



TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AS BANDITRY PARADIGM IN NIGERIA: ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES TO THE RESCUE

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Abstract

Human societies across the globe are characterized by a litany of immorality, socio-economic impropriety, insecurity, injustice and other varying degrees of challenges breeding imperfections as a part of human world. Interestingly enough, in all lands and climes, language is the only constant and potent tool that is employed unavoidably to proffer solutions to these teething problems. This paper seeks to remind us of this fact that we service our implement – English Language and explore its efficacy and dynamism in combating trafficking in persons (TIP) in Nigeria. The researcher observes that a lot of attention is paid to the issue of banditry in Nigeria with many works already done on it while the menace of TIP has enjoyed little attention. This paper posits that TIP is a form of banditry and that it deserves the concern and attention of all if we believe that our children and young women, who are the most vulnerable, deserve human dignity and as such should be protected and respected. The thrust of the discourse bothers on engaging the citizenry in English Studies to broaden the awareness of the ruler and the ruled about the problem. This enables them to wage war against it and enjoy a TIP-free society.

Keywords: *Trafficking in Persons, Banditry Paradigm, English Studies the Rescue*

Introduction

Human beings exist as a result of the presence of oxygen while their living, interaction and participation in any activity are made possible because of the presence of language. A person is alive when, by the grace of God, the required biological conditions are certified. It is not enough to be alive. The person needs to live on, attend and be attended to by other human beings. No other phenomenon satisfies the condition of functioning as a social being than language. The essence of living remains inconceivable without language. This view is given credence in the words of Anthony (2009:79) when he describes

language as “a tool for actualizing human ingenuity, creativity, human skills and knowledge.” He goes further to say that “through language, a man as a gregarious animal can comfortably live among his people and adapt himself to various, socio-cultural groups and situations.”

Our living together as humans should have an order, norms and culture, with a set of rules and regulations guiding our conducts, values and belief systems. In these important areas too, the indispensability of language comes to the fore. Ogundare, cited in Adamu (2016), confirms this assertion when he says that language is “a facilitator and an index of a people’s capacity to conquer nature and civilize their environment. It is capable of carrying the burden of a society’s values, experiences and ideologies.” Having x-rayed the nature and potency of language in actualizing our living and proffering solutions to our existential problems, the focus of this paper is shifted to the concept of banditry as one of the societal problems in Nigeria.

Banditry in Nigeria

According to “Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary” (2000), banditry is defined as acts of stealing and violence by bandits. “Cambridge International Dictionary of English” (1995) also defines a bandit as an armed thief, especially one belonging to a group that attacks people travelling through the countryside. Banditry in Nigeria is as old as the country herself, but its prevalence dated back to a little above two decades ago when military rule ended in the country. Nadama (2019) affirms:

Since the return of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the security system of the country was challenged by the rise of insurgency in different parts of the country so much that there was the emergence of various militant groups in the Niger Delta Region and Boko-Haram in the North East. Very recently also, there is the emergence of armed banditry with its attendant crimes (kidnapping, culpable homicide and cattle rustling) in the North West region...

The Nigerian academia have started researching into the causes and prevention of banditry in Nigeria with a view to having peace and orderliness in our society. Egwu (2016) considers the political economy of rural banditry; Momale (2016) also considers changing methods of animal husbandry and rural banditry; Oluyemi-Kusa Salihu (2016) worked on the effects of armed banditry on rural women’s livelihood and security. Many scholars have also researched into cattle rustling and armed banditry. See Olaniyan and Shehu (2016) and Rufa’I (2018).. This researcher is of the opinion that scholars have not been paying adequate attention to one form of banditry that has been ravaging the Nigerian society in recent times; that is, trafficking in persons. This heinous

crime against humanity deserves the attention of all, especially the humanists, and that explains why this paper focuses this banditry paradigm.

Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria

A more recent but aptly coined term for human trafficking is the nomenclature, 'trafficking in persons.' There is a national government agency that is saddled with the responsibility of prohibiting trafficking in persons in Nigeria. It is known as National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). The Research and Programme Development Directorate of the agency has a publication which presents useful information on the history, meaning, elements, types, causes, etc. of trafficking in persons (TIP). These contents were well discussed and articulated during sessions of TIP workshops put in place across Nigeria in regional editions.

As espoused in NAPTIP (2019), "Human Trafficking is modern-day slavery." It is proven that all countries of the world are involved in it though in varying degrees. One might be a country of origin, that is, where the trafficked person originates from while the other might be where the trafficker lures, deceives or forces the trafficked person to. If this other country is to host the trafficked person for some time before he/she is shipped to the final place where the trafficker finds the business lucrative, this country becomes a transit point. The final abode is located in the destination country.

The meaning of TIP is most comprehensive in NAPTIP (2019) where, quoting Trafficking Protocol, Article 3(a), it defines the phenomenon thus:

...recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, or abduction, or fraud, or deception, or the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

In summary, this definition captures the constituent elements of TIP, that is, the act(s) of trafficking (what is done), the means of trafficking (how the crime is committed), and the main aim of committing the crime (why it is done). The most vulnerable are young women and children. Whether the ladies are trafficked for prostitution or the children for hard labour, the purpose is for the trafficker to exploit the trafficked. More explicitly, the acts of trafficking include: recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, detaining, etc. The means of carrying out the act include: threat, coercion, abduction, deception, fraud, abuse of a position of vulnerability, receiving of payments, etc. The purpose of trafficking is exploitation. This can be sexual exploitation, slavery-

like practices, labour exploitation, use of trafficked persons as criminal agents, organ removal among others.

Human Trafficking in Nigeria

As provided for in the publication of NAPTIP (2019), no fewer than 1 to 2 million people are trafficked world-wide annually. The agency also stated that about 32 million people are currently victims of human trafficking across the globe. Findings by NAPTIP confirm the fact that:

All countries of the world are involved in one form of trafficking or the other; either as country of origin, transit or destination for victims of human trafficking.

According to the agency, TIP was relatively unknown in Nigeria until about the late 90s.

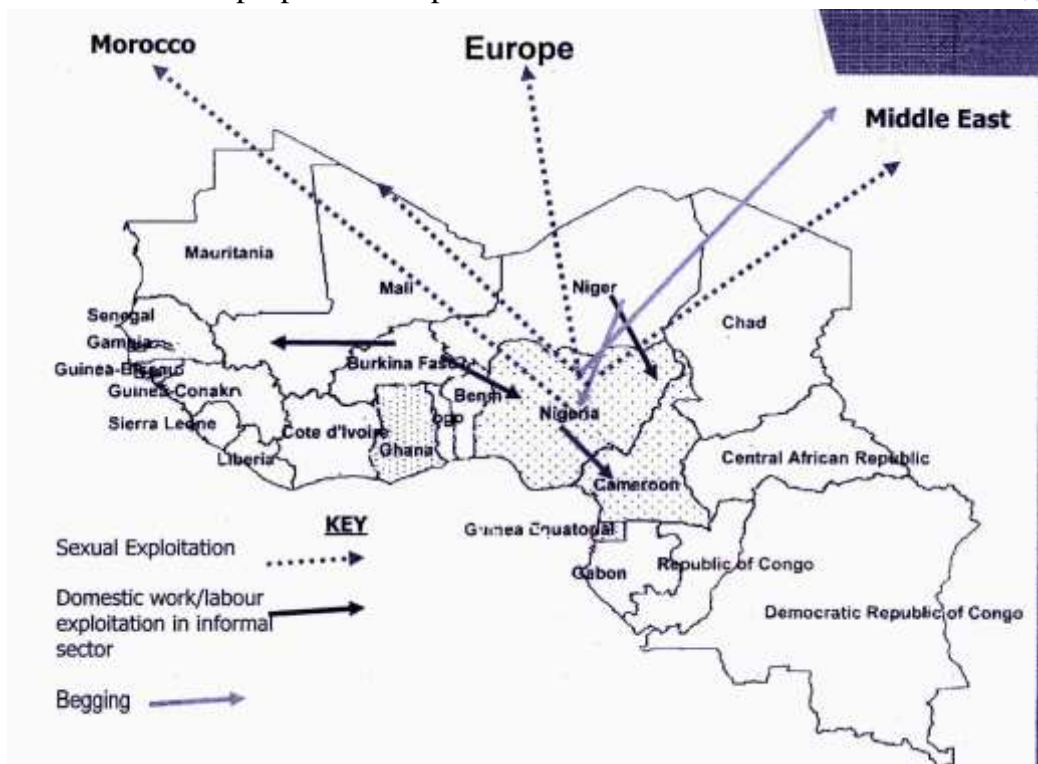
Two types of trafficking are identified across the globe and the two are ravaging the country with inimical intensity. The types are *internal* and *external* trafficking. The internal trafficking is predominantly for labour exploitations while external trafficking is mainly for sexual exploitation of young girls among others. The Italian Anti-mafia Bureau cited in NAPTIP (2019), estimates that – “there are more than 20,000 Nigerian women involved in prostitution in Italy alone, with varying numbers for other countries in Europe.

From the data above, one comes to terms with the enormity of this menace and the untoward inhuman conditions that victims are subjected to. As the name implies, trafficking signifies movement thus, TIP is movement-engendered crime. Since TIP has both local and international dimensions, its means of movement in Nigeria conforms to the conventional ones; that is, by sea, by air and by road.

Internally, for domestic servitude, forced labour, child labour, sexual exploitation and street begging, people can be trafficked from one state to another. On the other hand, external trafficking consists in Nigerians being smuggled across international borders for forced labour, sexual exploitation, organ harvest among others. External trafficking for sexual exploitation has been the most prevalent type over the years and trafficking for child labour is the second most prevalent type. Some trafficking routes as identified by NAPTIP (2019) are:

- Nigeria (Kano) → Saudi Arabia (Middle East) → (for prostitution, begging and for domestic servitude).
- Nigeria – Niger Rep. → Libya → Europe (for prostitution)
- Nigeria → Burkina Faso → Mali → Morocco → Europe (for prostitution)

- Nigeria → Cote d'Ivoire → Burkina Faso → Mali (graduated from transit to destination as a result of the legalization of brothel operations in Mali. To further illuminate the TIP route analysis, NAPTIP coined the acronym, "STD" with 'S' standing for source, 'T' for transit and 'D' for destination. In the route analysis above, Nigeria is the source country. All countries before the last one in each route are transit countries; while the last country in each is the final destination. The diagram below illustrates the different trafficking routes and the different purposes of exploitation.



Culled from the publication of NAPTIP used for the TOT workshop (Dec. 2019)

This crime is, to say the least, heinous, bizarre and can best be described as the height of man-inhumanity-to-man because unlike many other forms of criminal trade, human beings are the commodity of exchange and means of profit for the traffickers (TIP Training Manual, 2019). The causative situations that foster TIP are categorized into "pull" and "push" factors. The push factors, as given by the agency, refer to the conditions in the source countries that make trafficked persons highly vulnerable to trafficking. They include unemployment, lack of education, poverty, violence and conflicts, greed and peer pressure, breakdown of family values, gender and economic discrimination.

The pull factors on the other hand, are conditions within the destination countries that make trafficking of persons into the countries attractive. These

include growing sex markets in developed countries and urban areas, demand for cheap migrant labour, growing appetites for pornography, high and easy profits, the erroneous belief that grass is greener on the other side, etc.

It is just too obvious to state that no human society will show apathy to combating any social practice that makes a mockery of humanity. To this end, several efforts have been made by the Nigerian government, non-governmental organisations and international organisations to drastically reduce this scourge and restore orderliness into our society. At the human trafficking workshop organized by an NGO, PHEW Foundations in Warri, the Edo commander of NAPTIP, Ijeoma Udak, says: “Human trafficking is reducing in Edo.” *Nigerian Tribune* (10 Dec., 2019). It was organized to educate the general public on the dangers of human trafficking and how to identify culprits.

Again, featuring in *Nigerian Tribune* (23 Nov., 2019), the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) read out the punishments for illegal immigrants who are breaking the rule by not completing the Migrant E-Registration exercise. The registration, which requires certain documents to be made available by the migrants, is to check the nefarious activities of the traffickers which *Nigerian Tribune* referred to as “Nigerian employers.” As published in this daily by NIS, it is captioned: “Undocumented foreigners: Nigerian employers, maid agents face 7, 10-years jail terms.” The NIS, in *Nigerian Tribune* (23 Nov., 2019) elucidates further on this legal policy.

This law applies to migrants who intend or have stayed in the country for more than 90 days. Only person enjoying diplomatic immunity or below the age of 18 or intends to stay for a period less than 90 days are exempted from the Migrant E – Registration guidelines.

It could be said that Nigerian has begun the fight against TIP decades ago via legal acts, constitutional provisions and international protocols. NAPTIP (2019) highlights some of the steps already taken by Nigeria in her fight against trafficking in persons to include the following:

- In 2000, Nigeria signed and ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crimes (UNTOC) and its supplementary Protocol to suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children.
- The Protocol also known as Palermo Protocol was subsequently domesticated as Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration (TIPPLEA) Act, 2003.
- The TIPPLEA Act established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children.

➤ This law was amended in 2005 and in March 2015, it was re-enacted. In spite of these efforts, not much has been achieved in our quest to prohibit this crime against humanity. This criminal business is highly profitable, and as such, encourages traffickers to continue to perpetrate it. Rather than surrendering, they device different methods of committing the crime and controlling their victims. Their control methods of the victims include: (i) Violence and threats of violence. At any stage of trafficking, violence is introduced to intimidate victims, their friends or relatives (ii) Deception is another method. For example, a girl who was assured of working in a bar is then forced to work in a brothel. This results in involuntary prostitution (iii) The use of fetish oaths to psychologically control the victims throughout the exploitation process. Also, isolation and imprisonment, among others, can be used by traffickers to cage and weaken their victims for the trade to thrive. Spurred by the concern for the vulnerable, the researcher comes up with the idea of rejigging our language studies, especially English language, to rescue humankind from this untoward trend.

How English Language Can Help Check the Menace

In the introductory part of this paper, the importance of language to human living and continual existence has been adumbrated. It should be stated emphatically here that all the steps the government and different service agencies and organisations have taken so far are possible because of the malleability, adaptability and sheer functionality of English Language in our polity, Nigeria. Inter-tribal interactions and communication and public enlightenment, campaigns, workshops, and jingles on mass media are made more effectively possible by the English language. Any effort that is, therefore, made to encourage English studies and improve on its knowledge acquisition is commendable given its pricelessness. The call to promote English for its priceless value is given credence in the words of Otagburuagu (2016) that:

...deterioration in educational standards, rising graduate unemployment as well as under-employment of the existing labour force, etc. are among the litany of maladies that have bedeviled this country and which call for urgent reforms in the manner or aggressive transformation crusade by all stake-holders, especially the government, and those who teach and promote the official language – the English language that gives the government the power of expression in policy formulation, implementation, control, and over-all governance.

The desired change, that is, getting the TIP prohibited could be guaranteed if English Studies is enhanced. Female students, children and the youth in general should be encouraged to study English Language well in order to avoid being

easily deceived and falling prey to the snare of traffickers. In line with the call to get the desired remedy via empowering ourselves with average proficiency in English, TIP issues were declared being main-streamed into the NCE Minimum Standards and is coded as GSE 124 at the Training of Trainers' Workshop jointly funded by the European Union and ECOWAS in November 23, 2019.

In the pedagogy for teaching TIP issues, active learning is recommended as a teaching/learning strategy (TIP Training Manual, 2019).

Active learning as a teaching/learning strategy emphasizes that we focus our planning, our teaching and our assessment on the needs and abilities of our learners. In active learning, learners are engaged in doing most of the work by using their brains, studying ideas, solving problems and applying what they learn. Active learning is fun, supportive and personally engaging.

English Language as a language of instruction is given a vital role to play here. The training of trainers is endless as the would-be teachers of primary and secondary schools are students of the colleges of education in Nigeria. When English teaching/learning is accorded more importance, chances are that the learners on active learning get more awareness about the evil effects of TIP. Temptations would be easily differentiated from opportunities and the resultant prevention and prohibition of the menace are definitely in view.

The strategies for developing active learning as provided in the TIP Training Manual (2019) include interactions, small group, drama, debates, discussion, games, quizzes, excursions and projects. In all of these, English Language as the official language of instruction, in almost all the school settings from upper primary schools to the tertiary level, constitutes the 'how' and the 'what' in these learning experiences' avenues and many more in Nigeria. (National Policy on Education, 2013).

The Nigerian youths, especially the girls and the children, become less vulnerable with the good knowledge of English with which they hear it, say it, ask questions about it and discuss the scourge of TIP with others. To this end, all stakeholders in the area of education and national development should find ways of reinvigorating the language users' interest in English so that they can attain proficiency in it. Quoting Njoku, Okedigba (2019) avers that the ultimate objective of the teaching/learning process would not be achieved if the language of instruction is unfamiliar to the learner irrespective of the level of expertise that goes into selection and organization of the learning experience.

Lending their voice to the enormity of the roles played by English in notional development, Obisesan, Alabi & Olatayo (2010) say:

Though most Nigerian universities had already got a sister association known as 'English Readers Association'... there is the need to introduce the association in form of a co-curricular club in our secondary schools in view of its perceived importance to nation building.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it has been proven that English Studies, if embarked upon, would come to the rescue of our country in becoming a TIP-free society. Education remains the potent tool identified by the government and other major stakeholders for combating TIP. The TIP Training Manual (2019) observes that most learners in colleges of education graduate to teach at the basic education level. The NCE graduate teachers are to catch the children young in matters relating to preventing trafficking in persons as they are regarded as the first agents of socialization of the Nigerian children outside the family. In Nigeria, English determines the quality and delivery efficiency of education at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels. If education is desirable, its vehicle of attainment, English, should also be desirable, hence the need for the proficiency in it. Otagburuiagu (2016), quoting a Chinese philosopher, says:

If the language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant. If what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone.

With English giving the government the power of expression in policy formulation and implementation, it follows at this critical time that the government evolves a national plan of action which facilitates a collaborative efforts of civil societies, law enforcement and human rights agencies in order to combat the menace.

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