



**THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN
CURTAILING SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES IN NIGERIA.**

HASSAN, MOHAMMED KABIR

General Studies Department, Federal Polytechnic, Bali, Taraba State

Abstract

Nigeria as a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and pluralistic cultural nation faces several social, political, economic, linguistic and religious problems. Based on this, some researched works revealed that Nigeria is supposed to be a country not a nation for the multiplicity of tribes and religion. For instance, the Nigerian citizenry at the federation level speaks too many different languages, ranging from the major ethnic languages such as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba to the diverse languages of the minorities which include: Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Mumuye, Kanuri, Fulfude, Tiv, Gwari, Igala and Idoma to mention but few. In this kind of divergent linguistic setting, human interaction and relationship amongst the various distinct groups would be difficult if not impossible, without an independent and neutral language which many people can speak and understand freely and effortlessly. Ordinarily, because of the monolingual propensity of different actors in various fields in Nigeria, there would be mutual distrust and suspicion among the operators of national assignments leading to hatred and gross insecurity, if there is no language in which each of the divergent linguistic/cultural groups can speak and write. For instance, while the three major ethnic groups will be suspicious of one another, the vast minority ethnic groups would be suspicious of the three major languages and political groups as forming an unholy alliance against them. The obvious mutual distrust among these groups would naturally have a devastating impact on the overall development of the geographical entity called Nigeria. The above socio-cultural cum linguistic scenario would naturally impede negatively on national integration, security and development. To overcome the above- envisaged problems, a language that possesses the characteristic features of

national acceptability, mutual intelligibility and social neutrality needs to be put in a central position to act as a bridge through which all the different ethnic/linguistic and cultural groups can cross into the mainstream of the national culture. And the only language that can step into the big shoes painted above is the English language. Therefore, this study intends to highlight the functions of the English language and communication as a panacea to some socio-political challenges in Nigeria.

Keywords: *language, communication, socio-political, panacea, challenges*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, largest economy, and leading oil producer. Successive U.S. Administrations have described the U.S.-Nigeria relationship as among the most important in sub-Saharan Africa: the country is the United States' second-largest trading partner and third-largest destination for U.S. foreign direct investment in the region, and it routinely ranks among the top annual recipients of U.S. foreign aid globally. Nigeria plays a major political and economic role in Africa and wields influence regionally. Nigerians make up the largest African-born population in the United States, generating billions of dollars in annual remittance outflows.

Governance. Nigeria has been a multiparty democracy since 1999, after decades of military rule. Governance conditions have broadly improved over the past two decades, yet corruption, ethno-religious tensions, security force abuses, discrimination against women and sexual minorities, and government harassment of political opponents and journalists remain key challenges. Based on this background, this paper intends to use language and communication as a panacea for socio-political problems in Nigeria (Comfort, et al, 2013).

THE STUDY OBJECTIVES:

This study aims to curtail some socio-political challenges in Nigeria via the following objectives:

1. To identify some of the Nigerian socio-political challenges.
2. To make Language & Communication serve as a panacea to the Nigerian socio-political challenges.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- I. What are the Nigerian socio-political challenges?
- II. How do Language and Communication will serve as a panacea for the Nigerian socio-political challenges?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Recent congressional attention on Nigeria has centred on terrorist threats, elections and other governance issues, human rights challenges, and humanitarian conditions. Nigeria routinely ranks among the top global recipients of U.S. development aid, although U.S. concern over Nigerian security force abuses periodically has strained bilateral ties and limited security cooperation. Therefore, some of these issues accumulated to socio-political challenges in Nigeria which is a matter of concern. However, there is little or no prior work that has attempted to provide a remedy to these socio-political challenges in Nigeria. Based on this reason, this paper intends to bridge the gap by providing a remedy to socio-political challenges in Nigeria through language and communication.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

Qualitative research is defined as a method that focuses on obtaining data through open-ended and conversational communication. This includes **record keeping**: This method makes use of the already existing reliable documents and similar sources of information as the data source. This data can be used in the new research. This is similar to going to a library. There one can go over books and other reference material to collect relevant data that can likely be used in the research. Therefore, the method is adopted in this study as a result of time constraints which allow the researcher gets his data within a limited time.

LANGUAGE

The term language as the name implies may mean different things to different people. So long as there are many linguists and experts, there will always be many definitions of language and these definitions may vary from one school of thought to the other. The following are some of the definitions of language submitted by experts and linguists alike.

Sapir (1921) defines language as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires using a system of voluntarily produced symbols.

Osisanwo (2003) says the language is human vocal noise or the arbitrary graphic representation of this noise used systematically by members of a speech community for communication.

Chafe (1975) defines language as a system of communication that mediates in a complex way between the universe of meaning and the universe of sound.

According to researchers' perception, language can be seen as a major agent for promoting and identifying a particular tribe in a given society for mutual understanding.

Language and Communication are inseparable terms because one expresses the other. If one uses language to express his ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions to the other, he is passing across information and when one passes across information he is communicating. Therefore, for one to be able to communicate effectively, he must possess the basic language skills which are necessary for communication. These language skills are;(i) Listening, (ii) Speaking,(iii) Reading and (iv) Writing.

COMMUNICATION

The term communication just as in the case of language has been defined differently by different communication experts. This is because it is a concept that means different things to different people as it touches different aspects of human life.

Eyre (1983), states that communication is not just the giving of information, but it is the giving of understandable information, receiving and understanding the message.

Bran (2004), sees communication as the transmission of a message from a source to a receiver. This according to him means that communication involves two central figures engage themselves in the transmission of the message.

Parsons (1978), defines communication as the process of exchanging ideas and feelings.

Moreover, Aina (2003), while trying to emphasize the importance of communication in all facets of human life believes that " to communicate is to live and to live is to communicate" which engendered the popular American saying, You cannot communicate.

This paper sees communication as the process of controlling human utterances towards achieving balanced and meaningful interactions.

KEY COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION

For effective communication to be achieved, the underlisted components must be properly utilized: Sender, Message, Medium, Receiver and Feedback.

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONCEPT

The socio-political context in Nigeria is characterized by institutional instability and lacks a historical tradition of an efficient social, political and security system. Hence, there is no clear institutional “path” for policy-makers to follow. Rather, there is a long heritage of colonialism and economical power domination of the colonial masters over the social democrats. This lack of stability, political crisis, insecurity and cohesion make the system less predictable, and the attention of policy-makers needs to be called to order. Therefore this paper sees the need to address the socio-political challenges in Nigeria through language and communication (Ståhl, et al, 2018).

PANACEA

This according to the international Webster's comprehensive dictionary of the English language. 2010 edition, is a Latin, from Greek panakeia, from panakes all-healing, from pan-+akos remedy. First known use: 1548.

SOME OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES DISCOVERED

Insecurity: Insecurity is the state of being subject to danger or injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. This is quite rampant in Nigeria today (Williams, 2015). **Political violence:** negates peaceful coexistence, law and order. In addition to security concerns, it militates against the consolidation of democracy and social coexistence. This in turn impacts the social and economic well-being of the nation and creates imbalances in social relations (Howell, 2004). **Power economy:** In a poor economy, the indigenous citizens are unemployed especially the youth in Nigeria. This has resulted in a poor standard of living and cause many damages. **A language barrier** is in play when people do not communicate on the same level, such as by speaking the same language and has some effects due to that (McIntire, 2014). **Communal crisis:** refers to failure to maintain appropriate

individual and communal relations, or put in place appropriate crises management strategies and tactics to handle intra and inter-ethnic conflicts whenever they happen to arise is responsible for the intermittent wars, clashes, riots and crises in Nigeria. **The truism that corruption:** is the surest route that hinders development in any society does not need contention. Though, in some quarters, it is argued that corruption could trigger development (Oтите, 1986). However, despite this assertion, there is a widely held opinion condemning corruption in all ramifications and hence, worldwide outcry and call for eradicating the scourge. Or something that will make everything about a situation better or a remedy for all ills or difficulties.

HOW LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION CAN SOLVE SOCIO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA:

The Role played by language and communication in our society cannot be overemphasized because they are key to human lives. Language performs different functions and a multiplicity of purposes ranging from communication to conflict resolution and management.

We, therefore, believe that the socio-political challenges can be better addressed when the various language options available in the country are effectively mobilized and utilized.

As a social tool, language has the following multi-dimensional roles to society: it helps society to keep evolving, it is a tool for personal and communal communication, it eliminates misunderstanding of ideas, opinions, and feelings, and it promotes cooperation in the society. It is used for sharing and exchange of ideas, it is a tool for enlightenment, education, social interaction, preservation of culture, storing of information, and transmission of history. It is also responsible for establishing and maintaining a relationship with other people, societies and nations (Bamidele and Adama, 2019).

Considering the above-mentioned roles and functions of language, there is a need for the government to explore the impactful role/functions of language in addressing the country's socio-political challenges which include: Insecurity, Poor economy, Political crisis, Language barrier, Communal violence and Corruption.

On insecurity, there is a need for the security agencies, especially the police and the civil defence organizations to dispatch officers and men of their organizations to their states of origin. This will enable this security personnel to engage and interact with people in their indigenous languages. It will also enhance proper investigation that would stop or reduce the crime rate incessant killings.

In addition, government agencies and private organizations like the National Orientation Agency, media houses, and conflict management institutions should regularly dialogue with the people in their native languages. This will also reduce the feeling of marginalization and the urge to take up arms by the perceived marginalized people and communities.

Any information emanating from the government should also be communicated to the people through their different languages. This will aid proper dissemination and assimilation of any information released by the authorities to the citizenry, and it will further enhance purposive enlightenment and education of the citizens on the decisions of the government.

Relating with the people in their native languages will help to foster a sense of belonging in the country and it will also allow the citizens (both literates and illiterates) to express their opinions, feelings and or dissatisfactions on any matter that may be affecting them and their localities. By so doing, there will be peace and orderliness in the country while Lawlessness, civil disobedience and illegal arms proliferation leading to high rate of crime like armed robbery, kidnapping, human trafficking, terrorism, banditry, and insurgency will be drastically reduced and curtailed because the citizens would be well informed, educated and updated.

In a poor economy, the indigenous language of the people should be constantly used in doing business with the people. The English language should not be the only dominant language in the business sector of the country. There is a need to use the language of the people to relate with them on the economic policies of the government. It should be used to enlighten and educate them on how they can contribute to the economy.

It should also be used to promote products and services to them by the service providers. If the people are carried along on the economic programs and policies of the government and they are given the opportunities to share their native ideas and suggestions on improving the economy through their indigenous languages, the outcome, and rapport of such a step can ginger capital intensive investments that can boost the economic growth of the Nigerian nation.

On the socio-cultural challenges, the use of indigenous languages through effective communication can be a major solution in resolving conflict management. Right values and orientation can be effectively communicated through the use of indigenous languages (Bamidele and Adama, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Obvious challenges are confronting Nigeria. Some of which are insecurity, poor economy and socio-cultural challenges. The role of language in addressing these challenges has been discussed. This paper affirms that the multiplicity of languages in Nigeria can be more of a blessing than a curse if the purpose is

sincere and desired political will to address the country's multifarious challenges by our political leaders especially from the highest level of governance to the lowest level using the instrumentality of the language and communication functions. Finally, language and communication prove to be a panacea for socio-political problems in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATION

The government at various levels, NGOs, and wealthy individuals are pleased to organize workshops to sensitize the youths and other citizens on the implications of Insecurity, Poor economy, Political crisis, Language barrier, Communal violence and Corruption. Support can also help them to be positioned well in society. In doing this, language and communication remain the most useful instruments to actualize this recommendation.

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