

Lying in Ambush: Ethnic Nationalism and ‘Other Tongue’ Policy in Nigeria

L. Oladipo Salami

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

1. Introduction: the resurgence of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria

It has been observed that ethnicity or loyalty to one’s ethnic group is one major bane of Nigeria polity.¹ Since ethnicity and language are often closely associated in Africa, they both tend to constitute critical factors impinging on political, economic, religious, educational and social issues in Nigeria. The failure of the Yoruba ethnic group to secure the Presidency of the country in 1993 led to a series of developments one of which was the resurgence of Yoruba ethnic nationalism. The failure also seemed to confirm, for the Yoruba, their accusation of the Hausa-Fulani ruling class of marginalization in running the affairs of the country. This development further heightened the cry for a separate Yoruba nation from Nigeria as well as the resurgence of Yoruba consciousness. Beginning from 1993, Nigeria continues to witness the rise in the activities of ethnic and regional organizations, militias and other armed groups. Thus in the last few years, a relatively large number of ethnic and regional organizations have evolved in the country. They include the national/ethnic movements like EGBESU, MOSOP, OPC and OHANAEZE representing the Ijo, Ogoni, Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups respectively.

The Oodua People’s Congress (OPC) is an organization that is active in the southwest of Nigeria which campaigns to protect the interests of the Yoruba ethnic group and seeks autonomy for the Yoruba people. The OPC is a complex organization, which has taken on several different roles as it has adapted to the changing political and security environment in Nigeria. As one of several Yoruba self-determination groups, it was established in 1994 with the aim of overcoming what it alleged was the political marginalization of the Yoruba in Nigerian politics. It has since evolved in several different directions. Its activities have ranged from political agitation for Yoruba autonomy and the promotion of Yoruba culture to violent confrontation with members of other ethnic groups, and, more recently, vigilante work and crime fighting. The OPC continues to enjoy significant support among sectors of the population in southwestern Nigeria and among state government officials. As noted in the Human Rights Watch Report for the year 2002, there could be a resurgence of violence at any time in Nigeria, and the OPC remains poised to intervene in the event of ethnic or political crises, which remain a common feature of the Nigerian landscape.

2. Ethnicity and national development

As noted by Adebija (1994), while most of the social and political problems in Nigeria are not always related to ethnic and linguistic differences and attitudes, camps are often pitched along these lines. He observes, for example, that the major ethnic groups - Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo are often suspicious of each other and that this has considerable impact on attitudes towards each others’ languages, and consequently, on any meaningful attempt at language planning and action (p. 53). Several countries in Africa do not only present densely multiethnic and multilingual sociolinguistic space, ethnicity and language are closely associated. Like many nations across the globe, these African countries have language problems, some of which are general and others motivated by some peculiar ethnic problem. Multilingual nations particularly, have cultural, social and political problems that tend to impinge on the development of some of them. Some of these nations have been able to tackle such

¹ In a lecture delivered at a club business luncheon early in this year, Nigeria’s Minister of Transport, Mr Ojo Maduekwe observes that “Nigeria is in a bind because ethnicity has become an overarching paradigm, colouring and undermining everything” (see *The Comet*, Friday March, 2003).

problems effectively while others are still striving to find solutions. Nigeria is one of those nations still seeking solutions for their perceived language problems.

Akinnaso (1989: 133) notes that since 1947, no constitution has been written, and no major governmental policy has been formulated, which does not recognize the problem of language diversity and its effects on Nigeria's national development. According to Akinnaso (*ibid.*: 141), most countries adopt one of three approaches in trying to solve the problem of a national language(s) arising from language diversity. One approach of these three approaches is to promote a few languages, usually those spoken by relatively large populations, to national language status and to teach them compulsorily in schools. He mentions that countries that adopt this approach include Nigeria and Sierra Leone and argues that the underlying strategy is simultaneously to promote the languages spoken by major ethnic groups as national languages, thus avoiding the rivalry or tension that the arbitrary choice of any one of them would most certainly have generated. The expectation, however, is that one of the national languages would eventually emerge supreme and be adopted as the nation's official language (see also Akinnaso, 1994:153). This is the gradualist approach put forward, among other options, by Bamgbose (1976, cited in Oyelaran, 1988: 8). Whatever the approach taken, it is important, as observed by Adegbija (1994: 50), that we try to pinpoint the patterns and determinants of attitudes towards languages in Africa (both European and indigenous) because they help to contribute to policy formulation and/implementation.

3. The other tongue policy

It is now twenty-three years since a national policy of learning one other Nigerian mother tongue (OT policy) as a component part of the Federal policy on language in relation to education was formulated. One of the stated objectives of this policy is to build a united, strong and self-reliant nation (Section 1, paragraph 2 (1) of the Revised National Policy on Education, 1989). In fact, in Section 8 of the policy the government states:

[the] Government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother-tongue. In this connection, the Government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba (p. 12).

One important goal of this 'other tongue policy', which can be termed official bilingualism in Nigerian languages, is that if successful, one of the three major languages would eventually emerge as Nigeria's national language. The thinking of the Murtala-Obasanjo military regime (1975 – 1979) under which this policy was formulated was that consciousness of nationhood (feeling Nigerian) in the sense of unity among the divergent ethnic and linguistic groups could be engendered through the 'nationalization' of the three major languages (that is Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba). As noted earlier, the OT policy was formulated as part of educational policy but it was to be used as a ladder to working on the national language question. Nigeria is a multilingual country with a complicated sociolinguistic landscape consisting three major language types: (1) about 400 indigenous languages, (2) three exogenous languages – English, French and Arabic and (3) a relatively neutral language – Pidgin English (see Akinnaso, 1993: 257). Although the country's official language is English, its continued use is considered as not a sign of independence. Therefore, there is a need to evolve a national indigenous language not only to which all Nigerians can relate and but that which will also engender a feeling of oneness in them.

Akinnaso (1989, 1991) observes that one possible option that may work in the development of a national language for the country is adoption of a gradualist approach which advocates the learning of one of the three major languages – Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba – one of which is envisaged would emerge as the national language. It is assumed that this approach would provoke little or no reaction in the polity since it is not imposing any language on the people. However, as far as one is aware, there is no empirical evidence to justify this confidence. Although the Yoruba ethnic group belongs to the major language class, we think it would be wrong to assume that its reaction to the OT policy would be very positive. Thus, we think there is a need, at some point, to look at the OT policy in relation to national, group and personal identities. We agree with the argument that there is some dynamic relationship of language planning to constructs of power, state, social structure and perhaps, also to dominance and

exploitation (Tollefson, 1991: viii). Talking about the Yoruba-speaking people in Nigeria, Odi Ofeimun noted:

The area [South west] is sufficiently cohesive, culturally and electorally astute, to say No to rude and unconscionable power. No question about it: if there is going to be a future for Nigeria and that is to say, if there is going to be a restructuring that can halt the rule of the country by a tiny regionalist cabal [Hausa-Fulani], using Federal might to feather its nests, it would be because of this constituency that can say No.

(The News, 11 January, 1999, p.50)

Osaji (1979, cited in Sofunke, 1990: 38) seems to apprehend a bit of the view above when, in what Sofunke describes as pessimism, he fears that attitudinal factors in relation to the unique national environment and politics in Nigeria might not be helpful in the promotion of a national (indigenous) language even from the three majority languages:

[S]ince each of these great traditions [the three majority languages] is numerically and ideologically strong enough to support separate and large-scale socio-cultural and administrative integrations, their competition within a single polity makes for rather constant internal tension and for inter-ethnic disunity.

Also, in the same vein, Olagoke (1982, cited in Sofunke, 1990: 39), observes that ethnic and political prejudice may inhibit the selection of a national language in Nigeria. For Oyelaran (1988:10 - 11) the promotion of the three 'majority' languages in the OT policy will foster the socio-political exclusion of a large majority of the people who are not Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba. However, Ikara (1987, quoted in Oyelaran, 1988: 9) does not seem to share any of these views as he asks that:

[if] the recognition of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as Nigeria's lingua francas is only a transitional stage, pending the evolution of a single national language, why has it been difficult to jump directly to the selection of only one language, as is the case with most parts of the world where national integration and unity has had to be forced for purposes of national development?

In other words, Ikara thinks that Nigeria does not need to delay in selecting any one of the majority languages as its national language since, in any case, one of them is expected to emerge as the national language. He proceeds thus to suggest, in the same paper, that Hausa should be selected as Nigeria's national language since it is the only major lingua franca among the three languages based on the spread of its use in Nigeria (see Oyelaran, op. cit.: 9). As observed by Jibril (1990:116) the emergence of a national language should also be made an explicit goal of Nigeria's language policy. He is of the view, however, that for a language to develop as an acceptable national or official language, it has to spread and be accepted first as a lingua franca and, on that score, he argues that such regional lingua francas as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (that is the three officially recognized major languages of Nigeria) would have to be strengthened for an eventual emergence of a national language from among them. He notes, though, that there are constraining factors on the policy. These include improperly defined objectives, indefinite chronogram, the absence of sanctions for violation, lack of legal backing for implementation, inadequate facilities and lack of teachers.

Apart from Ikara's, there seems to be a general view that the ultimate goal of the OT policy to have an indigenous national language might be difficult to achieve. Although the constraints observed by Jibril (ibid.) are very critical to the success or failure of the OT policy, the rise in ethnic consciousness following the failure of the 1993 elections under the military regimes of Babangida and Abacha has also contributed to the negative perception of the Nigerian state (especially among the Yoruba people) and are likely to impact on the reception of and/or attitudes towards the policy of learning another Nigerian major language (that is Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba). For example, at the height of the 1993 election crisis, some Yoruba youth organization threatened to set fire on RayPower Radio station in Lagos for broadcasting in Hausa. It is worth noting that although Lagos is a cosmopolitan city where people from the different ethnic groups in Nigeria live, the youth organization had tried, in their threat, to remind anybody who cared to listen that it was a city owned by the Yoruba people of the southwest region. This threat would not have been necessary but for the fact that an election, which a Yoruba man was presumed to have won, had been annulled by a Northern (Hausa-Fulani) dominated military regime. In other words, a seemingly latent Yoruba ethnic nationalism was being fired by the political crisis and this nationalism was what the youth organization tried to express by the rejection of

the use of Hausa as a language of broadcast in a Yoruba territory. In fact, the power play that was involved in the 1993 elections support the contention of Okafo (1985 cited in Oyelaran, 1988: 10) that language may have a catalysing effect but that it is not the only factor that fosters unity and creates affinity and that for Nigeria, language is not necessarily a prerequisite for national unity. As noted by Akinnaso (1993:208), any policy that confers “national” or “official” status on any single Nigerian language is bound to be seriously resisted. He even goes further to say that the choice of Hausa, which allegedly has the largest number and widest spread of speakers, for example, as the national language will be readily construed as an attempt to establish the political hegemony of the north over the south.

4. Location of the study and fieldwork

The study location is Osun state in Southwestern Nigeria. The places covered were three towns: Osogbo, an urban town; Ile-Ife, a sub-urban town and Ikirun a rural town. The sample size is 100 people purposively selected. The purposive sampling method was used which meant that sample elements were chosen because they filled certain desired criteria for investigation. In purposive sampling, one or more communities or groups may be selected, for example, for intensive study because they are either considered typical or (less often) outstanding examples of the variables with which a particular research is concerned (see Salami, 1986). This is simply to say that we knew what we were looking for and went straight to find them. This method is good particularly for small samples. All respondents are of Yoruba ethnic group; men and women from age 25 and above with or without formal education. The study is quantitative but supplemented with qualitative data collected through open-ended interviews with subjects. The questionnaire elicited information mainly on ethnic feelings, perceptions of Nigeria as a nation, attitudes to other languages and ethnic groups in Nigeria. The questionnaire was administered directly by the researcher in order to take care of those with low level of formal education or total lack of formal education.

5. Results and discussion

5. 1 *The Nigerian nation and the national language question*

In order to understand the extent to which ethnic feeling or loyalty could impact on the evolution of the Nigerian nation and a national language, we had sought to tease out the feeling of our respondents for this study toward their country - Nigeria. In doing this, we had wanted to know from the interviewees whether or not they see Nigeria as one nation. The results show in Table 1 below that while 58% claims that Nigeria is one nation, 41% says it is not and 1% does not know what to say. Although we seem to have a relatively high percentage of respondents claiming that Nigeria is not one nation, the preponderant majority says it is. When we then asked, in the light of this seeming positive feeling towards Nigeria, whether or not respondents think it is desirable to have an indigenous national language, the data (Table 2) show that only 17% claims it is desirable while 83% of the respondents think it is not.

Table 1
Perception of Nigeria as a nation: (Do you see Nigeria as one nation?)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	58	58.0	58.0	58.0
No	41	41.0	41.0	99.0
Don't know	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

Do you think it is desirable to have a national indigenous language?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	17	17.0	17.0
	No	83	83.0	83.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0

5.2.0 Other tongue learning and ethnic attitudes

5.2.1 Perception of other tongue learning

Since the Yoruba language is one of the three major languages to be learnt as a second indigenous language, the other tongue policy formulators expected that the Yoruba child would choose either to learn Hausa or Igbo as his/her second indigenous language. In Tables 3 and 4 below, we show the distribution of interviewees according to their responses to perceptions of learning Hausa or Igbo as a second indigenous language.

Table 3

Do you think it is desirable to learn Hausa:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	82	82.0	82.0	82.0
	No	18	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 4

Do you think it is desirable to learn Igbo:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	83	83.0	83.0	83.0
	No	17	17.0	17.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The data in the tables above show that 82% and 83% of the respondents think it is desirable to learn Hausa and Igbo respectively. These high percentages of the number of respondents who think it is desirable to learn one other major Nigerian language seem to point to a positive view of the other tongue learning policy among the Yoruba people. This positive picture seems, however, to begin to crack when we decided to ask respondents what they thought of the Hausa and Igbo people themselves.

5.2.2 Perception of Hausa and Igbo ethnic groups

In Tables 5 and 6 below we show the distribution of interviewees according to their attitudes to the Hausa and Igbo ethnic groups. In table 5, we will note that a higher percentage of the respondents (53%) have a negative rather than positive attitude towards the Hausa ethnic group while table 6 also shows that a higher percentage (57%) of the respondents have a positive rather than attitude towards the Igbo. When we tried to correlate these attitudes to respondents' desire/willingness to learn either of these languages, the results (tables 7 and 8 below) show that for Hausa, there is no significant correlation between attitudes towards the people and the desire to learn the Hausa language while for Igbo we observe a significant correlation ($p < 0.03$). In other words, the more positive the respondents' attitudes toward the Igbo ethnic group the greater the desire/willingness to learn the Igbo language.

Table 5

Attitude towards Hausa people				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Positive	36	36.0	36.0	36.0
Negative	53	53.0	53.0	89.0
Indifferent	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

Attitude towards Igbo people:				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Positive	57	57.0	57.0	57.0
Negative	30	30.0	30.0	87.0
Indifferent	13	13.0	13.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 7

Relationship between attitude to Hausa and the desire to learn Hausa Language						
	Desirable			Not Desirable		Total
	%	No		%	No.	
Attitude						
Positive	83.3	30	16.7	6	36	
Negative	77.4	41	22.6	12	53	
Indifferent	100	11	00.0	00	11	
Total	82.0	82	18.0	18	100	

P<0.2

Table 8

Relationship between attitude to Igbo and the desire to learn Igbo Language						
	Desirable			Not Desirable		Total
	%	No.		%	No.	
Attitude						
Positive	91.2	52	8.8	5	57	
Negative	63.3	19	36.7	11	30	
Indifferent	92.3	12	7.7	1	13	
Total	83.0	83	17.0	17	100	

P<0.03

5.2.3 Attitudes to Oodua people's congress (OPC) and other tongue learning

As mentioned earlier (section 1), the OPC has occupied a central focus in the political consciousness of the Yoruba following the annulled 1993 Presidential elections in Nigeria. Therefore, we tried to relate respondents' attitudes to OPC (as some measure of their Yorubanness) and the policy of other tongue learning. In other words, attitudes to OPC is a measure of the relative depth of Yoruba ethnic feeling following the 1993 Presidential elections. In Table 9 below, we will observe that a higher percentage (52%) of respondents have positive rather than negative or indifferent attitude towards OPC. This positive attitude could be interpreted as a subscription to the political principles of OPC part of which is to resist the marginalization of the Yoruba ethnic group (particularly by the Hausa-Fulani ruling class) in Nigeria. When we tried to relate this result to attitude towards both Hausa and Igbo people, the data show that there is a significant correlation between attitude to OPC and attitude to Hausa ($p<0.03$). Here, we observe that the more positive respondents' attitude to OPC, the greater the negative attitude to the Hausa ethnic group. We note, however, that there is no significant correlation between attitude to OPC and attitude towards the Igbo ethnic group.

Table 9

Attitude towards OPC:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Positive	52	52.0	52.0	52.0
Negative	23	23.0	23.0	75.0
Indifferent	25	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 10

Attitude towards OPC and attitudes to Hausa people

	Attitudes to Hausa people						Total
	Positive (%)	(No)	Negative (%)	(No)	Indifferent (%)	(No)	
Attitudes to OPC							
Positive	34.6	18	55.8	29	9.6	5	52
Negative	17.4	4	73.9	17	8.7	2	23
Indifferent	36.0	36	53.0	53	11.0	4	25
Total	36.0	36	53.0	53	11.0	11	100

P<0.03

Table 11

Attitudes toward OPC and attitudes to Igbo people

	Attitudes to Igbo people						Total
	Positive (%)	(No)	Negative (%)	(No)	Indifferent (%)	(No)	
Attitudes to OPC							
Positive	61.5	32	28.8	15	9.6	5	52
Negative	52.2	12	39.1	9	8.7	2	23
Indifferent	52.0	13	24.0	6	24.0	6	25
Total	57.0	57	30.0	30	13.0	13	100

P<0.4

5.3 Political marginalization and other tongue learning

In tables 12 and 13 below, we show the distribution of interviewees according to their responses to the question of whether or not they see the Yoruba ethnic group as a marginalized group in Nigeria and the identities of the marginalizing group(s). The results show that a higher percentage (67%) of respondents claims that the Yoruba people are marginalized rather than not. When asked to mention specifically who marginalizes the Yoruba, more respondents (46%) claim that it is the Hausa people more than any other ethnic group. When we try to correlate these results to the respondents' desire to learn Hausa or Igbo, the results show that there are no significant correlations (see tables 14 and 15). In other words, there seems to be no relationship between the feeling of being marginalized politically and the desire to or not to learn either Hausa or Igbo language.

Table 12

The Yoruba people are marginalized in Nigeria:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	67	67.0	67.0	67.0
No	33	33.0	33.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 13

Those who marginalized the Yoruba people in Nigeria:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Hausa	46	46.0	46.0	46.0
Igbo	1	1.0	1.0	47.0
Govt	13	13.0	13.0	60.0
Others	9	9.0	9.0	69.0
Nobody	31	31.0	31.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 14

Relationship between the claim of marginalization and desire to learn Hausa

Whether marginalized	Desire to Learn Hausa				Total
	Yes		No		
	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	
Yes	82.1	55	17.9	12	67
No	81.8	27	18.2	6	33
Total	82.0	82	18.0	18	100

P<0.09

Table 15

Relationship between the claim of marginalization and desire to learn Igbo

Whether marginalized	Desire to Learn Igbo				Total
	Yes		No		
	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	
Yes	85.1	57	14.9	10	67
No	78.8	26	21.2	7	33
Total	83.0	83	17.0	17	100

P<0.09

5.4 Political marginalization and ethnicity

When we attempt to find out if the Yoruba's claim of political marginalization interacts with their attitude towards Hausa and Igbo ethnic groups, we see a significant correlation ($p < 0.05$) between their attitude towards the Hausa ethnic group and the claim of marginalization (see Tables 16 and 17 below). Here, in Table 16, a higher percentage (61.2%) of those who claim that the Yoruba people are marginalized rather than not also have a negative attitude to Hausa people than those who are positively disposed to the Hausa ethnic group. In other words, we see a relationship between Yoruba people's political feeling and the perception of the Hausa ethnic group.

Table 16

Relationship between the claim of marginalization and attitude towards Hausa Ethnic group

Whether marginalized	Attitude towards Hausa people						Total
	Positive		Negative		Indifferent		
	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	
Yes	31.1	21	61.2	41	7.5	5	67
No	45.5	15	36.4	12	18.2	6	33
Total	36.0	36	53.0	53	11.0	11	100

P<0.05

Table 17

Relationship between the claim of marginalization and attitude towards Igbo
Ethnic group

	Attitude towards Igbo people						Total
	Positive (%)	(No.)	Negative (%)	(No.)	Indifferent (%)	(No.)	
Whether marginalized							
Yes	55.2	37	34.3	23	10.4	7	67
No	60.6	20	21.2	7	18.2	6	33
Total	57.0	57	30.0	30	13.0	13	100

P<0.3

6. Findings

From the results of the data of this study, a number of inferences can be made in relation to the policy of learning another indigenous language (apart from one's mother tongue) in Nigeria and the attitude of the Yoruba ethnic group towards the policy as well as its perceptions of the Nigerian nation and other ethnic groups. First, we will observe that a relatively large percentage (58%) of the respondents show some positive feeling towards Nigeria. In other words, there seems to be a sense of belonging to the nation (Nigeria) among the Yoruba. This is in spite of the seeming loyalty to Yorubanness (as demonstrated in their positive attitude towards OPC). However, the Yoruba sense of belonging to the Nigerian nation does not seem to translate into an acceptance of an indigenous national language (even as they come from a majority language – which, theoretically, could emerge as the national language). Although we did not ask respondents directly what language they would prefer, as Nigeria's national language, most of them would opt for the English language. The rejection of a national indigenous language does not mean the rejection of Nigeria, rather it could be a response to a possible intrusion of Yoruba identity and/or domination by an equally local political power.

The second finding of this study is that there is a readiness or desire on the part of the Yoruba people to learn another Nigerian language. What this seems to infer is that they, are ostensibly, saying that they are well disposed to the OT policy. From the interviews, they provided a number of reasons for this disposition ranging from the fact that learning Hausa, for example, would facilitate trading relations between the Hausa and the Yoruba, promote national integration to such reasons as learning Hausa or Igbo would help to avoid cheating in interaction and facilitating geographical mobility. If we put this finding against the first, what we see is that the Yoruba would learn Hausa or Igbo as long as they know it is not for the purpose of selecting a national indigenous language. This result seems to be an empirical corroboration of Akinnaso's (1993: 208) view that "no matter how vaguely it is couched, any policy that confers "national" or "official" status on any single Nigerian language is bound to be seriously resisted."

Thirdly, our findings show one very interesting phenomenon in terms of ethnic relations in Nigeria. This is that from this study, we will observe that the Yoruba seem more positively disposed to the Igbo ethnic group than they are towards the Hausa. In other words, assuming that this positive disposition can be translated into an acceptance of a national indigenous language, the Yoruba would, theoretically, more readily accept the Igbo language rather than Hausa which is alleged to be more widespread in use and a better candidate than Igbo. But, as said, this is just in theory. The seeming positive disposition to the Igbo rather than the Hausa ethnic group is underlined by the rivalry between the Hausa and the Yoruba in the running of the affairs of Nigeria. The contest for the governance of Nigeria has, since 1960, been between the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba more than any other ethnic group. In other words, for the Yoruba, the Igbo ethnic group does not seem to constitute much threat to its ambition and, therefore, can be more readily embraced. But this is as far it goes because from this study, we note that the Yoruba do not seem to be ready for a national indigenous language.

The fourth finding is that the negative disposition to the Hausa ethnic group is further compounded by the claim by majority of the respondents in this study that it is the Hausa ethnic group that marginalizes the Yoruba in the affairs of Nigeria. However, this feeling of marginalization does not

seem to impact negatively on the OT policy. It seems rather strange that on one hand, the Yoruba people are politically not well disposed to the Hausa ethnic group and, on the other hand, this negative feeling is not expressed in the rejection of a Hausa identity, that is, its language as something that should not be learnt (as it is shown from the data that a large majority of the respondents claims that it is desirable to learn Hausa). What the results demonstrate is that ethnicity per se might not be a hindrance to Nigeria's OT policy. The present study seems, therefore, to confirm some earlier findings by Igboanusi (2001:138) which contradict Webb's (1985) observation that a person usually transfers his or her attitude towards a group of people to that group's dialect or language. In fact, some of the reactions of respondents interviewed for this study tend, as shown in the following extracts, to corroborate this conclusion:

On learning either Igbo or Hausa, we have the following responses from interviewees:

"We are all Nigerians and it will be good to understand every language"

(Male, 40year-old, trader)

"It is desirable to learn Igbo because we may find ourselves in their midst"

(Female, between 25 - 40year-old, professional)

"It is good for the promotion of national integration"

(Male, between 25 – 40year-old, professional)

However, the same interviewees have different reactions when asked to comment on the Hausa and Igbo ethnic groups:

"Igbo as a group have different ideas and way of life

When you give the Hausa due respect, they will be good to you."

"What I notice is that they (Hausa) are greedy, fanatics, extremists..."

"Hausa are domineering and imperialistic"

"Igbo people are crafty and ethnocentric"

"The Igbo people like themselves, selfish and self-centred."

The views above express some stereotypes the Yoruba have of the Igbo and Hausa which might influence their perceptions of the people as well as their attitude towards their languages. These stereotypes, among other factors, need to be given some thought and, perhaps, consideration in the process of national language planning and implementation in Nigeria as they might also impact positively or negatively on the success of the OT policy.

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