

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

THE SEVENTY-FOURTH INAUGURAL LECTURE

MEANING WITHOUT MEAN-NESS

By

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- 1.0 **PROLOGUE**
- 1.1 **Courtesies**

1.2 Invocation

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds, who has guarded and guided me in my earthly journey to my present lofty station. As the Yoruba would say, “*Ojo miiran oro a wa, sugbon ti ko ni i si asiko, Ojo miiran asiko a wa, sugbon ti ko ni i si oro*”, meaning “on some occasions there would be words and ideas but little or no time, but on other occasions there would be plenty of time but neither words nor ideas”. As a linguist and an educator, not only do I work on, and with words, I also feed on words. It is therefore somewhat ironic that as a word-worker in several senses of the word, I have to profess my calling on the occasion of this inaugural lecture within the constraint of one hour or thereabouts. In conveying my meaning, I must hasten to say, I do not intend any mean-ness to any individuals or groups.

Interestingly, this is the first inaugural lecture in this university in the field of Language Education to be delivered by a Professor of Language Education. However, the first ever university lecture delivered by Professor Oladele Awobuluyi on “The National Policy on Education in Linguistic Perspective”¹ falls squarely within the field of Language Education, or Applied Linguistics, to use a more encompassing rubric. This raises vital questions on the place of Language Education within the broad purview of Linguistics. It would also explain why, on joining the University as Lecturer I in 1990, Dr. Noel Ihebuzor, a friend and former colleague in the Department and in the discipline of Language Education, confronted me somewhat sarcastically: “Bayo, who are you now and what is your field of specialization?” I cannot remember now what response I gave him, but I made up my mind since then to attain considerable and balanced learning in Language, Education and Applied Linguistics, the tricky, interactive borderline between the first two. Dr. Ihebuzor’s rather unsettling poser was informed by his knowledge of my having studied French, Yoruba, English, Language Arts and Linguistics in the context of Education at different levels of my educational career.

Placed in its broad professional perspective, Dr. Ihebuzor’s concern hints at the unwholesome isolationism and compartmentalization among certain scholars of language. To use the words of Cook and Seidlhofer (1995:2)²,

the discipline becomes a federation of
academic principalities with a common
defence policy and tough immigration laws.
Its local and central governments are
moribund and autocratic. It is a dull
place, but a safe one to live and
develop a career.

Mr. Vice-chancellor, sir, I have been attempting to develop my career as a balanced linguist and educationist by defying the so-called “tough immigration laws” and breaking the artificial borders between Language Education on the one hand and English Studies and Linguistics on the other hand. To date I have taught courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels and supervised M.A. and Ph.D research projects in English Language, in Language Education and in Linguistics respectively.

The chair being inaugurated today was attained at the significant age of 40. Nothing is spectacular about this when viewed from the chronological angle, because by 1985 the lowest professorial age was 32.2 years at the University of Ibadan.³ Better still, Michael Apple of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, U.S.A., a foremost Curriculum expert, attained professorship at a younger age.

In secular but popular proverbial wisdom, however, “a fool at 40 is a fool forever”. Attaining a professorial chair at 40 thus becomes significant as it coincides with a universally

acknowledged developmental milestone. This is not to imply, however, that a professor can not be a fool. J. P. Clark in one of his poems admonishes his “academic friends who sit tight on their doctoral theses and have no chair for poet or inventor”⁴, just as Achebe a little later observed the “almost illiterate level at which even professors hold their discourse”⁵. In any case, a professor is simply one who knows so much about a little, and little bits of so much.

Beyond all this, and most significantly, the Glorious Qur’an spells out in lucid but highly suggestive language the psychological, sociological and most importantly, the spiritual import of 40 years as the golden age:

We have enjoined on man
Kindness to his parents
In pain did his mother bear him
And in pain did she give him birth
The carrying of the child to his weaning
Is a period of thirty months.
At length when he reaches the age
Of full strength and attains forty years,
He says “O my Lord!
Grant me that I may be grateful for thy favour
Which Thou has bestowed upon me
And upon my both parents
And that I may work righteousness
Such as Thou may approve;
And be gracious to me in my offspring
Truly have I turned to thee
And truly do I bow to thee in Islam

(Qur’an XLVI:15)

The Almighty God thus directs us to recognize the age of 40 as the peak of a period (30 – 40 years) when a person is at one’s best, and when one looks backward to one’s humble biological beginning inside one’s parents and looks forward to one’s growing pedigree, while commending the new generation to the Almighty God. Beyond this, as we are instructed in this verse, the age represents an intellectual milestone, ushering in a spiritual phase when a person’s spiritual faculties gain the upper hand. This would perhaps explain why two of the highest-ranking apostles of the Almighty God, Moses and Muhammad, received their prophetic commission at the ripe age of 40.

2.0 **THE MAKING OF A LANGUAGE EDUCATOR/APPLIED LINGUIST**

2.1 **In the Beginning:**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, sir, and my dear listeners, may I ask one innocuous question? The simple question is: “how can we best know a person?” I think we cannot fully understand a person until we understand the history of that person’s education. No matter how rich and comprehensive the Curriculum Vitae may be, it cannot contain those subtle but powerful influences which have contributed to the making of the man or woman.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you on this unique occasion as a product of all the collective factors and forces in the complex history of my education. Let me first and foremost acknowledge the trimorphous nature and texture of my education which has been nourished in varying degrees by african-traditional, judeo-christian and islamic tenets, values and cosmologies. I remember, with gratitude to God and to my elder sister, Alhaja Bola Olorukooba, who was my guide and companion, my first day in St. Mark’s Anglican Primary School, Offa. I will forever cherish her foresight when, after I successfully passed my right hand across my head to touch my left ear, the teacher asked her my name and she calmly gave the names which I still bear today.

In the primary school we were over-fed with judeo-christian values. There was little or no consideration for our predominantly muslim background and we learnt Christian Religion by compulsion. We were also lured to Sunday School and the annual harvest and bazaar ceremony of the school church with such rare delicacies as biscuits, sweets and powdered milk. With the benefit of retrospect and my literary education, I can see some resemblance between myself in the primary school and Toundi in Ferdinand Oyono's novel *Une vie de Boy*, translated into English with the title *Houseboy*. Thanks to God that, unlike Toundi, these compelling enticements had not taken me far away from home. But I can still recollect vividly some of the experiences with which the stuff of my mind was made in those formative years. How can I forget, for instance, the following hymn which was part of the daily dose in the Sunday School?

Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord, God Almighty
God in Three Persons
Blessed Trinity...

I enjoyed the melody and was captivated by the solemn aura, but I could not fathom the meaning. Nor can I even now after over three decades, and to imagine that concerning a whole professor who earns his living on words? Is this a case of deliberate mean-ness – the purported sin for which Bishop Arius, the apostle of Unitarian Christianity, was murdered the day he was to make a triumphal visit to the Cathedral of Constantinople in 346 A.D?⁶ Very far from that. It is but an enduring part of the genuine human search for the meaning of Man through the meaning of God.

In the Sunday School we continued our singing, drumming and dancing and I felt in love with Jesus Christ through the emotive content and melodious rhythm of the songs, coupled with the symbolic impact of his bold pictures which adorned the walls of the church and the classrooms. There was one particular Yoruba song which had tremendous emotional impact on me until the unexpected happened in one of my primary school classes. The song begins thus:

Mo fe ki n dabi Jesu
Ninu iwa pele
Ko s'eni to gboroo binu
Lenu re leekan ri
(I want to be like Jesus
In gentle behaviour
None ever heard for once
An angry word from his mouth)

We had sung and rocked our little bodies to the rhythm of this song on a particular Sunday. The following Monday our class teacher presented Jesus Christ very angry, and justifiably so, in the CRK lesson. I still remember vaguely that it had to do with Jesus storming the synagogue to chase off members of the Jewish clergy and laity alike who had turned his Father's house to a commercial centre. Muftau, a somewhat rascally and much older member of the class, raised up his hand and sprang up simultaneously as if he had been stung on the buttock by a ferocious scorpion: "But in the Sunday School they told us yesterday that Jesus never got angry, even once". The teacher did not only shout him down but he also cursed him for being an agent of the Devil.

Alone in the privacy of my thought I ruminated over this seeming contradiction. I later found resolution in the deeply humanistic ethos of Yoruba traditional education under the tutelage of my maternal grandmother and my great grandmother both of whom fostered me in turns on behalf of my mother. In Jesus Christ's justifiable anger, I saw the validity of my great grandmother's proverb the day she was placating an enraged elder sister of mine who was caning and slapping sense into my feeble body for playing truancy in school. The old woman had intoned: *omo ale ni i rinu ti kü bi; omo ale ni a a be ti kü gba*", meaning "it is legitimate to be justifiably angry but still legitimate and human to forgive and yield to placation".

I received further succour from my Qur'anic lessons which I took every weekday after school (except Thursday and Friday) and every Saturday and Sunday. At the end of each day's lesson, my Qur'anic teacher would give a short Islamic sermon and pray to Allah, urging Him to guide and guard us all by considering the blessings He had endowed on Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus Christ) and Muhammad. It took close to thirty years before I could realize that these three high-ranking prophets of God symbolize the three main religious streams, the so-called Abrahamic Religions, which must model their faith after Abraham, "The father of Faith" "The True in Faith" and "The friend of God".⁷

I came back from school one sunny day to find my great grandmother stone-dead. Thinking that she was deeply asleep, I innocently sat beside her and devoured my lunch. I then made for the market to show up to my grandmother before proceeding to the Qur'anic school. I narrated my experience and my grandmother became instantly alarmed. That was how for the first time in my short life then I encountered death vicariously at very close range. I could not sleep at home for I began to envision the dead woman's apparition in every dark corner. I ran off to the next house to sleep with my friend whose mother I instinctively loathed for being the local priestess of Orisa-Oko, the Yoruba god of Harvest. She received me warmly and with amused understanding, but I refused to eat her meal of delectable pounded yam and *isapa* soup reminiscent of her delicious delicacies during the annual Orisa-oko festival.

Thus, Mr. Vice-chancellor sir, I received in my highly impressionable years formal Christian education at school, semi-formal Qur'anic education after school and informal traditional education in the beehive of the activities of my residential compound and community.

At Offa Grammar School, Offa, the Christian education continued. Initially I excelled in the Sciences, especially Mathematics, but later became a laggard in these subjects, no thanks to the absence of guidance and counselling services in our school days. I then combined pure arts with pure science subjects and ended up doing far better in the former, including CRS and English Language in which I each made A. At 16, when I lost my father, I was too unguided, too uncounselled to have any articulate ambition. So I was rail-roaded, as it were, to the Pivotal Teacher Training Programme in Kabba, but the plan and programme of the Almighty God for me was unfolding, for it was there that I got a glimpse of the professorial chair being inaugurated today. The class album of the first set of graduating students in 1975 reads thus for my photograph:

"A small funny boy who hails from Offa in Kwara State.

He enjoys playing table-tennis a lot;

He hopes to become a professor of French.

Mr. Vice-chancellor, sir, I am today by the special Grace of the Almighty God, not a professor of French, a Romance language in the Indo-European family of languages, but a professor of language in a generic sense and in the context of the complex, soul-searching and soul-winning discipline of Education.

2.2 **In the hot afternoon of life**

The definitive journey into Language Education began in the College of Education, Ilorin where I majored in English and French. I broadened out to Language Arts Education at A.B.U. Zaria where I benefited from the international repository of scholarship as epitomized by Dr. Legese (a foremost Ethiopian Sociologist), Dr. Musaaazi (A Ugandan Educational Management scholar of repute), Mrs. Olive Dubey, a Canadian mother-figure, who supervised my first degree project on the diagnosis and remediation of reading problems.

Notable in the ABU team was Dr. Mukerjee, an Indian, who taught me Educational Psychology and planted in my yearning mind the two striking themes of "penis envy" (the bio-psychological basis of modern-day feminist egalitarianism) and "the sour grape concept" (escapist rationalism). Dr. Tunde Lakoju stimulated in me an enduring passion for literature and criticism, and was to advise me quite poetically several years later on completion of my Ph.D

programme not to work in any of the old universities where, according to him, “the tired professors would sit on your head and shit on it”. The late Prof. Emmanuel Odumuh introduced me to the fundamentals of Language Policy and Planning. From Dr. (now professor) Isaac Olaofe I learnt the rudiments of Applied Linguistics and the profit of perseverance and patience in learning. The late Prof. David Williams, a Barbadian, whetted my nascent appetite for TESL, and Prof. T.K. Adeyanju, the Nigerian American, fed me with Linguistics, especially psycholinguistics, as a jar of unadulterated honey which sticks delicately and deliciously to the palate, and to the brain too!

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I consolidated my A.B.U. gains at U.I, Ibadan under the strict and seasoned eyes of Prof. Ebo Ubahakwe who constantly admonished me not to imitate many graduate students who, according to him “love to cut corners”, for “you would pay dearly for every corner you cut somehow, somewhere, some day”. He also advised me to always speak out for Truth and Justice whenever I have the capacity to do so. He charged me to be inward-looking and thus suggested to switch from English and work on the acquisition/learning of Yoruba language by young, non-Yoruba Nigerian learners. That was how he, an Igbo man, who has contributed immensely to scholarship in the field of English Studies and Igbo dialectology and pedagogy supervised, unfortunately, the first Ph.D thesis ever then in the area of Second Nigerian language learning and acquisition with specific reference to Yoruba, within the rubric of Psycholinguistics.

Prof. (Mrs.) Caroline Aderonke Okedara was the maternal figure in the Department who took me with faltering steps through the complex paths of Advances in Reading and Literacy and has since then never abandoned me. From Prof. Adedeji Awoniyi, I learnt the social and cultural values of education and the significance of the mother-tongue in meaningful education.

A brief review of my professional career will fill up the missing strokes in the historical canvas against which the chair being inaugurated with this lecture can be fully appreciated. I have taught at all the levels and branches of the Nigerian school system, except the polytechnic. My teaching career began at the age of 18 in my Alma-mater, St. Mark’s Primary School, Offa where I taught for a few months before my secondment by the ministry to the newly established Government Technical College, Erin-Ile, where I was the foundation Mathematics and Integrated Science teacher in 1976. On completion of the NCE programme in 1979, I taught French briefly for a couple of months at Government High School, Ilorin before proceeding to the University for my first degree after which I taught English for about a year in Offa Teachers’ College before moving on to the then Oyo State College of Education, Ila-Orangun (Oyo Campus). In 1990 I joined the service of this University as Lecturer I in Language Education with teaching and research interests in English Education and Applied Linguistics.

Mr. Vice-chancellor, sir, I hope one day I will have the sabbatical opportunity to teach Use of English or Communication Studies in a Polytechnic so as to complete the teaching ladder.

2.3 **Towards the Sunset of Life**

I have continued to teach and learn from both my students and professional colleagues the twin disciplines of language and education in their complex but colourful ramifications. I will attempt to capture in this lecture the essence of my teaching, learning and re-learning. For me it is better to be a learning man than a learned man since the epithet “learned” conveys a sense of intellectual inertia, a smug feeling of fossilizable self-satisfaction.

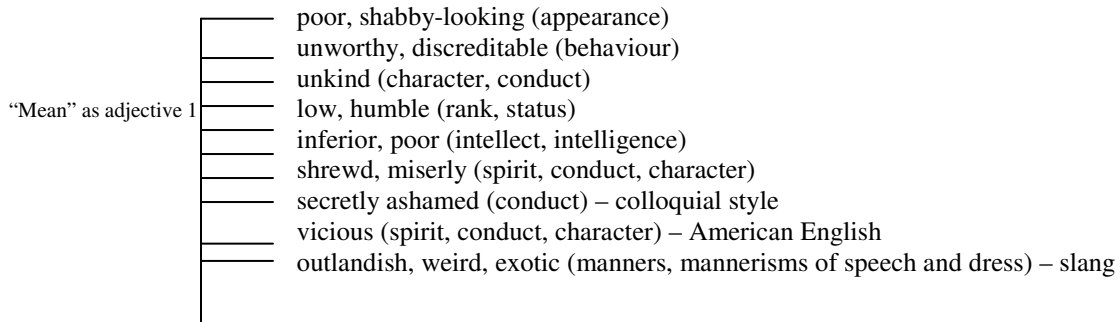
Unfortunately, or somewhat paradoxically, I started only recently to rethink and relearn much of what I have learnt through the intellectual substructure of a judeo-christian world-view and world order. But, quite ironically again, it is this same education system that has furnished me with provocative parameters and an investigative barometer with which I have been re-gauging and rediscovering first my africanness and ultimately my muslim-ness. In so doing, I have found as a useful polysemic short-hand the notions of “meaning” and “mean-ness”, by

exploiting and exploring the semantic robustness of the everyday word “mean” to shed light on the interconnectedness of language and education in the service of enduring development.

3.0 MEANING AND MEANNESS AS DISCOURSE MOTIFS

As previously indicated, my search for a concise but comprehensive idiom, a kind of rhetorical short-hand that would embrace the wide but interlocking gamuts of two fundamental activities of mankind – language and education – led me to the simple but polysemic word “mean”, with “meaning” and “mean-ness” as two nominal derivatives. Let us quickly consider the linguistic ramifications of this seemingly harmless word:

- (a) “mean” as adjective 1, referring to aspects of the human personality – the spirit, intellect, appearance and general conduct and character:



- (b) “mean” as adjective 2, and as a noun:

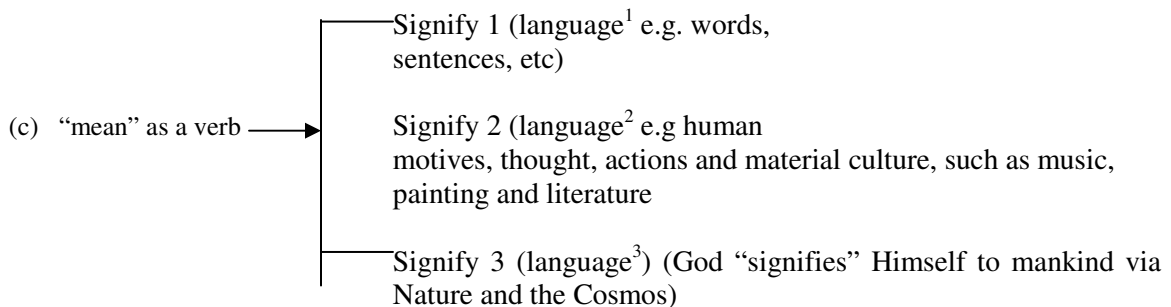
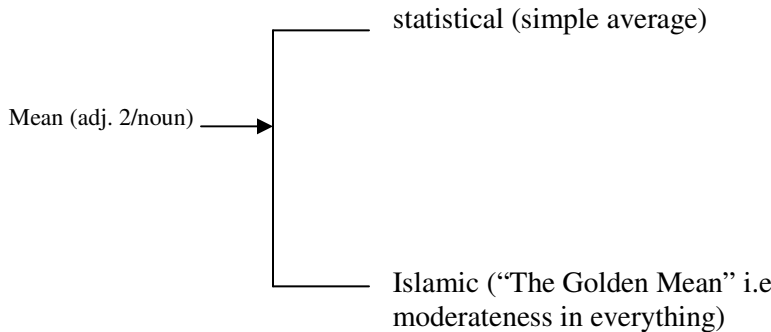


Figure 1 a, b & c: The semiotic Dimensions of the word “mean”.

Repel evil with that
Which is best:
We are well acquainted
With what they say. (Qur'an XXIII:96)

These two injunctions would seem to represent the flexible mid-point, in a spiritual, non-corporeal sense between the mosaic precept of “an eye for an eye...” and Jesus Christ’s teaching of turning the other cheek when slapped on the first. In short, the Islamic Golden Mean is the Spiritual Balance achieved by withdrawing from Evil while at the same time embracing Virtue.

Mr. Vice-chancellor sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, *Ibi ti mo n lo ko jina sugbon ibi ti mo n ya lo po*. My thesis in this lecture is simple and straightforward, but my illustrations, allusions and analogies would be fairly complex, not too simplistic as to nauseate my intellectual colleagues nor too turgid as to dazzle and perplex the common but yearning mind. Hopefully, Town and Gown can thus walk hand in hand to the altar of meaning, without any iota of mean-ness whatsoever.

I intend to show that language and education are two intricately interwoven disciplines through which Man can fully understand himself, where he came from, why he is here on earth and where he is going after here. It is also to affirm that “meaning”, in the two senses of sharing or communing and tending towards God, unites both language and education and provides the key to the existentialist riddle of man’s earthly journey. Conversely, “mean-ness”, on the other hand, debases man and obscures his vision of his proper location in the Cosmos as well as his humble and innocent Origin and his noble Destiny in God.

“Mean-ness” is thus not a mere negation of “meaning”; it is also a misuse and abuse of all human and material endowments, in particular language and education in the context of this lecture. To concretize this focal message I present this short but highly meaningful poem to serve as an imaginative and symbolic anchor for coming to easy terms with the rest of this lecture.

Giles Johnson, Ph.D

Giles Johnson
had four college degrees
knew the whyfore of this
the wherefore of that
could orate in Latin
or cuss in Greek
and, having learned such things
he died of starvation
because he wouldn’t teach
and he couldn’t porter (Frank. M. Davis)

This poem is a satirical piece, precisely a lampoon, launched against an apparently well-educated man, Giles Johnson, most probably a professor, and a foolish one at that, whose extensive knowledge and learning has brought him to ruin and shameful death. The graphological device of using small letters to begin all the lines of the poem, with the exception of the first line, is to diminish and belittle Johnson and to convey the low esteem in which the poet holds him. The first six lines of the poem capture graphically Johnson’s fruitless pedantry. The irrelevant and archaic knowledge with which he stuffs his head is symbolically portrayed with “Latin” and “Greek”, two classical languages whose ancient roles have since been appropriated by English and French in modern times. “Degrees”, “whyfore”, “wherefore” and “such things” belong to the semantic field of learning or erudition but with a negative ring of sarcasm and contempt. Mr. Vice-chancellor, sir, to properly capture the incremental lessening of meaning from “Degrees” through “whyfore” and “wherefore” to “such things” I had postulated the concept of “semantic attenuation” which many of my colleagues have found useful as a descriptive term in stylistics.⁸

The last four lines of the poem is a vivid portrayal of the tragic consequences of Johnson’s fruitless pedantry and greco-roman miseducation. In the last two lines of the poem the

poet moves from “wouldn’t” to couldn’t”, the first referring to a lack of volition, a misguided unwillingness to take up teaching, a noble profession, while the second implies both miseducation and physical incapability with regard to taking up, as a last resort, a porter’s job, which represents a humble but physically tasking vocation.

In sum, in the rest of the lecture I am going to adopt a multiple and eclectic discourse mode which would blend the secular with the metaphysical while at the same time integrating the literatural, the oratural and the scriptural, all with a view to sifting out “meaning” from “meanness”.

4.0 LANGUAGE AS SEMIOTIC SYSTEM

Language is central to all human activities and as such, most people who are neither students nor experts in its study often take it for granted. Such individuals tend to be oblivious of the complex and multidimensional nature of language. However, it is this complex and polymorphous nature of language that has led some specialists themselves, especially the so-called “pure” linguists, to impose too much strait-jacketing, with the attendant over-compartmentalization and atomization of its study. It has also led to divergent conceptions and sometimes misconceptions based on the narrow perspectives of different stakeholders.

In the words of Cook and Seidlhofer (1995:4)

Language is viewed in various theories as genetic inheritance, a mathematical system, a social fact, the expression of individual identity, the expression of cultural identity, the outcome of dialogic interaction, a social semiotic, the intuitions of native speakers, the sum of attested data, a collection of memorized chunks, a rule-governed discrete combinatory system, or electrical activation in a distributed network. But to do justice to language, we do not have to express allegiance to one or some of these competing – and aspiringly hegemonic – views. We do not have to choose.

Language can be all of these things at once...⁹

While agreeing with these two scholars up to this point, I would like to stress that in a more fundamentally generic sense, language is even more than “all of these things”. Language can be most comprehensively viewed as a communication code, any signalling or semiotic system, or, in the metaphysical purview of this lecture, any medium of “meaning”, every mode of communing through which Man means to Man, to other creatures and to his Creator.

Focusing on Reading as the language skill with the highest surrender and utilitarian value in this modern age, I had once looked at language from this generic perspective but in terms of its use as a means of daily communication.¹⁰ In doing so, I had identified three major types of language or communication code, which I am presently re-ordering and re-classifying into four as indicated in Figure 3.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION CODE OR SEMIOTIC SYSTEM	EXAMPLES	SIGN TYPES	CHANNEL TYPES

PARA-LINGUISTIC	Aspects of kinesics e.g. posture, facial expression, eye contact and pre-linguistic sounds – hissing, booing, etc	Symbol, Icon, Index	Visual Auditory
LINGUISTIC	Verbal languages e.g. Yoruba, Arabic, English and Chinese.	Symbol, Icon, Index	Visual (graphic) Auditory (Phonic)
EXTRA-LINGUISTIC	Proxemics (i.e physical, social, psychological and psychic distance); material and non-material culture (e.g worship, music, literature)	Symbol, Icon, Index	Visual Auditory Gustatory Olfactory Tactile
ULTRA-LINGUISTIC	All aspects of Nature and the cosmos, including the paralinguistic, linguistic and extralinguistic aspects as part of the Language of the Creator.	Symbol, Icon, Index	Visual Auditory Gustatory Olfactory Tactile

Figure 3: An upgraded version of Lawal’s (1995) model¹¹ of semiotic systems

This upgraded version of an earlier model identifies four major categories of semiotic system, or language in its most generic sense, with their examples, sign and channel types. The linguistic system refers to “pure”, verbal or human languages, while the paralinguistic code is usually dependent upon, and complementary to it, at least in this present stage of our biological development as homo sapiens. It is however possible to conjecture that the contemporary verbal languages originated through an evolutionary chain from the paralinguistic code which man shares with lower animals, thus underscoring the animal origin and nature of man, and the resilience and indispensability of the paralinguistic accompaniment in human speech. This is not to lend support to any particular hypothesis on the origin of language, but to stress that language in its narrow and broader senses is a product of both nature and nurture.

The extralinguistic code would first appear to be totally outside and independent of verbal language. There are, however, certain higher-order semiotic systems such as literature, painting, music and other creative arts, which employ a harmonious combination of other lower code types, with one or too serving as the primary level of signification, as does the linguistic code in the case of literature.¹²

The ultra-linguistic code is of the highest order since it employs the three other code types as basic elements through which the highest form of signalling in respect of metaphysical meaning is achieved. Thus, when for instance the Almighty God inspired Prophet Muhammad, through the agency of the Archangel Gabriel, to read, and the prophet responded by saying he could not read, he was merely thinking naturally of reading as a skill of verbal language, Arabic in his own circumstance, and as an illiterate adult then. By the time the voice of inspiration commanded the third time in a most peremptory manner, the prophet then tremulously inquired: “what can I read?” having now realized that this kind of strange reading was not like the one he was not capable of:

The Angel then said:

“In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
 Read in the Name of your Lord
 Who created,
 Created man from a clot of blood

Read. And your Lord is most Bountiful
Who taught the use of the Pen
Taught man what he knew not (Qur'an XCVI:1-5)

When in another latter revelation he was charged to “proclaim the bounty” of his Lord, it dawned on him, that he was to become the Model and Prototype of Mankind through this unusual reading by an illiterate adult. This reading is now in the present form of Al-Qur'an, which means “The Reading par Excellence”. A salient implication of this is that God's primary language is His Creation which contains signs which Man has to decode or read by first reciting them as a parrot would do, or better still as a little child would rehearse the mother's speech; by subsequently reflecting upon them as would do an advanced learner; and by finally proclaiming the Bounty of God so as to reclaim unregenerate humanity as did all prophets of God.

Mr. Vice-chancellor, in my most recent teaching and research activities, I have attempted to fuse my earlier judeo-christian learning with my current islamic re-learning, thereby integrating what is erroneously tagged as the “secular” with the essentially spiritual. In the field of Reading, for instance, I have started to rethink and relearn much of what I had hitherto taken for granted, by stretching the two well-known linguistic and psycholinguistic models of reading through pragmatic precepts and principles into the Qur'anic metaphysical realm. For want of time and space, let me summarise my metaphysical model of reading as illustrated in Figure 4:

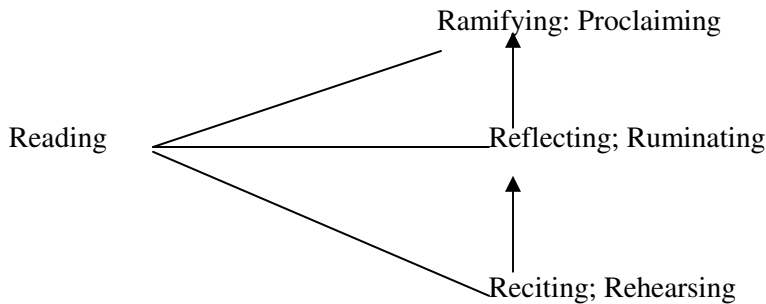


Figure 4: Lawal's (2003) Metaphysical Model of the 3R's of Reading.¹³

The first layer of Reciting or Rehearsing covers vocalization or verbalization, the physical dimension of reading which hardly goes beyond the mouth. This is the essential focus of the materialist approach based on a purely linguistic model of language and reading as illustrated earlier in Figure 3. It sees reading as a process of changing language from writing into speech. The essence of reading, i.e. the negotiation and interpretation of meaning, which takes place in the mind and not in the mouth, is not given the required premium in this model. We must also note that the more useful type of reading we are often engaged in is silent, personalized reading.

The second higher level of reading involves Reflecting or Ruminating upon what has been recited or rehearsed at the first stage, and it covers the cognitive and intellectual processes underscored in the psycholinguistic and pragmatic models of reading behaviour. One of the foremost proponents of the psycholinguistic view, Kenneth Goodman¹⁴ with his wife Yetta Goodman, has argued quite pointedly that reading does not proceed letter by letter, phoneme by phoneme, syllable by syllable, word by word, or even sentence by sentence, as assumed by the linguistic approach. What an efficient reader does, conversely, is to constantly make successive guesses or hypotheses which one uses semantic, syntactic and graphic cues to confirm or disconfirm. Solomon Unoh, a pioneering Nigerian literacy scholar, has also supported this view, which, according to him, emphasizes the cognitive and language-processing dimensions of reading behaviour.¹⁵

Ramifying (or promulgating and propagating) is the ultimate, spiritual level of reading through which, after rehearsing conscientiously and reflecting deeply, the human soul, having been suffused with light, radiates and multiplies into other shining souls in a ratiocinative sense. Through this metaphysical layer of reading, the individual soul transcends the linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic codes into the ultralinguistic realm in which the language of God is His Creation, which embodies his countless signs.

This takes us back to Figure 3 which illustrates the three major sign types as symbol, index and icon. A symbol has been defined as the “sign proper”¹⁶ in which the relation between the signifying item and that which it signifies is not a natural one but entirely a matter of convention. To cite examples from the paralinguistic code, Canadians shake their heads up and down to signal “yes” and laterally to signal “no”. This is not a universal phenomenon. For instance, in Ethiopia jerking the head to the right shoulder and throwing the head back and raising the eyebrows indicates “yes”. The Dyaks of Borneo raise their eyebrows for “no”. The Maori of New Zealand say “yes” by raising the head and chin, but the Sicilians say “no” in exactly the same way¹⁷.

In the extra-linguistic system, a red traffic light signifies “stop!” and a green one means “go!”. The primary and most complex symbols are most of the words that constitute any verbal language or linguistic system.

An index, on the other hand, is a sign which bears a causal relation to what it signifies; thus a smoke is a sign indicating fire, and a pointing vane indicates the direction of the wind in

the same way an arrow signifies certain meaning in the linguistic code. The third sign type, the icon, functions as a sign by virtue of inherent similarities or shared features with what it signifies. For instance, there is a similarity between a portrait and a person it depicts, and between a map and the geographical area it stands for. There are also in many, if not all, verbal languages certain relatively few words whose sounds depict certain features of what they signify. Such words technically known as onomatopoeic or ideophonic words include “clash” and “boom” in English; “*onijagidijagan*” (a violent person) and *worowoto*” (noisy gossip) in Yoruba; “*girigi*” (train) in Hausa; and “*ping-pong*” (table-tennis) in French.

Figure 3 also indicates that the channels are the gateways to the mind and they include the visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory and tactile senses.

In summary, we can now transit from our generic view of language as a communication code to a narrow conception of it as a verbal code by stressing that what unifies all semiotic systems is the signaling of meaning (i.e signification) through the three types of signs which are of varying degrees of explicitness/arbitrariness, as indicated in Figure 5.

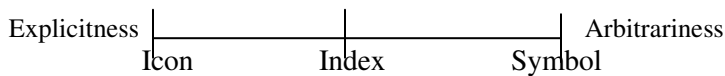


Figure 5: A model of Explicitness/Arbitrariness of Sign Types

5.0. VERBAL LANGUAGE AS MAN’S UNIQUE ATTRIBUTE

Language, in its narrow verbal sense, is one of the unique attributes of mankind and is perhaps the closest phenomenon to Man. Since language is closely linked with thinking,¹⁸ it is also fundamental to human existence and survival. Rene Descartes (1591 – 1650), the father of modern philosophy, is reputed to have declared: “I think therefore I am”,¹⁹ meaning that the proof of our existence as human beings is our ability to think, which is our starting point for our search for knowledge.

Our humanity thus depends on our thinking ability and our capacity for language. A simple experiment: let us pause for a few seconds and think about anything... If we were thinking at all, we must be thinking in one language or another! What then happens in the case of the deaf and dumb? They also think through the medium of an internal, innate blueprint of language, according to Noam Chomsky²⁰ and his co-mentalists, since language is both a verbal and mental phenomenon.

The humanizing quality of language would seem to be a universally acknowledged truism. Among the Malians of West Africa, a newborn baby is a “*Kuntu*”, a “thing”, not yet a “*Muntu*”, a “person”²¹. It is only when the child begins to acquire a verbal language that the child becomes a human being. In a similar vein, the pronoun “it” in English is used for a baby even when the sex is not in doubt, most probably because the child is yet to acquire a language. Our humanity would thus seem to be largely dependent upon our linguistic ability.

How interesting it would be if animals could talk as human beings do so that human beings could be more cautious and less mean! Justice would be more properly served if animals could give testimony. There would be a reduction in crime, no doubt and, quite probably, an increase in the divorce rate²², but then Man would adjust and the scourge of such dreaded diseases as AIDS would be reduced.

The next question is: do different types of animals possess their own respective languages? Of course yes, but animal languages would be better classified as paralanguages due to their highly simple and predictable nature when compared with the robustness and comprehensiveness of the human language. Animal languages lack the adaptive vigour which

human languages remarkably display across time, space and situation. This itself is a perfect reflection of the flexibility and adaptability of the human personality. It is this gift of verbal language which, more than most other capacities, elevates man above his basic animal nature.

Nor is there any other known phenomenon which resembles man almost symmetrically in his history, biology, psychology, sociology and cosmology. To start with, the mystery surrounding the origin of language is closely tied to the riddle of man's own origin. As we previously realized in our simple experiment, thought depends on the prior existence of language, but it must be noted that language cannot exist or even have emerged outside of thought. In the view of Fromkin and Rodman,²³ the only escape from the paradox is to presume that God must have given language in whatever primeval form to Man as part of his created nature. This same inference would be applicable to the several gaps in the evolutionary chain in Biology.

Language resembles man in his biological essence. Languages are born, they live for a while and they die either through old age or disuse. Latin is a dead language today, and its death was occasioned by disuse as it was at a point restricted only to writing, devoid of the life-giving and life-sustaining blood of speech. Many other languages are extinct today as a result of old age and inability to rejuvenate and meet the changing demands of time. Languages also exist in nuclear and extended families and they manifest kinship relations on the basis of their historical, genetic and structural affinities as illustrated with the Indo-European family of languages in Figure 6.

The human psychology influences and is in turn influenced by language. Already we have established the intricate symbiotic relationship between language and thought, including all thought-dependent cognitive processes (e.g. recall, inference, evaluation, analysis, synthesis, etc). Human attitudes are also manifested in linguistic choices just as language use influences a person's attitudes to people, situations and events for better or for worse.

In the realm of social relations and sociological realities, language resembles man even more astonishingly. As I have already indicated, there are language phyla just as there exist human races, and one of the language universals is that wherever human beings exist, at least one language must exist, and vice-versa. The koma people recently discovered to be living in primitive isolation in Northern Nigeria have been found to possess a language that is as logical, functional and complex as any modern language. But, more importantly, language behaves as a social being. Languages are strikingly similar and remarkably different at the same time just as we have differences and similarities among human beings and their communities. Individuality and variation are therefore shared attributes of both man and language. As we have intra-language and inter-language variation, so also are there intra-individual/intra-community and inter-individual/inter-community variation.

Let us compare words, the smallest building block of thought in language, and man the smallest expression of communal existence and meaning. A man not only behaves like the company he keeps, he also changes his roles and functions from time to time, from place to place and from situation to situation.

The example of the word "mean" as I illustrated much earlier would show how words change according to situations, according to the company of the other words they keep. As there are no perfect synonyms in any language, no two words mean exactly the same thing or perform the same linguistic functions, just as identical twins are not identical in all respects. The pairs of "tall" and "high", "little" and "small" and the trio of "increase", "extend" and "expand" would each appear synonymous but on closer examination the words are not interchangeable in all contexts. Nor is "iyawo" (i.e wife + formality; – homeliness) is synonymous with "aya" (wife + homeliness) in Yoruba.

Beyond situational changes, languages also manifest variation across space and time (in sound, words and syntax) producing historical/temporal and geographical/spatial varieties, all of which are known as dialects. Hence there had been and there still are today several historical and regional Englishes, including Elizabethan English, Victorian English, British English, American English, Nigerian English, and so on. Within each variety there are also sub-varieties. For instance, Yorubanglish, Hausanglish and Igbonglish are some of the varieties of English in Nigeria.

Languages give and take from one another in imitation of man's biological and social intercourse. English has for instance taken such words as "drama", 'tragedy', 'comedy', 'scene', 'physics', 'phobia', and 'zoology' from Greek; "de facto", "incognito", "libido" and many words in the legal jargon from Latin. From Arabic have come such words as "algebra", "alchemy", "alcohol", "cipher" and "zero". Not many Yoruba speakers know that the words, "*adua*", "*fitina*", "*aasiki/arisiki*", among several others, are from Arabic.

During the 9th and 10th centuries, the Scandinavians who first raided and then settled on the British Isles left their traces in the English Language. The pronouns "they" "their" and "them" were part of the tell-tales of the Scandinavian incursion into the English Language, apart from several words beginning with /SK/ as in "Scatter", "score", "scrape", "skirt", "skin" and "sky". In the same way, colonial incursion into Africa has its scars in several indigenous languages today e.g "*Asibiti*" (Hausa) for "hospital"; and "*Buredi*" and "*Miliki*" in Yoruba for "Bread" and "Milk" respectively in English.

"Quartz" and "cobalt" are borrowed from German, just as "robot" is from Czech. Spanish loaned out "novel", "barbecue", "cockroach" and "guitar" to English, among many other such words.

Having taken too much from others across time and space, English now behaves like an over-surfeited monster bestriding the world like a colossus, launching hegemonic assault on other lesser tongues. In consonance with the current repressive and aggressive posture of its native speakers in global politics and world order, English is undoubtedly the most adventurous, most adulterous language today. It is not just a rapist language but also a homosexual not sparing even French, another malevolent aggressor. As the Yoruba proverb goes, “*Apani kii fe ki a mu ida koja lori oun*” (“a murderer often flinches at the flash of a sword”). French purists are now resisting vehemently what they shrewdly term “*Français*”, (i.e “Frenghish”), the brazen penetration of English into the hallowed precincts of the French language! But these linguistic puritans care less about what French has done to several West African languages.

In this war of words as in the terrorist war of men, loss is the lot of both the aggressor and the aggressed and as there are human casualties so are there over time and space glaring evidences of loss of words in individual languages. But in a zero-sum game, the gains of one are obviously the pains of another.

6.0 **NATURE AND GOAL OF EDUCATION**

6.1 **Education as a human phenomenon**

From language, it is but a short step to Education, not just because language is the medium as well as a subject of education, both of them in narrow and generic senses, but also because the two human phenomena are natives of all cultures. In addition, both of them are inseparably conjoined like siamese twins by “meaning” and mean-ness” operationalized in this lecture in terms of how human beings relate among themselves, with other elements of Creation and ultimately with their Creator.

Let us first begin from the secular before proceeding to the cultural and finally the metaphysical. Both as a process and a product, education is largely misunderstood by both laymen and products of the western school system as found in Nigeria. The ordinary man sees education as the ability to speak good English. His literate counterpart extends it a little to the ability to read and write but still in the medium of English. Others broaden it into the process of learning and the product of schooling. These three different but overlapping conceptions of education reflect respectively three different expectations (high English proficiency, literacy and schooling) in terms of the goals of Education. We may safely infer even from this initial attempt that one’s conception of education, or any issue whatsoever, is largely dependent upon one’s background, value system and general world-view.

Moving now into the circles of great educators and well-established educationists, we can begin by considering Plato’s view on good education as consisting in giving the body and soul all the beauty and perfection of which they are capable.²⁵ By this submission Plato would seem to have identified the significance of the physical (body) and the spiritual (soul) dimensions of education, leaving out somewhat curiously, the intellectual or mental component which would be the link between the body and the soul. Nor had he explained the goal of “the beauty and perfection” of his limited view of the human personality, although he had aptly pin-pointed the ultimate spiritual essence of all “good education”. In addition, Plato’s conception of beauty and perfection is individualistic and terrestrial, as the soul of the individual is neither connected with the souls of others in the society nor to the Prototypical Soul, which is the Almighty God, thus ignoring simultaneously the social and divine essence of education.

To Whitehead,²⁶ education is the art of the utilization of knowledge, i.e the process by which the innate potentialities of the individual are tapped for the benefit of the individual. As in Plato’s conception, Whitehead’s view by-passes the social significance of education, while also

downplaying the physical and spiritual dimensions. In attempting a more comprehensive definition of education, Lodge submits rather cyclically that life is education and education is life.²⁷ By this he means to stress quite appropriately the life-long process which begins in the cot and ends in the coffin, or as some developmental psychologists would want us to believe, which commences in the womb and ends in the tomb.

But the crucial question is: are 'life' and 'education' exactly synonymous? Can't there be a life with little or no education? As there are no perfect synonyms in any language, what are the differences between "life" and "education"? In addition, the definition only stresses the length of the process without describing what goes on in the process and what comes out of it.

In the same vein, Mallinso,²⁸ citing Thrings, another educationist, conceives education as the transmission of life by the living to the living. This view has the strengths and drawbacks of Lodge's conception but, in addition, it fails to acknowledge the possibility of education being accessible from the dead to the living. Many of us living today have benefited immensely from the writings and documented sayings respectively of dead authors, philosophers and great spiritual teachers, such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, among many others.

More recently a study group commissioned by UNESCO examined critically the process and goals of education and then proceeded to replace the old schoolmaster's major objective of inculcating the 3Rs (Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic) with that of cultivating the 3Hs,²⁹ namely:

- (i) the HEAD as symbolizing the intellectual faculties.
- (ii) The HEART as representing the affective faculties of feelings, emotions, values, attitudes and psycho-social adjustment to life situations
- (iii) The HANDS as symbol of the psychomotoric and neuro-physiological faculties as they relate to physical agility and physical culture.

This view, which was rightly credited to Pestalozzi (1746 – 1827) as the originator, has clear advantages over the previous ones cited. It replaces inculcation, indoctrination or imparting of knowledge with cultivation or stimulation of the various desirable traits of the individuals to develop to their fullest capacity. It also provides a trichotomy of the human personality which Bloom³⁰ and his associates had no doubt explored as a platform for their classification of educational outcomes into the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. However the link between personal development and communal development is ignored, while at the same time the affective domain would seem to have no room for spiritual development, as it stops at the level of moral development.

At this juncture we seem to have come to the best which secular thinking has offered on the nature and goal of education. We can now move from "literature" into "orature" using the anthropological conception of education as stepping stone. According to Good,³¹ education is the art of making available to each generation the organized knowledge of the past, the process by which the tradition and culture of a society are passed on from generation to another, from the old ones to the young ones. However, while it is valid that education should involve acculturation, this should only be a stepping stone to enculturation. No culture is sacrosanct, static or even self-sufficient, but every culture stands to benefit from one value or the other in other cultures. This symbiotic relationship among cultures is underscored by Geflan³² when he observed that

many people nowadays like to eulogize our
western education to the detriment of all others,
and forget that other less developed communities
may be able to teach us something too.

By taking recourse to history and going down the lane of collective memory, we can now examine the nature and functions of education in traditional societies. Among the Yoruba, as in other traditional African societies, education is the process of producing an "*Omoluabi*", which refers to a balanced personality, healthy in body, sound in intellect and, above all, strong in the

communal spirit. The ancient Greeks referred to their own concept of “*Omoluabi*” as “*arête*” (a complete man), while the English people would speak of a “perfect gentleman” or a “well-bred lady”.

Furthermore, education in the traditional setting was akin to that of the Spartans in the classical era with its emphasis on learning by doing. Functionalism was therefore the main guiding principle of this type of education. As a means to an end, and not an end in itself, education was meant to be an immediate induction into society and a preparation for adult life – sometimes a preparation for peaceful death!

The question now is what happens after death?

6.2 Education as a divine process

The totality of the secular conception of education, as can be inferred from the preceding discussion, is based on the history and philosophy of ideas, the nature of man’s personality (his psychology), the structure of his social condition (sociology) and how all these three dimensions interact to inform specific principles and practices of teaching and learning (educology). The secular perspective also sees religion as an arm of education as found among western-educated sociologists of education who view the Church as an agency of Education.³³

In secularism God may be faintly acknowledged as being wherever He may be, but He is not located anywhere in the complex process of education. It is interesting to note that the affective/moral domain of the human personality and education is not stretched into the spiritual realm, which in certain euro-american intellectual circles is believed to be inhabited by people in varying stages of lunacy. Thus, in a typical secularist outburst entitled “Time to abolish the study of God”, Lote³⁴ submitted as recently as 1998 that

We know all religions are myths. It is time to abolish theology in universities... The study of religions should move to departments of psychology and neuroscience, if not psychiatry. Perhaps when genetic engineering has progressed a bit further, we will need to consider whether religious beliefs are such a threat to humanity that a little judicious genetic engineering to get rid of them will be justified.

If this is a mean goof from a secularist intellectual or social critic, let us examine the blasphemous blunder from an American statesman. On the heels of the heinous crime of the September 11 terrorist attack on America, Senator John McCain³⁵ reportedly boasted: “we are coming after you (i.e the suspected attackers). *God may have mercy on you, but we won’t!*” (emphasis mine). And to imagine that this is from a man whose national motto is “In God we trust”!

This is not the place to examine the etiology of the wave of Anti-Goddism currently sweeping across the Western World. One point which however needs to be stressed here is the current post-Christian state of most western cultures, as reflected in all aspects of life including the educational philosophy, the polity and the economy, especially as they relate to the underlying conception of development.

On the other hand, the spiritualist conception of education places God firmly at the centre of education, and, indeed, all other human activities. This metaphysical model of education is not rarely the subject of secular literature, but it is firmly grounded in divine revelation as recorded in the scripture.

It is founded on a firm “understanding” of the nature of man, his origin and destiny, his *raison d’etre*, the nature of the human society, the sublime and Perfect Nature of God and the interaction or communion among human beings, other elements of creation (i.e the universe) and the Creator.

All of this can be explained with a few related allegorical passages from the Glorious Qur'an on the spiritual origin and destiny of man in relation to God's sublime attributes:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels:
"I will create a viceroy on earth"
They said: "will thou place therein
One who will make mischief
And shed blood,
While we do celebrate and glorify
Thy holy name"
God said: "I know what ye know not"

And He taught Adam the names of all things
Then He placed them before the angels
And said: "Tell me the names of these
If you are right".

They said: "Glory to thee.
Of knowledge we have none
Save what thou has taught us;
In truth it is Thou who art Perfect
in knowledge and wisdom".

He said: "O Adam, tell them their names".
When he had told them their names,
God said: "Did I not tell you that I know
The secrets of heaven and earth
And I know what ye reveal
And what ye conceal?"

And behold, we said to the angels
"Bow down to Adam" and they bowed down
Except Iblis: he refused and was arrogant
He was of those who reject Faith.
We said: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife
In the Garden and eat of the bountiful things
Therein as ye will but approach not this tree
Or ye run into harm and transgression".

Then did Satan make them slip from the Garden
And get them out of the felicity
In which they had been.
We said: "Get ye down all
With enmity among yourselves
On earth will be your dwelling-place
And your means of livelihood for a time".

And Adam learnt from his Lord
Words of Inspiration
And His Lord turned towards him
For He is oft-Returning, most Merciful

We said: "Get ye down all from here

And if, as is sure, there comes to you
Guidance from me,
Whosoever follows my guidance, on them
Shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

But those who reject faith and belie our signs
They shall be companions of the fire
They shall abide therein” (Qur’an II:30-39)

In trying to understand this passage, we must bear in mind that it is an allegorical illustration of the power of God and the place of Man in the universe. In approaching this highly mystical passage containing deep spiritual insights, I must bring to bear my training as a linguist and educationist. The first important point is that the Arch-angel, Gabriel, or the Holy Spirit, or better still the Spirit of Inspiration, enjoins Prophet Muhammad to “behold”, i.e to gain some mental and spiritual vision of the nature of Man through the highly spiritualised story of Adam.

The first point in the story proper is that God spoke with the Angels. Since the story is about the Unseen Realm, the World of spiritual forces, the language in question must be ultralinguistic, which implies that language in a generic sense existed before the creation of Man, for it was with the word “kun!” (i.e “Be!”) that God created the universe. This would explain the biblical submission in the Book of Genesis (1:1) that in the beginning was the *w*ord, the *w*ord was with God and God was The *W*ord. The *w*ord therefore represents God’s creative command, and everything created from the divine command, i.e from the *w*ord, is a word, a mere manifestation or instantiation of the *w*ord. The Prototypal Power or Original Energy behind the creative command is The *W*ord, which is God Himself.

Next is Man’s *raison d’etre*, his spiritual Name or the purpose of his existence. He is supposed to be God’s viceroy or Deputy on earth, a position which implies God’s entrusting him with certain obligations and privileges. Even when the angels in their characteristic one-sidedness foresees mischief and mayhem on the part of Man, the Almighty God still reposes his confidence in Man, and foregrounds His own (God’s) foremost attribute of Perfect knowledge.

He then endows Man with a little of this divine attribute of knowledge which even the angels lack, so that Man can adequately discharge his viceroysmanship. Elsewhere in the scripture, God spoke of this divine endowment as His breathing into man something of His Spirit after He had fashioned Man into shape (Qur’an XV:29). This unique gift would thus seem to refer to Man’s innate intellectual and spiritual endowments as represented by his soul, which elevates him above all other Creation. This also refers to Man’s limited free-will. After imbuing Man with His Holy Spirit, God then commands the angels to bow down to Adam, which symbolically implies that as Baby Adam continues to grow and develop God further strengthens him with other noble and angelic virtues.

All this clearly underscores innocence as opposed to sin, which was later introduced into his soul through Satan in the process of Man’s development of conscience. Iblis’ refusal to bow to Adam symbolizes Man’s inability to govern the spirit of Evil, manifesting itself through arrogance and rebellion, both of which are products of ego-centricism as opposed to theocentricism.

We should note that God placed Adam and Eve in a spiritual state of Bliss and Felicity symbolized by the Garden of Eden, where they are to enjoy platonic and spiritual love devoid of carnal desire. Due to their spiritual innocence and inexperience they fell to Satan’s false enticement of immortality, disobeyed their Creator and sought self-perpetuation through “illegitimate” sex.

Thus emerging gradually is the allegorical Tree of Evil which God had warned Adam and Eve not to even “approach” or they “run into harm and transgression”. The firm root of this tree is “ego-centricism” which refers to man’s attitude of following his own will, as opposed to the

will of God. This itself is the result of Man's inability to resist the spirit of Evil. The trunk of this Tree is fed by hedonism as symbolized by illegitimate sex, which is described laconically but graphically thus:

Nor come near to adultery
For it is a shameful deed
And an evil,
Opening the road to other evils (Qur'an XVII:32)

In yet another passage (Qur'an VII:22 & 26) we are told that on tasting of the Tree of Evil, "their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the Garden over their bodies". The spiritual meaning of this act is that not only does the adulterous trunk of the Tree of Evil branches out to other such sins as cheating, lying, greed, covetousness, extravagance and even murder, the "leaves" or "gains" of these sins are often used to cover up or even justify them.

Hence the almighty God warns Mankind:

O ye children of Adam
We have bestowed raiment upon you
To cover your shame
As well as to be an adornment to you
But the raiment of righteousness
That is the best...
O ye children of Adam
Let not Satan seduce you
In the manner as He got your parents
Out of the Garden,
Stripping them of their raiment,
To expose their shame (Qur'an VII: 26-27)

This suggests that God created Man in the best of shape, physically, mentally and spiritually and the human soul in its naked purity knew no shame because it knew no guilt. After it was touched by guilt and soiled by Evil, the thoughts and deeds of Man became the clothing and adornments of his soul.

Thereafter came God's inevitable attribute of Justice. As Man was banished from his high spiritual pedestal to a lowly one on earth, a temporary "dwelling place" where, unlike the spiritual Eden, he would have to search for his "means of livelihood" and enmity would be the common lot of his race. But even in justice, God's love still predominates as He taught Adam "words of inspiration" and He turned towards him in Forgiveness and Mercy. However, Man is warned to follow God's Guidance so as to reclaim Felicity here on earth and in the hereafter after death, for if death is the end of man, then life has no meaning.

From this allegory, therefore, this life is essentially a test, a probation, through which man can reach a nobler state through good deeds, so that he can rise first above his animal nature, through his human or intellectual essence, to his spiritual quintessence through the Mercy of God. To fully appreciate this, he must first attempt to understand himself fully, (as indicated in figure 7) how he is an insignificant speck in God's spacious Creation, before he can get as much vision of God as his own will and God's Guidance can afford him (see figure 8). Above all, he must understand that God is the Locus and Focus, the Origin and Goal of his probationary life and his other existences as illustrated in Figure 9.

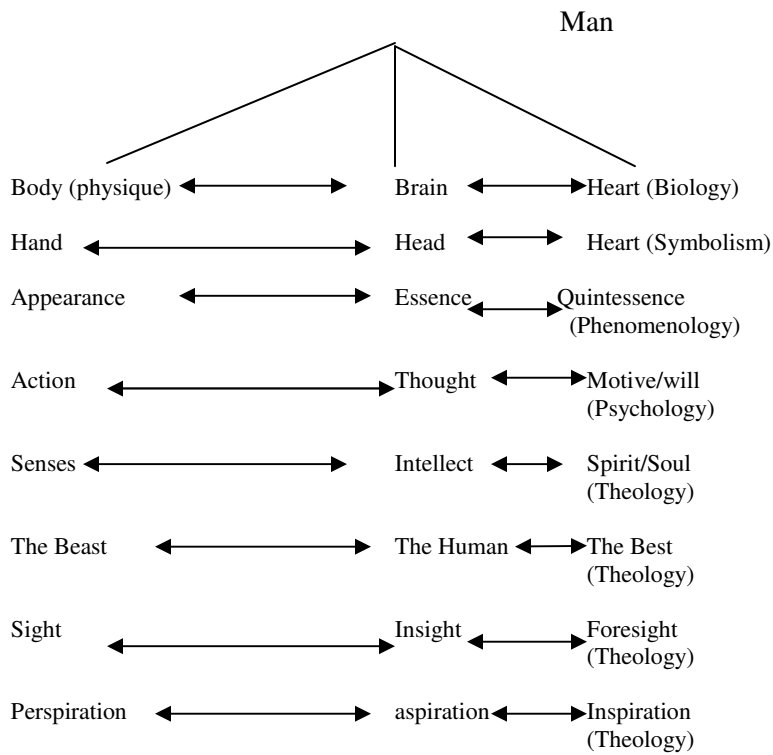
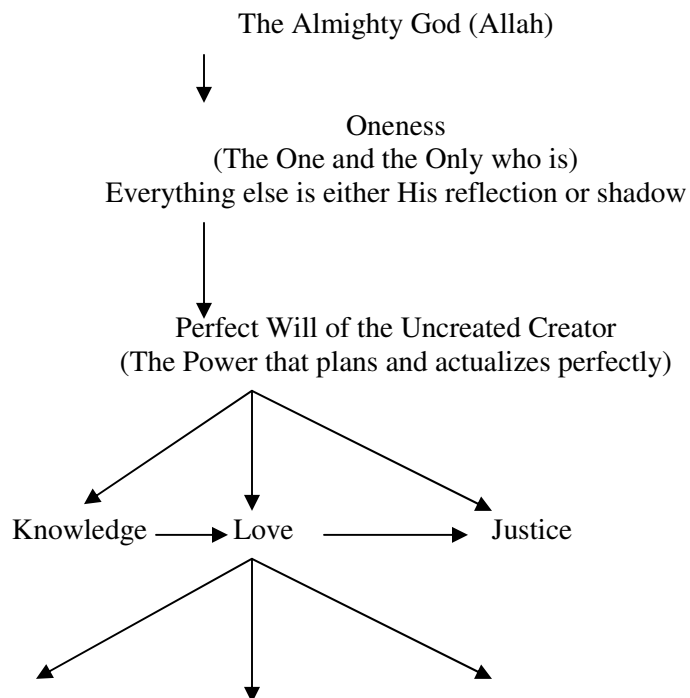


Figure 7: Trichotomies of the Nature of Man



Grace
(for all creation,
Including
Believers and
Unbelievers)

Forgiveness
(for repentant
sinners)

Mercy
(for righteous
Believers)

Figure 8: A Glimpse of God's Divine Attributes

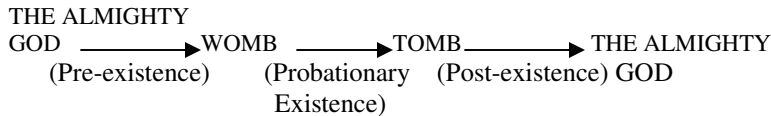


Figure 9: God as Locus and Focus of Man’s Existences

Figure 7 indicates that the primary attribute, (or Name in theological phraseology of God), is “The One and the Only One who is” as He is the Uncreated Creator, who exists by, in, on and for Himself. He is the Perfect Light of the Heavens and the Earth from which all other things manifesting His Glory are mere lights or reflections, while other things refusing to do so remain in His shadow. As the Causeless Cause of all consequences, His Perfect Will manifests primarily in His boundless and flawless Knowledge, which is the source of His limitless Love for His Creation, and of His Merciful Justice.

As His knowledge encompasses all, so also His Love and Justice. This manifests in His Grace towards all His Creation, His Forgiveness towards repentant sinners and His Mercy towards His sincere Believers who, however, can only be righteous in a limited human sense (since the best of us in the presence of God, is but a filthy rag). In God’s Benevolent Justice, man’s single misdeed is punished in a measure equal to the misdeed but He rewards a good deed far more than it merits. Herein lies the salvation of unregenerate mankind. In the final analysis God does not wrong man in the least, it is man through his weak and limited will who wrongs his own soul.

As indicated in figure 9, the primary purpose of Education is to make man appreciate His Noble Origin and His Destiny in God and His privileged position in God’s Universal plan. In this respect, education and indeed all other disciplines including Mathematics and the Physical Sciences are branches of Theology. All education is ultimately religious – to either bring Man to reclaim his lost Eden by serving God in Faith and righteous deeds, or to lead him further and further down the dark abyss of perdition through the service of Mammon and the Evil Ones.

In this metaphysical model of Education, science becomes a stepping stone for meta-science. For instance, the foremost Attribute of God is expressed in mathematical terms as being The One and the Only. In metaphysical numerology, 1 and 0 are the only “essential” figures, but 1 is the quintessential figure as 0 is only a negation of 1. Moving from Mathematics to Theology, to describe God as 1 is to say that he is the Quintessential Reality beside which anything else is 0, since in the final analysis, anything that exists temporarily does not exist ultimately. All other numbers or figures are either multiples or divisibles of 1, just like all other realities are contingent upon, and are mere manifestations of God, the One and Only Reality. Furthermore, the divisibles and multiples of 1 run into infinity, an imprecise and therefore non-mathematical measure or description of God’s attribute of Eternity.

This can also be likened to Einstein’s law of Relativity in Physics as it relates to the measurement of anything existing in time and space vis-à-vis the need for a reference point. If the Universe is described in terms of time and space, the crucial meta-scientific question is: what exists outside our ideas of time and space? From physics we can now take a leap into metaphysics and reflect upon the Qur’anic position that God is not just the Beginning and the End, but these two human ideas belong to Him, as God is Spaceless and Timeless and what man considers as “space” and “time” in his present carnal existence are but Spacelessness and Timelessness, i.e Eternity!

We can also consider the historic case of Galileo Galilee an Italian physicist and astronomer, who argued, contrary to the unscientific position of the Church, that the Earth moves and it is not the Centre of the Universe. The Church charged that belief in a moving Earth was contrary to scripture. Galileo proved his case experimentally by climbing on to the leaning tower

of Pisa from the top of which he dropped two stones of differing weights which fell with the same speed to the ground, thus disproving the Church's faulty views about the laws of motion.

Galileo was charged with heresy and made to face an inquisition in Rome. He had to soften his position to avoid being burnt at the stake, a punishment reserved for heretics. Although Galileo suffered incarceration in the hands of the Church leading to his blindness before his death, he was to be vindicated by Science first and later Theology. Pope John Paul II, commenting in 1992 on the report of a papal commission set up in 1982 on Galileo's trial, described him as "a sincere believer", who "showed himself to be more perceptive in this regard than the theologians (and the professors of philosophy) who opposed him".³⁶

But beyond this, the gravitational law in Physics can be spiritualized and made a stepping stone to the metaphysical law which stipulates that whatever is of the Earth must eventually return to the Earth. As the Yoruba have captured it quite pointedly, "*Laalaa to roke ile lo n bo*", meaning that "whatever goes up must come down". In a more profound sense, all things, big and small, which have the same Origin must have the same Destiny – in Earth first and ultimately in God.

Education is thus the development of a positive will, so as to purify the soul (which is God's first station on Earth and the link between Man and God) through the right use of the senses, the pathway to the intellect, which in turn feeds the soul. The purification and development of the positive will, the essence of education, involves, as in the allegorical case of Adam, experience, determination and effort on the part of the learner. Beyond all of this, however, the learner also requires the guidance of teachers, with God being the Ultimate Teacher. A teacher is thus a guide who provides the right experience, both secular and spiritual, encourages the learner's effort and directs learner's will to the Right Will, the Will of God.

Education is therefore the discipline of the Body, the Mind and the Soul of Man in doing righteous deeds in the service of God, his fellow-men and other creatures. This is what was meant when God commanded the Holy Prophet, an illiterate adult, to "read in the Name of God". Unfortunately there is plenty of reading in the world today without the Name of God. This explains why, by the very burden of their ponderous and pedantic knowledge, many so-called men of letters, such as Giles Johnson in the poem, end up missing the vital glimpse of God, the very Goal of all meaningful education.

Mr. Vice-chancellor, sir, in this respect I hereby humbly propose a mill and grill model of education which is erected on, and also fired by the tripodal structure of "orature" as foundation (i.e, traditional education), with "scripture" (i.e, spiritual as opposed to mere dogmatic, religious education) mediating between the traditional and the secular (i.e. "literature" in a generic sense). This model aims at producing "well-cooked" and balanced products as opposed to "half-cooked" or even "ill-cooked" ones as found in the ilk of Giles Johnson. (See Figure 10).

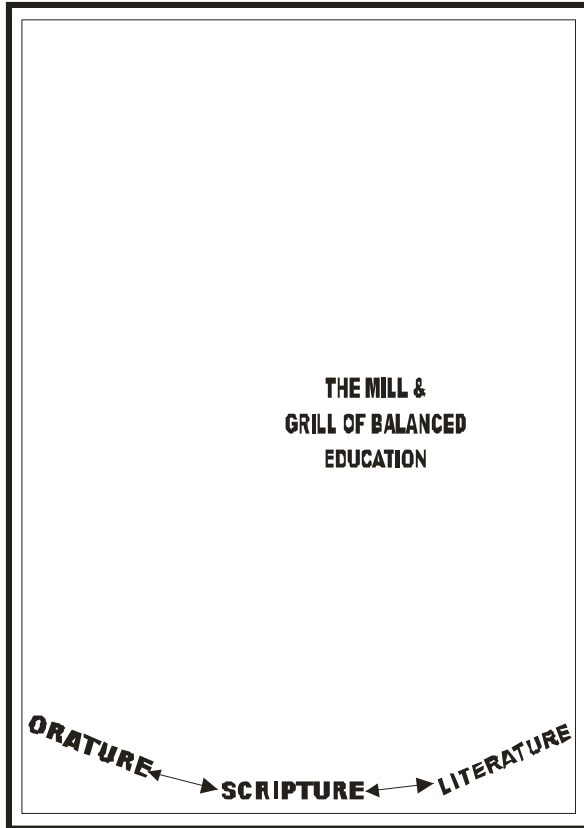


Figure 10: A Trichotomous Mill & Grill Model of Balanced Education

7.0 LANGUAGE EDUCATION AS A BRANCH OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS

We have already established in section 3.0 that meaning, both in its narrow linguistic and broader “ultralinguistic” senses, is central to both language and education. Having examined both language and education in both their narrow secular and broad metaphysical perspectives, we can now explore the nature and purview of Language Education within the ever-widening discipline of Applied Linguistics, using figures 11 and 12 as schematic framework.

Figure 11 affords us a panoramic view of all the major pertinent issues of language within a concise schematic framework. The two broad issues have to do with the form and functions of language, a dichotomy which has acquired the force of rigidity. This is quite unfortunate because language pervades and permeates all human activities and to have attempted to divorce language from the social and psychological context of human interaction is analogous to removing a fish from water. The original motive for this separatist and isolationist approach would seem heuristic, that is to make the linguistic form or code easy to study.

Ferdinand de Saussure³⁷ was the first to make the first useful distinction from a sociological perspective between “langue” and “parole”. Chomsky³⁸ later made his own revolutionary distinction between what he termed “competence”, the idealized and internal knowledge which a native speaker has about his language, and performance which refers to his actualized competence in the context of real life communication. Since then, more dichotomies have emerged between “usage” and “use”, “code” and “context”, “text” and “discourse”, “product” and “process”, and so on. All this type of exploration in the nature of language falls squarely within the scope of Theoretical Linguistics, which is one of the two components of the first half of Linguistics, tagged formal or “pure” Linguistics, as if the other functional half were impure.

The second component of the formal half is concerned with the structure or the rule-governed system of language and the object of study is to identify patterns through which linguistic elements are combined into larger forms, from the lowest phonemic level in speech, or the graphemic level in writing to the highest textual level, in a hierarchical order. This is the major segment which de Saussure and Chomsky have tagged “langue” and “competence” respectively.

The second broad half of the language question is concerned with the functions of de Saussure’s “Parole” and Chomsky’s “performance”. Three major functional categories have been identified for the purpose of convenience only, since the three rubrics shade into each other. The fundamental function of communication is achieved through the interactional skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing often construed as the Language Arts. Education is the first, second-order function of language, which primarily has to do with the utilitarian values of language both as a medium and as a subject of teaching and learning. In a narrow sense these communication and educational aspects of language often constitute the traditional territory of Language Education or Educational Linguistics, but in its broad sense it assumes and subsumes the foundational input of the formal aspects of language.

Beyond the sphere of education, language is central to certain practical, problem-solving activities of Man as found, for instance, in the field of medicine (speech therapy), publishing (scripting and editing), law (legal interpretation), and translation, among many others.

In the broadest conception of the field, Applied Linguistics is often defined as a field of language studies, as shown in figure 10, which affords a bird’s eye view of, and a heuristic approach to language, by fusing form with function. Yet, despite this potentially wide scope, it is with language teaching and learning, and particularly English language teaching, that many works on Applied Linguistics are primarily concerned.

7.1 APPLIED LINGUISTICS, GENERAL LINGUISTICS OR FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS?

The analysis of the territory of language studies in figure 11 and the inference drawn for Applied Linguistics in its broadest sense (as almost overlapping with the whole territory) would seem to suggest, in a rather pejorative sense, that an Applied Linguist is a general, non-specialized linguist. However, the need to reunite what had been put asunder, to reconnect, as it were, language not only to the contexts of situation in which it occurs, but also more generally to the many social practices involving an understanding of language is a strong justification for the panoramic approach of Applied Linguistics. The very name “Applied Linguistics” should

therefore guarantee eclecticism and open-ness and guard against the separation of theory and practice.

This explains why on the Continuum of Theory and Practice as represented in figure 12, Applied Linguistics would seem to occupy the “mean” (i.e middle) position of the Principle for translating theory into both function and action. The double-faced arrow connecting theory to principle on the one hand, and also linking principle or technology with practice, illustrates the connector role of the Applied Linguist in bringing together the formal linguist and such practitioners as language teachers and other categories of language policy implementors.

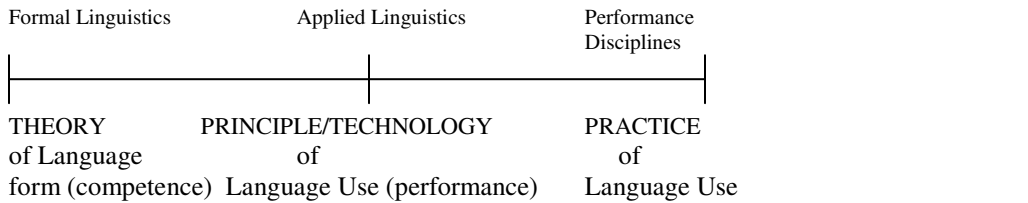


Figure 12: The Theory- Practice Continuum in Language Studies

However, this illustration represents a simplification, since in reality the three components on the continuum are not neatly compartmentalizable. Apart from this, and paradoxically too, the human emotions and desire for stability and order which often lead to separation in the so-called “pure” linguistics are not suspended simply because the subject is labelled “applied”.³⁹ In other words, all disciplines are constantly developing and becoming wider and wider while at the same time attempting to achieve some measure of stability. For instance, in formal linguistics, the divergent themes on the nature of language have informed the correspondingly different principles of language description, producing such descriptive models as Transformational Grammar and Systemic Grammar. This is to say that principle or technology also has a place in formal linguistics.

Conversely, principle is also developing its own theory, a theory of the technology of language use in variegated forms. First, there are the several theories of linguistic variation in sociolinguistics and many theories of linguistic performance in Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Error Analysis, Interlanguage Analysis, Contrastive Analysis, and so on, apart from different models of listening, speaking, reading and writing in the field of linguistic communication. In other words, as formal linguistics develops its own theory of competence, it is the goal of Applied linguistics to develop a unified theory of performance.

In the same vein, such performance disciplines as Language Teaching are developing their own theories and principles, some partly based on language while others are based purely on other disciplines. In Language Teaching, for instance, approaches, methods, techniques and materials are informed by theories in linguistics, as well as in psychology and pedagogy, among others⁴⁰.

Most importantly, the relationship among theory, principle and practice, as illustrated in figure 12 is not unidirectional in a left-to-right orientation, with Formal Linguistics having to pre-determine what is done in Applied Linguistics, which in turn dictates, for instance, specific language teaching and learning practices. A meaningful inter-relationship is that which is multi-directional and symbiotic with insights from theory reinforcing principle and practice and problems and successes in practice re-informing principle and theory.

Mr. Vice-chancellor, sir, viewed from this humanistic, interdisciplinary and functional perspective, the epithet “applied” in Applied Linguistics is not just misleading but also counterproductive, as it has been the source of the perennial difficulty in finding a simple, clear and workable definition for this interesting and rewarding field. For want of a clearer

nomenclature, I hereby propose “Functional Linguistics” as a fitting complement to “Formal Linguistics” within the umbrella of “General Linguistics”, with a view to adopting a broad methodology that would proceed from the formal to the functional field and vice-versa without any rigid doctrinaire allegiance to one or the other, and with the ultimate goal of elucidating and sharing meaning.

8.0 MEANNESS IN LANGUAGE USE

8.1 English Language is a key factor in unifying the world and reducing it to a global village. However linguistic globalization through English has been observed by such critics as Tuhus-Dubrow⁴¹ to be a natural corollary to the current recolonization and disruption of the minds, markets and cultures of lesser economies through such powerful media as foreign news, music, soap opera and films. As in the international political and economic spheres, English has become a powerful predator language devouring not only the languages of the periphery but also other less powerful languages of the global centre such as French and German.

8.2 The negative effect of globalization shows itself clearly in the Nigerian multilingual situation where the country’s enormous linguistic resources have turned into a curse rather than a blessing. The international status of English coupled with the weak political will of the ruling class has resulted in an exoglossic language policy which is far from being dynamic in terms of planning and development. As at today, there is no clearly articulated blue-print for transiting from an exoglossic policy to a mixed one, in which more and more indigenous languages can join English language in the efforts towards achieving nationalism (authenticity as a united people) and nationism (operational efficiency at all tiers of government). The result is a high rate of illiteracy and low participation of a large segment of the populace in the task of nation-building and a slow rate of political and economic development.

8.3 Deriving largely from a vague and stagnant exoglossic policy, official/school bilingualism tends towards English and one or more Nigerian languages, with English being the dominant language. There is thus a general orientation at the individual, the family and the societal levels towards subtractive bilingualism in which people want to increase their competence in English Language to the detriment of their mother-tongue. It has been found that most young Nigerian learners do not have a highly functional L₁ as they are neither fully competent in English nor in their mother-tongue with regard to the literacy demands of this modern age (Lawal 1991).⁴² In addition, the bilingual medium policy stipulated in the National Policy on Education (1998)⁴³ is crisis in practice as implementation varies from state to state and sometimes from school to school within the same town or city.

8.4 It is ironic that against this faulty background of language policy and practice within and across nations, certain linguists can still afford the puritanical “mean-ness” and aloofness of not wanting to soil their hands in the “impure” pool of Applied or Functional Linguistics. In the highly informed view of Bamgbose (2000),
for linguistics to be socially relevant, we must
go beyond mere scholarly descriptions
and consider the practical application of
our work in terms of orthography, literacy,
use of language in education, language
development and language policy⁴⁴

Even “in the pursuit of crass formalism”⁴⁵, there is the current “mean-ness” of making the data fit the theory at all costs by chopping off stubborn data, instead of working from theory to description and vice-versa within a more meaningful, holistic and synthetic approach.

8.5 A lot has been observed, said and written on the poor English achievement of learners at all levels of the Nigerian school system, including the University (see, for instance, Ayodele 2001)⁴⁶. Beyond poor mastery of the mechanics of the language, however, are other problems which hinder effective and efficient communication (i.e. which convey “mean-ness” as opposed to “meaning”). These include inability to adapt one’s language to the communicative situation (i.e stylistic inflexibility), code-mixing, bookish English and a penchant for literary usage and the grandiloquent style (Lawal 1991)⁴⁷.

9.0 MEAN-NESS IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

9.1 Beginning from the second half of the last century, there has been mounting criticism on the processes, values and goals of formal education all over the world in relation to the crisis deepening within and among many nations. Attesting to this growing concern are books such as *Compulsory Miseducation* (Goodman, 1962)⁴⁸, *World Educational Crisis: a Systems Approach* (Coombs, 1968)⁴⁹, *School is Dead.* (Reimer, 1971)⁵⁰, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1972)⁵¹ and *Deschooling Society* (Illich, 1973)⁵². The sum of the submissions of these authors is the growing irrelevance of the school system in ensuring the greatest good for the greatest majority.

At the international level, the growing dysfunctionality and increasing failure of education manifest in

- (i) gradual erosion of the ethics of service and sacrifice in which place selfishness and greed are gradually being enthroned;
- (ii) institutionalization of the unholy trio of capital (via free enterprise and cut-throat competition), war (via popular violence) and sex (via the entertainment industry) as key components of the contemporary global ideology;
- (iii) widespread violence within and among nations leading to genocides and unprecedented misery;
- (iv) desecration of the sacred institutions of marriage and family life leading to high rates of divorce and unmarried parenthood;
- (v) naturalization of the unnatural sins of homosexuality and lesbianism for which God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. There now seems to be a perverse policy of accommodation rather than correction or re-education of sexual deviants;
- (vi) unabating amassment of increasingly accomplished weapons of mass destruction, while millions are perishing from avoidable hunger, poverty and disease.

9.2 The crisis in education manifests itself in the Nigerian situation as follows:

- (i) After political independence, the colonial type of education continued only with slight modification. Education then was thus an acephalous monster, an immobile colossus, because the head was in Britain while the body was in Nigeria;
- (ii) The 7 – 5- 2 – 3 education system was later replaced with the 6-3-3-4 system, thereby jilting Britain to embrace the U.S. The first ever indigenous National Policy on Education was produced in 1977 without any clear and definitive philosophy of education based on a well-articulated ideology and vision of development as informed by our unique situation and experience as a young multi-ethnic country. As it were, education at this phase now sprouted a head, but it was a hydrocephalus.
- (iii) The Policy has since been reduced to a paper tiger due to poor implementation and the educational ladder is now anything but the 6-3-3-4 system.
- (iv) In the midst of this chaotic situation, Ministers of Education have come and gone, each leaving behind imprints of his whims and caprices. Thus, education has since

been growing several competing heads, thus becoming a dangerous multicephalous monster as illustrated in figure 13. Thus, as ministers come and go, the monster continues to grow and develop.

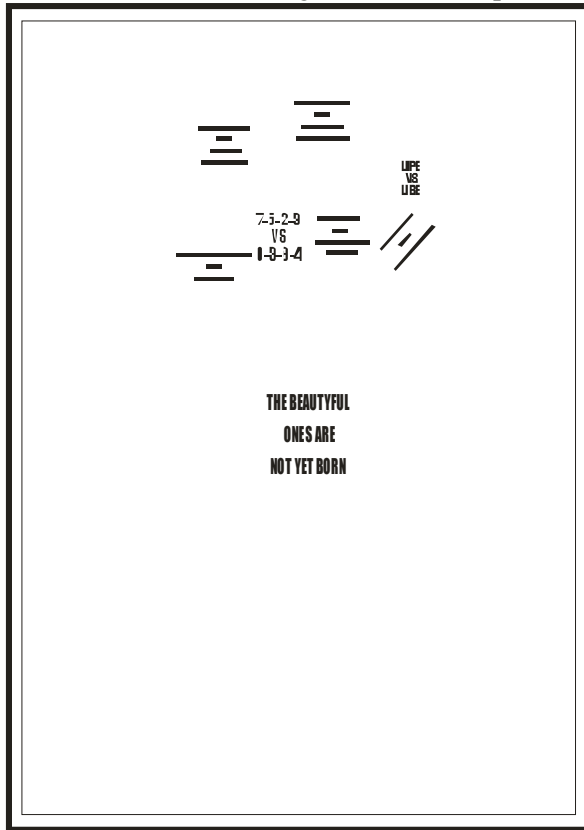


Figure 13: Education in Nigeria as a hydra-headed Monster

- (v) The school climate is thus marked by confusion, tension, dislocation and general disorientation, all of which are by-products of lack of any meaningful, well-reasoned, and goal-oriented direction.
- (vi) The whole system ultimately churns out from time to time a large chunk of poorly baked, job-seeking products as opposed to job creators; many are neither functionally literate nor really worthy in character and learning.

10.0 OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS “MEANING” DEVOID OF “MEAN-NESS”

10.1 Within the Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology as presently constituted, we have developed an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge and learning. Those of us in Humanities have benefitted immensely from the statistical and scientific expertise of our colleagues in Science and Mathematics Education, while they in turn have gained one thing or the other from our humanistic precepts and principles. The result of this symbiotic co-existence is a balanced academic team with an *esprit de corps* which is full of meaning and devoid of meanness

10.2 In the 14 years of my being in the service of this University, I have made conscious and determined effort to break the artificial borders of convenience erected within the broad field of language studies. In this respect I have taught courses and supervised research projects at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the Departments of Modern European Languages (MEL) and Linguistics and Nigerian Languages (LNL)

respectively. In the course of this cross-border search for meaning, I have been lucky to record a few break-throughs either individually or collaboratively.

- (a) In a joint study of the speech act functions of selected Yoruba proverbs, I developed a pragmatic model which has been found quite useful both within and outside Nigeria in the pragmatic analysis of language in use.
- (b) The 3Ps model of evaluating the place of language skills in national curriculum development⁵³ was part of a paper I presented and was well received at the 1995 annual British Council-sponsored international seminar on Language and development at Longridge, Manchester, England.
- (c) I received in 1998 the Elva-knight Research grant of the International Reading Association, U.S.A. for my research on the literacy needs and enrichment reading interests of neo-literate adults participating in the erstwhile FGN-EEC Middle-Belt Programme in Nigeria⁵⁴.
- (d) In a collaborative research effort, Dr. S. T. Babatunde of the Department of Modern European Languages and Mr. (Now Dr.) A. N. Kawu, formerly of the Department of Linguistics & Nigerian Languages, and I were able to identify and analyse the rhetorical structure of obituary notices in Nigerian newspapers and then characterize it as a unique sub-type of the expository genre⁵⁵.
- (e) In 1997 I led a collaborative book project on stylistics, the product of which has been found useful as a teaching and research material by both teachers and students within and outside Nigeria.⁵⁶
- (f) I had in 2001 the unique opportunity of leading the cream of the former students of my tutor and mentor, Prof Ebo Ubahakwe, in organizing in his honour an international conference on “Perspectives on Applied Linguistics in Language and Literature”. At the end of this historic conference, the Nigeria Association of Language Educators (NALE) was formed and a rich and highly educative book was produced⁵⁷.

10.3 I have enjoyed working with and learning from my students, especially the postgraduate ones. To date I have supervised over 20 Masters dissertations and 6 Ph.D theses in different areas of Applied Linguistics with a view to providing solutions to a few of the language-related problems of Mankind.

My first Ph.D student, Dr. (Mrs.) F.O.A. Adewumi, analysed the English Language needs of Nigerian bankers and proposed an instructional framework based on her findings⁵⁸. Dr. J. O. Agbaje later examined the relationship between students’ Grammatical knowledge and their communicative performance in English⁵⁹. Following closely on his heels, Dr. (Mrs) M. O. Olasehinde conducted an evaluative study of the English Component of the GNS curriculum for Nigerian Polytechnics⁶⁰, while Dr. (Mrs) A. O. Adebileje was to investigate experimentally the relative effects of three Modes of Advance Organizer on students’ performance in reading comprehension.⁶¹ Dr. Y. Y. Muslim’s thesis is on the effects of instruction in mapping and outlining on Polytechnic students’ comprehension and retention of specialized texts,⁶² while more recently Mr. A. O. Faniran successfully defended his thesis on the relative influences of lexical density and abstractness on students’ comprehension and appreciation of poetry in English⁶³.

10.4 Most importantly, Mr. Vice-chancellor sir, in the year 2003 I developed and proposed a metaphysical model of Reading within a theocentric model of Education⁶⁴. In this model I have suggested that the ultimate purpose of human life on earth is religious – to serve God and Mankind so as to reclaim Eden both here and in the hereafter. The ultimate goal of both reading and education, as processes for achieving this noble destiny, cannot be only physical or material, nor can it be merely intellectual. In the final analysis all

reading, and indeed all education, must be undertaken in the Name of God, the Source and Symbol of all Good.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) First and foremost certain fundamental questions have to be urgently asked concerning our existence as a geo-political entity: Who are we? Where are we coming from? What brought us together? Where are we going? How are we going to get there? These, I think, are fundamental questions we need to find a collective, broad-based forum to answer, otherwise we would continue to abandon meaning and roam aimlessly in a gyre of mean-ness.
- (b) Nigeria as a nation must re-design itself by articulating a vision of functional and sustainable development and mapping out workable steps and strategies in the short, medium and long run for achieving this. This would seem to fall within the realm of socio-political engineering.
- (c) As part of the blue-print implicated in (a) and (b) above, a new home-grown, functional and feasible philosophy and policy on education should be clearly formulated. If the education system is neither 7-5-2-4 nor 6-3-3-4, what should it be, based on the social, economic and cultural peculiarities of the Nigerian situation? A clear and meaningful answer must be provided in the new framework.
- (d) Beyond (c) attention should be given to the selection and organization of the content of learning at each level of the school system in such a way that acculturation would be achieved in a considerable measure before enculturation. In other words, learners should be well grounded in the traditional wisdom and the positive elements of indigenous cultures before exposing them to only worthy foreign values, with spiritual education mediating between the two. In this regard we need to consider the following thoughtful submission:⁶⁵

Why do civilizations decline, and ultimately die out?

The answer is that the seed of their decay lies in the *thoughts* and *habits* of the people among whom they

flourish. Mainly it is *moral decay* that leads ultimately to ruin (emphasis mine)

We can take “thoughts” in this quotation to refer to the intellectual dimension of education or miseducation, “habits” as implicating the psychomotor domain, while “moral decay” is the negative spiritual product of a soul-less education system.

- (e) A more vibrant and dynamic language policy should be part of a new socio-political blue-print. This policy should stress additive and balanced bilingualism as opposed to the current subtractive and lopsided bilingualism in favour of English. The goal is to gradually move from an exoglossic policy to a mixed one in which more and more indigenous languages, in addition to English, can be developed to such a level that they can serve to an appreciable degree as powerful tools for national integration and modernization. Such a well-articulated policy of balanced bilingualism would ultimately be in the interest of English Education as well as the development of the indigenous languages, since the mother-tongue does not always inhibit the learning of English; it can facilitate it in a number of crucial ways if there is adequate planning and conscious implementation.
- (f) Since, as the proverb goes, the fish usually rots from the head, if all these fundamental issues are addressed by those who are in charge of policy formulation, and exemplary leadership and sincerity of purpose are demonstrated, all the other secondary but perennial problems in educational administration and instructional delivery would be far easier to tackle.

12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- (i) Having given Glory to the Almighty God for His favours on me and my family, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my late father, Alhaji Lawal Owoade Adeyanju EWEOMI for his short but stern upbringing which stood me in good stead long after his death; and also to my mother, too burdened and bent by age and the vicissitudes of parenthood to be here in person, but has no doubt been with me spiritually since the beginning of this lecture.
- (ii) I must also acknowledge the contributions of all my teachers, both secular and spiritual and at all levels of the formal and semi-formal systems of education, some of whom I have already recognized in the course of my lecture. I remember most fondly the foundation role of Alfa Tairu who took me through the rudiments of Qur'anic education in my most formative years. I also recall with gratitude and nostalgia the humane advice given to my maternal grandmother by my warm-hearted teacher in Primary Two, Mrs. Opadeyi, when ferocious Round Worms were ravaging my feeble body. Those were the good old days when teachers were not only teachers but also surrogate parents.
- (iii) I thank all my colleagues and students beginning from the U.I days, through the Oyo period and finally to the current Ilorin experience for partaking with me in the sharing and negotiation of meaning and, most importantly, for contributing their different quotas to the stuff with which my mind is presently made. I want to place on record the support, care and affection of the family of Pastor Gbenga Adedokun in Oyo during the dark days of Abacha when as UNILORIN ASUU chairman I had to go on temporary and strategic exile. Not only did they shelter me successfully, they showered me with material, psychological and spiritual care.
- (iv) I want to use this medium to appreciate the kind gesture of Prof. Aliyu Abdullahi who discovered me in Ibadan, snatched me away from his friend, Prof. Ubahakwe, and brought me to the Institute as Lecturer I.
- (v) Profs Musbau Akanji and O.B. Oloyede deserve my gratitude for constantly encouraging me to brace up for this unique occasion, when the burden of officialdom was proving rather crushing.
- (vi) My gratitude also goes to Alhaji Yekeen Debo Bukoye who guided me through my first rough months in the secondary school.
- (vii) And to the Institute of Education staff goes my profound gratitude for their support, understanding and cooperation in the last three years or so.
- (viii) To all my younger and older Ijaiya cousins and their spouses, I must register my sincere appreciation of their love and encouragement.
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- (x) Last but by no means the least are those who have had to constantly bear the crude brunt of my professorial burden – my darling wife and “Junior Mummy”, Alhaja Salmota Omowumi Omolola Lawal, and my children – Rilwan, Lukman and Islamiyat – how can I most adequately express my debt of gratitude for your love and devotion and, above all, for learning and sharing with me the true meaning of life when it is devoid of mean-ness?

Mr. Vice-chancellor, sir, *o tan l'enu; o ku s'ikun. Abo mi ree o.* I have exhausted the words in my mouth but thoughts still well up in the fountain of my belly. This is my arrival; the beginning of a new journey. Thank you, my distinguished audience, for your kind, patient and meaningful attention.

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