIDE
Languages: Various (see below)

A shorter but also geographically broader initiative, the *Story Making West Africa Workshop* was held in Abuja on 12–16 March 2018 with the aim of promoting the arts, education and mother-tongue-based multilingual education in West Africa. The five-day workshop was facilitated by two trainers from the African Storybook Initiative. Twenty-five participants from Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Ghana participated in the workshop; 20 storybooks were created, in West African languages including Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Kanuri, Urhobo, Fulfulde, Tiv and Nupe.

The lack of access to storybooks, especially in children's mother tongues, at home and in schools, was identified in the workshop as a contributing factor to the low literacy levels of children in Sub-Saharan Africa. An additional challenge was recognised, stemming from the lack of storybooks with content that reflects the life contexts of children in Sub-Saharan Africa.

For more information on this project, see https://www.britishcouncil.org.ng/english/story-making-workshop

3.5 Comparing the two sets of projects

Several distinctions between these two sets of projects stand out.

The first five projects were all initiated in the 1970s. Shaped and led by Nigerian language experts and activists, these projects featured significant emphasis on a range of languages of Nigeria as languages of instruction. Financial investment in these projects had limited interest from outside sources, and the programme budgets were similarly limited. In all of the projects except the PEIP, language issues were a dominant feature in planning and implementation. The languages in focus included Hausa, Yoruba, English and more than 30 languages in the South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Motivation for the projects was both cultural and pedagogical: the belief that local languages *could* be more effective than English in producing strong learning outcomes, and that they *should* be developed to do so. The timing of these programmes, especially those carried out in the South South states, is also significant; the Biafran War, characterised by vicious interethnic conflict in that region, had ended in 1970. Certainly, ethnic identity and community sustainability were central issues at the time.

By contrast, the most recent eight literacy-oriented projects began after 2010, each one led by one or more international development agencies. Financial investment in these projects by bilateral partners has been substantial, with USAID funding NEI, ECR, RARA and NEI Plus and DFID funding the TDP and (along with UNICEF) RANA. With the exception of UNESCO's national-level RAYL and the limited-scope Story-Making West Africa workshop, the projects have been carried out entirely in the northern states of the country.

The choice of Hausa and English for the six northern-based projects was determined by the goals and locations of those projects. The *Nigerian Poverty Profile* of 2010, supported by the World Bank, DFID and UNICEF, indicates serious challenges in the north of the country (Ngbea and Achunike, 2014: 268). In the conviction that education can be an effective tool in poverty reduction, international donors' focus on education support in the northern states of the country is accompanied by other social and economic interventions in the region.

This strong donor focus on the poverty-stricken and politically volatile northern states of Nigeria, the pre-eminent position of Hausa across those states, and the agreed-upon priority of English-language learning in general, all contributed to the choice of Hausa and English as the languages for all six projects in the north. The status of Hausa as L1 or L2 among the target populations has not been a significant strategic concern; nor has the existence of dialects of Hausa which may or may not be mutually comprehensible across the programme areas.

The 'Hausa plus English' language strategy has generally been supported in project implementation and outcomes, although – as noted in Section 3.4.3 – the 2015 RARA evaluation report recognised that Hausa was perhaps not the best language choice in every study site:

> reading outcomes were better for children who reported Hausa as the language they most commonly speak home than for their peers who reported not speaking Hausa at home. [13]

These two very different project profiles – Nigerian-led, language development and local-language-based learning projects of the 1970s to 1990s, compared to internationally led, early-grade reading and education projects – reflect significant differences in the priorities, purposes and thought leadership of these initiatives. The two sets of projects were each developed to respond to the critical issues of the time, as perceived by particular stakeholders. From a language perspective, the focus of the earlier projects on language development and use was marked. By contrast, the language choices in the later projects have been seen primarily as mechanisms for accomplishing project goals of poverty alleviation and political stability.

Having said that, some important work on issues of language and learning is being done in these latter projects, including the TDP's exploration of how teachers' English proficiency might be effectively supported, RANA's Hausa-language literacy approach to numeracy learning, NEI Plus' work in mother tongue-to-English transition, and the ERC's development and use of a Hausa language-specific scope and sequence for its reading instructional materials. These project features speak to the potential for improvement in student learning outcomes across the nation, as lessons learned in the projects are assimilated more broadly.

Nevertheless, in view of the consistent focus on 'the Hausa north', it is important to bear in mind that language, ethnicity and national integration [14] are prominent concerns for Nigeria today. The near-exclusive focus on Hausa speakers of the northern states as the beneficiaries of financially substantial, internationally led reading programmes has prompted concern among some Nigerian educationists and programme implementers about the exclusion of southern states, their languages and their education needs. Given the national concern for equity and national integration, this continued attention to education issues in the north and apparent disadvantaging of the south may merit reconsideration.

13.   https://www.rti.org/impact/reading-and-access-research-activity-rara page 7.
14.   National integration (i.e. the awareness of a common national identity, regardless of racial, ethnic, cultural or religious affiliation) is an important aim for Nigerian leadership (Onifade and Imhonopi, 2013; *linguist and educationist groups*). The extreme ethnic pluralism of Nigeria is seen as one challenge to such integration, and education access is seen to have a role in building such integration.

4.

Discussion groups of experts and practitioners: themes arising

Many institutions and individuals play important roles in the interpretation, implementation and resourcing of language provisions as they apply to education policy in Nigeria. The experts and practitioners whose perspectives informed this review represented a range of institutions around the country.

- **Universities:** University of Ibadan; University of Uyo; University of Abuja; Benue State University; University of Lagos; Lagos State University; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; University of Ilorin; Bayero University, Kano; and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

- **Colleges of education (CoE):** Nwafor Orizo CoE, Anambra State; Sa'adatu Rimi CoE, Kano State; Isa Kaita CoE, Katsina State; and CoE Kangere, Bauchi State.

- **Government education bodies:** Ministry of Education, Lagos State; the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC); State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), Lagos and Kano states; the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC); and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).

- **Professional institutions and committees:** the National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba (NINLAN); the Linguistic Association of Nigeria (LAN); the Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN); the English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria (ELTAN); the English Studies Association of Nigeria (ESAN); and the Technical Committee on the Nigerian Language Policy.

- **International education agencies** currently carrying out education programming in Nigeria: Creative Associates, FHI 360, Mott MacDonald and Save the Children.

The perspectives of these experts and practitioners on a range of language and education issues were gathered by means of a series of interviews carried out in Ibadan and Abuja, Nigeria on 13–17 August 2018. The groups interviewed were:

- academics in the field of linguistics

- policymakers holding state-level and national-level government positions

- educationists, both in colleges of education and in consulting roles

- implementers of internationally funded programme interventions in the fields of reading education support and teacher development.

The most salient issues arising in each of the four discussions are listed in Appendix 4. The individuals involved are listed in Appendix 5. However, group input, as it is referred to in this review, is not attributed to individual interviewees.

As would be expected, each group had its own unique perspectives on issues of language and learning; nonetheless, several larger themes were evident across the groups. Five themes with particular relevance to this review are described below.

4.1 Language provisions in the NPE and their implementation

The linguists, policymakers and educationists had extensive comments about the NPE, its presentation of language policy, and the implementation of its language provisions in Nigerian classrooms. The adequacy of the policy itself was debated, but there was universal acknowledgement that implementation of the policy provisions is highly problematic. The lack of teaching and learning materials in Nigerian languages, the practice of English-medium assessment, inadequate teacher capacity, inadequate written-language development of hundreds of Nigeria's languages, multilingualism in Nigerian society and classrooms, and a lack of awareness of the policy requirements were all mentioned many times in the discussions. Concern was also expressed that the language policy discussion has more of a political character than a pedagogical one.

For programme implementers, the NPE itself is not a central issue; however, they regularly face implementation challenges related to teachers' capacity, community awareness of the language provisions of the policy and the mother tongue–English transition process. (This last phenomenon is further discussed below.)

One very significant implementation issue discussed by all the groups is the high value put on English by parents, communities and school staff – particularly in the southern states, but to some extent also in the north of the country. The view of the groups is that this high value for English, combined with a lack of understanding of pedagogical best practice, has resulted in English being seen as the desired medium of instruction from preschool onwards.

4.2 The place of English and the place of Nigerian languages

The groups all affirmed the importance of English, for students and for the nation in general. For them, multilingualism (always including English fluency) is a national self-identifier. The common use of non-standard English in classrooms was a concern to all the groups.

The northern states were particularly identified as having the greatest challenges in English acquisition; where neither teachers nor parents speak English well, the children are not learning it either. Some degree of ideological opposition to English as 'the language of Western culture' was also noted in the north; though for the programme implementers particularly, northern resistance to English on cultural grounds was not seen as a significant issue. In their experience, access to and quality of English language learning is the greater obstacle.

The role of the mother tongue was seen by all the groups primarily as a pedagogical necessity, particularly in the Hausa-speaking north, though the role of mother tongue learning for identity and national integration was also mentioned. Educationists noted that awareness of the importance of mother tongue-medium learning is increasing, especially in rural areas. Linguists, educationists and policymakers all urged that more Nigerian languages be developed for use as languages of instruction, including orthography development, appropriate curriculum and pedagogical materials for the languages. The educationist group suggested an 'indigenous language support system' that would assess and assist the development of Nigeria's small languages for use in formal education.

The role of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as 'major languages' in the curriculum was generally not seen positively; the removal of the requirements for their inclusion in the curriculum (as per the 2013 NPE) was for the most part welcomed. The linguist group commented that the lack of implementation of these requirements made their removal from the policy relatively painless. Others in the linguist, educationist and policymaker groups felt that the 'major language–minor language' policy distinction has bred more ill feeling than anything else.

4.3 Code-switching and the mother-tongue-to-English transition

The widespread practice of code-switching between the mother tongue and English in the classroom was a matter of concern for all four groups. It was noted that, in place of an early-exit transition from mother-tongue-medium in P1–P3 to English in P4–6, both languages are being mixed throughout all six primary grades. It was suggested in the educationist group that being able to use both languages as pedagogical resources could be a benefit; however, all the groups felt that this practice is generally both a result and a cause of poor English acquisition.

The suggestion also arose among the linguist, educationist and policymaker groups that mother-tongue-medium instruction through to P6, with English taught as a subject throughout, could be good for both content learning and greater English proficiency by P6.

4.4 Teacher quality and competency

All four groups expressed serious concern about the quality of primary classroom teachers, in terms of language fluency, pedagogical knowledge and subject content knowledge. The observation was made in one group that some teachers may not even have enough background knowledge to profit from project-specific teacher training. Teacher absenteeism was also identified as a significant hindrance to effective learning in the classroom, particularly by the programme implementer group. Teacher professionalisation, support and performance expectations were all mentioned as possible solutions to the problem.

The programme implementer and educationist groups also noted the challenges that arise when subject-trained teachers are posted to lower-grade classroom teaching assignments for which they are not prepared.

4.5 Teaching reading as a subject

The educationists, policymakers and programme implementers spoke strongly about the importance of putting reading into the curriculum as a subject, separate from the English language subject class. The importance of building teachers' capacity for teaching reading was mentioned as a key factor in this move. Current plans for developing a national reading framework were mentioned as a very positive move.

5.

Observations and analysis

Several broad issues arise from analysis of the policy analysis, literature review and on-site input of experts and practitioners.

5.1 Language policy and practice

5.1.1 What does Nigeria need?

The overall language policy situation in Nigeria is currently under more scrutiny than in the past. Adeniran (2016: 15) comments that 'critical attention is now being paid to language, especially to the use of indigenous languages, and to language policy.' Given the many criticisms of the current language policy provisions, as well as concerns about issues of ethnicity and national integration, the recent government launch of the Technical Committee on the National Language Policy is not surprising.

Is a new language policy needed? On one hand, it is easy to sympathise with the position that there are too many policies in existence already, and that implementation of the existing language provisions is actually the urgent issue to be addressed. There is also the question of whether a new language policy could actually bring about greater fidelity of implementation than the current language provisions are. The question is a legitimate one; indeed, a continuum of opinion exists among language planning scholars worldwide, from those who believe that a language policy decision can be taken centrally and implemented society-wide, to those who wonder whether a society's language practices can be influenced by policy at all (Wright, 2004: 74).

However, from the language-in-education perspective, it seems clear that the current language provisions are inadequate. Several aspects of the current NPE are almost certainly exacerbating the challenges surrounding language-medium and language-subject choices in the classroom:

• The inclusion of so many languages (unspecified Nigerian languages, English, Arabic and French) beginning with P1–P3, without a clear rationale for the status of each, and without guidance regarding how this much language learning might be done without either overbalancing the curriculum in favour of language or posing too great a cognitive load on young learners.

• The conflation of 'language of the immediate environment/community' and 'mother tongue' without engaging with the complexity of these terms, given the multilingual character of so many families, communities and classrooms. Wherever more than one Nigerian language is spoken, the 'LIE' approach can cause the speakers of the non-dominant languages in the area to feel disenfranchised and insist on English-medium instruction instead.

- The confusing and contradictory directive that LIE-medium instruction should only be carried out in monolingual communities.

- The mandated P4 transition to English-medium learning, without guidance or resources to support this complex linguistic and pedagogical task. The length of time required for non-English-speaking children to gain academic language proficiency in English is not taken into consideration (research indicates that it takes at least six years); nor is the limited English fluency of teachers and children.

- The unclear integration of Nigerian languages into the secondary curriculum, on the basis of their 'having a curriculum'.

- The lack of alignment of the language of instruction policy with policies on language of assessment, textbooks and teacher education.

A language policy focused on education could address these and other challenges to effective learning in Nigerian classrooms. It could provide implementable guidelines on appropriate language choices, as well as support for the language ecology of the classroom. However, it is crucial that any such policy be founded on good pedagogy and well supported at a practical level, if it is to have any serious impact on student learning outcomes. As one programme implementer commented, 'if you want reading scores to go up you need clear L1 and L2 policies, and materials and training to support them' (*programme implementer group*).

5.1.2 Language attitudes and language choices

Compliance with any national policy depends to a great extent on the consistency and appropriateness of the policy for the context, and on this point policy experts see many challenges with the current language provisions. Indeed, one might wonder whether the likelihood of compliance has even been a strong consideration in formulation of the language provisions. Bamgbose (2016: 5) calls this de-linking of policy and practicality 'declaration of policy without implementation'.

For this reason, it is important to understand the social contexts in which language choices are being made. The language attitude environment in Nigeria is immensely complex, and cannot be addressed adequately here; however, a few generalisations may be made.

Studies of language attitudes and policy implementation indicate that Nigerian languages are valued by their speakers; this attitude is particularly evident among more rural, less-well-off populations. The sociolinguistic domains for the use of those languages may vary from one ethnic group or demographic to another, however. For example, Ihemere (2006) sees rapid intergenerational language shift between home languages and English (or, more accurately, Nigerian Pidgin English) in the Port Harcourt area. In contrast, in communities of the north where Hausa is the home language, English is viewed with deep suspicion as the language of Western culture and Christianity; Hausa is seen to be the appropriate – and necessary – language of learning and communication (*programme implementer group*).

And indeed, the more rural populations of Nigeria in general recognise that their children need learning opportunities in their own languages if they are to succeed in school (Adebayo and Oyebola, 2016; Aaron, 2018; *programme implementer group*). A 2008 survey in several regions of the country found that 'respondents preferred education in both English and the mother tongue rather than the use of only one of them.' Not only so, but 'the majority of the respondents wanted to use the mother tongue beyond the first three years of primary education' (Igboanusi, 2008: 721).

At the other end of the economic and political spectrum, the elites of the country clearly identify with English, as evidenced in the education choices they make for their children. However, Alebiosu (2016) argues for the existence of a 'love–hate attitude' among this class towards the English language, noting that 'while they seem to admire their children's high level of proficiency in English, they still complain about adopting the English language as a lingua franca.'

Still, on a national scale the perception of English as the only legitimate language of formal education is widespread. Ejieh (2004: 79) notes that 'from the inception of formal education in the country there has been a strong association between it and ability to write and speak English.' In addition, the perception of English as a mediator of economic success is almost universal across the country, and many parents are keen to see their children gain English fluency for that reason (Anas and Liman, 2016). Fluency in English is seen by many as being the entire point of formal education: one educator noted that 'if the child can't speak English, [it is assumed that] he/she is not learning' (*educationist group*).

This keen desire for English as a primary educational outcome is legitimised to some extent in the job market in Nigeria. Pinon and Haydon (2010: 43) observe that English fluency is a highly valued skill among Nigeria-based companies, and that English-speaking employees tend to earn more than their non-English-speaking counterparts. So certainly for Nigeria's elite, the strong preference for English-medium schooling is both universal and warranted (Adegbite, 2003). This is also the segment of the population most likely to be raising children to speak English as their home language.

However, the actual economic value of English fluency is much lower for the majority of Nigeria's children, who by virtue of their socioeconomic status and employment opportunities are unlikely to gain either English fluency or white-collar jobs. As one linguist commented, 'Poor parents want English-medium learning because it is fashionable; elite parents want it because it will get their children ahead' (*linguist group*). The belief among them all is that immersion in English is the best way for children to become fluent speakers, and so parents look for English-medium classrooms. The burgeoning growth of private, low-fee English-medium schools is a direct result of these parents' desire that their children become fluent in English – regardless of the frequent failure of these schools to deliver on that promise (*educationist and linguist groups*).

Studies and pilot projects in Nigeria using the local language as medium of instruction have demonstrated clearly that it results in significantly better learning of curriculum content (Fafunwa et al., 1989; Bamgbose, 2000; Aaron, 2018). Igboanusi and Peter (2015: 3) note that 'near-regular bilingual education' can be found in some northern states, where Hausa is used to teach all subjects in both rural and urban public schools. Internationally funded education projects in the north such as RANA, RARA and NEI Plus employ Hausa-medium instruction for early-grade reading [15] and some teacher training.

Nevertheless, in much of the country the prestige of English, and parents' beliefs about how their children will gain English fluency, trump policy. As one education consultant noted, 'All the research shows that the language policy's approach is better, but the sentiment on the ground is not that' (*educationist group*). A few cases have been noted where parents do recognise the value of mother-tongue-medium learning, when they have the chance to see their children really learning (Fafunwa et al., 1989; Aaron, 2018: 161). However, these opportunities are generally limited to pilot programmes and interventions, and do not constitute typical school experience in the country.

Understanding and devising effective national language policy requires an understanding of the contexts in which they are made. As one linguist observed:

> We are ignoring the linguistic choices that Nigerians are making. Linguistic loyalty and cultural loyalty may not matter as much; choices are being made so as to claim national space and access to resources (*linguist group*).

5.1.3 The move away from Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo as major languages in the current NPE

Until the 2013 revision of the NPE, three Nigerian languages had been given special status in both the Constitution and the NPE itself: Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The inclusion of these three languages in the language provisions of these two documents, and their status as 'decamillionaire' languages (Olaoye, 2013b: 30) for their population size (approximately 48 million, 40 million and 27 million speakers respectively [16]), has earned them the denomination of 'the major languages' of Nigeria. The impact of this designation has been such that Elugbe (1992: 19) defined a minority language in the Nigerian linguistic context as 'one that is not Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba' – a definition that leaves the other 523 languages of the country in a fairly tenuous position where policy support is concerned. This privileging of the three major languages resulted in their prioritised development for use in the classroom (Adegbija, 1997: 19), constituting what Essien (1990) argues is denial of equal rights for the rest of Nigeria's languages. Ker (2002: 119) agrees, stating that:

> A language policy that singles out only three languages for special attention is anything but fair and is therefore at variance with the tenet of 'equal educational opportunities' enshrined in the National Policy on Education.

It must be said that the policy provisions for the three major languages were never strongly implemented. One linguist noted that although the pre-2013 requirement to learn one of the major languages meant that certification depended on passing one of those languages, a waiver of this requirement was given every year. Not only so, but the number of teachers needed to implement the policy was far beyond the number available. Thus, 'the policy has been in abeyance for a number of years' (*linguist group*).

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15.   For example https://41pylqn86jp37e3n04us8vqq-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PB_Teaching_A4.pdf and https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/RARA_Reading_Evaluation_Report_FINAL._January_2016.pdf

16.   https://www.ethnologue.com/country/NG/languages

Nevertheless, the 2013 removal of specific references to these three languages from the NPE was significant from a language of instruction perspective, in that it represented a new official perspective on the status and use of Nigerian languages in the nation's classrooms. Although the three languages are still permitted to be used in the National and State House Assemblies (a right which is rarely claimed [17]), the language of instruction inventory choices for the classroom are now reduced to English and 'a Nigerian language'. So on one hand, the change in this language provision clears the way for English to be even more dominant in classroom practice. On the other hand, it simplifies the issue of development and use of Nigerian languages in the formal education system, since the three major languages are no longer interposed as an intermediate set of language requirements between mother tongues and English. The policy space that has opened here invites an activist approach to the development and use of other Nigerian languages as languages of instruction, in classrooms where the use of those languages could enhance student learning outcomes.

5.1.4 Code-switching and the Nigerian classroom context

The concomitant use of two or more languages is a common sociolinguistic feature in multilingual contexts. The practice of using two distinct languages in one communicative event is called *code-switching*, or *code-mixing*; the difference between these two terms is debated, with some scholars seeing them as synonymous and others finding a greater intentionality and co-operativity in code-mixing than in code-switching (e.g. Adebayo, 2016). Among the educationists interviewed for this review, the two terms were seen both positively and negatively in terms of their impact on student learning in the classroom. However, all agreed that mixing languages (generally English and a Nigerian language) is commonly practised in Nigerian classrooms by both teachers and students. In the present discussion, the term *code-switching* is used to represent this activity.

Translanguaging is a more recent theory of such bilingual communicative events. Unlike code-switching, which is seen as mixing the linguistic features of two distinct languages, the idea of translanguaging does not represent a shift from one linguistic code to another. Rather, bilingual speakers are seen to be choosing language features from their 'total language

repertoire' in ways that fit the communicative event, and adapting their language use to suit the context (García and Kano, 2014: 260). Importantly, the translanguaging approach legitimises and encourages the free use of more than one language as part of the classroom learning process. This legitimisation of the learner's own language for learning carries significant pedagogical and social justice implications (Canagarajah, 2011; Hurst and Mona, 2017; Vogel and García, 2017). Certainly, for a Nigerian child encountering the formal classroom, the free use of their home language, along with English, enhances the likelihood of understanding and learning curriculum content.

However in the Nigerian classroom context, two major problems present themselves where code-switching is concerned, which would actually be exacerbated by a translanguaging approach to language use. The first problem is related to the fact that Nigeria's academic curriculum includes significant expectations for language acquisition – not only Standard Nigerian English, but also Arabic and French, in addition to 'a Nigerian language'. Whether or not it is feasible for students to learn all of these languages during their school career, the Nigerian curriculum demonstrates a strong value for fluency in certain languages; each of them carries specific political, economic and pedagogical value. So the Nigerian curriculum requires fluency in specific, standard languages.

Attainment of such language fluency is not being facilitated by code-switching behaviours in Nigerian classrooms. To the contrary, code-switching is related to confusion and inadequate language knowledge among students and teachers with limited English, especially when the switch between languages is not done in a deliberate fashion (*educationist group*). Where code-switching is described as helpful in the classroom, it is either as part of an intentional pedagogical strategy for language learning as well as content learning, or else it is identified with the near-complete substitution of a Nigerian language for English (*programme implementer group*); this latter behaviour is actually a matter of language choice, not code-switching. So ironically, the code-switching behaviours that are intended to convey non-language knowledge more effectively are much less effective at teaching language skills (this is also acknowledged in the translanguaging approach to communication in the classroom [18]).

The second point where code-switching fails to enhance academic success is that of subject examinations. In Nigeria, all school exams (except the Nigerian language subject) are carried out in English (*policymaker group*). So even if a student is able to use two or more languages to engage with content learning (whether on the code-switching or translanguaging model), the failure to support such learning at the assessment level robs dual language use of much of its benefit. Simply put, success in the Nigerian education system requires English language fluency as well as content knowledge. For students who struggle with English language acquisition, this feature of the curriculum (while undeniably unfair) highlights the critical importance of proficiency in one specific language for success in school, rather than a broad, multi-language repertoire for communication.

5.2   Classroom practice

5.2.1 The curriculum

The language provisions of the NPE play out in the curriculum as follows:

- beginning in P1, the textbooks in all subjects except Nigerian language subject are in English

- the expectation of 'mother tongue-medium' learning from P1 to P3 means that the teacher is supposed to use English-language subject textbooks for teaching, but explain them to the pupils in the LIE. No published helps or specialised training are available for this

- the Nigerian language subject is meant to teach the grammar, culture, literature and norms of that language and its speakers. The language itself is meant to be the medium of instruction in this class

- instructional materials for the Nigerian language subject are nearly non-existent in the classrooms [19]

- assessments in all subjects except Nigerian language subject are carried out in English, as noted above.

This curriculum context helps to explain the extensive use of code-switching between the LIE and English that has been described above. The fact of English-language assessment also explains the enduring desire of parents, teachers and students for English-medium instruction that will enhance the learners' likelihood of scoring well on the exams. The near-complete lack of instructional materials and teacher helps in Nigerian languages in any subject also constitutes one of the many substantial obstacles to teaching in the LIE, policy provisions notwithstanding.

In the area of reading instruction, three serious curriculum challenges emerge:

- reading is not taught as its own subject

- reading pedagogy as such is not part of the teachers' repertoire, since Nigerian teacher training curricula do not include it (*educationist and policymaker groups*) [20]

- reading instruction is expected to take place in the English subject class. In a classroom context where the learners have not mastered English, attempts at gaining proficiency in reading in English are fruitless.

These three factors pose serious handicaps to learning to read and write, and together they are responsible for low reading achievement scores in Nigeria's classrooms.

New attention is coming to this issue, however, as a result of the teacher training and classroom reading interventions of programmes such as RANA and NEI Plus. At this time, the NERDC and NEI Plus are collaborating on the development of a national reading framework, and teacher capacity-building courses are being trialled through NEI Plus at Bayero University (*educationist, policymaker and programme implementer groups*). The degree of success of these programmes in enhancing pupils' reading acquisition is causing national stakeholders to call for the broadening of this impact across more of the nation than just the current northern states in the programmes.

5.2.2 Teacher capacity

Although it is impossible (and unfair) to characterise the entire national cadre of classroom teachers in the same way, much is written and said about lack of teacher capacity when it comes to language practices in the classroom. The teaching profession is generally understood to be at the low end of post-tertiary education opportunities; it is considered to include many individuals who are not well prepared to teach effectively in the classroom or even, in some cases, to take on additional capacity-building themselves (*linguist group*).

The primary worry about teacher capacity where language is concerned centres around teachers' ability to use English adequately as the medium of instruction, either orally or in written form (Nta et al., 2012; Ezema, 2004). Teachers are seen as the mediators of language choice in the classroom (*educationist group*), and their code-switching practices are interpreted to reflect their own lack of English fluency at least as much as the lack of fluency among the pupils.

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1.   The linguist group noted that implementation of the constitutional provision for using Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo in House Assemblies has been consistently blocked by those who are from other language communities. Not only so, but Adegbija (2004: 14) cites Bamgbose's 2001 description of an incident in the 1999 Lagos State House of Assembly, in which use of Yoruba as the language of discussion was rejected by the majority Yoruba-speaking legislators on the grounds of its perceived inappropriateness for conducting business in Lagos – as well as the likelihood that it would demean and reduce the intellect of the legislators.

2.   Current research in translanguaging in African classrooms is indicating the need for a better understanding of the pedagogical distinctions between code-switching and translanguaging, and the modes and benefits of explicit translanguaging approaches to teaching in the bilingual classroom (personal communication with translanguaging researchers Lizzi Milligan and Leon Tikly, 20 September 2018).

19.   Review of the website catalogues of seven prominent school-text publishers in Nigeria revealed that all of them carried an extensive range of English titles. Evans and University Press had a few Yoruba titles; Evans had three Igbo titles; and none of the seven had titles in Hausa or any other Nigerian language. Of 364 titles surveyed in the DERP survey of 2015, 97 per cent were in English, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba or French. The remaining few titles were in Ijaw or Fulfulde (RTI International, 2015: 185–6).

20.   This lack of attention to reading pedagogy in teacher training institutions is common across the African continent.

Poor reading assessment outcomes among students can also be tracked to English fluency inadequacies, though the absence of training in reading pedagogy is also seen as a serious deficit that must be remedied in colleges of education (*educationist group*). A related concern has to do with northern teachers' low literacy levels in Hausa, even where they are fluent speakers of the language.

At the same time, it is recognised that teachers are not well served in their profession, nor in their training. Salaries go unpaid, in-service training is inadequate, teacher postings often do not align with the teacher's area of training (Adebayo, 2016: 26) and classroom materials to support effective teaching are limited or non-existent. Pre-service training in colleges of education is seen by some to be teaching out-of-date methods (*programme implementer group*). Teachers are not taught how to use Nigerian languages as languages of instruction in the classroom, and so 'when they follow the policy, they just do it as they understand it and it may not be well done' (*policymaker group*).

Interestingly, some programme implementers observe that teachers participating in current Hausa-language reading and numeracy programmes in the northern states are considered to be performing well (*programme implementer group*), as their implementation of the training they receive carries over into other subjects besides the reading subject. Where teacher learning takes place in Hausa, new teaching techniques are particularly well taken up. Teachers' use of Hausa in the classroom, rather than English, has been observed to result in better teaching and learning among the pupils as well. This programme experience speaks to the likelihood that poor teaching may be rooted as much in language choice, teacher support and implementation factors as in personnel factors.

5.2.3 Teacher practice

Teachers' language practices are central to the degree of compliance with the NPE language provisions in the classroom. Teachers may or may not be aware of those provisions; a study of teachers in the South West zone, carried out by Adeyemi and Ajibade (2014: 98), found that they were not aware of the language provisions of the NPE, and so 'they taught in any language medium they found suitable'.

Where teachers do know the policy expectations, challenges still arise. The NPE requires teachers to use the LIE as medium of instruction from P1 to P3, and

indeed pupils' lack of mastery of English requires the use of their mother tongues well into the upper primary grades. Yet as noted above, all subject textbooks (except any available for the Nigerian language subject) are available only in English. Not only so, but all assessments other than the mother tongue subject are also in English. So whether from preference, necessity or the desire to follow national policy, most primary-grade teachers routinely practise an informal form of code-switching in the classroom: speaking in English insofar as possible, and using the local language to clarify and explain English-language textbook content to the students (Amajuoyi and Ekott, 2016; Hardman et al., 2008; Anas and Liman, 2016; Anota and Onyeke, 2016). As noted above, this practice is widespread, and takes place throughout all six primary grades (*all four groups*).

However, teachers' limited language fluency and limited understanding of the subject content means that this practice does not generally deliver strong learning outcomes, particularly where language proficiency is concerned. One educator described the language-learning outcomes in the Hausa-speaking northern regions as 'corrupted Hausa, useless English' (*educationist group*).

A further complication arises when the LIE, or the dialect of the LIE, that is mandated for classroom use is not one that the teacher and/or pupils speak and understand. The issue of dialect choice in Hausa has arisen in project contexts in the north of the country, when one language variety is chosen for materials development but implementation takes place across other dialect areas (*programme implementer group*). The Cross Rivers languages are also known to have numerous dialects (Ndimele, 2012). However, the classroom teacher is expected to meet and manage this challenge of dialects without the support or training to do so.

5.3 Disillusionment with the formal education system

There is little doubt among Nigerians that the public school system is failing them. According to a 2015 education survey,[21] 47 per cent of boys and 45 per cent of girls in the country finish primary school unable to read, and 35 per cent cannot perform simple addition. A 2011 EGRA carried out on 4,000 pupils in Bauchi and Sokoto States indicated that between 72 per cent and 81 per cent of the P3 pupils tested had oral reading fluency scores of zero correct words per minute.[22]

The inadequacy of the government education system to provide expected educational outcomes is driving many parents to put their children into private schools – including a burgeoning number of low-fee private schools that are financially and geographically accessible to less-wealthy families. These schools promise greater accountability to parents for delivering adequate instruction. They also promise English: where language of instruction is concerned, they do not even pretend to follow national language policy, but use some variety of English as the sole medium of instruction. This is one of their primary attractions for parents. Having said that, the teachers in the low-fee schools are no more likely to control English well than the government school teachers are; as one linguist noted, 'the kind of English being taught in some places is not even recognizable' (*linguist group*).

The resulting disillusionment with formal education is understandable. Ige (2014: 643) notes that:

> Some parents are hesitating to send their children to primary schools based on the belief that they produce nothing but functional illiterates and fail to equip them for work.

One programme implementer described a common parental attitude in the programme area: 'Why should my child go to school, if when they come out they can't read anyway? I'd rather engage them in business; there will be value addition, and they can make a contribution to the family' (*programme implementer group*). Another programme staffer commented that 'parents in the community have accepted no-results schools' (*programme implementer group*).

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21. https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/sites/default/files/eddata/EdData_Education_NATIONAL_2015_FNL_V2.pdf
22. https://www.rti.org/sites/default/files/resources/indicators_northernnigeria_apflepsen_mar2013_cies.pdf
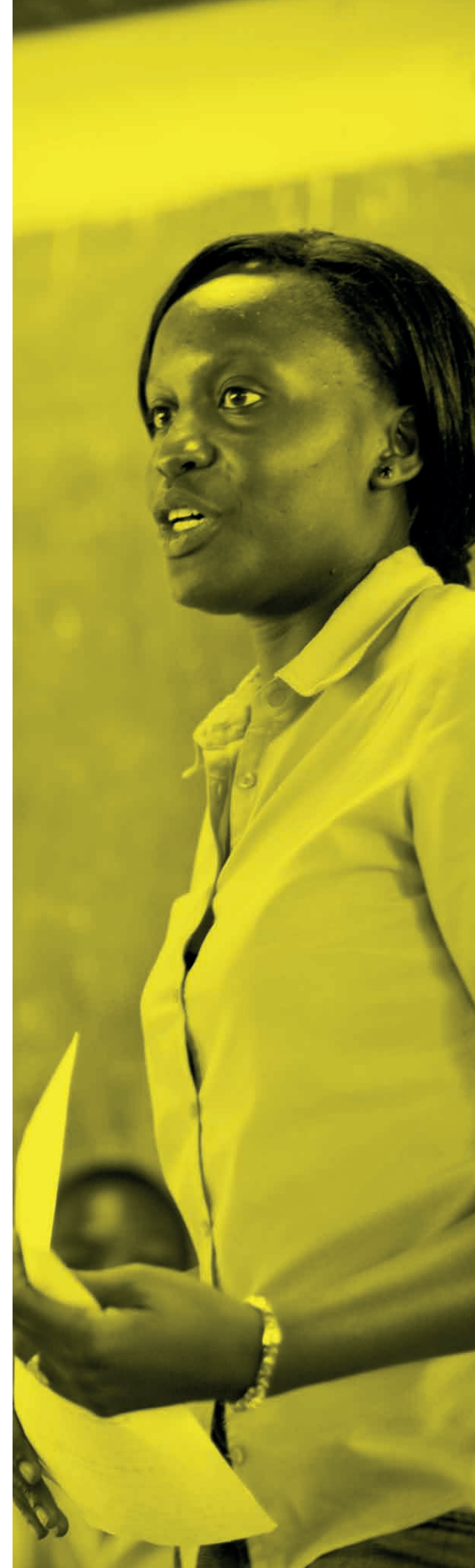
6.

Conclusion

Issues of language and learning are highly current in Nigeria, both as a matter of national integration and as a key pedagogical factor in the nation's development.

Clearly, any solutions to Nigeria's language and education challenges will have to take into account the pervasive and keen desire for English-language use in schools, tied as English is to perceived economic success and social prestige. Unmet expectations of effective formal education are causing vocal concern in many quarters, as well as driving thousands of parents (predominantly but not entirely in the southern states) to enrol their children in 'English-medium' schools of dubious quality.

Yet English language fluency is certainly attainable in the classroom setting; curricula for just this kind of learning are readily available. English language learners around the world can attest to the fact that the learning *of* English in a systematic way must precede effective learning *in* English. The manner of language instruction matters far more than early-age exposure to the language;[23] in school systems across the global North, English-only immersion education is generally known to be one of the least effective ways for a child to gain English fluency.

When it comes to the place of Nigerian languages in formal education, the removal of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo from the current NPE must not be taken as a step towards ceding the entire formal learning space to English. Rather, this new policy environment could open space for an intentional effort to develop viable curriculum materials and teacher training in many Nigerian languages. For example, the 13 Nigerian languages with populations of over one million speakers account for nearly 160 million Nigerians – more than 85 per cent of the population.[24] Of course, the presence of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo in the NPE until 2013 was not accompanied by the development of effective teaching and learning materials in those languages, and so opportunities for speakers of those languages to gain strong learning outcomes through the three languages were lost. This is why any initiative to establish a more language-inclusive policy will unquestionably have to include the resources, attention to teachers and political will to implement such policy with real outcomes.

[23]   For example, more than 90 per cent of Dutch citizens speak English, yet the Dutch curriculum features English as a compulsory subject only from upper primary or secondary school – and never as the medium of instruction.
[24]   https://www.ethnologue.com/country/NG/languages

In addition, justice and equity demand that the hundreds of smaller Nigerian language communities should also be supported. The grassroots-level action being taken on behalf of local languages needs to be assisted; at this time, the extent of language development work being done by local communities on their own languages is not being tracked. Even the NERDC's list of 52 languages with approved orthographies does not include language communities that are proceeding on their own to formalise their languages in writing, develop their own curriculum, and use these languages as medium of instruction in schools. Support for these community-based efforts could both enhance student learning outcomes and promote national integration.

The large number of publications, pilot programmes and institutions catalogued in this review demonstrate the substantial intellectual and political ferment that characterises discussions of language and education in Nigeria. The history of ethnic relations in the country, and the lessons learned from that history, colour both government and civil society approaches to the issues arising related to language choice in the formal education system. The solutions suggested by stakeholders and interested parties are wide-ranging and often mutually contradictory.

Nigeria is at a unique and potentially pivotal point in its language and education history, characterised and shaped by the linguistic equity provided to Nigerian languages in the 2013 NPE, the government's launch of the Technical Committee on National Language Policy, the outcomes of early-grade reading programmes in the north of the country and the lessons learned there, new attention to reading as a curriculum subject, and a growing awareness of the so-far disparate actions being taken by language communities across the country to sustain their languages.

However, it should be noted that many of the challenges facing Nigeria in this arena are not unique to Nigeria, nor are the potential solutions. Identical struggles over language, ethnicity and nationhood have featured in countries as varied as South Africa, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda and more. Indeed, every African nation has experiences related to these issues – not always happy experiences, but certainly experiences that could inform the issues and decisions in Nigeria. Nigeria stands to benefit a great deal from an increased awareness of what is happening across Africa in this area, whether of positive actions to incorporate or negative actions to avoid. Learning about and testing some of the activities that have been beneficial in other African contexts could provide a very helpful knowledge base for language policy decisions and implementation in the Nigerian formal education system.

7.

Recommendations: possible research opportunities – addendum to the language policy review

This document is a specific response to the request by the British Council in Nigeria and UNICEF Nigeria for recommendations regarding field research and 'next steps' that would facilitate the development of a positive environment for the use of Nigerian languages of instruction in Nigerian classrooms.

The recommendations below begin with a proposal for research on the national language policy situation, which is essential to the development of a strong multilingual learning environment in the country. The recommendations then move to a description of an overall, long-term plan for establishing effective language practices in Nigerian classrooms, followed by a set of shorter-term, specific research activities that could build a foundation for such language practices. Note that the language policy research could be done concurrently with the other research activities listed.

7.1 Research to support the formulation and implementation of language policy for education

The importance of this activity is grounded in the multifaceted nature of any strong national language policy. As mentioned earlier in this review, a complete national language policy covers language use in education, governance and public life. This research, focused specifically on language use in the education system, would provide government decision-making bodies with feasible, pedagogically sound approaches to a language-in-education policy.

Research questions on the context for such a policy could include:

- Where have comparative studies of language-in-education policy been done, in Africa or other parts of the world?

- Which policy models would align with Nigeria's values of national integration and equity, as enacted in the classroom?

- What language policy models elsewhere in Africa are linked to stronger student learning outcomes?

- What are the benefits and costs of the various models?

- Who would bear financial responsibility for implementing policy at federal and state levels?

Suggestions for policy content could include addressing several current curriculum issues:

- the expectation that learning assessments across the curriculum will be carried out in English, despite the NPE directive that the LIE is to be the medium of instruction in P1–P3

- the exclusive use of English in teacher training, even though the current NPE requires that these teachers deliver instruction in the LIE

- the critical importance of developing content textbooks in the mandated languages of instruction, rather than expecting teachers to translate the available English-language textbooks

- the importance of increasing the number of Nigerian languages that have a curriculum, so that they can be taught as subjects in secondary school.

Specific problematic features of the current language provisions of the current NPE could also be queried, such as those listed in Section 5.1.1.

7.2   A longer-term plan for language and education programming

Along with a strong language-in-education policy, a workable plan for the effective use of language in Nigerian classrooms would include components aimed at supporting the larger Nigerian languages, the smaller Nigerian languages and English. These components are:

- *Provision of pedagogically strong, linguistically and culturally appropriate reading instructional materials in a specific set of the largest Nigerian languages.* These materials would facilitate the teaching of reading and writing in P1 and P2 (with pre-reading curriculum recommended for pre-school children, as well as further language development curriculum in the indicated Nigerian languages through to P6). This component would build the literacy and oral language skills of the pupils in the indicated Nigerian language. Teacher training to use the materials effectively would also be part of this component.

- *Development and implementation of a strong curriculum for English language learning that would emphasise the English language needs of the formal education context.* The curriculum could begin with oral English learning in P1 and P2, as pupils are learning to read and write in their own languages; written English could be introduced as early as P3, once the pupils have learned to read in their own language.

- *Development of a pedagogically effective strategy for facilitating the transition from the LIE to English.* This particular aspect of bilingual education curriculum has not received adequate attention, despite being a highly challenging process. A strategy for successful transition of medium of instruction would include both teacher capacity-building and appropriate pedagogical materials for the classroom. It would also take into account research on how long it takes for a Nigerian child to gain academic language proficiency in a second language: does a P4 transition allow adequate time for this level of English language fluency?

- *Teacher capacity building in reading pedagogy, use of the teaching and learning materials provided in the LIE, and English fluency for the classroom.* Such capacity would be built in both pre-service and in-service training; monitoring and coaching would also be a good idea.

- *A mechanism for supporting the development of Nigeria's other languages.* This would include tracking and support for written language development and book development in those languages, as well as training and support for curriculum development and reading instructional materials development. The onus would largely be on the communities themselves to initiate and lead this effort, but institutional support and resourcing would be provided.

This plan is ambitious, but it is certainly feasible – particularly if international development assistance were available for technical and financial support. Here is why:

- Programmes for the development of reading instructional materials in multiple local languages have been, or are being, carried out by national ministries of education and international development partners in Ethiopia (seven languages), Uganda (12 languages), South Sudan (five languages) and Ghana (11 languages), just since 2012. National governments themselves have carried out such language development work in South Africa (11 languages) and Ethiopia (many more than seven languages) since 1991. Much could be learned from these various initiatives.

- An appropriate English language-learning curriculum is available, targeting both school children and teachers. Such a curriculum could be tailored to the classroom fluency needs of Nigeria's particular context.

- Teacher capacity building may be the most challenging component of this plan, given the range of formal and non-formal mechanisms that would need to be involved – and also given the significant gap between existing teacher capacity and the level of capacity needed for effective implementation of the reading and English learning programmes described above. Nevertheless, teacher training has been a regular feature of the reading programmes described above, and much could be learned about how to carry out the various aspects of this task.

- Support for the Nigerian languages not included in the components above could easily begin with a search for the NGOs, community-based organisations and researchers already involved in language development and education work in these contexts. Early work by the Rivers Readers Project and the Bendel State Project has been carried forward by Nigerian agencies such as the Rivers State Readers Project and the NERDC,[25] as well as individual language committees such as the Obolo language committee described in the review. Organisations such as the Conference of Autochthonous Ethnic Community Development Associations (CONAECDA),[26] the Bible Society of Nigeria[27] and SIL Nigeria[28] have carried out a range of language development activities in these languages. In addition, numerous community-led initiatives exist such as newspapers, orthography development activities and the development of pedagogical materials for local classrooms.

The plan as described above targets the reading and English language subjects of the primary curriculum, and does not cover a complete mother-tongue-based multilingual education programme. However, the plan could certainly deliver strong outcomes in these two subjects; it could also build confidence in an effective bilingual model of learning that could then be extended into other curriculum subjects.

7.3   Specific research activities

Specific, field-based research activities that could help to lay the groundwork for effective implementation of bilingual education in Nigeria, and could also feed into the overall plan described above, include:

7.3.1   A pilot programme to test the development and use of mother tongue and English as 'two strong pillars for learning'

This programme could be carried out in a limited number of schools, in one to two languages. My recommendation would be to choose two languages with medium-sized populations, one in the north and one in the south of the country. This will provide two sites for testing the interventions, and will also demonstrate the implementer's concern for inclusiveness and national integration.

Such a pilot programme could be based on one of three bilingual education models:

- a P4-level transition from mother tongue to English

- a more standard late-exit transition model, moving from mother-tongue-medium to English-medium at P5 or P6

- a maintenance model, aiming at equal use of mother tongue and English as languages of instruction by the end of P6.

In all of the above cases, the programme would cover mother-tongue-medium reading and writing for at least P1 and P2, as well as numeracy if desired. Materials would be developed using a reading pedagogy that is most appropriate for the classroom environment and teacher capacity, as well as being culturally and linguistically appropriate. (The use of translated materials is strongly discouraged for this type of programme.)

The programme would also pilot an English language-learning curriculum tailored to the language needs of primary grade teachers and pupils. At the level of P1 and P2, the focus would be on oral acquisition of Standard Nigerian English.

Ideally, such a pilot would cover up to P6, to give time for maximum impact on student learning outcomes. However, that may extend the programme timeline beyond what the implementer is able or willing to take on.

Research questions that would inform the *development* of this pilot could include:

- Which bilingual education model is to be followed, and why?

- Is the model to focus only on language and reading subjects, or will it include all content subjects?

- Which two Nigerian languages would be the most strategic for this pilot?

- Which languages have standardised orthographies and are already used in their written form?

- Which languages already have teachers who speak, read and write them?

- What other linguistic, geographical and political issues should be taken into account in setting up the pilot?

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25.   https://www.scribd.com/doc/114114753/Doc123
26.   A network of more than 350 ethnolinguistic communities in central Nigeria. https://www.facebook.com/Conaecda-813719351986294/
27.   The Bible Society of Nigeria has carried out language development and translation work in 24 Nigerian languages. http://biblesociety-nigeria.org/
28.   SIL has carried out sociolinguistic surveys and other language development activities in more than 40 Nigerian languages to date. https://www.sil.org/resources/search/country/Nigeria/online/1?query=assessment&sort_by=field_reap_sortdate&sort_order=DESC

The research questions to be addressed at the midline and endline of such a pilot could include:

- Does this model result in significantly better reading achievement among the target audience?

- Is English language proficiency improving in ways that are both academically helpful and congenial to parents?

- If the programme is limited to language and reading subjects, is there any knock-on effect on learning in other subjects than these?

- What is the impact of any dialect choices that have been made in the programme?

7.3.2 Research and development of an appropriate English language learning curriculum

This research activity would find and assess the various English language learning (ELL) curricula available, as well as determining the English-learning needs of primary-age Nigerian children of various socioeconomic and demographic categories. These activities would lead to recommendations regarding the best ELL curriculum direction for Nigeria, and whether a new ELL curriculum is needed.

The research questions to be addressed in this study could include:

- What ELL curricula exist for this kind of pupil population?

- How do they compare in terms of cost, outcomes, ease of teaching, number of materials required and assumptions about the teacher's English fluency?

- Which curricula are the best match for the Nigerian context, and why?

- Is it better for project partners to develop a new ELL curriculum specifically for the Nigerian primary school context?

7.3.3 Research on transition models in the education system

This study would examine the programmed use of Nigerian languages and English in the classroom, and how they could support an effective bilingual model of learning and teaching. This would include a study of successful models for transition from a Nigerian language to English, and an assessment of educators' knowledge of bilingual education best practices.

Research questions could include:

- Where has the L1 to L2 transition process in primary grades been documented? What models have emerged from successful classroom practice?

- In a context where L1-medium is used only for teaching reading and the L1 subject, how does the transitioning model differ from the context where L1-medium is used for all the subjects in the curriculum?

- What role could code-switching practices have in facilitating transition? How would such behaviours have to be modified from their current practice in Nigerian classrooms?

Related research could be carried out on the use of Nigerian Pidgin English and Standard Nigerian English in the classroom. Research questions could include:

- Do the two varieties of English have distinct domains and roles in the classroom?

- How may the goal of Standard Nigerian English fluency be attained in an environment where Nigerian Pidgin English is prevalent?

7.3.4 Research to determine the best choices for a set of larger Nigerian languages, to be proposed for development and use as LIE

This study would lay the groundwork for choosing and developing a set of the larger Nigerian languages, for their use as medium of instruction in classrooms on a national scale. A set of criteria could be developed for use in determining which and how many languages to include in this set.

The research questions to be addressed in this study could include:

- What are the demographics of the languages under consideration?

- Which languages have the largest geographical cover?

- What are the dialect issues related to the languages under consideration?

- How many L1 speakers and L2 speakers are there of the languages under consideration? What is the normal level of L2 fluency?

- What is the degree of local acceptance and support for the use of these languages in the classroom?

- To what degree are these languages already in use in written form?

7.3.5 Research on small-language development initiatives

This research activity would aim to identify the communities, organisations and individuals that are actively involved in the development and use of written forms of the smaller Nigerian languages. A number of such activities have been carried out by Nigerian researchers, local community organisations, networks and NGOs (some of them listed above). The outcome of this research could be used to inform the development of a mechanism for supporting the written use of these languages, as described above.

Research questions to be addressed could include:

- Which institutions have knowledge of, or are involved in, support for development of smaller Nigerian languages?

- Which languages have published linguistic studies?

- Which languages have approved orthographies? What are they currently doing with the written language?

- Which languages have, or have had, language committees?

- Which languages have some kind of written materials to use in the language subject of the primary curriculum?

- Is there a Nigerian institution that would be most logical to take on a role of 'language support' for the smaller languages?

7.3.6 Research on code-switching in the classroom

This study would examine the features and outcomes of current code-switching behaviours in Nigerian primary classrooms. Understanding the nature of teachers' code-switching practices, and their impact on student learning and language fluency, would help to clarify whether code-switching should be supported or eradicated – and in either case, how that could be done.

Research questions could include:

- How could the impact of code-switching be measured for a class of pupils?

- What percentage of teachers' talk is in each language? Does that vary by subject, or by grade?

- What are the relative levels of language fluency in the two languages as the teachers are using them?

- To what extent do pupils code-switch, as well as teachers?

- Is there evidence of the influence of code-switching in written exams?

- Would structured, intentional approaches to code-switching enhance learning in the classroom?

- What are teachers' and teacher educators' understandings or perceptions of, and attitudes towards, code-switching?

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Appendix 1: The methodology used in this review

This review is based on a few fundamental principles of qualitative social research:

- the importance of national stakeholder voice(s), and of accurate interpretation of those voices

- the importance of context, both historical and socio-political, in understanding and interpreting what is happening

- the value of experience beyond the borders of the research site, for accurate analysis of the key issues at hand.

Based on those principles, this review has mined multiple knowledgeable perspectives to build an understanding of the realities of language policy and practice in Nigeria, and the impact that this policy and its implementation are having on learning outcomes among Nigerian young people.

The primary data sources for the review are as follows:

- The *literature review* is based primarily on an extensive body of published papers and books on language, education and the Nigerian context, listed in the References and bibliography section. These were acquired by means of multiple searches through relevant holdings of such sources. Tracking down and acquiring these resources involved use of three professional and academic libraries (the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, UK; the library of the Dallas International University, USA; and SIL Africa's library holdings on language and learning in Cape Town and Nairobi), as well as internet resources. Most of these resources were authored by Nigerian scholars and practitioners, allowing a more authentic national voice on the issues involved.

- Three edited volumes on this topic, all published in 2016, were particularly important for providing current thinking on the issues:

  – volume 3/1 of *NILAS* – a journal of the National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba (NINLAN)

  – *Language Policy, Planning and Management in Nigeria: A Festschrift for Ben O. Elugbe*, edited by Dr Ozo-Mekuri Ndimele

  – the British Council's volume *The Abuja Regional Hornby School: Language Lessons from Africa*, edited by Hamish McIlwraith.

- In addition to these peer-reviewed and formally published sources, a certain amount of so-called 'grey literature' also provided key information. The utility of such sources is their currency, as well as the fact that they present information that is not readily found elsewhere. Examples of grey literature utilised in this review include project descriptions, organisational websites, blog posts and non-refereed papers. Footnoted references to these materials in the review include the hosting websites.

- Input and perspective was gathered from experts and practitioners in Nigeria. This data was obtained primarily through a series of in-person interviews of expert groups and individuals in Ibadan and Abuja, on 13–17 August 2018. The 40 linguists, policymakers, educationists and programme implementers who were interviewed provided current, detailed information and perspective on Nigeria's language and learning issues. Interview content was digitised for easier analysis, and the most salient issues and themes were identified.

In setting up the group interviews, care was taken to ensure a broad geographical representation of institutions and programmes. Also, participants were assured that the opinions and statements expressed would not be attributed by name; this set them more at ease, and facilitated more free (and sometimes very passionate) interview contexts. References to this data in the review refer only to a given group, not any individual speaker. A list of all the experts and practitioners involved in these interviews can be found in Appendix 5.

The information and perspectives gained by these three means were processed with the input of experienced peers in the field. Professionals in the British Council, UNICEF and SIL Africa gave valuable insights into the various findings; their engagement has considerably enhanced the quality and breadth of this review.

However, the drafting and revision of this review has been the work of the author alone, and any errors or omissions are her responsibility.

Appendix 2: Excerpts of the 2013 National Policy on Education relevant to language

Section 1. Philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria

Sub-section 8 (g): 'every child shall be taught in the mother tongue or in the language of the immediate community for the first four years of basic education. In addition, it is expected that every child shall learn one Nigerian language.'

Section 2. Basic education

A. Early Child Care, Development and Education

Sub-section 16 (j): ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will:

- Develop the orthography of more Nigerian languages, and;

- Produce textbooks, supplementary readers and other instructional materials in Nigerian languages.

C. Primary education

20 (b): curriculum for primary education shall be as follows:

- Primary classes 1–3:

  – English studies

  – One Nigerian language …

  – Arabic (optional)

- Primary classes 4–6:

  – English studies

  – One Nigerian language …

  – French language

  – Arabic (optional)

20 (d): The medium of instruction in Primary School shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years in monolingual communities. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject;

20 (e): from the fourth year, English shall be progressively used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French and Arabic shall be taught as subjects;

20 (f): specialist teachers shall be provided for particular subjects such as: … language arts (in relation to English, Arabic, French, Sign language and Nigerian Languages)

[NOTE: Junior Secondary Education has the same language curriculum as primary classes 4–6]

Section 3. Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD)

36. The objectives of PBECD are to:

36 (e) Develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage

A. Senior secondary education:

Subject offerings: English language (compulsory)

Fields of studies include 38.2.3. Humanities: includes English literature, French, Arabic and any Nigerian language that has curriculum

Section 5. Tertiary Education

80. Tertiary education is to include … universities and inter-university centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, the Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages…

Section 8. Education Support Services

Provision of:

127 (ix): Education Resource Centres [for teachers], their functions to include the enhancement of the study of language.

Appendix 3: Research on attitudes and implementation issues related to language of instruction in Nigeria

Author (date)	Subject	Findings	Language/area
Aaron (2018)	Prospects for sustained bilingual education in a minority language community	Programme sustainability is possible, but will need advocacy, more materials, and policy support	Obolo language community, Akwa Ibom State
Adebayo and Oyebola (2016)	Mother tongue influences on the learning of English in primary schools	Factors responsible for the positive use of the mother tongue on the learning of English include social and environmental feelings, linguistic factors, and social and environmental factors	Schools in Irepodun and Ilorin South, Kwara State
Adegbite (2003)	Language preferences of university students	Though most elites are less favourably disposed towards their MTTs than to English, the possibility of complementary roles is being recognised	English, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Pidgin, 'minority languages'
Amajuoyi and Ekott (2016)	Basic education teachers' awareness and implementation of language policy provisions	The teachers are aware of the policy, but they do not consistently use mother tongue as medium of instruction; they prefer combining mother tongue and English in classroom instruction	Aba Education Zone
Anas and Liman (2016)	Attitudes towards English as a medium of instruction among parents, teachers and pupils in primary schools	The attitude of parents, teachers and pupils towards English-medium instruction is positive, but teachers need more support to effectively teach in English	Kano State
Anota and Onyeke (2016)	Linguistic challenges affecting the use of English in teaching national values and ethics	All schools use English as the medium of instruction in the classroom, but code-switching is used in cases where the concepts being taught are difficult and so the teacher switches to the language that the majority of pupils understand	Primary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

Author (date)	Subject	Findings	Language/area
Anyadiegwu (2016)	Assessing the attitude of pupils, teachers and parents towards the English as a medium of instruction policy	Both Igbo and English are seen as important: Igbo aids understanding more, being the mother tongue, while English serves certain utilitarian values, being the official language, and is in no way superior to the Igbo language	Primary schools in South East Nigeria
Asuoha (2016)	Assessment of language policy implementation in schools	There is no language policy that is consciously planned and national in scope, even with the published national documents	Osisioma local government area, Abia State
Ayedemi and Ajibade (2014)	Implementation of language provisions in primary and secondary schools	The degree of implementation of the language provisions is low; no significant differences between primary and secondary, male and female, rural and urban, and public and private school teachers	South West Nigeria
Baba (2016)	An analysis of teacher willingness to use the language of the immediate environment in lower primary school	The majority of respondents think that the use of code-switching and code-mixing should be less prevalent at primary 4–6 than at primary 1–3 levels	Jigawa State
Dikwa and Dikwa (2016)	The use of English as a cause of poor teaching and learning quality	The general complaint of the decline in the level of English among students is correct. Students express themselves more comfortably in their mother tongue than in a foreign language. English as a medium of instruction in Borno has a serious problem if students in JSS year 3 still find it difficult to use English as a means of communication	Three government schools in Maiduguri, Borno State

Author (date)	Subject	Findings	Language/area
Ejieh (2004)	Attitudes of student teachers towards mother tongue medium instruction in primary school	Students had a generally negative attitude to using mother tongues as MoI	'Yoruba-speaking areas of the country'
Fortune-Nwakanma (2016)	Teaching of Igbo as L2 in secondary schools	Igbo L2 students are not being taught with the correct curriculum; English is the LoI	Rivers State
Igboanusi (2008)	Education stakeholder attitudes related to English and mother tongue medium instruction	Respondents preferred education in both English and the mother tongue rather than the use of only one of them. A majority of the respondents wanted to use the mother tongue beyond the first three years of primary education	Anambra (Awka), Kano (Kano city), Oyo (Ibadan), Plateau (Jos) and Rivers (Port Harcourt)
Igboanusi and Peter (2015)	Studies regarding language practices and attitudes	Attitudes and practices are regularly at variance with language policy provisions. Only a uniformly implemented education policy in all schools across the country can restore the use of Nigeria's indigenous languages as MoI in primary schools	All zones except North East
Iyamu and Ogiegbaen (2007)	Parents' and teacher's perceptions of mother tongue medium of instruction policy in primary school	Parents and teachers appreciate the advantages of mother-tongue education, but parents do not want their children to be taught in the mother tongue	Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern Nigeria
Ituen (2016)	Extent to which elements of mother-tongue reading are implemented in secondary school	Boys and girls in both public and private schools readily read Efik/Ibibio books; but public and private school teachers do not pay much attention to the provision and use of reading materials	Efik and Ibibio, Akwa Ibom
Salami (2008)	Classroom language practice in primary schools	English and the mother tongue are still being used, but variably, across the curricula and across classes and levels; code-switching between the mother tongue and English is prevalent	Ile-Ife, Osun State

Appendix 4: Stakeholder and expert perspectives: themes

Group discussion: University linguistics scholars and researchers (13 August 2018)

The most pressing language policy implementation issues

- Development of the written forms of more Nigerian languages.

- Addressing the lack of grade-level pedagogical materials for any of the languages.

- Building teacher capacity for delivering mother-tongue-based learning, and ensuring that trained teachers stay in their field of expertise.

- Addressing the lack of community involvement and 'grassroots ignorance' about language/learning issues.

On the role of English

- The place of English is important, as an international language. We need to find a way to develop Nigerian languages for use as languages of instruction, and still support English as an important second language.

- There is a lot of concern over 'what kind of English' children are learning.

- 'We are a multilingual nation!'

Other thoughts

- A successful programme in mother tongue attracts interest even from the elites.

- We need to look at where the policy has worked, and why.

- We need to identify where the local capacity is for policy implementation.

- 'We are ignoring the linguistic choices that Nigerians are making. Linguistic loyalty and cultural loyalty may not matter; choices are made so as to claim national space and access resources.'

Group discussion: Policymakers (15 and 16 August 2018)

Views on the current NPE

- The mother tongue simplifies learning, and imparts knowledge to children easily. The current policy supports that. However, there is some feeling that the changes to the NPE over the years have watered it down.

- Implementation is very problematic, due to multilingual classrooms, the practice of assessing children in English in the early grades, and the belief that English is the only viable language option.

- A National Language Policy could be a good idea.

How implementation of the language provisions of the NPE could be enhanced

- The policy, and the curriculum, should be available in all the languages, because at this time people don't know what is in it.

- Multilingualism is about all Nigerian languages; so any local government area that wants to use a particular language as medium of instruction, should be encouraged to do so.

- Removal of specific reference to Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa in the 2013 NPE is a good thing, because so many children don't speak them. Since this was done, the number of communities wanting their own orthographies has gone up.

- Teachers should recognise and appreciate all the languages that are in the classroom.

- Extending mother-tongue-medium instruction through to P6 has advantages; children would have longer to learn English as a subject, and could gain reasonable mastery of English by then.

- Reading is not yet a subject in the curriculum, but it should be.

Group discussion: Educationists (16 August 2018)

On the language provisions of the NPE

- They are inadequate in dealing with multilingual classrooms and communities.

- The policy discussion needs to stay relevant to language and education, and not become only about national identity and integration.

- The formulation of the language policy needs to be more participatory.

- It has never been successfully implemented in this country. There is a disconnect between 'rational policy and irrational parents', who all seem to want their children to read and write in English.

- 'All the research shows that the language policy's approach is better, but the sentiment on the ground is not that.'

- The number of languages expected in the classroom make it very difficult: English, Nigerian language, French and Arabic.

On use of mother tongues in classrooms

- Interest in the use of local languages as MoI in schools is increasing, especially in the rural areas; awareness is growing, and some communities are insisting on writing their own curriculum.

- Up to 52 Nigerian languages now have NERDC-approved orthographies; others have developed orthographies but have not yet gone through the approval process.

- An indigenous language support system is needed, which will identify what is going on already and assist the smaller languages in this process.

On code-switching in the classroom

- It goes against what teachers are taught to do.

- It is inevitable for teachers trying to help their children understand.

- Code-switching and code-mixing are not readily distinguished, and there is no agreement on whether either one is better than the other for facilitating learning.

- If you think of languages in competition, it is a bad thing. If you think of languages in co-operation, it is useful.

- In the north, the informal mixing of English and the LIC results in 'corrupted Hausa, useless English.'

On teaching reading as a subject

- Reading instruction needs to be its own subject, apart from English studies.

- This would greatly strengthen the curriculum.

- The teacher training curricula used in Nigeria must start including reading pedagogy.

Series of small group discussions: Programme implementers (15 and 17 August 2018)

Concerns about the mother tongue–English transition

- The expected transition from LIC medium (P1–P3) to English-medium (P4–P6) is not taking place. Rather, code-switching between the two languages characterises all six grades.

- In the programmes being carried out in the north, the teachers more comfortable in the LIC than in English, and their levels of English literacy are low. Thus teacher competence for transition is a problem.

- When neither the teacher nor the parents speak English, how is the child to gain English fluency?

Concerns about teachers

- The teaching profession tends to attract the weakest students; teachers are educationally handicapped and they struggle to professionalise.

- Strengthening teacher training institutions could allow them to set higher standards for admission.

- Teachers are not being posted to jobs that they are trained for; in particular, subject-trained teachers are being put into early-grade classrooms.

- Teachers' salaries need to be actually paid to them on time.

- Teacher absenteeism from the classroom is a fundamental problem.

Is use of Hausa-medium helping to strengthen education outcomes in the north or not?

- Poor performance in schools is not about the use of Hausa; it is about teacher capacity.

- Global best practices on teaching language and reading are not in place in the colleges of education. The approaches being used are out of date.

- The Hausa-language materials being used in schools are not appropriate to the age and learning levels of the pupils.

- Teachers who are trained in development projects are teaching effectively, because the techniques of the current programme are in Hausa.

On the perception of English in the northern states

- The people's interest in gaining English fluency is not matched by the opportunities to do so, and so they don't aspire to it.

- Lack of English fluency is more common than outright resistance.

- At the same time, the belief in the north is that if the child cannot speak English, they are not learning.

- Resistance to English seems to appear more in the non-formal learning programme than the formal programmes.

Recommendations for improving the language and education situation in Nigeria

- Greater support for teachers, with professionalisation and resourcing.

- Raised expectations for teacher performance in the classroom.

- Advocacy so that people know what is in the policy.

- Emphasis on the pedagogical aspect of mother-tongue-medium learning, rather than the political aspect.

Appendix 5: List of experts and practitioners interviewed, Ibadan and Abuja, 13–17 August 2018

Name	Organisation	Designation
Abdu Maigari	Isa Kaita College of Education, Katsina State	Provost
Ahmed Amfani	Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto	Professor of Linguistics
Aleshin Mayowa	Universal Basic Education Commission Abuja	Deputy Director
Appolonia Okwudishu	University of Abuja	Professor of Language Education
Ayo Bamgbose	University of Ibadan	Emeritus Professor of Linguistics
Ayo Yusuff	University of Lagos	Senior Lecturer, Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies
Baffa Saleh	Kano State Universal Basic Education Board	Director, School Service
Busola Agagu	Ministry of Education, Lagos State	Deputy Director
Chinwe Muodumogu	Benue State University	Professor of Language Education
Eno-Abasi Urua	University of Uyo	Professor of Linguistics
Folasade Adefisayo	Leading Learning Ltd	Principal Consultant/CEO
Francis Egbokhare	University of Ibadan	Professor, Linguistics and African Languages
GOC Obiamalu	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	Professor of Linguistics
Gabriel Egbe	Reading Association of Nigeria	Immediate Past President/Project Manager, RANA
Garba Ibrahim	College Of Education, Kangere, Bauchi state	Provost
Harrison Adeniyi	Lagos State University/Linguistics Association of Nigeria	National President/Chairperson, Technical Committee of National Language Policy
Hassan Musa	National Commission for Mass Literacy, Abuja	Director, Literacy and Development
Imelda Udoh	University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State	Professor of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages
Ismaila A Tsiga	Bayero University, Kano State	Department of English and Literary Studies
Jacob Masanso Gebukoba	Save The Children	Head of Education
John Edeh	National Commission for Mass Literacy, Abuja	Technical Assistant to Executive Secretary

Name	Organisation	Designation
Joseph Ahaotu	English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria	National Secretary
Justina Anyadiegwu	Nwafor Orizu College of Education	Senior Lecturer
Mark Hamilton	Northern Education Initiative Plus	Senior Reading Specialist
Michael I Adaji	Teacher Development Programme	Communication Officer (Consultant)
Mikailu Ibrahim	RANA/FHI 360	Literacy Coordinator
Miki Tanae	UNICEF, Abuja	Education Specialist
Murtala Mohammed	UNICEF Akure Field Office	Education Specialist
Ndimele Ozo-Mekuri	English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria	National President
Nuhu Cheshi	Universal Basic Education Commission ABUJA	
Obiajulu Emejulu	National Institute for Nigerian Languages	Deputy Executive Director & Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies
Olalekan Saidi	Teacher Development Programme	In-Service Technical Lead
Olusola Timothy Babatunde	Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Ilorin	Professor of English & President, English Studies Association of Nigeria (ESAN)
Oluwabunmi Oteju	Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board	Director
Philip Hayab John	College Of Education Gidan Waya, Kaduna State	Lecturer, Department of English
Rasaq O Alagbala	National Commission for Mass Literacy, Abuja	Senior Education Officer
Shehu Sidi Ibrahim	Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto	Professor of Modern European Languages and Linguistics
Sulleiman Adediran	FAA Educational and Consult	Independent Consultant
Wale Adegbite	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State	Professor of English, Department of English and Literary Studies
Yakubu Anas	Premium Development Consultancy	Senior Consultant