

# **POOR ENROLMENT OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS OF NIGERIAN LANGUAGES IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION AS A THREAT TO NATIONAL HARMONY**

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## **Abstract**

The need for national harmony in a multilingual, multicultural nation such as Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Diversities in worldviews emanating from differences in culture have remained a major cause of disharmony. This is seen in constant conflicts and violence across the Nigerian nation. The aim of this paper is to discuss poor enrolment of second language learners of Nigerian Languages in colleges of Education as a major threat to national Harmony. Data for the study was sourced from three years enrolment figures of ten colleges of Education that were randomly selected. Five federal colleges and five state colleges. Data generated were analysed using simple percentage. The findings from the study reveal that there is poor enrolment of second language NCE students in departments of Nigerian languages across the nation and that this poor enrolment is as a result of lack of job opportunities for holders of second language certificates, especially within their own locality. Also, the study shows that acculturation, also known as immersion programme has remained a veritable tool for debunking negative perceptions about different ethnic groups especially among the youths. It is believed that findings from the study will awaken the consciousness of the NCCE on the need to promote teaching and learning of Nigerian languages as second languages in Nigerian colleges of Education.

**Key words:** Poor Enrolment, Second Language Learners, Nigerian Languages, Threat, National Harmony.

## **Introduction**

The harmony of the Nigerian nation is being threatened daily by a lot of issues ranging from religious/cultural differences, poor governance, all forms of insecurity, perceived injustice and marginalisation and perceived ideologies about different ethnic groups. These differences have remained the major cause of conflicts and disharmony experienced in different parts of Nigeria today. The rich heritage of diversities in language and culture has turned as it were, an instrument of disharmony. People who belong to the same nation see themselves as opponents rather than supporters contending for who would outsmart and outshine the other; such attitude impedes national harmony. This situation has affected almost every aspect of life; people now find it difficult to freely travel from one part of the nation to another for business trips or in search of white collar jobs. Youths shy away from doing their National youth service outside their regions for fear of insecurity. No doubt, their fears are not far from the truth as some of them lose their life because of religious crises or even attack of bandits. The slogan of 'one Nigeria' is called to question since citizens from different parts of the nation can no longer freely travel to other parts without being segregated against or even attacked. It has become imperative that such barriers created by differences in religion and culture in Nigeria be handled before they become monumental problems. The all important question yet to be answered is 'Is Nigeria actually one? When hate speeches against people from other tribes has continued to thrive despite campaigns against such? When it has become evident that people from certain part of the nation cannot occupy certain leadership positions for reasons best known to certain

people. One does not bit a child and expect him or her not to cry. The essence of this paper is to lend a voice in the ongoing campaign for national harmony and integration which fosters national development.

In a multilingual and multicultural nation such as Nigeria, there is need for mutual respect for each other's culture as well a rights and privileges. The need for mutual respect for each other as well as acceptance of one another as citizens of the same nation has to be reemphasised. This can be achieved through both formal and informal teachings. In this paper we argue that one of the ways to achieve national harmony is by changing the mindset of upcoming teachers in Nigerian colleges of education. This is because they have the opportunity to influence Nigerian children early enough to disabuse their minds on perceived ill feelings about people from other tribes.

Second language learning is a type of language learning in which a learner studies another language which is not his or her first language. One of the benefits of learning a second language is that it exposes the learner to the culture of the owners of language in question. This is achieved through acculturation or immersion programmes. Every second language learner of Nigerian languages in colleges of Education is expected to compulsorily undergo this programme before graduation. Acculturation programme provides second language learners with an opportunity to have physical contact/ interaction with native speakers of the language. It involves deliberate and systematic activities intended to immerse the students physically in the culture of the particular Nigerian language of their study. This is done through six weeks of personal contact with the native speakers of the language they intend to get the Nigerian certificate in Education in. Over time students involved in this kind of programme have come to develop better understanding about people from other tribes. They have come to gain acceptance and hospitality from people already perceived to be hostile.

Some years ago, when campaign for the study of Nigerian Languages was so high, student's enrolment in second languages was also high, However, many of the NCE holders of Nigerian languages as second languages were not employed especially in their state owned institutions, the enrolment level also dropped. For instance, in most Northern states where government sponsors acculturation trips, the number of enrolment began to reduce drastically as soon as government began to withdraw their supports. The reasons being that majority of their parents are not able to pay the bills. Moreover they are not sure of employment after graduation. Currently, the study of Nigerian languages especially as second language in state owned colleges of education has become a history. The degree of enrolment in Federal colleges of education has also dropped, In some Federal colleges they lecturers pay student's fees just to make sure they have at least a very few number of L2 students in Nigerian language departments. The researchers are of the view that one of the ways to savage the Nigerian nation from the challenge of disharmony caused by language and cultural differences is by encouraging especially the youths to take up language courses in any of the Nigerian language outside their native language.

It is against these backdrops that the writers of this paper discuss poor enrolment of second language learners of Nigerian languages in colleges of education as a major threat to national harmony. The specific objectives are: to identify federal and state colleges of education in Nigeria that currently have L2 students in their Nigerian language departments, to analyse their three years enrolment figures from 2019/2020-2021/22 sessions to ascertain the extent to which student enrolment in the Nigerian language L2 has increased or reduced. Ten colleges were randomly selected for this study. Five out of which are state owned colleges known as COEs, while five are Federal colleges also referred as FCEs. Data for the study was generated from student's departmental enrolment records from heads of department of ten selected Nigerian colleges that have L2 Nigerian language departments. The findings were analysed using simple percentage.

It is believed that findings will remind the National council of colleges of education.(NCCE) about the need to effectively implement the national language policy.

### **Review Of Related Literature**

Emeka-Nwobia (2015) defines language as a conduit for transmission of people's culture, norms, ideas and belief. This means that through the study of language one can be able to rewire perceived ideas about a person or group of individuals. Language holds the power to separate or unite a people together. Buttressing on the important role of language in handling ethnic and national sentiments, Egbokhare (2009) describes language as a core symbol or rallying point. Ability to speak someone's language no matter how little creates an atmosphere of acceptance among people of different cultures.

On the other hand, a second language refers to a language spoken in addition to one's first language. It is a language other than one's language of immediate environment. Usually, a second language is learnt in an organised setting, while first language is acquired. Chomsky differentiates between competence and performance. Competence refers to the natural knowledge which a native speaker has about his first language which may or may not be his or her mother tongue. On the other hand, performance refers to the actual use of the language by its native speakers, Second language learners refer to language learners who study languages other than their first language.

In Nigerian languages there are three official Nigerian languages are: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. Nigerian languages are classified into three broad linguistic groups "Niger-Congo, Nilo Saharan and Afro Asiatic. The Niger-Congo group includes the kwa subgroup, the Ijiod, the Atlantic subgroup, the Benue- Congo subgroup, On the other hand, the Nilo Saharan group includes mainly the Kanuri and the Zama. While the third group which is the Afro Asiatic group, consists of Hausa, Margi, Bede, Fulani among others.

### **Acculturation Programme**

This is an immersion programme for second language learners of language which is intended to help them interact physically with the native speakers of the language they intend to learn. Two types of acculturation are identified; incorporation and language change. Atowa (2017) defines acculturation as activities and programmes aimed at incorporating an individual into another culture, the one an individual is not conversant with. It is a kind of socio-psycholinguistic interaction among students of language, especially indigeneous languages. Berry, (2003) describes acculturation as a psychological change induced by cross-cultural imitation power where people eat their kinds of food, live in their kinds of house and practice their ways of life. Acculturation programme also known as immersion programme is one of the compulsory courses for NCE second language learners of Nigerian languages in colleges of education.

Idris and Jega (2022) embarked on a study entitled 'A sociolinguistic study of communicative convergence in linguistic accommodation among Hausa settlers in Ama-Hausa, Owerri, Imo state. The study examined the degree of linguistic convergence in Ama- Hausa speech community with an aim to discover its implication for inter ethnic relationship. The study also investigated the extent of the Hausa language speakers' accommodation of the Igbo language both in their private and public discourses. The paper adopted communication accommodation theory as theoretical framework for analysis of data. Data for the study were sourced from members of Ama-Hausa speech community and analysed using simple percentage. The findings for the study showed a high degree of accommodation of Igbo language both in private and public places among the Hausa dwellers in Ama- Hausa.

Onyemaechi, (2014) studied ways of improving the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages as second language in Nigerian colleges of education a case study of college of education, Azare Bauchi state. The study investigated some of the challenges confronting the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages in L2 situation and discussed possible ways of solving the identified challenges. Data for the study were generated using a questionnaire. Fifty respondents were randomly selected from Igbo and Yoruba L2 teachers and learners from college of education Azare. Twenty five teachers and students each were selected from both Igbo L2 and Yoruba L2 departments. Data was analysed using simple percentage. The findings from data analysed showed that teaching and learning of Nigerian languages in L2 situation should be encouraged for a peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. Some of the challenges facing teaching and learning of Nigerian languages in L2situation include: negative societal attitude towards the study of Nigerian languages, financial issues relating to accreditation trips, security and personal preferences as well as curriculum issues which has to do with limited job opportunities. The writer reiterates that the much needed peace in a multilingual, multicultural setting can be achieved by creating an atmosphere of free social interaction among the existing ethnic group.

Akinabi and Ajetomobi (2023) studied acculturation programme in Yoruba language: A tool for sustaining Yoruba culture among the L2 students of Federal college of education, Yola. The researchers examined the effect of acculturation on the spoken language of L2 Yoruba, Specifically, they analysed the influence of acculturation programme on L2 students in sustaining Yoruba culture. The writers also discussed factors which they believe is hindering the effectiveness of acculturation programme as well as factors that can make the acculturation have positive effects on L2 Yoruba students. Fourty NCE students were randomly selected from NCE 1and NCE 2 and some students who graduated from FCE special, Oyo. Data for the study was sourced using a questionnaire and analysed using mean and standard deviation. The findings from the study showed that acculturation is a tool for sustaining Yoruba culture. Also, the study revealed that lacks of money, stress, acceptance problem, insecurity are factors hindering the effectiveness of acculturation.

### **Nigerian Colleges Of Education**

Colleges of education refer to tertiary institutions established for training teachers. They are regulated by a national body known as national commission for colleges of education, (NCCE). Colleges of education award NCE certificates. There are 152 colleges of education in Nigeria, twenty one federal, forty nine state colleges and eighty two private colleges of education. Teacher education is a very important sector in the education of every nation. The reason is that it deals with the training of human beings who in turn trains the future that is to say, the future of every nation considerably lies on the teachers. The teacher education institutions should be given adequate attention by the government. Below are the lists of Federal and state colleges of Education in Nigeria.

#### **Names of State Colleges**

	<b>Location</b>
(1)Adamawa State College Of Education Hong	
(2) Adamu Augie College Of Education	Kebbi
(3) Adeniran Ogunsanya College Of Education	Lagos
(4) Akwa Ibom State College Of Education	Akwalbom
(5) College Of Education Arochukwu	Abia

(6) College Of Education Azare	Bauchi
(7) College Of Education Billiri	
(9) College Of Education Ekiadolor-Benin	Edo
College Of Education Gashua	Yobe
College Of Education Gindiri	Plateau
College Of Education Ila-Orangun	Osun
College Of Education Ikere-Ekiti	Ekiti
College Of Education Jalingo	Taraba
College Of Education Kangare	Bauchi
College Of Education Katsina-Ala	Benue
College Of Education Lanlate	Oyo
College Of Education Oju	Oju
College Of Education (Technical) Lafiagi	Kwara
College Of Education Waka-Biu	Borno
College Of Education Warri	Delta
College Of Education Zing	Taraba
Cross River State College Of Education	Cross River
Delta State College Of Education	Delta
Delta State College Of Physical Education	Delta
Ebonyi State College Of Education (Technical) Ikwo	Ebonyi
Edo State College Of Education	Edo
Emmanuel Alayande College Of Education	Oyo
Enugu State College Of Education (Technical)	Enugu
FCT College Of Education Zuba (Coezuba)	Fct Abuja
Gombe State College Of Education And Legal Studies	Gombe
Isaac Jasper Boro College Of Education	Bayelsa
Isa Kaita College Of Education	Katsina
Jama'atu College Of Education	Kaduna
Jigawa State College Of Education	Jigawa
Jigawa State College Of Education And Legal Studies Ringim	Jigawa
Kaduna State College Of Education	Kaduna
Kano State College Of Education And Preliminary Study	Kano
Kashim Ibrahim College Of Education (Coekabba)	Kogi
Kogi State College Of Education ()	Kogi

Kwara State College Of Education	Kwara
Kwara State College Of Education Ilorin	Kwara
Michael Otedola College Of Primary Education (Mocoped)	Lagos
Niger State College Of Education	Niger
Nwafor Orizu College Of Education	Anambra
Osun State College Of Education	Osun
Sa'adatu Rimi College Of Education	Kano
Shehu Shagari College Of Education	Sokoto
Tai Solarin College Of Education	Ogun
Umar Ibn Ibrahim El-Kanemi College Of Education	Borno
Zamfara State College of Education	Zamfara

### **LIST OF FEDERAL COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

- (1) Adeyemi College Of Education
- (2) Federal College of Education, Technical, Asaba
- (3) FCE, Technical, Oyo
- (4) FCE, Technical Gisau
- (5) FCE, Omoku
- (6) FCE, Eha-Amufu
- (7) FCE, Kotangara
- (8) FCE, Osiele
- (9) FCE, Kano
- (10) FCE, Pankshin
- (11) FCE, Nsukka
- (12) FCE, Tech Gusau
- (13) FCE, Akoka
- (14) FCE, Katsina
- (15) FCE, Okene
- (16) FCE, Yobe
- (17) FCE, Obudu
- (18) FCE, Zaria

(19) FCE, Yola

ANALYSIS OF STUDENT'S ENROLMENT FROM SELECTED NIGERIAN COLLEGES  
BETWEEN 2019/2020 - 21 /22 ACADEMIC SESSION.

Name of Institutions	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	Total	%
FCE Yola	7	6	4	17	34.6
FCE Obudu	4	2	2	08	16.00
FCE Okene	5	4	3	12	24.4
FCE Zaria	4	4	4	12	24.4
COE Azare	0	0	0	00	0
COE Nsugbe	0	0	0	00	0
COE Akwanga	0	0	0	00	0
COE EhaAmufu	0	0	0	00	0
COE Oshun	0	0	0	00	0
Total	00	00	00	49	

From the table above, it is evident that the number of Nigerian language second learners in both Federal and state colleges has continued to reduce. Some Federal colleges do not have students which means that although such departments exist, they are not functional. The worst hit in this issue of poor enrolment are state colleges. Some state schools like colleges of Education Azare and Akwanga have closed down the department and redeployed staff to other departments where they may have to start all over again. Some out of frustration could not continue and so had to opt for voluntary retirement.

### Conclusion.

The degree of poor enrolment of second language learners of Nigerian languages is alarming. It is a threat to national harmony. Acculturation or immersion programme promotes national integration and harmony. Acculturation gives room for students to travel from their locality to interact physically with the native speakers of the second language he or she is studying. Gaining acceptance from such people has changed the perception of some youths about a given ethnic group. In this way, acculturation as part of second language learning promotes national harmony.

### Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, we make the following recommendations

- (1) The Government should apply measures to ensure implementation of the Nigerian language policy.
- (2) Incentives can be given to l2 Nigerian language students in colleges of education.
- (3) Those who studied L2 Nigerian languages should be offered employment in their state primary and post primary schools.
- (4) Parents, Government organizations and individuals should assist in sponsoring acculturating students.

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