

Current Developments in Multilingualism

ORJI DERECK-M. AKACHUKWU (PhD)

Department of Linguistics
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State Nigeria

Abstract: *Multilingualism is a very common phenomenon that has received much scholarly attention in recent years. This article examines the meaningful changes that have occurred in multilingualism over the years. This article studies multilingualism as it was in the past as historical multilingualism and the today's unfolding multilingualism as contemporary or current multilingualism. This article pays attention to the factors that motivate the current developments in multilingualism and the properties or main features of current multilingualism. Historical and contemporary multilingualism are distinguished based on the origin, geographical location, class, profession, religious rituals etc. Nigeria is a language diversified country of over 400 languages, the increase on the attention given to multilingualism in Nigeria today is motivated by academic, economic, political and social factors. Multilingualism is been practised today in most countries of the world.*

Keywords: *Multilingualism, Linguistics, Dispensation*

I. Introduction

Scholars from different fields have studied the concept of multilingualism. Decades have been spent on heated discussions about what kind of person a multilingual is. Definitions and descriptions of various communities which are labelled as multilingual vary in their accounts. The basic understanding of multilingualism is often diverges from researchers depending on their backgrounds and ideologies.

The European Commission (2007:6), defines multilingualism as the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage on a regular basis with more than one language in their day to day lives. In line with this definition, Aronin (2019) views multilingualism as the presence of a number of languages in one country or community or city. It is the use of three or more languages and the ability to speak several languages.. In the last sense, multilingualism is widely regarded as “a natural state of humankind” (Flynn, 2016).

Many authors try to give a distinction between individual and societal multilingualism. We must acknowledge that the domains of individual multilingualism and societal multilingualism are not clear cut. They are closely interwoven. Human language is a collective phenomenon and it is impossible to study individual multilingualism without considering its societal dimensions. And the opposite is also true: societal multilingualism cannot be understood without knowing how multilingualism affects individuals (Aronin 2019:3). Multilingualism is at the same time an individual and a social phenomenon (Cenoz, 2013:5). It can be considered as an ability of an individual, or it can refer to the use of languages in society.

Li (2008), defines a multilingual individual as “anyone who can communicate in more than one language, be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading)”. According to Aronin (2019), individual multilingualism relates to the personal sphere and covers the acquisition and use of several languages by an individual. It deals with an individual's ability to master, and approximately use two or more languages, and includes language related physical abilities and neurological processes taking place in the brain in healthy, challenged and gifted individuals. Individual multilingualism is sometimes referred to as *plurilingualism* (Cenoz, 2013).

Societal multilingualism refers to the contexts, circumstances, order, manner and routines of use of languages in different kinds of communities, organizations and groups. (Aronin, 2019). This implies that a community, group or organization that employs the use of languages (more than two) in conversations, meetings, games and other social activities are said to be practising societal multilingualism. By societal multilingualism, we mean the organized and unorganized language practices with three and more languages and the handling of more than two languages by some or all members of a society, as well as the implications of these practices and this handling for the society and its members. "Handling" involves language policies, attitudes, language behaviour and the assumptions underlying such behaviour in a particular community, all in the context of three and more languages being dealt with.

II. New perspective of multilingualism

The expansion of multilingualism is attributed to the social, linguistic and cultural changes derived from globalization, geographical and social mobility, economic and political transformations and the omnipresence of technology in all areas of life (L.Ruiz de Zarobe and Y. Ruiz de Zarobe 2015). Indeed multilingualism is considered a new social phenomenon in itself not just the result of adding numbers of language to individuals and societies.

According to Zarobe and Zarobe (2015), multilingual societies arise in a number of ways. Cohabitation of immigrant groups in a community, immigration and emigration and likes. Hence, multilingualism has become the backbone of these new societies to the extent that Aronin and Singleton (2012: 51) claim: in fact, virtually every facet of life in the present era depends on multilingual individuals.

III. Historical multilingualism and Contemporary multilingualism

Aronin and Singleton (2008:46) compared the features of historical and contemporary multilingualism and reported seven distinctions. The researchers report that distinctions between historical and contemporary multilingualism based on:

1. **Contiguity of origin:** In the past where two or more languages are widely used, the languages in question tended to originate in contiguous areas/nations/tribes but in the contemporary world, a particular area may be characterized by the use of languages of a wide diversity of origins, including the very distant origins.
2. **Class:** In some societies in the past, the use of more than one language was mostly confined to a particular social strata while the use of more than one language in contemporary societies is increasingly spread through the entire social range (obviously in some places more than others).
3. **Geographical location:** In the past, the use of more than one language was very often a feature of particular types of geographical locations (border areas, regions having their own local language varieties, towns on trade routes, imperial administrative centres, etc.) but in the contemporary world, the use of more than one language is becoming an increasingly ubiquitous phenomenon.
4. **Medium:** In some societies in the past, the use of additional languages was mostly confined to the written medium whereas the use of additional language is rarely confined to the written medium in contemporary societies.
5. **Ritual:** In some societies in the past, the use of additional languages was principally associated with ritual purposes while multiple language use is rarely confined to ritual purposes in contemporary societies.
6. **Profession:** In some societies in the past, the use of more than one language was associated with particular trades and professions but in contemporary societies, the use of more than one language is typically spread across a range of professional groups.
7. **Spatio-temporal aspects:** In the past, multilingual communication tended to be face to face over modest distances and in its written form could be quite slow whereas in the contemporary world, most multilingual communication is instantaneous and such communication routinely takes place over vast distances.

However, Cenoz (2013) clusters these distinctions into three main areas, which are:

1. **Geographical:** In comparison with the past, multilingualism is not limited to geographically close languages or to specific border areas or trade routes. It is a global phenomenon spreading over different parts of the world.
2. **Social:** Multilingualism is no longer associated with specific special strata, profession or rituals. It is increasingly spreading across different classes, professions and socio-cultural activities.
3. **Medium:** In the past, multilingual communication was often limited to writing and mail was slow. In the 21st century, because of the internet, multilingual communication is multimodal and instantaneous.

Aronin (2019) points out that in earlier times, particular languages and even single specific skills were instrumental in sub serving a variety of factors of human existence as the backdrop to multilingualism. Multilingualism as a phenomenon was useful but not crucial for the maintenance and advancement of communities and groups. Normally, in various localities and communities, one factor came to the fore as especially useful. At other times and in other places another linguistic skill could become useful for advancement of the particular group. For instance, elsewhere we have referred to as ancient Egypt, where the skill of writing was more significant than the presence of multiple language in the vast country (Aronin and Singleton 2012: 44-45).

Previous multilingual contexts mainly dictated particular point of emphasis in the use of several languages or their specific single skills necessitated by particular aims or needs. We can infer that multilingualism of the past was largely circumstantial and unevenly spread between groups and individuals for a variety of purposes. Specific limited (not necessarily important) aims needed to be attained but such attainment did not define the development of humanity nor was it crucial for such development. Multilingualism in the past has different tasks and aims. It was local and patchy, whereas it is (contrastingly) systematically and overarchingly global now.

Our current day to day existence and social behaviour accompanied by language differ markedly from those of previous generation. While the three basic component of multilingualism; user, environment and language endure through century, they also keep mutating thus inducing change in the resultant type of multilingualism. In other words, the same but ever changing element, each time generates different varieties of social practice different kinds of multilingualism.

Flores and Lewis (2016: 98, emphasis added) rightly treat 'language practices and language categories' as socio-political emergences that are produced by the specific histories and contemporary contexts of interlocutors. In conclusion, the human ability to use many languages and the presence and use of many languages in human societies have existed long ago. However, due to some circumstances and the stage of human development, the manifestations, configuration and role of multilingualism have been different in different periods. Emphasizing these meaningful changes, Aronin (2019) refers to the form of multilingualism that occurred in the past as **historical multilingualism** and that unfolding today as **current multilingualism**.

IV. Factors that contribute to the current visibility of multilingualism

According to Cenoz (2013:4), several factors have contributed to the current visibility of multilingualism. Among them, globalization, transnational mobility of the population and the spread of new technologies are highly influential in different political, social and educational contexts.

Aronin (2019: 6) explains these factors extensively although he treated them as key features of current multilingualism. He explains:

1. **Globalization as a context and the driving force:** The scope of multilingualism has broadened immensely to the extent that it now covers the whole world. Even the countries that were until recently considered strictly monolingual such as Japan and Iceland, are now experiencing an influence of languages and multilingual speakers. What has led to such fundamental worldwide changes in the way people use their languages? Globalization is frequently invoked in this connection.

2. **Mobility:** Mobility is deemed to be the cause of diversity of current multilingualism. Yet scholars point out that people have always been on the move. Most recent anthropological researches suggest that human language preceded the migration of our spaces across the globe. Barnard (2016) believes that language had begun before modern humans populated the earth. 'When humans first arrived in Australia, they arrived with language, having used it on their migration and after their fortuitous settlement on the continent' (Barnard, 2016: 34). In the Middle Ages in Europe, the roads were full of pilgrims, priests and wandering soldiers and carriages bringing families and their language from villages to towns and back. Chaunu (1966) describes the ways in which improving transport in Europe facilitated the flow of people and trade resulting in remarkable economic effects for some places. We often encounter claims of unprecedented increase of migration in recent times. It is true that the number of immigrants has increased in the last century and a half. But considering that the overall number of people on earth has also swelled, the proportion of migrants has actually decreased. The patterns and meaning of migration have altered as well. Altering between different cities, countries and continents has become normal as opposed to one way migration in earlier times. Contemporary migration is more visible and receives more attention from researchers because it is more intense and more crucially intertwined with the fabric of society.
3. **Technological advancement:** Technological advance in our time may seem pertinent only to our period, but scholars tell us that the previous eras breakthroughs in technology appeared perhaps even more drastic to their contemporaries. Radical technological improvements have been occurring for a long time and some scientific claim that the emergence of such technologies stunned contemporaries not less and perhaps more than the internet and modern day sophisticated appliances impress us. It has to be acknowledged on the other hand that the transformations brought by communication technology have brought crucial changes to linguistic practices.

V. The new linguistic dispensation

Current developments in multilingualism go beyond the mere addition of further elements to individuals' stock of linguistic knowledge or the mere augmentation of numbers of languages, multilinguals and multilingual countries.

The overall order of things with regard to languages in contemporary society can be described by the concept of **the new linguistic dispensation** (Aronin and Singleton, 2008, 2012). The word 'dispensation' means system, order, arrangement, government or organization of a nation, community, etc., especially at a particular time. We define the new linguistic dispensation as an emergent linguistic-social condition, characterized by unique properties and developments expressed in global and local patterns. It affects big and small communities, nations and countries. Regularities and patterns characteristic of the new linguistic dispensation apply to firms, parties, interest groups, armies, churches and individuals.

Fishman (1998) described the shifts in the contemporary sociolinguistic situation as characterized by two major trends:

1. An unparalleled spread of the use of English as an international language.
2. A remarkable diversification of the language in use.

The new linguistic dispensation includes monolingual, bilingual and multilingual arrangement. These are spread unequally across the globe. Since virtually every facet of human life depends on multilingual social arrangements and multilingual individuals, directly and indirectly (Aronin and Singleton, 2012), the principal component of the new linguistic dispensation both in its scope and in its role is multilingualism, concomitantly, there are many bilingual spaces and monolingual niches which are mostly local.

VI. Multilingualism the defining, inherent part of the new linguistic dispensation

Multilingualism language practices at community, institutions and collection levels are the vehicle of the new linguistic dispensation and play a central role in it. Transnational and multinational business companies and educational, cultural and political organizations like the EU etc., are based on multilingual linguistic

arrangements (although this does not mean that these arrangements work smoothly and equally for all the languages). Members of small language communities have to know regional and official languages and languages of wider communication; at the same time they often promote, revive and sustain their indigenous languages. Thus, multilingualism is important both at the global and local levels .

The interaction between the three kinds of arrangements- mono-, bi-, and multi-, with the prominent role of multilingualism produces the reality of a new linguistic dispensation in each particular local context and globally. Even with multilingualism playing a leading role globally, it is possible that in some cases monolingual or bilingual approaches are justified for teaching or for dealing with individuals and communities, even in the multilingual context.

VII. The properties of the new linguistic dispensation

Aronin and Singleton (2008), describe the qualities inherent in the new linguistic dispensation (that is current multilingualism). The new dispensation can be characterized as suffusive, complex and liminal. These three characteristics in turn lead to specific developments (key processes and phenomena) in the realities of global societies. These scholars discuss the properties as follows:

Suffusiveness: The suffusive attribute is manifested in the way in which language related phenomena (in particular English-related phenomena) pervade so many aspects of our lives probably less obvious but deeply significant is the degree to which multilingualism is integral to the construction of contemporary social reality. Contemporary multilingualism is suffusive in the sense that it permeates the world in terms of the existence of multilingual population, multilingual spaces and activity domain (e.g. business) where multilingual practices prevail. In fact, virtually every facet of life in the present depends on multilingual social arrangements and multilingual individuals.

Of course, person speaking just one language in a multilingual society can very often survive quite well. For example, an elderly Russian-speaking immigrant to Israel who has not mastered Hebrew and who does not know English can cope through Russian in selected banks, hospitals, Post offices, etc. and she can have access to newspapers and cultural events in Russian. But this is a case of the arrangement of a particular situation. Clearly, knowing the other languages of the environment would be the norm, simply because knowing these other languages renders life easier and yields a great variety of tangible benefits.

Complexity: The property of complexity can readily be seen in the dynamic polymorphous nature of current multilingualism, with its many interwoven levels and forms. Complexity in this context is readily discernable (and not just to researchers) in the practices of child rearing in language teaching, in everyday language use, in the multiplicity of languages meeting in particular locations and in individual personal experiences of language. Such complexity makes it impossible to provide a plausible account of multilingualism based simply on an aggregation of its various parts. When we look closely at multilingual phenomena, we are confronted at both the psycholinguistic and the sociolinguistic levels with a great multiplicity of agents (varying number of languages, variability among multilinguals in terms of modes of use and levels of mastery, an immense range of interaction types, etc.) and apparent unpredictability. The resultant perception is of fuzziness, irregularity, fragmentariness, even near chaos.

Complexity is the subject matter of complexity science, which he proved to be effective in arriving at solutions in fields as varied as medicine, traffic and financial services (Capra, 2005) and whose techniques, ideas and solutions can we believe, be fruitfully transferred to multilingualism studies.

Liminality: The term liminality is occasionally applied in the literature to linguistic and cultural transitions of individuals. In the present context, we use liminality to advert the fact that many processes and phenomena connected with language and languages seem recently to have become discernable or noticeable, the realization of their importance deriving perhaps from the challenge of recent linguistically connected events and developments and patterns. Examples are numerous and come from all aspects of multilingualism.

The three properties of contemporary multilingualism: suffusiveness, complexity and liminality, materialize in the concrete developments taking place in the context of the current global linguistic dispensation.

VIII. Developments characterizing the new linguistic dispensation

Aronin and Singleton (2008), explain the developments characterizing the new linguistic dispensation, which include: shifts in norm, the emergence of new focal issues, an expansion of affordances, an ambience of awareness and extreme malleability are easily illustrated with respect to the English language, or are particularly salient in this language.

Shift in norms: Norms have shifted in respect of at least the following aspects of relationships between people and language(s).

- The bi/multilingual rather than the monolingual language-user is increasingly recognized as the norm.
- Native speakers are losing their special status, this phenomenon has mostly been commented on with respect to English native speakers, but as a tendency it is not language specific.
- Bi/multilingual education is common and not just for elites or specific professions or in border areas, such education very frequently involves English.
- The aims of the formal learning and teaching of additional languages are typically formulated these days in terms of communication goals and tasks rather in terms of the objective of aping native speakers, so that, for example, the role of language knowledge in defining the life path have increased.
- The correlations between particular languages and particular geographical national/ethnic units have loosened giving way to more dynamic concepts of network and flow.

New focal issues: Another development is the emergence of new ‘hot’ topics of discussion in the language area. These include the following:

- The demarcation of the concept of a language in a world where a myriad of language varieties are recognized.
- The definition of native speaker and determination of the relevance of this notion amidst current multilingual, multivarietal complexity and diversity.
- The ownership of languages of wider communication – notably English.
- The impact of the proliferation of multilingual families.
- Issues arising in respect of multilingual identity.
- The expression of emotions in multilingual language use.
- Life-long multilingual language learning.
- The respective advantages and disadvantages of native and non-native language teaching in contemporary world.
- The fortunes of minority languages in today’s highly multilingual environment.
- The multidimensionality and multidirectionality of cross linguistic influence in multilinguals.

Expansion of affordances: The development which we have labelled of affordances is partially related to the previous opportunities to acquire English as an international language (and other languages of wider communities). To have knowledge of English is significantly to extend possibilities of all kinds across a very wide range of domains. For example, Hoffmann (2000:5), notes that ‘English is a sine qua non if one wants to gain access to international electronic information network’.

Ambience of awareness: The development of ambience of awareness (however flawed sometimes) around language, languages and multilingualism. In October 2003 Resters (Demick, 2002), reported the case of a Korean mother who had a surgical operation- costing more than E94- performed on her six years old son’s tongue, the procedure known as *frenctomy* involves shortening the tongue by one centimetre. It has become increasingly popular in South Korea as more and more parents drag frightened children –almost all under five- into doctor’s surgeries. The parents believe that the operation in question will improve that children’s ability to differentiate Rs and Ls in the English manner –so that for instance rice does not come out like lice- and thus give them a competitive edge in Korea’s English-obsessed society. The doctor interviewed for the Resters article reported that he reports this procedure about ten times a month.

This example is admittedly an extreme one and we do not wish to claim that tongue dating is sweeping the planet. Nevertheless, the example does provide a powerful sidelight on the extraordinary awareness of importance of English in Korea and by Extension, in the wider world.

Malleability: Finally, the development we have dubbed malleability refers to the very rapid and often unpredictable changes in the constituents of multilingualism in response to changes in conditions and needs. This applies to such phenomena as the individual's shifting levels of proficiency in his or her languages, the evolving status of particular languages in particular locations, changing rates of frequency of use in respect to specific languages and developments in relation to the availability of language instruction in respect to given languages. Whereas multilingual situations always have been of their very nature, highly transient, the mobility and rapidity of transformation characterizing the contemporary world currently render such transience extreme.

IX. Distinctive Language Practices in Current Multilingualism

Aronin (2019:12), explains different languages practices in current multilingualism. Language practices such as language nomination and dominant language constellation. The researcher explains as follows:

Language nominations: The way we perceive and treat languages

With thousands of languages spread across the world, with most countries becoming multilingual and with the recognition of many previously ignored languages, pidgins and dialects, there emerged the need to somehow situate them by mentally marking their roles in respect of individuals and within societies. Language nominations serve this purpose. Language nominations are specific language appellations that are assigned to various named languages and dialects according to their perceived role for particular individuals or communities. Language nominations are used in addition to the names of languages, such as Spanish, Norwegian or Russian. They include, for example, '*official language*', '*majority language*', '*indigenous language*', '*immigrant languages*'. For example, Danish is an *official* and *national language* in Denmark. Danish is a *minority* language attaching to Danish communities in Norway, Sweden, Spain, the United States, Canada, Brazil and Argentina and also a *home language* for around 15–20% of the urban population of Greenland.

X. Dominant language constellation: The way we use languages

If language nominations reveal how we *perceive* and *treat* languages, dominant language constellations show how we *use* multiple languages in today's world. Languages and language skills are subjected to re-evaluation and restructuring in terms of the mode of their use by groups and by individuals. Global and local trends dictate that the human language faculty is often expressed via a number of languages rather than a single language. Traditionally, in sociolinguistics, language teaching and language acquisition, the mastery and deployment of many languages is described using the concept of language repertoire.

XI. Language repertoires

The concept of language repertoire evolved from a monolingual perspective. Under the name 'verbal repertoire' it was famously deployed by Gumperz (1964: 137–138), who used it to refer to the sum of various skills in one language. Later the notion of language repertoire was expanded to include more than one language, as 'an individual's particular set of skills (or levels of proficiency) that permit him or her to function within various registers of (a) language(s)' and the 'totality of linguistic varieties shared by the group as a whole' (Pütz, 2004: 227). Today we speak of language repertoires as comprising various language skills from three and more languages. We can imagine a language repertoire as the sum of all the linguistic skills in one, two, three or more languages, an asset, resource or a store possessed by an individual or a group. Contemporary language repertoires may contain a long list of skills in many languages accumulated with the help of mobility, new media and technologies, all of which make languages more available. Indeed, in our day-to-day lives, no matter how many languages and skills we have in our repertoire, we usually use only part of this language repertoire.

Such a constellation of the individual's most important languages at a particular period of his/her life is called a dominant language constellation.

XII. Dominant language constellation

To represent the pattern of grouping of languages in use at a given time, the concept of dominant language constellation (DLC) was proposed by Aronin (2006, 2016). It denotes the group of person's most expedient languages, functioning as an entire unit and enabling an individual to meet all his/her needs in a multilingual environment. The DLC includes only a person's most useful and used languages, rather than all the languages known to them as would be the case for language repertoire. Unlike a language repertoire, a DLC comprises the languages which, together, perform the most vital functions of language.

Language repertoire and DLC are mutually complementary. A DLC is an active part of one's language repertoire. At the same time, there are a number of significant differences between the two concepts.

XIII. Multilingualism as a new linguistic dispensation in Nigeria

Like most African countries, Nigeria is multilingual. There are over 400 languages (languages, not dialects), of which about half of the 88.5 million people in the country speak three languages — Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba. In addition, another 10 per cent of the populations are people who speak other languages, but at the same time understand and use one of the three main languages as an auxiliary language (Voloshina, 2019).

Although Nigerian languages are divided into primary and secondary languages, this division is not correct, since very close languages to the three main ones in number and value are about ten more languages, just as the main languages in some states. Such languages include Kanuri, Ibibio, Efik, Tiv, Ijaw, Edo, Fulfulde, Urhobo, Nupe, Igala. As for smaller languages, they are not so small, since the number of people who use them is a significant percentage of the population. Thus, it can be concluded that there are three functional types of languages in Nigeria: the three main languages intended to be national; the ten languages used in a state; and the many ethnic languages distributed locally. Mahmoud (2016), also asserts that beyond these three major language groups which include Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, there also exist at least more than four hundred indigenous groups as estimated, of course all speaking different languages in Nigeria the prominent among them are only nine into which translation will be needed when it comes to some national issues on language. These are Edo, Efik, Ijaw, Fulfulde, Igbo, Tiv, Kanuri, Yoruba and Hausa.

Multilingualism in the country's government is considered a complex problem. Nigeria, with its over 400 languages and constant propensity for separatism, is clearly striving to strengthen national unity. One of the common myths in a multilingual country is the associative relationship between the diversity of languages and separatism. In this respect, it is worth emphasizing that the differences in the languages themselves, to nourish separatism, and their political Association with ethnic characteristics. Fortunately, Nigeria had avoided the temptation to use that stereotype to resort to harassment of foreign minorities (Vooloshina, 2019).

There is another stereotype, according to which the introduction of a single language acts as the factor of cohesion in the national state. In Nigeria this role of best suited language to unite all spheres and ethnic group is the English language, inherited from the colonialists. It occupies a dominant position as a language of administration and education, contributes to the unification of the elite from different ethnic groups. In addition, the English language, is still a stranger for all linguistic communities of Nigeria, it acts as the "neutral" speech. However, a common language can become a factor of unity only in combination with other factors that can unite the communities that use it. No language can be "neutral" because it certainly carries a certain cultural charge (Voloshina, 2019).

Three main question-issues have determined Nigeria's language policy since independence, they are: what should be the country's official language, what language should be granted as the status of a national language, and what language should be used in education?

One must mention the issue of the official language has been resolved from the very beginning: given the colonial (pre-independence) experience of using English for almost all official purposes, it is simply impossible to reverse it now. The dominance of the English language is really comprehensive. It is the language of

Government and Administration, including its use in meetings of the National Assembly and the State Assembly, the language of education at all levels, the main language of the media, the language of science and technology, and the literary language of many works by Nigerian writers. Even discussions about the need for change in this area are conducted in English. Agbedo and Eze (2012), term this **Englishization** that is the spread of English as the lingua franca of the information age.

Mahmoud (2016:3), advises that the best solution to ensure effective interaction and communication in the entire languages in Nigeria is to learn English language as the national and international media of communication for educated ones (that is for official and special or personal interactions and transactions). For the ethnic or local interactions, pidgin, creolization and other varieties of English can be informally used when necessary. This can be enough for the illiterates, peasants and their like to enjoy being together with their fellows when it comes to normal interactions in whatever business.

From time to time they raise the question of creating a kind of Lingua Franca, which would become a national language. Of course, everyone wants the official language of Nigeria to be African speech, but which one exactly? It is difficult to agree what language of today's 400 languages will take this privileged position. The few linguistic groups fear the political, economic and cultural domination of the people of the main linguistic communities, who in turn fight for primacy among themselves. Some see a way out of the impasse in creating an artificial hybrid language from elements borrowed from all African languages, or deliberately choose one of the smaller languages, thus comparing all and not singling out anyone. In conclusion, the complexity of the choice leads some linguists to propose to introduce as a national language English, which is already an official language, or some foreign African language like Kiswahili from East Africa.

In the meantime, the Government is trying to promote the teaching of the three main Nigerian languages, or hoped that one of them would eventually establish itself as the language of the overwhelming majority. Naturally, this means that English actually ceases to play the role of the national language. Some suggest introducing a Swiss model in Nigeria, where there are three official languages (French, German and Italian) which coexist with the regional (retro-Romanesque) language. However, the price of it may be too high; this solution would in any case make it possible to find a way out of the situation where, due to the lack of an alternative, English plays the role of a national language (Voloshina, 2019). We realize that government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interactions and national cohesion and preserving cultures.

Multilingualism has been gaining more attention in Nigeria recently. It is advisable today, to expose children to three or more languages after birth. Being fluent and proficient in three or more languages has been motivated by academic, economic, political and social factors. These languages can be foreign or indigenous languages.

Academically, there is increase in the quest to learn more than three languages. It is an advantage to a student that is proficient in the use of languages. Economically, a multilingual business man in a language diversified area like Nigeria will trade easier than a monolingual especially in that his non native languages. Politically, an individual is likely to be favoured when he communicate with those people on their native language. Socially, it is easier to adapt on an environment that you are conversant with (language) than those places whose languages are mutually unintelligible.

XIV. Conclusions

Multilingualism is an inherent human trait. It denotes both the ability of humans to use three or more languages and social situations where such capacity is utilized. The use of multiple languages accompanying human activities is behaviour unique to humans. Current multilingualism has attained to the scope and significance of a new linguistic dispensation on a world scale. Because multilingualism and globalization are so inextricately intertwined, all the major attributes of the globalization phenomena characterize multilingualism as well.

Multilingualism practices differ not only from those of the past, but are extremely diversified in today's world. They are characterized by diversity of users, languages and in particular, a diverse of multilingual arrangements across the world and communities.

Nigeria as a multilingual nation has experienced changes in multilingual practices over the years. People's view about multilingualism has changed; multiple language use is no longer viewed as a factor of disintegration but as a means of exploring the world. English has also been accepted as a national language. Although government has it in mind, to make one of the three main languages in Nigeria, a national or official language in a bid of unifying the country. Students are been advised today to learn as many languages as possible and no longer be confined to speaking only the native language. Being a multilingual is no longer constrained to a particular class, age, profession, ritual, geographical locations etc. but covers all spheres of life.

The hallmark features of current multilingualism are the drastic change in how languages are used. Today neither single languages nor the entire language repertoire serve as units of language circulation. Notably, sets of languages labelled as dominant language constellations are the prevailing patterns of language practices now. The proliferation of language nomination defines and describes the role of each particular language in particular contexts, the new linguistic dispensation is manifested in patterns and dispositions of contemporary human activities. The new linguistic dispensation include: monolingual, bilingual and multilingual arrangements. Of these, multilingualism is the leading component of the new dispensation.

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