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LANGUAGE AS A TOOL FOR ENSURING NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

National security has been a challenging and disturbing issue in Nigeria. Several efforts have been made by national security agencies to provide effective and endearing security mechanism, yet, the problem of national security has continued to rear its ugly head. This paper x-ray language as a tool for ensuring national security. The present democratic dispensation in Nigeria has been characterized by several sheds of crisis, most of which have been due to ineffective and inappropriate use of language. The thrust of this paper is to expose how effective use of language could enhance the management and resolution of insecurity in the country. The major thrust of this study is that Nigeria in general should try to maintain continuity as well as achieve peace and success in language used by constantly and strategically expressing opinion and understand the opinions of others in the process of interacting with others. National security is not the business of the government alone. There should be collaboration by Nigerians to ensure effective and appropriate use of language in communication. Finally, the study recommends as follows: that Nigerians, especially, politicians should avoid making inflammatory and unguarded utterances that could threaten national security. People should also strengthen their feedback mechanisms, improve on their communication competence and that the Federal Government should show more commitment to the issue of national security by bringing to book anybody who makes inciting statements.

Keywords: **Language, Tool, Security, National security.**

Introduction

National security has been a persistent problem that have defied solution in Nigeria since 1999. Different researchers from different academic endeavor have shown varying interests as they try to proffer solutions to this problem which its continued existence has called for the present study. National security is not only threatened by political exclusion, economic marginalization and social discrimination etc, as previous researchers have discovered but

also by ineffective, inappropriate language use language to a great extent, makes human existence worthwhile or chaotic. This paper sees it as a major factor in national security because the terms are themselves expressed in English language which is the nation's lingua franca. Most perpetrators of crisis in Nigeria have usually done it through this language communication and some have tried to calm the situation through appropriate use. Suffice it to say that language use in interpersonal relationship is a doubled edged sword.

The present democratic dispensation in Nigeria has been characterized by several kinds of crisis situations which seems to have aggravated the existing unresolved conflicts. From the report made available by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) in October 2002. Njoku in Clark (2009) discovered that as ethnic religion conflict persists, they can acquire different forces: they can start with dispute over territories and manifest attitudinal antagonism (as Ife Modakeke conflicts), from struggle about environment to resources control (Niger Delta), Killing of the Igbos in the North whenever there is religious riot.

Institute for peace and conflict resolution (IPCR) had in their report classified conflict under five headings to include: security related manifestation of conflicts and psycho cultural dispositions. Njoku in Clark (2009): cites the report which states that, in order to preserve democracy, these root causes now need to be addressed and a wider range of policy responses should be considered. Failure to resolve basic issues relating to resource competition and policies will allow the situation to depreciate into violent conflict."

Although the IPCR effort is appreciated, they fail to discover that ineffective, inappropriate language use is a major cause of conflict or insecurity. These "root causes" in the quotation above can better be addressed through effective use of the Nigeria's official language.

Most of the hostility, disagreement, rivalry (ethnic, political etc.) and in fact, insecurity experienced among Nigerians have been as a result of ineffective use of language, especially by some political players. So, there is the need for political corrections, a situation where users of language should put into consideration the relationship between the words they choose in different contexts and their meanings. It is pertinent at this juncture to define the term that form the crux of this study in order to clarify them as well as situate this research in its proper context.

One set of belief about what is "natural" consists of ideas about what language is and how it works and about how communication works. McLaughlin (2006); sees language as "the system of arbitrary verbal system (and non-verbal means) that speakers put in order according to conventional code to communicate ideas and feeling or to influence the behaviour of others".

The means available to us in communicating our ideas and feelings is usually the symbols of language which we choose to speak, write or gesture. According to Fromklin et al., (2003); "the possession of language, perhaps more than any other attribute, distinguishes human from other animals. To understand our humanity one must understand the nature of language that makes us human". Thus language is very important because it enables one to speak and be understood by others who are intelligible in the same language. Crystal (1994); sees language as species specific. He defines it as human vocal noise. (Graphic representative of

this noise in writing). Sapir (1921) in Afolayan and Bamisaye (2006) presents language" ---as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntary produced symbols "while Osinsanwo (2003); defines language as the human vocal voice or the arbitrary representative of the noise used systematically and conventionally by members of a speech community for the purpose of communication".

According to these linguists, language is a universal phenomenon peculiar to mankind. Human beings are the only animals to acquire a highly developed and complex system of communication. Language as a linguistic features endowment is one of the major distinguishing features between man and animals to communicate, the former employs language in communication while the latter lacks the ability to use language to communicate (Bamisaye 2006). Petty and Becking (1976); describe language as follows:

i. Language is a human activity
ii. It is a form of behaviour
iii. It reflects behaviour that has occurred
iv. It causes behaviour to occur
v. Language is arbitrary and structured
vi. Yet it is flexible and dynamic
vii. It has orderly arrangement – recurring patterns – but each language has its own system
viii. It is a flow of sounds segmented into meaningful symbols

That may be transformed into graphic forms, language is the basis for most human communication.

Hickkorm (1972); defined language as "the body of words and combination of words used by a nation, people or race for the purpose of communicating their thought. "Going by this definition, language is seen as a means of communicative value of language (Dada 2004)".

Language is important because skilled communication enhances the most successful human interaction while failed communication can lead to unpleasant misunderstandings, rifts and even war. The reason for this is not farfetched, it is because human beings are social animals. Our ability to communicate through is one of the things that clearly separate us from other beasts. Language provides us with a means for storing our knowledge and wisdom and it equally allows us to transform and transfer that knowledge. Language makes it possible for the sharing of human experiences. Language is the main vehicle by which we know about other people's thought, and the two must be intimately related. It is a vital tool for all human beings because it through it that people share feelings, ideas and emotions. The social development theory by Vygotsky states, that social interaction plays a fundamental rolein the process of cognitive development.

Since language is a cognitive aspect, it can therefore develop effectively as people interact with society. Speech and language are essential tools for every human being because it is through them that one shares or communicate feelings, emotions, ideas and thoughts. Language is therefore, a set of rules shared by individual who are communicating, ideas or emotion while speech in talking which is one way that language can be expressed.

It is with language that people communicate their ideas, thoughts, opinions and feelings. According to Opara (2018); the field of cognitive acquisition had demonstrated that language influences peoples thought, feelings, reasoning and ways of communication in everyday life. Froman (1992); stressed that those who control language, control what knowledge, meaning and reality are taken to be. Osiman, Aniga and Bateye (2015); stated that "the power of language in conflict is so influencing that it even control the actions of the users."

A listener or reader is held to complete attentiveness when appropriate words diction is used inappropriately ties". They also observed that "language has the power to entertain, to instruct, to teach, to satirize, to reconstruct and even to destroy". Aniga (2011); explained further that language is "--- a vehicle of interaction, inter communication, and a practical tool for state administration in both modern and ancient times".

Functions of language

Every normal human being depends, in all his social activities, on the use of language to do things. Finegan (2012), opines that people use language principally as a tool to do things: "request a favour, make a promise, report a piece of news, give directions, offer a greeting, seek information, extend an invitation, request help and do hundreds of other ordinary things --- ".

What we do with language can have positive or negative consequences on us. For instance, it could negatively affect us when it is used to curse, fire an employee etc. but positively when used to pray, propose a marriage, tell the truth.

Considering conversation generally, Wardhaugh (2000); asserts that it involves much more that using language to state propositions or convey facts. According to him, "through conversation we establish relationship and so on. The utterances we use in conversation enable us to do these kinds of things because conversation itself has certain properties which are well worth examining". It is therefore important to understand what utterances do, how they can be used in conversation.

Language also perform a social function. Mey (2000); considers the social function of language from two point of view. First, he looks at its function from the content with a focus on what the conversation is all about, the topic discussed and how they are brought into the conversation, whether or not these topics are overtly announced or maybe presupposed or hidden in other ways, what kind of topic lead to other and why, etc. Secondly, he considered the function in creating an "ambience", a context in which the conversationalist are able to pursue their (Overt or hidden) goals.

Sometimes, individuals simply need to establish ties or union by a mere exchange of words. In relation to this Wardhaugh (2000) notes that Malinowski(1923); ascribes a social function he calls "phatic communion" to language which we employ for its effective value as indicator that one person is willing to talk to another and that a channel of communication is either being opened or kept open. So, the essence of this function is that each utterance is an act serving the direct aim of some social sentiment or other.

Another important function of language is that it determines our social cultural reality. Hence Sapir (1929) and Whorf (1939) in Wardhaugh (2000) claim that every language has an effect (negative or positive) on the way in which the people see and talk about things. This claim to the point of the relevance of a language user to have not only the knowledge of his language but also the culture of his society since the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously limit upon the language habits of the group.

However, there are many other functions of language as we hardly can think of any human activity that will be performed without the facility of language. Thus, we can use language to make statements, also questions, persuade, dissuade, pray, curse, abuse, praise, perform ritual, recall, threaten, make peace etc.

The examination of language from functional perspective has enabled the researcher to discover, like Halliday in Webster (2003); that

1. Language serves for the expression of "content" or what may be called the "ideational function". This is the major component of meaning in the language system that is basic to more or less to all users of language.
2. Language serves to establish and maintain social relations known as "interpersonal function" through which social group are delimited and individual identify and interact with others as a way of developing their own personalities.
3. Language serves for making link with itself and with faction of the situation in which it is used. This is called the "textual" function which enables language users to construct 'texts' or connected passages of discourse that are situationally relevant and appropriate and which are understandable and acceptable by the receiver. Language, therefore is very essential because it makes life easier and meaning. Language can do all these and many other if it is used appropriately. Without language, human life would have been chaotic.

Security

Security gives the import of safety to lives and properties of individuals. BBC English Dictionary: A Dictionary for the world (1992:1048) defines security as precaution that are taken to protect a place. It is a legal protection against possible harm or loss. In another development Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995:1282): defines security as "things that are done in order to keep someone or something safe". Security involves some activities geared towards the protection of a country, building or person against attack, danger etc.

Any nation that experiences security challenges of any sort would always strive to restore peace for development to be attained. The issue of national security in Nigeria has been a thorn in the flesh since 1999 and has been worsened (1999:123); believes that security for any nation is a very important element for any form of development to take place. It is very unfortunate that people strive for development but do not know how to protect it. When it is not achieved. It becomes a fruitless effort.

In view of this, Nwolise in Odunlami (1999: 128) advises that "as Nigerians think of how to develop the country, accumulate national wealth and live the good life, we must also be thinking of how to protect these from forces that may want to snatch them from us". Nnoli (2006:i6) sees national security as a cherished value associated with physical and

psychological safety of individuals, groups or nation-states, together with a similar safety of their other most cherished values. These definitions give the semantic import of freedom from threat, anxiety and danger.

People have talked about different kinds of security both at personal and national levels as: physical security, food security, human rights security, job security, family security, and others (personal level). At the national level, the old school of militarist thinking which has conceived national security primarily as military response and management of threats has given way to the new school of thought which sees national security beyond military force. Hence, citing Mcnamara, Odunlami (1999:129) writes that:

In a modern society, security means development. Security is not military force, though it may involve it. Security is not traditional military activity, though it encompasses it, security is not military hard -ware, though it may include it. Security is development and without development, there can be no security.

Language, national security and development have intricate relations. Every nation's target is positive development and to attain it, there must be maximum security ensured not just through military force but something more subtle and powerful than that. An appropriate use of language communication (a generally accepted language can foster peace and unity). In other words, right choice of words that will not create threats, anxiety or danger for human existence could foster peaceful co-existence.

The national security that has formed the major theme of many conferences recently, needs collaborative efforts of every one not just the duty of the government and security agencies. It is in view of this that Nwolise in Odunlami (1999:129-30) believes that:

> ... The security of Nigeria is not only the function of the government, armed forces, Police, Intelligence Agencies, the Nigeria Customs Service, the Immigrations, Prison Service, and National Road Safety Corps. The Judiciary, Media Organizations, the workers and farmers, nurses and doctors and general masses are also involved in one way or the other.

Interestingly many factors have been identified as exacting impact on national security. Among those that constitute threats are: bad and weak government, human right violation, unjust and inequitable distribution of national resources (e.g, in political posts, industries, investments, funds, etc), disunited and unintegrated ethnic groups, ethnic and religious antagonisms, and cleavages, weak and poor economy marked by corruption, weak currency, etc, socio-economic hardship, unemployment, hunger, etc. weak military might, weak media, communal clashes, unhealthy competition among the ethnic groups for national resources, political domination, abuse and misuse of power by some defense and security agents etc. (Odunlami,1999:131).

Although the above factors can threaten national security, Odunlami seems to undermine language use which is an element central to all that he has mentioned above as none of these forces could be achieved without inappropriate use of language. On the other hand, Odunlami

identifies some factors that enhance national security as: good and strong governance, respect for human rights, just and equitable distribution of national wealth and other positive factors that can be drawn from the negative factors mentioned above. This paper adds that effective and appropriate uses of language communication enhance national security. This is why it is a great worry here about the ignorant way some political players use words of the English language in an unguarded manner.

Ugwu in Clark (2009:520) attributes ignorance, unguarded utterances and rumours to factors that can lead to conflict or crisis The effects of such attitudes on national security have prompted President Goodluck Jonathan to caution those playing politics with national security at the occasion of Senate Retreat in Uyo, AkwaIbom state on 25 June, 2012 with the theme "The National Assembly and National Security: Securing the Future for Development" , the President in his speech, as quoted by Folasade - Koyi and Effiong, fingers politicians who make inflammatory statements as chief culprits. Citing his words, they write:

> As food security is necessary, we want national security. We are committed to physical responsibility and consolidation. We have several challenges including terrorism which undermine our national security... Bitter and inflammatory statements emanating from some politicians have in recent times in the history consumed thousands of human lives in the country (Folasade-Koyi and Effiong, 2012, p. 5).

Conclusion

National security is a cherished value to many Nigerians. Yet, many do not care any longer about new development but go about igniting fire to consume the existing development. This they do through their ineffective use of language. It is important that our political players, and indeed Nigerian s in general, should try to maintain continuity as well as achieve peace and success in language use by constantly, and strategically figuring out what to say, how to say things and how to understand what others say in the process of interacting with others.

The problem of national security is not that of the government alone but what every Nigerian should collaborate to ensure through effective and appropriate use of words of the accepted language communication. A thought should therefore be given to what one wants to say, his receiver, the effect of his utterance on the receiver, the possible interpretations that might be given as his intended meanings. These are necessary because the insecurity in Nigeria has taken a shape that needed, more than any other thing, effective and appropriate use of language as a more comprehensive measure to address it.

Recommendations

For any meaningful democracy to exist there must be peace to be enjoyed by every citizen. Nigeria needs peace and concentration for its continued existence, development and security. It is in view of this that this paper recommends the following in order to enhance national security:

- Nigerians, especially the political players, should avoid making inflammatory and unguarded utterances that threaten national security. People should strengthen their feedback mechanism and improve on their communicative competence.

- Federal Government should show more commitment to the issue of national security by bringing to book anybody reported to be using inciting statements and not to be treated as "a sacred cow"
- We should all engage in persistent prayers for peace to return to our country.
- Finally, we should imbibe the spirit of sportsmanship where politics would be seen as a game rather than "a do or die affair"

It is the belief here that if these are effectively implemented, the far-fetched solutions to national security would have been reached.

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