



LANGUAGE: A CATALYST TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Peace and security, without exaggeration, are needed for a country to develop both the human and natural resources. That Nigeria is not safe, is purely stating the obvious. There is palpable fear within and without because of insecurity of unimaginable proportion in the land. Since independence, Nigeria is synonymous with political, religious, socio economic crisis while corruption and poverty are our siblings giving birth to novel crimes like terrorism, kidnapping, cybercrimes, ritual killing and so on. Without mincing words, there is absence of peace all over the country. Nigeria on the other hand is blessed with numerous languages to foster co-existence and enhance peace and security. Nigeria is a blessed country with a lot of resources but in an atmosphere full of security challenges, development becomes a mirage. The multiplicity of languages is a blessing and not a curse so all hands must be on deck to use the various Nigerian languages to ensure peace and security where everyone will be able to contribute his or her quota to the development of the nation. The focus of this paper therefore is how the numerous languages in Nigeria can be adequately utilized to enhance peace and security in Nigeria.

Keywords: Language, Security, Peace, Violence, Corruption, Kidnapping

INTRODUCTION

Language is a peculiarity of man and also an integral part of man. It facilitates communication and social interaction. It also influences thought and often conditions action which also influences conduct. It is the central feature of any community. Ehusani in Mekilua (2018) asserts that language is the chief medium of communication, of civilization, customs, traditions, habits, wisdom, values and lifestyle of a people. Moreover, language is a major prerequisite for peace and security, while the goals of peace and security are never achieved without language. In addition, Obiegbu (2015) opines that language is an indispensable medium that helps man to achieve effective communication. Also, Babalola (2019) affirms that language is one of the attributes of a living man. It changes our world and it is naturally given to man by God. Akanbi and Fakeye (2019) submit that Nigeria has close to seven hundred living languages. Moreover, Owolabi and Dada (2012) submit that Nigeria has more than 510 languages. It is therefore erroneous and dangerous to disseminate our information only in English. No wonder, Muhammed (2015) opines that a united Nigeria rest on English but her survival as a nation is beyond English. Very important and inflammable concepts like peace and security should not be discussed using only the official language. There is the need to use the multilingual nature of the country for the advantage of our dear country. The school in Nigeria is expected to actualize what the National Policy (2014) stipulates from the five National goals.

The five main national objectives are:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

There is no gain saying that these objectives are only achievable and realizable in an atmosphere devoid of security challenges but as far as Nigeria is concerned, the objectives are just on paper.

Security

According to Olokooba (2017) security is a situation where the populace and the citizens are protected against attack or danger. Anyanwu (2019) submits that security is a major requirement for the development of human beings and society and it is considered the most basic need of human being. Ojo (2019) asserts that through history, Nigeria has gone through different devastating times and that conflict and violence have killed thousands of people. Also, Muhammad (2015) submits that since the return to democracy, Nigeria has witnessed serious backwardness in her socio political, economic, education and activities so that meaningful existence has given way to violence, ethnicity, religious crisis, political violence and politically motivated assassination. These issues threaten the survival of Nigeria as one of the most important countries of the world in terms of human and material resources. There is killing and killing everywhere. Political killing, kidnapping, ritual killing, kidnapping for ransom, and threat by the Niger Delta. Insecurity is evenly spread all over the country that no region is totally free from its scourge and it is a fact that no meaningful development can ever take place in a troubled society.

According to Nwinee (2019), it is observed that Nigeria is the 16th least peaceful country in the world according to the 2019 edition of the global peace index and occupies 148th position out of the 163 countries. Mohammed (2015) opines that security issues have been a persistent problem that seems to have defied solution in Nigeria. It is an essential ingredient for the development of human being. Anyanwu (2019) asserts that insecurity slows the pace of development and economic growth of any nation undergoing security challenges. In addition, according to Adebayo, Nadabo, in Anyanwu (2019) the level of insecurity has degenerated so badly. Today, it is news of bomb blast. Yesterday, it was a suicide bombing, tomorrow, it may be assassination and the day after, mass murder. In addition, Akpan in Muhammed (2015) submits that security challenges are issues that affect lives and properties negatively. Insecurity has assumed formidable dimensions facing the entire Nigeria nation. Ojo (2019) submits that since independence, Nigeria has witnessed both inter-ethnic and intra ethnic religion and political conflicts and students' unrest many times

Nigeria history has been marred by political instability, communal violence and militia insurgencies in different regions in the country. Also, Salami and Adeyemo (2019) assert that the current security challenges confronting Nigeria range from insurgency in the North East, arm banditry to endless kidnapping for ransom which has assumed a level termed: unprecedented in Nigeria history since the end of the civil war in 1970. Violence and insecurity have become a daily occurrence in Nigeria hence, Ijeoma (2012) asserts that violence and insecurity have become a daily occurrence in Nigeria.

Peace

According to the United nations (UNESCO) (2010) peace is a set of value, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflict by teaching their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individual groups and nations. Peace refers to security, tranquility and a state of wellbeing. Everyone desires to live in peace. Peace has a universal language. Moreover, Agbonika (2017) asserts that most people are desirous of peace but the path it takes to achieve calls for personal sacrifice, tolerance and discipline.

SOME SECURITY CHALLENGES

Terrorism: According to Olokooba (2017) the latest in line of developmental problems facing the Nigerian nationhood is terrorism and problem of insurgency. Also Agbonika (2017) asserts that terrorism clearly has a very real and direct impact on human rights with devastating consequences. He opines that terrorism is the use of violent acts to frighten the people in an area as a way of trying to achieve a political goal. In addition, it is a global threat to democracy rule of law, human rights and stability. It is evil and has enormous impact on people. Moreover, Akinterinwa in Igbo (2013), submits that thuggery, terrorism and violence are three social vices of a kind and they



promote the breach of peace in society stemming from unlawful acts of destruction committed in organized attempts to intimidate the victims. These vices sadly, have led to quantum loss of lives.

Cultism: There has been a shocking rise in cult activities in Nigerian higher institution campuses in recent times. It is indeed a cankerworm eating deeply into the fabric of the peace expected on our campuses. Ismail (2016) asserts that cultism is violence. Duyilemi (2016) also submits that cult activities lead to violence on campuses and its attendant destruction on lives and property. This acts usually generates feelings of fear and social insecurity among students and lecturers. There is also the unhealthy rivalry among secret cult groups while their frequent clashes over infinitesimal and trivial issues have made campuses across the country unsafe for other students. Esharherke (2019) opines that with the spate of killings and insecurity in the country, the secret cult activities are becoming more worrisome in this era of constant threat to security. He further opines that the dichotomy between terrorists, kidnapers, cult members can hardly be drawn.

In addition, Igbo (2013) asserts that the negative effects of cultism among others are violence, loss of life and life-time, regret, armed robbery, loss of focus and distorted societal life.

Corruption: This is also a major threat to the security of lives and properties. According to Ngwakwe in Dinatu (2016) it is an illicit activity committed with objectives of earning wealth illegally either individually or in a group or organized manner thereby violating existing legislation governing the economic activities of government and its administration. Moreover, Bartholomew (2016) asserts that corruption is any act by a public official which violates the accepted standards of behaviours in order to serve private and selfish ends. Though corrupt behaviors differ from society to society, the damage is the same because evil cannot be sugar coated. Evil is a universal language. Corruption is a major threat to peace and security in Nigeria. Afe and Olusa (2012) submit that it includes all dishonest and illegal acts in return for money or personal gain. Also, Oshio (2009) asserts that corruption manifest itself arrogantly in all spheres of our national life leading to severe economic and social-political consequences. In addition, Anyanwu (2019) asserts that the folds of corruption such as; bribery, fraudulent acts, embezzlement of funds and property (public and or private) ball of stuffing and election rigging, money laundering, examination malpractices in public and private schools are some of the corrupt practices perpetrated, in Nigeria which have contributed to the decaying cultural values in the country.

Kidnapping: This is one of the security threats that the country has to grapple with. Diara (2011) submits that it is incontrovertible that kidnapping has become one of the greatest social problems plaguing Nigeria since her existence as a sovereign nation. He further opines that kidnapping has thrown the entire Nigerian populace to a situation of psychological sickness as people are now jittery not knowing who will be the next victim. Also, Ucheffu and Okafor (2012) submit that kidnapping is a forceful abduction of human being with the intention to hold them for ransom or seize them for the motive of harassment physically or sexually.

Rape: Presently, it has become so rampant in Nigeria and a daily occurrence that no day passes without a story on rape of the girl child and of women and strangely, of under aged boys. It is indeed a repulsive, disgusting and irritating act. Oladiti (2015) asserts that sexual harassment is prevalent in the world over and is the height of sexual immorality and child sexual abuse. This is one of the evidences of insecurity in our country. In addition, Obadare (2015) submits that rape inflicts on its victims, a number of dehumanizing factors while victims of rape suffer unquantifiable anguish like post-traumatic stress disorder, sexually transmitted disease, unwanted pregnancy and suicide. Also, Ajoom (2008) opines that the consequences are life threatening physical, psychological, spiritual and social behavior disorder, shame, suicide.

Political Violence: this also is one of the security threats to lives in Nigeria Garridau (2012) asserts that Nigeria has witnessed cases and acts of assault, arson, ballot boxes snatching, murder and assassination and that electoral violence has claimed thousands of lives in Nigeria. This is a sad reality at this time and age. Okafor and Okafor (2018) submits that democracy in Nigeria since the first republic has been faced with lots of hurdles which include electoral violence in form of thuggery: making it more or less difficult for the true principles of democracy to emerge. Due to political violence and political thuggery, an average Nigerian cannot differentiate between democratic governance and leadership by imposition; this of course has made a significance number of the citizens to see democracy as synonymous with death and destruction.

Ethno-Religious Crisis: This has become a problem since independence. Inter-religious and intra religious conflicts with or without political undertone claiming lives and property have been sad realities that Nigerians have to live with since independence and these have threatened our peaceful co-existence. Adu and Bamidele (2012) opine that ethno-religious disturbance have become recurrent events in Nigeria since independence.

Inter-Tribal Conflict: In this country, intertribal conflict is no longer new or news. Brothers and sisters that once co-existed peacefully just wake up one day and become sworn enemies killing and maiming and shedding innocent blood. In Nigeria today, the list of warring communities is simply endless. As Oyiadika (2011) asserts that Nigeria with increasing ethnic agitation, resentment, violence and general insecurity in the land which if not carefully handled might lead to disintegration.

Ritual Killing: this also is one of the security challenges bedeviling the nation and it occurs almost on a daily basis. This practice is common with people who want a short cut to wealth and fame. This is an ugly phenomenon that happens almost every day. Old, young, men, women are cut down every day and their bodies dismembered like cow meat on the butcher's slab ready for sale to evil customers. Ritualists have their evil purposes. Some do it for financial fortune, others for spiritual empowerment and longevity. Whatever the reason, ritual killing is an ugly development in our history. Commuters, tricycle riders, motorcycle riders, evil prophets, cybercrime operators known as yahoo boys are known to be perpetrators of this evil and ugly act. The media is awash with news of ritual killing every day, while ritualists pretending to be mad men and women liberally spread all over the country. Ritual killing is a common practice in Nigeria. Every year, hundreds of Nigerians lose their lives to ritual murderers also known as headhunters. These head hunters go in search of human parts-head, breast, tongue, sexual organs at the behest of witch doctors, juju priests and traditional medicine men who require them for some sacrifices or for the preparation of assorted magical potions. According to Igue, (2004). recently, there have been several reported cases of individuals who were kidnapped, killed, or had their bodies mutilated by ritualists in Nigeria. The question is why do Nigerians' still engage in such bloody, brutal and barbaric acts and atrocities even in the twenty-first century.

Drug Abuse and Alcoholism

Ifo (2013) submits that drug and alcoholism are vices that entail use of any medium or substances in a manner that deviates from an approved medical or social pattern in a culture. These are major inducements for people with criminal tendencies and the two are intertwined. Some of these drugs are marijuana, cocaine, heroin, alcohol and so on. Omuesibu (2011) posits that drug abuse is caused by bad company, poor upbringing, poverty, unemployment or under employment and the resultant effects of its usage range from madness, loss of perception, poor health, loss of memory, loss of sight and hearing, stealing, robbery, drop out syndromes, aggression disrespect, murder, suicide and death. It is germane to note that criminals find it very easy to perpetrate their criminal activities effortlessly once they are under the influence of drugs and alcohol.



Practical ways to use Language for the Promotion of Peace and Security

Akanbi and Fakeye (2019) opine that Nigeria has close to seven hundred living languages while Owolabi and Dada (2012) submit that Nigeria has more than 510 languages. To therefore focus only on English for the dissemination of information is suicidal. All these languages should be used adequately and judiciously in/on bill boards, handbill, jingles, religious places of worship to inform the people on the sanctity of human life and the importance of peaceful co-existence. The language of the immediate environment should be adequately and frequently used to emphasize the need for peaceful co-existence

CONCLUSION

Languages are God-given gift for man and are very powerful tools for promoting peace and national security. Our numerous languages should be used effectively to influence peaceful co-existence. We should not use language to incite but rather to communicate, to express and promote love and to stress the sanctity of human life. Iwuagwu (2012) asserts that languages should be used to preach peace, unity, love and tolerance.

RECOMMENDATION

- Nigeria is a multilingual country so all languages should be used to emphasize the importance of peaceful coexistence.
- The mass media should be used to promote peace by using the language of the environment to inform the people.
- A hungry man is an angry man so the poor, homeless, hungry in the society should be taken care of, as a matter of urgency. Information is power so the uneducated citizen deserves to be informed and this should be done not only in English but in his language. Okondo (2003) submits that an educated race is the easiest to rule and the most difficult to fool.
- The various languages in Nigeria should be used to preach tolerance at various fora
- Where ever there is a crisis, there is a message so dialogue in the language of the environment should be used before it gets out of hand. 'Jaw Jaw' is better than 'war war'.
- The use of language should not classify any tribe as superior or inferior in Nigeria so every tribe should be treated equally and no tribe should be subjected to internal colonialism through the use of language.

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