

Some Preliminary Findings Concerning the Non-existence of Newspapers in the Minority Languages of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The study sought to ascertain if the non-existence of newspapers published in the languages regarded as minor in Nigeria is due to state policy or language apathy or lack of economic viability, or a combination of some or all of these reasons. This study adopted the Historical Research method, using relevant documents and interviews as instruments. Structured interviews were conducted with some socio-linguists, media scholars and professionals, as well as some members of the ethnic minorities in Nigeria. Data gathered for the study were qualitatively analysed. The dominant opinion is that government policy cannot be said to be responsible for non-existence or poor performance of minority language newspapers. Yet extant literature points to the fact that the language provisions in the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and the Language Policy in the National Policy on Education have an adverse effect on the development of minority languages and their use in publishing. There is a consensus among the respondents that lack of cultural assertiveness, otherwise called language apathy, is responsible for the poor performance or non-existence of minority language newspapers. There is also a strong opinion that even though ethnicity plays a prominent role in power equation and resource allocation, it has nothing to do with the non-existence or poor performance of newspapers published in minority languages. This view runs contrary to the position of Critical Political Economy theory that there is interrelationship between the distribution of material and symbolic resources. There is again a general consensus that minority language newspaper publishing is not economically viable because of the relatively small populations of the minority ethnic groups.