

Investigating the Strategies for Promoting a National Language in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper investigates the various strategies for promoting a national language, with emphasis on their relevance to linguistic unity and national development. The study explores conceptual clarifications of national language and language promotion, and reviews theoretical frameworks underpinning language planning, particularly status, corpus, and acquisition planning. Relying on extensive literature review, the paper examines global strategies adopted by countries such as Indonesia and Tanzania, alongside national efforts within Nigeria to promote indigenous languages like Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. It identifies key strategies including effective policy formulation and implementation, integration of the national language into education systems, utilisation of media and digital platforms, development of literature and creative arts, standardisation processes, and community mobilisation. However, it notes that challenges such as political resistance, ethnic diversity, and inadequate resources often hinder the effective promotion of a national language. Thus, the study recommends the adoption of Pidgin language as Nigeria's national language. This can only be achieved through deliberate governmental policy actions, stakeholder collaboration, educational curriculum reforms, and societal attitudinal change to enhance the status and usage of the national language, fostering national integration and identity.

Keywords: National language, planning, policy, unity.

Introduction

Language is a crucial instrument for communication, national identity, and socio-political integration. In multilingual societies, the choice and promotion of a national language often serve as a unifying factor to bridge ethnic, cultural, and linguistic divides. For example, Indonesia's promotion of *Bahasa Indonesia* and Tanzania's adoption of *Kiswahili* demonstrate how national languages can foster national cohesion and development. Also, *Filipino* in Philippines, and *Bahasa Malaysia* in Malaysia have continued to serve as unifying factors for these countries. In Nigeria, the need to promote indigenous languages as national languages has been recurrent in policy debates, especially given the dominance of English, a colonial legacy, as the official language. Effective strategies for promoting a national language are therefore essential to preserve cultural heritage, promote unity, and enhance development.

Despite various efforts at promoting indigenous languages as national languages, many countries, including Nigeria, still struggle with low status and limited usage of these languages in official, educational, and

technological domains. The continued dominance of ex-colonial languages often undermines the development, codification, and spread of indigenous national languages. Consequently, there is a need to critically investigate and propose strategies that can effectively promote a national language to ensure linguistic empowerment, national integration, and sustainable development.

Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to investigate strategies for promoting a national language. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the concept of national language and language promotion.
2. To analyse existing global and national strategies for promoting a national language.
3. To suggest a suitable national language for Nigeria considering her heterogeneity.
4. To propose effective strategies applicable to multilingual contexts such as Nigeria towards the national language promotion.

These are significant as they highlight the importance of promoting a national language as a tool for fostering national unity, cultural identity, and development. The paper contributes to sociolinguistic and

language planning literature by providing insights into effective strategies for national language promotion, which can guide policymakers, educators, linguists, and other stakeholders in formulating and implementing relevant language policies.

Conceptual Clarifications: What is a National Language?

A national language is a language given special status within a country, serving as a marker of national identity and unity. Bamgbose (1991:27) defines a national language as “a language that is used for political, cultural, and ethnic identification within a nation-state.” Unlike an official language, which is primarily used for administrative and governmental purposes, a national language symbolises national consciousness and cultural heritage. According to Wikipedia, a national language is that which has some connection –defacto or de jure– with the people and perhaps by extension the territory they occupy. This definition is however vague and inadequate. A more comprehensive definition is that given by Akindele and Adegbite (1999):

The national language refers to a language which has the authority of the government conferred on it as the language of a number of ethnic groups inhabiting a geo-socio-political area. It is

deliberately chosen as a symbol of oneness and unity and of achievement of independence in an erstwhile colonial situation and of the state of nationhood. Such a language must, as a matter of necessity, cut across the entire structure of the society in its use and application. For instance, the English language in England, Canada and USA. It can also be qualified as a language that is both elite and mass-oriented, integrating everybody in the political community.

From the above definition, one can deduce that a national language is that used among other functions, to perform the function of nationalism. Again, it should have the authority of the government conferred upon it as this is the only way it can be established as a national language. Also, the language must be indigenous and mass oriented: it must cut across all strata of the society where it is adopted.

At this point, one may ask: What is the essence of adopting a national language? Of what use will a national language be for a sovereign state like Nigeria that has existed for over six decades as an independent state? The answer to this is not far-fetched. First is that a national language, when adopted, will foster unity among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. The language will instil

unity into the populace by making everyone speak with a unified voice. There will be a general feeling of a sense of belonging and brotherhood, enhancing collective responsibility. Also, a national language when adopted will inculcate a sense of patriotism into the citizens. This is true because having a unifying language in which everyone is a stakeholder and can easily receive messages passed through that language, will instil a high level of enthusiasm and willingness to render service; people will automatically become patriotic. Citizens will be willing to defend their country's integrity with faithfulness, honesty and loyalty. Furthermore, the adoption of a national language will facilitate national development. National development will come as a consequence of unity and patriotism which is a unified language will foster. Development, undoubtedly, thrives in a peaceful environment. Not only that, the citizens will not hesitate to contribute their quota to the development of the nation because they see themselves as bonafide members of the state.

Language Promotion

Language promotion involves deliberate strategies to enhance the status and use of a language in society (Kaplan and Baldauf,

1997:54). These efforts may include policy formulation, language planning, standardisation, integration into the education system, and public advocacy to encourage functional expansion of the language (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997: 54). In recognition of the importance of educating children in their native languages, especially in Africa, UNESCO (2025) writes:

To mark World Mother Language Day, UNESCO is highlighting the importance of linguistic diversity, particularly on the African continent, which alone is home to a third of the world's languages. With an estimated 1,500 to 3,000 languages, Africa is a true hub of linguistic and cultural wealth. Yet fewer than 20% of pupils in Francophone Africa are taught in their mother tongue, a factor that limits their access to quality education and their success at school.

This captures not only the essence but also the inevitability and giant strides made by UNESCO towards promoting multilingualism across Africa. There is statistical evidence to support this, such as children's 30% more likelihood to read with comprehension by the end of elementary school when taught in a familiar (native) language (UNESCO, 2025). Sequel to this, the United Nations Organization

consistently seeks to promote multilingualism and the integration of national languages into education systems. This national language integration promotion has been implemented through several schemes that the results are already being felt. Mozambique, for instance, has witnessed a 15% higher school success rate due to the introduction of teaching in the local languages in a quarter of its schools.

Strategies for Promoting a National Language

Promoting a national language requires deliberate and multifaceted strategies that address sociolinguistic, political, educational, and cultural dimensions. These strategies include the following:

1. **Policy Formulation and Implementation:** Effective promotion of a national language begins with clear and enforceable language policies. Such policies should give the national language official recognition, define its functions across domains, and outline implementation mechanisms. For instance, Indonesia's language policy elevated Bahasa Indonesia to national and official status, mandating its use in government,

education, and media (Moeliono 1986:128). Similarly, Tanzania's Kiswahili policy facilitated its widespread use in administration and education (Blommaert 2014:64). However, as Bamgbose (1991:107) notes, policy formulation without implementation is ineffective. Therefore, governments must allocate resources for teacher training, curriculum development, and public sensitisation to ensure policy success.

2. **Integration into Education:** Incorporating the national language into the educational system as a medium of instruction is critical for its promotion. UNESCO (1953:47) asserts that children learn best in a familiar language, which improves cognitive development and literacy. In Indonesia, using Bahasa Indonesia as the language of instruction fostered national unity and widespread proficiency (Moeliono 1986:130). In Nigeria, although the National Policy on Education (2013: 10) recommends mother tongue and major Nigerian languages in primary education, implementation remains weak due to inadequate materials

and trained teachers. Strengthening teacher education and curriculum design in indigenous languages is therefore essential.

3. Media and Technology Promotion:

The mass media play a significant role in promoting national languages. Broadcasting news, entertainment, and educational programmes in the national language increases its prestige and daily use (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997:278). Digital platforms, including social media, apps, and online publications, also provide opportunities to popularise the national language, especially among youths. For example, Tanzania uses Kiswahili extensively in radio, television, and social media to enhance its status and accessibility (Blommaert 2014:67). Similar efforts can be made for Nigerian languages to compete with the dominance of English in media spaces.

4. Literature and Creative Arts:

Promoting literature, music, films, and drama in the national language fosters cultural pride and increases its functional domains. Literature in Bahasa Indonesia played a significant role in its standardisation

and acceptance (Moeliono 1986:132). Supporting authors, filmmakers, and musicians to produce works in the national language contributes to its development and appeal.

5. Language Standardisation:

Standardising orthography, grammar, and vocabulary is essential for a language's growth. Corpus planning, as outlined by Haugen (1983: 275), ensures that the national language has codified rules for effective teaching, learning, and use in official contexts. In Nigeria, continuous efforts are needed to standardise indigenous languages to make them fit for modern educational, technological, and administrative purposes.

6. Community Mobilisation and Advocacy:

Community mobilisation strategies involve sensitising the public on the benefits of using and promoting the national language. Advocacy campaigns can target parents, educators, religious bodies, and youth groups to encourage intergenerational transmission. Fishman (1991: 13) emphasises the importance of family and community

domains in language promotion and maintenance.

7. Economic Incentives: Creating economic opportunities linked to proficiency in the national language increases its relevance. For example, making knowledge of the national language a requirement for certain public service jobs or media roles enhances its functional value (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 281).

8. Intergenerational Transmission: Encouraging families to use the national language at home ensures its transmission to younger generations. As Fishman (1991: 13) argues, no language promotion strategy is effective without strong intergenerational support at the family and community levels.

Challenges in Promoting National Languages

Some of the major challenges in promoting a national language include:

1. Ethno-linguistic diversity: Multilingual countries often face resistance from minority groups who fear domination by the selected national language (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997:245).

2. Colonial language dominance:

Continued use of ex-colonial languages in governance and education hampers indigenous language development.

3. Inadequate language planning and policy implementation:

Many policies remain at the formulation stage without systematic implementation and evaluation (Bamgbose 1991:111).

4. Negative societal attitudes:

Preference for English as a status symbol discourages parents and schools from prioritising indigenous languages (Igboanusi 2008:97).

Language Policy and Planning

Language policy refers to decisions and guidelines that govern language use within a society, while language planning is the practical implementation of these policies to develop and standardise language use. Further, language planning is geared towards influencing the function, structure, or acquisition of a language(s) within a speech community. It is an activity initiated and carried out by governments or authoritative bodies to address linguistic problems and to achieve some socio-

political goals. The concept became popularised after the works of scholars like Einar Haugen (1966), who identified language planning as the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a heterogeneous speech community. The relevance of language policy and planning lies in their ability to guide policymakers and stakeholders on deliberate steps to enhance the status and utility of a national language, ensuring its effective promotion and sustainability. Haugen (1983: 275) identifies three types of language planning: status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning.

A. **Status planning:** In simple terms, status planning entails decisions about the functions of a language or its varieties within a society. It is concerned with where, when, and by whom a language is used. Overall, it involves assigning functions and official roles to a language within society. A good example is declaring a language as a national or official language to elevate its prestige and encourage its use in governance, media, and education; or deciding the language(s) for government,

education, media, law, and other domains; as well as managing language use in public life and formal settings. Status planning has the potential to promote national integration if inclusive. However, it may lead to marginalisation if minority languages are excluded.

B. **Corpus planning:** Corpus planning deals with the internal structure of the language itself. It involves developing, reforming, or standardizing vocabulary, grammar, orthography, and pronunciation. Corpus planning cuts across graphization, standardization, modernization, and purification. It focuses on developing and standardising the form of the language through codification of orthography, grammar, vocabulary expansion, and production of educational and literary materials (Haugen 1983). This is to enhance language functionality and modern relevance; it also plays a crucial role in language revitalisation and literacy development. However, it may cause resistance if reforms affect deeply entrenched usage.

- C. **Acquisition planning:** This involves efforts to increase the number of speakers of a language or improve their proficiency. It focuses on language learning and teaching policies. Acquisition planning is associated with strategies to promote the learning and spread of the language among speakers. It involves developing language teaching curricula, training teachers, and integrating the language into formal education systems (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997). Thus, some of its key aspects include implementing language education policies in schools, teacher training and curriculum development, promotion of adult literacy programmes in specific languages, and motivating communities to learn and transmit the language inter-generationally. Acquisition planning is highly essential for language maintenance and revival. While it enhances national literacy levels and cognitive development, it requires adequate resources, trained teachers, and political will to succeed.
- D. **Prestige Planning:** Sometimes included under status planning,

prestige planning seeks to enhance the image, attractiveness, or socioeconomic value of a language, to encourage its use and acceptance. It involves language promotion campaigns, media broadcasts and literature production in the target language, and public incentives coupled with official recognition. Prestige planning usually motivates voluntary language adoption, while counteracting language shift by elevating the language's status.

While these types of language planning are conceptually distinct, they overlap in practice. Status planning often necessitates corpus planning to function effectively. Meanwhile, both require acquisition planning to build user base. Finally, prestige planning underpins all by creating societal acceptance. In Nigeria, successive governments have made various attempts to implement language planning strategies in pursuit of a national language. In line with status planning, there are constitutional and official provisions which recognize four languages. The 1999 Constitution (and its 2011 amendment) states that business in the National Assembly is in English, but may include Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba "when adequate arrangements have been made".

Similarly, State Houses of Assembly are mandated to conduct business in English, though other “Nigerian languages have divisive potential”. These provisions create a symbolic tri-lingual status (English + the “Big 3”), but leave implementation vague and inconsistent. In the same vein, Pidgin has been extensively discussed as a neutral *lingua franca* capable of national integration, yet despite its wide use, it lacks legal or constitutional recognition.

As regards corpus planning, major languages like Yoruba and Igbo have undergone orthographic standardisation (e.g. Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture work), but dozens of minority languages remain without codified writing systems. In a practical example, the government of Bayelsa State in 2013 standardized *Central Izon* and produced instructional materials —launching *Izon-language* primers with trained teachers. Also, the *Quadri-lingual Glossary of Legislative Terms (QGLT)* project by NERDC/NERC compiled legislative terms in English, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba —an example of direct corpus intervention.

Concerning acquisition planning, the National Policy on Education since 1977 (revised through 1981, 2004, 2013, etc.)

mandates the following: early education in “language of the immediate environment” (i.e., mother tongue); the learning of any of the three major Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba) by every child; French to be compulsory in primary and junior secondary school. Regardless, almost every evaluation (2000s–2020s) reveals poor or non-existent implementation, often due to lack of materials, teachers, and political will. Furthermore, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), created under the 2004 UBE Act, is mandated to ensure curriculum and instruction materials for basic education—including mother-tongue teaching— but chronic underfunding and a shortage of teachers have greatly inhibited progress.

In line with the tenets of prestige planning, government does broadcast in Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo on state radio and TV —improving reach and perceived prestige. The establishment of the *Nigeria French Language Village* (since 1991; federally codified in 2021) underlines a policy that values French as a regional *lingua franca*. Despite these efforts, the question of a national language for Nigeria remains elusive as a result of various factors, particularly heterogeneity.

Global Perspectives on Promoting National Languages

Globally, countries have adopted various strategies to promote their national languages, often as a means of unifying diverse ethnic groups and asserting post-colonial identity. For instance, *Indonesia* successfully promoted *Bahasa Indonesia* as its national language through its integration into the education system, media, and official communication, despite having over 700 local languages (Moeliono 1986). The government ensured that Bahasa Indonesia was used as the medium of instruction from primary to tertiary levels, thus fostering national unity and literacy. Indonesia is an archipelagic nation with over 700 local languages. After independence in 1945, the country sought a unifying language to bridge its ethnic and linguistic diversity. Bahasa Indonesia was chosen because it was already used widely as a lingua franca, derived from Malay, and was not the mother tongue of any dominant ethnic group, thus being politically neutral. The strategies adopted include the following:

- **Constitutional Backing:** Article 36 of the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia states: “Bahasa negara ialah Bahasa Indonesia” (The language of the state is Bahasa Indonesia) (Undang-

Undang Dasar Republik Indonesia 1945, Article 36).

- **Integration into Education:** It was made the medium of instruction from primary to tertiary education (Moeliono 1986), ensuring intergenerational transmission and proficiency.
- **Media and Administration:** Government policies mandated its use in broadcast media, official documents, and public communication to reinforce its presence nationwide.
- **Legal Framework:** Law No. 24 of 2009 on National Flag, Language, Emblem, and Anthem explicitly states: “Bahasa Indonesia is the national language used as the language of state administration, education, national communication, and development of national culture.” (Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 24/2009, Chapter III, Article 25).

The impact of these strategies is far-reaching: Bahasa Indonesia fostered national unity, literacy, and identity while allowing local languages to coexist within regional domains.

Similarly, *Tanzania* adopted *Kiswahili* as its national language after independence to promote national identity and reduce ethnic tensions. Kiswahili was standardised, incorporated into education as a compulsory subject, and used extensively in administration, media, and politics (Blommaert 2014:64). Tanzania has over 120 ethnic groups with distinct languages. After independence in 1961, the government under Julius Nyerere promoted Kiswahili to build national cohesion and dismantle colonial language hierarchies. The strategies employed were as follows:

- **Constitutional and Policy Backing:** Kiswahili is recognized as the national language in The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (1977), Article 7, which mandates the state to promote and develop Kiswahili and English for official use.
- **Education System:** Kiswahili became the medium of instruction in primary schools, while English is taught as a subject and used at secondary and tertiary levels. This policy entrenched Kiswahili from early education.
- **Media and Political Discourse:** Kiswahili is used widely in radio,

television, parliament, and public mobilisation. Also, the National Kiswahili Council Act No. 27 of 1967 established Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa (BAKITA) to standardise and promote Kiswahili.

The implication of the above is that Kiswahili has become a symbol of Tanzanian identity, bridging ethnic divides and serving as a model for other East African countries (Blommaert 2014:64).

Another practical example is the status and use of Filipino in Philippines. The Philippines is home to about 175 languages. The quest for a national language began during the Commonwealth era to unify its ethnolinguistic diversity. The country utilized the same pattern as seen in Indonesia and Tanzania to entrench Filipino as her national language. These include:

- **Constitutional Authority:** The Philippines' 1935 Constitution, Article XIII, Section 3 mandated the National Assembly to adopt a national language based on existing native languages. The 1987 Constitution, Article XIV, Sections 6-9 establishes Filipino as the national language. Particularly, section 6 of the constitution states: "The national language of the

Philippines is Filipino. As it evolves, it shall be further developed and enriched on the basis of existing Philippine and other languages.”

- **Legal Framework:** The Republic Act No. 7104 (1991) created the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) to develop, preserve, and promote Filipino and other Philippine languages. Also, the Batasang Pambansa Blg. 232 (Education Act of 1982) mandates the use of Filipino in education alongside English.
- **Educational Integration:** Filipino is taught as a subject and used alongside English in instruction, especially in public schools.
- **Media and Public Life:** Filipino dominates national television, radio, and social media, fostering a shared linguistic identity.

Consequently, Filipino which is based mainly on Tagalog but officially distinct has become a unifying language while respecting regional linguistic diversity.

Notable Efforts to Furnish Nigeria with a National Language

In Nigeria, the *National Policy on Education* (2013: 2) stipulates that the mother tongue or the language of the immediate

environment should be used as the medium of instruction at the primary school level, with English taught as a subject. It recommends that Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba be taught as L1 or L2 in all schools. Despite these policies, indigenous languages still face low prestige and limited functional use, as English continues to dominate official, educational, and media domains (Bamgbose 1991: 107). Efforts such as the development of orthographies, publication of literature, and broadcasting in local languages exist, but their implementation remains inconsistent due to political neglect, lack of resources, and societal attitudes favouring English. The UNESCO (2010) reported that over 400 indigenous languages are spoken in Nigeria, yet only a fraction has standardized orthographies or are used officially.

In spite of the heterogeneous nature of the Nigerian society, several scholars, organizations and concerned individuals have ventured to provide Nigeria with a national language. Wole Soyinka (1997) suggested the use of an ‘exoglossic’ but pan-African language –Swahili. According to him, Swahili enjoys a large population of speakers when compared to other African languages. However, the idea was rejected on the grounds of the language not being indigenous to Nigeria. Swahili is spoken by

over 75 million people across East and Central Africa (Ethnologue, 2022), and it is an official language in countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, but its Eastern African origin made it unacceptable for Nigerian national identity.

Olagoke (1982) came up with the idea that the three major Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) be jointly adopted as the country's national languages. He argued that the three languages have the highest number of native speakers in Nigeria. According to Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (2022), Hausa has over 52 million speakers (including second language users), Yoruba about 45 million, and Igbo about 44 million, making them the largest indigenous languages in Nigeria by speaker population. Critics refused this suggestion on the grounds of marginalization and the sense of disunity which it is likely to engender in the minds of the speakers of other minor languages. Again, the cost of maintenance of such a policy would be very high. Implementing trilingual official documents, educational materials, and public signage would demand extensive financial and infrastructural resources, which the government has historically avoided.

There are still other suggestions like the use of an artificial language such as WAZOBIA and GUOSA. One of the arguments against the adoption of such artificial language is its lack of creativity. Besides, language use is conventional, and its rules are based on tacit agreement among the users and not by explicit decision of a few individuals. GUOSA, for instance, was proposed by Alex Igbineweka in the 1960s as a pan-Nigerian creole derived from Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Edo lexicon, but its adoption has remained minimal, confined to small language activist circles and publications without governmental recognition (Igbineweka, 1998).

Equally, the choice of English has been rejected for nationalistic reasons and lack of any sizable consistency (Akindele and Adegbite, 1990). The widely held view is that a national language for Nigeria has to be in Nigerian language which fully expresses and preserves the experiences and cultures of Nigerians. However, English remains Nigeria's only official language, used in government, legal systems, and education up to tertiary level, with about 79% of Nigerians able to communicate in it at varying degrees of proficiency (British Council, 2018).

Meanwhile, Popoola (2011: 89-90) notes the following additional suggestions for a national language in Nigeria as well as the criticisms of such ideas. Some scholars have suggested that a national language should be allowed to develop unconsciously from the various languages that are used within the sovereign state. However, the possibility of such a scenario is highly improbable as language—which is a repository of culture—dies hard. For Nigeria to have a national language, conscious positive attempt must be made in that regard. Historically, standard national languages developed through deliberate governmental planning and unification policies, showing that passive evolution rarely leads to widespread national language adoption (Sneddon, 2003). Similarly, there has been calls to adopt one of the indigenous Nigerian languages currently spoken in the country. However, considering the heterogeneous nature of the sovereign state, the idea is a highly improbable one. The political unrest that would follow such decisions will be unprecedented. This fear is rooted in the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), where ethnic tensions escalated into violent secessionist conflict; thus, language politics are delicately approached to avoid reigniting such sentiments. Some other suggestions

include the use of Nigerian English-based Pidgin. There are numerous arguments against this idea, one of which is hinged on the fact that the language is regarded as low class. Its alleged crude and simplistic nature makes it an object of scorn. In addition, the language has different varieties that are regionally based, so standardization may prove unattainable. Nonetheless, Nigerian Pidgin is spoken by over 75 million people (Ethnologue, 2022) and serves as a *lingua franca* across ethnic groups, especially in informal contexts, entertainment, and urban communication.

Suggesting a National Language for Nigeria

It must be noted that no linguistic choice for adopting a national language for Nigeria is or would be without criticisms, dissent, and misgivings. The onus is therefore on the government to take decisive steps towards adopting a regionally neutral language for the country. As ethnicity has been one of Nigeria's greatest challenges, the choice of the national language should defeat the norm and not magnify it. Accordingly, this paper suggests the use of Nigerian Pidgin as the nation's national language. On the issue of it being a language of the lower class, it must be noted that all languages are equal as long as they are able to cater for the linguistic

needs of their users. This argument of lack of prestige can be overcome through deliberate governmental promotion, official use in media, education, and public signage, which will normalise its status as a respected language of unity. The government then should, through its language policy (selection, codification, elaboration, and implementation), establish Pidgin as the national language. Secondly, while different varieties exist, studies (e.g., Faraclas 1996) indicate that mutual intelligibility is high across regions. The speakers of different varieties manage to communicate among themselves effectively, regardless. Hence, the adoption of the language appears to be the best and the only viable option for a national language in Nigeria. Further, recent efforts have produced orthographies for Nigerian Pidgin (e.g., University of Ibadan's Pidgin Project) and ongoing linguistic codification by bodies such as the Nigerian Pidgin Language Council could standardise grammar and spelling conventions. Lastly, literature in Pidgin is growing, including novels like Dele's *Pidgin English Storybook* and music lyrics, demonstrating its literary potential. While Nigerian Pidgin is indeed rooted in English lexicon due to colonial history, it has evolved into a distinct language with its own grammar, syntax, and

sociolinguistic identity, incorporating indigenous words, idioms, and expressions that reflect Nigerian realities. Thus, it functions not merely as a dialect of English but as a creole uniquely tied to Nigerian urban and interethnic experiences, making it a potential heritage language that embodies cultural hybridity.

Lastly, unlike Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba, Nigerian Pidgin does not align with any particular ethnic group; it avoids ethno-linguistic bias and regional favouritism that could fuel disunity. Unlike Swahili, it is indigenous to Nigeria, having developed within its socio-historical context. Unlike GUOSA or WAZOBIA, it is not an artificial construct but an organically developed language used by millions. Compared to English, Pidgin is perceived as more accessible to the common populace while still retaining lexical familiarity with English for administrative and international purposes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In line with the above, these steps should be taken to establish Pidgin language as Nigeria's national language:

- There should be official declaration in this regard, and this should be enshrined in the constitution and

reflected in the National Policy of Education.

- Linguistic institutes should be empowered to finalize orthography and grammar norms, and integrate them into education curricular. Steps should be taken towards the elaboration and modernisation of the language. This entails developing terminologies for academic, technological, and administrative usage, enabling its adequacy for formal discourse.
- Implementation and institutionalization are vital. Thus, the language should be used in national broadcasts, government campaigns, local literature promotion, and civic education to build prestige. There should equally be conscious attempt at literary and cultural promotion of the language. Writers, filmmakers, musicians, and media houses producing content in Pidgin should be supported as a way of enriching the language's literature and enhance cultural acceptance.
- Finally, there should be inter-ethnic campaigns. The government should publicise the adoption as a unifying identity symbol in civic education,

especially emphasizing its neutrality and accessibility in overcoming ethnic divisions.

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