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**VENEZ PARLER FRANÇAIS
AVEC MOI : LET US ALL
APPROPRIATE THE BLESSINGS
OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE**

By

U. L. ARCHIVES

PROFESSOR SAMUEL ADE OJO



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VEenez PARLER FRANÇAIS AVEC MOI : LET US ALL APPROPRIATE THE BLESSINGS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Inaugural Lecture to Jesus Christ, "The same yesterday, today, and forever". (Heb.13.8)

INTRODUCTION

In order to provide an insightful background to this Inaugural Lecture, it shall take off from the consideration of two radically opposed positions on the status of French in Nigeria that were held by two important stakeholders in the academic and political evolution of Nigeria. One of the two positions was taken from a purely academic viewpoint and was infused with pedagogical and intellectual considerations. The holder of that position was a highly respected academic, whose pioneering efforts in the development of French in Nigeria have continued to be highly appreciated by many Nigerian French scholars. The other position was taken by the highest political juggernaut of his time, from a pragmatic, political and diplomatic perspective.

In a highly provocative paper, with a rather condescending interrogative title, "Does everybody need French?" (Evans: 1972:18-28), the first Professor of French in Nigeria, the late Professor Evans, presented ample reasons to justify his conclusion that "French is necessary in English-speaking West Africa, but not for everybody" (Evans: 28). His position was based on the prevailing inclement motivational learning environment for both learners and teachers of French in West Africa, as well as the discernable inadequacies at the levels of human, physical and material resources for the teaching of French. His position was also anchored on the disturbing yawning gap between policy intentions and declarations on French and the implementation of such intentions. Professor Evans particularly singled out Nigeria as the least advanced of all West African countries, with regards to the development of French, in spite of her being the most populated, the most endowed and the largest of all West African countries. But, then, shall we, because of these handicaps, conclude and accept that Nigerians do not all need French?

The most authoritative political reply to this question came in two separate statements made on December 14 and 31, 1996 by no less a person than the then highest political authority in our land.

In the heat of the battle to wrestle Nigeria from her diplomatic emasculation and isolation by most countries of the world, General Abacha presented some reasons to justify the position of his government on the indispensability of French as a means of transnational communication for all Nigerians. He posited that all Nigerians need French, which should henceforth be positioned as the second official language of Nigeria. Abacha's position, it must be admitted, was and is still considered by many analysts, as a survivalist political lifebuoy to salvage him from being irrelevant to Nigerian history. His promotion of French to the position of the second official language of our country was therefore seen as a desperate bid to court the sympathies of Francophone countries in the context of Nigeria's dwindling political fortunes and to anchor our drowning country in the safe harbour of countries which treat the French language as a common heritage to which they are inextricably bound. Whatever excuse might have been adduced by critics to dismiss Abacha's positive policy on French as being self-seeking, face-saving and rabble-rousing, we should not be deluded into throwing away the baby with the bath water, but rather see how Abacha has been deft in his "sweet uses of adversity". The adversity here was the Nigerian's nose-diving political predicament. The sweet uses of this adversity lay in Abacha's positive exploration of the dynamics and limitless resources of language, which he postulated as being capable of serving as a diplomatic key endowed with the redemptive potentials of unlocking doors that were once closed. The politician in Abacha therefore saw language as a most viable bridge that links peoples and nations with whom fruitful co-operation and reciprocally rewarding understanding on almost every aspect of human endeavour could be beneficially worked out. The soldier in him explored the "principles of strategy and tactics" to see language as being capable of attracting sympathies and understanding from the users of the same language across the globe, with whom healthy relationships can be achieved in an atmosphere of togetherness, friendship and mutually shared interests.

Our lecture would partly receive its driving force from this perspective of the indispensability of language in forging between individuals, groups, communities, nations, peoples and races, mutually beneficial and enduring political, social, economic, commercial, sentimental, contractual, religious, academic and other human relationships. It will be anchored on the fact that language is a divine gift, specially handed over to man to be well-tendered and carefully cultivated so that it can be used to benefit one another and mankind in general. It therefore views language from each individual's basic needs and also from the context of mankind in which language should serve as a communication tool for the promotion of global partnership for development, for global public goods and services and for the sharing of natural assets (knowledge, information, water, land, air, space, etc).

Our lecture shall provide a more scientific and more patriotic answer to the question raised by Professor Evans as well as to the many questions of Nigerians on the status of French in an English-speaking Nigeria. It will show how the policy enunciated on French for Nigeria by Abacha can be beneficially exploited and managed to the benefit of Nigeria and Nigerians. In presenting this position, we will try to convince our audience, and indeed all Nigerians, that they should share what we have been enjoying for more than over four decades: viz, the blessings of the French language, so that our Creator would not find us guilty of selfishness. This explains, therefore, the title of our lecture: **Venez parler français avec moi: let us all appropriate the blessings of the French Language.**

We would begin the lecture with the examination of how French is a supranational language par excellence that has been bequeathed by God to mankind to help human beings enjoy life to the fullest and be used also to explore the hitherto untapped heritage of living in a world that has become a Global Village which is replete with experiences and resources to be shared together in French and in the other languages that we speak.

We would, thereafter, examine the state and status of French in Nigeria; and finally see how French should be best managed so that its blessings can be best appropriated by Nigerians.

1.0 FRENCH: A SUPRANATIONAL LANGUAGE PAR EXCELLENCE

The French language is one major world language that enjoys an exemplary reputation, a proud and robust history, an enviable international and supranational attraction, a carefully co-ordinated worldwide legislative and administrative attention and care, an enduring semantic richness, a captivating rhythmical beauty and an indisputable magnetic pull to scholars and the lovers of the language. It also exhibits other impressive intrinsic and extrinsic qualities which make it stand over and above most modern world languages. These qualities and other factors account, to a great extent, for the passionate love and unreserved respect that are shown to the language by its almost 300 million users and admirers across the globe.

It is to be noted that there is hardly any other modern world language that has provided such a secure and comfortable haven as French for words that are drawn from other languages, including Arabic and African languages, which continue to have their own share of contributions to the estimated 1,200,000 words that now constitute the lexical repertoire of the French language. There is perhaps no other modern language, apart from French, that has made such a seductive appeal to the high and the low, to men and women belonging to all human races and colours outside France, its cradle or original motherland and even beyond the world-wide Francophone family, all of whom have adopted or adapted the French language as their own and who have been proud to learn to express themselves in it and to show off their refinement, knowledge and international outlook by speaking and writing it. No other modern language has had a better fortune than French of being used by its non-native users to produce creative and scientific masterpieces for which many of the writers

and scholars have received international prizes or have been admitted as members of prestigious language-based academic bodies or have been allowed to play leading roles in the policy formulation and the management of the language involved. No other living language, apart from French, can boast of being pampered with as many as almost 400 awards and about 2200 literary prizes to compensate its exemplary users. No other contemporary language, apart from French, is as better monitored, more carefully shielded from unscrupulous, uninitiated and defective users, more jealously protected from factors that can infect its purity and its high standard and more consciously and conscientiously promoted as an essential aspect of the national life of those for whom it is either a mother tongue and first language or an official language. Apart from these virtues, there is hardly any other modern language that has had the exceptional reputation of playing vital and decisive roles in major political decisions in modern world history and also of determining the direction in which international politics and world-order should take.

In more than one quarter of all the countries of the world, French is treated as a priceless treasure. For each of these countries, including those which have adopted it as their second language in the former French colonies, it is preserved as a precious national property, an invaluable common good and a public heritage of inestimable value on which individual and nation-wide attention is lavished.

The French language has, since its origin, been so carefully nurtured that it has never ceased to accumulate and exhibit extraordinary qualities including its exemplary capability to express ideas as clearly and as accurately as they should be understood. These were some of the major reasons that made the language the favoured linguistic candidate for drafting international treaties. They have also contributed in making it the preferred mode of expression in modern international diplomacy. In fact, for about

two and half centuries, from 1678 to 1919, that is between when the Treaties of Nimègue ending the War of Holland were signed and French completely replaced Latin as the number one international language and when the Treaty of Versailles ending the First World War was signed, French was exclusively used for drafting international treaties. Even after 1919, whenever the French language is used with other world languages to draft international treaties and agreements, the French version has always been recognized as the reference version for the other versions, in case of dispute or controversies.

While it must be admitted that the qualities of a language account in no small measure in winning for it accolades, admiration and recognition beyond its original habitat or zones of geo-linguistic jurisdiction, other factors that go beyond the intrinsic qualities of the language also contribute generally in catapulting it to universal acceptability. The case of French is not different.

Among the strongest and most determining of the factors that raised French to the level of strong international reckoning was the support provided by the French language-focused activities and the policies of French political leaders including kings, emperors and presidents who have ruled France at various decisive periods of human history. These “French-language-friendly” political leaders¹, to use a contemporary parlance, saw the French language as a national heritage, as their country’s symbol of intellectual power and influence, as a monumental source of national pride which had to be well-preserved and passionately pampered with the requisite cares and resources that would make it an enduring and attractive intellectual product as well as an endearing and effective communicative tool that was fit for exportation to other peoples and other countries. They also cultivated the language to make it presentable as one of the most cherished domesticated divine legacies to bequeath to those who were the beneficiaries of their extensive expansionist and military activities. French was, therefore, marketed to other

peoples as a rich language that had been very carefully nurtured and developed. To the former colonial subjects in the French colonies of South-East Asia and Africa in particular, it was presented and accepted as a powerful language of a powerful people who were and are still distinguished by a remarkably powerful culture and civilization.

The support given by successive French political leaders and the French people, past and present, to French creative writers, philosophers and other intellectuals who creatively explored the linguistic resources of the French language to produce masterpieces and exemplary intellectual products, has proved to be one of the greatest sources of its worldwide acceptability as a language that is resilient and richly endowed with an internal beauty and distinguished by unassailable communicative potentials. This was what gave rise to the production of the world acclaimed classical French writers of the 17th century. It also provided the fertile ground on which operated the committed advocates of the purity of the French language who formed the French Academy in 1634. The great philosophers and revolutionaries of the 18th century, the remarkable poets, novelists and playwrights belonging to the various literary movements of the 19th century and the iconoclastic and caustic writers of the 20th century all owed their successes to the high tastes and critical responses of the French reading- public. All the great users of the French language were therefore officially and unofficially supported and massively encouraged to invest a lot of intellectual energy, fertile stylistic fervour and critical sensitivity in projecting and developing the French language to the level at which it became recognized as one of the most viable world languages that could be used for creative writing and thinking, expressing deep philosophical thoughts and also conveying ideas in an elegant, delicate and refined manner. This was why a critic said:

La littérature détient le mérite d'avoir perfectionné la langue [...] Ils (les grands écrivains) se sont appliqués à rechercher l'élégance et la précision et c'est par cette recherche qu'ils ont procuré à notre langue cette perfection à laquelle nous attribuons, avant tout, tant de justice, l'ardeur que témoignent toutes les nations de s'en instruire.

In addition to the above points, it must also be noted that history-changing and life-transforming events and ideas, originating in particular countries and associated with specific languages, also affect the destiny or fortunes of such languages beyond their countries of origin. This is so, particularly with the French Revolution, whose effects left beneficial impacts on man, particularly wherever he is subjected to any oppressive and alienating regime and system in any part of the world. Through this, the French language, which was the language in which the French Revolution was conceived and perfected and through which it was advanced into a panhuman phenomenon, became recognized as the **Language of Revolution**. It became also recognised as the language that underscores the aspirations of man to harness, for his benefits, the blessings of freedom, mutual aid and dialogue. This actually prepared the ground for making French "the language of non-alignment". This is particularly so because it has had the honour of serving to enunciate the Declaration of the Rights of Man which has proved to be a major cornerstone of modern democracy and which, no doubt, influenced the content and spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The French language, thus, saw itself being adopted by men all over the world because of its ontological property of providing for humanity the most appropriate words to express ideas that are related to freedom, emancipation and the blessings of dialogue. This was why Constant Roy saw the French language as an innovative language that is imbued with strong emancipating credentials:

Le français est une langue bienfaisante. Que de choses éternellement bonnes et vraies ont été pour la première fois dites en français, ont fait leur apparition dans le monde en français. Que d'idées libérales et justes ont trouvé tout d'abord en français leurs formules, leur définition véritable [...] l'abolition du servage, les droits de l'homme, l'égalité, la liberté ont été pour la première fois proclamées en français.

In addition to the blessings that the French Revolution brought to the French language, it also contributed a lot in turning Paris, the French capital, into the panhuman melting-point of freedom and the universally acceptable haven for all human beings, regardless of their race, colour and country of origin, who are persecuted in their countries of origin. This explains why a lot of scholars, including scientists, critics and creative writers have found in Paris, a place where they could live in peace, nurture into fruition their intellectual, creative and scholarstic ambitions without molestation or anxiety and are encouraged to generate great ideas that are germane to the progress and the realisation of the aspirations of mankind. No wonder that many great intellectuals, who were non French-natives made their breakthroughs in French and in Paris in whose permissive, welcoming, motivating and stimulating environment they chose to groom and market their talents.²

With this, just as New York has gradually become the modern capital of international politics and diplomacy, and Rome as well as Mecca have become the ideological and symbolic capitals of Christianity and Islam respectively, Paris gradually rose to become the international generative epicentre of creative writing, the intellectual nursery of modern philosophical thinking and theories as well as the socio-cultural fertilizer of literary movements or schools. Among these literary schools are classicism, naturalism, realism, romanticism, symbolism and dadaism to which are attracted writers and critics from varied

multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic and linguistic backgrounds. This has resulted in making Paris the panhuman fertile ground to cross-breed the different cultures of the world into a supranational culture through the multifarious cultural activities and manifestations that are continuously taking place in the French capital. In fact, Paris has been baptized the world capital for congresses as well as that of the arts and sciences. With its 12,000 classified monuments, its thousands of other tourist attractions and its magnificent architectural masterpieces which have won for Paris the popular: "See Paris and die" wishful slogan, Paris is the dream city for people with taste and an adventurous spirit.

Besides, as a result of the concentration in Paris of peoples with different tastes, cultures and orientations from all corners of the world, many of whom are involved in the production of the best and the most exemplary in every area of human experience and development, and this, in an environment that nurtures, encourages and rewards healthy competition, excellence and competence, Paris has also become the supranational capital of fashion, high taste, exquisite refinement, **haute cuisine** and **joie de vivre**. The language of Paris, which is French, has also become recognized worldwide as the supranational language of refinement, tourism, hospitality, **haute cuisine** and fashion as well as the linguistic medium through which fashion, **joie de vivre**, romance and creative thinking are better conveyed than in other languages.

It needs to be mentioned that the French language has actually, since its birth, been moving gradually but relentlessly towards being distinguished by this worldwide acceptability, transcontinental status and multiracial magnetism and also being admired as a great language with panhuman potentials and with a distinct structural and lexical identity. By the 17th century, referred to as "Le Grand Siècle" (The Great Century), French had already established itself as the world language par

excellence of civilization, culture, literature and diplomacy. Not only had it become the favourite language spoken in almost every royal palace in Europe but it had also attained the prime position among the dozen or so languages that were striving to become national languages in different European countries.

Many privately sponsored initiatives embarked upon since the 17th century up to the present time and sustained by a very proactive cultural policy of successive governments of France have contributed immensely to the promotion and the popularization of the French language, across the globe. Through this cultural policy which became pronounced with the establishment, in 1909, of the world's first pro-foreign country cultural agency, "**Les Services des Ecoles et Oeuvres Françaises à l'Etranger**", the French government initiated a powerfully co-ordinated and massively financed programme of promoting the French language and culture in foreign countries. The policy has now yielded about 400 cultural, scientific and technical treaties, accords, conventions, protocols and agreements signed with about 135 countries, with which France maintains diplomatic relations, all aimed at the enhancement and promotion of the development and teaching of French in those countries.

1.1 The Role of the Francophonie

Particularly galvanising and catalyzing in the promotion of French across the globe is l'**Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)**, which was launched in 1986 and which is the French-speaking equivalent of the Commonwealth. It now (in 2006) has in its fold 53 member-states including 40 countries among which are 21 from Africa, whose official language is French. Other members are 13 non-French-speaking countries and 10 observer-countries which had never had any colonial or direct linguistic link with France. Among these are the African Spanish colony of Equitorial Guinea and the former Portuguese colonies of Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and São Tomé and

Principe. Other countries belonging to the Commonwealth like Canada, Cameroun, Mauritius, St Louis, Vanuatu, Dominican Island and Seychelles and also others like the Arabophone countries of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt which belong to the Arab League are in the **Francophonie**. Should Nigeria, through a well funded and competently implemented proactive orientation for the promotion of French and in the spirit of making more friends, decide to join the **Francophonie**, and she is admitted to be part of it, she will only be following the footsteps of the other Commonwealth countries referred to above. She will thereby expand her economic coasts, extend her circles of diplomatic friends and enrich herself through the various supports that the organization and its members would freely give to her.

It is to be noted that the OIF is the second strongest generating agent, apart from the French Revolution, to contribute extensively to the robust exploration of the enduring resources of French as a language that is richly endowed with the most resilient potentials that are capable of promoting panhuman understanding, transnational co-operation and dialogue as well as intercontinental politico-economic solidarity, multicultural harmony and inter-racial friendship. Particularly targeted by the OIF is the mission of making the French language the richest human language available to man to enable him communicate easily and effectively knowledge and information and exteriorise creative thinking, while at the same time cohabiting with other languages, in the spirit of integral humanism, panhuman symbiosis and inter-racial co-operation, to make living a pleasurable, enriching and rewarding experience.

1.2 French in International Organisations

Beyond the **Francophonie**, at global or planetary levels, French is a major language to reckon with. In most multilateral, bilateral and universal relationships, associations and organizations, French is a major linguistic player, having been universally accepted as a monumental power-house and an indomitable

power-broker. In most of these international organizations as well as many inter-governmental and global regulatory bodies, French is either a dominant working language or at least one of the leading official languages.

With the mother of all global organizations, the United Nations Organization, French is one of the two working languages, in addition to English, of its principal organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, **Le Conseil de Tutelle**, the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat. In addition to these, in all UNO's agencies, French is one of the major working languages. It is also the number one language of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the only working language of the Universal Postal Union (UPU). It goes without saying that, to work in each of these organizations and to clinch, in particular, their highest positions, French is a requirement. This is certainly one of the reasons why very professionally qualified Nigerians, have not found it easy to be considered suitable to occupy the top seats of these organizations, unlike, for example, Ghanaians. The same predicament has also befallen many qualified and competent Nigerians who would have been playing major roles in the hundreds of world regulatory bodies on various aspects of human endeavour, in which French is a working language and in which proficiency in spoken and written French is an indispensable requirement for employment.

In other world bodies, French also plays a seminal role. For example, in the European Union, it is a dominant working language and one of its eleven official languages. In the European Parliament, it is the first working language and one of the three pivotal languages to which other languages of the member-countries are translated. With the Arab League and the Islamic Conference, it is one of the dominant working languages. Close to us, in the African Union, it is one of the three working languages.

Closer to us further in ECOWAS, French is one of the two working languages, just as it is for many other sub-regional political, economic, business and sporting organizations in which Nigeria is a major player.

So, not only has French made an unquestionable and deep impact on the linguistic, political and economic landscape of the world, but it has also served and continues to serve as a distinct mark of identity and definition to many peoples of the world as well as to many countries. But, how has French been really faring in Nigeria?

2.0 The Status of French in A Multilingual Nigeria

If the question raised in 1972 by Professor Evans, “Does everybody need French?” were now, (in 2006), to be subjected to a referendum in Nigeria, the verdict might be a resounding: “No. We do not need French”. If the respondents were to be further requested to advance reasons for their negative verdict, the reasons might be any of the following probing or rhetorical questions: “With my infallible competence in English, unquestionably accepted universally as the number one modern world language of science and technology, of international trade and of high-profile politics, as the most patronized world language and as the language of the most influential power-brokers of the world, why on earth do I need to bother myself with French?” “Why should I, by wanting to appropriate French, another language of the former colonial masters of Africa, subscribe to the re-colonisation of Nigeria by France, through the back-door?” “Why should I, a true Nigerian, be a willing agent for the cultural enslavement and the linguistic emasculation of Nigeria by lending a helping hand to the popularization of another neo-imperialistic linguistic tool?” “How would any right thinking Nigerian want to further complicate the already chaotic linguistic landscape of Nigeria, with her plethora of languages, by aiding and abetting the foisting on Nigeria of another major European language?” “With the unsolved problems of getting Nigerians to learn and

“speak good English, why do we need to dissipate our energy and lean resources on another foreign language?” These are the samples of the many answers to be expected!!

Some of these answers do contain some elements of truth, but these have been paradoxically used to arrive at unobjective conclusions, in the context of the reality of our basic needs as individual Nigerians and as a nation. The conclusions and motives are also to be faulted, when viewed against the exigencies of a modern times as well as the bitter and humiliating experiences through which most Nigerians have passed at different times, because of their deficiency in or stark ignorance of French.

The harrowing insults that have been hauled at many Nigerian travellers, while passing through the immigration and customs services of Francophone countries, still leave a bitter taste in the mouth. The disappointment of very highly qualified Nigerian professionals who have been disgracefully rejected in their bids to clinch top positions in international organizations is one that such Nigerians cannot easily forget. Even if they had decided not to cry over split milk, we, as Nigerians, would still remember how an eminently qualified and requisitely experienced Nigerian was edged out of the top seat at the UNO in 1991, because of his inability to completely and satisfactorily satisfy the language requirements of that organization. This speaker is aware of how another Nigerian, a former highly placed minister, who hurriedly rushed to Southern France to do a few months of French, had also lost out in the same job, largely because of his deficiency in French. One would like to add to the long list of those who will surely regret their inability to speak French, the many top-ranking Nigerian scholars whose expertise is most often ignominiously under-estimated in international meetings. Added to this list is that of many Nigerian businessmen who have been most brazenly cheated in business transactions that would have been otherwise directly and personally conducted by them in French but for which they had to rely on temporarily hired, and at

ridiculously high costs, quack or half-baked translators and interpreters who served as their intermediaries. Many of us in this hall must have felt so incomplete as truly educated men and women when interacting with our Francophone African counterparts who express themselves in impeccable English, while we cannot even greet them in French. Others would have had their patriotic pride badly battered at the repeated stories of how Nigeria lost out, to our detriment, in international trade and diplomatic transactions, because of the failure of most members of the highly professional teams representing our interests, to communicate in French in addition to English. Most of us in this hall cannot but be appalled by the most illiterate way that French words that have now moved into English are pronounced by most Nigerians, particularly those in the media and even the educated elite. Such words include **coup d'état**, **aide-de-camp**, **esprit de corps**, **agent provocateur**, **crème de la crème**, **tête à tête**, **souvenir**, **fiancé(e)**.

In the light of the above experiences, many of us might now be sufficiently convinced that we need French. We might therefore be tempted to tag anybody still holding a contrary view, a victim of myopia, narrow mindedness and blurred horizons, largely because such people have possibly not felt the pangs of losing out as a result of lack of proficiency in French. The regret that most of us may nurse, however, is in our failure to have learnt French earlier in life or well before now.

This predicament is due to the fact that French has been suffering from serious setbacks in Nigeria right from the colonial period when the British colonial masters jealously shielded the colony from entertaining any other European language. For example, a law enacted by the British Parliament in 1882 interdicted the teaching of any other European language, apart from English, in British colonies. It was obvious that the language that was specifically targeted was French, considered as an undesirable rival to English, which eventually became Nigeria's official

language in 1954 through the McPherson Constitution, though its pervading presence had been asserted since the colony became British.

2.1 French in the Curriculum of the Nigerian Educational Establishments

But, in spite of this water-tight legislative and administrative control, French still managed to find its way, through French traders and missionaries into Nigeria, first to Lagos, where, by 1875, the “forbidden tongue” in British colonies was one of the subjects that featured in the Wesleyan High School and Training Institute. With more and more French people settling in Nigeria, where, by 1881, there were 9 of them, French started to gain some ground. No wonder it became one of the subjects taught by 1909 in the newly established King’s College in Lagos.

But then, by independence, most Nigerians actually knew too little about the language. Even if they did, only the audacious among them, imbued with an adventurous spirit, knew what blessings French could bring to Nigeria as a nation as well as to her citizenry. As if to make the horizon more cloudy for French, the newly independent country of Nigeria was confronted and miffed by some political, diplomatic and military actions taken by the French Government, which Nigeria considered radically antithetical to her interests. France was therefore considered as an enemy-nation and its language as an enemy-language that could not be a harbinger of good luck and blessings to Nigerians. This situation therefore distanced Nigerians from wanting to learn French.

But, a combination of events, actions (particularly a new policy-orientation of the newly independent nation of Nigeria) and some diplomatic pressures provided a light at the end of the tunnel for French in Nigeria.

Nigeria, as a sovereign state, started reviewing very critically her real political, economic and cultural interests in the context of her identity, geo-political location, expected political and economic role in West Africa, Africa and the world and also as a result of her natural and human resources as well as the individual needs of her citizenry. It was clear, in her vision as an independent nation, that her contiguity to Francophone countries could not be wished away, because of the multifarious cultural and ethnic ties that exist among peoples with a common past who live across our borders. Nigerian blood relations are to be found in neighbouring countries that hem in Nigeria in the North, East and West: to the North by Niger and Algeria, to the East by Chad and Cameroon and to the West by Benin and Togo. If any country were to spring up in the Atlantic Ocean, it would most probably be a Francophone country. In addition to the cultural links with identical tribes in these Francophone countries, the need was later felt to evolve a policy that would eventually bring about a sub-regional integration in West Africa. That need gave rise to ECOWAS which eventually came into existence in 1975, through Nigeria's initiative. ECOWAS is today made up of 5 Anglophone and 10 Francophone countries including the two Lusophone countries of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde which are now members of the Francophonie. One does not, therefore, need a soothsayer or a special consultant to convince us that the official language of the ten Francophone ECOWAS countries should be positively embraced and learnt by Nigerians.

By sheer divine coincidence, God has intentionally positioned Nigeria to be the bowel of West Africa just as she is the trigger-point of a gun-shaped Africa in which one out of every six human beings is a Nigerian and in which 24 of its 53 countries are French-speaking. Nigeria's centrifugal role in Africa is therefore divinely ordained; which is perhaps why the continent has always been the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. All these make it highly desirable for the country to adopt a linguistic policy that would encourage Nigerians to learn French in addition to English, which has become their *lingua franca*.

With the growing need for Nigeria to supply some of the high-level manpower of ECOWAS, the African Union (which was initially O.A.U) and other continental organizations, French started being considered as a desirable subject to be given priority attention in Nigeria's school curriculum. Apart from this political imperative, French was gradually identified as a "sellable" subject for Nigerian professionals vying for international jobs. This became particularly compelling as more and more highly qualified Nigerian professionals were being edged out of top-ranking positions in international organizations, because of their inability to fulfill the language requirement which, till today, still stipulates that the knowledge of a second language, particularly French, would be an advantage.

The above situation seemed to supply a very strong reason to respond positively to the diplomatic pressures mounted on African countries and other developing world countries, by international bodies which never ceased to underscore the relevance of multilingualism in European languages to the promotion of international understanding, sub-regional co-operation, peace, transnational communication, effective appropriation and domestication of science and technology, access to multilingual information, new knowledge, new skills and new understanding. Multilingualism, in languages of wider communication, was also repeatedly presented by these international bodies as a powerful armour to break down national, ethnic and language stereotypes and barriers, encourage intercultural sensitivity and awareness and usher in panhuman understanding. These international organizations, which included the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa, the UNESCO and the UNO, therefore invited all developing countries, particularly in Africa, to take adequate measures to promote the study of another second European language in addition to the one that has found a safe haven in each country, through colonization.

In addition to these pressures, a major impetus for the gradual blossoming of French in Nigeria came from the positive change in the attitude of France to Nigeria. With this, the initial inimical stance of France towards Nigeria's interests gradually gave way to an objective appreciation by France of Nigeria's potentials as an economic and political asset that could be viably tapped for the benefit of both countries. This friendly attitude towards Nigeria also coincided with the general review of the orientation of the cultural policy of France in favour of Anglophone African countries. The new policy resulted in a massive administrative, material and technical support for the promotion of the teaching of French in Nigeria. This also facilitated the signing of several cultural and educational agreements with Nigeria, on making French loved and learnt by Nigerians. With these, Nigerian undergraduates of French were offered scholarships tenable in France for their compulsory French Year Abroad Programme. Many Nigerian youths were given opportunities to undertake technical courses in France with a view to making them part of the middle manpower needed for Nigeria's technological take-off. Many teachers were also beneficiaries of various forms of scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate courses in France. In addition, French teachers and specialists were sent from France to teach in Nigerian secondary schools and tertiary institutions. Learning materials, including books and language laboratories, were generously donated to these institutions. Co-operation agreements between some Nigerian and French universities were also facilitated by the French government. All these yielded phenomenal results in the quality of French taught in Nigeria and also in the overall promotion of French in our country.

Another important *concoure de circonstance* was provided by the gradual disappearance of Latin from the curriculum of Nigerian secondary schools. The reality of independence and the need to make formal education contribute to the future career prospects of young Nigerians, were like a fatal wind of change that blew Latin into the sea of oblivion. The vacuum left by Latin was

therefore filled by French, seen as a more living and more useful language. This was from the onset of independence.

2.2 *The Glowing Years of French in Nigeria*

With the above, the fortunes of French in Nigeria changed for the better, after the first two years of independence. By 1962, many secondary schools had started offering French as a school subject and it was taught by young, vibrant, resourceful and well-trained French and British teachers, who left no stone unturned in making the language enthusiastically and rewardingly learnt by their students. Not only did the number of candidates offering French keep increasing but also the number of those offering it in terminal certificated examinations conducted by WAEC kept soaring higher and higher. This increase was not due to only the increasing number of schools but particularly to the excellent quality of French taught and the conducive environment in which it was taught.

The period also coincided with the introduction of French as a degree subject in two of the existing universities at Ibadan and Nsukka and as a diploma course in the newly established Federal Advanced Teachers Colleges of Lagos, Owerri, Zaria and Ibadan. Other first generation universities and some colleges of education later joined the train. The teaching staff in these tertiary institutions were exemplarily effective as teachers and very well-respected as knowledgeable scholars. The quality of teaching was therefore very high and the French graduates produced could stand their ground anywhere in the world. Not only were all the pedagogical, human and physical requirements for a rewarding teaching and learning environment provided in the right proportion, but the teachers were also competent, well-informed, committed and effective and the learners were highly motivated, serious-minded and focused. Teaching materials, including laboratories and libraries, were not considered as luxuries but as part of the essential and required learning materials. Classes were not crowded; and so direct contact of students with their teachers

was easy and fruitful. Teaching methodologies were excellently blended and aptly exploited. French was indeed “the beautiful bride” among Arts subjects and so it was emotionally embraced by its students who were passionately envied by other students. In addition to all these, physical facilities in the Universities and Advanced Teachers Colleges were fresh, aesthetically inviting and pleasurable adequate. There were no social excesses within the campuses to divert attention from learning. This situation was the norm in the first decade of Nigeria’s independence.

2.2.1 The Gloomy Years of French

However, by the mid-70s, the situation had changed, just as it had also been for the whole Nigerian academic landscape. But, the change was more pronounced for French.

The foreign teachers, at both the secondary schools and the tertiary institutions, were gradually returning home. At the secondary school level, they were replaced by the new graduates of French from the universities and colleges of education. Unfortunately, some of these teachers brought into their teaching of French new ethics, new habits, new teaching methods which, incidentally bore the mark of our traditional Nigerian *laissez-faire* attitude and this was counter-productive to the quality of French taught. French classes were gradually becoming a shadow of their old selves in most schools. The classes were becoming rather dull, dry, dreary and boring. Most of the teachers were performing much below the minimum standard expected of them. Unfortunately, the situation has not changed ever since; it has even deteriorated as a result of these and other reasons.

Among these other reasons are the quality and quantity of teaching materials used. These are often inappropriate, not culturally relevant and pedagogically uninspiring. They are also, most often, not creatively adapted by the teacher. Most schools do not even have these facilities. The few ones available in some schools are either obsolete or overused. To make matters worse,

hardly does any school, particularly the public ones, have enough teachers, since no new teachers are employed. The ones employed for French are most often diverted to other subjects that are considered by the school authorities to be more vital to the future of the students.

As if to nail the coffin of French, a fatal blow was dealt on the language by Nigeria's first detailed official policy on education, the National Policy on Education (NPE), which was released for implementation in 1981. The policy failed woefully to be responsive to the linguistic needs for which provisions ought to have been made in order to prepare the Nigerian child for "maximum self-development and fulfilment", which was touted in the document as the central focus of education for the Nigerian child. Instead of this, the policy packaged the systematic marginalisation and insulation of the child in the modern world, by failing to adequately prepare him to face the challenges of being integrated into the wider world through the provision of the linguistic tools that would empower him to cope with the demands of living successfully in a competitive world that is multilingual. By making French an undesirable elective among more favoured non-vocational electives, the NPE marooned the Nigerian child in a dilemma that practically prevented him, even when talented and interested in French, from choosing to study the language. This led to a catastrophic atrophy that turned French to a "*leper-subject*", not profitable or worthy enough to be associated with, but good to be avoided.

The effect of this predicament was cataclysmic for French. French classes got emptier and emptier as the days passed by. French teachers became objects of ridicule by their students. Parents, especially in those parts of the country where French is seen as an unwanted rival to Arabic, discouraged their children from having anything to do with French. Hardly could all the candidates offering French in Nigeria in WAEC examinations fill a big auditorium. For example, between 1990 and 1995, the number

of such SSCE candidates was between 352 and 542, at a time when the total number of candidates for SSCE in Nigeria was almost a million. The failure rate was between 42.9% and 52% of the total meagre number of those who attempted the subject.

Even with a revised NPE, which up-graded French to the more inviting status of a core subject, at both JSS and SSS levels, and with Abacha's 1996 elixir for the dying subject, the situation of French seemed to be beyond redemption. The irreparable damage done to the subject, during the long years of complete neglect and disregard, has turned French to an underfed *kwashiorkor* child, who seemed infected by the congenital *down syndrome*. The pall of darkness and gloom under which French was vegetating is evident in the fact that the highest percentage of candidates offering French in SSCE between 1999 and 2004 was a mere 0.21%, with other years having a range of 0.13% to 0.19%, of the total entries for all subjects! With this development, no university can draw all its candidates for French from UME/JAMB; and so each university has to rely heavily on pre-degree programmes and other sources for survival.

The snowballing negative effect of the state of French teaching in secondary schools and of the poorly conceived and demotivating official policy on French can therefore be felt in the universities, where most of the weaknesses which characterize the quality of French taught in the secondary schools are generally replicated, and at times, in greater dimensions. The quality of teaching in most departments of French and the attitude of the teachers are therefore far below the expectations of the students as well as much below the normal standard in identical departments in developed countries.

The reasons for this include the non-familiarization of most of the teachers with the appropriate teaching methods for French as a foreign language and their inability to teach the language as a living subject in an environment that should be particularly enlivened by an intra-institutionally arranged acculturation

process. The students themselves are equally to blame, because most of them are like unwilling horses that are forced to come to quench their academic thirst from a murky pond. Their lack of motivation is traceable to the fact that French is, to most of them, an imposed alternative, as a result of their failure to qualify for university admission through courses of their first choice. In such a circumstance, French is like a dust-bin subject, fit for the rejects of other departments. The end-result is the proverbial “garbage in garbage out” syndrome. The decay, obsolescence and inadequacy of teaching facilities, the moral excesses of students and the periodic closures which have become common features in Nigerian universities have also added more insult to the injury caused by the poor quality of French taught and learnt in the universities.

With this inclement teaching and learning environment, many of the French graduates of our Universities are far from being the targeted balanced bilinguals that are expected to be produced from a French degree programme in an English-speaking country. Because these French graduates have been very insufficiently exposed to French language usage and practice, because their knowledge of the codes, rules and the three linguistic levels of French as well as those of English is grossly inadequate and because of other deficiencies resulting from their insufficient knowledge and practice of oral and written French and English, most of them do not qualify to be described as equilingual or ambilingual in French and English. The best that they can be called are “double semilinguals” who do not have sufficient competence in either French or English, quantitatively and qualitatively.

From the above, it is clear that it is not yet **uhuru** for French in Nigeria, in spite of its being learnt at all the levels of our education industry. With the poor quality of French taught and learnt and the low number of its learners, the blessings that should accrue from French to Nigerians and Nigeria still remain a mirage.

Nigerians have not therefore had easy access to the vast advantages that are waiting to be tapped through the acquisition of the French language, which we have shown, as being the toast of most citizens of the Global Village that the world has become.

Should most literate Nigerians eventually have a working knowledge of French in addition to English, which is our country's *lingua franca*, they will be better empowered to harness the multifarious communicative, cultural and cognitive advantages that are attendant on the knowledge of a second international language. Thus, they will have better access to the information and knowledge that are conceived and expressed in French; they will be better positioned to realize their affective goals in self-awareness, self-concept, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-realisation and social values. They will also be offered a vital tool to build better social and professional bridges with those who use French, particularly in the 53 countries belonging to the Francophonie. They would, in addition, be better qualified to have access to a wider variety of careers and promotion in any career where French is needed. Their prospects for job opportunities in multinational and international organizations would be more greatly enhanced. Their ease in travelling to and enjoying their stay in Francophone countries, and adding more value to their professional and business contacts would be better guaranteed. As for Nigeria as a nation, she would be better positioned to make profitable economic in-roads into the present member-countries of the Francophonie, particularly our neighbours. We would equally be able to expand our circle of diplomatic friends and become a stronger force to reckon with in sub-regional, continental and world politics. With our anticipated positive action on French, we may be able, as the politico-economic leader of Africa, to encourage each African country to have a more proactive policy and a stronger political will in favour of another transnational language: French for non-Francophone countries, English for non-Anglophone countries. With this, we may be able to have a

fully bilingual Africa, with English and French spoken by every literate African.

But then, with the present gloomy state of French in Nigeria, what should be done to make French “glow” and release to Nigerians its inherent blessings including those that are accruable from the way the language has been excellently nurtured in other countries? We shall now examine this in our conclusion.

3.0 THE WAY OUT

3.1 *Attitudinal Change Towards Language*

The most fundamental problem in language acquisition in Nigeria is in the area of attitude. From the ordinary Nigerian to those in authority, our attitude to language³ is generally negligent, careless, indifferent and unconcerned, unlike the attitude of Francophones to French and languages in general.

This negative attitude must change for the better and the change must be pursued with ethnic nationalism, patriotic zeal and cosmopolitan fervour, so that each Nigerian becomes a proud member of his ethnic group, a committed citizen of Nigeria and a worthy member of the Global Village that the world has become. This triple but symbiotic commitment to all the vital aspects of the identity of every Nigerian as a total man will make the Nigerian child quadrilingual.⁴ In the context of the quadrilingualism being advocated for the Nigerian child, the ethnic or native language, which most Nigerian children now see as an insult to speak because it is viewed by them as leading to a devaluation of their civilized outlook, would be learnt naturally and easily at home and be seen as a divine gift, specifically bequeathed by God through parents. The second language is one of the three major Nigerian languages which should be appropriated as a national heritage and as one of the cementing cords of our unity as a nation. This would lead to Nigeria being ultimately a country with three acceptable nationwide national languages. The other two languages are the two main continental languages of Africa,

English and French, which are to be fully adopted as part of the panhuman heritage that has been perfected for us by others, in the same vein as they have also made available to us the blessings of science and technology.

Our political leaders should lead the way in this proposed re-orientation of our attitude to language. They should be ready and be fully armed to fund, supervise and preside over language issues with commitment and conviction as we have seen with French leaders. As a first step, it is proposed that every Nigerian who wants to play a key role in our nation should be a competent user of his ethnic language as well as of English and French. Such a multilingual leader, who should use language resourcefully, creatively and competently would be better disposed to champion the positive change of attitude of Nigerians to their own languages and also to other languages that are relevant to their personal interests. Our leaders should also be consciously disposed to encourage individuals and ethnic nationalities to protect their languages by initiating various measures, including the funding of awards, for the exceptional users, most committed defenders and researchers of the language. It is hoped that one Nigerian leader would one day want his name inscribed in gold in the history of Nigeria, just like Louis XIV did for French, for establishing language academies to superintend the fortunes of the languages that are in active use in Nigeria.

3.2 Policies on Languages

The greatest harm that has been done to the potential ambition of most Nigerians towards language acquisition is the one emanating from the imposition on them of a poor, unimaginative, unimplementable and too narrow-minded language policy. Nigeria is one of the very few countries in the world, which, through her failure to provide an appropriate legal or constitutional framework to protect her languages and guide her citizens on the proper exploitation of non-native and panhuman languages and through

a nebulous and woolly language policy, has failed to protect the fundamental interests of her citizens by not helping them to beneficially appropriate the rich resources of language as an inescapable means of self-expression and for the apprehension and appreciation of reality, as well as the domestication of nature and the acquisition of knowledge.

It is therefore imperative that our country's constitution, whose only provision for language(s) is in respect of the ones to be used in national and state assemblies, should provide a proactive and detailed constitutional framework for the identification, development, promotion, protection, learning and appropriation of the languages that are actively used by Nigerians as well as other non-native languages that are relevant to their interests and needs. In addition to this, our language policy, as presently enunciated in Section 10 of our National Policy on Education (Revised), should be reviewed so as to contain pragmatic, realistic, well-researched and clearly articulated provisions for the functions, identification and teaching of all the languages in use in Nigeria.

Also calling for immediate action is the enunciation of an objectively defined, coherently manageable and pragmatically implementable foreign language policy for the promotion and learning of foreign languages in Nigeria, to be based on the economic value of each language to be chosen, its role in the overall enhancement of our nation's geo-political and strategic interests and the promotion of Nigeria's economic interests. Other considerations would derive from Nigeria's political and diplomatic expediciencies, her technological imperatives, the responsiveness of the chosen language to the exigencies of Nigeria's closeness to other countries and to her need for full integration into sub-regional, continental and global reckoning. The policy will make Nigerians functional multilinguals like most Europeans and it will also respond positively to the expected leadership roles of Nigeria in ECOWAS and the AU and as Africa's

major voice in the UNO. Not only will the foreign language policy provide for the effective and well-funded teaching of French at all our three levels of education and even the informal sector, but it will also make Nigeria champion the teaching of English to other Africans. In the context of the principle of “charity beginning at home”, we would, in the first instance, provide for our immediate Francophone neighbours, by establishing well-funded and competently staffed Special English Language Centres (SELC) in each of the three cardinal regions of Nigeria: in the West in Lagos, for Togo and Benin, in the East in Calabar, for Cameroun and the two Congos and in the North in Maiduguri, for Niger, Chad and Algeria. The University of Lagos is proposed as the site for the envisaged SELC for countries in the Western flank of Nigeria. Learners for the Lagos SELC can also come from all other Francophone countries to the West of Nigeria.

Even when the policies being advocated here are clearly and brilliantly enunciated, we need to take appropriate measures to effectively implement the recommendations being proposed, should they be accepted as relevant to our needs and survival as a nation. This is because of our well-known poor records in policy implementations.⁵

3.3 Institutional Re-orientation

Under this are included all such features of language learning that are directly linked to the immediate learning environment: the teacher and his teaching methods, the content and focus of the curriculum and the pedagogical materials that are indispensable for a result-oriented teaching of language. If these are not provided in the right quality and quantity and as when due, the teaching of any foreign language in particular, is doomed to fail in achieving the targeted objectives of foreign language learning.

The teacher is really the most important human factor in the effective teaching of a foreign language. Testimonies abound on

how the good French teacher has brilliantly succeeded in bringing, from a really bad situation, the best out of his students, by being stubbornly faithful to his teaching ethics and also by being friendly, cheerful, resourceful and caring in the handling of his lessons. On the other hand, we have had tales of woe told about the bad French teacher, that is the uncreative, the bully, the uninspiring, the non-resourceful, the perpetual late-comer and the careless and incompetent user of French, who has killed the interest of many young learners of the French language. Nigerian teachers of French owe it a supreme and sacred duty to see themselves as the greatest source of motivation or demotivation of their students. In addition to his resourcefulness and commitment to his job, the communicative competence and the familiarisation of the French teacher with the best teaching methodologies through relevant training and research, are vital ingredients that will leave a rewarding and refreshing impact on the foreign language learner.

We should also not underestimate the positive role that can be played by the availability to the teacher of the relevant pedagogical requirements (like a good multi-media centre, a well-stocked language library and the physical props needed for an effectively domesticated intra-institutional acculturation) in helping students to acquire, with relative ease, the basic language skills, in the appropriate and correct proportion.

For the re-training of French teachers as well as the provision of teaching aids including books, the highly industrialised and rich members of the Francophonie are called upon to supplement the present and anticipated efforts of the Nigerian government. As of now, it is only the French government that is offering very commendable help in these areas of need. Since the issues at stake are so demanding, other Francophone countries should now help in making the teaching of French in Africa's most populous, most influential and most economically viable country result-oriented and better empowered to yield better dividends to

many more Nigerians. Francophone parastatals and multinationals operating in Nigeria are also invited to be more favourably disposed in providing the needed support.

One aspect of our institutional orientation with regards to French which calls for a radical review and adaptation to contemporary exigencies is in the area of the content, scope and focus of the French curriculum in the universities. Though periodic reviews have been done to secondary school French curriculum, almost all the Departments of French in Nigerian universities have been somehow conservative and timid in their attitude to their French curriculums, which have virtually remained the same since the mid-60s. One basic defect of the curriculum being presently run is the grossly inadequate provision for language practice in and outside the classroom. It is noted too that in most literature classes, undue prominence is given to the ideological and thematic preoccupation of literary works rather than treating the French literary work as a creative experiment with the French language seen as an expression of human experience and perception. French literature is, therefore, hardly seen as an end-product of the creative processing and exploration of the resources and structure of the French language with a view to bringing into a convincing focus the appreciation and explication of reality, re-created by the Francophone writer from his specific cultural, stylistic and philosophical perspective.

In addition to this approach which fails to enable students to use literature to beef up their sensitivity to language use, it is also observed that the present curriculum seems more focused on producing only teachers and, in exceptional cases, a few administrators.⁶

There is, therefore, an urgent need to work on a three-pronged review of the French curriculum in Nigerian universities. The first is to professionalise French studies, by mounting such French-dominated professional courses as translation, interpretation and

bilingual secretaryship either within the Department of French or more pragmatically in a distinct department that will have a close relationship with the Department of French and other cognate departments from which relevant courses would be drawn. Bilingual secretaryship, in particular, can be domiciled in the Faculty of Business Administration. As for Translation and Interpretation, we may draw inspiration from the more and more universities all over the world which now offer highly patronized first honours degree and diploma programmes in these two highly remunerating courses. From only 49 of such universities in 1960, the number rose significantly to 108 in 1980 and by 1994, to 250.

The second approach aimed at making French courses yield better dividends and attract better candidates, is to combine French with professional courses to form combined honours degree courses, as it is now the case in many world universities, where French is combined with such professional courses as Mass Communication, Law, Banking, Insurance, Business Administration, Tourism, Computer Science and Drama. As of now, only Education is combined with French in the University of Lagos and this is not very patronized. The professionalisation of French being advocated will make most graduates from professional courses proficient in French, an asset that will greatly enhance their job prospects, as well their self-assurance and self-realisation perspectives.

The third approach is to make all other Nigerian undergraduates take a compulsory French for Special Purposes course to be given identical weighting as to the university-wide GST programmes. With the functional knowledge of French that each Nigerian graduate will acquire through such a course, none of them will probably ever again be refused any job for failure to have a working knowledge of French, if it is a compulsory requirement.

With these approaches, we would not fall foul of a Croatian folk-saying which affirms: “However many languages a person knows, that’s how much he is worth” and of the truth underscored by King Hassan of Morocco who once said: “*Etre monolingue, c’est une certaine façon analphabète*”. In other words, speaking other languages makes one truly educated and it is a positive mark of the overall value and quality of the individual.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, we wish to passionately plead with you as the current best Vice-Chancellor in Nigeria and as the presiding officer of Nigeria’s university of first and best choice, to lead the way for other universities, by making the graduates of the University of Lagos roundly educated and be worth a lot more than before, by helping them to speak French in addition to their English. Kindly initiate this by championing the implementation of our modest proposals, particularly for the curriculum review of French studies in our University. This will also help our graduates join other Nigerians like me and many millions of Francophones in the world, to fully appropriate the blessings of the French language and also individually and meaningfully contribute, from their professional expertise, to the enhancement of Nigeria’s interest.

And so, Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, can I rely on your protection and authorisation, as the Chairman of this lecture, to extend an invitation in French to everybody in this hall:

« ***Venez parler français avec moi*** » or better still : « ***Voulez-vous parler français avec moi ?*** »

I am sure, I will hear a resounding: “***Oui***”.

Can I, therefore, Sir, in return, say to all, for their readiness to learn French and speak it with me and for their patience in listening to me:

Merci, beaucoup. Que Dieu vous bénisse.

NOTES

1. Among those included are William the Conqueror (1028-1087), Louis XIV (1638-1715), Napoléon, the First (1769-1821), Charles Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, the 2nd (1808-1873) and Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970).
2. Among them are some of the brightest promoters of symbolism: Jean Moreas (Greek), Stuart Merrill and Julian Green (both Americans), James Joyce and Oscar Wilde (Irish), Gabriele d'Annunzio (Italian), Wilhelm Apollinaire (Polish), Arthur Adamov (Russian) and Foyjita (Japanese). Others are notable writers including Georges Schéhadé (Lebanese), James Joyce and Samuel Beckett (both Irish), Graham Green (British), Eugène Ionesco, Tristan Tzara, Mircea Eliade and Michel Goran (all Romanians), Hector Bianciotti (Argentinian), Gabriele D'Annunzio (Italian), Seyhmus Dagtekin (Turkish), Paula Jacques (Egyptian), Andrei Makine (Russian) and a host of others. Others are critics, scientists and artists including Van Gogh (Dutch) and Picasso (Spanish).
3. This attitude reminds one of our general attitude to our national monuments which are brazenly vandalized and to our national properties, each of which is seen as a national cake to be gluttonously shared out by selfishly applying the principle of "the survival of the fittest." The attitude is also akin to that which we show to our national interest which most Nigerians treat with indifference and non-chalance.
4. This will not be an impossible feat when we remember that psychologists have proved that each child is potentially capable of learning and mastering about ten languages, if the right opportunities and motivations are offered him and that the European Union is already

implementing a trilingual policy for every child in its member-states.

5. One may want to recall how the following policy decisions have been either poorly implemented or completely unattended to: the one on promoting French to be the nation's second official language, the one contained in our National Policy on Education to make the Nigerian child to learn one major Nigerian language other than that of his environment, the latest provision in the revised NPE (1998) to make French a core subject at both the JSS and SSS, and the recommendation of **The Vision 2010 Committee** in October 1997 on French.
6. The marooning of French courses on only literature, civilization and language does not seem to go beyond producing teachers who, unfortunately, are ill-equipped pedagogically and linguistically to be good teachers. The few French graduates who manage to become administrators, most often lack the requisite knowledge to fit easily into their jobs, except through supplementary re-training.

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Tribute to Him who is worthy to receive it

To God be the glory for great things He has done for me.

To Him, who was, who is and who shall ever be,
To Him, the Giver of my life which he created wonderfully and fearfully,
Who has led me to see Him as the epitomé of wisdom, knowledge, power, beauty and excellence,
Who has always been providing me with the most auspicious circumstances and opportunities to excel, shine and fulfill my destiny,
Who has directed, appointed and selected various individuals, groups and institutions to help me reach the goals that He set for me, even before I was born,

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Without Him, my hundreds of students would not have been privileged to discover in me the model of a dedicated teacher, an endearing motivator and an ever-willing counselor and helper!

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How can I thank Him enough!!!

I bow my head in total reverence to the Greatest, the Best, the most Exemplary, the most Powerful and the most Dependable.

To Him be all the glory and the praises!

U. I. ARCHIVES

U. L. ARCHIVES