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**Orphan Tongues and the Economics of Language Shift in
Nigeria: An Entremesa Discourse**

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Abstract

Complex experiences implicate a change in the structure of work, and consequent shift towards the functional language that expresses the new economic order. In other words, the “demand and supply” for a language directs its distribution, determines its value and creates its direct or indirect profit; and the extent a particular language facilitates survival in a changing socio-economic ecology determines what particular languages are given up, orphaned and rendered invisible in the global market. It is aspired in this paper to examine how dimensions of language use in Nigeria and different axes of economic and cultural shift connect with the developmental challenges and (in)visibility of the nation, as well as suggest practical steps towards language revitalization as a dimension of remedying the developmental challenges in the country. The thesis here is that the phenomenal dominance pattern of English with the consequent shift indigenous languages suffer is implicated in the economics of language. Especially, it is the position in this paper that language shift is determined by the cost and benefit of languages in contact and the socio-economic ecologies of the speakers.

Key words: Economics, Ecology, Language Shift, Nigeria.

ECONOMIC AND LANGUAGE SHIFT

The economics of language, a term believed to have been coined by Marschak (Novak-Lukanovič, 2008), is an analytical framework that considers relationships among language acquisition, language policy, and language use. It also involves a complex of socio-economic variables such as language of consumption, language of work, market power and preferences of buyers, ownership and management of technologies and market availability, labour income, mean income and number of buyers, etcetera. Though there is no systematic or unified theoretical concept which would encompass the link between language and the economy (Novak-Lukanovič, 2008), the syntagmatic combinatorics of language plus economy portends an interdisciplinary inquiry into the effects of language on various fields of economic activity as well as the effects of economics on choices about language use. Language acquires valuation in a broader socio-economic context, which determines its choice or use, specific formation or specific modes of expression. As field of research on the fringes of economics as a discipline, and which implicates sociolinguistics, economics of language “refers to the paradigm of mainstream theoretical economics and uses the concepts and tools of economics in the study of relationships featuring linguistic [...] variables: it focuses principally, but not exclusively, on those relationships in which economic variables also play a part” (Grin, 2002:13-4). Language skills, thus, become every other skill in an area in which individuals and societies could profitably invest, as a source of economic advantage.

However, rather than cultural economics, the closest cousin of language economics is environmental economics which “is concerned with the weighing of the advantages and drawbacks of different policy options regarding the environment. Because of the particularities of the environment from an economic perspective (which are related to the network aspects of languages), the type of trade-offs to be envisaged regarding our linguistic environment are akin to those that have to be considered with respect to the natural environment” (Grin, 2002: 21). Thus, the idea of implicating the phenomenon of Language shift, as indexical of displaced ecologies, in economics of language is trite: The co-occurrence of language and economics portends that language has a commercial/value potential, and that various forces determine whether it is capitalized on or not. Such processes like language maintenance or loss, cultural xenophobia and prejudice, various strategies of adaptation, language planning and language policies, etcetera, are directly or indirectly linked to the economy. For instance, language is “an important competitive agent aiding the individual in a competitive environment”, just as language planning serves as a tool for directing society in the social, political and economic sense. The multilayered value-variable of language in the objective sense means that knowledge of and speaking of a language represent a product to the individual, having a price and creating income, and also profit where the value of the language approaches an economic category. The price a language has, and indirectly the

individual speaker, is placed on an open and competitive language market (Novak-Lukanovič, 2008).

Thus, in discussing the economics of language, the kind of value attached to language is both of market and nonmarket values. This is because the value of language is reflected both in prices or such indicators as academic performance, employability, etc.; and in social value in other preferences such as access to culture and social contact with members of the target language and preferred culture that individuals enjoy (Grin, 2002:21). Language is not just an element of identity, but also a potential valuable skill, and asset of linguistic attributes which influence individuals' socio-economic status. In fundamental economic theory, welfare includes non-material elements with symbolic values such as preservation of cultural heritage, rather than restricted to material consumption of well-being. Thus, writing on Marxism and Literature, Raymond Williams (in Onyema, 2012) remarks that a definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world. This apparently recalls the role of language in identity formation and the integrative relationship between language and culture; that is, a people's way of life and the sum total of their being and essence, or rather, non-market value of language.

Thus, in the ethnographic and psychological treatment of language and ideology, the idea of language as model of reality and the more reflective level of understanding 'paths of speech', is germane to global language. Language, every language, assumes a metapragmatic function. Words are not just abstract principles of syntax and semantics; they do not just represent ideas. In addition, they denote objects, thought and feelings, and are strongly rooted in materiality. In global terms, the language order as the rest of social life is, *simplicita*, the material and economic order. However, rather than indulge in calculus notations common in econometrics, what follows is an articulation of findings from research, available literature as well as experiential knowledge from participant observation on the certain link between economic dynamics and language shift in Nigeria.

DISPLACED ECOLOGIES: INTRODUCTION

Over twenty years ago, Krauss (1992) raised an alarm over the possible loss of ninety per cent of some 6,528 languages spoken (by about 6.5 billion people) in the world, and generated a common reference point in the growing interest in global language shift, endangerment and loss. Going by Krauss' prediction that the world would lose ninety per cent of its languages by the turn of this century, Africa, which harbours thirty per cent of the world languages, will be reduced from the present number of 2,058 (Grimes, 2000) to only about 200. Crystal (2003) also states that it is probable that half of the world's over 6,000 languages will disappear in the course of the Twenty First Century, that is, an average of one language dying out every fortnight or so.

To adopt the ecology of language theory, language shift, endangerment and loss is akin to the loss of diversity in the zoological and botanical worlds, as languages, like all living

things, depend on their environment to survive. Language death or loss becomes analogous to the extinction of plant and animal species that are consumed by predator tongues, displaced from, and deprived of their natural habitats by more successful competitors, in a manner analogous to the eco-food chain (Fakuade, 1999:66). Language shift is part of a much larger process common in culturally diverse areas whereby economically and politically dominant languages and cultures simply overwhelm, displace and embattle indigenous ones. This process of language endangerment lapses to eventual loss if effective measures are not taken to stem it.

Determinants of language shift and endangerment are predicated on various indices that range from number, domination, and description. In terms of number, a language is said to be endangered when it has very few number of speakers. Brenzinger and others (1991:25) put the cut-off point for endangerment at 500. The tendency is for such speakers to learn the language that is more widely spoken in order to be socially and politically integrated into their econiche. However, instances abound where languages with fewer speakers have resisted the threat of endangerment, usually because of the economic relevance, prestige and loyalty they compel (Bamgbose, 1993:19). It has also been stated that a language is endangered when it is poorly described or when it has not been described at all. That is, languages with neither written literature, dictionaries nor grammas are likely to die off unrecorded and undocumented.

However, Bamgbose (1993) argues that the best definition of endangerment is that of *use*, predicated on *need*. A language is said to be endangered when speakers no longer find need for it because of the reality of their economic and socio-political ecology. It is used mainly for in-group communication, festivals, rituals, etcetera, but not for education in the formal sense. Such a language is no longer spoken by the youth, and there is little or no intergenerational transfer. Youths no longer derive joy in it and the few that speak it do not use it in any serious function. The language is deprived of vitality by the dominant language of wider communication used for work, administrative or educational purposes in the area. Though the language is not used in secondary and tertiary education, it could still be used in out-group communication and formal education at the primary level.

Indigenous Nigerian languages, which served as identity marker for its proud owners, suffer shift today and risk endangerment and loss despite the teeming number of its speakers in the rural areas. A recent study (Onyema, 2011) has shown that most children in the urban areas no longer speak their indigenous language, just as parents communicate with their children and wards in English. Speakers of indigenous languages are found mainly among adults and the elderly, and some children in the rural areas who would (at the least opportunity) switch over to English to press in their membership in or aspiration to the social and economic status that English confers. Economic activities including market transactions and street begging are also conducted in English and (pidgin) English-spruce patios, interlaced with different ranges of code-mixing and switching. In this context, English does

not refer to any mythic “standard” variety, but to all forms of nativized and domesticated forms, including such extensions as Pidgin, Broken and Market Patios. It also incorporates all other forms of expression that have been (re)lexified with English as superstrate.

Although the Nigerian National Language Policy, as embedded in the *National Policy on Education* (1977; 2004), recommends the use of the indigenous language or the language of the child’s immediate community in preprimary and primary education, academic activities in Nigeria are conducted in English; and on rare occasions, the indigenous language is taught as a school subject and, that, in English too. Most Nigerian adults and children do not show interest in reading literature in the indigenous language, or in studying the language in school; students that specialize in the indigenous languages are derided by their colleagues and treated as those who would not get admission in any other discipline. Except in few orthodox churches and mosques, religious sermons are conducted in English or Arabic, rather than in Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa, for instance, just as town meetings and bazaars in the urban areas are held in English. In national and most state televisions, in this era of teeming visual culture among children and youth, the slot for broadcast in indigenous languages is quite marginal.

Similarly, the shift Nigerian indigenous languages suffer has nothing to do with the numerical power of their speakers, as a sizable number of people, especially in the rural areas, still speak the languages, at least for in-group communication. Though the rate of their use is fast diminishing, it is still argued that such languages like Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have capitalized on the number game to gobble other languages around them. But this is only temporary because these indigenous languages engulf the minority languages only to surrender to the economic power of English. In the main, shift in indigenous languages as a stage in their endangerment happens as a result of the speakers’ need to fulfil their economic needs. The fact is that the emergence of new economic and social systems in Nigeria occasions lack of use and endangerment of the indigenous languages; and the high rate of absorption, assimilation or integration of the current economic and social system determine the high degree of shift and endangerment of the ancestral languages.

Generally, language shift—endangerment and eventual loss—is inevitable because it follows the trend of, maybe social, but certainly, economic change. A common feature of these shifts is the tendency for speakers to embrace the language of education, the workplace, mass media, business, government and services; that is, the language of economic, social and upward mobility. The cataclysmic loss in the linguistic diversity of the world (Onyema, 2011) is consequent upon the “big” languages of the economic, political and technological moments acquiring global status and supplanting the roles of the “small” indigenous languages. In a manner that is akin to environmental degradation and loss, global languages border-cross to other regions and displace, deplete or erode the delicate ozone layer of the indigenous languages. Using predatory metaphors, economically and politically dominant languages rage like the hurricane or wild fire during a peak harmattan period, and gobble and engulf

other languages with lesser economic value in the area. This causes serious “desertification” and “deforestation” in the linguistic landscape of the region. Valenced by the economic and technological clout of couriers, English, with other imperial languages, seems to have the effect of greenhouse gas which has eaten up the linguistic ozone layer. This has led to some kind of global warming that has affected the survival of the indigenous languages in African countries, such as Nigeria, and triggered a language conscience among most people who articulate programmes designed at empowering and revitalizing the indigenous languages.

ORPHAN TONGUES: THE ECONOMICS OF LANGUAGE SHIFT IN NIGERIA

The fact of economic shift in the primeval niche of the native speakers and the challenges of need posed by the new economic ecology account for the shift of the indigenous Nigerian languages. This is because the vitality of a language depends very much on factors like what a speaker needs a particular language for, and the extent a particular language facilitates one's survival in a changing socio-economic ecology determines what particular languages are given up and doomed to attrition and eventual extinction. The Nigerian historical (trading, missionary and colonial) contact with the West, the displacement/dislocation that trailed it and the current postcolonial wave of globalization, all occlude axes of language *warming*, which eat deep into the nation's linguistic ozone layer. The Nigerian social (and cultural) image has been slimmed by colonial economic subjugation, whose multiplier effects on the subservient image of the citizens have remained a historical and political imperative. Ultimately, English, which is the British colonial language around which the Nigerian economic and social structure revolves, and currently the dominant language with the highest geographical spread in the world (Crystal, 2003) is especially implicated.

Nigerian languages are fast becoming orphan tongues because of complex global experiences of the speakers that implicate dis-location and change in the structure of work, and consequent shift towards English, the functional language that expresses the new economic order. In other words, the “demand and supply” for the indigenous languages is fast declining as English, the language of the economic moment on which the global super structure revolves, reduces its distribution, lowers its value and creates direct or indirect loss for its speakers. The extent a particular language facilitates survival in a changing socio-economic ecology determines what particular languages are given up, orphaned and rendered invisible in the global market.

Although the evolution and shifting of cultures and languages of various niches is a natural and social imperative, the foremost reason for shift in indigenous Nigerian languages lies in their displacement as language of work during colonial rule. This is owing to the resultant shift in work and economic structure of the speakers during their contact with the western language and culture. Thus, Scott Palmer's (1977) establishment of the critical link between economic change and language shift is relevant to the Nigerian experience. As the world globalizes, there is massive change in work structure of the Igbo and this has been

catalytic to the endangerment of their vernaculars. According to Palmer, the language of work hypothesis is a causal chain leading from a shift in the structure of work to a shift in language of the home. In Nigeria, language shift can be located in the change from the kinship-based agrarian economy that prevailed during the pre-colonial era to the present wage-based economy; and consequently that of language of work from indigenous languages to English. Before the coming of the Europeans, most Nigerian ethnicities operated agrarian economy based on a close-knit kinship system, and the indigenous languages were used for intergroup communication and interpersonal relationships. Colonialism dislocated this traditional order and introduced changes in the ways the ethnic group organized work. The family no longer served as the agent of, and organ for, most economic and social tasks.

During the missionary *cum* (pre)colonial era, English was emphasized because the missionaries needed catechists and teachers to help in teaching the gospel and advancing the evangelizing mission. The colonialists in addition needed messengers, clerks and interpreters to work in the colonial offices, and replace those employed from Sierra Leone who were becoming too expensive to maintain. Thus, the ability to speak English became a ticket to good jobs and a status symbol, such that “no up-to-date native gentleman would now think of using his own language to express himself” (Kelechi, in Afigbo, 1981:380). The propaganda of the Roman Catholic Mission exploited this tendency towards material determinism as the ultimate end to English learning, and effectively lured the native speakers from the hype and security of their languages. Thus, exploiting the idea of economic determinism for language shift, Bishop Shanahan, leader of the premier catholic mission in Igbo Land was quoted as saying:

Why was the European DO in charge of tens of thousands of the Ibos? Was it because he had more money or more wives or more influence? No, the answer was that he was educated...and look at the court clerk and court messengers, the most influential and the most feared men in the district. Why were they chosen for their jobs? Simply because they had been to school and understand English. Why, they all knew the court clerk could distort and recast every written word, while their titled men could not read a single line (qtd. in Afigbo, 1981, pp. 379-80).

With this kind of utterance from a foremost Catholic priest, it became clear that the ability to read and write in the indigenous languages no longer attracted material advantages and social benefits in the emerging colonial economy. For one, court records were kept in English and the natives had to rely on the gory machinations of “English literate” court clerks who made the difference between freedom or life behind the bars, and even of life and death! The economic and political transformations undergone by the native population were so much that their social economy and traditional world of work were dislocated and repositioned in the colonial labour system that required them to function in English. In addition to the value of the traditional economy and work being displaced by “white collar jobs”, the subsistent

farmers and herdsmen lost their farmlands and grazing fields to government developmental projects, social diversification and population increase, just as locally produced metal works and crafts were replaced by “imported” high brands.

Furthermore, there was a shift to the written culture from the oral culture of the vernacular, just as the colonial language was needed at the personal, interpersonal, inter-ethnic, government and international levels. Mastery of English required a higher level of competence and violated the traditional pride and identity of the indigenes, but it also attracted great financial rewards and boosted the prestige of the indigenes. This cost and benefit analysis favoured English and weakened the resistance of minority languages to shift. The colonial language was perceived as the language of opportunities and sweet dreams. The nightmares were in the vernacular.

Rather than favour the indigenous tongues over the colonial language, the hardship introduced to the ethnic economy as a result of shift in national work structure increased the need for the colonial language, as the indigenes aspired to the elitist class with and in English. In fact, even the poor were not against the use of English. Rather, inability to speak English imbued in them a sense of disability, loss and denial which they struggled to make up for by ensuring that their children were well groomed in this language of means and economic success. What they felt about their lack of competence in English was a sense of loss, and of desire, not hatred. To adopt Palmer (1997), indigenous communities no longer found traditional means of support practical or adequate; participation in the wage-based economy became very important for meeting need up and down the need hierarchy. In this context, work and institutional related issues became a strong source of motivation and this implicated the English Language skills needed for the specific work environment. This situation agrees with Vallencourt’s (1989) belief that the determinants of the preferred language of an employer are the language of its owners, the language of its market and the language of its technology.

Similarly, during the colonial era, the indigenes were kept in subordinate positions and were involved in an economic system, which required them to use the colonial language as language of work and to function adaptively in the new order. Contrary to the Mufwenean (2004) position, the educated elite ran the Nigerian socio-economic structure and tried to sustain the colonial economic (infra) structure in English. The clamour for power, participation and share in the national cake, as well as the effects of mass mobilization eroded the linguistic division of labour, in favour of the colonial language. The indigenous population experienced (and still experience) language shift rather than language integration. Language integration occurs when the contact populations coexist peacefully while language loss occurs when the stronger language overshadows the weaker one to the point of threatening its existence. Thus, the social and economic marginalization of Nigerians (and Africans by extension) and their consequent shift and incorporation (rather than integration) into the contact economic infrastructure, culminated in the loss of their ancestral economic structure

and language value.

It is essential to note here that the language of work hypothesis discountenances the role of pride (but not prestige) in a language as posing resistance to language shift. As Palmer (1997) has reasoned, the indigenous language may be highly esteemed as the language of heritage, that is, for what it is or what it represents, even while being replaced by the national or international language of work. According to him, English as the language of survival may be used simply because it is needed for functioning in the work place to earn a living. It is often valued because of what it accomplishes, not for what it represents. *Use, not high regard*, is what perpetuates a language. Therefore, a language of heritage may decline even while being held in high regard.

However, the issue of prestige is still potent in understanding language shift in that shift still favours the language of (social) prestige. Yet, what confers prestige is necessity/social and economic allure, and what sustains *use* is need. Primeval attachment of prestige and esteem based on mere psychological preference, which though, may delay language shift, lack the economic allure/drive to vitalize language. Thus, in spite of the high esteem the vernacular commanded among most members of the indigenous communities, the socio-economic valenced prestige of English enticed speakers away from needing their indigenous tongues. Consequently, though Palmer (1997) and Mufwene (2001) treated *prestige* and *collective self-esteem* as synonyms and likely indices of language vitality, they still assert, in the words of Palmer, “that prestige and collective self-esteem or lack of thereof, are not key factors for language maintenance or shift”.

The fact is that Nigerians needed the language that will better integrate them in their (new) places of work. As Mufwene (2004) has observed, the socioeconomic ecologies of most populations around the world have changed since the recent European colonization of the world started four centuries ago (especially over the past four hundred years), and so have their aspirations for decent living. The changes in these socioeconomic ecologies have often involved new languages in which they are expected to develop some competence in order to compete for jobs when they are available. The pressure on the indigenous and some immigrant populations to function also in the new languages and be better integrated in their new societies has been unrelenting. Despite their attachments to their ancestral traditions, the pressures of the new socio-economic order have made it increasingly difficult for the affected indigenes to practice their traditional languages and culture. The moral dilemma that arises is that the natural quest for the language needed to meaningfully integrate in the new socio-economic order pressures indigenous populations away from their native languages and consequently cause lack of practice, use, development and vitality in such languages. The consequent shift/attrition and death of these languages happen despite the will of the relevant population not to give them up.

(Post) colonial educational and administrative structures in Nigeria created jobs requiring speakers of English rather than the indigenous languages. English therefore enjoys

a measure of convenience and use. The all-pervading role of English as the language of trade, commerce and industry, education, national and international communication, and (practically) of government, compels its use in terms of costs and benefits. English is the major bridge with not just the outside world or another ethnic language; it has become the mother tongue in Nigeria (Anthony, 2001). In urban cities where intercultural and intra-cultural marriages are contracted, parents raise their children in English (or in pidgin, among illiterate parents). Education, which makes English compulsory in Nigeria, takes care of the rest and holds English sway. Note that Nigerian schools still lack local content, and have continued to operate as colonial schools originally designed to lure the indigenes out of their culture—language and religion—deemed as barbaric and satanic. In all cases, English is highly prioritized as language of civilization, economic emancipation and spiritual salvation.

In fact, Ronald Walker (qtd. in Palmer, 1997) has adopted Abraham Maslow's "hierarchy of need" as good predictor of language maintenance and loss". The value of applying the Hierarchy of Need Theory to questions of language choice lies in its potential to take us beyond external social circumstances to probe the circumstances of the heart, the motivations and felt needs of communities undergoing language shift. And, these have clear links to economics. Understanding how language is used to solve basic needs helps to explain why communities respond differently to the same external social forces, specifically, why one group undergoes language shift and another does not. For instance, in spite of the stipulation in the Nigeria's Language Policy (1977; 2004), which makes the major indigenous languages the language of instruction in preprimary and primary schools, pupils are still taught in English, even at the Kindergarten level. This is because schools and parents desire to meet the children's need for English, the ultimate language of education in Nigerian schools, and the language in which the *books that matter* are written. Up till date, proficiency in English has remained the litmus for assessing the country's standard of education: The standard of education is said to have fallen when pupils and students across the various levels exhibit poor English language performance! This is regardless of their level of competence and performance in other Nigerian languages.

The (post)colonial encroachment of "development" and "modernity" dislocated the traditional means of sustenance, just as the lure of external culture and the prerogative of individuals to choose between traditional cultures and modern culture further displaced their use. There is feeling among the youths that traditional ways are illegitimate, irrelevant and retrogressive, and this adversely affects the trend of intergenerational transfer as an index of language vitality. The young no longer speak the native languages, and the nation risks losing its over three hundred and fifty tongues. Following practical considerations, the major challenge is that English is becoming the vernacular in most Nigerian homes. As the official language in multilingual Nigeria, where mutually suspicious ethnicities live in a state of suspended conflict, English has become the language of education, law, national and international relations, politics, science and technology, and even of street begging. English has become Nigerian. Apart from being the language of work, English is the language of

social interaction among individuals and communities. It both interfaces and localizes the people, their land and economy. The Nigerian constitution is written in English in utter disregard for the linguistic rights of the majority and minority ethnicities, just as the express role it ascribes to the vernaculars is quite marginal.

The economic incentives, which English confers, are being taken care of by parents who prioritize the needs of their children to suit the exigencies of the economic (and language) moment. To meet the necessity for the language of work, need is reshuffled and English prioritized, as parents even withdraw their children from schools where English is not the language of instruction, to schools where speaking or teaching pupils in any native language is banned. The desire is to integrate them meaningfully into the Nigerian academic and global work structure. Parents would rather their children became first language speakers in a wage-based English in order to have an edge over others and guarantee their advancement in the highly competitive social and economic regime. This is because a major determinant of status and use/ acquisition of a language is its economic determinant, as users/ individuals will invest according to the net benefits of these languages, all languages being 'human capital', and benefits being future returns associated with factors such as employability, earnings, and so on. This is moreso when language acquisition often occurs before childhood (Vallencourt, 1989), while, costs are more immediate and depend mainly on the language skills of the parents and on the language environment (schools, neighbourhood, and etcetera) of the child, net benefits being gross benefits minus cost. According to Vallencourt, an increase in the use and status of a language will increase investments in the language, mainly as a second language but also as a first language.

Thus, the language of work hypothesis explains the issue of native languages as orphan tongues and English as mother tongue in Nigeria. The change in the structure of work impact on the lives and thoughts of parents. Especially, the replacement of the vernacular with English as the language of work equally revises their perceptions on the needs of their children who must be prepared for life in a functional language. In other words, the political economy of Nigeria creates a production and hierarchy of languages, just as agents of the political economy promote specific types of language practice or patterns of language exchange, in a manner akin to a language market, where "demand and supply" for a language directs its distribution, determines its value and creates its direct or indirect profit. Thus, following Palmer's (1997) stages of adoption and utilization, the indigenous languages are now at the fourth step as some parents now make English the language of their children. This has put pressure on the nation, as English increasingly becomes the common means of communication, while the native tongues are used less, and only by adults.

Consequently, intergenerational transfer is disrupted as younger speakers have fewer opportunities for continued acquisition/ learning of the indigenous languages. They lack advanced features of their tongue, as there is no opportunity to acquire the typical and advanced features. They also spend less time with adults at the very essential formative years

of language acquisition. They spend most of their time in school where English is the language of instruction and interaction. Even the erstwhile economically disenfranchised proletarian majority seeks to bridge the economic gap by going to school and sending their children to school, where English is mastered, and consequently gaining the linguistic and resultant economic empowerment which English promises. Thus, those who could not go to school now ensure that their offspring are empowered enough to partake in the national cake which is shared in English. All these economic considerations have become so total and so permeate the psychology of an average Nigerian that English has now become both the language of dream and the dream language. These dreams facilitate language shift at the expense of the indigenous tongues whose roles and uses are slimmed by the socio-economic realities of the new order, and the displaced traditional ecology/economy, which reprioritize the speakers' needs.

Technically too, the colonized were subtly stripped of their immovable lands and property and this facilitated their relocation and scattering among (capital) cities of government with dominating economy and semblance of 'superior' western culture. With urbanization and international migration powered by economic drive, Nigerians of various ethnicities scattered all over the country in search of daily bread. Constrained by their sense of dislocation, they spoke less of their native language in an attempt to meaningfully integrate socially and economically in the language of work and have access to its speakers in their new econiche. In other words, the need for economic integration and to identify with a new economic order (and the language in which it is spoken) led to urbanization, just as the economic prospects attached to the benefiting language lured the younger ones away from their ancestral homes. The economic motivated urban or overseas drift saw Nigerians scattered in foreign neighbourhoods quartered by other dominant tongues and socio-economic settings that compelled them to speak the foreign but economic language of work, social interface and psychological belongingness. Thus, in this era of political newspeak, "detrribalized Nigerian" has become a shibboleth for those who speak English more often and less of their vernacular. Quite in line with Marschak's postulation (in Novak-Lukanovič 2008), Nigerians saw language as the object of choice directed to achieving certain goals, and attributed the choice of what language to use and what language to learn to standards of microeconomics, which, like all other economic decisions, always represent a result for the individual—the best choice in a given moment.

In this era of globalization, the negative shift in economic value and need indigenous Nigerian languages suffer is immense. Shifting socio-economic ecologies have continued to evolve, just as successive governments and individuals have continued to make policies and choices that favour the global language. According to Peter Drucker, every major social task, whether economic performance of health care, education or the protection of the environment, the pursuit of new knowledge or defense is today being entrusted to big organizations, designed for perpetuity and managed by their own managements (in Palmer, 1997). While Drucker had citizens of developed countries in mind, one can say without any

fear of contradiction that citizens in most developing countries are becoming typical employees. They work for one of the institutions, look up to them for their livelihood, opportunities, access to status and function in society, as well as for personal fulfillment and achievement. Government and these institutions control their dreams and aspirations for a better life and the lives of their children. This process of institutionalization of work structure, which started in Nigeria with religious institutions that later transformed into colonial institutions, has finally morphed to global multinational institutions, and permanently entrenched the foreign language in which foreign institutional structure is spoken. Indigenous Nigerian languages suffer shift because they lack meaningful presence in the global arena and international discourse. Why, for instance, would an American want to study or speak Igbo from the economic, political and cultural security of the White House, socio-economic hype and brand superiority of English? Oil exploration, which would have compelled the need for the languages of oil-bearing communities in Nigeria, is curiously drilled in foreign tongues, just as crude is sold and bought in Dollars. An Italian or American does not need to speak any Nigerian language to be able to gain employment in Agip or Shell Oil Company, or drill oil in Egbema, Ibeocha, Oyigbo (Obigbo) and Elele.

The shift from the indigenous languages to English has been progressive, as government has continued to support policies that favour English and disadvantage the indigenous languages. The value and prestige English carved for itself during the colonial era has been improving rather than waning. It is the language around which the Nigerian socio-economic superstructure revolves, and the language that guarantees access to the national cake. With its certification as the language of education, government and business, the judiciary, as well as the language of science, technology and international communication, English is surely positioned like no other. It can be said that this language of work and use compels the kind of prestige that directly vitalizes it. Thus, Nigerians—both the poor and the rich—aspire towards English because it improves their economic and social conditions. The economic enfranchisement English confers on Nigerians automatically implicates a built-in pressure toward increased dependence, need and use for this language at the expense of the indigenous tongues.

The socio-economic structures that had empowered the indigenous languages have been (and are still being) eroded by the forces of globalization. For instance, the average Nigerian no longer keeps the proceeds of their sales in the goatskin bag. They have acquired a banking culture needed, at least, to beat the more desperate and sophisticated crimes that are the legacies of globalization. Moreover, banking transactions are in English. At least, Automated Teller Machine (ATM) instructions are in English. Thus for Nigerians, the reality of globalization has clear links with language use, as economic (with political) power models cultural power and continues to be an important index in the determination of language empowerment (vitality) or endangerment. The balance of language vitality tilts towards the language of the economically powerful cultural producers at the expense of the weak consumer nations. This is because the powerful nations have the economic, technological,

political and military reach needed to advertise themselves, create a “mind set” of their brand and image and accord themselves loyalty and relevance from weak and consumer countries who are compelled by the need for such a language. Obviously, economic advantage and cultural relevance are important factors that favour some languages rather than others.

In this sense, Nigerian indigenous languages become less important as the world economy globalizes. There is diminished ‘locality’ of the indigenous languages because Nigerians themselves consume global economic and cultural goods, assimilate language brands and give up the local and cultural characteristics of indigenous goods that were valued in their own right. The language, name, manual and cultural use of the products become assimilated and increasing important database for the consumers. In this age, asking the Nigerian youth to speak their vernacular is as awkward as insisting that they wear traditional attires instead of vogue American Jeans, snickers, and body hugs; or to make them listen to news from the state radio station instead of American rap songs and musicals from Channel 0, or at least news from the prestigious CNN. Even local songs are only enjoyed among the youth when such songs are “discovered” abroad and reimaged by being aired in satellite stations. These attitudes are indices of value and need for the language of production among the consumers who tend to shift to the language of the economic moment and further shore up its prestige.

Even Igbo producers of culture give up their voices or incorporate them into western imagination. Thus, in international discourse, for instance, “experts” on Igbo studies are at best Nigerian-Americans or residents who rarely visit home, and who rely on dated or wrong information and vague tale-tale signs of the Igbo backwardness in the race to modernity, documented by Western scholars. Of course, among most European-based African scholars of African culture, the brand of discourse they find relevant in African study centers and, of course, which guarantees their employability, is that which tends to authenticate Africa as a backward race, occupying the primal rug in Charles Darwin’s evolutionary scale of atavism. Shored up by certain links to economic determinism, they model tales of great grandmother lands, pass them off as modern African anthropological dissertation and excite their western hosts who jolly at the pollution of autochthonous African tales. That way, they are read, employed, or have their contracts renewed; they are discovered abroad and celebrated back at home, by some other scholars “stuck at home”. These “lucky drainees”, thus celebrate academic exile, and deride a niche whose story they corrupt, whose authentic tales remain largely unwritten, and whose genuine identity is denied. Thus, according to Ham (2001) "as globalization extends to cover a wide range of goods and services, the number of these which continue to be provided locally are displaced and diminished in quality". Thus by some metaphorical/ analytical stretch, suppose we assume the existence of an objective aggregate index of "locality" derived, sum the locality index of all goods consumed, and hold the prices and qualities of goods constant, increased globalization certainly reduces this “index of

locality".

CONCLUSIONS: THE TASKS

Obviously, there is need to highlight the process of competition and selection which has characterised global language shift in Nigeria since the beginning of colonization, through an interdisciplinary conversation between economics and language. However, rather than bemoan language loss or shift argue for the hopeless reversal of language shift in Nigeria, Mufwene's (2001) position is taken quite literally: The subject matter of language shift and endangerment is actually made better sense of when particular attention is paid to factors that have favoured particular languages at the expense of others, factors which lie in the changing economic and social conditions to which speakers respond adaptively for their survival.

In Nigeria, the challenge of the language of work as determinant of language use and direction of shift is immense. However, the solution to language shift, as a prelude to language loss, does not lie in limiting natural choices to the economies of the traditional society, as that would impede on individual freedom of choice in a heterogeneous global community. Rather, the first challenge is to appreciate the awareness that the economics of language hypothesis implicates, and understand that language needs can still be revitalized in the indigenous languages. Certainly, other factors such as political will, social consciousness or legislative changes play a role, directly or indirectly, in explaining language choice and use, but they all translate to economic variables that model choice among alternatives for individual language users. Surely, while an economically powered interest in indigenous languages and culture may not completely stem the corroding effects of English superpower, easily the global lingua franca, it will certainly help in delaying the corrosive displacement of the Nigerian collective identity and ethnic core-values.

Thus, in order to stem the adverse economic regime of these languages that suffer shift, and shore up their need and use, government, academics, and entrepreneurs, should invest economic power in the indigenous languages and culture through various means of positive economic reinforcement. To achieve revitalization of these languages, they should be prepared to guarantee both good standard of living and career opportunities to speakers by turning the indigenous languages into languages of work, education, government, law, mass media, and so on. Certainly, this has strong implications for evolving and implementing a vernacular friendly and democratic national language policy. Again, it is important to raise the consciousness of parents on the need for language maintenance even as they prepare their children for work life. Similarly, government economic policies should be geared towards affecting, in a very positive way, the economic integration of communities, as development and use of one language over the other will remain artificial as long as there is no economic consideration for its maintenance or use. To be admitted into any higher institution or employed in the civil service or in any Nigerian establishment, for instance, a candidate should demonstrate ability to speak and write at least an indigenous language.

The overwhelming majority of the educated and entrepreneurs should be interested in their language, as well as read and write in them. Language scholars and policy makers should go beyond primal authentication, and exhale the needed energy to jump start modern linguistic advancement in the area of information technology, for instance, rather than anthropology/ philological exposition and cultural-authentication campaigns. Stakeholders should take steps to reverse deliberate economic practices, policies and conditions that favour English rather than forbid the indigenous tongues from playing the roles that maintain and empower English, but endanger them. Academics should imbibe a progressive indigenous language conscience to positively brand and put them to international use. In this global era driven by the politics of image and reputation, instituting awards, grants and prizes will engender their local allure, shore up their market value and make them economically viable language choices for speakers.

Conscious efforts should be made to do for the indigenous languages what Chaucer and Shakespeare did for English, or what Boccaccio, Petrarch and Dante did for literary Italian, or Martin Luther for German. Just the same, publications in indigenous languages should be largely celebrated, largely read, and largely sold. Though levels of mastery and motivations in creative writing could vary from one language to another, the fact still remains that the kind of creative energy expended by the writers in nurturing Nigerian Literature in English is directly proportional to the amount of energy they did not expend in nurturing Nigerian Literature in the indigenous language. The time they expend writing in English is the same amount of time denied the usage and linguistic expansion in their ancestral tongue, from which their authentic idioms of feeling, valuation and sales-pitch should naturally derive. Nigerian writers as producers of culture should also write in their native tongues, rather than kill the vernacular and use the vital parts to nourish and vitalize English. Linguistic and literary ingenuity, like charity, must begin at home.

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