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## LANGUAGE POLICY IN RUSSIA AND NIGERIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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### Summary

From available literature, it has been established that there are situations whereby a country functions in one language while another functions in more than one language. These situations have amounted to what language experts refer to as mono-lingualism, bilingualism, or multilingualism. Social factors such as ethnicity, ethnic pluralism and conflicts have significant effects on determining the linguistic relations of human society. Our study thus brings into focus, the Russian linguistic society especially modern Russia, and the Nigerian society. The major elicitation instrument will be collection and discourse of materials on language policy and planning between the two countries. The two countries, that is, Modern Russia and Nigeria are purposively chosen because they are multiethnic, multi-plural, multiparty and multicultural linguistic societies. These assertions are based on the fact that many ethnic groups came together in their various stages of historical foundation and growth, thereby leading to many ethno - linguistic relations in the two societies. This paper investigates factors that relate to determining language functions among these two multi linguistic societies.

**Key Words:** Language policy, Russia, Nigeria, multilingualism, language in Education.

### Introduction

As a starting off point, it is pertinent to state that many countries function in more than one language. Meanwhile, primordial and contemporary issues such as language conflicts, ethnicity and ethnic conflicts have necessitated veritable academic efforts towards language planning and policy.

This germane fact has led to a situation whereby various venerable efforts such as debates, academic and political discourses are generated to determine the relations between languages especially, in multilingual societies. It is also an established fact that language planning and policy are predominant in multilingual societies, as opposed to monolingual ones. It is then arguable that it takes a multilingual society to devise the parameters in determining the various functions and recognitions that should be accorded to their own various linguistics issues.

More than five decades ago, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization ( UNESCO ) advocated and established that “children should receive instruction in their native language in at least the early years of school.” This advocacy, as a matter of fact, was upheld by UNESCO as a core principle of its operations, but despite this position, it is still evidently common globally to see a difference in relation to the language of home, and the language of instruction in school. Although thousands of languages exist globally, one can state the extents in which languages are diverse, while some are endangered for several reasons. This could be as a result of language contact in multilingual societies, where social factors such as politics, pluralism, culture, colonization, annexation and domination have necessitated a concentration of first-language speakers to make conscious or unconscious shift to a more dominant one. This postulation therefore, is typical of many colonized countries in Africa, like Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, South Africa, among others, and countries that have in one way or the other been under the hegemonic leadership of the former Soviet Union such as countries of the former Eastern bloc.

Psycholinguistics, a growing and vibrant branch in linguistics maintains that all human beings share some psycholinguistic characteristics, meanwhile, language relations with respect to acquisition and dispatching revolves round cultural and social structures. Language (s) may be endangered or ultimately die over time to give room for their use to be shifted to new ones. Language policies either implicit or explicit can therefore cause an individual to gain fluency in one language or more and at the same time lose the same fluency. In sum, this research focuses on language policy in modern Russia and Nigeria. The multicultural and complex nature of Russia and Nigeria are examined, while aspects of similarities and differences are also investigated. The research findings will be of immense benefit to researchers, policy makers, government and various stakeholders and the general reader. The research will bridge the gap of comparative study in language policy and planning across the Russo - Nigeria Atlantic divide. Meanwhile, scholars like Wodak (2006), Romaine (2002), Heinz Kloss (1969), Richard Baldauf (2005), among others, have espoused the veritable field of language policy, but despite their various credible contributions, there is still a dearth of comparative discourse of Russia and Nigeria’s language policy.

## **Methodology**

Data for the study were sourced from primary and secondary sources and collected from documentations through published and unpublished books, articles, journals, and seminar papers, among others, and were content analyzed in relation to the scope of the study. Data for the research are also derived through visiting, observing and discussing the various policies that directly or indirectly have links with language use and language attitude in the two societies concerned. Thus, the research is both documentary and historical. It employs historical and archival methods to relate the historical development of language policy in modern Russia and Nigeria.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The goal of a theory of language policy is to account for the regular choices made by individual speakers on the basis of patterns established in the speech community or communities of which they are members. One of such policy is to maintain the existing status of a recognized variety, or more realistically, to resist a tendency of speakers of the variety to shift to the use of another. The theoretical background of this research is based on Ricento's deployment of theory on language policy in his work "Language policy: Theory and Practice - An Introduction" (2006). Ricento argued that, if theory should be viewed from the angle of a set of rules and principles that explain a concept, we may say that there is (are) no general theory to explain language policy. Hence, instead of theorizing the concept, we should view or concentrate efforts at the "domain of inquiry" that the language is functioning (Ricento, 2006: 12).

The domain of inquiry theory is deployed in theorizing our research. The "domain" of the languages is therefore discussed in relations to the respective policies made towards them in the multicultural and multiethnic societies of Russia and Nigeria.

## **The Role(s) of Language Policy in Society**

Language policy play active roles in domains like home, school, religion, work place and supra-national groupings, i.e, the European Union,(EU) African Union,(AU), FIFA, Unesco, etc. Scholars like Haugen (1959), Charles Ferguson (1968), Heinz Kloss (1969), Joan Rubin (1971), and Richard Baldauf (2005), have expanded the field of language policy and their works have promoted multilingual societies as major causative agents of linguistic policy. While arguing on bilingualism, multilingualism and bilingual education, scholars like E. Glyn Lewis (1981), Ayo Bamgbose (1994), Bernard Spolsky (2007), among others, have also noted and adumbrated the importance of the lingua franca in every society. Although the linguistic situation of a country may be pluralistic as a result of many ethnic groups constituting such a society like Russia and Nigeria, but, amidst these plurality of languages, decisions are taken to assign the status of a lingua franca to that one ( language ) which will always prevail in certain domains of functioning that enhance general comprehensive communication when required. A language that is assigned such status is termed "a lingua franca". Furthering the discourse on language policy are scholars like; Schiffman (1996), McCarty (2002), Spolsky (2004), Ricento (2006) who have also advocated that language policy becomes more pronounced in multilingual societies. The importance of language policy plans is captured by Suzanne Romaine (2002: 1-2) thus:

...fewer than 4 per cent of the world languages have any kind of official status in the countries where they are spoken. The fact that most languages are unwritten, not recognized officially, restricted to local community and home functions, and spoken by very small groups of people reflects the balance of power in the global linguistics market. Campaigns for official status and other forms of legislation supporting majority languages often figure prominently in language revitalization efforts, despite the generally negative advice offered by

experts on their efficacy.

From the above quotation, it is deducible that language policy is a decision or principle of action adopted with regard to the usage of language or languages by an individual or organization. From the perspective of Ruth Wodak (2006: 170), language policy deals with;

every public influence on the communication radius of languages; the sum of those top-down and bottom-up political initiatives through which a particular language or languages is/are supported in their public validity, their functionality and their dissemination.

It is worthy of mention that discussions bordering on language policy and planning are generated around the world frequently. These discussions and position/implimentation papers are either made by the governments, that is, formally or by language policy experts, scholars or community leaders, that is, informally. In a similar vein, language policy experts have submitted that the decisions taken influence the right to use and maintain languages, affect language status, and determine which languages are nurtured. They have a major impact on the language vitality and, ultimately, on the rights of the individual and consequentially, all societal contexts. One must also add that language policy goes concurrently with language planning. On this note, Cooper (1989: 45) gave a description of language planning when he posited that: *'language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes'*.

### **Language Defined**

It is apt to take on board some useful definitions of language. Lyons (1981: 1) provides a critical clarification to what language means through his philosophical question: "what is language?" according to him, *the question "what is language?" is comparable with – and, some would say, hardly less profound than – "what is life?"... it has more of a philosophical ring to it.* Lyons submits that languages are systems of symbols designed specifically to perform communication purposes. It is also argued that the major preoccupation of linguists is natural languages. And that, what the linguist is concerned about in terms of enquiry is whether all natural languages have something in common not shared by other systems of communication, human or non- human, such that it is right to apply to each of them the word "language" and deny the application of the term to other systems of communication (see Lyons, 1981).

In another breath, Hudson (2001: 22) critically observed language from the perspective of varieties of language. In this sense, the variety of language is defined as *a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution.* From time to time, different language policies have been implemented in Russia and Nigeria. Some researchers believe that it is important to use local languages as a medium of instruction in the first years of primary schools, while others find it difficult to use local languages as a medium of instruction in schools (Owu-Ewie, 2006).

Language is the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area. Language is seen as a system of conventional spoken, manual, or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. To many scholars, the concept 'language' is viewed in various perspectives. That is perhaps why Sapir, E (1921) argued that, language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. While language becomes necessary for groups, Bloch, B and Trager,

G (1942) substantiated that a language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which a social group cooperates.

From the perspective of another school of thought, Chomsky, N (1957), a language is considered to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. Language is majorly exhibited by humans, as such, it involves some human body parts. This is further substantiated by Peng, F.C.C (2005) as he argued that language is behaviour which utilizes body parts: the vocal apparatus and the auditory system for oral languages; the brachial apparatus and the visual system for sign language.... Such body parts are controlled by none other than the brain for their functions. Meanwhile, Weiten, W (2007), argues that a language consists of symbols that convey meaning, plus rules for combining those symbols, that can be used to generate an infinite variety of messages. We can also define language as a system of communication using sounds or symbols that enable us to express our feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences (Goldstein, E.B 2008).

Arising from the different views of various scholars, one can draw a conclusion, or infer that language cannot be isolated from man as it has been the major means of communication in human society. This communication further makes it glaring to observe that language goes beyond verbal communications to include sign interaction, otherwise known as sign language. As linguists argue and converge at the same point, all languages are equal. Hence, the level of recognition accorded to a particular language depends on the place of such language in a particular setting.

It is instructive to note that, it was in the efforts to place language in societies that arose the concept of language policy. The efforts towards language policy and planning are most frequently associated with multi-culture and multilingual societies where many languages co-exist. The problem of giving these languages respective places within the society leads to language policy.

### **Language policy: A Critique**

A lot of discussions and debates have been generated on language policy and planning in Russia. Prominent to the discussion of language policy in Russia are the works of Yemelianova (2007), Razumovskaya & Sokolovsky (2012), Alpatov (2014), Zhemukhov & Akturk (2015), as well as, Bowring & Borgoyakova (2016).

According to Razumovskaya & Sokolovsky (2012: 927),

The language policy can be defined as the total sum of the ideological principles and practical measures directed to solve language problems in the society and state frame. In accordance with its goals the language policy may have two main variants: perspective ( language planning or language building in other terms) and retrospective (language and speech culture).

The efforts or decisions or principles of action tailored towards the usage of language(s) in the linguistic societies are referred to as language policy. This concept has been viewed by many scholars, as an area that demands urgent attention with regards to expanding the coverage of socio-linguistics as an academic discipline that deals with language use and language attitude.

According to Ricento (2006: 11), language policy is viewed from the perspective of addressing social problems that deal with language in the society and not just to display philosophical prowess. He asserted that: “*After all, LP is not just an exercise in philosophical inquiry; it is*

*interested in addressing social problems which often involve language, to one degree or another, and in proposing realistic remedies.”*

From the above assertion, it could be deduced that the primary goal of language policy is to proffer solutions to problems that border on linguistic relations in the society. Hence, one can ably state that there might have been no need for policy on language had it been issues that deal with language use and attitudes have not arisen. Every individual is a conductor of language policy in the society. The moment an individual becomes a member of a society, he/she automatically becomes an instrument of social factors that aid language policy either directly or indirectly. The involvement of individuals in language policy process is further substantiated by Thomas Ricento (2006: 21) thus:

when we begin to think of language issues as personal rather than abstract and removed from daily concerns, we quickly see how we all have a stake in language policies, since they have a direct bearing on our place in society and what we might (or might not) be able to achieve. Schools, the workplace, the neighborhood, families all are sites where language policies determine or influence what language(s) we will speak, whether the language is ‘good/ acceptable’ or ‘bad/ unacceptable’ for particular purposes, including careers, marriage, social advancement and so on.

Meanwhile, Nancy H. Hornberger (2006) in her contribution “Frameworks and Models in Language Policy and Planning” opines that copious energy towards language policy and planning is engendered due to the noticeable coverage that languages such as English and other world-wide recognized ones like; French, Russian, among others are covering especially in non native and ethnic users’ domains. According to her:

The decade leading up to the turn of the millennium brought a resurgence of interest in the field of language policy and planning (LPP), fueled in large part by the imperious spread of English and other global languages and, reciprocally, the alarming loss and endangerment of indigenous and small language communities world-wide. (P24).

Hornberger argued further that the pressing and demanding, as well as, tasking real-world language policy and planning concern on unprecedented scale is language teaching and language revitalization initiatives. While stating the link between language planning and language policy in citation, she posited thus: “language planning... must be linked to the critical evaluation of language policy: the former providing standards of rationality and effectiveness, the later testing these ideas against actual practice in order to promote the development of better... language planning models. Such a field would be better described as language policy and planning (LPP)”

In his unpublished Ph.D thesis titled “Ethnic Politics in the USSR and Modern Russia” Omotade (2009: 158-160) argues that:

Language is the strongest social instrument that unites people into ethnic groups. While territory, religion, culture and economic interests play their important roles in the formation of national identity, it is precisely the language that is vital for expressing the idea of collectivity and defining the features of psychological and spiritual likeness within the community of

separate individuals. Language is the most important component of spiritual and ethnic identity of any people, a necessary prerequisite for its development and existence. The pressures for national identity are most keenly felt in the domain of language. Thus, it is not surprising that a linguistic policy is a key element of the process of state-building...

Furthermore, Omotade, states that two conflicting principles outlined the choice of official language, as upheld by many scholars. These principles as he argued are “efficiency and fairness”. He establishes that “a more effective and competent language policy officialises fewer than all languages and is therefore unfair, while a fair policy officialises everyone’s language and is therefore inefficient and impractical” (Omotade, 2009:160-161).

The events of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 that led to the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), made Soviet Russia a multinational state. The fifteen constituent states had their respective languages; therefore, linguistic challenges and agitations became contentious even from the inception of the Soviet Union. Apart from this, it was discovered by Vladimir Lenin - the protagonist and mastermind of the Bolshevik Revolution, that the vast number of the Soviet populace was illiterate. This singular fact resulted to literacy campaign in the outset of the formation of the USSR. As Omotade observed:

Against this background of Bolshevik victory, the campaign of literacy was the first active step they (the Revolutionaries) took towards altering the linguistic landscape of the *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, that is the (Soviet Union) and also to sway *Obshchestvennoye Mneniye* (public opinion) and, in many more ways, made possible the radical changes especially that manifested in the later years of the Bolshevik victory... (p61)

Language policy in the Soviet Russia can be argued to have a direct relation to literacy campaign during the Soviet era. The fact that the Union was a multinational state with different ethnic nationalities, the classes were taught in either Russian or the local language. Initially, the literacy courses were three months long- this time was later extended to between six and eight months.

( Omotade, 2009: 62). In tandem with language policy in Russia was the Russification policies. During the era of Soviet Russia, the Russification policies were greatly pronounced and widespread. It thus, played vital roles in the ethnic and linguistic relations in Russia. To buttress this, Omotade, (ibid), further substantiated that:

all official business in the Soviet Union was conducted in Russia; technical secondary education as well as higher education in technical, and often other, subjects was switched to Russian; the percentage of primary and general secondary schools with Russian as the language of instruction was growing, albeit slowly, but steadily; while in schools with an indigenous language of instruction, Russian language subsequently became an obligatory subject. P64

The Russification policy did not go well with all the nations of the Soviet Union of course. From an ideological and nationalistic view points, it was believed that the policy favoured the Russians and the Russian language than the other ethnic nationalities within the Soviet Union. This

salient, but rather implicative factor amounted to what afterwards aggravated the collapse of the Soviet Union, though scholars diverge on this postulation. With the Russification policy, in the Soviet Union, the Russian language assumed the position of the lingua franca, subjugating the linguistic prominence of other nations' languages within the Union.

In a similar vein, Odunuga (1994) in his work "Language, Politics and Nationalism" argued thus;

... crisis that have engulfed most of Eastern European countries since the popular revolution of 1989 that swept away the communist system reveal that the political issues of language, linguistic rights, cultural and national self determination were not settled in all parts of Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.... In the Soviet Union, 15 sovereign nations have emerged and more are appearing with the demands of nationalities that now want to assert their political as well as socio- economic independence from the larger groups that for years submerged them.

From Odunuga's view, the politics of language and linguistic rights cannot be segregated from nationalism. It is a general phenomenon that an individual, to a great extent, holds his/ her language in high esteem and accords relevance and importance to it. Therefore, language policy becomes more difficult and complex in a situation whereby many languages that could stand the standard of national language are contending for the number one position. For example, in the former Soviet Union, fifteen independent states merged to form a single formidable Union, each of these states of course had its national language before the amalgamation. In a situation whereby one was to be selected to overhaul others as a lingua franca, and reduce others to other functions, the societies of such would definitely battle with the tasking linguistic policy. Omotade (2009) further established this as he argued that:

Federalism... continued to ensure demand for a large native intelligentsia able to read and speak the native language, this community of native speakers continued to grow throughout this period and showed no signs of forgoing their native tongue for Russian in spite of the social pressures to communicate in the lingual franca of the state.... Consequently, the perennial language problem had been exacerbated by the Kremlin's intention to make Russian the official language of the Soviet Union. P67

In a comparative study of bilingual and multilingual societies like Russia and Nigeria, one cannot but, discuss aspects of heterogeneity, whether based on linguistically distinct clans, tribes, nationalities, nations, or states. For instance, it would have become a useless effort to provide bilingual education or even policies directed towards bilingual education and relations in a community if the community is homogenous in all spheres as discussed earlier: clans, tribes, nationalities, among others.

E. Glyn Lewis (1981) in his book titled "Bilingualism and Bilingual Education" recognized "linguistic" to be the most salient aspect of heterogeneity that is sought to be accommodated or promoted by bilingual education. In consideration of linguistic diversity in multinational, multiethnic, multicultural and multiparty states like Nigeria and Russia, one cannot but relate it with other instances of heterogeneity, because, considering linguistic diversity void of other forms of



heterogeneity will be incomprehensive enough.

These aspects of heterogeneity according to Lewis may be present in different combinations and are usually associated in varying degrees with linguistic differences (see for example, E. Glyn Lewis, 1981). Russia and Nigeria are multinational and multiethnic societies and thus cannot be isolated from these “aspects of heterogeneity”. When educating a child in bilingual education, Lewis aptly warns that:

Educators must take account of as many as possible of these linguistically associated variables, because in a bilingual program we do not set out merely to teach two languages but rather to educate a person who possesses or needs to possess two languages. P5

The submission of Lewis thus, adds to the robust literature on bilingualism and bilingual education that are always the bane of complex societies like Nigeria and Russia, which have necessitated linguistic or language policies to be made.

A major factor becomes prominent when tracing the origin of linguistic diversity and the multi-plural nature of both Russian and Nigerian societies. This factor is “colonization”. Giving credence to this, Lewis (1981: 46) avers thus:

the...linguistic and ethnic composition of the populations of the Soviet Union...is the product of the conquest of some territories, the more or less pacific acquisition of others, as well as colonization and massive migration, all acting on primordial native groups and interacting with each other.

Colonization has been synthetically associated to the Russian Empire. The empire conquered many other lands thereby expanding the frontiers of Russia. As Lewis (1981: 47) argued further:

The story of colonizing of the Russian empire belongs to the European tradition. It is true that the Russian occupation of Siberia involved moving against small numbers of very primitive peoples in a vast and comparatively empty space. But the Russian empire had already been founded by following a different process. In the sixteenth century peasant colonization of nationalities such as the Nogais, Tatars, and other established nations occurred on the Volga, Don, and Dniester. In the nineteenth century, the incorporation of the Caucasus and Turkestan brought the Russians face to face with equally, if not in fact more advanced, Islamic civilization.

Likewise in the case of Nigeria, around the nineteenth century and prior to the twentieth century, the various ethnic groups existed independently. The Old Oyo Empire, the constituent subjects of the empires were of the same linguistic functioning. And as such, the linguistic policy was of no need. Colonization, taking from the scholarship proposition of Lewis, can be said to have amounted to be the major factor among others, that have made the Nigerian society a multinational and multicultural one merged together to exist as one independent geopolitical entity, where many ethnic groups that have existed before were merged with each still upholding to their roots with their local languages. As such, these ethnic languages apart from struggling with one another, are still made to come in contact with the colonial master’s language- English, which is, as a result of some factors made to function on one hand in certain domains, while the ethnic languages on the other

hand, function in domains that are subjugated to that of English.

Russia has always been a multinational and polyglot empire Lewis (1981: 50) maintains that:

it was not until 1552- 54, when Ivan IV conquered the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, that the seal was set on the transformation of the small Russian state into a multinational, polyglot empire. With the acquisition of the North Caucasus in the middle of the sixteenth century, the period of very extended colonization rapidly got under way. For two centuries, until the time of Peter the Great in the eighteenth century, Russia pushed northward to the province of Archangel, eastwards into Siberia, and southward beyond the Caucasus.

Considering the extent of this expansion as stated above, one will not but have the imaginative picturesque of the vast landmass that such an expansion could have resulted into. The present day Russia thus, cannot escape language policy because, as Lewis further noted, they incorporated such linguistic groups as Nenets, Komi, Permeans, Vogul, and Ostiak, and later the more numerous Mordvin. Other linguistic and ethnic groups like the Karelians and Estonians in the northwest, the Tatars, Finnic, and Chuvash to the east, and the Lithuanians, Jews, Germans, and others on the Baltic seaboard were incorporated by the Russians...to the territories of Central Asia...the Uzbeks, Kirghiz, and Kazakhs, speaking traditionally important languages, had long established themselves in the lands they have continued to occupy. The North Caucasus, including Daghestan with its thirty- two distinct linguistic groups, became a protectorate...and...Armenia annexed (Lewis, 1981: 50-51).

Language policy was a necessity in the USSR and, with the inevitable disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, linguistic pluralism is still a very strong component of the modern day Russia. Russian bilingualism is a goal set by the government and is very emphatically a matter of educational planning and school instruction. It should also be noted that Russian has been a significant component of unplanned and fortuitous bilingualism. Large numbers of citizenry who know a second language other than Russian will often know Russian, which they have learned normally in a mixed community or at school.

### **Language Policy in Nigeria**

Danladi, S. S (2013) in “Language Policy: Nigeria and the Role of English Language in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” presents a critical look into the field of language policy.. He examines the role of English in Nigeria as a medium of communication, political activities- social and academic guidance from its historical perspective, and the duration of gradual transition to the present status of bilingualism and its democratization of language in conformity with national unification. The work portrays how English occupied an influential role in the formation of the national expectations and integration of the Nigerian nation through its “official language” status. The work also highlights the transition from English monopoly to bilingualism in accordance with indigenous demands for language change in educational policy that could be the form in line with mother tongue languages. Furthermore, evaluation of the current relationship between language shift and language death in another case with the emergence of the Nigerian Pidgin English is examined. This brings us to a cogent area of language policy relation in Nigeria. The position of the Nigerian Pidgin English

demands particular attention. Literature abounds in scholarly writings on the Nigerian Pidgin English. Notably among these are the works of scholars like Egbokhare, F. O. (2003), Elugbe, B. (1995), Elugbe, B. and Omamor, A. P. (1991), Akande, A. T. and Salami, L. O. (2010), and Mafeni, B (1971).

On the concept of “Pidgin”, Danladi, S.S. (2013) argued that a pidgin could be referred to as:

a new language which develops in situations where speakers of varieties languages need to communicate but do not share a common language. The vocabulary of a pidgin comes mainly from one particular language (called the plexiform). An early ‘pre- pidgin’ is quite restricted in use and irregular in shape. However, the latter ‘stable pidgin’ develops its own grammatical rules, which are quite distinctive from those of the lexifier. Once a steady pidgin has emerged, it is generally learned as a second language and used for communication among people who speak different languages.

From this perspective, it means that the concept of ‘pidgin’ could be developed based on any chosen language. There could abound as well, various forms of Pidgin. For example, the English language in Nigeria has been worked upon in such a way that we now have the Nigerian Pidgin English version.

Danladi (ibid,:13) argued further that the Nigerian Pidgin English basically uses English words mixed into Yoruba, Benin, or Igbo grammar structures. And the Pidgin English originally evolved from the need for the Missionaries, later British sailors, to communicate with local merchants. However, today it is often used in ethnically mixed urban areas like Lagos, Benin, Port harcourt, etc as a common form of communication among people.... The question now is what does language policy in Nigeria hold for the Nigerian Pidgin English? The position of the NPE will be discussed later. In a general sense, what is upheld by Danladi is that the primary stage of language policy is seeking to understand the languages available and planning the importance of those selected to use for various functions.

### **Overview of Language Policy in Russia and Nigeria**

The language policy in Russia and Nigeria has been necessitated due to the multiethnic and multicultural nature of the two societies. As discussed earlier, various factors have resulted to the multilingual nature of Russia (see Lewis, 1981). Principally, the Russian Federation inherited the largest portion of policies in relation to language use in the society from the Soviet language policies. Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, and particularly, since the period of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922 the language policy in Russia was basically towards the promotion of multiethnic nationhood (Zhemukhov and Akturk, 2015). The Soviet Union’s language policy was devised to promote regional languages at their various regions. Apart from the regional languages, the Russian language was upheld as the lingua franca in Russia. This therefore, made virtually all the people of Russia to function in their respective regional languages and Russian. It was also observed that the Soviet Union was the first modern state that institutionalized ethnic diversity and to reverse centuries of

ethnic discrimination. Zhemukhov and Akturk (2015: 36-37) argue that:

The Bolsheviks, who eventually established the Soviet Union, sought to recognise, codify, and institutionalize ethnic and linguistic diversity among their subject populations, under first Lenin and then Stalin. In the all- Soviet census of 1926, almost two hundred ethnic categories were codified and counted

Significant to the early Soviet policy was the undisputable elevation and promotion of ethnic and linguistic particularities and a principled stand against what Zhemukhov and Akturk call “assimilation”, at least from the time of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 to the early 1930s, when many of the ethnic minority groups were accorded autonomy and allegiance to their respective cultural belongings and language functioning. Each ethnic language became the official, “titular” language of its autonomous territory along side with strong and copious ethnic affirmative action policies to build, nurture and promote devoutly Communist elite from every ethnic group (Zhemukhov and Akturk, 2015). Alphabets were developed for the languages and books, primers, and other materials were produced in them. Russian language, being the language generally recognised as the official language was learnt in schools as school subject along with the regional languages. In the USSR, the language policy towards foreign languages as well, had its variations with the respect to the language situation of the Soviet Russia national territories (Razumovskaya and Sokolovsky, 2012). As argued earlier, the Russian language functioned in tandem with ethnic nationalities languages, the Soviet Russia exemplifies a perfect stable bilingual in each autonomous region especially, it was evidently pronounced between 1922 to 1930s when Lenin’s literary campaign was observed to be the only machinery to free the Soviet populace from the shackles of illiteracy. From the argument of (Razumovskaya and Sokolovsky, 2012: 198), the situation of perfect and stable bilingual is substantiated thus:

in the republics of the USSR the foreign languages were taught alongside with the Russian language as the state language of the country, which was not the mother tongue to the majority of the republics’ population. In the Ukraine Soviet Socialist Republic, the traditional combination of the taught languages was: Ukraine (native), Russian (state), English or other European language (foreign).

When considering the native language teaching, there existed disparities in different autonomous regions of the defunct USSR. To this end, Razumovskaya and Sokolovsky (2012: 931) opine that *in the autonomous territories we have got the stable bilingual situation (Tatar plus Russian). In some territories the native language teaching is obligatory, in some – optional.*

Before the formation of the USSR, especially, the periods before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Russia was under Tsars. It was then referred to as the Russian empire. The periods 1721- 1917 marked remarkable turning point in the numerical growth of Russia as various expansions were made under the Tsarist Russia. This inevitably contributed to what made Russia a multiethnic society. Significantly, the Russian empire displayed harsh policy in relation to the divergent linguistic minorities. This harsh policy, as observed by some Russian studies scholars especially Alpatov (2014), did not favour the very large number of users of minority languages, thereby, hampered the development of national self-consciousness. Not only that, religious tie was in relation to maintaining linguistic functioning as some ethnic groups upheld their language in line with their religion (see Yemelianova, 2007).

The success of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 saw the minority languages through the

lime light in the efforts of Lenin's principles and ideology. Hence, various strategies were subsequently employed to consolidate Bolshevik power in the fledgling Soviet Union and to build the foundations of a Communist society. One of the most important of these was the language policy that the Soviets adopted in dealing with the non-Russian nationalities.

Like in the Soviet system, the National Policy on Education allows the use of more than one language in the Nigerian educational system. Although, English later assumed the status of the language of instruction from the fourth year of the primary school education, other languages still function alongside the English language in the school system. By implication, the policy intends to expose an average Nigerian child to be at least three languages in the course of his or her education thereby making the recipients of such system of education multilingual, multiliterate and multicultural (Olagbaju, 2014). But a major setback in the Nigerian language policy especially in education is lack of proper implementation. The policy in practice looks more intent than practice. Some scholars in Nigerian language in Education have as well, argued that such policy lacks comprehensiveness. For example, Oyetade (2003: 107) submits that:

There has not been a comprehensive language policy for Nigeria as a deliberate and planned exercise. Indeed, language planning as an organized and systematic pursuit of solutions to language problems has remained largely peripheral to the mainstream of national planning. What can be regarded as our language policy came about in the context of other more centrally defined national concerns, such as the development of a National Policy on Education and the drafting of a Constitution for the country. It is in connection with these two documents, i.e. the National Policy on Education and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that we can talk about language policy and planning in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, Olagbaju (2014) aligns with the National Policy on Education. With that, we are made to believe that Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion; and preserving cultures. Thus, in comparison to Soviet Russia, *every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.* He also establishes the (b) aspect of the policy statement above thus:

For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in Primary and the Junior Secondary Schools but Non – vocational elective at the Senior Secondary School. (P67)

The above position further buttresses the existence of multilingual education of the Nigerian educational system.

The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. From the

fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects.( provision of the NPE (2004), Section 4, Paragraph 19 (e) and (f) ( for example,see Olagbaju, 2014).

In contrast to the Soviet Union where the policy on language was greatly pronounced and implemented, language policy in Nigeria is more of a statement of intention than practice. For example, the so called 'private schools' do not allow the use of other languages either as the language of instruction or a school subject apart from the English language in the school system (Olagbaju, 2014). Therefore, Nigeria stands to learn lessons to learn from the Soviet Union's language policy. The Soviet education system addressed issues of linguistic and cultural diversity within a separate structure of 'national education'.

When looking into modern Russia, we can build our arguments on the periods between 1991, when the Soviet Union disintegrated till present time. Hence, the focus is pragmatically based on the Russian Federation. Modern Russia's education system mostly began to take shape at the beginning of 1990s, and it inherited many educational structures of the Soviet period. Its construction continued for a decade. From the beginning of the 2000s the dynamics of language education in Russia began to be determined by preparations for a new educational reform. The need for modernization was used as justification. It began through systematic attempts by the Russian Ministry of Education to change federal and regional educational policies and practices towards the recentralization of power in Moscow (Zamyatin, 2012). Therefore, contemporary efforts have been towards making Russia more or less Russian.

### **Conclusion**

Russia and Nigeria are very similar, taking into consideration of the multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual disposition of the two countries. Language policy which has spanned over decades in Russia, especially the early Soviet language policy that gave substance to both Russian and other ethnic languages is a prototype that multilingual countries like Nigeria can learn from. The language policy on Education in Nigeria has not been well adhered to especially, in private school systems where the students are prohibited from speaking and learning their Mother Tongue (ethnic language or language of their immediate environment) in schools, where such language is termed 'vernacular' other than English.

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