

LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY IN NIGERIA: THE PROSPECTS OF ARABIC LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Language planning is a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of languages or language variety within a speech community. It is often associated with government planning, but is also used by a variety of non-governmental organizations, such as grass-roots organizations and even individuals. The goals of language planning differ depending on the nation or organization, but generally, it includes making planning decisions and possibly changes for the benefit of communication. Several efforts have been made to influence the function of Arabic language in Nigeria owing to its long historical antecedents in the country but successive governments have been coming up with different language policies that contribute to the development and decline of the use of Arabic language in Nigeria. This paper attempts to analyze the contribution of language planning to the development and function of Arabic Language in the pre-colonial Nigeria as well as the effect of language planning to the decline of Arabic language in Nigeria recently.

Key words: Arabic language, Language planning, Language policy, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Language planning may be seen as an attempt to interfere deliberately with a language. This attempt may center on either its status with regard to some other languages or its internal condition with a view to changing that condition (Baldauf Jr, 2005, Oluwole, 2003). Thus, the first focus of language planning can be regarded as status planning. This may be in form of legislation or policy bequeathing a certain language or its variety with a status. The second focus results in corpus planning. This is an effort to improve the structure of a language or its vocabulary to make it suitable for the new needs of its speakers.

Although, there has not been a comprehensive language policy for Nigeria as a deliberate and planned exercise. Indeed, language planning as an organized and systematic pursuit of solutions to language problems has remained largely peripheral to the mainstream of Nigeria national planning (Oluwole, 2003). Researchers were of the opinion that what can be regarded as the language policy for Nigeria came about in the context of other more centrally defined national concerns, such as the development of a National Policy on Education and the drafting of a Constitution for the country. It is in connection with these two documents, i.e. the National Policy on Education and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that reference can be made to language policy and planning in Nigeria.

The importance of language planning in Nigeria cannot be underestimated especially as it affects Arabic language as well as other minority languages. Arabic has been, as a matter of fact, part of the mainstream languages which had great influence on major Nigerian languages including Hausa, Fulfulde, and Yoruba etc. even before the advent of British Colonialist. Therefore, there had been different language policies and planning that has influenced Arabic positively and otherwise since the pre-colonial period up to the present day Nigeria.

STATEMENTS OF PROBLEM

It is believed that language policy is where linguistics meets politics. Language or linguistics legislation serves as a medium through which power is negotiated between different speech communities within a particular society. Where varieties are endangered, language policy often takes the form of specific ideologies that underline language planning strategies (Grenoble, 2013). In Nigeria, language policy affects many languages especially the minority languages but little is explored in this regard in order to suggest

solutions to this problems. Researchers such as Danladi (2013) in his work "language policy: Nigeria and the role of English language in the 21st century" mentioned that even English language with its status as the "official language" is also facing a lot of challenges regarding language planning and bilingualism in Nigeria. However, little is known about Arabic language and the effects of language policy in Nigeria because researchers are yet to explore this area. Today, Arabic language is to be considered as an endangered specie of language in Nigeria considering the language policy as found in the National policy of Education where the status of Arabic is not even mentioned at all. And where it is mentioned, it is only in its connection with Islam. Alfa et al (2014) mentioned that the National Policy on Education and the government's views on implementation of the committee's blueprint on the document, Arabic is given explicit mention only in relation to its link with Islam. At the primary school level, the blueprint states that: "where Arabic is the medium of instruction in religion and moral instructions, it will continue to be used". This policy, therefore, considers anything Arabic as Islam and as such making Arabic language more vulnerable especially to the non-Muslims.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The present study aims at analyzing the role of language planning and policy in pre-colonial Nigeria as well as the colonial and post-colonial periods and the resultant effects to the development and decline of Arabic language in Nigeria. To do this, brief history of Arabic language is considered with reference to the role and status of Arabic language in Nigeria.

LANGUAGE IMPORTANCE, ROLES AND POLICY

Communication has been of great importance to man, especially when daily human interaction is considered. The value of language began long before the postmodernity. Therefore, the primacy of language in human history has never been in doubt. In social and political policy, language functions as a vehicle of integration and interaction as well as instrument of communication. By implication, to learn a language is not only reaching out to others but to maintain a variety of the social bond, a shared sense of values and communal awareness. Linguists of all persuasions seem to agree that a language should be viewed as a system; a set of elements, each of which has a capacity of contributing to the workings of the whole (OLuwole, 2003; Beau Grande and Dressler, 1992). Hence, it forms a large part of the culture of people through which they express their folklores, myths, proverbs and history (Oluwole, 2003). Language also covers a more potent characteristics of human behaviour. It consists of a comprehensive and overlapping set of "sub-languages," both ethnically and geographically defined territory known as dialects--some are in some cases defined by shared settings known to be registered while others are linked to profession, class or educational level or a combination of these elements. The language includes a wide range of variation from a variety of human activities in a system of interacting with somebody, society, or culture. It also plays a crucial role in the social, political and economic life support of the people in a given geographic entity (Oyetade, 1992). In spite of all perceived roles of languages to man, an all-embracing interpretation of it continues to elude us due to the complexity of its structure and the functions it performs. A useful definition of communication should include the feeling that language has been widely studied and acclaimed as the most valuable human institution and is indispensable in all spheres of life (Oluwole, 2003; Crystal, 1987) Conceptualized it as having perhaps a "magical, " "mystical" and "unique" role in capturing the breadth of human thoughts and endeavours." It means that for a country to function properly it needs the cooperation and understanding of people (Rufai, 1977) for co-operation and understanding among different ethnic groups, inter-ethnic discussion was needed. It is the crucial component of cultural identity and the most striking factor in distinguishing one culture from another. The roles of language include a substantial amount of people's historical experience, their thought patterns, and their world view.

Language policy: Kaplan & Baldauf (1997), defined language planning as a body of ideas, laws and regulations (language policy), change rules, beliefs, and practices intended to achieve a planned change (or to stop change from happening) in the language use in one or more communities. Hoffmann (1991), however, considers language planning as concerned with "both the symbolic function of language within a society, and with the instrumental use that its speakers make of their language." But Crystal (1990), believes that language policy should be understood as a systematic attempt to resolve the communication problems of a community by studying the various dialects it uses and developing a viable policy concerning the collection and the use of different languages. One crucial point stated in this view is that the primary stage of language policy is seeking to understand the languages available and planning the importance of those selected to be used for various functions. Furthermore, related to this is the fact that for any government-oriented change in language status, the first stage is information on its use (Mackey 1989). Like Crystal, Kaplan (1990) declares that language planning remains an attempt by any organized body (most often some level of government) to initiate structured language change for some more or less clearly articulated purpose (commonly stated in altruistic terms but not based on altruistic intents). Lewis (1981), opined that: "any guidelines for language, especially in the system of education, has to take account of the attitude of those likely to be affected. In the long run, no policy will succeed if it does not meet one of the three following functions: (a) Conform to the express attitude of those involved, (b) Convince those who expressed attitudes about the rightness of the policy, (c) Or those that seek to remove the causes of the disagreement in any case knowledge about attitudes is essential to the formation of a policy as well as success in its implementation". Moreover, Apple and Muysken (1987), also pointed out that language planning is part of language policy, arguing that language planning is, in fact, a part of, or the exact recognition of language policy: a government adopts a strict policy with respect to the language(s) spoken in the country and will try to keep it out in the form of

communication planning, any case of language design is based on an effective language policy, and this will generally indicate a more inclusive government policy.

LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA

Arabic language was given a paramount attention during the pre-colonial Nigeria especially during the Sokoto Caliphate of Sheikh Uthman bin Fudi of the 19th century in the Northern Nigeria and thus was adopted as the official language of the administration. Since the Jihad of Sheikh Uthman bin Fudi of the 19th century, Arabic became widespread and means of communication in West Africa. In addition to that, Native languages were written in Arabic Autography known as the *Ajami* script which was later abolished by the language policy.

Previously it had been the written language of the educated elite and of the government for nearly 500 years. For the fact that Arabic predated any other foreign languages in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, the language was used officially in administration with which chancery prose, official letters, and other materials were documented. Indeed, it then served as the earliest exclusive means of vast record keeping, literature as well as historical record in many centuries before the advent of colonialism. It remained the first imported language used as the official language of education and of daily intercourse in West Africa and it has contributed a great deal to the reconstruction of the African history (Alfa & Abubakar 2013; Ogunbiyi, 2005).

Arabic language therefore enjoyed institutional support of the then community of the Nigerian Islamic revivalists of the 19th century. The revivalist movement was established on Islamic principles subjected to the canons of Islamic Law, which necessitated thorough knowledge of Arabic language before application. This is for the fact that primary sources of the Shari'ah law were all in Arabic language. Hence, the scholars wrote many texts on Islamic tradition of reforms, as regards politics, ethnography, sociology, education, economy and urbanization, historiography, law, jurisprudence as well as administrative organization.

This language policy made it easier for Muslim scholars to produce numerous works in prose and poetry on subjects that cut across disciplinary boundaries such as history and medicine, apart from the traditional religious themes of Islamic jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis and different aspects of the Arabic language itself including its grammar. Thereby, making it a sort of golden age of Arabic culture and education.

The pre-colonial language policy, although, not mentioned specifically by any official document, but looking at the vast literatures written by the Muslim scholars in Arabic language and their native languages using Arabic scripts, one would realize the fact that Arabic was a virile means of education before the arrival of the Europeans in Africa. Significant attention was given to scholarly areas like Theology (*Tawheed*) jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Traditions of the Prophet (*Hadith*), Exegesis of the Qur'an (*Tafsir*), Arabic language 'Arabiya and Stylistics (*bayan*). Others include Prosody (*Al 'Arud*) and (*Adab*) i.e. where the Pre – Islamic Arabic Poetry was learnt. The study of Classical Arabic literature was equally integrated into the scholarship curriculum of Islamic educational system. This was so particularly for learning the pure linguistic correctness of the time since in it were to be found words and usages though no longer current but which could throw light on the meaning of expressions in the Qur'an as rightly pointed out by Ibn Abbas in his *Tafsir*. That's all the more reason why up till today one can still find in the library of any Muslim scholar in the West Africa, one or more of the most celebrated anthologies of pre – Islamic Arabian poetry (Alfa & Abubakar, 2013; Sirajudeen, 2003).

Historically, Official documents showed the kind of institutional recognition of Arabic language as the official language of government administration in the pre-colonial Nigeria, amongst which were letters written by rulers to their counterparts outside Africa. Scholars such as Hunwick (1970) and Alfa (2013) mentioned Almaghili's letter (in Arabic) to Sultan Ibrahim of Katsina dated as far back as 1492. It was also mentioned that in the archives of Istanbul (Turkey) a letter from the Ottoman Emperor there to the ruler of Borno, in Kanem Borno Empire dated 16th century exists (Alfa & Abubakar, 2013; Alfa, 2014). Sarkin Musulumi, Hassan and the Emir of Gwandu Haliru in the Sokoto Caliphate also wrote to Fedrick Lord Lugard, acknowledging him of a visit accorded them to England by the Colonial Officers, in Arabic language (Alfa & Abubakar, 2013).

To buttress the support enjoyed by Arabic as the official language probably heralded by the language policy of the pre-colonial Nigeria, it was mentioned by Ogunbiyi (2005), that in the south western part of Nigeria such as Ibadan a lot of Arabic scholarly heritage were discovered. Most of these heritage were letters from the traditional rulers and Ulama' (scholars) to their counterparts in other parts of Yoruba land of Nigeria. Other works of the Jihadists that cover the Northern Nigeria and some parts of south western Nigeria were all products of the language planning and policy of Arabic language in Nigerian long before the advent of the Europeans.

On the intellectual plane, Sokoto Jihad succeeded partly because of an effective method of planning in the use of this language as a medium of communication. Arabic has in no small measure helped in the growth of local languages such as Hausa, Kanuri, Kiswahili, and Fulfulde. It also became one of the local languages of part of today's Borno State of Nigeria spoken by over two million indigenes of Nigeria (Alfa & Abubakar, 2013). In the South western Nigeria, particularly among the Yoruba Muslim scholars

Arabic was the medium of literary communication and flourished well alongside the precedence of Islam before the advent of the colonialist. In Ibadan, for example, Arabic served as a secondary means of verbal communication after the efflorescence of its literary activities in early 20th century.

LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE COLONIAL NIGERIA

Before to the conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate by the British in 1903 and the subsequent establishment and consolidation of colonial rule, an Islamic educational system, which had Arabic as the language of instruction already existed as mentioned before. A renowned historian on the Sokoto Caliphate, Murray Last (2005), acknowledges the existence of a thriving and broad-based Islamic educational system that also incorporated the teaching of European languages and new sciences in its core curricula. The Caliphate recruited teachers, educational advisors and planners from Egypt, Tripoli and Ottoman Turkey, to help in teaching and reforming the Islamic system of education. This enduring legacy of Arabo-Islamic education from the Sokoto Caliphate continued before and after the advent of colonialism. Scholars established Qur'anic schools and for so many centuries up to the colonial period, Islamic schooling was the formal educational system in northern Nigeria (Lemu, 2002). In the Northern Protectorates, when Lord Lugard came to take over as the Governor of northern Nigeria in 1914, he found over 25,000 Qur'anic schools with a total enrolment of 218,618 pupils (Alfa & Abubakar, 2013; Fafunwa, 1991). These Qur'anic schools known as *Tsangaya* and their students called *Almajirai* from the Arabic word, *Almuhājir* or an immigrant, later enrolled in more advanced theological schools, or *madrasahs* where they studied Islamic Jurisprudence, Theology, History, Philosophy, Arabic Grammar and the Sciences (Umar, 2012).

At first, the British colonial administration, maintained the Quranic school system, and accorded them official status by paying monthly stipends to the teachers. However, things began to change after the consolidation of British colonial rule in northern Nigeria, with the introduction of colonial education. Colonial Nigeria witnessed a paradigm shift in the language planning and policy in the sense that it was not naturally wise for the British Colonial masters to sustain the aforementioned language policy for their own success in the new Nigeria. The culture and philosophy of a people depends greatly on their language. Therefore, the colonialist tried to play alongside the existing language policy by first encouraging the locals to give priority to their native languages which was now taught in the Latin script instead of the existing Arabic autography known as the *Ajami* script.

As colonialism became firmly entrenched, British colonial government under Lugard began to see the advantage of adopting the Hausa language both as a regional lingua-franca and a semi-official language (Philips, 2000, Umar 2012). Hausa was used as a language of communication in official documents, missionary schools and translation of the Bible. Lugard even vowed to "make West African Frontier Force, as far as possible, a Hausa-speaking pagan force and... it will thus be a far more reliable source of military strength" (Lugard, 1902; Philips, 2004). This arrangement worked well for Lugard until his successor, Captain Wallace, under the influence of the missionary Charles Henry Robinson, outlawed *Ajami* (Arabic script) form of writing and introduced Roman script and English as an official language. Another colonial officer, Captain Merrick, who had initially supported the continuation of the Arabic, later argued for dropping *Ajami* script in favour of Roman script (Philips, 2000).

The introduction of Roman script, not only resulted in the gradual phasing out of Hausa Arabic script, known as *Ajami*, but also brought about fundamental changes in the educational and cultural development of the region (Argungu, 2005). The newly introduced "Boko" (Romanized Hausa) shook the very foundations of Islamic education and stunted the rapid development of adult literacy as well as the long established tradition of scholarly writings in northern Nigeria. Historically, *Ajami* literature had played an equally important role in mobilizing for the revivalist movement and for understanding how it should be conducted in accordance with the tenets of the Shari'ah. Sultan Muhammad Bello's *urjuza*, titles *Yimre Jihadi*, is one of the extant works in this category of *Ajami* literature (Bobboyi, 2008, Umar, 2012). Sokoto *jihad* leaders relied on *Ajami* and Arabic language itself in reaching the people and spreading political and religious doctrinal teachings. Abdullah bin Fudi, second in command of the Caliphate administrative and religious hierarchy, was emphatic on the role *Ajami* literatures played in this mobilization process:

"during that time, Shaikh Usman bin Fudi, the founder of the Caliphate, travelled to the east and the west calling people to the religion of God by his preaching and his *qasidas* in *Ajami* in both Hausa and Fulfulde languages" (Bobboyi, 2008, Umar 2012).

Since then the schools in the Sokoto Caliphate taught only in Arabic and used *Ajami* script in educating the people, a new educational system would have to be created if the locals were to learn English instead. It also meant that the graduates of the 25,000 Qur'anic schools that Lugard found when he served as the Governor of northern Nigeria "would have to be re-educated before they could obtain employment with the colonial administration" (Philips, 2004). Therefore, they were considered "illiterate" under the new policy. The Colonial drastic measure in replacing *Ajami* with Roman script was borne out of his ignorance of Arabic alphabets and its vowel system (Philips, 2004). Apparently, Lugard's policy on Romanization of Hausa Arabic was consistent with the recommendations of Hanns Vischer, who was given an honorific title of "Dan Hausa" or "Son of Hausa" and who ironically introduced Roman script to replace *Ajami* (Arabic) script in 1909. At that time, Vischer was appointed by the colonial administration to "reform" the education system of northern Nigeria. Some of his arguments in favour of Roman script included "the use of *Ajami* would mean the government would be spreading Islam"; "learning Roman script would be faster"; "to print

Arabic with vowels would be very expensive” and “few colonial officers could write *Ajami*” (Umar, 2012; Philips, 2004). The colonial administration accepted and implemented the recommendations without thinking about their implications for future educational planning, whether Islamic or secular in northern Nigeria. From the logistical perspective, maintaining *Ajami* and gradual rather than automatic transition to the modern Roman system would have been cheaper and more effective (Philips, 2004). This policy alienated the Qur’anic schools that Lugard had found and allowed to function without interference. It also contradicted Lugard’s earlier support of the Qur’anic educational system and questioned not only his personal integrity, but also his lack of diplomacy. This singular act of proclamation altered the future direction of Islamic education in northern Nigeria. Thus, Roman script replaced a centuries-old literate tradition and value system symbolized in the *Ajami* (Arabic script) form of writing, which the Northern Muslims were already used to (Argungu, 2005)

This policy of the British was multi-dimensional in that the precedence of the Arabic language was challenged even in the Southwestern Nigeria and attempts were made to stop its expansion by series of blackmails and character assassination. For instance, Raji (2002) mentioned that, the study of astronomy, astrology and numerology which are common features of the Egyptian influence on Arabic studies were adduced as a reason for the colonial administration hatred for Arabic in the Northern states. The missionaries in the southwest regarded Arabic prayer manuals as books of incantations, while Arabic medical efforts, both curative and preventive ones, are branded as “talisman” (Ar. *Talasim*), magic, amulet, *juju* and black power. The famous name for any manuscript written in Arabic is ‘*tira*’, while a collection of such manuscripts is referred to as ‘*kundi*’.

Language policy of the colonial administration could also be linked with educational policy. The banning of *Ajami* script was definitely a game changer in the language policy of the British colonial government which later affected the development of Arabic Language and Islamic studies. The gains made by *Ajami* script as one of the major vehicles of Islamic literary scholarship that existed for centuries were gradually wiped out.

There is no doubt that the Quranic educational school system served a useful purpose especially from the social, educational and religious perspectives during the period of transition from traditional Islamic education to dual educational system introduced by the British. One of recorded achievements of these Qur’anic schools, as mentioned above, was that they had an enrolment of approximately a quarter of a million pupils. In addition, Umar (2012) stressed that: “these Qur’anic schools had produced a literary class known as “Mallamai,” learned in Arabic and the teachings of Qur’an and commentaries, from whose ranks the officers of the Native Administration, the judges of the Native Courts and the exponents of the creed of Islam were drawn”. They are a very influential class, some of them very well read in Arabic literature and law, and deeply imbued with the love of learning.

Galadanci (1993) observed the situation of Arabic during this period: “the colonial authorities realized the importance of the Arabic language in the north as the language of administration and the language of culture and thus tried everything within their power to replace it with their own language”. They therefore made English the official language so that government offices and registries the Sharia courts would use English instead of Arabic. Even the local languages such as Hausa and Fulfulde which were already being written in Arabic script known as *Ajami* scripts, were now being taught in formal schools in Latin scripts. The same situation was found in the southwest in the formal schools established by Muslim organizations in response to the challenge posed by Christian schools. Their orientation was largely dictated by the fact that the opportunities for employment in the colonial civil service, in commerce and industry were only open to those literate in English language (Ogunbiyi, 2005). The language policy of the colonial administration was therefore greatly influenced by their political as well as religious antecedent which later had a carryover effect on Arabic language up to the present day in Nigeria.

CURRENT LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE STATUS OF ARABIC LANGUAGE

Status planning is a significant aspect of language planning that analyses and monitors the evolution and functions of language within society. It strives to influence public attitudes within the linguistic community by taking a stand on language policy issues. We have mentioned how the colonial language policy has changed the language use in Nigeria up to the present day. The Federal Government of Nigeria, after independent, began from the late 1970's onward to take official interest in, and make policy pronouncements on the teaching of languages. Thus, in an official document first published in 1977, revised in 1981, and titled Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE), the Federal Government for the first time laid it down as a policy for the whole country that:

- (a) in primary School, which lasts six years, each child must study two languages, namely:
 - (i) his mother-tongue (if available for study) or an indigenous language of wider communication in his area of domicile, and
 - (ii) English language;
- (b) in Junior Secondary School (JSS), which is of three years' duration, the child must study three languages, viz:

- (i) his mother-tongue (if available for study) or an indigenous language of wider communication in his area of domicile,
- (ii) English language, and
- (iii) just any one of the three major indigenous language in the country, namely, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, provided the Language chosen is distinct from the child's mother-tongue;

(c) in Senior Secondary School (SSS), which also lasts three years, the child must study two languages, viz:

- (i) an indigenous language, and
- (ii) English language.

French and Arabic existed under the policy as language options at both the Junior and Senior Secondary School levels. No specific prescriptions are made in the policy document under reference for language education at the tertiary level of education, it being felt, presumably, that the choice of subjects at that high level will necessarily be determined by the choices already made at the Primary and Secondary School levels.

Given what was said earlier, it can be seen that the teaching of English in the schools is of course not a new policy initiated by the NPE but what was inherited from the Colonial language planning and policy. Similarly for the teaching of the indigenous languages, or at least the teaching of some of them, as mother tongues. These two types of languages have continuously featured in the country's schools since the middle of the nineteenth century. As it actually turns out, the only innovation in the NPE as far as language education is concerned is the teaching of the three major indigenous languages as second languages. That had never happened before in the country, at least within the formal school system.

However, the current policy became more complicated in relation to the issue of Arabic due the subsequent upgrade of French from foreign status to second official language where it is categorically mentioned in the current language policy in the National Policy on Education (1998) as:

"Government appreciates the importance of language as a means promoting social interaction and national cohesion, and preserving cultures. Thus every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in schools"

The language policy as mentioned in the National Policy on Education published in 1977 (revised 1981, 1988 etc.) and the government's views on implementation of committee's blueprint on the document, only mentioned Arabic in relation to its link with Islam. At the primary school level, the blueprint explicitly states that: "where Arabic is the medium of instruction in Religion and moral instructions, it will continue to be used (Akinaso & Ogunbiyi 1990). Here it can be seen that Arabic is mentioned with Islam. Therefore, the notion of the colonial officials that "the use of *Ajami* (Arabic autography) would mean the government would be spreading Islam" continues to exist in principle. The problem with this policy remains that the belief of the British Colonial officials in relation to Arabic was maintained even as ethnic group known as Shuwa Arabs in Borno State speak Arabic as their mother tongue. (Alfa & Abubakar, 2013; Ogunbiyi 2005)

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, insights from the Nigerian language policy, show the significance of language planning and policy to the survival of any language in a particular society or within a language community.

Specifically the discussions centered on how language issues are politically motivated in educational, political and social affairs in Nigeria in pre-colonial as well as the post-colonial administration. Findings have shown that Arabic language prospered vigorously during the pre-colonial period relatively because of the institutional supports it enjoyed from the government then to the extent that native languages were written in Arabic autography. However, with the advent of the colonial administration, there was a paradigm shift in the language policy and planning which took Arabic language to the dark days. It is therefore, a common knowledge that the politically driven forces behind the use of Colonial languages as well as call for the use of indigenous languages in Nigerian society put the prospects of Arabic language in Nigeria in an extraordinarily slim position. Here, if Arabic language continues to survive, it will be limited within the Islamic religious spheres. Although, if serious effort is made to revive Arabic language, if not for general communication purpose, it would be pertinent for specific purposes. Arabic could serve as a tool for tourism development if explored. Other areas such as commerce, industries and telecommunication would benefit immensely.

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