

UTILITY, STATUS AND LANGUAGES IN COMPETITION IN MIDDLE BELT NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT The diglossic principles implanted into sociolinguistic discourse in the late 1950's afforded a conceptual frame where traditional paradigms and novel parameters for theorizing language within multilingual management coincide and interpenetrate. To Nigeria's multilingual situation, the principles of triglossia have been introduced on two conceptual levels: *policy management* and *public response to policy*. However, dimorphous symbiosis between policy guidelines and the attendant applicatory dispositions has attracted inconsistencies in public response to language management strategies and goals. Rendered inadequate, are the adopted triglossic principles which stand in variance with the linguistic realities they are designed to explain. This paper examines first the constructs where contradiction and inconsistency on the levels of policy management and theory stem. Given the conflictual relation between language policy and public response, this paper also examines conditions that intervene to dictate the patterns of language behavior. The tenet that the character of the contemporary language management in Nigeria encourages linguistic behaviors autonomous of policy dictates is affirmed. Particularly in the Middle Belt, language behavior guided by minority group-based social benefit (utility) rather than policy goal is privileged.

Key Words: Multilingualism; Management; Policy; Theory; Triglossia; Utility.

INTRODUCTION

Since the infusion of diglossic maxims into sociolinguistic theory (Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1967, 1968) a permanent qualitative anchorage was established for language diversity as a factor in social management. Perhaps by default, the character of the multi-dimensional symbiosis between language and society in the pre-diglossic sociolinguistic tradition, has been under-explored. As the diglossic principles were pursued, and new dimensions added (Ferguson, 1972; Platt, 1977; Abdulaziz, 1978 and Fasold, 1990), with greater rigor, other related theoretical paradigms ensued. The concept of triglossia was introduced to Nigeria's sociolinguistic management as scholars, (Brann, 1979; Ikara, 1986, 1987; Orite, 1990 and Bamgbose, 1991) searched for ways to match the imports of government language policy with the attendant aggregates of social response. Persistently, however, mismatch has resulted, exposing earnest anomaly in either the policy or the concepts designed to explain it, or both.⁽¹⁾

On the one hand, a government language policy largely guided by political pragmatism rather than absolute commitment to national authenticity generated a management approach that situated the country in a chaotic conceptual intersection between the nationalist vs nationalist tendencies (Fishman, 1972) complimented

by pluralist vs unitarianist dispositions. On the other hand, the government failure to pursue this policy with succinct definitional criteria and principled program of implementation (Bamgbose, 1991), produced applicatory inconsistency, a condition with strong anchorage for arbitrariness in the mainstream response to the policy goals. Additionally, conceptual gaps between language and other policies, particularly those designed to compliment it, i.e. educational and affirmative policies have, all together, created contradictions in the nation's social management strategy. Yet, in absolute defiance of these developments is the tendency, in some quarters (Simpson, 1978; Brann, 1979; Olagoke, 1982; Ikara, 1987), to implant a somewhat rigid taxonomy into the conceptual paradigms adopted in the analysis of the overall content of the country's language policy.⁽²⁾ This study is informed in part, and perhaps in no complimentary terms, by the attributes of mismatch between policy and implementation within the contemporary framework of national management, and more essentially by the questions afforded by the theoretical designation of the resultant social attributes of the existing language policy.

By focusing on specific language-centered social denominators, attitude/choice, mobility/accommodation and value/utility observed in the Middle Belt, the nation's microcosm, this work examines the conditions under which a two-way mismatch, customarily marked by inconsistency and contradiction, has been incurred on two levels: policy-dictated social adaptation and policy theorizing. The goal is to evaluate, through a set of complimentary usage-based language data, the roles of education, group solidarity and identity in determining the patterns of mainstream language behavior. This paper's core argument is that given the inefficient profile of the nation's policy implementation, the patterns of language behavior are now anchored in parallel management strategies, one with which group-based subsystems vie for equity in a participation-opportunity scheme, and the other, where the country, as a nation, strives for authentic political structure and sovereignty. The locus, away from which the two strategies deviate, is the social buffer where inter-group relation is central. I argue that language maintains, in addition to its bio-cognitive or symbolic character, goal-driven parameters, especially in a multilingual setting is, a primordial instrument of social negotiation, and benefit acquisition, and hence utility.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

I. Middle Belt/Nigeria

Nigeria, a nation with approximately 270 ⁽³⁾ethnic subsystems (Murdock, 1975; Wente-Lucas, 1985) as myriad as the linguistic systems they sustain, has instituted language policy as an avenue for accommodating order and equilibrium in its conglomeration, absolutely within ostensible management exigency. What is striking is the degree to which the policy has succumbed to failure. In the Middle Belt where the largest number of the nation's ethnic subsystems are located, social confusion characterized by discretionary group-based language behaviors have surfaced as the clear indicator of problems in the existing policy. Decades before

policy intervention, Hausa was well established as the lingua franca of the Middle Belt and a social stabilizer. Years of missionary work which instituted educational activities through Christianity and local vernaculars hardly destabilized the region's linguistic status quo. Many of the local languages were taught by the pioneering missionaries-educators who utilized Hausa as a lingua franca. More importantly, the role of Hausa as a regional language in conjunction with its political empowerment made it a strategic linguistic requirement for the region's diverse groups. Some, under this condition, were able to sign onto regional ideology and political oneness orchestrated by the Muslim majority.

But, most groups were reluctant to be assimilated into the institutional constructs of the language, i.e. the dominant religion of Islam, and the culture of Hausa. Commonplace was solidarity toward Hausa toned by social detachment from it when attributes of its religious affinity were evoked. To Brann (1989), this detachment translated into group resistance to the language "less on account of its linguistic, than its religious identity with Islam." Nonetheless, due to direct antecedent in the traditional political order, Hausa was utilized to consolidate the institutions that recreated its functional status, as well as those that fostered the integration of the political structure, i.e. the Northern Region to which these institutions were organic (Paden, 1968). Established through Hausa in the domains of administration, public services, law, media and education, was an effective management infrastructure for this region. However, new government policy adjustments⁽⁴⁾ largely autonomous of the regional agenda have been introduced, forcing a far-reaching social change with negative effects on the traditional status of Hausa. Instead of further consolidation, the institutions that once guaranteed the status have, in fact, weakened. Group resistance to culturo-religious assimilation was tolerated in the structural adjustment policy, resulting in administrative separation of the minority territories from areas under the direct political control of the majority identified mainly with Hausa culture and Islam. This adjustment has brought about a minority sense of autonomy.

In socio-linguistic terms, this meant a cursory reconstruction of the functional allocations traditionally assigned to Hausa language and other languages. In the process, Hausa became a language associated with outgroup institutions the minority groups can either accept or reject under fluctuating conditions. Inevitably, there has been a rejuvenation of group-centered linguistic awareness in the Middle Belt with roots in the legacy of language policy earlier formulated through Christian evangelism. Meanwhile, as citizens of these states adjusted to the attributes of administrative freedom, other conditions marking their individual autonomy were put to test by way of federal affirmative policy.⁽⁵⁾ The basic indices of this policy were ethnolinguistic. Hence, groups in the Middle Belt have responded in fashions that affirm their individual identities rather than compromise them for the sake of preservation of the traditional political coalescence under the Hausa lingua franca. This has coincided with the re-established efforts geared towards educational vernacularization and renewed affinity toward mother tongue (MT) communication in the region. A collective redirection of consciousness toward language identity has emerged. The historical vesting of the smaller minority languages inside a much larger majority language (Fasold, 1990) is currently under-

going a configurational reconstruction. Infused into this development, is ethnicity, and with it, culturally-centered attitudes toward ingroup and outgroup languages are constantly injected into the strategy guiding usage preferences.

Certain fundamental questions, with cues from Fasold's (1990) observation may be raised: (a) In what direction are the language behaviors in the Middle Belt being guided, toward sustained multilingualism or toward advocated unilingualism? (b) What forces other than ethnicity guide these behaviors? (c) Are these forces products of manipulation, political or otherwise? (d) Can any of the forces be effectively mutated? (e) Under what conditions is mutation or lack thereof consistent with the national political agenda and language policy goals? These questions are significant providing the basis for the conceptual validation formulated for the data profiled for this essay. My core contention is that language behaviors in the Middle Belt are predicated on the existing institutional conditions of which they are a direct product. Although some of these conditions are historically induced, these behaviors have come to bear the traits of the contemporary political programs and policies on national management. I will examine how much of this novel development is incorporated into the contemporary language behaviors of the citizenry in this region through language data.

INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS

Minority language users in their bid to minimize social isolation and participatory handicap tend to resort to language for political tool. For them, language becomes a resource for mainstream information acquisition as well as an avenue to equal opportunity in education, employment, justice, health and other para-public services (Demoz, 1991). However, as the privileged ethnic groups in the majority class are reluctant to abandon their linguistic advantages and, the minority groups,

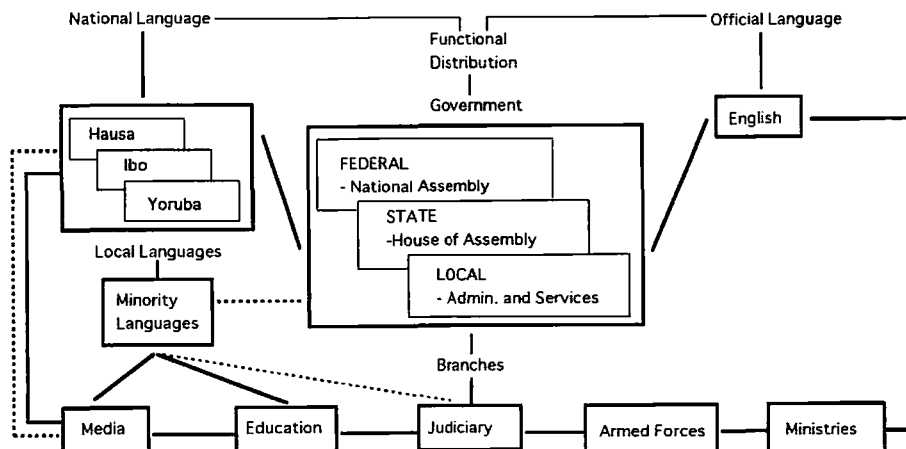


Fig. 1. Functional distribution of languages in Nigeria.

the under-privileged, are too impatient to tolerate continued inequality, a mutual sense of gentile antagonism erupts (Nnoli, 1979) as in the case of the demographic classes in the Middle Belt. Social division looms with the issue of language. Inter-group polarization with language resource becomes a crisis requiring policy intervention of some sort. In Nigeria, an avenue to language management was provided by way of the national constitution. But, in an attempt to customize management strategies, guidelines with major social significance were paradoxically instituted, invoking from the public a response of ambiguity. For instance the government guideline⁽⁶⁾ on language distribution in administrative and para-public sectors assigns official function to English superposed on Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba, the three majority languages in turn functionally elevated above the other minority languages (Fig. 1). This arrangement has readily generated social contradictions. A two-level bottom-up resentment, from the minority toward the majority, and from the latter toward English was promptly triggered.

But so far, the rationale for this scheme, which derives from language determination and compromise (Jernudd, 1973) has been sustained. The hierarchy of language assignment adopted was determined on the basis of five major factors: colonial legacy, demography, territoriality, political equation and language standardization, all employed to build a social compromise among the nation's diverse groups. These factors, considered in their totality, appear to legitimize competition rather than compromise on the level of policy implementation. By affording English, a colonial language, official functions in government, public services, law, education and commerce, the scheme relies on historical legacy and nationalist approach for social management rather than demographic conditions or nationalist demands. For this reason, the scheme has (Brann, 1979; Ikara, 1987) been contested. More significant, is the induced two-way competition that the scheme inevitably admits. One, the fluidity in the structure of functions assigned to the three national languages, Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba should bring about social competition rather than complementarity among the three. Reinforcing this is the fact that none of the languages is particularly dominant, with individual ethnic base population⁽⁷⁾ of 22.04, 17.49 and 21.41 percents (Jibril, 1990).

Also, all of the three languages are highly territorialized, in effect, permitting frontiers of mutual social exclusion to be erected rather easily. In their individual home territories, other outgroup majority languages are largely alienated. Political ambivalence on the part of government in procuring adequate policy-implementation matching procedures has, in large measure, undermined the required trans-regional effectiveness of the three languages. Simply they are national languages only in their functional confinement to individual historical regions of origin. By superposing the three national languages on more than 265 other minority indigenous languages, the scheme fosters counter-productivity as the minority dissociates itself from forced incorporation into the linguistic culture of the majority. Indeed, effectively engaged by the Middle Beltan minority population has been a massive retreat of its members into the familiar ethnocultural sub-systems, where their individual linguistic identities are affirmed (Otite, 1990).

In education as well as in the affirmative programs where government actions have been streamlined by criteria similar to those employed for language distribu-

tion, made manifest is the social fracture resonates. The 1977 national policy on education⁽⁸⁾ maintains that the medium of instruction in the primary school should initially be the mother tongue or any language of the immediate community, and later, English. Additionally, the government considers English "to be in the interest of the national unity that each child ... be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages (Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba) other than his mother tongue." By the token of commitment to national unity and social equilibrium, the government stresses equitable participation of all groups in the conduct of government affairs and agencies through the affirmation of federal character policy.⁽⁹⁾ Advocated unambiguously in this and educational policies and that of education are two management-oriented social concepts, *unity* and *equity* to which languages constitutes a common denominator. To dismantle the anchorage of social dissatisfaction and perceived 'cultural imperialism' (Ansre, 1976), at least from the minority viewpoint, non-majority languages, under both policies, are granted functional avenues in education and in certain para-public services, notably the media and public health. The minority commitment to absolute vitalization of their individual languages has been promoted. With languages such as Tiv, Idoma, Ebirra, Nupe and others becoming highly standardized through concerted efforts and political calculation by the minority elites, there is an obvious drive toward linguistic challenge rather than social compromise suggested in the educational policy.

I. Policy Equation

The contemporary group-centered social awareness in the Middle Belt has gained momentum. The national policy formula that Brann's (1979) triglossic model (Fig. 2) so unambiguously represents, has been steadily dismantled. At the moment, a chaotic state of linguistic disequilibrium pervades this region. On the ground of calculated subscription to the federal affirmative policy, items of ethnicity, culture and language have been employed somewhat regularly by the government as the indices of social management and political reconstruction. Many administrative states and local governments have been created and empowered through pseudo-autonomous institutional apparatus to manage language policy and implementation. Of all the states created in the Middle Belt, none is ethnoculturally homogenous. By and large, the policy problems encountered in planning indigenous languages in the higher echelon of federal governance, where Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba are considered equal national language options, is also experienced in the individual states fueling linguistic competition and functional instability.

Once again, the government attempt to foster *unity* through *equity* verges on serious difficulty as grounds for social compromise are lost to the imperatives engendered by policy strategy. An important epilogue to this development is the constant adjustment of social behavior, particularly in the minority population, as the public interpretation of the inadequacy of government policies, acquires greater credence. The liberty of cultural groups to apply their linguistic awareness on the basis of benefit maximization permeates the complexity of the ensuing social

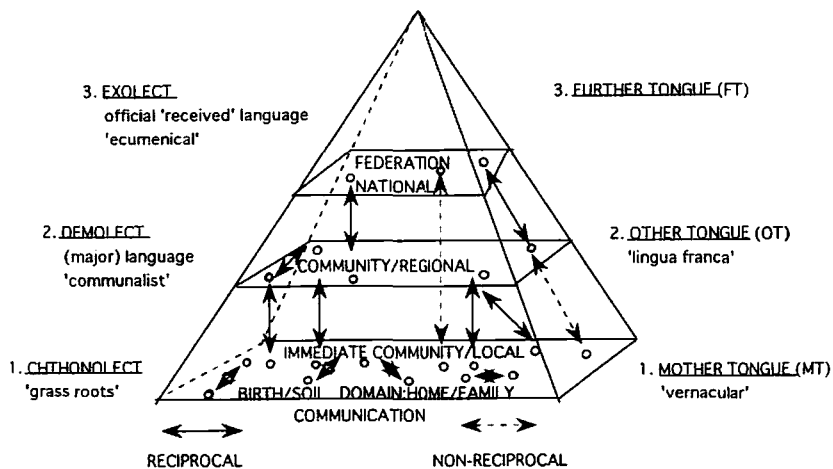


Fig. 2. Brann's triglossic model of language use in Nigeria.

behavior. Utility as a goal-driven entity makes the interests of these groups coincide with the consequences of their choices, especially in social negotiations.

PUBLIC RESPONSE TO POLICY

1. Minority Perspective

I have sought conceptual avenue in certain specific designed to investigate language behaviors of the minority groups in the Middle Belt. Guiding my choice of studies profiled are data that either validate or contradict the underlying assumptions of the present work. Three areas of language behavior, acquisition, interactive goal and choice management provide the foci for the choice of data. I tried to identify behaviors affirming utility conditions as guidelines for actions manifested in situations of binarity or symbiosis between attitude and choice, mobility and accomodation, and those that relate singularly to encroachment and *leakage*⁽¹¹⁾ (Fasold, 1990). My assumption is that the legislation of English as the sole official language (OL) in Nigeria prompted a social response underscored by favorable, and broader applicatory appeal for the language than customary.

I assumed, therefore, that preference for English is positively correlated with the caliber of roles to which the language is assigned. To all the indigenous groups in the country, English is an ethnically unmarked language (Fishman, 1972), a neutral code to which groups can relate without social attributes peculiar to feelings of outgroup domination. The minority elites prefer to interact in OL as an avenue of preserving the integrity of their group identities (Williamson & Van Eerde, 1980). Neutralized in this regard is the social disadvantage encountered in having to use a majority national language (NL) which in the North is Hausa. The Nigerian language legislation inherently has mutated biculturalism in intergroup language ac-

quisition. Choice of acquired language may be determined by multiple factors; however, usage is guided particularly by social goals. Among the educated minorities, languages with which they reserve no particular symbolic affinity, are a social resource, utilized to achieve social goals. Both English (OL) and Hausa (NL), to most are unmarked instruments of participation in a larger social structure. But these minorities, in their desire to maximize participation, are more oriented toward OL than they are toward NL.

Differential competition occurs between the two language categories based on the significance of the domains assigned to each through policy legislation. The allocation of superior functional roles to English in the areas of administration, documentation, law, media, and education, where other languages marginally function, generates greater appeal for the language among the minority elites. Among them, hierarchy in language distribution is likely to engender an aversion to outgroup language(s) that afford(s) less than maximum social benefit. Level of usage of an unmarked language is assumed to be positively related to the aggregates of the utility attributed to it. Language that provides the minority with the greatest social values, political access, participation, economic power, education, and health, is slated the highest in the acquisition and usage hierarchy. Where two or more languages maintain similar social values, minority language solidarity may be subjected to marginal conditions.⁽¹⁰⁾ However, if two or more languages are not differentially accommodated, an indiscriminate usage occurs, and the predication is leakage⁽¹¹⁾ in value-driven language functions.

Since proficiency in English is an elitist commodity, preference for the language and levels of education, which are markers of class, are positively correlated. The minority elites who are themselves well-educated and occupy the upper echelon of government establishments tend to communicate more frequently in OL for reasons of social status. But, they remain absolutely loyal to their individual MT's for the reasons of their symbolic values and also those of politics, particularly in the light of ethnolinguistic identity as a unit of participation under the national affirmative policy. These assumptions lead me to believe that policy intervention filtered through public response has produced a paradox altering policy goals while effectively creating usage management that relies more on social need (utility) than any other value, at least, for the minority groups.

PATTERNS OF LINGUISTIC BEHAVIOR

I. Language in Education

Among the minority languages used in schools, seven (Table 1) appeared prominent and sufficiently stable in terms of their roles in curriculum instruction. I conducted a survey of language use in 7 state capitals and 45 local government headquarters in the Middle Belt (Arasanyin, 1994). The languages surveyed were spoken in these locations, and in some instances, beyond. Incidentally, the survey also showed that the majority of the languages were used in urban centers and also for informal administrative functions. The seven languages sampled were all used

Table 1. Language use in education.

Language	Main State (Middle Belt)	Acquisition Distribution (Respondents)															
		Medium of Instruction														Class Subject	
		Primary				Secondary				Primary		Secondary		<Secondary			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Berom	Plateau	112	12.5	45	40.2	67	59.8	0	0.0	76	67.9	88	78.6	12	10.7	0	0.0
Ebirra	Kogi, Plateau	125	13.9	52	41.6	73	58.4	0	0.0	87	69.6	90	72.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Fula	Adamawa	118	13.2	33	28.0	85	72.0	0	0.0	53	44.9	51	43.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hausa	Bauchi, Plateau*	88	9.8	85	96.6	3	3.4	21	23.9	67	76.1	88	100	73	83.0	12	13.6
Idoma	Benue, Taraba	91	10.5	12	13.2	79	86.8	0	0.0	69	75.8	18	19.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Nupe	Kogi, Niger	94	14.0	25	26.6	69	73.4	0	0.0	42	44.7	49	52.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Tiv	Benue, Taraba	126	14.0	78	61.9	48	38.1	0	0.0	90	71.4	66	52.4	19	15.1	0	0.0
Yoruba	Kwara, Kogi	143	15.9	115	80.4	28	19.6	4	2.8	139	97.2	122	85.3	101	70.6	2	1.4
**N/%		897	100	445	49.6	452	50.4	25	2.8	623	69.5	597	66.6	205	22.9	14	1.6

*: States not covered; **N (conducted): 1,010; N (fully completed): 897 or 88.8%.
Lang./ethnic distribution (see Otite, 1990: 44-57).

formally in primary school institutions. Hausa, in the survey, was not considered a minority language even though the region under consideration was a minority area where Hausa was a second language. Of the total number of the respondents who claimed Hausa ethnicity,⁽¹²⁾ 9.8 percent of the overall sample, 96.6 percent indicated having been instructed in Hausa in the primary school.

The languages closest to Hausa are Yoruba, another majority language of minority status in the region, and Tiv; respectively, they comprised 80.4 and 61.9 percents of respondents who claim initial formal education in them. Those who had primary school instruction in other minority languages were below 50.0 percent, nonetheless a worthy development. Within the contemporary minority curriculum is a clear accommodation for vernacular instruction at the local level (Brann, 1989). Most of the languages in terms of standardization for pedagogical purposes are still in different stages of development. They are yet to accomplish Ferguson's (1968) tripartite conditions of evolvement, i.e. graphization, standardization and modernization. Very few language was utilized formally (2.8 percent) or taught (23.9 percent) beyond primary school level, a situation that hindered continuity and production of instructors with sufficient proficiency to teach in these languages. This is significant but less so than other militating conditions.

Facing the evolvement of these languages are indeed two erosive factors: the historical influence of Hausa and the contemporary power of English. More significant is the latter. Based on the superiority of the social roles assigned to English and the type of benefits these roles embody, certain minorities have elected to confine their acquisition aptitude to its mastery. Pervasive are situations of 'monoliteracy' (Mackey & Beebe, 1977) where people acquire many languages but can read and write only in English. Brann (1989: 53) referred to these situation as 'a state of schizoglossia' between the written English and the oral minority languages.

Etim (1985), in his study of languages used in pedagogy (English and 6 indigenous minority languages) in Plateau, a state in the Middle Belt, observed the overwhelming preference for English, confirming favorable public response to its acquisition. Headmasters on whose shoulders rests the responsibility of language policy implementation in schools, use English three times more frequently than they do any of the indigenous languages surveyed. The relatively high preference for English both in urban and rural areas (Fig. 3). was shared by teachers in all levels of primary school instruction. Mainly in the rural areas, all instances except the final years of primary school, show local languages (MT's) in strong competition with Hausa as well as with English. These findings coincide with the results in Arasanyin's (1995) study that found a strong majority (an average of 65 percent of the participants surveyed on language use) agreeing with the view that MT was socially more vital in Nigeria and should therefore be encouraged in the nation's educational system (Fig. 4). Whereas Etim's results support minority resolve on instructional vernacularization, more significant is the high percentage ratio, approximately 3 : 1, of minority participants who considered English the most advantageous language in the country (Fig. 4). Etim (1985) attributed this to the prestige factor.

For instance, teachers preferred English to Hausa or MT, both in urban and

LANGUAGE PREFERRED by Primary School Headmasters for Use in Schools

	AREA	ENG.	HAUSA	MT
Language Preferred Primary 1-3	URBAN	60	10	30
	RURAL	30	10	60
Language Preferred Primary 4-6	URBAN	80	10	10
	RURAL	70	20	10

	LOC.	YES	NO	TOTAL
Because there are few materials in other languages	URBAN	75.4	24.6	100%
	RURAL	72.2	27.8	
It is the language I can use with ease	URBAN	82.5	17.5	100%
	RURAL	75.4	24.6	100%
The children will gain more due to the language I use	URBAN	92.2	4.8	100%
	RURAL	70.6	29.4	100%
It is a more prestigious language both within and outside the community	URBAN	85.7	14.3	100%
	RURAL	67.5	32.5	100%

	AREA	ENG.	HAUSA	MT
Language Preferred Primary 1-3	URBAN	23.8	7.9	22.2
	RURAL	14.3	31.7	3.8
Language Used Primary 1-3	URBAN	50.8	3.1	
	RURAL	18.3	39.9	3.8
Language Preferred Primary 4-6	URBAN	42.9	1.6	1.6
	RURAL	26.1	11.9	
Language Used Primary 4-6	URBAN	46.0		
	RURAL	20.6		

LANGUAGE PREFERRED/USE in Urban-Rural Schools

Teacher's REASONS for LANGUAGE CHOICE in Pedagogy

Fig. 3. Etim's (1985) three-way findings on language preference.

rural settings, because it was the language they can use with ease and because of what the language offered in instructional materials and social prestige (Fig. 3). He observed that teachers preferred bilingual education in English and Hausa to that in English and MT. This is understandable given the strong dependency, over 72 percent, of language preference on the availability of teaching materials in the languages surveyed. Under this condition, MT's suffered greater disadvantage. Etim concluded, however, that English maintained the highest preference because it was the official language of Nigeria. In fact, what I find more conclusive in these findings is the consolidation of English and the evolving acceptance of MT education, a condition that will, eventually, reduce Hausa to a linguistic buffer of limited functional significance, hence low utility. This, in itself, undermines the triglossic principles built into the national language policy. Currently emerging with the renaissance of vernacular education in the minority areas are conditions of commitment to group consciousness.

Politically, there is a sense of urgency, particularly among the minority elites who, given the affirmative policy, have become prominent 'cultural entrepreneurs' (Young, 1979), preoccupied with the mission to develop minority languages as tools for defining a minority social agenda, and for fulfilling minority institutional needs and goals. Among them is the consensus that "mass mobilization and education are more meaningful, more effective and more creative when they are carried out in people's language" (Emenanjo, 1988: 27). And, in their entrepreneurship, they perceive language development in schools not only as a means of promoting group vitality, but also as a way of insuring a competitive edge for their individual languages within the state structure where some of the languages have become majority languages. What they encourage in the process is educational

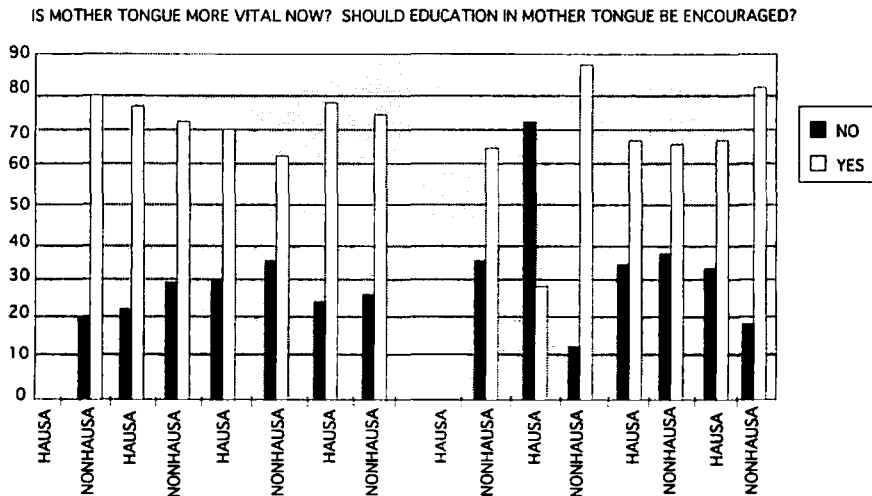
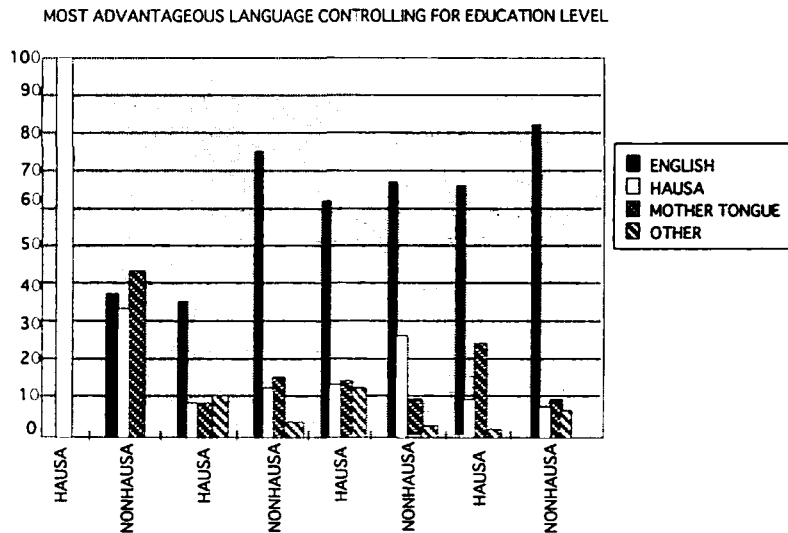


Fig. 4. Minority views of function and status of selected language categories (Arasanyin, 1995).

indigenization with the language denominator. Thus, only those who speak a particular language may benefit from educational privileges of a particular area. The domain where this development has a serious impact is in the overall strategy of national language management, aimed at *unity-equity fusion* but currently overwhelmed by multidimensional levels of language instrumentality.

Table 2. Distribution of the commonly used languages.

Government Employees: Federal, State and Local																					
Education	N/%	Language	pref.	Macrosocial Milieus												X	p<.05				
				family		*community		peers		market		gathering		street				office			
				N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Primary School	147 16.4	non-Hausa *EL	i (H)	32	21.8	59	40.1	24	16.3	44	29.9	47	32.0	30	20.4	14	9.5	250	59.0		
			ii (L)	68	46.3	18	12.1	31	21.1	19	12.9	22	15.0	11	7.5	5	3.4	174	41.0	55.90	0.00
		Hausa	i (H)	5	3.4	8	5.4	7	4.8	8	5.4	5	3.4	6	4.1	6	4.1	45	12.4		
			ii (L)	23	15.6	41	27.9	46	31.3	53	36.1	38	25.9	61	41.5	56	38.1	318	87.6	2.70	0.84
		English	i (H)	2	1.4	3	2.0	3	2.0	1	0.7	2	1.4	3	2.0	2	1.4	16	6.9		
			ii (L)	17	11.6	18	12.2	36	24.3	22	15.0	23	15.6	36	24.5	64	43.5	216	93.1	4.07	0.66
Secondary School	410 45.7	non-Hausa (EL)	i (H)	249	60.7	218	53.2	89	21.7	165	40.2	121	29.5	23	5.6	10	2.4	875	78.8		
			ii (L)	108	26.3	42	10.2	33	8.0	23	5.6	22	5.4	4	1.0	4	1.0	236	21.8	36.97	0.00
		Hausa	i (H)	23	5.6	51	12.4	89	21.7	112	27.3	52	12.7	127	31.1	72	17.6	526	73.7		
			ii (L)	12	2.9	27	6.6	26	6.3	29	7.1	38	9.3	29	7.1	27	6.6	188	26.3	23.72	0.00
		English	i (H)	14	3.4	49	12.0	107	26.1	18	4.4	157	38.3	192	46.8	268	65.4	805	77.0		
			ii (L)	4	1.0	23	5.6	66	16.1	63	15.4	20	4.9	35	8.5	29	7.1	240	23.0	213.57	0.00
>Secondary School	340 37.9	non-Hausa (EL)	i (H)	169	49.7	141	41.5	46	13.5	40	11.8	54	15.9	26	7.6	18	5.3	494	70.0		
			ii (L)	125	36.8	29	8.5	21	6.2	15	4.4	13	3.8	12	3.5	6	1.8	221	30.0	38.72	0.00
		Hausa	i (H)	17	5.0	49	14.4	60	17.6	99	29.1	61	17.9	93	27.4	52	15.3	431	73.1		
			ii (L)	8	2.4	21	6.2	18	5.3	26	7.1	29	7.1	18	5.3	39	11.5	159	26.9	23.11	0.00
		English	i (H)	12	3.5	82	24.1	166	48.8	84	24.7	172	50.6	181	53.2	215	63.2	912	84.8		
			ii (L)	9	2.6	18	5.3	29	8.5	76	22.4	11	3.4	10	2.9	10	2.9	163	15.2	189.87	0.00
N: 897														S/R: df. 2		F=12.7, p>0.0001					

*EL: Indigenous Ethnic Language often referred to as Mother Tongue (or MT); * Community: restricted only to ethnolinguistic reference.
Source: Arasanyin, 1994.

II. Language in Microsocial Settings⁽¹³⁾

The language used in microsocial settings, as in language use in education, is as inconsistent as it is discretionary, manifesting a firm akinness to the amorphous state of the social strategies by which it is primarily informed. There are two interlocking usage situations presently: *inter-domain leakage* and *intra-domain purging*. With the former, social frontiers or domains categorized under distinctive languages are, for pragmatic reasons, crossed readily through the usage of a unique language. Normally, one language is, in variance with policy guidelines, used with great frequency, in domains to which different languages are separately assigned. Occurring quite often in this situation is cross-dominal mobility of one language with ancillary functional overlap with other languages. A single domain of education, primary or nomadic, or public health may constitute a functional anchorage for several instead of one assigned language, i.e. MT. Conversely in the latter, languages of differing classifications provide identical functions within a unique domain.

This stems from policy-based language *clustering* that affords two or more languages to function in unique domains (e.g., English and the NL's in the House of Assembly, or English as the OL in the office where Hausa may function as a NL). Marking this situation is functional chaos, a circumstance wherein domainal allocations based on the relative appropriateness of languages (Fishman, 1968) is shelved in favor of the functional encroachment of less preferred languages (Lieberson, 1981). Essentially, *leakage* and *purging* derive from autonomous public responses to policy; and associated with both are instances of contradiction. Where one language is assigned, several are used and where several are assigned, one is preferred. Arasanyin's (1994) survey of language use among randomly selected government employees in the Middle Belt attests to these tendencies. In Table 2 are three languages in their intra-code categories (H-L) matched with their individual policy-dictated functions (EL/MT, NL and OL).

For instance, in the office, a domain to which English as OL is assigned, I observed that workers chose other languages for their communication needs. What potentially engender this situation are variables embodied in certain indices of status, i.e. education (proficiency level) and class (office held). A security officer, cleaner or messenger with less than secondary school education is more than likely to interact with a clerical officer in Pidginized English (L) because of his low proficiency in standard English. The clerical officer in the structural ladder would need, in his address of perhaps an executive officer, standard English (H). Differentials in usage forms are indeed variables of levels of education. My survey showed that 43.5 percent of those with primary school education only, preferred to interact in the office milieu in the L variant of English. Another 38.1 percent of the same group preferred interaction in non-standard Hausa (L). The standard forms of both languages were less preferred among members of this group because high proficiency in these languages was an attribute of at least secondary school education. Low proficiency in this case generated an inter-domainal transfer of language functions or *leakages*. In the office, a domain of great formality where the H versions of OL and NL are by policy assigned, informal low language, a medium

with its primary appropriateness in the street, gathering, market and the like milieu was found to be utilized.

However, among those with secondary or higher education, very high percentages, 65.4 and 63.2 respectively preferred English, the standard H variant. Among these groups also, inter-domainal functional *leakage* appeared slightly. In gatherings, and on the street, 38.3 and 46.8 percent of those with secondary school preferred standard English where even non-standard Hausa would have sufficed. In conversation with peers and friends 26.1 percent resorted to standard English. Outside the office and devoid of official contents, such as discussions among friends, deliberations in informal gatherings, and contacts on the streets could be served by an indigenous language, those with tertiary education, 48.8, 50.6 and 53.2 percents respectively in those situations, preferred standard English. Entrenched in the pervasive *leakage* is one consistent usage pattern: standard Hausa (H) is least preferred. An important aspect to this observation is a social twist defined by the departure from the linguistic tradition that matched both Hausa and English, in Northern Nigeria, as co-official languages in all government-run bureaucratic establishments (Brann, 1989). As an official language by tradition and a national language by the dictates of the contemporary policy, the low usage of Hausa among the minority office workers seems to indicate, on its part, a functional decline or, an encroachment.

If in fact social maintenance of a language is achieved primarily through its H form (Fasold, 1990), Hausa may indeed be losing its solidarity base among the minority groups. Relative to English in its H and L forms, both the H and L variants of the language are, in almost all the social instances investigated, favored less. Education as a microsocial index⁽¹⁴⁾ clearly plays a significant but not absolute role in this development. It was asserted rather conclusively in both the F- and chi-test results indicating homogeneity in the minority population and inherent variability in language preferences, that Hausa, in a two way competition with English and minority languages, fared poorly. English particularly, has been purging Hausa of its effectiveness in many domains of social interaction in the minority areas. Where English faced potent competition were in the family and community domains. In the three levels of education examined, individual ethnic languages (EL's) in both H and L forms accounted for 68.1, 87.0 and 86.5 percents in contrast to 13.0, 4.4 and 6.1 percents English (H and L) usage in the family domain. Observed also in the community domain was similar pattern with minimal variation with education levels.

Those with higher education used English with higher frequency (29.4 percent) in their individual communities. Again, all these instances show low tolerance for Hausa with slight modification among those with minimal education (27.9 percent). Reflected overwhelmingly in these results was minority adjustment of language preferences to fit, first the dictates of their individual group needs, and then those permissible under the national language policy. English affords the minority groups greater competitiveness and participatory opportunities in the national mainstream. At the base are individual ethnolects, i.e. the languages with which the elites maintain their participatory anchorage and with which each collectivity mobilizes to make social demands with a degree of effectiveness that the affirmative

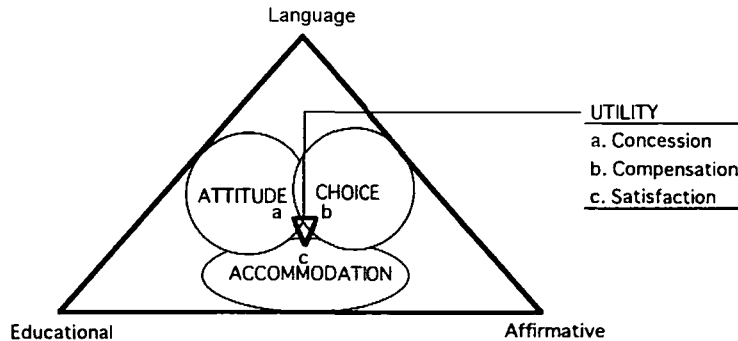


Fig. 5. Triangular national policy frame.

policy permits. Midway between English and the ethnolects is a linguistic buffer, the NL (Hausa) whose functions by way of participatory benefits exhibits no specific aggregates of determinacy and, with this character, preference for it has faltered. Choice for Hausa seems slated for regular adjustment as long as the current language policy is pursued.

PARA-LINGUISTIC PARAMETERS: A PROFILE

I. Attitude, Choice and Accommodation

A state of confusion and inconsistency exists in the pattern of language use in the Middle Belt, in part, because of the language policies adopted by the government particularly in the areas of administration and education. Established in these areas are management strategies packaged in a triangular policy frame with a goal of insuring social cohesion (Fig. 5). However, what the government has, in actuality, managed to institute, is a policy frame held together by desire rather than by expediency. The primary substance required to maintain the frame, i.e. social attitudes to manage linguistic choice and accommodation, is largely excluded (Osaji, 1987). As a result, two prominent conditions have been created: ambiguity and contradiction. In the former, the open-ended policy goals, whether it be permanent preservation of the current nationalist-multilingual approach, or, preparation for a nationalist-unilingual replacement, embed parameters with confusing implications. Under the latter is the problem of inconsistency given its attunement to conditions of *incentive*, a significant dimension in attitude contemplation. Contradictions stem from the way the constituent policy apparatuses in the frame interrelate notably from the perspective of public response rather than that dictated by policy objectives.

In their individual simplification, each of the apparatuses exhibits significant social ramifications. By accrediting English with superior functions, making it the language of access to employment, education, health, and law (Fig. 1), the working apparatus of the language policy attaches greater incentive to the language

relative to the NL's. That of educational policy vitalizes English and MT pedagogy but encourages with great procedural ambiguities NL learning in schools. Finally, the affirmative policy, by content, trivializes identity and linguistic peculiarism as avenues for group character recognition, a requirement for minority mainstream participation and, an insurance against overt majority cultural domination. From these conditions emerge, essentially from the minority viewpoint, five major social incentives: (a) to strive for autonomous cultural evolution and engagement in independent social choices; (b) to reject the historical nuances and conditions under which they were once incorporated differentially; (c) to promote culturo-linguistic awareness as collective insurance against group privilege in social negotiation; (d) to demand greater fairness and compensation for their historical subordination; and (e) to bridge developmental gaps between them and the majority through rapid education. In sum, all these incentives define the crucial ingredients: *attitude*, *accommodation* and *choice* of the minority linguistic behavior within the Nigerian social policy frame (Fig. 5).

Moreover, if all these incentives are valid under the current policy arrangement, what other incentives of greater significance are left for the minority groups to maintain allegiance to the desire of the majority particularly in the area of language acquisition? In other words, why should the minority groups learn Hausa, Ibo or Yoruba if English provides the primary access to mainstream participation? Why should they identify with the majority culture or language if the affirmative policy rewards them for being different and being a minority? Why should they subscribe to education in a majority language if the benefit for doing so remains unclear? Why should the studies presented in the preceding pages defy policy expectation? Simply, how can the nation's three-way policy and its attendant theory be affirmed given many unanswered basic questions? As a social theorist, Ikara (1987) wondered why a Muslim of Pullo ethnic origin with historical-religious ties to the Hausa rejected the contemplation of Hausa language as Nigeria's official language. To the Pullo, such contemplation bordered on cultural imperialism yet, he maintained an absolute willingness to accept English, a colonial language, as the nation's official language. A more interesting dramatization of the problem, in Ikara's view, occurred during the civilian administration (1979–83) when members of the National Assembly, in direct dissociation from policy guidelines, insisted that over their dead bodies would Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba be used in the House of Representatives and the Senate. They, instead, emphasized English usage for all proceedings in the House.

What in fact prompted these reactions are not revealed solely by fear of majority domination to which history attests, but partly by contemporary attitude which supports ambiguities and contradictions in national strategy for diversity management. The policy that prescribes the conduct of National Assembly in NL's, i.e. Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba on the condition of *provision* of 'adequate arrangement' entails response that is more paradoxical than candid. What the minority groups strive for is benefit-oriented *satisfaction* achievable by dismantling the traditional policies that once certified their differential incorporation within the nation's mainstream. This is the essence of the federal character policy; its goal is to guarantee *concessions* to minority groups *compensating* them for their historical

subordination. As the policy acquires the required institutional support, its social potency is, in effect, consolidated with visible changes in minority attitude toward the social agenda of the majority. Choices through language policy afforded the minority the avenue to participatory maximization through English and MT. Where MT education is strongly desired along with English instruction, and Hausa is acquired as a class-room subject, as is currently the case in the Middle Belt, encouraged is a steady shift toward a two-way proficiency (MT-English) to which the policy goal of trilingualism, or the theory of triglossia may no longer apply, at least in the practical sense.

Concurrently, other important questions arise. With the existing linguistic concessions to the minorities in this region, why then should they have to maintain social accommodation in Hausa, or any majority language? And, if accommodation entails linguistic adjustment, or a convergence based on how much culturally peculiar identity traits a person or group is willing to mutate in order to adapt to those of the outgroup (Giles, 1977), under Nigera's affirmative policy, should this not be conceived legitimately as a concession requiring compensation through certain forms of social benefits? Embedded in such a concession, if accorded, are utility values the minorities may associate with their social benefits which, on the level of language, determine the attitude manifested, and the choices made. Presently, the traditional minority attitude toward Hausa appears, at least gauging by the findings from various studies, to be wavering, while their choice of English shows consolidation, (Etim, 1985; Arasanyin, 1994). This is because, English, the language of greater access to benefit, is associated with higher value, i.e. superior utility.

II. Benefit-Acquisition Framework

Attached rather firmly to the existing policy frame are four significant management conditions which in the Middle Belt, and elsewhere, are that: (1) languages be classified into categories (Official Language (OL) National Language (NL) and Local/Community language or Mother Tongue (MT)) functionally distributed in a hierarchical structure; (2) second language acquisition be realized outside the rubrics of culture; (3) institutions and bureaucracies that once sustained the social status of the majority language be decentralized and replaced by novel guidelines that are pseudo-autonomous under the auspices of states; and (4) the bulk of language matters and the attendant management be transferred to the state. Out of these parameters emerges what is assumed in this study to be benefit-centered language acquisition and usage. Basic to this assumption are two related notions: that no language is inherently better than others, all languages are, indeed, equally capable of being developed or legislated to meet any need for which they might be required (Wardhaugh, 1987); and that languages in their inherent power do not differ but their users do (Lieberson, 1981). In the light of the former, all languages, therefore, have equal status particularly from the perspective of the individual cultures that created them, while, according to the latter, there exists a positive correlation between social roles of language and political clout (Emenanjo, 1988).

Where the former and the latter intersect is actually the locus of choice in the

event of second language learning. The desire for social equity and uncompromised, all-cadre mainstream participation, both of which are beneficial to the individual or group, often evokes conscious decisions on second language learning that builds upon, and not necessarily overrides the status of the language of the individual or group. Majority as well as minority languages, in their cultural catchments maintain very high status. If all languages in their primary domains of culture, and ethnicity potentially maintain equal status, they should as a consequence, exhibit minimal differences in their potential to compete in a unique social structure. Where one competes better than others, socio-political manipulation that provide functional advantage for one language and not for the others could, more often than not, be held accountable (Brann, 1989). Demographic condition is hardly an absolute advantage, as it, too, succumbs to manipulation. English, in Nigeria as a whole, has a very low demographic base,⁽¹⁵⁾ with fewer speakers than any of the majority languages, yet it is a language of enormous prestige and status (Bamgbose, 1983, 1991). To Ammon (1989), status maintains two meanings: i) position within a specific social system; and ii) rank in social hierarchy. Community and society are both social systems but, within community, language is not necessarily ranked given its markedness as the sole means of communication in this system. Where two or more culturally marked languages co-exist within a societal system, ranking of some sort may occur.

Languages often derive differential statuses when their functions are, by political intervention, ranked, or by social consensus, hierarchically distinguished. The Nigerian language policy maintains a three-level functional hierarchy designating supra-institutional, major and minor social distributions with differing statuses (Agheyisi, 1986; Brann, 1989). A language assigned relatively superior functions, particularly in domains associated with political power, as with the case of English in Nigeria, acquires high status and hence prestige by the character of the domains in which it functions. Mackey (1989) calibrated prestige, function and status under the concepts of past, present and future where prestige is a function of language record, i.e. what a language actually accomplished, and status, its primary potential. Status therefore is what can be done with a language legally, culturally, socio-economically, politically and demographically. Indeed, status makes sense primarily in the context of usage. Arabic described as a men's language in Nigeria (Ammon, 1989), has high religious prestige, but limited social function. To a Berom minority, his ethnolect, Berom maintains high functions within his community but low prestige on the national level.

Given the primacy of function in the determination of status, functional alteration does in effect transform, as exemplified in the data, the customary status of a language. Individually, English and Hausa have had their statuses modified in the Middle Belt in the light of policy intervention that assigned hierarchical functions with differential significance to them (Fig. 1). However, what is bestowed on a language as its official assignment or functional domain does not automatically coincide with the reception the language attracts from its potential users, particularly those to whom the language is culturally unmarked. Other social conditions notably linked to attitude and politics play crucial roles. Whatever the situation, every language potentially exhibits the capacity for two forms of status: *cardinal*

and *relative*, where the former is based on minimal cultural and institutional aggregates, e.g. religion, norms, custom and values, and the latter determined through social manipulation, competition and power attributes on which functional prestige is contingent. Under the second category falls government policy intervention.

III. Second-Language Acquisition

That the federal language policy embodies bilingualism devoid of biculturalism encourages second language acquisition under subtle instrumental rubrics. What kind of language is acquired is therefore guided by what kind of value the language has. Where elaborate acquisition options obtain, as in the Nigerian case, what language choice manifests greater value tends to be the most preferred (Fig. 4). The value of a language especially in its instrumental function may be measured in terms of the level of social benefit to which it procures access. Value, in essence is domain-oriented and bound by both the institutional and structural characters of the mainstream. There is, in the Middle Belt, a strong correlation between language value and government policy (Fig. 3). With the promotion of the English in the school curriculum and the socio-economic reward, access to employment and political opportunities attained through it, efforts to gain its mastery have accelerated regardless of its alien status or colonial past. Outgroup language acquisition in this region seems to reflect rather strongly the political construction of domains for languages. While language attitudes of the minority groups exhibit inconsistency in consonance with their varying needs; and the parameters of their language accommodation, choice, convergence and divergence fluctuate with social goals, one value remains constant in their language decisions: utility. Sought almost unconditionally is an overture to benefit maximization, and whatever language provides it with least effort is favored most.

Quite appropriately, Bamgbose (1991: 74) observed that "language is like a currency, the more it can buy the greater the value it has." Value in this respect coincides with utility, while, together, both relate directly to attitude and choice on the one hand, and status-prestige symbiosis on the other. Often the content of value to the user tends to defy the dictates of policy, and to some degree, theories confined by policy dictates. Language can be treated for its value. Indicative of the objectives or goals for which a language is employed is utility. These goals are, themselves, driven essentially by desire for satisfaction and opportunity. Why a language is used, often, is governed by what the language can allow the user to achieve. Any language that provides the user the social capacity to maximize his/her opportunities will be considered beneficial. Thus the utility value of a language correlates positively with the level of benefits, opportunities and advantages the language attracts. Why, on the average, 60.5 percent of the respondents in Arasanyin's (1995) survey considered English to be the most advantageous language in Nigeria (Fig. 4), can well be attributed to its capacity to procure avenues to social opportunities. From this vantage, the language is not only an instrument that can be used to pursue a goal but that may be employed to achieve it. Nonetheless, utility in a user's language management assumes greater validity

where there are language-based social options.

Language preference as an item of choice and attitude is context-driven. Where two or more languages are available, choice rather than attitude may depend on value units derived from the benefit aggregates to which each language maintains maximum overture. Attitude, though tied rather firmly to choice, is very subtle and more abstract. Among the minority Middle Beltans, attitude to outgroup language is often expressed as a product of intrinsic collective value with resource in the individual groups' history, culture and ethnicity. The historical imposition of Hausa on a number of these groups may have caused, perhaps more than utility conditions, low social tolerance for the language. But then, neither did English, a colonial language, complement the significance of the linguistic vitality of these groups. It, too, was imposed and worse still, as part of the imperial management package. Why English seems to maintain higher preference than Hausa (Etim, 1985) is an attribute of utility in the differential assignments of domain to both languages.

IV. Value as a Social Cost

Planning language in a political structure such as Nigeria to which ethnolinguistic pluralism is congenial (Paden, 1968) often embeds conditions under which group languages are assigned functions with value differentials. The government recognition of only 3 out of approximately 270 languages as national languages means functional restriction for certain languages on the basis of political intervention. The application of demographic criteria in apportioning functional domains that are value-oriented curtails absolute liberalization of functional levels on which all languages maintain equal recognition. To the minority groups whose languages become subordinated in the functional hierarchy, the cost is both social (Demoz, 1991) and psychological (Wardhaugh, 1987). Knowing that their languages may not perform any serious communicative functions beyond their individual cultural catchments, these minority groups are forced to forge cross-cultural linkage and extended social participation through a second, and even at times, a third language. Whereas the government policy requires the majority groups to be at least bilingual, for the minority groups, they are forced to be trilinguals, a situation indicative of a differential application of certain policy guidelines.

The denial of functions to minority language imposes cost in opportunity that translates directly into social vitality cost. In other words, the cost the minority groups endure in having to rely on majority languages for communication in certain national domains is the opportunity denied to their languages to function competitively in those same domains. Largely this undermines minority social vitality, if cost and benefit do coincide (Jernudd, 1971; Thorburn, 1971). On the level of social compensation, the opportunity lost in giving up one language may be replaced by the greater benefit another language provides. Linguistic opportunity cost is definitely minimized if the value to be derived socially is maximized through the second or third language. The basic idea, in the case of minority language users is to ascertain, which language behavior yields the "most benefit for the

least cost" (Fasold, 1990: 254). With multiple linguistic options, preference becomes an item under cost-benefit symbiosis. The language that procures greater benefit tends to maintain higher preference since they compensate better for lost opportunity. With the colonial language, English, the entire Nigerian citizenry bears uniform disadvantage, an identical social cost for all its constituent groups. The cost of acquiring English is the same for every group (Tadadjeu, 1977; Mackey, 1981). This condition of equal disadvantage may also account, among other things, for why preferential scales tilt in favor of English among the Middle Belt minorities. Incidentally, with this language, both the majority and the minority are accorded equal opportunity to compete in a social situation with a neutral linguistic apparatus promoting, in essence, merit over undue privilege.

V. Marginality and Functional Duplication

The values of a particular language may be affected if the inputs, notably the functional domains that denominate these values, are altered. The inputs themselves are a resource on which the social status of a language is based. For instance, the resources now allocated to Idoma and Tiv in Benue, Berom in Plateau and Ebirra in Kogi, in the areas of para-public services, e.g. radio and television, constitutes an opportunity cost in the sense that it cuts into the traditional primacy of Hausa functions in these domains. The alteration of Hausa function in minority education has indeed affected minority attitude and preference for the language (Fig. 3). Additionally, the establishment of English in administrative law and commerce where Hausa once maintained functional exclusivity has altered the latter's role in social management, creating a situation to which minority groups, in terms of the contemporary pattern of their language behavior, have exhibited concrete response. Part of the strategy for national language management is the prominent construct of *acquisition cascading*. What this entails is a progressive multiple language acquisition process. Primarily, three language categories are involved, i.e. MT, NL and OL; and very important to its construct is the mode of transition from one language learning to another.

The mode allows a minority subject to acquire MT in a home milieu, and be instructed in it during the first few years of primary education to insure a smooth transition⁽¹⁶⁾ between home and school (Bamgbose, 1991). While in this level of education, this subject is required to acquire English as a school subject both in oral and written form since English assumes instructional function after this level. In the next level, of secondary school education, the subject may or may not learn one of the NL's as a school subject. However, at the tertiary level, the students per national policy are encouraged to learn one of the NL's. Meanwhile avenues to social opportunities: employment, health and justice are established firmly through the English medium. Structurally, the policy strategy discourages arbitrary language acquisition while insuring second language learning via utility judgment. Permitted within the acquisition structure are conditions of *prioritization*, *essentialization* and *economization*. It is hardly feasible for a minority subject to acquire all the languages identified with social functions within the national mainstream; learning individual languages thus becomes prioritized in consonance with

the essentiality level of the benefits each language potentially accrues.

The tendency indeed is to favor acquisition with minimal efforts (learning economy) but with the capacity for benefit maximization. In the Middle Belt the odds are overwhelmingly against all languages except English. As the OL, English automatically assumes functional open-endedness. All instances of social interaction and participation can be established through it. For this reason particularly, how essential then are three national languages to the minorities? Given that vitality or opportunity for their lot does not verge on the number of the NL's for which they exhibit social affinity, but rather on equitable participation for which the OL constitutes the primary avenue, on what grounds therefore should they accommodate majority linguistic imposition? If English could very well perform the functions that Hausa would perform in the North, Ibo in the East and Yoruba in the West, of what advantage or utility is learning these languages to the minority groups? The social marginality of languages arise through the procedure of *alternative-matching* guided by the linguistic choice available to the user.

If the user finds the employment of one language (OL) more attractive than the use of three (NL's) for virtually the same goal and without serious loss of benefit, the value of NL's to the user, in effect, decreases. Lacking a specific guarantee is an incremental advantage in learning the third, fourth or fifth outgroup language. By this assessment, that three languages under the national policy are assigned a unique function on the same level (NL), amounts to linguistic duplication from the minority vantage. Moverover, that the Nigerian central government manages these languages, particularly in the states, while allowing each state to establish institutions that manage exclusively state languages, definitely espouses duplication. The general outcome among the minority groups has been the subscription to elaborate factors for simple language decisions. These factors being so complex tend to engender language behaviors that defy the logic inherent in the familiar theories on Nigeria's management of language diversity.

VI. Communal Attributes

A conceptual adjunct to the observation made in the preceding section is that while transformation of the linguistic landscape has become rather obvious, not so candid is the pattern or the direction it will eventually lead. Suffice it to reiterate that change has brought with it certain social conditions of which attitude, novel or renescent, is one. For the minorities that were once incorporated politically as a monolithic demographic mass, realizing benefits in their unique identities is a peculiar avenue of which maximum exploration is promptly engaged. Prevalent among them are situations of social balkanization based on micro-linguistic aggregates. Membership in a collectivity now attains certification through a denominator that is more linguistic than ethnic. The guiding axiom is that maximizing group solidarity in the micro-level which by federal affirmative standard is socially rewarding precludes no less than optimum linguistic uniformity. Two social parameters are created from this axiom: on the one hand is language determinism based on a territoriality factor; and on the other are usage configurations that differentiate rather than affirm similarities within and among groups.

Structurally, a complex *linear polyglossia* (Platt, 1977; Fasold, 1990) has been established with such dimensions as *functional nesting* (Gumperg, 1964; Fasold, 1990) and *linguistic overlapping* (Abdulaziz, 1978; Fasold, 1990). Often in defiance of the triglossic prescription favored by government, minority groups apply standards that accrue them greatest benefits. From this, separatist attitudes have emerged with levels. Within the federal and state levels, groups separate themselves into social compartments defined by culture and ethnicity and under which intra-ethnic linguistic peculiarism applies as the index of communalism. Minority groups in the Middle Belt maintain several language levels toward which they can possibly gravitate, a condition which, in itself, attracts social maxims of shifting characters. Hardly uncommon are for groups (communal or ethnic) to collaborate in their desire for benefits and subsequently factionize after the benefits had been acquired. Inter-ethnic rivalry between the Tiv and Idoma was temporarily muted to acquire a separate state, Benue from the original Benue-Plateau, and once the goal was achieved, the resumption of rivalry followed with dissolution of pan-ethnic solidarity. Compounding these problems is the government approach that encourages urbanization within states which, individually, are not ethnically homogenous.

The application of communal aggregates as units of mainstream participation promotes minority gravitation toward English and a negative attitude toward any language devoid of maximum utility. On the ground that all political structures, regardless of level—state and local—maintain direct links with the central government administered in the nation's OL, the minority elites therefore support English in minority areas, for the benefit it provides. They also express positive attitudes toward EL or MT for the participatory base it protects. There are significant social gaps between the majority and minority groups. The former intends to preserve its authority base conceived to embody the latter which, as an autonomous entity, seeks a separate agenda for which both MT and English are vital. In both events, the majority languages become marginalized in ways that attract negative attitudes from the minority.

CONCLUSION

Language among the minority groups has indeed become a tool for multi-level solidarity establishment, a mechanism with which they protect their individual group values and demand values due them. The equilibrium of these two ends is maintained by a social threshold that embodies the basis of linguistic choice, attitude and utility. For the minority groups the existing language order stems from a tradition, and a set of conditions with contradictions, the social imperatives that they have to confront and inevitably customize to mirror their individual needs. With the tenacity to meet individual group needs, social emphasis has shifted away from linguistic solidarity and social coalescence to a more autonomous group construct. Optimum linguistic divergence has prevailed engendering functional leakages of a rather chaotic sort. English, the colonial language, needs competition and conflict among the indigenous languages, particularly those of the

majority, to thrive well beyond its official assignment.

By and large, with the shifting allegiance of the minority groups, and the functional status imposed by policy on most of the indigenous languages, English has come to assume a stabilizing role in the Nigerian mainstream management. Whether the language-centered political action now pursued within the contemporary power structure effectuates a nationalistic feeling and common ideology within which minority linguistic autonomy is accommodated, will depend not only on the social forces but also on the citizenry. For the minority elites, often their social roles involve candid duality, one as the civil bureaucrat committed to the affirmation of federal character principles, and the other as the cultural entrepreneur committed to politically protecting their survival base (Kohn, 1955; Young, 1979). With respect to the former, English applies convincingly as the favorite tool. Why Hausa fared relatively poorly among the minority elites could be attributed to five conditions: historical, linguistic, political, demographic and utility. Under the first, the language is associated with an assimilative culture (Hausa) and domineering religion (Islam), both of which most minorities deem necessary to resist. The second applies to Hausa uniqueness relative to most of the minority languages. With the third, constitutional and institutional supports for English and decentralization of Hausa apparatuses undermine the traditional linguistic status quo minimizing the capacity of Hausa to compete. The fourth involves political reconfiguration of regions into states granting autonomous majority roles to some traditional minority groups, in smaller political structures. With more languages exhibiting competition within the states, Hausa has become further marginalized. Finally, utility is a condition that entails both benefit (value) and opportunity cost (relative benefit or value given up).

That English is ethnically unmarked, a language with which all groups are equally disadvantaged, yet the most vital language in benefit acquisition, makes it more socially palatable. Indeed, of what utility is a NL in the contemporary minority territories where EL's or MT's preserve an identity base and English attains primary participatory opportunity? Hausa, a NL of high traditional status, is faced with encroachment in many significant domains. Government intervention seems to have blunted its competitive edge, a situation that has inadvertently aided the rapid emergence of MT and English in potent competition against it. Essential to policy intervention in national language matters are the establishment of social cohesion and the encouragement of participatory equity. But achieving a linguistic *gemeinschaft*, from a structural base fractured by multi-dimensional cleavages requires more than incidental federalism. A transectional normative coalescence within Nigerian federalism demands much more than mere policy declarations. To maintain a linguistic structure where all its parts operate as a system requires role specificity. At least in the minority language behavior, there are cues, which by all measures, appear strategic to Nigeria's language management. Emerging among the minority groups is a social consciousness that language taste is seasoned by an elitist flavor and the appetite for it, is stimulated by how much participatory hunger it effectively alleviates.

NOTES

- (1) These are as inconsistent as the policy they are designed to explain. Prominent among them are those pertaining to *triglossia* (Brann, 1979; Ikara, 1987); *major versus minor* (Agheyisi, 1986; Brann, 1989; Elugbe 1990).
- (2) See the preceding note (1).
- (3) Actual number remains uncertain. No uniform figure adopted by government or scholars. Awolowo (1968), Murdock (1975), Hoffman (1974), Gandonu (1978), Wente-Lucas (1985), all maintain different figures ranging between 51 and 394. See documented ethnic catalogue in Otite (1990: 44–57).
- (4) Involved are administrative adjustments through regular creation of states and local governments, and also the politically dictated changes to the nation's constitution.
- (5) Established via the constitution (1979). It was designed mainly for government institutions charged with the procurement of equitable representation of all groups in the administrative, political and socio-economic processes.
- (6) Details in *the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with Amendments*, (1979): A Daily Times Publication, Nigeria. Also discussed in Bamgbose (1991: 115–117).
- (7) Based on 1986 population projection, *source*: Ekanem (1972), and cited in Jibril (1990: 111). The official population count was conducted in 1991 with results that put the individual ethnic populations much lower.
- (8) Details in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981), *National Policy on Education*, Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- (9) See the Federal Affirmative Policy.
- (10) Applied as value condition, and in ways that do not coincide with marginalization as employed in the Nigerian political discourse.
- (11) See Fasold (1990).
- (12) Very fluid as a result of centuries of exogamous relations and cultural amalgam with various other groups. Often, it is viewed solely as a linguistic concept, see Adamu (1978).
- (13) Primarily, these are domains of social interaction through linguistic means. They are circumstances wherein social behaviors dictated by language are anchored. See Arasanyin (1995).
- (14) Parameters or variables capable of influencing language behaviors in macrosocial settings. See Arasanyin (1995).
- (15) English, in Nigeria, is taught nationwide, but relatively low number of the nation's citizens is proficient in the language. Estimates are at approximately 30 percent population proficiency (Elugbe, 1990); but Bamgbose (1983: 5) estimated it much lower, about 10 percent.
- (16) Based on UNESCO's (1953) provision on MT education, and reiterated in Bamgbose (1991).

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