

PERSPECTIVE ARTICLE

Ethno-Linguistic Loyalty: The Paradox and Search for the Sustainability of Language in Nation-Building in Nigeria

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Abstract

The success or failure of any nation lies, to a great extent, on the collaborative capacity and the tone of language used for governance. This paper seeks to unveil ethno-linguistic loyalty and the paradox of language in maintaining sustainable development in Nigeria as a nation. It however draws parallels from other nations for clearer depth and illustrations. Language is a unifying force that binds a nation; it can also serve as a divisive element, creating cultural and linguistic schisms in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual society like Nigeria. Drawing from social psychology theory of social identity and the concept of linguistic fragmentation, this paper explores the role of identity formation in understanding ethno-linguistic loyalty and the paradox of language in nation building. Social identity theory examines how people define themselves and perceive others based on group membership, while the concept of linguistic fragmentation argues that language can be a barrier to nation building. When a nation is linguistically diverse, multiple languages spoken within its boundaries can create communication gaps and hinder effective governance. This framework is deemed proper for this study because it argues that extreme attachment to a people's linguistic group and language can lead to discrimination and tensions among different linguistic groups, making it challenging for a nation to work together towards common goals. Through analysis of various happenings and instances in Nigeria and other parts of the world, this paper examines how language can

impact nation building and sustainable development. Furthermore, it discusses the challenges that arise from ethno-linguistic loyalty, incongruity and lack of comprehension in dialogue, as well as make recommendations for effectively managing and promoting linguistic diversity within a nation. Ultimately, by examining the challenges and opportunities posed by this phenomenon, this paper aims to explore strategies for ensuring the sustainability of indigenous languages while fostering a unified Nigerian identity.

Introduction

Nigeria's linguistic diversity, while a source of cultural richness, presents a challenging interplay between ethno-linguistic loyalty and national identity. The strong loyalty to ethnic groups can hinder both nation-building and national cohesion, as well as engender divisions. Ethno-linguistic loyalty has resources that can penetrate human realities whether positively or negatively. These resources can serve as instruments of ethnic cohesion as well as obstacles to successful nation building depending on who is wielding their potency of force. At this juncture, it is pertinent to explicate on a few key words or expressions used in this paper. "Language, as an instrument of communication has resources that penetrate into humanistic realities, that is to say, an enlightening force that can promote positive or negative developments" (Inegbe 2024, p. 214). Ethno-linguistic loyalty refers to an individual's strong allegiance to his or her ethnic or linguistic group, often at the expense of their national identity. This phenomenon can impede the integration of diverse communities, exacerbate intergroup tensions, and hinder social cohesion.

To build a strong, virile and united nation, it is vital to address and overcome ethno-linguistic loyalty traits. The paradox of language lies in its dual nature, acting as both a unifying and a dividing element in society. Language can foster national unity by promoting understanding, cohesion, and a shared cultural heritage, and it can as well bring about conflicts, exclusion and even pose other detrimental effects on a nation's development. The implication is that the choice of linguistic codes determines the output in nation building. The language activities of leadership determine the future of any nation. Arthur Koestler, cited in Inegbe (2024) observes that "wars are not fought for territory, but for words. Man's deadliest weapon is language. He is susceptible to being hypnotized by slogans as he is to infectious diseases. And where there is an epidemic, the group mind takes over" (p. 214). This is an indication that language is used in diverse ways to achieve specific goals: positive or negative, depending on the choice of linguistic codes. Perhaps this is why Moore (1969)

asserts that “to choose a language is to choose a world” and Isayev (1977) adds by declaring that language is “a nation’s most important asset. There is no such thing as a nation without a common linguistic basis” (p.33). Language, therefore, as Inegbe explains in Integral Research “may be described as the sensory motor drive that defines who we are as a people”(2024, p.60) and it plays a vital role in the processes of nation building and development, as it shapes cultural and social identities, as well as provides a means of communication and expression for citizens within a nation. One of the major problems plaguing the Nigeria nation is that of communication, or its lack.

Thiong’O (1981) states that “the choice of language predetermines the answer to the most important question”(p.53). This position agrees with Inegbe (2016) that “language is an indicator of a people’s times, dreams and condition”; in other words, language is a medium through which a people’s ideas, frustrations, lacks and needs are communicated. It is a vehicle that drives the needed national integration for development to thrive in a nation. Thus, the choice of linguistic codes embodies the sociocultural and economic development of any nation or society, and it is a capital prerequisite for nation building (see Inegbe, 2016). The discussion on nation building and development has been tackled by so many corporate organizations, researchers and scholars. However, the notion behind sustainable development, according to Turner (1988), was “formulated in the 1970s but given a pride of place by the World Commission for Environment and Development”(p. 11).

Sustainable development, according to the United Nations (1987) in Brundtland Report means “becoming aware of choices and behaviours that influence the intricate balance of the earth’s social, ecological and economic systems”(p.44). This definition creates a consciousness among people in ways that account for positive impact on their immediate society and global economies. The definition also signals the choice of linguistic codes as a system of signs which expresses ideas through their relative position (Inegbe, 2014, p.450) and may bring about transformation in the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes (Inegbe, 2024, p.215). It strongly appeals for a kind of governance and human dynamics that could catalyze a transformational shift from the usual unproductive attitudes and systems, as well as seek a broad-based change regardless of status.

In view of the communication deficiency plaguing the Nigerian nation, the aim of this paper is to examine how to stimulate social progress, economic and political growth through collaborative capacity and national loyalty, national development through dialogue approach and unity through linguistic diversity. This paper also explores the paradoxical nature of ethno-linguistic loyalty and its implications for nation-building. By analyzing the root causes of identified challenges, this paper proposes potential solutions to ensure the sustainability of indigenous languages while promoting national unity.

Methods

This paper employed a qualitative research approach, drawing on a comprehensive review of existing literature. The methodology involved a systematic examination of scholarly articles, books, and reports pertaining to ethno-linguistic dynamics, language policy, and nation building in Nigeria. The analysis focused on understanding the complex interplay between ethno-linguistic loyalty and national identity in Nigeria. The paper critically examined existing literature, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in knowledge. A comparative analysis was conducted to highlight similarities and differences between various perspectives and approaches. The study drew on relevant theoretical frameworks such as social identity theory and concept of linguistic fragmentation. These theoretical frameworks were used to interpret the findings and provide a deeper understanding of the research topic. The research adhered to the highest standards of academic integrity, ensuring accurate citation and referencing of all sources.

Theoretical Stance

This study adopts social identity theory and the concept of linguistic fragmentation as analytical frameworks. Social identity theory is a psychological theory that examines how people define themselves and perceive others based on group membership. It suggests that individuals derive part of their self-concept and self-worth from the social groups to which they belong. According to the theory, people tend to identify themselves as part of certain social categories, such as ethnic groups, gender, religion, nationality, or occupation. This identification leads people to see themselves as part of an in-group, with positive feelings towards their own group and negative feelings towards out-groups. This tendency can be further exacerbated by the presence of perceived intergroup conflict or competition.

Social identity theory was formulated by British social psychologists Henri Tajfel and his student, John Turner in the 1970s and the 1980s (Turner & Reynolds, 2010). Tajfel conducted a series of experiments known as minimal group studies, to find out how individuals form social identities and biases. The Intergroup Bias Theory explains how individuals favour their in-group, leading to favoritism, discrimination, and hostility towards out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Translating these theories into practical terms, it is evident that when ethno-linguistic identities are valued above national identity, nation building efforts face significant challenges. By understanding underlying psychological processes, policymakers and stakeholders can design interventions to mitigate the negative effects of ethno-linguistic loyalty and foster a sense of collective national identity.

The concept of linguistic fragmentation argues that language can be a barrier to nation building. When a nation is linguistically diverse, multiple languages spoken within its boundaries can create communication gaps and hinder effective governance. This concept of linguistic fragmentation is an idea that suggests that language becomes fragmented over time due to various factors such as geographical separation, political boundaries, and cultural influences. This fragmentation can lead to segregation, mistrust, and tensions among different linguistic groups, making it challenging for a nation to work together towards

achieving common goals. The concept of linguistic fragmentation proposes that as a language spreads and evolves within different communities, it becomes diversified and ultimately splits into distinct dialects or languages.

There is no single founder associated with linguistic fragmentation as a concept. It is an overarching concept that has been discussed and explored by various linguists and scholars over many years. Several linguists have contributed to the understanding of linguistic fragmentation, including Ferdinand de Saussure, Leonard Bloomfield, and Avram Noam Chomsky. The formation of the linguistic fragmentation concept can be attributed to several factors. One crucial aspect is the observation of linguistic diversity around the world. As linguists studied different languages in isolated regions, they noticed that languages differed significantly from one another, leading to the exploration of why and how this fragmentation occurs. Another factor that led to the formation of this concept is the study of language change and evolution. As languages change over time, they often diverge into distinct forms, either due to geographical barriers, social isolation, or even political factors. Studying these evolving languages and their diversifications are what contributed to the formulation of the concept of linguistic fragmentation. Thus, drawing on social identity theory and the concept of linguistic fragmentation, this study explores the role of identity formation in understanding ethno-linguistic loyalty and the paradox of language in nation building.

Results and Discussion

Ethno-linguistic Loyalty and the Paradox of Language in Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the multilingual nations in West Africa. As a country, Nigeria is "composed of different indigenous cultures and languages. It is divided into geo-political zones, states and ethnic groups, including the Fulani-Hausa, the Yoruba, the Igbo, the Fulani, the Bini, the Annang, the Ijaw..." (Inegbe, 2011, p. 177). The multilingual status of Nigeria has given tremendous rise to ethnic politics. At present, identification of an individual is done based on ethnic group and linguistic patterns. This kind of ethnic group relations based on linguistic patterns signal a negative dimension to national development. Linguistic diversity is supposed to be a reflection of a nation's rich cultural tapestry, showcasing the range of ethnicities, histories, and traditions within its borders. Largely, however, in a suspicion-laden society like Nigeria, laced with fear and mutual hatred, this diversity can sometimes become a source of tension and division. The different languages spoken within the Nigerian nation have, unfortunately, created barriers, hindering effective communication and impeding the development of shared national discourse. This has constrained social mobility, limited economic opportunities, and perpetuated inequalities in the nation's polity. Linguistic loyalty, evident in speech communities in Nigeria, plays a significant role in shaping social dynamics and influencing the nation's development and economic growth.

Aside onomastic labels, language also acts as a marker of identity, promoting cultural heritage and establishing a sense of belonging. Since linguistic loyalty is rooted in culture

and identity of a linguistic group, this present study, therefore, describes it as ethno-linguistic loyalty. Ethno-linguistic loyalty thus, is a strong and steadfast attachment and commitment which individuals have towards their own languages and speech communities. It could also be viewed as ethnic identity politics. This adherence to a particular linguistic group often results in favoring and prioritizing only the needs of in-members over others. However, when this linguistic loyalty becomes extreme, it can pose challenges and hinder a nation's development. This is to say that it can create barriers to effective communication, unity, and cooperation. This is so because individuals do things based on ethnic consciousness.

Ethno-linguistic loyalty is reflected in virtually all aspects of life and institutions in Nigeria, such as voting during election, banking, security agencies, education, issuance of licence for the importation of goods, appointments into political offices, employment, and general government patronage by the citizens. Things are no longer done on the basis of merit; people in positions of authority choose to put their linguistic groups first, before considering other speech groups. This became worse with the Federal Government's establishment of what is referred to as the "Federal Character Commission (FCC)", a commission which has earned for itself the ignominious reputation of privileging mediocrity for merit, always sacrificing merit on the altar of mediocrity in the name of National Character. Various Nigerian communities now tend to associate with their fellow linguistic members, forgetting a sense of national unity and collective participation in national development. The Federal Character Commission was "established by Act No. 34 of 1996 to implement and enforce the Federal Character Principle of Fairness and Equity in the distribution of Public Posts and Socio-Economic Infrastructures among the various Federating Units of the Federal Republic of Nigeria" (<http://federalcharacter.gov.ng>). A cardinal complaint against the Buhari-led administration was the lopsidedness in his various appointments to key positions at the national level, without much resistance, a trait which the Tinubu administration has equally been accused of without much spirited resistance. This leaves one to wonder if the Federal Character Commission is not a toothless bull-dog afterall.

When ethno-linguistic loyalty takes precedence over national identity, it can result in social divisions. Exclusive linguistic groups may emerge, leading to discrimination and marginalization of individuals who do not share the same language. Such divisions hinder social cohesion and limit interaction among citizens, consequently stalling national development. For instance, the Nsukka Analyst (1994) observes that since 1970, the Igbos have been jointly marginalized by the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba linguistic communities. It illustrated graphically by stating that in 1989, out of 154 Officers of the rank of Brigadier and above in the Nigeria army, only 8 were Igbos, while 37 and 51 were Yorubas and Hausa-Fulanis respectively. Protests against marginalization have also been taken up by the Yoruba, who see the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election which was purportedly won by a Yoruba, as a product of marginalization by the Hausa-Fulani to maintain power by all means, hence, the explanation of Fawehinmi (2000) that "OPC came into being as a result of dastardly, illegal and immoral scuttling of the June 12 (1993) election". Vanda Felbab-Brown (2020) in "Militias (and Militancy in Nigeria's North East: Not Going Away" states that "since

2009, an insurgency calling itself 'The People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad... has caused devastating insecurity, impoverishment, displacement, and other sufferings in Nigeria's poor and arid North-East zone. The group is better known to the World as Boko Haram...' (also see Onaiyekan, 2013). And only of recent, August 2024, the Igbo in Nigeria decided not to take part in a national protest march, organized and christened ENDBADGOVERNANCE, to protest bad governance in the nation, their reason being that they have never been carried along in the nation's scheme of things in spite of their much truncated support for the project. These illustrations and various reactions are consequent upon a symbiotic relationship between ethno-communal, religious and linguistic associations.

The Notion of Language and National development

Language is a fundamental tool for human interaction, thought, and cultural expression. It is a vessel that carries traditional environmental knowledge systems. Language can be expressed, studied and analyzed from different perspectives due to its multi-faceted nature. Language psychologists are of the opinion that the way humans use language in general and words in particular to a large extent, define their personality—mental, social, and physical state. Hence, the declaration of Pennebaker, Mehl and Niederhoffer (2003), that "the words people use are diagnostic of their mental, social, and even physical state"(p. 548). In the same vein, Tonkin (2003), views language as a "device for exercise of power", while Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), see language as a "meaning-making tool". To Nimmer (2011), language has "an important role in creating worlds that communities identify themselves with. Language functions as an avenue for creating, normalizing and reinforcing particular worldviews, affixing certain knowledge and institutions in society"(p. 229) and Inegbe (2020) supports Nimmer's (2011) assertion by stating that language is "deliberately fashioned to change the will, opinions or attitudes of its audience"(p. 122). Language therefore, plays a crucial role in shaping societies, economies, and individual identities. Language is an integral part in the process of national development. The concept of national development, according to Rogers (2000) as cited in Nduka (2008), is "a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into the social system in order to produce higher per-capita incomes and levels of living through more methods and improved social organization"(p 170).

National development involves economic and sociopolitical changes that will have positive effects on its citizens. The conditions that lead to national development and nation building do not exist in a multilingual state like Nigeria. This is as a result of ethno-linguistic loyalty. There are significant factors that identify a people. These include: language, class, dress code, religion, and belief system. Out of all these, language is the most significant. Nnoli (1978) affirms this declaration as he postulates that the most crucial variable in ethnic identity is language. Emenanjo (1990) asserts that language, apart from being the most important vehicle of a people's culture, is the most distinctive of all the traits which separate human beings from any other. For instance, a person from any Yoruba kingdom owes allegiance to a

Yoruba first, before any national consideration. This is also the case among the Igbo, Hausa, and many other linguistic communities in Nigeria; they all owe allegiance to their different linguistic groups. This deep attachment and loyalties to individuals' linguistic group, as a matter of fact, is a major clog in the wheel of national development. This is because they compete with the desired loyalty to national growth.

Ethno-linguistic loyalty leads to primordial sentiments in multilingual societies. This is a kind of behaviour whereby a group of people look down on others and discriminate against them for the singular reason that they are not from the same linguistic group. This loyalty is seen in the allegiance which people pay to members of their linguistic groups rather than with the nationals. This behaviour encourages sentiments among citizens because individuals are more concerned with socio-economic and political development of their linguistic communities and not with the nation as a whole. This linguistic loyalty to an individual's linguistic group member has manifested itself in diverse ways in Nigeria. For instance, Crawford (1993) in his documentation of political parties formation in Nigeria made reference to sectional political parties formation from different ethnic groups in Nigeria due to dominance of national movements by petit-bourgeois middle class and perceived fear of socio-cultural domination from the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) which had Nnamdi Azikiwe as the leader. Due to this logic, the Yoruba group founded a political party named, The Action Group (AG) under Obafemi Awolowo; the Hausa-Fulani emirates of the North founded the Northern People's Congress (NPC) with Ahmadu Bello as the head. This pattern of political parties formation still continues till date in likes of All Progressive Grand Alliance meant for the Igbos; Congress for Progressive Change for the Hausas and Action Congress of Nigeria for the Yorubas (Hodgkin, 1961). This also signals ethno-linguistic loyalty and the preference to identify primarily with individual linguistic group.

Apart from strong ties to individual linguistic communities and marginalization, lack of dialogue has also led to the formation of ethnic militia groups such as the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Arewa Peoples' Congress (APC) (Agbu, 2004). The emergence of these militia groups, according to Fawehinmi (2000) as cited Ayinla (2003), is also due to "the abysmal failure of the security agencies of government (that) have contributed to the strength and social acceptability of the ethnic militia organizations" while Danjuma (2002) as cited in Nduka (2004) adds that the formation and activities of ethnic militia are traceable to marginalization and neglect by government. In his own words, "it is the neglect or a perception of it, which has resulted in the creation of Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys, Bakassi Boys, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), and the Arewa Peoples' Congress among others" and, of course, the dreaded Boko-Haram activities in the North as well. This is also an indication that ethno-linguistic loyalties have been domesticated within various linguistic communities in Nigeria. In fact, it is a salient factor in Nigerian politics today. However, these militia groups, although claim to represent their different linguistic communities' interests, have adopted diverse strategies

which include violence and deviantly motivated actions in the conduct of their activities which cannot aid sustainable development. Some of them have even become a threat to the nation's security; they have occasioned the destruction of lives and property in their respective speech communities. With the activities of these groups, there will be no remarkable or cardinal economic and property development in the nation.

Ethno-linguistic loyalty can also manifest in the educational sector. Language is the medium through which education is imparted. A well-developed language infrastructure, including literacy programmes and access to educational materials, is essential for human capital development. When a nation's education system prioritizes a specific language, it can marginalize students who speak different languages, leading to educational disparities. Inadequate access to quality education for linguistic minorities can perpetuate inequality and become a hinderance to socio-economic development. Promoting inclusive and multilingual education can enhance social mobility and create equal opportunities for all citizens. For instance, in a multicultural and multilingual society, the lack of a common language for communication can impede the sharing of ideas, hinder policy-making processes, and limit opportunities for economic growth. An illustration of the negative impact of linguistic loyalty on a nation's development can be observed in Belgium. Belgium is a trilingual country with three official languages:

Dutch, French, and German. The linguistic division in Belgium is primarily geographical. The northern part of the country consists, predominantly, of Dutch-speaking people. It includes the provinces of Antwerp, Limburg, East Flanders, Flemish Brabant, and West Flanders. The southern part of Belgium, is mainly French-speaking. It includes the provinces of Hainaut, Liège, Luxembourg, Namur, Walloon Brabant, and the French Community of Brussels-Capital. A small region in the east of Belgium called the German-speaking community uses German as the official language. It consists of nine municipalities. There is a bilingual area known as Brussels-Capital Region, where both French and Dutch are official languages. It serves as the capital of both Belgium and the European Union.

(https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/policy_areas/external_relations/constitutional).

The linguistic division within the country has led to political instability and difficulty in reaching consensus on important issues. It has also hindered economic progress due to conflicting interests and priorities.

Every linguistic community derives its existence from the collective actions and contributions of its members. These collective actions and contributions come through dialogue which allows people of all ages the opportunity to participate in the suggestions and implementation of developmental processes. It cannot be ruled out that good communication is imperative for steady growth, development and prosperity of a nation. Failure on the leadership class to create opportunity for dialogue with its citizens represses the supportive potentials.

Aside unifying the nation, adopting a dialogue approach can serve as a powerful tool for a nation's development. Dialogue involves open and respectful communication between individuals with different perspectives, values, and languages. It encourages an exchange of ideas, promotes understanding, and facilitates collaborative problem-solving. By engaging in meaningful dialogue, nations can overcome linguistic barriers and foster a sense of unity and collective responsibility. For instance, Frederick Fasheun, the leader of the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC) once lamented the lack of potent means of communication to present the interests, needs and aspirations of his linguistic community that were not accommodated. According to Fasheun (1999) as cited in Ayinla (2003): "all platforms for expressing social discontent were disrupted; the Nigerian Labour Congress was disrupted, the ASSU proscribed; NBA, NMA and so on. So we looked inward..." This, in a way, is Fasheun saying that the aforementioned are the only mouth-piece of the marginalized Nigerians, without which they resorted to tackling their ethnic issues through the formation of the militia group, a way of sending a message and signal to the Nigerian government.

Promoting multilingual dialogue forum can enhance social mobility and create equal opportunities for all citizens. An illustration of the positive impact of a dialogue approach can be seen in Switzerland. The country is multilingual, with four official languages which are:

German, French, Italian, and Romansh. The linguistic division in Switzerland is predominantly based on cantons (states). The majority of the Swiss population speaks German and resides in the central, northern, and eastern parts of Switzerland. The largest cantons in this region include Zurich, Bern, Aargau, and Basel-Stadt. The western part of Switzerland is the French-speaking region. Major cantons in this area are Vaud, Geneva, Neuchâtel, and Jura. The southern part of Switzerland is predominantly Italian-speaking. Major cantons include Ticino and parts of Grisons (Graubünden). Romansh is less common official language and is mainly spoken in the south-eastern canton of Grisons (Graubünden) (<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/language/situation.html>).

The Swiss practice a culture of dialogue, where language barriers are often bridged by translation services and a commitment to multilingualism. This approach has contributed to political stability, effective governance, and a strong sense of national identity, which have facilitated Switzerland's development as a prosperous and harmonious nation

Conclusion and Recommendation

The predicament of many African countries, Nigeria in particular, should be blamed on lack of dialogue with its citizens. Many African leaders are in the habit of always taking decisions on behalf of its citizens without any form of public dialogue on sensitive issues. The socio-political flaws and economic woes in the continent are closely associated with this leadership style. For maximum change and physical progress, the dialogue approach should

be embraced to encourage collective participation and for vision to be discovered. Undoubtedly, the language of communication, in terms of dialogue, is a socio-political tool of change, vital tool for economic stability, and a paramount tool for human resource development. Lack of dialogue makes nation building and the needed development elusive. In Nigeria, for instance, political leaders offer little or no opportunities for deliberations, dialogue or discussions on sensitive issues that affect its citizens.

Communication in any human society is a continuum and it embraces the past, the present and the future. The problem of communication will certainly emerge if there is a disconnect between the past and the future. To resolve this problem, Nigeria must raise leaders who can connect with their citizens through dialogue to take decisions on sensitive national issues for the common good of all. The Dialogue approach to any national issue or crises is the "gin" in understanding and proffering resolutions for peace, unity, and development.

To address the paradox of language in nation building, it is necessary to adopt inclusive policies and strategies that recognize and embrace linguistic diversity. These policies should safeguard the rights of minorities, ensure equal opportunities for all citizens, and promote representation in political, economic, and social institutions. By addressing the concerns and needs of various groups, inclusive policies can help foster a sense of belonging to the nation as a whole. Language should be celebrated as a key element of national identity, rather than a source of division. Education systems should prioritize multilingualism, offering opportunities for citizens to learn multiple languages and foster respect for various linguistic traditions.

Education on citizenship and national values should be incorporated into the curriculum at all educational levels. By instilling a sense of national pride, shared history, and common destiny, the young generation can develop a strong attachment to the nation beyond their ethno-linguistic identities. Such education should emphasize the importance of unity, tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful co-existence.

Intercultural dialogue should be encouraged between different ethnic and linguistic communities to reduce animosity and promote understanding. This dialogue should focus on promoting appreciation for diversity, addressing misconceptions, and finding a common ground for collaboration.

Additionally, public institutions and services should be accessible in multiple languages, ensuring that linguistic minorities are not marginalized. Furthermore, the media has a significant role in promoting linguistic diversity and breaking down language barriers. Broadcasting in various languages and providing subtitles or translations can increase inclusivity and encourage dialogue across linguistic communities. Moreover, cultural exchange programmes, festivals, and events can serve as platforms for promoting linguistic diversity and fostering intercultural understanding.

In conclusion, this paper submits that ethno-linguistic loyalty poses a significant challenge to nation building processes. This loyalty, when prioritized over national identity, leads to division, conflict, and hinders social cohesion. Language presents itself as a paradox in nation building and ultimate development; it can simultaneously unite and divide. Recognizing and

managing linguistic diversity is vital for ensuring inclusive and cohesive societies. To address this issue, intercultural dialogue, and education on citizenship and national values are crucial. By embracing linguistic diversity, nations can tap into the cultural wealth and bring about social, economic, and political development. Overcoming ethno-linguistic loyalty and the paradox of language require a commitment to inclusive policies, multilingual education, and the promotion of intercultural understanding. By so doing, nations can harness the potential that linguistic diversity holds and build stronger, more cohesive societies.

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