

LINGUISTICS, LANGUAGE OF THE NATION

BY

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Preamble

The institution of inaugural lectures requires every professor to give, at some time, a formal lecture in which he is expected to tell the world what he professes. That, he is often expected to do in a language that is not suffused with professional jargons or esoteric registers. In other words, he is expected to play the specialist who is not opaque and the generalist who is not patronizing. Some professors have given theirs after more than one decade of their elevation, some on the eve of their disengagement from active and combative academics and some others in the morning of creation day. We belong to the last group as we are giving ours at the fourth hour of creation day and one decade after our *Elements of Modern Igbo Grammar*.

A Magnificat

An inaugural lecture, no matter the theme or the timing is, in our opinion, the outing by a new masquerade. It is a solo performance in which the masquerade rips off its mask, speaks in person, without its usual weird guttural voice, looks people straight in the face while the people see its eyeballs. In preparation for our own outing we have familiarized ourselves with the styles of our predecessors, both here and elsewhere. And our finding is that in all cases the style is invariably the man. So if our own style helps to validate Buffon's tested maxim, you can then understand. Part of our own style is that we would preface our lecture with a magnificat in praise and in recognition of, before your very ears, some people without whom this outing would never have been. We start with our father-in-law, late Mr Afagwu Louis Ogbolu, and his wife, and our eldest sister, Ogbeianu Angelina Emenanjo. They took us away from our parents at the age of five and took very good care of us. Without them we would not have been to school at the time we did.

Next, is Ambassador Chinweuba Cyril Uchuuno, now retired, but settled at Ibusa. He not only made it possible for us to go to secondary school, but also taught and

exposed us to Latin and English, two languages which have turned out to be indispensable in our career as a linguist. Next, are all our teachers. We still remember most of them by name and, with nostalgia. But we cannot mention all of them. Those we would like to mention are the ones who played catalytic roles in our conversion from English literary studies to African linguistic studies. These constitute a team, perhaps, the best and most formidable team that Nigeria's oldest University institution and, in fact, any Nigerian University has ever had in linguistics: Professor Carl Hoffmann, Oladele Awobuluyi, Ayo Bamgbose, 'the father of Nigerian linguistics' and Kay, R.M. Williamson 'the mother of Nigerian linguistics'. Of all these notables we shall single out for special mention Professor Kay, R. M. Williamson. She taught us, as a junior fellow, the rudiments of linguistics. Under her we learnt the rudiments of Igbo. This was some two decades ago. And she supervised all our postgraduate studies. It is a tribute to the largeness of heart of this self-effacing but meticulous and effective woman that she literally invited us to vie for another chair which she created in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages of this University – a department which, with justification, she continues to nurse as her baby. And so today our chair is like her own but with the difference that we always insist in keeping it behind, not beside hers.

Of course, all married people who have succeeded in that difficult venture would be surprised if we do not recognize the inimitable contributions of our Oliaku and Odoziaku Nwaamaka Florence Nwulia, to our present status. We got married on the eve of our induction into linguistics. She now knows us like she does the back of her hand. And understands not only our usual male pranks but also our beat as the informal and itinerant husband who, when not on the road makes a home of his office. If this magnificent ends without our mentioning our indebtedness to our parents: Obi Enunwaonye Jonah Emenanjo and Ameifeobu Meri Okoobi, it is because one does not usually praise one's parents in the open. And if this magnificent ends at the doorstep of Olisaebuluwa Chukwu Abiama, the known-and-the-Unknown, it is partly because in our culture the greatest masquerade or the master-performer comes out last in any

public performance; and partly because, we share the naivety common to all believers that without Him there is nothing that is that can be.

The Discipline of Linguistics

Linguistics is a micro-discipline within the macro-discipline which concerns itself with meaning as realized in icons and symbols, images and signs. This discipline which is technically called *semiotics or semiology* is definable as the science of signs. By its very nature linguistics is so fluid that it can be appropriated by any of the sciences. Thus, because linguistics concerns itself with language which is the essential contract that binds any society together, it has been called a social science. The humanities have laid a claim to linguistics because language, the concern of linguistics, is essentially of a homonoid feature. Linguistics has also been appropriated by the biological and physical sciences partly because human language is a bio-physical phenomenon and partly because linguistics uses some of the jargons of the bio-physical sciences.

Within linguistics there are such levels as:

Phonetics: which concerns itself with the production and classification of speech sounds;

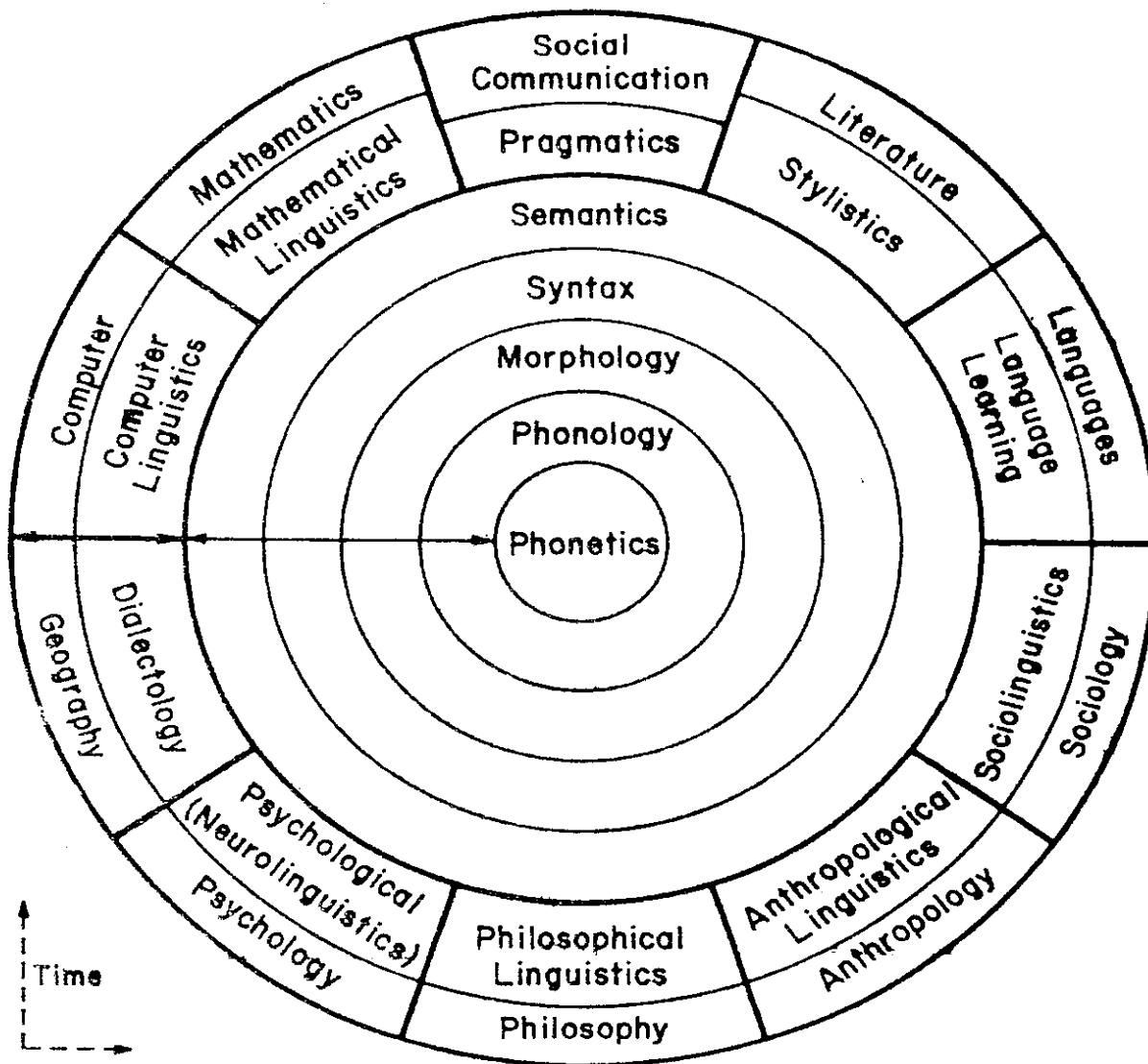
Phonology: which concerns itself with the production and classification of speech sounds in a name language;

Morphology: which concerns itself with the identification and classification of meaningful units;

Syntax: which concerns itself with the identification and classification of stretches of meaningful structures and the rule underlying them.

Semantics: which concerns itself with explaining the symbiosis that exists between sound and meaning in a name language.

Fig 1 The Wheel of Linguistics showing i) levels of linguistics, ii) branches of linguistics, iii) approaches to linguistics.



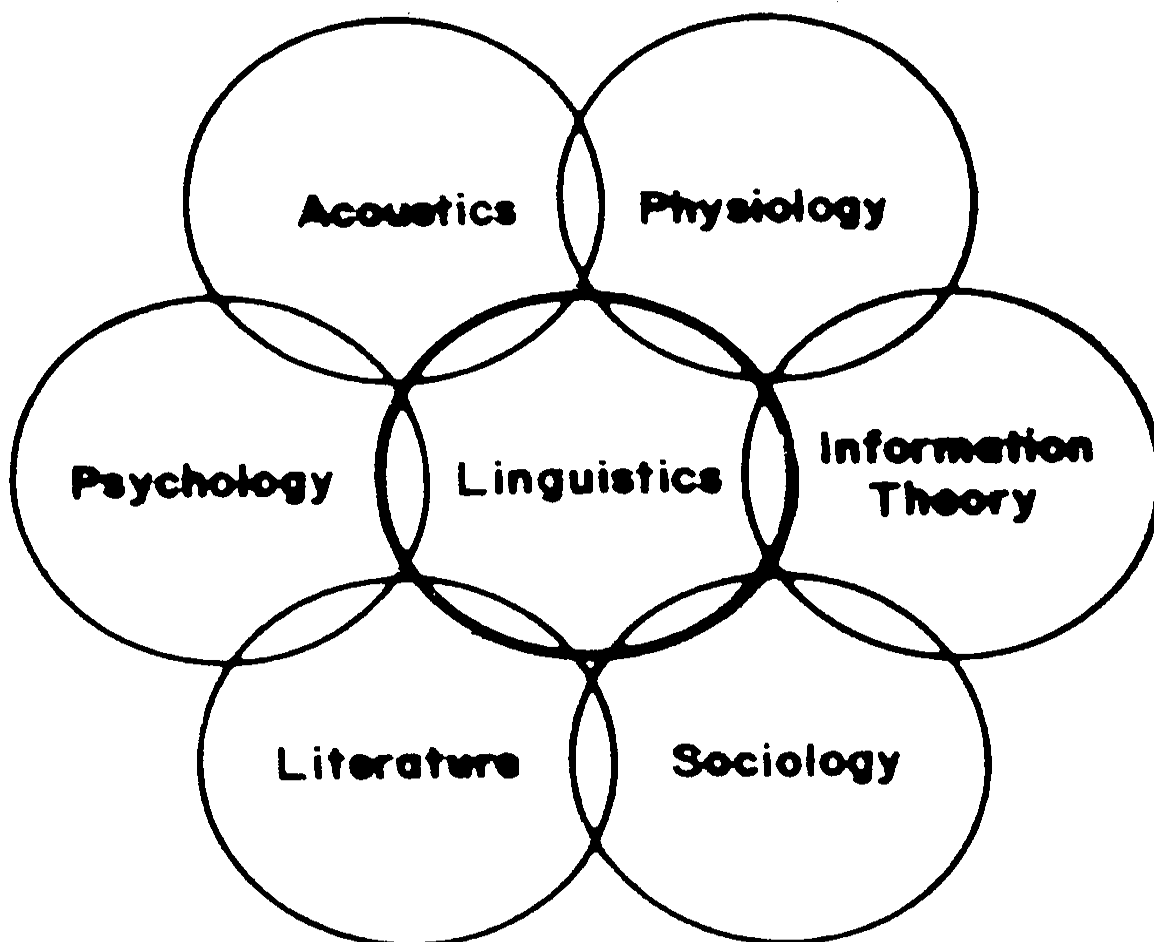
- Theoretical Linguistics deals with levels of linguistics
- Applied Linguistics deals with branches of linguistics
- Time Diachronic Approach - Diachronic Linguistics
- Synchronic Approach - Synchronic Linguistics

The levels of linguistics are intra-linguistic. But there are aspects of linguistics which are extra –linguistics. These result from the interaction between linguistics and man in society or other disciplines: with the immediate context of usage (pragmatics); with post-literate society (sociolinguistics); with pre-literate society (anthropological linguistics); with literature (stylistics) with neurology (neurolinguistics); with computer science (computational or computer linguistics); with psychology (psycholinguistics). These are some of the branches of linguistics. When levels of linguistics interact with branches of linguistics, we have applied linguistics. Linguistics can be practiced qua linguistics or applied to human needs. The former is narrowly called theoretical or formal linguistics and the latter, more broadly called applied linguistics. Applied linguistics comprises second language learning and teaching, language planning, speech therapy, translation and interpreting. Linguistics can be studied from the point of view of describing language at a definite point in historical time or from that of the changes undergone by language over(a period of)time. The former is synchronic, the latter diachronic.

Studied from the point of view of diachrony or synchrony, linguistics uses the scientific method. The scientific method, and sometimes scientific terminology dominate research and discourse in the various aspects of the discipline. For example, at the level of phonetics, linguistics uses the stock-in-trade of physics (especially acoustics), and of anatomy and physiology. At the level of morphology, it uses the methodology of biology especially with regard to taxonomy. At the levels of syntax and semantics, (modern) linguistics employs heavy doses of the jargon and practices of symbolic logic, finite automata theory, set theory, etc. But from a historical point of view, the study of human language was not always scientific. In classical times, it was studied within *ars poetica* (poetics) or literary criticism. In 19th century Europe, it was carried on within (Comparative philology which concerned itself with the analysis of written texts. In the United States of America, it was first studied within the discipline of (social) anthropology. And in Nigeria interest in human language, as a discipline, started from English language studies, especially, English phonetics.

As an academic discipline and a science, linguistics is a very recent one. And this happened during the first half of this century through the cumulative but essentially independent efforts of Ferdinand de Saussure in Europe, and Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield in America. It is these very important figures who salvaged the discipline from the many diversionary pre-occupations of their predecessors and put it on a steady course of growth along strictly empirical lines. Since 1915, in Europe, and since 1933, in America, linguistics has been a rolling stone which has continued to gather moss. So that by the time we get to Noam Chomsky it becomes a hydra-headed and multidisciplinary endeavor with its base in cognitive psychology. And in Europe through the interdisciplinary activities of the Prague School, linguistics is now a polyvalent undertaking with holistic implications and applications.

Fig 2 a modular view of Linguistics.



MODERN LINGUISTIC POST-CHOMSKY

The overlapping of circles brings out not only the holism of linguistics and other disciplines, but also the centrality of the discipline to all of them. This holistic, modular visualization of linguistics derives largely from generativism. Generativism is the approach to linguistics which Chomsky following his teacher, Zellig Harris, has developed into a full-blown theory. It is a theory which is sometimes called 'modularity'¹ (J.A Fodor: 1982); Hale et al.: 1977, Grosu (1981), Carroll (1981), and Green(1981;1982) or 'interactionism'² (Bever; 1974, 1975). And it is a theory which reveals the polyvalent nature of Chomsky himself: mathematician, psychologist, political activist, philosopher and linguist. This theory has necessarily brought about a great revolution in linguistics. One of the most enduring being that B.C., before Chomsky, is now used for periodizing linguistics. Like all revolutions, generativism has its admirers³ who, while being aware of its limits are full of fascination for its possibilities. (Smith and Wilson: 1979) and Newmeyer (1980; 1983). The revolution also has had its detractors⁴ the most virulent, ruthless, and even reckless being Ian Robinson (1975). Like all revolutions, the Chomskyan one has resulted in the development of competing and, sometimes, combative theories, all of which derive directly or indirectly from Chomsky's 'Standard Theory': autonomous syntax,⁵ (Jenkins: 1972; Lightfoot 1971; Akmajian and Wasow: 1975; Culicover: 1976); various shades of generative semantics⁶ (Ross 1972; McCawley: 1971; 1975, R.Lakoff; 1970); meaning-based/case grammars⁷ (Fillmore: 1968;Chafe: 1970;Anderson:1977); cognitive grammar⁸ (Lakoff and Thompson: 1975); natural generative grammar⁹ (Edmonson and Plank: 1976), space grammar¹⁰ (Langacker:1978); Montague grammar¹¹ (Partee: 1975); functional grammar¹²(Dike: 1980); and different approaches of non-transformational grammar such as daughter-dependency grammar¹³ (Hudson: 1976), and Generalized Phrase-Structure Grammar¹⁴ (Gadzar et. al. (1985). The interesting but exasperating thing about all these various theories is not only their high attrition or mortality rate but also, because of the welter of experimentation and the near fetish use of symbols and symbolization in modern linguistics, even people within one theory

appear to be involved in howling matches trying to understand themselves. In short, it is this state of affairs where the falcon no longer hears the falconer, which has led Ian Robinson (1975: viii) into observing, almost in desperation that 'Fashions come and go with a rapidity which itself suggests something about the essential claim of linguistics that it is a science'.

Some Facts About Language.

Linguistics deals with human language. Human language is a very elusive phenomenon to define. For our purpose, however, we shall define language as the device which employs vocal symbols to give and to hide information, to give illusions of love and to create realities of hate, to build and to destroy. We use language to give and to change names, to appreciate or to deceive, to create literature and to describe it. Language is employed to encode and to decode the most intricate computations. Language is everywhere. 'It permeates our thoughts, mediates our relations with others and even creeps into our dreams. Most human knowledge and culture is stored and transmitted in language which is so ubiquitous that we take it for granted. Without it, however, society as we know it would be impossible¹⁵. If we might distort Pusey (1950:81), we can state that 'man can live though not very well or long without any extensive acquaintance with the natural sciences. He could get on though not go ahead without much experience in the social sciences. But he cannot be a good natural scientist or social scientist¹⁶ without language. In short language is so important and crucial to life, like air, that, like air, people do not often recognize its nearness, its presence and its importance. It is this nearness of language to man that accounts for why anybody and everybody believes that the ability to talk qualifies one to talk about language. It is this that led to a number of myths and fallacies about human language.

Every natural language is a systematic construct with its own internal logic. In fact, language is the greatest invention of man. For it is man and not God who created or creates language. Any people who find themselves together invariably workout a vocalizable language after some time. This, for us, is the origin of human language and

the dynamo that energizes and propagates it. Every natural language has its autochthonous geographical area which is definite and definable. There is both a macro- and a micro-dimension to this geography. At the macro-level every language is spoken in a culture area. At the micro-level it is spoken in the family and/ or in a circumscribed geographical area.

No language is an island in itself. Groups of geographically contiguous speakers of the same language constitute a dialect (cluster) which in turn make up a language family, while groups of language families make up a phylum. The 5,000 odd languages spoken in Africa come under just four phyla.¹⁷ It is facts like these that make the definition of language pretty difficult. Whereas people can easily and statistically show the relationship between lects in language families and in phyla, they cannot do so between a language and its dialects since these 'form a continuum... With no neat opposition and (have) edges that are extremely ragged, uncertain (and fuzzy).¹⁸ Linguistics has proved that even two individuals of the same generation and locality speaking the same dialect and moving in the same social circles are never absolutely at one in their speech habits. A minute observation would reveal countless differences of detail in the choice of words, in sentence structure, in the relative frequency with which particular forms or combination of words are used¹⁹.

It is all of the above that explain why the criteria for defining language are more often political and geographical than linguistic. Norway and Sweden are two different countries, each with her own national flag, constitution and identity. Yet a speaker of Norwegian does not need an interpreter to understand a Swede. It is on geo-political and cultural grounds and in the use of a common writing system that Mandarin Chinese (Pekingese) and Cantonese Chinese make up one language even though a speaker of Mandarin needs an interpreter to understand a Cantonese. Efik and Ibibio are two languages on political grounds even though until very recently, Efik was regarded as the literary variety of Ibibio. The same political argument holds true of Ika and Igbo or Ukwani and Igbo or Izi and Igbo on the one hand, and Igbo and Ikwere, and Igbo and Echie on the other²⁰.

Language is primarily spoken, not written. This is evidenced by the fact that writing is a recent invention in the evolution of mankind. All natural languages are spoken but only a small percentage of them are written. In Nigeria there are some 397 languages believed to be spoken today. But only some 65 have alphabets for writing them and only some 120 have had some texts written in them.

Another point about human language is that with the passage of time and with the spread in usage two standard forms evolve: the spoken standard and the written standard. In terms of historical evolution, the spoken standard often precedes the written standard. Yet the written standard is usually more easily definable and permanent by virtue of the written sign and agencies of language modernization through various standardization processes. The spoken standard begins to emerge when people from different sub-areas of the given culture area meet and have to communicate in the language. It is at this point that linguistic adjustments and accommodation and leveling begin. A willing suspension of personal and dialectal *idiosyncracies*; begins to take place as people desiring to be 'genteel' and acceptable start to shed off or underplay those peculiarities which people first notice in others and are inclined to make fun of. ²¹In some languages the standardization of the spoken form is given the stamp of authority, popularity and universality by a Received Pronunciation (R.P.). This R.P., in essence, is the speech of a class which though not arrogantly exclusive is necessarily limited in numbers. Its traditions are maintained not primarily by the Universities but by the public school²². The fluidity which is characteristic of the spoken standard is absent in the written one. For as Quirk (1965) has authoritatively observed with regard to Standard English, and we shall paraphrase him, the standard language is that variety of any language which draws least attention to itself over the widest area through the widest range of usage. It is a complex function of vocabulary, grammar and a spellings that is least clearly established in other areas of pronunciation. It is a variety that is particularly associated with language in the written form. In fact, the norms of any standard language are largely determined and preserved by the printing house. The standard language is basically an idea, a

mode of communication people seek when they wish to communicate beyond their immediate community.²³

Just as any human language develops, with time, the standard spoken and written varieties, so too; it fathers its own pidgins. These pidgins may either die out or evolve into creoles when they become peoples' mother tongues. These creoles in turn develop their own standard forms in both the written and the spoken modes. This is how, for example, today's Romance languages developed from Vulgar Latin which creolized into Standard Italian, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Rumanian. These standard forms have, in turn, produced their own pidgins like le petit Negre of French in Francophone West Africa.

In some cases when a standard language becomes a language of wider communication or goes international, it fathers new regional varieties which have varying degrees of mutual intelligibility with the standard metropolitan variety. This is seen very clearly with a language like English which now has many new Englishes which Britain's colonial enterprise has brought into existence²⁴.

Another feature we would like to mention about human language is with regard to its role. When a language functions purely as a foreign or second language, like English in Nigeria, or any Nigerian language for non-natives, it is just a medium of communication and no more. But where a language is a mother tongue or a first language, it is both a medium of communication as well as a carrier of culture, expressing what Emile Durkheim has called the 'collective consciousness' of the group. In this regard, language and culture are not only symbiotic but rub off on each other in a mutual cause –and-effect-manner. This partly explains why the idioms of any human language draw their vibrancy, relevance and immediacy from the natural phenomena in the culture area: the fauna, the flora. This explains why, for example the concept of being cunning is associated with the Fox in one language and culture but with the Tortoise or the Hare or the Spider in other language and cultures. This also explains not only why 'no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered

as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds not merely the same with different labels attached!²⁵ It further explains why words of another language may mean the same but they never feel the same! All these explain why language imposition will always generate resentment, riots and wars no matter how subtly it is done.

All these explain why all learning is more meaningful, more effective and more creative when it is conducted in the mother tongue. In Nigeria the Ife Six-year-Yourba²⁶ Project (SYYP) and the Rivers State Readers²⁷ Project have validated this, especially, for initial literacy, whereas the Kano State Government Literacy Programme²⁸ and the Ahmadu Bello University²⁹ Extension Services Programme have validated this for adult literacy.

All those also explain why scientific and technological innovations are most effortlessly and spontaneously done in the language in which the people eat, dream, love and curse – in fact the language in which their whole personality is enmeshed and immersed. The evidence of Germany, France, and Britain are usually taken for granted. But not so the modern wonders of Japan, China, India, South Korea, and Russia, where startling and momentous scientific and technological breakthroughs are being conducted and brought about in the peoples' languages. And finally, but very importantly, all these explain why no matter how valiantly a micro-group of a given culture area might try to disown their native language in order to please ephemeral policies of expediency--- which recommend all forms of linguistic cloning and alchemy, as seen in novel, strange and weird spelling conventions deliberately fashioned to make the new language look unlike the standard variety--- they more often than not fail. If one buries oneself, one hand will be found uncovered. If a tiger likes to please its political masters and linguistic midwives it can change its name through swearing to an affidavit. Or it can translate its name into another language. Or it can reinterpret it into another language. Or it can re-spell it by adding archaic affixes. Or spell it in such a way that it will no longer be recognizable except to the initiate. All these battles will be fought and lost simply because the tiger cannot do anything about its tigritude. Names

like Ngozi, Ebele, Kelechi, Anuri, Oghenebiko, Tamunoigoni, no matter how they are spelt or written, have more psychocultural reality than their colourless and meaningless English equivalents of 'Blessing', 'Mercy', 'Thank God', 'Happiness', 'God-I-beg!' etc. These names in translation tell no stories about the circumstances or time of birth. And in most Nigerian Cultures, names are histories in encapsulated forms. We find it paradoxical and unbelievable that people who are usually diehard chauvinists in the defence of their new found linguistic independence should tinker with their group, Clan, town and personal names when such (names) are amongst the vehicle(s) for the preservation and transmission of a people's cultural heritage³⁰. It should always be remembered that language is one of the six distinctive indices which ethnographers employ to demarcate a culture area. And Emile Durkheim has observed that in any community, human intercourse rests on a tripod of exchanges: exchange of information, exchange of women and exchange of commodities. Of these, that of information has primacy; for the two other forms are encodable and decodeable in human language.

We would like to emphasize the point we made earlier about every language having its indigenous culture area. A culture area is to anthropology what a linguistic community is to linguistics and a nation, to political and administrative studies. Put differently, we are saying that every language has its autochthonous ethnic nation. This means that a modern multi-ethnic nation-state will have as many languages as there are ethnic nations. In a multilingual nation-state, therefore, it will be found out that despite the linguistic axioms of equality and completeness of all natural languages, in terms of actual language use, some languages will only be used at local levels, some at regional levels and some others at national levels. More often than not there is a correlation between the social roles of languages and the population, political clout and economic power of their speakers. What is true about the metropolitan languages of Europe is true of the 'major', 'large', or 'main' languages in any multilingual polity, anywhere.

LINGUISTICS AS NATIONALISM.

We have been concerned in the first part of our discourse with laying the background for the second part which concerns itself with the social responsibilities of the Nigerian linguist and, especially, a first generation linguist working in his native language.

The Nigerian linguist is a linguist by training, a Nigerian by nationality and an Africanist by implication. As a linguist he has had exposure to the great traditions of universal linguist theory, specialized in one (or more) of these and used it (or them) for analyzing aspects of a Nigerian language in one of the 'hardcore' levels of linguistics.

Because he is a Nigerian, the linguist cannot afford to be oblivious of the socio-political realities of his immediate and larger Nigerian milieu. Without being a political historian he should know that Nigeria is a fledgling and fragile nation state which is just seventy-four years old as a geo-political entity, twenty-eight years old as an independent state and twenty-seven years old as a democratic republic. Without being a social anthropologist he should know that Nigeria is a pre-industrial society. Without being a sabre-rattling socialist, he should know that Nigeria runs a ruthless and unrepentant capitalist economy. Without being a satirist or a cynic he should know that the giant of Africa is a nation in search of her nationals. It is an evergreen wasteland peopled by hollow men. In the land of this giant, there is perpetual movement and yet no motion, continuous change and yet no continuity. The land of the giant has all sorts of directorates yet there is no direction in the horizon. In that land the blind and the deaf have always led the lame and the dumb. There, umpires end up as vampires and rulers always believe they are leaders. The giant of Africa is the best example of how Africa has under-developed and continues to under-develop Africa. In this wonderland of farce, the best lack all conviction, the worst are full of passionate intensity and all of them are perennially engaged in the hopeful mirage of building domes of pleasure with blocks of buffoonery and wishful thinking. In that land, people are continuously trying to re-invent the wheel fully believing that history begins and ends with them. Finally, without being a social anthropologist, the Nigerian linguist knows that Nigeria is a complex plurilingual country in which language loyalty is an article of faith. It is in this

type of environment in which foreign academic journals and books are no longer available and local ones are either extinct or priced beyond reach that the Nigerian linguist has to operate.

The grim realities of the situation, therefore, require the Nigerian linguist to be an eclectic pragmatist in his approach to, and use of, linguistic theory. This point needs to be emphasized because many a Euro-American linguist disparagingly refers to African linguistics in Africa as being either a theoretical or too pragmatic to be theoretical. If the absence of theory is itself a theory, what more is eclectic pragmatism?

Two crucial points are often forgotten by the detractors of the theoretical underpinning in African linguistics. The first is that whereas some Euro-American nations are post-industrial societies, all African nations are pre-industrial ones. Related to this is that whereas many a Euro-American nation is monolingual or bilingual in 'developed' languages, all African nations are multilingual and saddled with languages that are still to be developed. On account of these, the philosophy that should inform practice in African linguistics should be that which motivated Franz Boas- a rescue operation- to record in descriptive analysis all (African) languages before their speakers pass away. These unassailable and urgent realities impose certain imperatives on the African linguist in general and the Nigerian linguist in particular. These imperatives are, for as realizable in a six-point programme of action:

- i. In-depth and sophisticated descriptive analysis of Nigerian languages;
- ii. Collection and transcription of the oral literatures in Nigerian languages;
- iii. Language modernization in its widest sense;
- iv. A sociolinguistic profile resulting in a well articulated national language policy
- v. Complete domestication of English;
- vi. Pre-occupation with linguistic theory per se.

There is just no way one can do (i) – (v) above without constant recourse to linguistic theories. And the spin-offs from or results of these enterprises will, no doubt,

have corresponding impacts on universal linguistic theory for theoretical and applied linguistics.

By training and specialization the Nigerian (descriptive) linguist is armed with the tools for in-depth theoretical analysis of aspects of Nigerian languages. As a native speaker of one (or more) Nigerian language(s) he has insights into the 'deep' aspects of these languages which no foreigner or non-indigene can ever boast of. The Nigerian linguist, especially if he is a syntactician would be failing in his duties if he refuses to descend from *grammaire generale* to *grammaire particuliere*. This will take the form of the writing of practical orthographies, pedagogic grammars, definitive monolingual dictionaries etc. while doing these he will have to come to grips with matters of taxonomy in phonology, morphology and syntax. Euro-American linguists of English or French do not have this problem because their languages are developed and over-studied. Yet their languages had to pass through all these.

Another responsibility of the Nigerian linguist is in the collection and faithful transcription of the oral literature in his language. Euro-American linguists will not consider this a priority because they live in literate post-industrial societies. It is immoral for linguists to pick one consonant from one language, one vowel from another language, one TBU from yet another language and all such disjointed phenomena from languages that they do not speak and build their fragile and sensational theories without taking an interest in the literatures in these languages. These practices have their genesis and persistence in the fact that the first analysts of Nigerian languages were non-Nigerians. And most of the so-called 'experts' on African linguistics today are not native speakers of any African languages. Another factor which has contributed to the lack of interest in orature by linguists is the fact that a good number of them have no literary training. Even those that have, have been afflicted by the Euro-American 'scholarly' disease which insists that linguistics is an autonomous discipline. Chomsky, and members of the Prague School have shown that linguists should bring their various training, exposure and interests into their practice of linguistics. The Nigerian linguist should, therefore, not be afraid of, or apologetic about bringing whatever

previous training he has had into his practice of linguistics. In the matter of orature, he should faithfully transcribe the orature in his language into texts. It is texts of this nature which will reveal the shallowness, under analysis and incorrect analysis that abound in the 'classics' of the many scholars or 'experts' of African oral literatures, who study their subject through second-hand, and sometimes, puerile English or French or Portuguese translations. It should be remembered that texts so transcribed will be of great value in the literacy programmes in the language. Linguists who are cynical of the involvements of linguistics in literature should always remember that human language is perpetuated in literature. What survives in a language is not the grammatical analysis about of the language but the imaginative literature that is available in it.

Unlike the Euro-American linguist, the first generation Nigerian linguist has the social responsibility of caring about language loyalty, language maintenance, language treatment and language development all of which come under the ambit of 'language engineering' or 'language modernization'³¹(Ansre: 1974); Ferguson (1968), Fishman (1968), Haugen (1966;1983). Language engineering is the overall development of a language in order to make it suitable for use in areas in which it had not been previously used, such as, modern education, government, economy, science, and technology. All things considered, most Nigerian languages are either undeveloped, under-developed or developing. It is the responsibility of the Nigerian linguist to put Nigerian languages on the path of development in the five complementary areas of graphization, language standardization, numeration, metalanguage and materials production. Graphization is imperative for literacy. Standardization is imperative for the evolution of a strong literary tradition in a given culture area. Numeration is imperative for numeracy and the evolution of a scientific tradition. Metalanguage is imperative if there is to be an effective and profound tradition of scholarship through the medium of Nigerian languages. The production of materials is necessary to sustain literacy and the nascent literary tradition, numeracy and the fledging scientific tradition as well as the popularization and propagation of the standard language and the metalanguage.

We would like to single out the issue of language standardization for closer scrutiny because this is one area where some Nigerian linguists or some linguists of Nigerian languages have played suspicious if not ignoble and unacademic roles. The linguist has the responsibility to contribute to the development of one standard written variety in his language of study. The development or evolution of a standard variety does not mean that death of dialects. Nor does it have anything to do with mutual intelligibility between the dialects of a language. Mutual intelligibility is not a matter of politics or (lexico) statistics. It is a matter of the interplay of phonetics and semantics. Although it cannot be scientifically determined or quantified, it can be attested in speech. A functional view of language reveals that since no '(linguistic)' community is linguistically homogenous, no two persons use a language in exactly the same way: the same situation will elicit different linguistic reactions from different onlookers, no two persons will use or understand the very same vocabulary; even the highly structured aspects of language such as morphology may differ in important respects from one speaker to another without impairing mutual understanding and even without being noticed by the interlocutors³². The Nigerian linguist has the responsibility to promote those things which make for mutual intelligibility and the eventual evolution of standard written and spoken forms. It has to be emphasized that in all languages the spoken and written standards are new forms which have to be formally learnt. These forms have the advantage of impersonality and universality. Any sub-group which for whatever reason refuses to use the nascent standard forms will be the losers, especially if they are a minority or a peripheral group within a major group. After such groups have devised their orthographies to look peculiar and written a few textual materials for initial literacy the new language reaches a dead end. It would not be long when the economics of publishing and the demands of political mobilization and group identity would reveal the futility of such linguistic independence.

We would like to end the discussion of the linguist's contributions to language development by the observation that some of his activities and literary outputs or preoccupations may count for very little in his assessment for promotion. Some of his

activities will be disparagingly glossed over as ‘contributions to society’ and the texts as unacademic, unscholarly, scrap book. This is the cross every first generation linguist has to bear for being a pioneer in language development.

The linguist has another national responsibility in the matter of making the case for a national language survey³³. A national language survey is not a survey of national languages but a survey of language use in a nation. It is to language planning what a national census is to national socio-economic planning and development. Such a survey would throw up vital and crucial information about:

- I. All Nigerian languages and other languages spoken in Nigeria: their speakers and their users; their exact geographical locations....; numbers of speakers as L1, L2, and L3...; extent and degree of usage in formal and non-formal education as well as in the electronic and print media; the law courts, legislative assemblies, hospitals.
- II. Dialects, dialect clusters and language continuum purely on the basis of mutual intelligibility and ethnicism rather than on such supposedly ‘objective’ criteria as lexicostatistics or reconstruction as practiced by linguistic archeologists;
- III. Their states of development.
- IV. Language attitudes, language preference, language imposition, language shift, language survival, language death and weaving the language complexity of the country into an effective asset rather than the liability which most Euro-American sociologists think is.

The next national responsibility of the Nigerian linguist is the domestication of the English language in Nigeria, in order to transform it from a Germanic-Saxon phenomenon into an Afro-African reality. In this venture, the linguist should not be intimidated either by the ‘catechetical litany’ or ‘the fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in our society or literature’. Nor should his crusade be informed by the radical posture of some iconoclasts who regard the English language as Caliban’s heritage and the cause of Nigerian’s under-development.

Any interest in the English language motivated by any of these reasons would be as Ngugi wa Thiong'o has observed: 'futile exercise(s) ... In the realm of evasive abstractions.' The interest of the Nigerian linguist in English should be from the purely sociolinguistic fact that English is not just one of the languages in use in the country, but also, in the socio-political entity called Nigeria, a distinct regional variety (or varieties) of English is (are) evolving. This variety therefore needs to be studied partly because it has been used for producing one type of written literature in Nigerian. No Nigerian linguist can, therefore, afford to ignore this language. His concern, however, should be with treating it, de-colonizing it and domesticating it so that it can become truly Afro-African in body and in spirit.

One area where this domestication exercise is very urgent is in the matter of vocabulary. In this regard, we would like the de-colonization and de-westernization of the race-redolent fixed '*collocations*' which cluster around the five-letter word '*black*' the word '*orthodox*' and the phrase '*first name*'. words like 'blackmail', 'blackleg', 'black sheep', 'black spot', 'black Maria', 'black book', 'black list', 'black hole' (of Calcutta), 'black magic', 'black bomb', 'black September' and 'Black Friday' among others, abound in English. Afro-African English which should express an African ethos and world-view should expunge these five-letter words from its vocabulary. This exercise is a nationalistic and Africanist imperative because, 'if a society conceals language, language can (in turn) corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation even among people who should and do know better'. These five-letter words are cases of bad usage and should neither continue to be used nor continue to be allowed to spread. For they remain a 'white spot' from our colonial experience. As products of 'white mail' they should be 'white listed', for good, in Afro-African English of which Nigerian English is a regional or national variety. It is of interest to observe that in the irreverent but picturesque language of Nigerian English slang, the phrase 'white leg' is now being correctly used for a woman of low decorum, of easy means and easier morals! The next word whose fate should concern the Nigerian linguist of *NE* (Nigerian English) is 'orthodox' as used for medicine or religions. In Nigeria, Euro-

American medicine and medical practices 'orthodox'. This implies that our traditional medicine is 'unorthodox'. Christianity in its many European forms is the 'orthodox' religion while African traditional religion is 'unorthodox'. It is, perhaps not often realized that when it is said that our religion and medicine are unorthodox, the implication is that our foods, our world-views, our culture, our civilizations, in fact, our very selves are unorthodox. The truth of the matter, however, comes when in moments of great psychological stress both the mad men and the specialists in the so-called orthodox Western medicine patronize the so-called unorthodox traditional medicine in the same circumstances that laymen and clergymen of the so-called orthodox religion visit the diviners and high priest of the unorthodox traditional religion. In spite of all our pretences we all know that the autochthonous sources have more psychological reality and philosophical anchorage for our people. Our use of English should be able to express this reality in its vocabulary.

Another expression which should command the attention of the Nigerian linguist is the phrase 'first name' which people who have to fill all sort of forms have to contend with. The Euro-American conception of first name is not the same as it is in the Africa of the post-Christian era. Our first names are the names which tell the histories of our birth; the day and time of the traditional week, the circumstances of birth, the psycho-philosophical state of the nuclear and extended families, etc. For us, that name is Nwanolue. Yet, we are told to fill in Emmanuel which is our second or baptismal name. So, now, most of us are made to fill in the so-called Christian or English name as our first name or prenom and our real prenom as our second name. The Nigerian linguist has a duty to draw attention to this fallacy and to change it beginning with himself. The point being made is that the attitude of the Nigerian linguist to English should be from the sociolinguistic reality that English should be form the sociolinguistic reality that English is one language though a very important one that is used in Nigeria, in its continuum, for a variety of official, specialized and non-official transactions. Through a guided programme of language treatment Afro-African English could and should be made to express genuine African thoughts. African linguists should be

concerned with giving an African perspective to the political sociology of English on the continent. Ali M. Mazrui (1975) has somehow blazed a worthy trail in this direction³⁴. African linguists' in general and Nigerian linguists in particular have the social responsibility to continue this crusade and to fully domesticate the English language for use on the continent. The decolonization programme in English should go on side by side with the programme for correct English usage. The Nigerian linguist should be concerned with correct English usage in phonetics and syntax. He has a duty to help in treating the innumerable instances of laziness, sloppiness and inelegance in the use of English in the society.

Other than English, the Nigerian linguist should be concerned with fate of other non-Nigerian languages that are being taught or used in Nigeria: French, Portuguese, German, Kiswahili and Classical Arabic. These languages should be seen for what they are: completely foreign languages but not in the same way that English is foreign. These languages should be properly taught to those who need them. But we doubt that they should continue to be taught in all the tertiary institutions that now teach them. The need to have designated tertiary institutions to handle these languages is both pragmatic and nationalistic.

Another equally important responsibility of the Nigerian linguist is that which he owes to linguistics as a discipline in search of language universals. The point has to be made that the Nigerian linguist is, first and foremost, a linguist in the same way that the Nigerian botanist is, first and foremost, a botanist. But like the botanist he operates in given socio-political milieux which invariably influences his practice. The Nigerian linguist operates in a society where basic necessities like uninterrupted supplies of electricity and water and of various hardware and software needed in academia are not guaranteed. These have their toll on the Nigerian linguist in terms of, among other things, being current with developments in universal linguistic theory. All these notwithstanding, the Nigerian linguist should endeavour to be abreast of what goes on in theoretical linguistics.

For theory is basic and necessary in life. All of today's concrete realities in inventions were yesterday's flights of fancies in, initially, surrealistic and arid realms of theoretical speculations. So, aware of the fact that our milieux do not have the wherewithal to generate or sustain or even accommodate such dreams we should not be ashamed of 'copying' realities fashioned elsewhere. Copying by itself can be creative and innovative as Japan and Brazil have clearly demonstrated to the world. Since in linguistics, as in science and technology it would be futile for us to attempt to re-invent the wheel, we should concern ourselves with modifying, restructuring, and domesticating it to serve our immediate needs first and those of the world of universal linguistics after, if not *pari passu*. The Nigerian linguist should not apologize to anybody for so doing. Nigeria's language problems are myriad unlike those of the Euro-American nations. A real African who practises linguistics *per se* is a white leg. Yet no African should practice without theory. That by, itself, is really thinkable. We agree with the Stalin-Lenin dictum that theory without practice is sterile, practice without theory blind. And this is the dilemma of the Nigerian linguist: practicing linguistics as an academic discipline *vis-à-vis* relevance to or limits plagued by stifling and stultifying social conditions. The point we are making is that if elsewhere pre-occupation with linguistic theory is an end itself, in Nigeria, it should be a means to an end first, and a pre-occupation or even a religion after. We hope the foregoing do not suggest that the Nigerian linguist should not be concerned with developing new theories when possible. During the processo of domesticating old theories, and correcting wrong analyses of Nigerian languages by many a hasty Euro-American 'Africanist' new, theories will willy-nilly evolve.

Another responsibility of the Nigerian linguist is in the area of linguistic education. Linguistic education is itself an aspect of overall political education. The linguist should identify himself with the activities of the National Language Centre and the Nigeria Educational Research Council among other language planning agencies. The contributions of these in the area of graphization, curriculum and metalanguage

development should be known by all linguists and used, adopted or adapted in their first languages.

Again, the Nigerian linguist should concern himself with curriculum development for Nigerian languages in higher institutions. This concern should extend to the maximization of the potentials of the linguists available in the country irrespective of their departmental bases or institutional affiliations. The realities of our lives demand a restructuring of our departmental programmes in such a way that all the linguistics which is to be taught in a given university should be based in one department. The Department of Linguistics and African Languages of this University is already doing this with the co-operation of the other language departments in the faculty of Humanities.

The second type of re-structuring should be done in the light of the nation's needs and the policy on languages in education. In these matters change should begin at home. By this we mean that the 'major' languages of a given community should be given pride of place over and above any other African language no matter its importance on the African continent. Thirdly, the Nigerian linguist has to point out to the nation and its nationals that in a democratic, multilingual polity all languages must be recognized and catered for in a language policy which must be one of multilingualism. In this policy, different languages will be found to be performing different roles as dictated by non-linguistic factors. In terms of education some languages will only be necessary for initial or adult literacy. Some can be used for formal literacy while others can be used for, and, in tertiary education. What we are talking about is a world-wide phenomenon in multilingual societies and should, therefore, not generate the sort of heat it has always done in Nigeria.

Another aspect of linguistic education is the awareness that it is the people themselves who have to develop their languages. No governments, local, state or federal can do this for them. Governments through their agencies may and should provide the infrastructure through curricula, syllabuses and language policies. It is the

people themselves who have to produce all the texts they need for purposes of all forms of literacy programmes in their languages.

Another aspect of the overall linguistic education for the nation is the point that mass mobilization and education are more meaningful, more effective and more creative when they are carried out in the people's languages, be they Nigerian languages or a pidgin variety of Nigerian English.

The last responsibility of the Nigerian linguist is in the area of manpower development. The Nigerian linguist-teacher should always bear in mind that some of the best known linguists were famous teachers: De Saussure, Edward Sapir, Chomsky, Bamgbose, Williamson, etc. As a linguistics teacher, language educator, language engineer, language consultant, active member of LAN and a researcher, the academic Nigerian linguist owes society the responsibility of producing younger linguists to succeed him and inherit his chair. These heirs should have greater, and more formal exposure to disciplines including: the philosophy, psychology, and sociology of language, literary studies, mathematics and statistics, speech therapy, philosophy especially symbolic logic and philosophical movements, transcription practices and translation techniques, aspects of political economy as well as of social anthropology. This interdisciplinary approach would produce more rounded linguists. This approach would also call for the re-structuring of our programmes to make them cut across rigid departmental and faculty barriers. As a precondition for their certification this new brand of linguists should be made to produce in their languages (of choice) original creative or analytical works or substantial annotated transcriptions of orature in their languages or translations of texts of either general or scientific nature into Nigerian languages. It is only linguistics brought up in the tradition recommended here that can adequately grapple with the ferment of ideas and practice in world linguistics today. It is they only who can appreciate the fact that modern linguistics is a holistic discipline-and practice it likewise to the benefit and glory of linguistics, language and the nation.

Finally, in terms of curriculum development in this University it needs to be said that as the second professor in our department, but the first Nigerian, we have the responsibility to see that Nigerian languages are properly taught in the department of Linguistics and African Languages. This national assignment and responsibility is already informing the review of our programmes currently going on in the Faculty of Humanities. So that, within the next quinquennium we should be producing graduates in Nigerian languages and literatures as we are now doing in Kiswahili, French or English.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, permit us to say that *mmadu weli na anu na-aso uso liba ya, o bulu na o lisho anu mmadu o lia nke udene. Wa weli ka agwo si so ogonogo fuba ya oku, wa ga-afu ya ogonogo oge. Nwaanyi nebe onyinyo okuku anya, o sia nni uchichi. Wa kwochata okuku ugbene ya, wa ekwochapu ya onya. Okuku si na ife kpata o ji anaba ula abusho maka na afo ejugea ya. O bu maka na chi ejigea.*

The point I am trying to make through this battery of proverb and wellerisms which were reeled off in my igbouzo dialect of Igbo is that one cannot really say all there is to say about any topic as there is time limit for doing anything and everything.

We thank you all for your attention and patience.

NOTES

1. Figure 1 is modelled after Aitchison, J. (1978:16) *Teach Linguistics*: David and Mackey: Teach yourself Books: Figure II is modelled after Newmeyer, F.J. (1983:3). Fodor, J. A. (1982). *The modularity of mind*. Cambridge: MIT Press; Hale, K., La Verne Jeanne, and P. Platero (1977). "Three cases of overgeneration'. In Culicover, P.T.A. Wasow, and A. Akmajian (eds) *Formal Syntax*. New York: Academic Press; Carosu, A. (1981) *Approaches to island phenomena*. Amsterdam: North-Holland; Carroll, J.M (1981) *Modularity and naturalness in cognitive science* IBM Research Report #39482; Green, G. (1981) 'Pragmatics and syntactic description' *Studies in the Linguistic sciences* 11:27-

- 38: Green, G. (1981) 'Linguistics and the pragmatics of language use' in R. Buhr (ed.) *Neurolinguistics and cognition* New York: Academic Press.
2. Bever, T. 1974: 'The ascent of the specious; or, there's a lot we don't know about mirrors' in D. Cohen ed. *Explaining Linguistics hypotheses*. Washington, D.C. Hemisphere.
 3. Smith, N. and D. Wilson, (1979): *Modern Linguistics: The Results of Chomsky's Revolution*, Penguin.
 - i. Newmeyer, F.J. (1980) *Linguistic Theory in America* New York: Academic Press.
 - ii. Newmeyer, F.J. (1983) *Grammatical Theory: Its Limits and Its Possibilities*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
 4. Robinson, I. (1975) *The New Grammarian's Funeral: A critique of Noam Chomsky's Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 5. (i) Akmajian, A. & F. Henry (1975) *An Introduction to the Principles of Transformational Syntax* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press
(ii) Culicover, P. (1976) *Syntax*. New York: Academic Press.
(iii) Culicover et al. (eds.) *Formal Syntax* in (ii) above.
 6. (I) Ross, J.R. (1972) "Act" in Davidson D. & G. Harmon (eds.) *Natural Semantics of Natural language* pp.70-126. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
(ii) McCawley, J. (1976a) *Grammar and Meaning*. New York: Academic Press.
 7. (i) Fillmore, C. (1968) "The case for case" in Bach, E. and R. Harms (eds.) *Universals in Linguistic Theory* pp. 1-90. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
(ii) Chafe, W. (1970) *Meaning and the Structure of Language*. Chiacago: University of Chicago Press.
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(iv) Anderson, J. (1977) *On Case Grammar* London: Croom Helm.
(v) Lakoff, G. 1976 (1973) "Toward Generative Semantics' in McCawley 1976(b) (ed.) pp. 43-62
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17. Greenberg, J.H. (1970) *The Languages of Africa* 3rd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University.
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20. Key Williamson's works, notably:
 - (i) 'The Lower Niger Languages' *Oduma* 1.1 (1972).
 - (ii) *An Introduction to Ika and Ukwuani* (1968) Occasional Publication No. 14, Institute of African Studies;
 - (iii) John Bendor- Samuel and Paul Meier's (1974) 'Igbo Dialects and the Development of Standard Igbo' (Paper read at the seminar on Igbo Languages and Culture, University of Nigeria, Nsukka(1974) - have been seen by Igbo scholars –and people, as an attempt to mix politics with

academics in applying the suspicious and misleading methodology of lexicostatistics to Igbo.

For one reaction, see Onwuegeogwu, M.A.(1975) 'Some fundamental problems in the application of lexicostatistics in the study of African Languages' *paideama*, Band 21:6-17.

21. See Jersperson, Otto, *The Philosophy of Language*.
22. See 'The Growth of Standard English' in Williams, R. (1960) *The Long Revolution* Penguin: pp. 237-253.
23. Quirk, R. (1968) What is Standard English? *In The Use of English*. London: Longman
24. See for example, Kachru, B.J. (1982) *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
25. Op. cit No. 19
26. See, for example, Fafunwa, A.B. (1975) 'Education in the mother tongue: a Nigerian Experiment' *West African Journal of Education* 19: 213-28.
27. Williamson, K. (1977)' Small languages in primary education: The Rivers Readers Project as a case History. In Bamgbose,A. (ed.) ;*Language in Education in Nigeria*: Lagos: National Language Centre, pp. 81-89
28. See Essien-Ibok, A. (ed.) *Three Faces of the Revolution in Kano State*: Zaria : Gaskiya Corporation.
29. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria has the most vibrant and virile extention services, in mother tongue, among Nigerian Universities.
30. See Vansina, I. (1975) *Oral Tradition*. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books
31. For differing but complementary views see:
 - (i) Ansre, A. (1974): Language standardization in Sub-Saharan Africa in Fishman, J. (ed.) *Advances in Language Planning*: The Hague: Mouton.
 - (ii) Ferguson, C.A.(1968) 'Language development in Fishman, J.et.al (eds.) *Language Problems of Developing Nations*. New York: Wiley, pp. 27-36.

- (iii) Haugen, E. (1966): *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
 - (iv) Hauge, E. (1983) 'the implementation of corpus planning. Theory and Practice in Cabarrubias J, and J.A. Fishman (eds.). *Progress in Language Planning*. The Hague: Mouton,pp 269-289.
 - (v) Rubin, J. &R. Shuy (1973) *Language Planning: Current Issues and Research* Washington: Georgetown University Press.
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33. Ohannessian, S. et.al (eds.) (1975): *Language Survey in Developing Nations*. Arlington, Va: Centre for Applied Linguistics.
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