

# SURPLUS AGENDA, DEFICIT CULTURE: LANGUAGE AND THE CLASS-DIVIDE IN NIGERIA

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In the political attempt to invest in social equity and national unity, successive Nigerian governments have embarked on legislative agenda that correlate social policies with the prerequisites of national character where language provides finite strategic link. Established is a process of social management implanted in the traditional institutional programming. Essentially, it relies on the national educational system for provision of modalities within which language can be engaged as the nation's social equalizer. Yet, built into national policy on education are parameters that produce social imperatives in direct dissonance with the national political investment. Rather than it achieving equity and unity, engendered is a context where multidimensional divisiveness is encouraged. For the nation's government to situate itself where it can adequately articulate language policy programs to harness the national micropolitics, contended as a minimal prerequisite, is adjustment of policy modality under radical departure from certain traditional institutional nuances.

Pour pouvoir réaliser l'unité nationale dans un esprit de justice sociale, plusieurs gouvernements successifs ont passé des lois liant les politiques sociales à l'utilisation des différentes langues nationales. Cette démarche a permis de lancer un processus de transformation sociale au sein du programme d'éducation traditionnel. L'éducation nationale était censée fournir les modalités permettant aux différentes langues de servir comme outil d'équité sociale au niveau de la nation. Cependant il apparaît que dans la politique même d'éducation nationale, certains paramètres produisent des impératifs sociaux en dissonance directe avec l'investissement national sur la plan du gouvernement. Au lieu de parvenir à l'équité et l'unité, on aboutit à un contexte encourageant la division sur des niveaux multiples. Cette situation montre qu'avant d'articuler une politique linguistique visant à incorporer au niveau national les micro politiques, il apparaît nécessaire d'entreprendre une réforme radicale pour se départir de certaines aspects des institutions de l'éducation nationale.

## 0. INTRODUCTION

Proclaiming within Italy's emerging cultural vitalization of the 1800s what is, perhaps, more befitting to Nigeria's political struggle for authentic statehood in the twentieth century, Massimo D'Azeglio<sup>1</sup> enthusiastically declared *fatta L'Italia bisogna fare gli Italiani* 'we have made Italy, we must make Italians'. Territorial amalgamation (1914) anchored in colonial agenda made the Nigerian nation-state, a geopolitical construct primarily guided and sustained by the superficiality of its invention and ipso facto, its existence. Making Nigerians out of "a mere geographic expression" (Awolowo 1947) has been a national survival issue contemplated via 'one nation, one trajectory' formula where 'one language' provides the essential IDEO-SYMBOLIC certification. Howbeit, where state appetite for ambiguity-cum-ineptitude and public taste for opportunism interfused firmly and plugged into a complex honeycomb of policy deficiencies, social management efficiency has drifted more prominently into oblivious national potential rather than into clear utilitarian manifestation. Within the mainstream institutional apparatus, afforded in complementary symbioses, are politically-guided contempt for social equilibrium aggregated by participatory inequity, and policy-driven nourishment of sectarianism, all marked with political disunity and instability. Instilled into the national collective psyche is PAROCHIAL MARGINALIZATION SYNDROME, a complex psycho-social group affliction with functional symptoms that beset the claims of participatory deprivation and disempowerment of every existing national group. Yet, the need for guided reprogramming of the national mind set

<sup>1</sup>A political moderate trusted by the monarch; brought to restore political sanity in Italy after the Proclamation of Moncalieri, November 20, 1849.

through implantation and nourishment of values of equity continues to encroach ever so slowly on the essential prerogatives of political tradition in the hope of diminishing demagogic attitude and eventual emergence of consensual parameters for national survival. Such need, by no means benign in a political sense, forms the basis for novel management choices and a shift in the paradigms required in the design and execution of national policies and agenda. Accommodating these choices meant far-reaching adjustment of the existing political tradition via a preponderance of new programs and strategies, hence the legislative engagement of federal character<sup>2</sup> and administrative pacification on the one hand, and utilitarian pursuit of educational and linguistic policies on the other.

The legislation of equity (social) through affirmative programs (1979) and the continual pacification-oriented administrative adjustment (1967–1997) together have produced a structural frame wherein participation is afforded pseudo-political liberalism. But then, the pursuit of unity (national), give or take certain government policies, has engendered a political obsession with unitarianist tendencies replete with the congestion of power in the center in ways that dislocate rather than connect it to the periphery. Indeed, to establish equilibrium between the two cardinal concepts (equity-unity), goal driven education programs aimed at maximizing mainstream mobilization was injected. As an endeavor emerging out of the prevailing political circumstances in the country, it lacked implementation logistics and social sustenance apparatus. And, given the limitations of the political choices, language emerged as a strategic ideological refuge, an equalizing factor, as it were, in a dire attempt to foreclose the existing policy inadequacies and the social divisions engendered as a result. Inevitably, it too was politically ordained (1979) compliments of the articles of the national constitution.

The political agenda with language is basically remedial, closely tied to its stature to serve in three capacities: i) as a development apparatus (for nation building; Bamgbose 1983, 1991); ii) as an equalizing mechanism (for participatory parity among intranational groups; Elugbe 1990); and iii) as a permeating system (for wholesale social homogenization; Olagoke 1982). Operating in this caliber, language may be promoted as the 'conscience of the nation' whose functions cut across all the existing strata of society (Ikara 1987). Such a language in the opinion of many (Simpson 1978; Osaji 1979; Ikara 1987; Jibril 1990) should be endowed with national markedness, i.e., cultural indigeneity. Suggested, in other words, is a symbolic national estrangement from past policy strategy that promoted English as the 'efficiency' language. This language, given its source and history, should, in essence, be denationalized particularly in its official role and replaced piecemeal by an alternative code that is home-grown. As a viable political enterprise, the suggestion acquired legislative support; but, beyond that, the role of indigenous language in the nation's management continues to be undermined either by policy ambiguity or social incidentality or both.

The poor social dividend from policy investment in language has resulted in significant political disappointment complemented by elaborate appropriation of blame with peculiar logic. Stepping outside the traditional analysis of policy failure, this work investigates political perversion of the national language policy enterprise and the corresponding applicatory inefficiency from the center of intersection between two prevailing parameters: Management bureaucratization (a condition of functionalist political determinism via efficient rather than authentic strategy) and social instrumentalization (public management of policy options through a two-way channel of (1) group and (2) utility). Where the two parameters converge within the Nigerian political configuration is a chaotic

<sup>2</sup>Historically prominent national affirmation legislated through the 1979 federal constitution and utilized as the parameter for resource allocation; see Ekeh and Osaghae 1989:19–44.

social buffer where mainstream response to language assumes patterns autonomous of government language policy goals. In essence, this work is an attempt to deconstruct within the Nigerian language management paradigm certain functional aggregates that remain fundamental to the bifurcated relation between two forms of logic: political and sociolinguistic. Simply, the conceptual tenet is that, in as much as certain social configurations persist with a degree of political potency in Nigeria, language policy remains within a peculiar paradox with strong capacity to sustain firm dialectical relation to public concerns.

## 1. POLICY: DESIGN AND MANIFEST: BASIC PLATFORM

Why language planning through political policy has had serious difficulty graduating from enactment and rhetoric to action or implementation has, to some, been frustrating, and to others, baffling. The 'causality search' for rationale regarding transparent discord between policy prescription and public subscription to policy, each manifesting autonomous evolution in the country's political management, has attracted divergent perspectives anchored in assumptions and hypotheses often juxtaposed only to create conceptual fluidity. Indeed, a major task in the present endeavor is to establish a frame of causal convergence, highlighted by a matrix of factors that account for the state of apprehension and ambivalence in public relation to management policies. The questions to answer are essentially: why has language failed in its desired assignment as the symbol of national unity in Nigeria? Why is it an effective tool of social divide in the country? Who, in relative terms, are on the other side of the existing social divide? Who are the excluded, sociopolitically or otherwise? Who/what generates and sustains the exclusion? At this point, clarification of certain important conceptual parameters, with indulgence in basic analytical mapping, is in order.

The first is the separation of the terms INTEGRATION and UNITY into distinct "socio-conceptual" fields where one is basically geopolitical, institutional, constitutional, bureaucratic, etc. and the other, mainly attitudinal, cultural, psychological, etc. Nigeria, for that matter, was a product of an imperial orchestrated marriage of convenience between two main "ideo-political incompatibles" (Afigbo 1989:9), guided into tripartite federalism (Ayida 1990) with ambiguous character, and thus a chaotic existence. The two were so thoroughly and effectively divided that "[they] were divergently and almost irreconcilably oriented: the one looking intently to the Middle East and illustrious past and the other to the West and a glorious future" (Awolowo 1968:72). Yet, politically, the two were integrated hence encouraging the elements of the pagan, unruly, materialistic South and those of the feudal, ignorant, neo-colonial North (Nnoli 1980) to converge in the economically attractive center. Albeit, the nation remains disunited, caught readily in a continuous political storm (Onuaguluchi 1990) as the forces of its past and the pressure of its future converge on its present existence, fragile and ideologically disoriented.

The second deals with group allocation of integration and unity into distinctive functional anchorages where they are arbitrated virtually autonomously by different sets of conditions. While integration may be settled through pragmatic, benefit-driven input, unity or lack thereof is not so readily mediated given its subtle resource in items of ideology and aggregates of group agenda. Conditions of unity in a multifaceted situation such as Nigeria's tilt very heavily in favor of the subjective, affective-based group psychology than anything else. Within the national integration, therefore, unity may be accommodated in the event of absolute re-orientation of a divided attitudinal configuration towards social convergence devoid of demagogic disposition or political arbitrariness (Osaji 1979).

The third builds on the government strategy that introduces language policy as the aggregate of SOCIAL DETENTE between equity and unity. The strategy verges on two types of social politics: MICRO and MACRO which in the Nigerian management terrain may not

be complementary in absolute terms. Micropolitics is a function of multidimensional social intercourse involving collectivities as communal entities engaging in group-based management of their individual collective well-being specifically in consonance with their distinctive sociocultural characters and the supra-structural management properties that relate them to the larger social setting. Within this conceptual frame, the mode of social accommodation, quality of group concession, parameters of political access, and character of culturo-linguistic awareness constitute few of the attitude-based aggregates that determine collective overture and response to the national sociopolitical agenda. Directly fused into this frame on a higher stratum is macropolitics which, in Nigeria, is essentially the government management engineering and programming at various administrative-cum-bureaucratic institutions responding somewhat to federal character as a strategic condition of linkage with micropolitics. In the planning of a national language in response to equity and unity, underlined by the two forms of politics, lies the requirement of absolute balance between two social modes in no particular working order: ELECTION and SELECTION. Collectively, a group in micropolitical manifest with the corresponding social attitude may elect to employ a language as a marker of social equity, regardless of government language selection for the sake of national unity. That the government selected three majority languages, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, for national use does not automatically guarantee wholesale usage nationally, or even among the native speakers of these languages. What language individuals or groups elect to use in varying circumstances rests on several variables many of which duly preserve their political arbitration as well as their legislative immunity.

The fourth involves policy recycling and its attendant contradictions. The reluctance of the central government to break free of the ambiguities of its past while it desires radical, innovative political evolution, has only bolstered inconsistency in its present agenda. What mirrors this imperative, more than anything else, is the national constitution. The need to engage social management efficiency<sup>3</sup> and national authenticity with equal rigor and commitment has situated the country, particularly in the area of language management, in a functional limbo sustained by ambiguity and uncertainty (Bamgbose 1991). In an attempt to isolate suspicion from linguistic infusion into the equity-unity frame, the government legislated language to function in a hierarchical structure that is domain-oriented. The association of English, the Wazobia<sup>4</sup> triad (Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo), and other languages with different domains under varying conditions reestablishes verbatim the historic language policy recommendation in the Phelps-Stokes<sup>5</sup> Report (1922). The fact that the political platforms and epochs in which the two provisions are accommodated (the present being equity-unity oriented and the past, divide-and-rule centered) not only, among other things, condones functional contradictions but also creates a peculiar policy dialectic as well.

Nonetheless, clearly indicated in the past-present relationship, as the country politically reconfigures its existence is the significance of language role. This being the case, why has the linguistic achievement been so limited especially in fostering equity in national sociopolitical management? Why has it been so difficult to tap, in a symbolic way, into the nation's consciousness via unique indigenous language (Ikara 1987)? And, why is language fast becoming a liability rather than an asset? Answers to these questions and

<sup>3</sup>Condition determined on Fishman's 1971 conceptual distinction between two politically-dictated policy modalities: nationist (efficiency) and nationalist.

<sup>4</sup>A linguistic coinage applied in reference to the three majority languages. The term derives structurally from three free morphemes: *wa*, *zo*, and *bia*, respectively, from Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo all referring to 'come' in English.

<sup>5</sup>The African Education Commission set up as the initiative of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society to make thorough determination of educational needs and resources available to Africans in the West, South, and Equatorial Regions; see Lewis 1962.

many more derive, with greater plausibility, from the context where language features most prominently.

## 2. CLASS, POWER, AND POLITICS

Consistent in Nigeria with a certain degree of peculiarity is an institutionalized praxis where power and authority, i.e., capacity to control and the right to do so (Chazan, et. al. 1992) are neither legitimized by the collective political acumen of the rulership nor sanctioned within the realms of public consensus. Involved are dysfunctional social management paradigms recycled ever so readily to render a deficit political culture where power and the institutions that support it are conceived under divergent parameters of right, privilege, and deprivation. More often than not, political fair play in an intergroup dispensation is assumed in a zero-sum, 'winners-take-all' equation, a condition where losing becomes a collective participatory disability and a convenient rationale exclusive to parochial engagement of sociopolitical ostracism. In the game of power versus the people's rights, government versus social dialogue, the elite versus the masses, the losers are unambiguously, the latter in each case. With it emerged a disturbing reality to which arbitrariness in class structure of the sort observed by Newsum (1990) are afforded. In ways that render the social middle economically insignificant, classes have become polarized between those in the upper social echelon (i.e., government bureaucrats, top military officers, financiers, contractors, etc.) and those at its lower stratum (farmers, artisans, wage earners, traders, teachers, etc.). Complementing this rather broadly is the crude elimination of normative maxims, particularly those tied to cultural capital or education, where-with class distribution, often, is logically configured (Pandit 1988; Mba 1990).

Where access to education in Nigeria has become a political investment in the privileged rather than a recognition of homogenous national right, class strata and linguistic divide have merged creating an awkward social configuration where language evolves as a variable of social class. If national citizenship is truly a measure of participation aggregated by social status, indeed, Nigeria is a nation of two divergent groups of citizens: the elite, i.e., the endowed, economically, sociopolitically, and wielders of power who speak English; and the masses, i.e., the deprived majority, disempowered and marginalized essentially by the language in which they are largely proficient, their individual chthnolects (i.e., local languages). Yet, persistently rendering arbitrariness in the two-way class construct is CLIENTELISM (Aborisade and Mundt 1998), a mediative interest-driven mechanism in the political programming of social access and the guidelines of interclass mobility. Substituting patronage for meritocracy, the mechanism relies on political unorthodoxy in the determination of access protocol. Often in Nigeria, there are no jobs for the certificated, and where, in Ajayi's (1987:26) views, "the most affluent is the least educated, where the most venerated is the rich illiterate [and] where qualifications attract no remuneration (...)", classes in their ceiling and threshold thrive in a clumsy binary opposition rather than striving for logical configuration or, for that matter, parameters for blending. Those who wield power have, according to Oyelaran (1990) maintained, under ad hoc circumstances the devices to restrict access to mainstream participation thereby maintaining class exclusivism.

Yet, somehow, language in its "symbolic immunity" and equalizing role is expected to mobilize collectively the dimorphous castes of the elite and the masses. The former designs the policies, which in the case of language recognizes English in an official role and the three majority languages in pseudo-official roles blending in essence the need for efficiency with the drive for national authenticity. The latter, however, respond to policies in consonance with the character of its social endowment or need, and at times, in ways that expose the superfluity of the wholesome outlook of the elitist caste. Given that the major

feature of the lower class is that members are mostly fluent in their indigenous languages (Newsom 1990), between them and the English-speaking upper class, language as a social aggregate exhibits a spectrum of functions and statuses that determine their working attitude towards national policy brokered by the upper class members. Major categories in the status catalog include: (i) **AUTONOMOUS STATUS** under which no language, from the vantage of individual collectivities, is acknowledged to be naturally or independently inferior to another. To each ethnic sub-system, its language is of equal status with any other.

Where one language is chosen for certain functions over several with limited concessions (Demos 1991), the effect on those groups whose languages are underrepresented is not only social but psychological as well (Wardhaugh 1989). (ii) **DERIVED STATUS** largely attributed to the user's power (Liebersohn 1981); in other words, language has no (autonomous) power, but people who speak the language do. Accepting an outgroup language therefore translates as abdication of power to the group whose language is adopted. (iii) **POLITICAL STATUS**, a condition that affirms that no language in a multilingual setting is politically neutral (Nida and Wunderly 1971; Emenanjo 1988). Associated with each language therefore is a political agenda of the group whose culture the language is a part. (iv) **CONTROLLED-MANIPULATED STATUS** which makes language status a question of choice through political interventionism (Paden 1968). The political determination of Hausa in lingua franca role in the North was a choice on behalf of the caliphate conservative agenda. (v) **DOMAINAL (RELATIVE) STATUS** which entails the involvement of a language into superior social cadre due to functional domains associated with it, a condition often accompanied by prestige (Bamgbose 1991). Social domains where languages function are, by their very character, largely hierarchical and hence afford languages unequal statuses.

Essentially, if the conditions in the aforementioned status catalog are valid, group (micro)politics vis-à-vis language policy is automatically accorded avenues for vitalization. In the light of (i), Olagoke (1982:200) noted that "there is no linguistic group in the country, however minor, that would like to see any language prevail other than its own, and failing that, they will not allow any other to take its place." Group attitude towards its language and towards those of the other groups often reflects the prevailing intergroup politics at macrolevel. As a result of what Young (1979:167) describes as "perceived preponderance of particular groups in the most advantageous occupational roles" language, if selected and promoted politically, is viewed as an extension of social privilege for such groups. Under item (ii), Hausa, the language of the politically dominant group (Hausa-Fulani), has been resisted less on the account of functional quality (Ikara 1987; Brann 1989) than its association with power brokers. And knowing that language is not immune to mainstream politics (iii), the perception, in Allan's (1978:398) observation is that "a group whose language is dominant will typically be dominant politically, and/or socially, economically and culturally and certainly psychologically, that is, they will tend to feel themselves dominant..." In Nigeria, this has kept alive the "traditional antagonism" between the Hausa-Fulani alliance in power until very recently, and the other majority groups, Igbo and Yoruba in the political periphery. Moreover, the political agenda to promote the nation's three majority languages has not only been perceived as discriminatory vis-à-vis the minority groups, but has also been accommodated with mixed commitment by the majority groups who, in the light of unilingualism as the ultimate political goal for the country, fear that only one of their languages may be slated for national language role.

The last two items (iv and v) are interwoven more closely particularly in the context of class disparity. Through subscription to efficiency approach rather than nationalist pressure, the nation's policy assigns superior functional domains to English, granting it access to government management/documentation, judiciary, education, armed forces,

industry, banking, and everything else. To make the policy more inclusive, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba are identified as language options to be used officially and also taught in schools. However, where the elitist caste governs in English (Newsom 1990), delivers justice, constitution, and policy in it (Ansre 1976; Mazrui and Mazrui 1998), attains status and privilege by it (Bamgbose 1991), obtains education in it (Etim 1985), and accesses opportunity through it, attempts to promote mother tongue (MT) usage particularly in the school system has largely been perceived with suspicion, a political ploy to consolidate social class and group exclusion. That the power elite has not led through example provides appropriate and logical anchorage for this rationale and definitely other social ramifications. The country in its social policy continues to struggle with deficit political culture based in its own history and the ideological choices contemplated in its institutional trajectory.

### 3. PREDICATES OF SOCIAL PROGRAMMING

#### 3.1 AGENDAS IN CONFLICT

Arguably, what really bolsters public apathy toward elitist policy strategies, often a mere reproductive process, is not solely the contradictions that they in their social manifestations espouse, but the fact that they are products of the prevailing order, a social package subjected to the domineering nuances of capricious political programming. Language policy remains an agglomerate of political engineering of conditions designed to manage and streamline social behaviors of the citizenry through a vehicular means that is goal driven, i.e., the nation's unity. Supposedly, the implementation relies on the apparatus of government at suprastructural level and in its various institutional forms, charged with the task of achieving equilibrium at substructural level with divergent micropolitics. Consistently, however, this task has run amok, disoriented vis-à-vis its objective not so much for the arbitrariness or the ambiguities it embeds, but for the character of the source whence it emanates.

Within the national management frame, a state of perpetual imbalance exists due to the functionalist custom of participatory privileging. The brokerage of political programming has, as matter of tradition, been a minority affair managed by a class of elite. Drawn almost exclusively from the preponderance groups, the three-way antagonism that this class customarily manifests becomes a conditioned avenue for the demographic minority to engage in social appropriation of its "cultural entrepreneurship" (Young 1979). Elements of this condition have been employed pervasively and in ways that privilege legacy over contemporary logic. With inequity embedded in the programming scenario, imbalance persists on several social fronts: access to means of production, political participation, empowerment through education, infrastructural provisions, and the like. Inevitably, group disaffection is encouraged on the two complementary political levels: macro and micro often maximized through consistent government accommodation of recyclage of policy failure. In the case of the nation's languages as programming tools, three main goals were intended: broad social homogenization, equal group mobilization, and sustained national authenticity, all of which are dialectically complemented by public response. The Nigerian language policy was legislated using primarily numeric variables which indeed favor the groups that constitute the power elite.

More significantly, the apparatus and the mechanism of access to the capital provision, i.e., the acquisition process, are anchored in a singular institution: education controlled by the same group. To harness their traditional privilege with linguistic desire, their languages—Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba—are in Brann's (1989:50) words, "enshrined

in the constitution as 'major' and probably, soon as 'national' languages." Political approach to language and the social status attributed to it through the functions assigned, attest principally to institutional recognition of two linguistic classes, majority and minority, in a hierarchical social order in the country. Minority outcry was triggered on the impending linguistic assimilation and social exclusion, a situation that has forced a political afterthought culminating in the extension of functional recognition, at national level, to nine other languages tagged "network languages". Be that as it may, the linguistic programming, on the surface, appears candid given its goal, i.e., eventual unilingualism in the country. But, in its congenital character, particularly as it pertains to the numeric indices of its derivation (table 1), intricate relational conditions are manifested with a strong capacity to generate significant social ramifications guided by discord.

Table 1. Nigeria: Network languages by population (in descending order)

Language	Class												Total 12
	Major			Minor									
	Hausa	Yoruba	Igbo	Fulfulde	Kanuri	Ibibio	Tiv	Izon	Edo	Nupe	Urhobo	Igala	
<i>N</i> - s/1000	23233	22571	18434	9538	4498	3909	2779	2171	1904	1314	1274	1660	92875
<i>N</i> (s) - %	22.0	21.4	17.5	9.1	4.3	3.8	2.6	2.1	1.8	1.3	1.2	1.1	88.1
<i>N</i> (m) - %	78.0	78.6	82.5	90.9	95.7	96.2	97.4	97.9	98.2	98.7	98.8	98.9	11.9
<i>r</i> - %	4	4	5	10	22	25	37	48	54	79	82	90	7
<i>C</i> (t) - %	60.9			27.2									88.1

Statistical population projection for 1986: 105,400,000. Source: (1) Jibril (1990:111-117), originally in (2) Ekanem (1972). A higher projection than 95-100 million projected in (i) Bureau of the Census (1986) and World Population Census Profile (1985), US Department of Commerce; and (ii) Economic Commission for Africa (1987), all cited in Ottong (1987:301). The official Nigeria population (1991) is 88,514,501.

To the extent that the twelve officially recognized languages are statistically configured the way they are, what language legislation institutes essentially are avenues for intergroup conflict and exclusion explored sociopolitically under multiple interlocking conditions: (i) DOMINANCE CONDITION with population percentage range between 17.5 and 22.0 (*N*(s)-%), the three majority languages are numerically major, but none is relatively dominant, a condition that fosters competition rather than functional accommodation amongst them; (ii) ACQUISITION CONDITION given the condition hitherto, promoting the learning of any of the major languages requires almost the same amount of effort, and possibly, cost. The percentage ratios (*r*-%) of non-speakers of these languages only ranges between 4 and 5 per cent compared, for instance, to those between 70 and 80 per cent associated with three minority languages, Nupe, Urhobo, and Igala; (iii) TERRITORIALITY CONDITION linguistic class (*C*(t)-%: major or minor) notwithstanding, none of the languages boasts of even-distribution nationwide; most maintain strict regional boundaries beyond which they are alien; Hausa is spoken in the North as Igbo and Yoruba are spoken, respectively, in the East and West; (iv) LITERACY CONDITION widespread illiteracy, over 40.0 per cent in the country, according to World Bank (1998/99:10) data, restricts formal contact and material circulation in outgroup languages; (v) ATTITUDINAL CONDITION historical as it is psychological where rejection of past political domination through linguistic assimilation converge with the contemporary affirmation of group identity through federal character provisions in the national constitution to encourage intergroup alienation; and lastly, (vi) UTILITY CONDITION tied to different functional provisions for languages certified by policy.

If at the social benefit apex is English, the language of access to employment, education, government, law, and the like, its mastery renders redundant the need for other languages as means of social participation. Indeed, what the Nigerian language policy has so far engendered is a firm establishment of social divide and linguistic frontiers designed to exclude rather than to accommodate. Together, the conditions that ensue from politically formulated policy only sustain a fragile social frame on the national level where intergroup

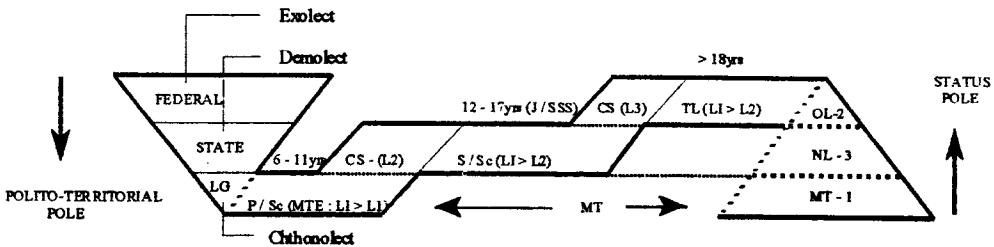
convergence by way of the official language English, and the selected indigenous languages is registered only minimally. Essentially, policy engineering in the country has produced social paradox, a condition of sectarianism to which every group maintains firm subscription. Attempts to establish redressive modalities has for some time been initiated, prompting the introduction of novel strategies through the Political Bureau Blueprint<sup>6</sup> on national languages (1979), the Revised national Policy on Education (1981), and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, NERDC (1988). The agenda is to eliminate conditions that treat language as an esoteric pursuit to be replaced by those that rate it as both an educational and social vehicle.

For this agenda, the working symbiosis between language acquisition and education curriculum was reiterated. Still, education as a planned strategy for solving the nation's language problems permitting the mutation of the complementary class divide by ethnicity, territoriality, demographics, and other social aggregates, is constructed on virtual desire rather than earnest principle. Infused prominently into the plan are operational incongruities that generate the encroachment of policy goals through illogical strategies and processes. Two basic social ideas, grass-root mobilization (equity) and national homogenization (unity) through language, determine the primary premise of the plan. Their mode of accomplishment is established in the curriculum under cascading principles affording progressive introduction of different languages at various educational levels (scheme 1).

### 3.2 CURRICULUM AS A POLICY STRATEGY

To harness the policy goal of mass mobilization and the need for smooth transition from home to school milieu (Unesco 1953; Bamgbose 1991), MT is assigned as the language of instruction (LI) in the primary school (P/Sc). Along, in this level, a second language (L2) normally English is to be studied as a classroom subject (CS). This prepares the learners for eventual application of the language as LI in the secondary school (S/C) now categorized as junior secondary (JS) and senior secondary (SS) under the 6-3-3-4 educational arrangement. In this level as is the case in the former, a third language (L3) from the Wazobia category (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba) is slated for acquisition as a CS. And finally at tertiary level (TL), one language, usually L2 is to be used as LI and any L3 of choice, not studied earlier may be introduced, or pursued if already studied at a lower level. As a language acquisition programming aimed at accomplishing a very significant national policy, the cascading mechanism is, in its ambiguity, clumsy.

Scheme 1. Language policy: Acquisition strategy



Based on three-tier acquisition cascading within the 6-3-3-4 educational system. See Federal Government Elite Print on Education (1978:136); see also Erann (1989:383)

<sup>6</sup>See the Technical Committee Report (1988:1), the Federal Government document on the production of teachers for the three majority languages.

The three-way progressive language acquisition structure espousing Mackey's (1984:162) "partial bilingualism" at each stratum, involves dimensions of implementation threaded firmly by conditions of social exclusion. Of immediate concern are the following: (1) AWKWARD TRANSITION leading to low language proficiency. At every level of language introduction and acquisition, the standard forms of none of the languages is sufficiently mastered, negating Fasold's (1990) premise of language maintenance and performance sustenance through the standard form. MT as LI hardly develops beyond the primary school, a condition that encourages permanent reversion of its learners to the dialectical form, eventually minimizing communicative scope of the language in ways that encourage intracommunal exclusion. On the other hand, the introduction of English as LI replacing MT in the secondary school produces a weak acquisition foundation resulting in possible poor performance in the language as shown in (table 2). The pass rate in English in the three successive years examined, 1983-85, hardly rose above 40.0 per cent of those who participated in WASC and GCE - 'O' Level, the national yardstick of social adequacy.

Table 2. Secondary school language results by subjects/grades

SUBJECT	YEAR	ENTRY	TOTAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1-6	1-8	1-9	
ENGLISH	1983	NO	364725	355163	184	406	3715	4175	5850	24604	30854	51840	38835	121629	233534
		%		97.37	0.05	0.11	1.04	1.17	1.64	6.92	8.69	14.50	10.96	34.24	65.75
	1984	NO	407740	398767	514	1056	7032	6948	9336	33087	38123	64663	57793	163172	235595
		%		97.79	0.12	0.26	1.76	1.74	2.29	8.29	10.46	15.96	14.49	40.91	59.08
	1985	NO	47061	463567	27	112	1541	2046	3203	16934	22056	35234	23863	81153	382414
		%													
HAUSA	1983	NO	15193	13460	195	325	1624	805	948	2205	1862	1498	6103	9463	3997
		%		88.90	1.44	2.41	12.06	5.98	7.05	16.38	13.83	11.12	45.34	70.30	26.69
	1984	NO	23433	20536	325	483	2140	969	1308	2668	2865	2533	7893	13291	7245
		%		87.63	1.58	2.38	10.42	4.71	6.36	12.99	13.95	12.33	38.43	64.72	35.27
	1985	NO	25989	22149	325	471	2072	901	1355	2812	3353	2928	7937	14218	7931
		%		84.22	1.46	2.13	9.35	4.06	6.11	12.69	15.13	12.21	35.83	64.19	35.80
IGBO	1983	NO	41085	38698	113	186	2313	1796	2500	7050	9312	6907	13938	29177	9521
		%		94.19	0.29	0.48	5.97	4.64	6.46	18.21	21.47	17.84	36.06	75.39	24.60
	1984	NO	46373	43993	14	37	696	616	1371	4516	7876	8795	7250	23921	20072
		%		94.86	0.03	0.08	1.58	1.40	3.11	10.26	17.90	19.99	16.47	54.37	45.60
	1985	NO	48271	46077	60	160	1820	1338	2106	6169	8360	8193	11988	28506	17571
		%		95.45	0.13	0.34	3.94	2.90	5.22	13.38	18.14	17.78	25.94	61.86	38.13
YORUBA	1983	NO	70359	64478	4	37	643	828	1484	5176	12122	15572	8172	35871	28607
		%		91.64	0.00	0.05	0.99	1.28	2.30	8.02	18.80	24.15	12.67	55.63	44.16
	1984	NO	74687	68889	246	513	3404	2367	3025	8359	9547	10047	17914	37558	31381
		%		92.28	0.35	0.74	4.94	3.43	4.39	12.13	13.85	14.58	26.00	54.44	45.55
	1985	NO	103827	98581	178	565	4585	3398	4748	12966	13895	14540	26345	54870	43711
		%		94.94	0.17	0.57	4.65	3.44	4.81	13.15	14.09	14.74	26.81	55.65	44.34
EFIK	1983	NO	1904	1687	18	9	92	35	65	146	287	366	365	1018	669
		%		88.60	1.06	0.53	5.45	2.07	3.85	8.65	17.01	21.69	21.00	60.34	39.65
	1984	NO	1857	1617	1	4	22	29	29	84	175	231	159	565	1052
		%		87.07	0.06	0.24	1.36	1.70	1.17	5.19	10.82	14.28	9.83	34.94	65.05
	1985	NO	1369	1204	4	11	56	55	46	98	209	195	270	674	530
		%		87.94	0.33	0.91	4.65	4.56	3.82	8.13	17.35	16.19	22.42	55.98	44.01

Source: West Africa Examination Council, Yaba, Lagos. GCE 'O'-level examinations May/June 1983-85, Statistics results (English, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and Efik). Cited in Dada 1987:14-15.

Mass failure in English, the language of access to mainstream participation, employment, administration, education, etc. (Simpson 1978), has been a major cause of class divide between the literate and illiterate, the elite and the masses, all together marking the conditions for assessing social inclusion or exclusion. Next is (2) DIFFERENTIAL REQUIREMENT controlling choice of language pursuit. Those who study indigenous languages beyond primary school level tend to do better on the average in those languages than they do in English, the unmarked language. The pass rate, in (table 2) averages 56.5 per cent for the indigenous languages, Igbo: 63.9, Yoruba: 52.3, Efik: 43.5, and Hausa: 66.4. However, examination enrollment rate is overwhelmingly in favor of English by political design: it is a compulsory subject. The policy decision to assign the language to

official domains and its elevation to a prerequisite for participatory authentication in spite of low proficiency rate, less than 15 per cent of the overall population (Bangbose 1983:8), only compounds the class problems. High enrollment in English has done very little to improve proficiency, neither has it closed the class gap that its adoption in official role generates. In fact, the higher the enrollment in the language, the greater the failure rate hence the wider the social gap between the elite whose basic occupational status derives from the mastery of English, and the masses with marginal professional ascendancy due to lack of accreditation in the language. English, with the legislative privileges, has failed to neutralize the existing social divide; in effect, it reinforced it rather effectively. Also, there is another awkward revelation in the enrollment numbers this time involving the indigenous languages. Of the four languages documented, Hausa has been perceived as the most widely spoken language in the country, yet, in the majority language category, it attracts the lowest number of examination enrollment. What this means is that fewer people engage the language formally in a school setting where its standard form is taught and proficiency status determined. Simply, group divide and historical antagonism afford it marginal pedagogical accommodation among other majority groups that tend to register relatively higher enrollment in school.

Additionally, there is condition (3), the UNEQUAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT affording, within the existing arrangement, temporary applicatory exclusion. Mother-tongue education, in accord with the government agenda, meant linguistic liberalization, an avenue for participatory democratization (equity). However, out of 394 languages identified with the country (Hansford, et. al. 1976) only 65, i.e., 16.5 per cent have alphabets (Emenanjo 1988:12), leaving in excess of 83.5 per cent incapable of LI roles. Those groups whose languages have yet to be standardized are by default forced to acquire education under unequal terms that tend to brew discontentment rather than cooperation. Compounding the problems in significant ways is (4) TRANSITIONAL RATE registering poor interlevel mobility. Marked by a prominent index of disequilibrium, the nation's focus on education, in its current state, as the primary avenue to unilingualism can only encourage social exclusion.

With the upward trend in school enrollment, boosted 15.5 per cent following the introduction of the Universal Primary Education<sup>7</sup> (UPE; 1976) (Adesina 1981:5), government financial commitment increased accounting for 10.5–12.5 per cent of the nation's recurrent expenditure. But about 78–85 per cent of this spending was assigned to primary school education (Aigbokhan 1988:94). By government record<sup>8</sup> for various years between 1960 and 1980, the transition rates between primary to secondary school and to tertiary level have been, on the average, as low as 5–16 per cent and 3–6 per cent, respectively. Adesina's (1981) record of transition for both levels at the same period was less than 10 per cent given enrollment percentages of 90.4 in the primary level. Unesco (1983) was more optimistic with its projection of 85.7 per cent primary school enrollment with 42.6 and 9.4 per cent proceeding, respectively, to secondary and tertiary levels in 1985. But calling this projection to question is the trend in government data employed by Pandit (1988:23). Particularly significant was the overall number of enrollment, 18.7 million in 1985 which breaks down to 14.7 million in primary school, 3.8 in secondary, and less than 1.0 million in the tertiary level. In 1995, 16.1 million Nigerians between ages 6 and 12 years enrolled in primary schools nationwide. The same year, only a quarter of that number, 4.4 million, were enrolled in secondary schools, and for the tertiary level there were only 0.6 million. Aigbokhan (1988) blames this discrepancy on two factors: slower

<sup>7</sup>Program defined by educational right and obligation where all school-age children are required to enroll in government-financed (public) primary schools nationwide.

<sup>8</sup>See Aigbokhan 1988:24.

rate of expansion of postprimary institutions and finance method, i.e., over-prioritization of primary education. Where transition remains abysmally low, particularly into the educational levels where adequate language acquisition is assigned by policy design, interlingual mobility is hampered, a condition that reinforces instead of mutating the class divide. Making the acquisition pyramid much steeper than customary is the evolving shift in sectoral revenue. Oil exports that account for approximately 90 per cent of the nation's GNP (Oshikoya 1990) has procured limited revenue in recent years due to falling oil prices. As a consequence, primary school enrollment that shot up by 15.5 per cent following the UPE program at the height of the oil boom in the 1970s dropped down to a 1.9 per cent increase, and still dropping in the 1990s. Currently, the real per capita government spending on education has plummeted to all time low, only a meager 2.6 US dollars (World Bank 1998/99). Where 19.9 per cent of government expenditure was devoted to foreign-debt servicing in the 1995 national budget, only 4.7 per cent was earmarked for education.

Closely tied to the preceding condition is (5) POPULATION GROWTH rendering ineffective the existing educational programs where overstretching of the allocated resources obtains. Nigeria, by World Bank's (1988:227) assessment, remains relatively an economic giant in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, while in 1986 it accounted for 30 per cent of the continent's gross domestic product (GDP), its average annual population growth to that point, precisely between 1980 and 1986 was 3.4 per cent, although indexed at 2.7 per cent by a 1991 government census. Per the 1998/99 World Bank index, the annual population growth stands at 3.6 per cent, the GNP per capita is less than 300.00 US dollars. Crucial to this growth is the emerging population distribution. In close numeric proximity to 48.0 per cent projected for the nation's population below 15 years of age, Aina (1994:40) put the percentage for the group at 50.0 per cent, i.e., half the number of people in the country. In 1998, Nigerians who are 15 years old or younger constitute 45.6 per cent of the nation's population. With 15.5 post-UPE increase in enrollment, only 44.5 per cent school age children are adequately accommodated by school systems in most parts of the country. Diejomaoh and Anusionwu (1981) cited in Bienen (1983:89) noted a significant inadequacy in school enrollment in certain areas in the Northern section of the country. For instance, in the Northwest, a minuscule 0.45 per cent in primary and 0.34 per cent in secondary were registered from the school age pool as the area's benefits from free education in 1977/78. In the Northeast the percentages were equally small, 0.70 per cent for primary and 0.16 per cent for secondary during the same period. Poor enrollment not only affects language acquisition, but also enhances lack of parity in outgroup language diffusion, a situation with output not confined to education. It is an important condition in the molding of the next and final variable (6) LOGISTIC STATUS exposing inadequate readiness for the adopted language acquisition strategy. This was the immediate *bête noire* of language programming in education. Though a shortage of schools remains acute, lack of personnel is greater still (table 3).

Table 3. Language pedagogy: Personnel requirement

Language		Teachers - nationwide					Cost (in millions)		
Language	Number	%	Available	%	Difference	%	Year	State	Federal
	Needed								
Hausa	17991	32.6	1678	26.3	16313	33.4	I	31.68	47.62
Igbo	19328	35.0	1117	17.5	18211	37.3	II	52.27	78.41
Yoruba	17918	32.4	3588	56.2	14330	29.3	III	72.00	180.00
Total	55237	100.0	6383	11.6	48854	88.4	3	155.95	233.93

Of the total number of teachers, 55,237, currently required for the instruction of the three major languages only 6,383, i.e., 11.6 per cent is available. Each of the languages is at different levels of difficulty. However, lack of parity in enrollment in the catchment regions of these languages is another problem. Hausa, for instance, is the language with the highest number of speakers in the country (table 1) but relative to other majority languages, the least studied, at least in secondary school (table 2). This stems partly from the tradition of skepticism about non-Islamic forms of education in the Northern section where the language is dominant. A significant policy development from this concerns social fairness. With fewer students enrolled in the North (Diejomaoh and Anusionwu 1981) fewer teachers will be required in this region to promote either Igbo or Yoruba, the two other majority languages from the South. There are more teachers, 56.2 per cent, available to teach Yoruba than the numbers for the other two majority languages combined. Where school enrollment is low in the North, the traditional Hausa language catchment region, Yoruba or Igbo instruction and acquisition are minimal. Yoruba teachers are forced to seek avenues of teaching their language in the East where enrollment is high with Igbo dominance; the same scenario obtains for the Igbo teachers seeking pedagogical avenues more so in the West than in the North.

What these conditions really negate is the true spirit of political agenda built into language policy as a product of education. How does the government promote policy of uniform distribution of the three majority languages if one section of the country is, on the level of acquisition, sealed off as a result of poor enrollment? Moreover, Hausa will, by default, flourish in the South (East and West); more teachers will be required to teach the language in the light of higher enrollment. In the North, the reverse will be true; far fewer students will have the opportunity to learn the two Southern languages. Thus, it appears that the fundamentality of the equity-unity equation in policy engineering established for national management has, in more ways than one, exhibited a disjuncted mechanism between plan configuration and goal accomplishment. The idea of class divide in the country does not necessarily connote absence of political programs designed to bridge social gaps, but basically represents a clear manifestation of how those programs are configured in their questionable political character and disposed readily in their inadequate functional dispensation. Goal and result often underscored, respectively, by macropolitics and social inclinations have remained in perpetual conflict. Accentuating education in the nation's language programming is only but a part of a multilevel policy conglomerate which, in its complex anchorage in paradox harbors sociocultural retreat more so than conformity to political agendas. Yet, these are minor problems when matched with others.

#### 4. INSTRUMENTING NATIONAL FRACTURE

Core to the strategy of managing language through the curriculum are two basic guidelines: (i) to inculcate, in an educational milieu, national consciousness and the need for unity; and (ii) to establish the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and of the nation. In both instances, the focus should be common heritage and shared symbols as avenues for appreciating unifying traits. Thus, to effectively consolidate these guidelines, the government deemed it appropriate to pursue, among others, three significant policy agendas: direct strengthening of the center (power), firm establishment of periphery dependency (financial), and pacifist installation of authority under dependency criteria (political). The three converge to constitute a functionalist threshold for sustaining the goal of first, unity and second, equity; yet, like the policy in education, how these agendas interrelate in a common political arena, has been anything but harmonious.

In the attempt to finance its so-called investment in unity, the government provides a rationale for peculiar centralization of national wealth. It became the biggest shareholder, controlling over 60 per cent shares in items that account for 90 per cent of the nation's GNP (Bienen 1983; Oshikoya 1990). Bolstering this control and its attendant power, the centralist government, took over the Distributable Pool Account—the source of revenue for the periphery governments (state and local). Additionally, the federal government exclusively collects personal and corporate taxes, duties, etc. affording all in all, 90 per cent control over local revenue. The formula for revenue distribution allocates 75 per cent to federal, 22 per cent to states and 3 per cent to local governments (Graf 1988:141). If absolute financial power of the center over the periphery constitutes an avenue for preserving unity, the Nigerian model provides conditions where political stability is indeed hard to contemplate. In the group-based “winner-takes-all” political enterprise the country engages, control of the center with its attendant financial dividend attracts intergroup competition and conflict that reinforce linguistic divergence more so than otherwise. To pacify groups with poor dividend through participatory optimization, in the “spirit of equity”, the apparatus of management is reconditioned permitting regular reprogramming through state creation<sup>9</sup> and continual affirmation of federal character.

Federal character is a remedial political action that relies on the congenital national divisions: ethnicity, culture, languages, and other politically attractive social indices, e.g., demographics, history, and religion in the determination of equity and equilibrium in the management of national resources. Along with administrative adjustment that state creation entails, the federal character policy is a politically guided instrument of power decentralization as a way of promoting investment in cultural capital, particularly, education, in terms of which national values can be generated. Once again, the two policies, state creation and federal character, in their modes of social application have only optimized the hyperbole of group-pacification process. Rather than being remedial in the participatory catch-up game of certain groups, and bridging the existing sectarian gaps, they have become tools for cultural demagoguery and political parochialism wherein hard-core indigenization principles that promote outgroup exclusion are firmly nested. By creating states endowed with administrative autonomy without strong internally generated sustenance means, the government provides a paradoxical leeway for exclusion. As states consolidate their management institutions and experience through federal government handouts, a new sense of intolerance often emerges. The power and influence of the NON-INDIGENES in the judiciary, commerce, media, mass transit, etc. must be curtailed, terminated, as it were, and replaced promptly by those of the indigenes. With minimal sociocultural accommodation or blending, out-of-state groups become easy targets of participatory intolerance, and quite often, are barred from employment, 85 per cent of which is in the state civil service. Or, sometimes these groups are subjected to outright expulsion, e.g., Plateau State repatriation of Benue State elements (1981); Akwa Ibom, and Katsina, the two newly created states (1986) that saw political purging and removal of non-indigenes from the state civil service as a modality of legitimacy acquisition.

State-based protectionism is engaged under the rejection of the traditional apparatus of domination to which language is central. Instead of encouraging a majority language not native to the new states largely populated by the demographic minority, languages of the majority within these states, Edo, Tiv, Kanuri, Ibibio, Izon, etc. are at times elevated

<sup>9</sup>Strategy under political formula of equity that transforms the Nigerian political structure from a four-way administrative federalism into thirty-six states with separate but non-autonomous bureaucracies.

into a new height of competitiveness with the national majority languages. What government policies achieve in these scenarios is to provide avenues for groups to aspire to cultural autonomy where language inevitably becomes a tool for exclusive group identity given the social benefit such an approach attracts. Conscious restriction of diffusion of the languages non-native to the individual states (table 4) is pervasive. Through indigenization principles, states have fortified their administrative frontier, discouraging interstate linguistic cross-over in the process. Out of 31 states, before the number rose to 36 in 1996, 6 do not accommodate any of the three majority languages as choralects, 11 only partially.

Table 4. Brann's typology of functional diffusion (networks languages)

Language range	Category	Linguistic area (selected)											
		Abuja	Bauchi	Borno	Bendel	Imo	Kano	Lagos	Oyo	Plateau	Rivers	Sokoto	Nigeria
a. spoken over an entire area or community	panlect	0	1	0	0	(3)1	(1)1	(2)1	(2)1	0	0	(1)2	0
b. spoken over a larger part of the area or community	macrolect	(1)1	1	(1)2	0	0	0	1	0	(1)1	1	0	(12)3
c. spoken equally with other language(s) in the area/community	isolect	(3)2	0	0	(2)5	0	0	0	0	2	(3)1	0	9
d. spoken by a smaller part of that area or comm.	microlect	9	1	1	(1)1	0	2	(13)2	(1)1	(3)2	(2)1	0	0
e. spoken locally; language of the soil	chthanolect	(12)3	(1)3	(1)3	(12)6	(3)1	(1)3	(23)4	(2)2	(12)6	(2)3	(1)2	(12)3
f. spoken over a region/state; language of the region	choralect	0	(1)1	0	0	(3)1	(1)3	(2)1	(2)1	0	0	(1)1	0
g. spoken country-wide; language of the people	demolect	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m	(3)m
h. absent in one of the communities in language area; majority languages	absentive-variable	0	(23)9	(23)9	6	(12)11	(23)9	8	3(10)	6	(1)9	(23)10	0
		Hau	Hau	Kan	Edo	Igb	Hau	Yor	Yor	Hau	Izo	Hau	H/U/Y
		Igb	Ful	Hau	Igb		Ful		Tiv	Igb	Ful	Ful	N/A

Source: Brann (1989:372-385). 3m = Three majority languages without reference to order of demographic significance.

Brann (1989:376) noted the different levels of linguistic spread both within the state and throughout the federation; clearly showcased was an elaborate specimen of linguistic "Swiss cheese" (table 4). That the nation's chosen languages are not only restricted in function, but also limited in their spread basically balkanizes the country into territorial pockets distinguished essentially by language. Very significant is the fact that less than 15 per cent of the 394 languages in the country maintain a spread of 0.1-9.9 per cent beyond their core territories. In Abuja, Igbo (3) and Yoruba (2) are both isolects where Hausa (1) is a macrolect. As the federal capital, it boasts of no dominant panlect per Brann's definition. The three majority languages are spoken nationwide (demolects), but as microlect in most regions outside their core territories. More significant is the overall exclusion of the nation's primary languages (the ones employed in the local media, or the so-called 9 network languages) from transcultural functions. With the exception of Abuja, all the states maintain no social accommodation for at least 50 per cent of those languages. They are restricted conspicuously to the sociocultural and territorial contexts whereof they are a part. Some of them, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, Izo, in their native states, remain major languages, i.e., macrolects with great capacity for competitiveness with the nation's three majority languages. Linguistically homogenous states, Imo, Anambra, or those that are partially homogenous, Sokoto, Bauchi, Oyo, exclude more than 80 per cent of the out-of-state languages, including those in the Wazobia group. Why most of the exclusionary conditions exist may be associated largely with certain congenital attributes, but how they become instrumented may not. Often they reflect policies in a much larger context.

### 5. SOCIAL DIVIDE: VARIABLES IN SYNTHESIS

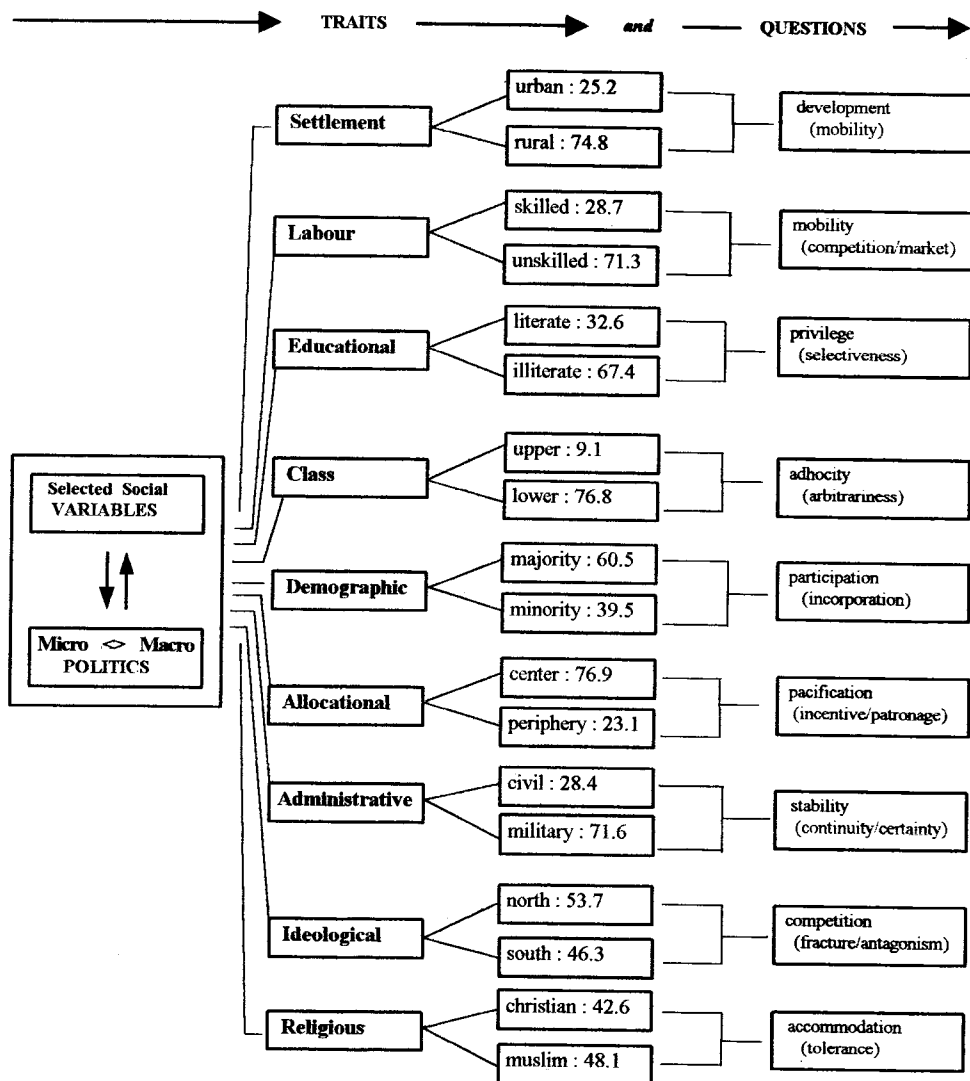
For the nation's government to politically situate itself where it can better articulate programs, particularly those pertaining to language designed to weave the existing individual micropolitics together in unity, a far-reaching adjustment of the modality of social engineering ought be engaged with a radical departure from the traditional policy nuances. The basic leitmotifs of the nation's difficulty in minimizing division-centered interference with mainstream management are the unwavering political subscription to unbalanced planning. Crudely juxtaposed are programs with unification nexus on the one hand, and those with divisive potency on the other. If, for the sake of analysis, the existing national structure is deconstructed into certain basic social aggregates, in complementary terms (scheme 1), revealed unambiguously is a working frame with parameters that encourage social management fracture rather than cohesion. Moreover, where language is engaged to mentor functional porousness and transparency of the distinctive social sectors, inevitably generated are certain logical questions. Adebuseye (1994) noted that, as early as 1965, 90 per cent of Nigeria's total investment were located in metropolitan areas. Rural-urban imbalances have not in Bienen's (1983:90) view been rigorously assaulted with 80 per cent of government total planned investment in the 1980s indexed in the urban areas. Yet, between 70 and 80 per cent of the nation's population are rural dwellers (Mensah and Ojowu 1989:9; Olanrewaju 1992:2). About 70 per cent of this population (Adebuseye 1994:115) engage in subsistence agriculture, a land-based enterprise requiring limited mobility hence restricted intergroup contact logically tempered by linguistic communalization.

How can class or group divide be ultimately neutralized via political approach, if the parameters that sustain it are those that derive directly from government policies? In terms of amenities: schools, job opportunity, parapublic services—media, health, and social infrastructure in general—the ratio is 12:1 in favor of the urban areas. Limitation of educational facilities where the majority of the nation's population reside, does not only translate into a high level of unskilled labor at 71.3 per cent nationally or illiteracy that stands at 67.4 per cent, but also means deprivation of the apparatus of linguistic programming to the larger portion of citizens. Education, a resource for social mobility (Mabogunje 1978; Seibel, et. al. 1988) being underdeveloped hampers intergroup alliance, again making linguistic consensus a remote option. Educational liberalism has traditionally been viewed by government as too costly, and a situation likely to benefit certain groups more than others, promoting paradoxically group-based participatory hierarchy instead of equity. Yet, making educational participation selective, by social status only, undermines the social porousness that government seeks to achieve with language as a product of the educational system itself. Where this system is still driven by either class or group politics that affords the exclusion of the majority of the nation's population, language by default remains a primary factor of social fracture. What unequal investments breed, particularly in education (involving territories and groups), is inequity both in participation and in development. Indeed, through policy design, Nigeria continues to exhibit difficulty with effective disengagement from divisive programming. It remains, as noted earlier, a nation with two remotely complementary demographic sectors in diametrical evolutionary trajectories: the endowed (socially empowered) and the under-endowed (socially deprived).

Class distribution derives guidance not only from faulty government policies but also from arbitrary social aggregates which in basic manifestations are the direct output of ad hoc political culture, a seemingly constant trait of the country since independence. Afforded, compliment of this culture, is hegemonic enterprise with the imprint of a group-driven agenda for financial and political centralism (Graf 1988) as a

condition of social control and power monopoly. With it, the periphery is strategically confined to perpetual dependency and granted survival mainly through patronage-driven sociopolitical incentives. Since patronage entails differential accommodation of the periphery as a measure of degree of cooperation it renders to the center, invariably, language in its ethnocultural bondage and territorialization loses its political immunity. In effect, it emerges as the primary tool of micropolitics oriented by group need and participatory prerequisite rather than by national agenda. Again, providing a convenient political context and institutional umbrella for this situation are the policies embedded in state creation and affirmative programs that encourage indigenization principles antithetical to libertarian social mobility. The government's desire for social homogenization via language as the aggregate of national oneness is consistently undermined by these bridge-breaking principles that government policies in awkward irony encourage.

Scheme 2. Perspectives on Nigeria's structural divide



Incidentally, all the states so far created in the country were established under various military administrations almost as a stamp of their political validation and an effective apparatus for legitimacy acquisition. Yet, consistently suspended in the continual administrative adjustment under political perversion and power monopoly by the military for 71.6 per cent of the nation's years of autonomous existence, is the constitution that authenticates this programming. Raised is the question of how linguistic homogenization could be achieved if the instrument that legitimize its materialization is under persistent suspension. Military interventionism has not only created continual structural disruption of intrastate political coalition but also sustained an inevitable discontinuity of language programming initiated by the states. Designed originally as a mechanism for minority political participation, an attempt to nullify the traditional dominance of the majority in national polity, it has, in its social paradox, evolved into a pacification strategy establishing yet another avenue for creating fracture in both social engineering and intergroup linguistic accommodation. With the minority population at 39.5 per cent (Ayida 1990; Jibril 1990), the political goal has been to construct avenues wherewith, by way of legislated social (affirmative) concessions, this group, in its divergent political agendas, may compete sufficiently and eventually catch up with the majority in development.

There is a major problem, however, from a policy perspective. The interpretation of language policy by different cultural groups that constitute the minority is defined by their individual concerns on benefit and linguistic marginality conditions to which they are susceptible (Arasanyin 1996). Objectively, no Nigerian majority language may emerge as a national lingua franca without the minority group alliance tilting the demographic and territorial balance. Differential incorporation of their lot, as a social class in policy matters, seems to mold their overwhelming preference for English, the language that procures for them greater access to the mainstream (Etim 1985; Adegbija 1992; Arasanyin 1998). Their basic rationale is, why should they learn three majority languages for functions that can, sufficiently and effectively, be performed by one—English. But what the majority-controlled central government could hardly achieve via social cooperation and political goodwill, i.e., wholesale minority adoption of majority languages, became a management preoccupation it deemed inevitable to legislate. By the same token, making language policy a matter of law rather than choice has procured no automatic positive response from the minority groups whose contributions were negligible in the overall policy brokerage. Infused into the nation's evolutionary political logic was the unequivocal minority dissociation with what it perceived as linguistic imposition reminiscent of imperial policy strategy and management order.

Chief Enahoro, a minority leader of the only post-independence administrative region established in the federation, sounded the initial warning early,<sup>10</sup> bluntly rejecting what he regarded as linguistic hegemony. His basic concern was the unwarranted linguistic assimilation of his group and his question was: "How can they [the majority], because the British brought us together, wish to impose their languages on us?" He, on behalf of his group, went on to assert that: "We have not fought the imperialist in order to establish a new imperialism in the country." To Balewa,<sup>11</sup> the nation's only prime minister, and of the majority stock, Enahoro's remark is, in retrospect, valid only as a product of historical perversion, an unfortunate commentary on an unfulfilled ideological destiny of the Northern oligarchy. Because, in his seemingly preemptive view, if the British had left Nigeria earlier, the Northern people with the Jihad and Hausa language "would [have] continue[d]"

<sup>10</sup>Reaction to the language bill introduced in the national parliament that would have made Hausa Nigeria's lingua franca one year into the nation's independence, 1961. Cited in Aborisade and Mundt 1998:86.

<sup>11</sup>Excerpt from the speech at the Nigerian Legislative Council, p. 212, 24 March, 1947. Cited in Nnoli 1980:231.

their interrupted conquest to the sea." Individually, these leaders expressed sentiments that were not bound solely by aggregates of demography or even language, but those that extend to ideology and religion as parameters of division between the two former protectorates, North and South. Traditionally, these parameters have been linked rather broadly by variables of history with the tendency to fuel divergent political agendas. Poor cross-regional political interpermeation has guided the nation's micropolitics with the potency that reduce national survival to fragile ideological compromise. The multidimensional social rift with politically reinforced frontier, definitely a far-cry from the finite national unity sought through language and other social apparatuses, has established communal xenophobia and group-oriented marginalization syndrome that only afford the public a dysfunctional psychological filter through which to relate to social programming that language underscores.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Amidst truncated political preoccupation with language as a vehicular apparatus of social reinvention in Nigeria, entrenched are management techniques providing a somewhat sterile balance between inefficient past and lack of readiness for future demands. Communal compartments which have sustained, and even strengthened themselves through the affirmative, and other pacifist agencies have established a pleasant refuge for group retreat and eventual mobilization for dissonant social demands. Each compartment is not only unique in its demographic content and form, but also in the way it is articulated and anchored in the macropolitical structures. Waves of reform have emerged in Nigeria, but have been consistently submerged by the tide of traditional programming wherein new policy choices can hardly be envisaged. Currently surviving is a land where "there is perpetual movement and yet no motion, continuous change and yet no continuity. The land...has all sorts of directorates yet there is no direction in the horizon" (Emenanjo 1988:16). Attempts to centralize language officially within a reconstructive enterprise in a nation which, in Mackey's (1975) estimation, has "representatives of all known African language families" have attracted all forms of difficulty, some historical others contemporary.

Why less than adequate dividend has been accrued is not so much the congenital diversity of the languages or their individual social properties, but the policy engineering that defines the character of the social terrain where they, as programming mechanisms, apply. Conditions of politically-dictated language policy production err on three significant levels: DEFINITIONAL, particularly in their subscription to openendedness and ambiguity (Bamgbose 1991); SYNTHETIC, in relation to obsessive focus on design synchronicity involving awkward melange of discordant policies (Arasanyin 1996); and LOGISTICS, that combine lack of readiness and impatience on the part of policy brokers in a perverted pursuit of policy agenda (Elugbe 1990). Firmly embedded in these levels are, among others, five distinct factors on the basis of which exclusionary measures as class conditions are publicly engaged: (i) the shifting emphasis from regional linguistic zoning to demographic criteria using relative numeration; (ii) maintenance of the traditional (even colonial) hierarchy in the functional distribution of languages; (iii) language clustering or wedging where several languages are assigned identical domains in the same functional stratum; (iv) pacifist technique as a method of closing participatory gaps under agencies of indigeneity-affirmative action and state creation; and (v) configurational artificiality where regional population structures are constantly revised owing to continuous administrative adjustment (state and local).

Realizing that language can hardly be separated from the existing distribution of groups and classes as utility factors in the nation's social programming, the policy makers

have drifted into an uneasy political ambivalence. In their resignation to policy deficiency, at least per recognition of the government-sponsored language commission,<sup>12</sup> the social engineers, particularly those in academe, contemplate alternative avenues. To mediate the current social management stalemate and avoid the linguistic anomie that looms, advocated, against the nationalist pressure against "denaturalization" of English in the country, is a pragmatically-guided demand for "decolonization" and prompt domestication of the language (Okafo 1985; Emenanjo 1988). Each major group sector, with its centrifugal index: the hegemonic, assimilative Hausa, the territorially-confined Igbo, the amorphous Yoruba, and the identity-seeking minority, all should be able to converge in a culturally neutral language, a tool for bridging the gaps among indigenous cultures at equal disadvantage. While this sounds practical and candid, really, wholesale linguistic homogenization hardly constitutes an earnest intergroup option essentially where politically-sponsored management engineering is conspicuously devoid of adhesive sociocultural mechanism.

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<sup>12</sup>Based on the *Report of the Technical Committee on the Production of Teachers for the Three Major Nigerian Languages*. Vol 1, Main report. 1988.

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