



## LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS OF THE HAUSAS, IGBOS AND YORUBAS OF NIGERIA

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### **Abstract:**

This study entitled 'Language and the behavioural patterns of the Hausas, Ibos, and Yorubas of Nigeria' is designed to find out whether or not language determines the behaviour of its speakers, using the Hausas, Ibos and Yorubas of Nigeria as a focal point. The theoretical linguistic tool adopted in this study is **linguistic determinism** championed by Edward Sapir (1884 – 1939) and his follower, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897 – 1941) in the popular Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. To achieve the objective of this study, linguistic tools such as words, proverbs, idioms and wise-sayings relating to types of food, clothing (wears), politics, education, law and other aspects of the culture of each of the above linguistic communities were randomly collected (through interview) for the purpose of finding out whether any of them can be said to be responsible for any particular behaviour being exhibited by members of the linguistic community. The study unambiguously revealed, among others, that each of the words and expressions is either responsible for the thought pattern of its users, or for a particular behaviour being exhibited by the speakers of the language. This means that the Hausas, Yorubas, and Ibos of Nigeria view life along lines laid down by their respective native languages and as such are (behaviourally) distinct to the extent of the difference in the contents of their languages. Based on the above findings, recommendations are made to the Federal Government of Nigeria, school policy makers, curriculum developers and Language Engineers on how this conflict of thought pattern and world view, occasioned by heterogeneity of language (or culture) in Nigeria may best be handled for socio-political harmony, and peaceful co-existence.

**Keywords:** language and behavioural patterns, Hausas, Igbos, Yorubas

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## 1. Introduction

The world consists of clusters of people (i.e. societies), each definable by its peculiar pattern of life. The Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba of Nigeria are different societies in view of their different languages, cultures and histories. This means that they can be different societies in the same nation. This view of society is in tandem with that of Wilkin (2008:168) who sees society as “*a collection of individuals joined together by (identical) patterns of behaviour exhibiting a high degree of regularity over time*”. It is the said patterned way of life (of individuals) in a given society that is technically referred to as culture. Tylor (1998:1) in Campbell (2009:190) sees culture as “*that complex whole which include knowledge, traditions, occupations, beliefs, arts, ethos and habits acquired by man as a member of society*”. It may be vital, at this juncture, to note that culture, like human language is non-instinctive (i.e. not genetically transmitted). It is acquired or learnt through the acquisition of (or socializing with) a particular language (Chomsky 1965:86, in Womack 2002:128). He (Womack 2002:130) explains further that culture refers to those things a person would be unable to do were he to be left to grow up isolatedly in a forest or desert, and that “*language is the human ability to encode culturally defined meanings in sound.....*” (underlined for emphasis). Hence, as individuals acquire (or learn) a language (vide socialization), the culture of the people, being embedded in the said language, is also (automatically) acquired. It is in agreement with this that Elugbe (1999:103) sees culture as “*the exact reflection of the language which bears it and vice versa*”. That is, as one views a language, he is also viewing the culture and vice versa. Put differently, people (in their different societies) respond and react to issues, view and value life in such a way that reflects what they say. That is, while positive linguistic content produces positive behavioural patterns negative linguistic content in the same way, begets negative behavioural patterns. Though language is known to be an aspect of culture (like religion, tradition etc.), it contains and transmits culture; “*all habits, ideas, behaviours, notions, believes, ethos, and other cultural patterns are virtually inconceivable without the instrumentality of language*”. It (language) is “*a means by which elders in society teach the younger ones the culture of the society; it is a veritable instrument for socializing, a tool for thinking, for dreaming and for all human actions*”. The limit of a man’s language is therefore the limit of his world (Anagbogu, Mba and Eme 2010:162).

The above introductory statements on language and behavioural patterns (culture) are anchored on Edward Sapir (1884-1931) and Benjamin Lee Whorf’s (1897-1941) concepts of linguistic determinism and relativism which hold (partly) that there exists a Nexus between language and human behavioural patterns (culture). That is, language dictates how people should respond/react to issues, how they should cloth themselves, what they should eat as food, as well as how they should behave in every other aspect of human activity. Before looking at the validity of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in the three major Nigerian languages, it is pertinent that we assess (review) in practical terms the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis – viz **linguistic determinism** and **linguistic relativism**.

## 2. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

The theoretical background of this article is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, championed by Edward Sapir (1884 - 1939), who is known to be a student of the prominent American anthropologist, Frank Boas; and his follower Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1944). They (Sapir and Whorf) are known to have given serious thought to the relationship between language and human behavioural (cultural) patterns. The central idea (theme) of this hypothesis is that language shapes thought, hence people speaking different languages are held to be living in different worlds of reality because, according to Sapir and Whorf, the language of each speaker powerfully conditions the speaker's mode of thought, perception, and social reality (Sapir, 1929:120). Thus in Sapir's own words (quoted from Elugbe, 1999:103):

*"Formation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar, and differs from slightly to greatly, between different grammars. We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language..."*

The above quotation suggests clearly that man's entire appreciation of the world around him (i.e. his life style, as well as his judgment and evaluation of life generally), are grossly controlled and dictated by his language, i.e. his language of thought and dream (Akindele and Adegbite 1999:96). Put differently, the way we 'see' the world and perceive nature is constructed by the (dominant) language we speak. This simply means that *"the linguistic system forms our thoughts, and directs (or dictates) our intellectual activity"*. As a result of the above, we (language users) *"are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for our society"* (Sapir 1949:207).

In fact, the following passage taken from Sapir (1929:106) further enunciates his explication of how language influences an individual's thought and the appreciation of the world around him:

*"Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjust to reality essentially without the use of language, or to imagine that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication. The fact of the matter is that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously but up on the language habits of the group ..., we see, and hear, and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation" (Underlined for emphasis).*

The general conception covered in the above quotation is that a man's language moulds his perception of the world, or simply put, language determines behavior. This is what Sapir refers to as **linguistic determinism**. That is, language *determines* a people's way of life (culture)

The above view of Sapir was broadened and developed by his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf, into what we presently have as the *Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis*. According to Whorf (1956 in Elugbe 1999:105) “*Language conditions our world view*”; and “*different speakers view the world along the different lines laid down by their respective languages*”. What this means is that language differences result in cultural differences, thus ushering in the concept of *linguistic/cultural relativism*. Put differently, linguistic relativism (language difference) engenders cultural relativism (cultural difference). Hence, human beings live in different worlds (i.e. have different cultures) because of their respective languages.

Contrary to the above theory of linguistic relativism is Hudson’s (1990:104) explication of the concept of *linguistic universal*. According to Hudson, “*live is broadly similar, and some aspects of it can be perceived similarly by individuals irrespective of linguistic differences*”. He argues that it is this similarity that makes it possible to translate between languages. But, although the possibility of translation justifies the idea of linguistic universal, the impossibility of total translation shows that the perception is relative to some extent.

Linguistic determinism and relativism, no doubt, has raised an unimaginable array of scholarly criticisms. However, the concept has remained of continuous significance to linguists and anthropologists whose interest lies in showing the intricate relationship between language, culture and society. Since the focal point of this paper is to find out whether or not language determines (dictates) the behaviour of its speakers, using the Hausas, Igbos and Yorubas of Nigeria as a case study, we shall now attempt to validate the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis in the three major Nigerian languages listed supra.

### 3. Validity of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in the three major Nigerian languages

To ensure an objective testing of the validity of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in the three major Nigerian languages of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, linguistic tools such as words, proverbs, idioms and wise sayings relating to types of food, clothing (wears), politics, education, morality and other aspects of the culture of each of the above linguistic communities were randomly collected (through interview) for the purpose of finding out whether any of the data so collected can be said to be responsible for any particular behaviour being exhibited by members of the particular linguistic community. Tables 1, 2 and 3 below present data on the linguistic tools (i.e. words, proverbs, idioms and wise sayings) randomly collected from each of the linguistic communities so far studied, and their resultant/engendered behavioural patterns.

**Table 1:** Samples of some Hausa linguistic tools and their resultant/engendered behavioural patterns

Linguistic tool	Resultant/Engendered behaviour
<b>a. <u>Types of food</u></b> i. <i>Masa</i> (a type of cake) – ingredients: grinded local rice, onions, baking yeast, sugar, milk, and salt. ii. <i>Dambu</i> (a type of cake) – Ingredients: moringa, grinded maize, onions, groundnut, groundnut oil, maggi and salt.	The resultant/engendered behaviour is that the Hausas of Nigeria eat (as special delicacies) all the food types listed on the opposite column of this table. In fact, they are the major food types among the Hausas of Nigeria. This is so because such food types are contained in their linguistic inventory.

<p>iii. <i>Gwate</i> (a type of porridge) – Ingredients: granded maize, spinach, palm oil, maggi and salt.</p> <p>iv. <i>Fara</i> (fried locust) – Ingredient: pepper, maggi, groundnut oil.</p> <p>v. <i>Fate</i> (liquid dish/porridge) – ingredient: spinach, grinded maize, onion, tomatoes, groundnut, pepper, salt, pumpkin, palm oil, bitter leaf and seasoning.</p> <p>vi. <i>Kuka</i> (a type of soup) – Ingredients: dried baobab flowers, potash, onions, fish, maggi, pepper and beef.</p> <p>vii. <i>Miyan Taushe</i> (a type of soup) – Ingredients: spinach, onions, pumpkin, seasoning, and beef.</p> <p>viii. <i>Fura</i> (grinded millet) mold into balls and taken with cow milk.</p> <p>ix. <i>Waina</i> (snacks) – Ingredients: grinded cassava, vegetables, oil, and salt (taken as breakfast).</p> <p>x. <i>Tuwon shinkafa</i> (grinded rice mixed in boiled water) – it is served with any type of soup.</p> <p>xi. <i>Tuwon masara</i> (grinded maize mixed in boiled water) – it is served with any type of soup.</p>	
<p><b>b. Marriage</b></p> <p>i. <i>Mata na tuba bata rasa mijin aure.</i> <b>Meaning:</b> A remorseful, patient and apologetic woman does not remain single (unmarried)</p>	Most Hausa women are skillful in pretending to be humble, remorseful, patient and apologetic before marriage. When she gets into marriage proper, her real self will show up.
<p>ii. <i>Darajan ya mace gidan mijin ta</i> <b>Meaning:</b> The dignity of a woman is in her husband's house.</p>	That is why (most) Hausa parents give out their daughters in marriage as early as possible.
<p>iii. <i>Auren wuri maganin lalata</i> <b>Meaning:</b> Early marriage prevents promiscuity</p>	That is why (most) Hausa parents give out their daughters in marriage as early as possible, and the suitor prefers younger bride than the older one.
<p>iv. <i>Amarya ba ta laifi ko ta kashe 'yan masu gidan.</i> <b>Meaning:</b> A wife is always right no matter her offence</p>	That is why (most) Hausa house-wives control and dominate their husbands.
<p>v. <i>Giola biya maganin gobara</i> <b>Meaning:</b> Two wives are better than one (in case one is sick or misbehave, the other will complement.)</p>	That is why (most) Hausa men prefer marrying more than one wife (ie. they prefer polygamy)
<p><b>c. Education</b></p> <p>i. <i>Illimin 'ya mace ya kan kare a gidan miji</i> <b>Meaning:</b> Educating a female child is a waste because she will end up in her husband house.</p>	That is why (most) Hausa parents are not incline to sending their daughters to school. Instead, they marry them off early because a woman's dignity, as dictated by the language, is to be in her husband's house ( <i>Darajan iya mace gidan miji ta</i> ). This is a strict adherence to linguistic instruction.
<p><b>d. Morality</b></p> <p>i. <i>Bin na gaba bin Allah</i> <b>Meaning:</b> Respecting the elders is like respecting Allah</p>	That is why, among the Hausas, the elders are highly respected.
<p><b>e. Religion</b></p> <p>i. <i>Daga kin gaskiya sai bata</i></p>	That is why all the Hausas believe in the existence of Allah (God) and offer prayers regularly to Allah (God)

<b>Meaning:</b> A man who say there is no God is dwelling in the thickest darkness	because prayer is the shield of true religion ( <i>Addua makamin mummini</i> ).
<b>f. Politics</b> <i>i. Siyasa rigar 'yan ci</i> <b>Meaning:</b> Politics signifies freedom.	That is why (all) Hausas get involve in political matters. They come out en-masse to register and to vote at elections. They are fully involved.
<b>g. General sayings</b> <i>i. Kazan da Allah ya nufe ta da chara sai tayi</i> <b>Meaning:</b> Whatever must be must be: it is all the will of Allah	That is why the Hausas see whatever happens (good or bad) as the design (will) of Allah. They rationalize it with " <i>Allah bai yi ba</i> (it is not design to be). This also makes them trust others easily.
<i>ii. Mutun baya chaka wa chikin sa mashi</i> <b>Meaning:</b> A man does not make accusations against his brother.	That is why even if the whole world accuses a Hausa man (leader) for whatever reason; a typical Hausa man will never be involved (openly) in the accusation.

**Table 2:** Samples of some Yoruba linguistic tools and their engendered behavioural patterns

Linguistic Tool	Resultant/Engendered behaviour
<b>a) Types of Food</b> <i>i. Amala:</i> (Dried grinded yam/cassava mixed in boiled water) – it is served with any type of soup. <i>i. Fufu:</i> (Cassava that is fermented, washed (filtered), boiled and pounded to be served as food) – it is served with any type of soup (especially vegetable soup). <i>i. Ewedu:</i> (a type of soup) – ingredients: cooked <i>ewedu</i> leaves (pounded), locust beans, maggi, onions, pepper (it is usually mixed with already prepared stew and served with <i>Amala</i> or <i>Fufu</i> ). <i>v. Gbegiri:</i> (a type os soup) – Ingredients: grinded beans, fish, beef, maggi, pepper. It is served with either <i>Amala</i> or <i>Fufu</i> <i>v. Eforiro:</i> (a type of Soup) – Ingredients: vegetable (Spinach), onions, beef, maggi, pepper. It is served with <i>amala</i> or <i>fufu</i> <i>i. Ila asepo:</i> (a Type of Soup) – Ingredients: Okra, beef, pepper, maggi, palm oil. Served with either <i>amala</i> or <i>fufu</i> .	The resultant/engendered behaviour is that the Yorubas of Nigeria eat (as special delicacies) all the food types listed on the opposite column of this table. In fact, they are the major food types among the Yorubas of Nigeria. This is so because such food types are contained in their linguistic inventory.
<b>b) Clothing (Wears)</b> <i>i. Buba</i> <i>ii. Esiki</i> <i>iii. Sapara</i> <i>iv. Awotele</i> <i>v. Dandogo</i> <i>vi. Agbada</i> <i>vii. Gibariye</i> <i>viii. Sulia</i> <i>ix. Oyala</i>	The Yorubas of Nigeria use the types of wears listed on the opposite column as their major (traditional) attire. Whoever wears them is either a Yoruba or is imitating the Yorubas of Nigeria.
<b>c) Names (of persons)</b> <i>i Oruko eniyan o mang so ibi ti ayanmo re yode</i> <b>Meaning:</b> A child's name influences his life.	This belief prompts the Yorubas carefulness in the names they give their children. For example names such as the following are found amongst the Yorubas: <u>Name Meaning</u>

It is a common belief among the Yorubas that the name a person bears influences the life of the person who bears it. They strongly believe that names given to children have meanings and such meanings influence the life of the bearer of the name.	<p>I. <b>Bola nle</b> – I met wealth</p> <p>II. <b>Toluwani</b> – God’s own</p> <p>III. <b>Gbemishela</b> – push me into wealth</p> <p>IV. <b>Oluwaferomi</b> – God Loves me</p> <p>V. <b>Simileoluwa</b> – Rely on God, etc.</p>
<p><b>d) Morality</b>  <i>i Egun ma ng tele eni ti ni ibowo fun eniyan sungbon ibukun ma ng tele eniyan to ni ibowo fun eniyan.</i>  <b>Meaning:</b> Curses follow the disrespectful while blessings follow the respectful.</p>	That is why the Yorubas must either, bow, prostrate, kneel or lie on the floor to greet as a mark of respect.
<p><b>e) Politics</b>  <i>i O san fun opepe ko dari afoju ju ki afoju ko dari opepe</i>  <b>Meaning:</b> it is better for the blind to be led by the sighted than for the sighted to be led by the blind.</p>	That is why the Yorubas will always insist that whoever must be elected into any political office must be well educated.
<p><b>f) Education</b>  <i>i Eko je kokoro si igbesi aye rere</i>  <b>Meaning:</b> Education is the key to a good life.</p>	That is why the Yoruba’s pay very serious attention to education. For this reason, it has been reported that they are the most educated in Nigeria.
<p><b>General Issues:</b>  <i>i Oda ki enyo se iran lowo fun molebi ee ju ko se fun ara-ita.</i>  <b>Meaning:</b> it is better to help your brother than an outsider.</p>	The Yorubas are known to favour people of their own tribe than outsiders. This makes them appear tribal.

**Table 3:** Samples of some Igbo linguistic tools and the engendered behavioural patterns

Linguistic tool	Resultant/Engendered behavior
<p><b>a) Types of food</b></p> <p>i. <b>Abacha</b> (a type of salad) – ingredients: sliced cassava, palm oil, salt, potash, fish, locust beans, spices (magi).</p> <p>ii. <b>Mimiri-Okuji</b> (a type of pepper soup) – Ingredients: yam, chicken, palm oil, scent leaves, water, pepper.</p> <p>iii. <b>Fio-fio</b> (Local brown beans porridge) – Ingridients: Local brown beans, locust beans, fish, onions, magi, pepper.</p> <p>iv. <b>Jia hurahu</b> (Roasted Yam) Ingredients: Roasted yam, palm oil, grinded pepper, salt, bitter leaf (<i>otashi</i>)</p> <p>v. <b>Ofe-akwu</b> (a type of soup) – Ingridients: palm fruits, fish, palm oil, beef, onions, magi, scent leaves.</p> <p>vi. <b>Ofe-Egusi</b> (a type of soup) – Ingredients grinded melon, fish, pepper, magi, onions, palm oil. Tomatoes, beef.</p> <p>vii. <b>Ofe Onugbu</b> (a type of soup) – Ingredients: bitter leaf, fish, pepper, magi, onions, palm oil, water leaf, beef.</p> <p>viii. <b>Ofe Nsala</b> (a type of soup) – Ingredients: boiled grinded yam or cocoyam, beef, palm</p>	The engendered behaviour is that the Igbos of Nigeria eat (as special delicacies) all the food types listed on the opposite column of this table. In fact, they are the major food types among the Igbos. This is so because such food types are contained in their linguistic inventory.

oil, magi, onions, pepper.	
<b>b) Politics</b> <i>i Ndi mmadu bu government</i> <b>Meaning:</b> The people are the government	That is why the Igbo traditional society is egalitarian and acephalous (equal rights for all and headless society).
<b>General Issues</b> <i>i. Nwata kwakaya osoru okele rie uri</i> <b>Meaning:</b> A child who washes his hands clean eat with elders	Most, Igbos work very hard and can be desperate to attain the height of being considered 'having washed their hands clean', so as to be worthy of eating with elders and kings, such a person no matter how young he may be, is usually invited to the meeting of <i>Ndichie</i> to share and contribute ideas.
<i>ii Nwanyi mutara nwa nwoke, kaga so punu.</i> <b>Meaning:</b> A woman that gives birth to a male child should be respected.	In Igbo society male children are valued more than the female children, hence a woman that has no male child is not respected in the family and community
<i>ii. Ousu mba nine nazu nwa amura mu</i> <b>Meaning:</b> It takes a whole village to raise a child.	All members of any particular Igbo community must see to the raising of a child, and so a child belongs to the entire community, and not just to the biological parents. Therefore, any member of Igbo community that neglects this role is seen as being wicked.
<i>iii. Onye gbunu eke ga kwado emiye</i> <b>Meaning:</b> He that kills a python should be ready to bury it.	In Igbo society, snakes (python) are not killed. Pythons, among the Igbos, are believed to be messengers of the gods. Any one that kills a python must pay the penalty of burying a member of his family.
<i>iv Woke gree a wa ego ga eso eliyas</i> <b>Meaning:</b> A man that is far away from money is very close to his grave	That is why most Igbos are known to love money much more than anything else in life. This complement the common saying that 'to find out if a sick Igbo man is truly dead some coins (money) should be shaken close to his ears, if he does not sneeze with a shout of <i>ego</i> (i.e money) then he is completely dead.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

As shown in the above tables, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is quite valid in all aspects of the communal life of the three Nigerian linguistic communities. For instance, with regards to types of food, the linguistic inventory of each community harbours specific food types for the community. While *tuwon shinkafa*, *tuwon masara*, *fara*, *kuka*, *waina*, *dambu* and *gwate* (among others) are favourite dishes of the Hausas, *amala*, *gbegiri*, *eforiro* and *ewedu* (among others) are the favourite of the Yorubas. In fact, a Yoruba or Igbo who sees a Hausa man eating *fara* will wonder why human should eat 'grasshoppers' or 'insects'. In the same vein, while the Yorubas and Hausas may detest such food types as *abacha*, *fio-fio*, *jia-hurahu*, *ofe-akwu* and *mmiri-okuji*, the Igbos view them as special delicacies. On wears (clothing), while the Hausas are known with *jalabia*, *babanriga*, *sunnah* (among others), the Yorubas are known with *agbada*, *dango*, *sapara*, *buba*, *gbariye* and *oyala*, among others.

With regards to greetings, the Yoruba saying '*Egun ma ng tele eni ti ni ibowo fun eniyan sungbon ibukun ma ng tele eniyan to ni ibowo fun eniyan*' (curses follow the disrespectful while blessings follow the respectful) directs/commits them to either kneel, bow or lie down on the floor while greeting an elder. Igbo language contains no structure that calls for or requires this form/method of greeting and so it is not practicable among the Igbos. Also, a Yoruba



man finds it cultural and better to favour his tribal man than a non-tribal person. That is why a typical Yoruba man is seen to be tribal. The Yoruba expression '*oda ki enyo se iran lowo fun molebi ee ju ko se fun ara-ita*' (it is better to help your brother than an outsider) is instructive in this regard.

Also, the Hausa saying *Kazan da Allah ya nufe tad a chara ko ana muzuru ko shalo sai tayi* (whatever must be must be) commits the Hausas to view man's destiny as the design of Allah. If a venture undertaken by a Hausa man takes a contrary turn, he will rationalize it with the saying *Allah bai yi ba* (it is not designed to be). This also makes them trust strangers easily. This view of the Hausas is contrary to that of the Igbos who see destiny as being in the hands of man. The Igbos believe that if a man says yes, firmly, his *chi* agrees and supports him. So, while a Hausa man may see the demise of his brother as the design/will of Allah, his Igbo counterpart may accuse the wife of the deceased or any other member of the family as being responsible for the dead.

The behaviour of the Yorubas in giving their children specific kinds of names, as discovered, is prompted by the Yoruba saying '*oruko eniyan o mang so ibi ti ayanmo re yode*' (a child's name influences his life, or rather, the name a person bears influences the character and life of its bearer). For this reason they give to their children names they feel will positively influence the lives of their children. Such Yoruba names as *Gbadegesin*, *Oluwafemi*, *Toluwani*, *Bolanle* and *Gbemishola* are instructive. This Yoruba linguistic tool of names being capable of influencing the character and life of a person is alien to the linguistic inventory of most Nigerian Languages. The resultant effect therefore is for such linguistic communities to indulge in giving arbitrary names to their children. To buttress this fact, among the Bokyis of Northern Cross River of Nigeria such names as the following are given to children: *Ebu* (goat), *Efi* (snake), *Dikan* (bush), *Abong* (excreta), *Abong-bajia* (no one picks excreta), *Kekong* (toilet) *Bukie oshie* (communal deity), *Orim* (devil). The distinct behaviours of the two societies (Yoruba and Bokyis) with regards to naming of children are, no doubt, occasioned / prompted by the respective contents of their deferent languages (Tawo 2010:56).

Without further explication, it suffices from all the above to state, in sum, that there exists an intricate relationship between language and the way its speakers behave. Language, through all its expression reflects and projects the way of life of its speakers, giving it form and regularity. Since culture (human behaviour), being a conglomeration of thought, feelings, action, knowledge, skills, beliefs, art, politics, education, morals, ethos, customs, nuances and other qualities acquired by man as a social being, is known to be embedded in language and can only be expressed through language, it therefore becomes imperative to take the instrumentality of language seriously for the good of any society. It may be useful at this juncture to state clearly that the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis is valid not only among the Hausas, Yorubas and Igbos (of Nigeria) and other African societies, but also to practically all linguistic settings in the world.

#### **4.1 The way forward as it affects the Nigerian Society**

Having clarified the fact that Language is the bearer, reflector, regulator, dictator and director of human thinking, opinions, feelings, desires and world view, the way forward as it

affects Nigeria, as well as any other society that uses Language, becomes simple and straightforward.

Simply, all Language users and learners, in Nigeria, should be made to understand why people think, speak and do things the way they do, and to understand the possible agreements that are in place between language and culture. Since English is a lingua franca in Nigeria, it is therefore advisable that the Nigerian government, through competent language engineers, evolve a language policy that will enable learners and users of the Nigerian English to become socially, morally and politically competent in the use of the said language. It should be a language (Nigerian English) that will reflect the history, culture, tradition, beliefs and vision of the Nigerian people; a language that reflects love, oneness, unity in diversity, integrity, patriotism, the rule of law and a clear vision for true democracy. Such a policy should not only offer its beneficiaries insight into an English that explore the sensibility of the Nigerian culture, but should provide them an educated base for how to view and treat the existing multifarious Nigerian ethnic languages and cultures. This may require the adjustment of the curriculum of the Nigerian educational system to accommodate (compulsorily) courses that will emphasize the unity of Nigeria, peaceful co-existence, respect for, and tolerance of, the ethics, traditions, religions of other Nigerian societies, no matter how minor, as well as other issues that will promote peace, and development in Nigeria. Above all, appropriate legislations should be made to guide against the use of fowl language by Nigerians.

In the same vein, top government functionaries, including members of the Nigerian State and National Assembly, should be made to have periodic induction courses on proper use of language, avoidance of hate speech, oratory skills, tolerance of other cultures, promotion of Nigerian heritage and ethical values, national unity and development and the evil of corruption.

Such a language policy should also look at the contents of the Nigerian administrative and legal language with a view to expunging linguistic strands that appear to emphasize disunity and ethnicity. That is, all expressions bringing state of origin (i.e indigenization), religionism and quota system to the fore should be deleted from the inventory of the Nigerian administrative (official) and legal language and be replaced with words and expressions that clearly reflect and emphasize a common national identity, national unity (one Nigeria), national security, patriotism and merit rather than quota system. This will diminish and retard language users attitude of divisiveness, separatism and disunity, and re-enforce a positive attitude towards meritocracy and the indivisibility and indissolubility of the Nigerian entity.

Nigerian language scholars, teachers and writers of literary and language texts, as well as film actors and actresses, should, as a matter of policy, be made to write texts and use language that are/is capable of promoting the Nigerian culture, unity and morality. In fact, a national holiday should be set aside for show-casing the Nigeria cultural heritage and integration, and for the presentation of national awards to Nigerians who are found, in their respective human endeavors, to have contributed to the unity of Nigeria, peaceful co-existence, cultural (national) integration, and the development of Nigerian democratic values.

It is our strong belief that a growing child or language user/learner who gets immersed in this suggested linguistic culture will, certainly, acquire a positive moral, political and social attitude and world view that will reinvigorate the developmental needs of the Nigerian dream.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between language and behavioural patterns (i.e language and culture) using the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as its theoretical framework, and the Hausas, Igbos, and Yorubas of Nigeria as its focal point. The study revealed that there exist an intricate relationship between language and the way its speakers behave. In fact, each of the randomly selected Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba words and expressions examined in this study was either found to be responsible for the thought pattern of its users, or for a particular behavior being exhibited by the speakers of the language. This means that the Hausa, Igbo and Yorubas of Nigeria view life along lines laid down by their respective native languages and as such are (behaviourally) distinct to the extent of the difference in the contents of their different languages. The peculiarity of the Nigeria linguistic environment suggests that Nigerians are very much at the mercy of both their respective native languages and their official language (English) which are the mediums of expression for the Nigerian society.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is, however, not without criticisms. Such criticisms notwithstanding, the hypothesis remains the most widely accepted thesis for the explication of the relationship between language and culture. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations are made to the Federal Government of Nigeria, policy makers, curriculum developers, and language experts and Engineers to evolve a language plan that will impact positively on the thought/behavioural pattern and world view of Nigerians for socio-political harmony and peaceful co-existence.

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