

Why We Should Develop Nigerian Languages*

Oladele Awobuluyi

oladele.awobuluyi@gmail.com

P O Box 136

Okeagbe-Akoko 342005, Ondo State, Nigeria

Abstract

The negative attitude displayed towards indigenous languages these days by some of their native speakers in Nigeria, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, is not due so much to colonialism (as is the common belief) as it is to the fact that those languages, unlike Hindi, Bengali, Burmese, and Vietnamese in South-east Asia, all lack scholarly and literary traditions of great time depth. To be able to survive possible future colonisation virtually unscathed like the above languages of South-east Asia, at least some of those indigenous languages must be linguistically and politically empowered, and also assiduously cultivated as potent tools for scholarly and literary creativity spanning thousands of years.

1. Introduction

Our indigenous languages big and small are dying a slow death and we are wittingly or unwittingly aiding them in that process.

2. The Low Esteem of Indigenous Languages

Their death will be the eventual joint outcome of developments like the following, if allowed to go unchecked. First, there are supposedly enlightened indigenous couples today that each have a common mother tongue for use in their homes, but who prefer instead that people speak only English to the hearing of their growing children. Second, most privately run schools, not merely in urban areas as some people think, but in rural areas as well, pander to the wishes of such enlightened parents by teaching their children only in English for the whole of their pre-primary and primary education – in outright defiance of the laid down official policy. Third, children who have thus been more or less lured and brainwashed into learning in English in such schools naturally take their cue

*A keynote address delivered at the 25th Annual Conference of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria held at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria, 3rd to 6th December 2012.

from their school authorities and develop a dislike for their individual indigenous languages. As once witnessed by this writer, some such children would tell any adults that care enough to listen to them that they hate their mother tongues. It is fairly certain that such children will not be able to accurately pass their indigenous languages down to their own children when they become adults, given their lack of competence in such languages as well as their negative attitude towards them. Fourth, by approving a restructuring of the Senior Secondary School curriculum proposed by the National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) and ratified by the Joint Consultative Council on Education (JCCE) and the National Council on Education (NCE) in late 2008, the Federal Government knowingly and voluntarily relegated our indigenous languages by taking them off the list of core subjects at the Senior Secondary School level, leaving English as the only compulsory language there. This deeply regrettable new policy (more on it below), which took effect from the 2010/2011 school year, will only serve to worsen the educationally harmful effect of the Federal Government-imposed 40:60 Humanities/Science admission ratio, which works in effect to limit the numbers of university students that can be admitted each year to study their indigenous languages. Fifth, as a consequence of all the foregoing, enrolments in indigenous language courses continue to dwindle in tertiary institutions, with the predictable result that teachers that are actually trained to effectively teach such languages will become more and more difficult to find as the years go by. Indeed, according to a news report not too long ago, Governor Fayemi of Ekiti State is already having difficulty finding enough teachers to teach Yoruba in his Yoruba-speaking state! Sixth, even the few students that do come to study indigenous languages in tertiary institutions today do so as a last resort, not only because that was not what they originally elected to study but, more importantly, also because they generally feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to be found studying languages now widely perceived as being of little economic value. For this latter reason, too, very few private universities in the country, if any at all, offer courses in our indigenous languages.

These developments are a clear manifestation of the negative attitude and low esteem that even grown-ups have for such languages. And when grown-up native speakers begin to

harbour such feelings towards their own mother tongues, great danger lies ahead. If the present trend continues, most if not all of our indigenous languages are likely to have completely died out in probably less than two hundred years.

3. Reason for Their Low Esteem

The common thinking or conventional view on the above unhappy situation sees it from a purely political perspective and accordingly blames it wholly on colonialism, as in the excerpt below from a programmatic statement (Bamgbose 2006: 1) posted on the ACALAN (Academy of African Languages) website:

... African languages previously had a role and vitality, which had been eroded as a result of the impact of colonialism. Prior to the colonial experience, African languages were the sole media of socialization within the language community, and communication within and outside the group. There was no question of any stigma being attached to the use of one's own language for any purpose. ... Today, the situation has changed. Imported European languages, which served as the language of colonial administration, have overshadowed African languages, and become the preferred mode of communication in most domains. It is not unusual for African children to be raised speaking English or French, even in the home, and many African adults are able to speak but not write their mother tongue. ...not many Africans believe that meaningful education is possible in their languages beyond the early years of primary education.

One's belief here, however, is that colonialism is actually less to blame for that unhappy situation than the sociolinguistic nature of the languages concerned. For reasons now lost in the mists of time, sub-Saharan Africa in particular was more or less completely cut off for centuries from positive new developments elsewhere in the world, particularly developments relating to reading and writing. And because the peoples of that part of Africa were consequently not exposed early enough to the tradition of reading and writing, their indigenous languages have remained till today virtually as they have been from time immemorial, namely, essentially colloquial – that is, mainly used in the spoken mode. With such a characteristic and as Sociolinguistic theory predicts, such languages are bound to naturally assume the role and status of low variety speech forms (L), and in the absence of remediation and until they finally die out, if it comes to that, they are

bound to continue to assume that role and status, in language contact with any and all high variety speech forms (H), whether foreign or indigenous. This, with its many fairly predictable consequences, is precisely what has been the lot of our indigenous languages ever since they came into full contact with English.

4. Reasons for Studying Indigenous Languages

(a) Raising their Sociolinguistic Profile

If colonialism as such were the real or sole cause of the plight of our indigenous languages, as the conventional view suggests, then such languages should have immediately reverted to their earlier role and status once our colonial masters packed their bag and baggage and went back home. But that didn't happen and still hasn't happened! To see clearly why it hasn't happened, recall that Nigerians are not the only peoples to have been colonised in the recent past. Other similarly colonised peoples are to be found in the Americas, Africa, South-east Asia, and Oceania (defined as 'the islands of the central and South Pacific, including Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia, and sometimes Australasia and the Malay Archipelago'). When independence was finally granted to all of them, only the peoples of North Africa and South-east Asia up to Indonesia were able to promptly liberate their indigenous languages and elevate the major ones among them to official status (Awobuluyi 2012a), while at the same time relegating their former colonial languages to such complementary or supplementary roles as they considered appropriate for them.

Now, European colonialists stayed almost two centuries in India and roughly only one century in the rest of South-east Asia. And yet, whereas the peoples of South-east Asia found it relatively easy to elevate their indigenous languages above the colonial languages that had been planted in their midst for a century or longer, we in Nigeria find it rather difficult to do likewise to a colonial language that was, for all practical purposes, planted in our midst for a lot less than a century. The question that this immediately raises is: what accounts for this glaring difference between us in Nigeria and the peoples of South-east Asia?

The difference could not be in the duration of colonialism; for, as indicated above, it lasted much longer in India, for example, than here in Nigeria. It could also not be in the variety of colonialism involved; for India, once again, and Nigeria were under exact same colonial masters, namely, the British. In these circumstances, it can only be in the sociolinguistic nature of the languages concerned – that is, in the fact that some of the indigenous languages of the peoples of South-east Asia, unlike ours here in Nigeria, had been reduced to writing for centuries before the arrival of their European colonial masters. In addition, some of those South-east Asian indigenous languages, like those of the European colonial masters, were fairly well developed and had (and till today continue to have) respected bodies of highly treasured literature dating back well over a thousand years in many cases.¹ Largely because of that, some of those indigenous languages were essentially of the same high sociolinguistic status as the European colonial languages then temporarily dominating them. Hence, when those temporarily dominating European colonial languages finally departed with colonialism, the sociolinguistically high indigenous South-east Asian languages both naturally and, in most cases, automatically stepped in as official languages. Thus, India chose Hindi, Bangladesh Bengali, Myanmar Burmese, Cambodia Central Khmer, Vietnam Vietnamese, Malaysia Malay, and Indonesia Bahasa Indonesia (which is a variety of Malay).

It would seem fairly clear from this, therefore, that, were some of our native languages as endowed, or nearly as endowed, with valued and respected indigenous scholarly and literary works in colonial times as some of the languages of South-east Asia were in those same times, they would today not be as predictably lacking in prestige and value as they are even in the eyes of many of their own native speakers.² However, merely decrying and bemoaning their current plight will not help matters. What will help is for us, by way of remediation, to first empower those languages both linguistically and politically, and then remove any and all obstacles in the way of evolving in our midst strong traditions of

¹Recall here the widely acknowledged contribution of Panini's Sanskrit grammar of around 400 BC to Modern Linguistics.

²Hausa would appear to be somewhat better off here, as it would seem, because of its indigenous pre-colonial writings done initially in Arabic script.

publishing respected and treasured works of scholarship and literary creativity in them. This then is one reason why we need to develop such languages – for them to be able to comfortably sustain scholarly and literary traditions. Only such traditions will ever launch or boost them beyond the orbit of low variety speech forms in which they are currently stuck.

(b) Ensuring that They Survive Possible Future Subjugation

However, this is not the only reason why we should develop such languages. Developing them is the only thing that will protect at least the major ones among them from foreseeable future threats. We emerged from colonial rule in 1960. But that does not mean that we have emerged from it for all time. Quite the contrary; colonialism happens to be a recurrent phenomenon in human history. Thus, we know from Ancient History that parts of North Africa were at one time colonised by the Romans. Later, the Arabs came claiming to be propagating their religion but ended up forcing themselves on the indigenous peoples of that same region. Much later still, different European nations came to that same region and carved out different ‘spheres of influence’ for themselves. Thus, Libya came for the second time under the Romans (by then and up till now collectively known as Italians), Tunisia and Algeria came under the French, and Morocco under the Spanish.

Given these examples, that the British gave up Nigeria as their colony in 1960 is no guarantee at all that they could not return to re-colonise it in future. Neither does it preclude some other ambitious nation from coming here in future for that same purpose. Indeed, the signs of the possible designs of other nations on us are there for those who can see them now. Such signs take the form of a superpower of a nation very clearly eyeing our natural resources and loudly professing to love us more than other rival nations, more than God almost. They also take the form of people from other nations coming in annually increasing numbers into different parts of Africa (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Tanzania so far) to acquire freehold or leasehold vast tracts of

land, ostensibly for the purposes of commercial farming.^{3,4} This should immediately remind us of the Royal Niger Company of old, whose ‘security force’, like that of the East India Company a century earlier in India, over time metamorphosed first into an ‘expeditionary force’ and then into an ‘occupation force’. It is very much to be hoped that our leaders have their thinking caps firmly on as they go abroad with ‘begging bowls’ in hand looking for all sorts of favours, including so-called Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)!

Eternal vigilance, they say, is the price of freedom. And vigilance in this case means taking and adopting appropriate preventive measures against all foreseeable real or potential threats from whatever source. What Nigerian linguists can easily do and should do in this connection is for them to learn and act upon the important lesson that comes out very clearly from the sociolinguistic history of the formerly colonised nations of South-east Asia, namely, that “a well-entrenched and time-honoured tradition of scholarly and literary writing in indigenous languages offers [such languages] the surest protection against permanent linguistic subjugation”⁵ (Awobuluyi 2012b). This constitutes the second reason why we need to develop our indigenous languages – to enable them to survive possible future periods of colonisation virtually unscathed, as in the case of the major or high variety languages of South-east Asia.

³Observe here the clear parallel between the treatment of land and languages in sub-Saharan Africa. Just as the peoples there, ever looking for the easy way out, are content to make use of already developed foreign languages instead of developing theirs, so they are also content to lease or sell their land for peanuts to outsiders from whom they would later be buying partially or fully processed food at prohibitive prices, when they should instead improve their agriculture and work such land to the extent of being easily able to fully feed themselves and also make money from selling surplus food to those very outsiders.

⁴The scramble for Africa appears to be on again; for a conference was held in London this past June to regulate the process of acquiring such tracts of land in Africa, in much the same way that a conference was held in Berlin in 1888 to peacefully partition Africa among the then contending colonial powers.

⁵The corollary to this lesson is seen in the history of Modern Hebrew and Modern Irish: possession of written literature of appreciable time depth by otherwise largely disused languages facilitates efforts to revive them.

5. Necessary Remedial Measures

(a) Change of Language Education Policy

People who are familiar with book publishing know that it takes a very good knowledge of a language to be able to write, edit, and publish truly readable materials in it. That being the case, it goes without saying that the scholars and creative writers of South-east Asia must all have known their indigenous languages very well to have been writing and publishing very valued and respected works in them for centuries now. A similar kind of knowledge and command of our own indigenous languages is precisely what we need and should have here in Nigeria. Unfortunately, however, the current policy on language education in the country is designed to produce the very opposite of that kind of knowledge.

As practical experience and the relevant literature tell us, every human child grows up speaking its mother tongue. It only learns or acquires other tongues when it comes into contact with them on the street, in school, or in another speech community. The mother tongue constitutes and remains the foundation for the child's other language experiences in life – this is the lesson jointly taught us by Contrastive Linguistics and Error Analysis. Accordingly, just as new building blocks can normally only be added onto an existing foundation at any given construction site, so too can other tongues normally only be added to, rather than be substituted for, the mother tongue within the child's native speech community.

Our current language education policy, however, stands the above logic on its head by seeking within indigenous communities to supplant mother tongues with other tongues. Thus, since colonial times, at the end of the third year of primary school, a child who at that stage is actually yet to acquire full and sure mastery of his mother tongue is compelled to start receiving all instruction in English, thereby jeopardising further progress in his acquisition of that mother tongue. At the Junior Secondary School level, the policy regarding the teaching of Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba as second languages is curiously interpreted to mean that the child must at that level stop being taught his mother tongue and be taught one of those three major languages instead. Thus, a native Yoruba

child, for example, is at that level expected to completely give up Yoruba (earlier dropped as a medium of instruction, and now even as a mere school subject!) and pick up either Hausa or Igbo instead! Further confounding this already confused situation is, thanks to the NERDC, the recently approved retrogressive language education policy making indigenous languages optional at the Senior Secondary School level. The easily predictable effect of that policy is that no indigenous languages, not even the three major ones, will be offered from now on by any significant numbers of Senior Secondary School students.⁶

To borrow imagery from housing construction once again, attempting to supplant retarded competence in the native language with necessarily insecure competence in another language (given the kinds of teachers involved, among other things), in the manner of the country's successive language education policies since colonial times, is like seeking to graft a botched job of a new foundation onto an already damaged one on the same construction site. The result in both cases is bound to be both unsafe and unsatisfactory. This can be clearly seen today, as far as languages are concerned, in federal and state legislators who are both unwilling and unable to use their indigenous languages for legislative business, as the constitution allows, largely (but not solely)

⁶The Federal Government is sadly not alone in being rather naïve and completely thoughtless in this matter of our indigenous languages. *The Nation* for today (4 December 2012) reports on its page 5 that the National Assembly in Abuja is planning to enact a law soon "to make the learning of the French language compulsory in primary and secondary schools." And Prof. Amfani in his presidential address at this conference says that "we heard in the news that the Lagos State House of Assembly is about to approve the use of Chinese language in Lagos schools. The annoying aspect of the whole thing is the total ignorance displayed by the legislators in respect of the relevance of Nigerian languages. The Assembly was bold enough to display sheer ignorance and arrogance when it said Chinese must be formally taught in Lagos schools, but Yoruba should only be taught at home by parents. In another development, the *Daily Sun* of Monday, 26th November 2012, reported on page 11 that 'Oyo is to make French Language compulsory in secondary schools'. The State Governor said members of the State Executive Council would soon be engaged in learning French, and so would secondary school students also. LAN [Linguistic Association of Nigeria] wishes to advise the Executive Governor to exercise caution [in this matter], as French is not taught in Junior Secondary Schools, as stipulated in the 9-year basic education curriculum of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Yoruba would have to be abolished in all Oyo State Junior Secondary Schools if French is to be taught at that same level there!"

Lagos State is actually not the only State planning to introduce Chinese in secondary schools. Kano State was reported in the newspapers a few months ago to be also planning to introduce Chinese at that level. And this is a Hausa-speaking State whose new state university has a Department of Languages that plans to teach only Arabic and English! Kano State and Lagos State naively think they are introducing Chinese for commercial and diplomatic reasons. It doesn't occur to them that they may thereby inadvertently be aiding the currently covert designs on us of the superpower associated with that language!

because they actually lack competence in such languages. It can also be seen in the vast majority of educated Nigerians (including the writer) who cannot manage more than a few sentences on any topic (including traditional ones) in grammatical, idiomatic, and unadulterated forms of their respective mother tongues, and who at the same time have life-long problems communicating grammatically, let alone idiomatically, in English.

Reversing the current pervading level of ignorance of our indigenous languages requires that we rework or rethink the country's language education policy. Interestingly enough in this connection, the NERDC was reported on page 26 of *The Nation* of 6 September 2012 as saying that its decision to drastically reduce the number of subjects on offer in schools in the country, to the extent of removing indigenous languages from the list of core subjects at the Senior Secondary School level, was informed by best practice in countries like the US and Indonesia, among others. Belying that claim as far as languages are concerned, however, is that that body actually completely missed the essence of the practice in the US, where English is both the school child's mother tongue and the medium of instruction for him at all levels. Similarly, in Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia, that country's national and official language, is both an indigenous lingua franca and the medium of instruction at all levels beyond the third year of primary school. The practice in those two countries is the universal norm. Exceptions to it are only found in some (but not all) countries with a history of recent colonial domination, like Nigeria, where the bad practice of teaching children in languages that they do not understand regrettably prevails. Besides being an indigenous medium of instruction, English is compulsory as a subject at all levels up to the first year of undergraduate studies (where it is known as Freshman English) in the US, while Bahasa Indonesia is similarly compulsory in Indonesia up to at least the pre-tertiary level of education (Article 37 of Act No. 20, 2003).

These examples from the US and Indonesia (which are acknowledged examples of best practice as far as language education is concerned) and the various considerations raised earlier all suggest that the new language education policy needed in this country must accomplish at least the following two things. First, it must restore the normal relationship

between the mother tongue and other tongues, specifically by devoting more time and attention than hitherto to indigenous languages in the school timetable. And second, it must institute an educational system which routinely turns out enlightened citizens that, unlike at present, are fully competent in their indigenous languages (particularly those of them having fairly large to very large numbers of speakers) and are also highly proficient in some other language or languages, whether foreign or indigenous.

(b) Reconsideration of the 40:60 Admission Ratio

There is need, too, to reconsider the 40: 60 Humanities/Science admission ratio routinely used for admitting undergraduate students into universities in this country. That admission ratio, as indicated earlier, is in part responsible for the low enrolments in indigenous language courses annually experienced in our tertiary institutions – institutions that have enough manpower to train many more indigenous language students than they are annually permitted to admit. As for the need for the admission ratio in question, the countries that are known for scientific and technological advancement in the world today do not appear to operate anything like it. What they appear to do, instead, is make facilities for studying all subjects available to all children in schools, and then guide and encourage each child along the lines of his or her natural aptitude or talent. (Guidance here, for example in the US, may involve sending talented or gifted children to special senior secondary schools.) When a child graduates from college under that system, he or she has access to jobs and advanced facilities that enable both further progress in his or her area of specialisation and practical contributions towards easing or ameliorating the human condition worldwide. As to the benefit of the admission ratio, it is not at all widely known that this country has in any way benefited spectacularly from using it. What is generally known instead is that people trained in the sciences here rarely find work that is commensurate with or even related to their training – what with graduates with First Class degrees in science or engineering finding office work (when that was still feasible) only in banks and management consultancies, and students sent to study science and engineering subjects abroad on government or quasi-government sponsorship these days not being able to return home to enable the nation to benefit as expected from their new skills and training, simply because there is no standing provision

made for placing them in appropriate jobs within the country's economy if they are foolhardy enough to actually come back home.

What these considerations seem clearly to suggest is that the admission policy in question should either be abandoned altogether or be, at the very least, modified by exempting the indigenous languages forthwith from its application. The desired effect of such exemption would then be to increase the numbers of new undergraduate students offering and specialising in indigenous languages in our universities.

(c) Change of Collective Attitude plus Political Empowerment of the Languages

Furthermore, we need to radically change our collective attitude towards our indigenous languages. Instead of treating them with neglect, disdain even, as we have in effect so far been doing (witness that policy makers in government appeared to have no qualms at all about removing indigenous languages from the list of core subjects at the Senior Secondary School level), we need now to start actively cultivating and promoting them. Doing so entails three things, namely, (i) purposefully developing them, (ii) actively teaching them as well as teaching all subjects in them save for useful foreign languages like Arabic, English, and French, and (iii), as a South African colleague (Webb 2002: 11) put it for his country, making them required “instruments of access to material rewards such as employment and training opportunities.” In other words, knowledge of appropriate ones among such languages should be made a requirement or prerequisite for employment and promotion particularly in public service. In a society like ours that looks to the government for direction on nearly everything, this would be the most visible way for government to restore and signal the economic value of the indigenous languages selected for such use. The Hausa-, Igbo-, and Yoruba-speaking three groups of states and local government areas, which are each lucky to be linguistically homogeneous, would be expected to take the lead in this matter, for their respective areas in the country.

(d) Linguistic Empowerment of the Languages

For the languages to be able to function as envisaged here – as media of instruction at all levels and also as media of communication in administration at various levels and in the

various sectors of the country's economy – their vocabulary must be modernised and considerably expanded. The universities are the only institutions in the country that can effectively carry out this kind of assignment. They are not fettered by prejudice or bias in favour of the status quo – like the civil service, for example. They have the required expertise in trained linguists and subject specialists who know and can correctly interpret or explain the technical terms in regular use in their individual fields. And they have the needed funds as part of the money they are all expected to vote annually for research. Given the role that language plays in the transmission of knowledge and values within every society or nation, no research could be more relevant to national development than research designed to enhance the communicative or expressive power of the languages in the nation or society concerned. One possible way for universities to work on the country's languages as suggested here would be for them to concentrate on the languages spoken within their respective geo-political zones.

(e) Promoting Publishing in the Languages

Developing and cultivating our indigenous languages also entails actively promoting publications of various kinds in them with a view to developing firmly rooted traditions of researching, writing, publishing, and reading in them, particularly in the bigger ones among them that each have populations that are large enough to comfortably sustain large-scale commercial publishing. As indicated earlier, in the US, the native language, English, is compulsory up to Year I in colleges and universities. In Indonesia also, the indigenous national and official language, Bahasa Indonesia (lit. language of Indonesia), which was chosen at independence and rapidly developed for that purpose, is compulsory up to at least the pre-tertiary level of education. The unstated but easily fathomed reason for making native languages compulsory in those two countries, as elsewhere in the enlightened world, is to ensure that citizens have sufficient competence in their native languages for their social and professional needs in society. This practice gives the pride of place to indigenous languages in the school timetable and is fully in line with the proposal made on language education above. Instituting it, at least for our main indigenous languages and restricting it to the confines of the respective native communities of such languages would have the additional benefit of entrenching the

tradition of publishing in those languages, as it would guarantee large numbers of people that can read and write them with ease.

We need not wait until such newly trained individuals begin to come on the scene, however, before we start encouraging the writing and publishing of literary and scholarly works in our languages. The many skilled and indisputably highly talented columnists that daily or weekly write in English in our newspapers can begin from now to ply their trade in the service of their respective mother tongues also; similarly for our numerous award-winning writers at home and abroad (whose award-winning works, however, currently only boost the statistics of publication in English rather than in their respective mother tongues), as well as the various specialists currently within our university system.

6. Expected Positive Outcomes

One easily foreseeable effect of developing and using our indigenous languages as urged here is that it will open up, particularly for the kinds of educated persons that are currently mistakenly adjudged to be unemployable, vast employment opportunities in teaching, publishing, marketing, the mass media, and in administration in general at different levels in many sectors of the country's economy. Furthermore, if the promotion of the languages is sustained at an optimal level for generations, the hitherto vexed issue of whether or not to teach in them⁷ will, a century or so from now, become a dead issue – as children will then be naturally taught here in their mother tongues just as children are routinely taught in their mother tongues today in the existing more enlightened countries of the world. As envisaged and also fervently hoped for, should events warrant it again centuries or less from now, at least the major ones among our indigenous languages will not lose out again in contact and contest with any invading language, as they did in 1960.

⁷As every linguist knows, and as the cases of Afrikaans in South Africa and Bahasa Indonesia in Indonesia show, with commitment, time, and sufficient financial resources, **any language at all** can be developed to the level of a viable and effective medium of instruction. The Western-educated parents who say that our indigenous languages cannot be media of instruction in our schools actually only want their individual children to be able to study to any levels of their desire in English. The desire of such parents can easily be met under the proposal made above by teaching English in our schools as **an additional rather than a substitute** language. Children educated in that way who are also truly qualified can, like their counterparts in the rest of the world outside sub-Saharan Africa, subsequently travel to native English countries both for further studies and for greater competence in English. The numbers of such children will never be such as would warrant killing off our indigenous languages merely for their convenience.

And, finally, should the momentum of the development of the languages be sustained, they should in future start featuring in serious academic discussions of classical written literature all over the world, as none of them regrettably do at the moment.

7. Conclusion

Whether the hopes expressed above actually get realised or do not get realised depends entirely on what people do, or fail to do, about the languages concerned from now until that future time. What is certain, however, is that there will be no excuse for people living then and their forebears starting from us, as there is today for our forefathers who apparently did not have the benefit of early contact with any writing systems.

References

- Amfani, A. H. 2012. 'Presidential Address,' read on 4 December 2012 at the 25th Annual Conference of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria, held at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.
- Anonymous 2003. 'Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20, Year 2003, on National Education System'.
http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Indonesia/Indonesia_Education_Act.pdf
 Accessed 10 October 2011
- Awobuluyi, O 2012a. 'Language Policies in Africa,' presented at the 43rd Annual Conference on African Linguistics, Tulane University, New Orleans, USA, 15th to 18th March 2012.
- Awobuluyi, O 2012b. 'Major Milestones in the Development of the Yoruba Language,' keynote address at the International Workshop on the Development and Modernization of Yoruba Metalanguage, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, 30th July to 2nd August 2012.
- Bamgbose, A 2006. 'About ACALAN,' keynote address on the occasion of the launching of the Academy of African Languages (ACALAN) in Bamako, Mali.
<http://www.acalan.org> Accessed 17 October 2011.

- Olugbamila, A. 2012. 'Our Grouse with [the] Revised Curriculum by Teachers,' *The Nation*, 6 September 2012, pp. 25-26.
- Webb, V N 2002. 'Language Policy Development in South Africa.' <http://www.up.ac.za/academic/libarts/crpl/language-dev-in-SA.pdf> Accessed 23 June 2011.