

OVERCOMING NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES THROUGH APPROPRIATE USE OF THE LANGUAGE (TONGUE)

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Abstract

Nigeria's Security situation calls for everyone's concern, including friends of the country globally. It appears the nation is under siege from violent crimes that were hitherto unknown. Foul or inflammatory language as well as hate speech is the order of the day. On a daily basis, Nigerians are faced with kidnappings, suicide bombings, ritual killings, politically and religiously motivated killings, armed banditry, herdsman-farmers' clashes, Boko Haram insurgency and many others. These are attributed but not limited to: ethno-religious conflicts, political corruption, unemployment, weak security system, high rate of illiteracy, and porous borders. These causes apart, the article asserted that the inciting and inflammatory language (tongue) by our leaders as well as their stooges have contributed largely in setting Nigeria ablaze. The article is of the view too that to build Nigeria, users of language should be mindful of the Pragmatic implication of their utterances. Data were drawn from secondary sources and personal observations using J. L. Austin's Speech Arts Theory to analyse the information. Positive

language is strongly suggested to arrest the insecurity situation in Nigeria.

Key words: Nigeria, Security Challenge and Language.

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation-state is a product of the 1914 amalgamation of the predominantly Christian South and the Muslim North (Ayenbi, 2014). Over 400 mutually unintelligible languages with diverse customs and cultures are spoken in the country. Added to this language plurality, is English which is considered as the nation's official language (tongue). However, this rich language resource has not been harnessed to achieve any meaningful peace or development for the country; but we know that virtually nothing can be achieved in any human society without effective use, and understanding of one another through language.

The nation is bedeviled with numerous security challenges. Uzochukwu cited in Bamidele and Adama (2019) highlights the challenges as: Corruption, crime and terrorism (specially Boko Haram insurgency, militancy, banditry and herdsmen-farmers' crisis), unemployment, poor education, environmental degradation, lack of infrastructure, gender discrimination and poor economy. Added to the list according to Idoko and Dasuma (2014) are "social security issues, kidnapping, human trafficking, poor system of governance, poverty, wasteful culture and religious conflicts." From the foregoing, Nigeria is caught in the web, so serious effort is required to free her.

Successive governments have tried to free Nigeria from the entanglement but to no avail. The 'force-for-force' and 'carrot and stick' approaches have been deployed; yet the security challenges appear to be waxing stronger and stronger. Crimes like human trafficking, kidnapping and terrorism were abstract terms only heard or read in foreign texts but they have now become part and parcel of Nigeria's daily life. Lamenting, Okonkwo, Ndubuisi-Okolo and Anagbogu (2015) refer to this national security threat as unprecedented while Bamidele and Adama describe it as increasingly terrifying, unrelenting, not abating, and with the potency of tearing the core fabrics (essential structures) that hold the country together.

The insecurity situation in Nigeria has called for the concern of all and sundry. Though the security and welfare of the citizenry lies constitutionally in the hands of government, it has become imperative for us to individually and collectively act to douse the flame. The government has already failed in this regard "to provide a secure and safe environment for lives and property..." (Okonkwo et al, p. 157). Here comes the need to try the language approach.

The failure of existing attempts to solve the country's security challenges has called for a different approach in fighting insecurity in Nigeria. The article is strongly advocating for "correctness" in using the tongue to build rather than to destroy. The 'tongue' is used here to refer to the language used in communicating or interacting with others. Appropriate and effective language should be used. Onifade, Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2013) once advised that "Nigerian leaders, politicians and their amen corners must be forced to avoid heating up the polity unnecessary by their conducts and comments which sometimes incite violence in their followers" (p. 52). The Bible states in Proverbs 18:21 that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue (i.e. language). It is quite true that a great deal of good, and a great deal of harm, can result from the ways in which we use our tongue.

This article posits that negative language can only fuel the existing security tension in the country while positive language can mitigate or quell the ugly development. Any language to be used whether English or indigenous when deployed in utterances, we must be conscious of the contextual implications of such utterances. The tongue should direct us in the right path and not the wrong path (Bible, James 3:3-4).

Conceptual Clarifications

Security and Insecurity

The term security connotes peace, the absence of physical danger, a feeling of calmness and lack of worry and problems (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). The Encarta Dictionary (2009) on its part sees security as the state or feeling of being safe and protected. Allied to the position of peace, Matthew cited in Omachonu (2017) views security as a condition in which the human mind accepts and values the rights of his or her co-inhabitants to enjoy peaceful living and as a result lives, property, and positive interests are not under threat whatsoever.

Ahar and Nartondo (2018) citing Francis (2005) agree that security is the preservation of core values and the absence of threats to these values. That it is a provision in practice in a society that allows order and peace for the good of the people. All these views above emphasize the imperativeness of peace in the society.

The Commission on Human Security cited by Adegbami (2013) defines security as the protection of important aspect of human lives in a way that would enhance freedom and fulfilment. It encompasses freedom from want, harm, fear, and the freedom to take appropriate actions without any form of hindrance (p. 8). Ayenbi (2014) and Nwaboso (2012) add that security is the assurance of future

wellbeing and freedom from threat or challenge. The import of security or national security protects lives and property of individuals and the state.

Insecurity, the antithesis of security connotes the lack of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty, lack of protection, etc. (Okonkwo, Nduibisi and Anagbogu, 2015). Similarly, Bamidele and Adama (2019) consider insecurity to be the inability of a particular nation-state to ensure absence of violence, lawlessness, civil disorder, and insecurity. It is also the ability of such a country to keep order within her national boundaries (p. 82). From the foregoing, insecurity is the threat to lives and property and the absence of freedom and peace for the people or society to go about its normal live.

In Nigeria, the surge in crimes against the state and her citizens constitutes serious security challenge. No Nigerian sleeps with his or her two eyes closed because of armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping, cultism, Boko Haram insurgency among others. Nigeria is not secure at the moment.

Language

Language is uniquely human, that is, species specific (Fromkin, 2003), it distinguishes human beings from the lower animals. Crystal (1994) defines language as “vocal human noise with the noise graphically represented in writing.” His definition looks at both the spoken and written forms of language.

Kluckorn (1972) in Bamidele and Adama (2019) says language is the body of words and combination of words used by a nation, people or race for the purpose of communicating their thoughts. In line with the above, Azuka (2012) agrees that language is a “compendium of words, phrases, clauses and sentences which a user selects from and strips together, systematically, to express meanings that are appropriate in a particular context.” He adds communication to what language is.

To lend his voice to the concept of language, McLaughlin in Azuka (2012) views language as “the system of arbitrary verbal symbols (and non-verbal means) that speakers put in order according to a conventional code to communicate ideas and feelings or to influence the behavior of others” (p. 218). Language is thus a tool for communication as well as a force to influence the thought of others. It is an asset that is species specific to man (Ogunsiji, 2001, p. 152).

With insight into these definitions, the imperativeness is on the communication aspect of language. Skilled communication engenders successful human interaction while failed communication leads to unpleasant understandings, rifts, and even war. In fact, effective and positive language sustains peace and security in given societies (Omachonu, 2017).

Functions of Language

No human being can live and lead a successful life without language. Finegan (2012) lending his voice says people use language as a tool to “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 ordinary things...” (p. 302). Language according to him has numerous functions.

In addition, Azuka (2012) says language can be used to make statements, recall, ask questions, persuade, dissuade, pray, curse, abuse, perform rituals, threaten, make peace, ignite conflict, etc. Partly, this implies that language can be used to cause crisis and at the same time is a tool to solve problems. Still citing Halliday in Webster (2003), Azuka reiterates further that language serves for expression of content (ideational function), maintenance of social relations (interpersonal function) and being a link with itself and with features of the situation in which it is used. This third function examines the context of situation.

Finally, Osisanwo (2003) in reference to Stubbs (1995) posits that language has expressive/emotive function, directive/conative/persuasive function, poetic, contact function, metalinguistic function, referential and contextual/situational function. The contextual/situational function is of interest to this article. This is because it 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 receivers (Azuka, 2012). Appropriate language builds human bridges while inappropriate language destroys bridges.

Theoretical Framework

The article attempts to analyse available data using J. L. Austin and J.R. Searle’s Speech Act theory. The theory was propounded by J. L. Austin in 1962 and further developed by Searle in 1969. The Speech Act Theory examines speech as an utterance defined in terms of a speaker’s intension and the effect it has on a listener (Austine, 2005 cited in Omachonu, 2017).

Speech Act Theory is considered a sub-field of pragmatics (language in use), concerned with the ways in which words can be used not only to present information but also to carryout actions. In line with this, Osisanwo (2003) referring to Austin (1962) says:

In every utterance a person performs an act such as stating a fact, stating an opinion, confirming or denying something, making a prediction or a request, asking a question, issuing an order, making a promise, giving a piece of advice, making an offer, making a promise, thanking someone or condoling somebody (p. 55).

Some scholars in pragmatics domain seem to disagree on the number of speech act types Osisanwo (2003), the ones common to most of them are: locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is the act of making a meaningful utterance or producing meaningful utterances. That is, the literal meaning of an utterance. Illocutionary act asserts an attitude with a certain function or 'force.' The speaker seems to be doing certain things with the utterance. Lastly, the Perlocutionary act is the effect of the speaker's or writer's utterance on the listener or hearer.

Added to the speech Act Theory is the issue of field, mode and tenor. The area (field) of an utterance may be politics, religion, economic; the mode could be a written medium or casual verbal discourse while the tenor refers to who the speaker is and to whom he has spoken.

As a user of language whether local or foreign, it is imperative to realize that some utterances have negative impact on the listeners or readers. As a result, one must therefore be very cautious in his or her diction in order not to fuel disputes. The speech Act theory is not just about locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary acts as well as field, mode and tenor; it emphasizes the fact that any statement made carries a force with an effect. Understanding that a speech is accompanied with an effect will certainly make one to control his tongue so as not to start a fire he cannot extinguish. In the data analyses, the speech acts as well as the pragmatic aspects mentioned above will be considered.

Security Challenges Facing Nigeria

One will have to take a deep breath before looking at the security challenges confronting the country. It is also a difficult task trying to enumerate all the challenges because they are diverse and many. Some have earlier been mentioned in the article, however, suffice to state some of the more notorious ones again: armed robbery, kidnapping, Boko-Haram, terrorism, hired assassins, herdsman-farmers' crisis, cultism, secession threat by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), etc. (Okonkwo, Ndubuisi and Anagbogu, 2005). These have brought untold hardship on Nigeria with no solution yet in sight.

Boko Haram

The dreaded fundamental religious Islamic set killer machine was founded in 2002 by Utaz Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno State (Onifade, Imhonopi and Urim, 2013, p. 57, Okonkwo, Ndubuisi-Okolo and Anagbogu, 2015, p. 163, Oluwadoro, 2017, p. 46). The name Boko Haram when translated means 'Western education is forbidden'. The set is totally opposed to

western education, culture or modern science. Its main agitation is to impose Sharia law in the Northern region of Nigeria (Okonkwo *et al*, p. 163).

Book Haram is said to have started with the basic ideology of bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, and the government and the governed. This posture endeared the teaming jobless youths to the group. During the first seven years of the group's existence, its operations were more or less peaceful (Oluwadoro, 2017, p. 46). Later, the group withdrew from the society and found abode in the remote areas of the north east.

However, things altered in 2009 when Mohammed Yusuf, the group leader was apprehended by the Police and shortly after died in custody. Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf's second in command took over the reins of leadership of the group and began to launch a violent campaign against the Police and the State. The group is even said to have a link with the dreaded Al-Qaeda terror group (Onifadeet *al*, 2013, p. 58).

With Shekau's commando style of operation, peace has eluded the North East in particular and some parts of Northern Nigeria in general. Destruction of innocent lives and property is the group's stock in trade. The Boko Haram activities have constituted a serious security challenge in Nigeria today.

Banditry

Banditry is another serious and colossal security challenge threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria. It is viewed by Wikipedia as "a type of organized crime committed by outlaws typically involving the threat or use of violence". These nefarious acts which include extortion, robbery, murder, kidnapping, etc. are committed either as individuals or groups. Lamenting, Odinkalu (2018) rightly observed that banditry has added to the already existing security challenge of Boko Haram, herdsmen, cultists and militants.

From the North to the South, no Nigerian is immune to the activities of these miscreants. Transiting in Nigeria and/or engaging in commercial activities is done at great risk; because one can be attacked any moment anywhere. Banditry is indeed a very serious security threat. What is responsible for this ugly development? Certain factors such as: eroded moral values, poverty, acute unemployment, ineffective law enforcement in southern Nigeria, and the crisis of ungoverned spaces in Northern Nigeria are some of the factors (Odinkalu, 2018).

Farmers/Herders Conflicts

Crops and animal or livestock production are essential components of agriculture. Their roles are also complimentary. The products derived from these production activities are needed for home consumption locally as well as for

export. However, in Nigeria today, farmers and herders are perpetually in conflict. According to Gillham (1960) the conflict involves disputes over land resources between mostly Muslim Fulani herders and mostly Christian farmers across Nigeria but more devastating in Middle Belt since the return of democracy in 1999. Of course, other sections of the country are not spared. Attacks by armed Fulani herders on defenseless farmers across Nigeria has become a daily occurrence.

On the causes of the conflict, the Gillham asserted that the conflict which has underlying economic and environmental reasons, has also acquired religious and ethnic dimensions. The herders are mostly Fulani and Muslims while the farmers are non-Fulani and predominantly Christians. It went on to attribute the causes of these conflicts to: an expansion of agriculturalist population and cultivated land at the expense of pasture land, deteriorating environmental conditions, desertification and soil degradation, population growth, breakdown in traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of land and water disputes, proliferation of small arms and crime in rural areas. Whatever the causes, the effect is that many Nigerians have been murdered and property destroyed.

IPOB

The Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), an outlawed group was formed in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, a Nigerian-British born political activist. He has been in the forefront in the agitation for a sovereign state of Biafra in the South East of Nigeria. The group's supporters are exclusively Igbo. According to Wikipedia, IPOB's main ideology is Biafra separation, Biafra Nationalism, Igbo Nationalism, and 'Indigenism.' The action of the group is geared towards actualizing Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu's secession attempt that plunged Nigeria into a civil war from 1967-1970. Also, Ralph Awazuru's MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra) failed agitation in 1999. Just like in the previous two failed attempts, the activities of IPOB have unleashed terror on Nigeria and Nigerians.

IPOB has been violent since it was formed. In attempt to checkmate its activities, the Federal High Court in Abuja on 18th September, 2017 labelled IPOB as a terrorist organization. Thus, under Nigeria's Terrorism Act, the movement is classified as a terrorist group. IPOB's attempt in 2018 to reverse the proscription and the 2017 court decision did not succeed (Wikipedia). By and large, the group has continued to attack individuals and the state especially in the South East with colossal damage.

Language as Solution to National Security Challenge

It has been stated that the security challenges bedeviling our nation can to a great extent be blamed on our leaders who recklessly use language not minding the negative impact of such utterances. Folasade – Koyi and Effiong (2012) cited in Azuka (2012) argue that “bitter and inflammatory statements emanating from some politicians have in recent times in history consumed thousands of human lives in the country” (p. 226).

Since ‘death and life are in the power of the tongue (language), the available data can be analysed in two parts. The first part looks at ‘poisonous’ language while the second part deals with language that can quell tension.

Part A:

Analysis i.

In the words of Sir Ahmadu Bello as cited in the Parrot Newsarticle, 1960 by Motanya and Toro (n.d):

The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather Othman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We must use the minorities in the North as willing tools and the South as conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us and never allow them to have control over their future (p. 6).

The speaker adds that Nigeria, a product of the 1914 amalgamation was a “mistake.” The literary meaning of the utterance (locution) is that the new state should have been a dynasty belonging to the Jihadist, Othman Dan Fodio secondly, as a highly placed Nigerian, he was very assertive and prohibitive (illocution) in his utterance. This can be noticed too in his use of personal pronouns “we” and “us.” Thirdly, the language was to sow the seed of authority amongst his kilt and kin. Nigeria is supposed to be their personal property so they should defend it (Perlocution). The words and phrases such as ‘estate,’ ‘must,’ ‘ruthlessly,’ ‘prevent,’ willing tools,’ ‘conquered,’ ‘allow,’ and ‘not to have a future are very bitter. It is this position that is causing political upheavals for Nigeria till to day.

Analysis ii.

Nigeria is a mere geographical expression.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo was once quoted to have said “Nigeria is a mere geographical expression.” Plainly, the statement denotes that there is no true Nigeria, it is just a map (locution). As one of the founding fathers of Nigeria, Chief Awolowo informed and insinuated (illocution) that there is no Nigeria.

If the leader feels there is no Nigeria, the led will follow suit (perlocution). The statement may have been casual but it has entered the written medium (mode). Many Nigerians (tenor) now feel that the country does not merit to be addressed as a nation.

Analysis iii.

No Goodluck or anyone also can stop us from taking back our power next year 2015, we will maim, destroy and turn this country into Africa's biggest war zone and refugee camp (Motanya and Toro, p.6).

This very inciting utterance is credited to Aliyu Gwarzo, an influential politician from the North. He is said to have made the statement during the 2015 electioneering campaign for the presidential election. The denotative meaning of the statement is that there must be power shift from the South to the North (locution).

Secondly, as a top politician, he is not only assertive and authoritative but also directing (illocution). Words and phrases such as 'anyone' 'taking back,' 'our power,' 'maim,' 'destroy,' 'warzone' and 'refugee camp' are illocutionary in substance. With these words or kind of language, it may encourage the North to carry arms against the state should the North fail to win the election (perlocution). Comparing what might happen, with the genocide in some African countries is the worst a leader would say. Well, the use of "our power" re-echoes Sir Ahmadu Belo's position above.

Analysis iv

Buhari would likely die in office if elected, recall that Murtala Muhammed, Sani Abacha, and Umaru Yar Adua all former Heads of State from the North West like Buhari died in office (Ezeibe, 2015 cited in Nande& Abon, 2019 p.10).

The Governor of Ekiti State, Peter Ayodele Fayose threw this bomb in 2015. This hate speech emanated from a highly placed Nigerian who should have been more guarded in using his tongue. It is true that all the leaders mentioned are from the North and it is equally correct that they all died in office except president Buhari (locution). Fayose's attitude to the utterance is a strong expression of a wish that Buhari should die (illocution). People who might have aligned with his desire would also want the incumbent President to die in office (perlocution). Even afterwards, Fayose was said to have referred to President Buhari as a clown individual from another part of Africa.

Analysis v.

I will grant political asylum to Christians in the North when Biafra secedes (Opejobi, 2021).

Emma Powerful, the spokesperson for Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) credits Kanu with the utterance. The literal meaning of the declarative sentence is what Biafra will do if it secedes (locution). Kanu is a leader in his own right because he has some followership and the use of the word 'grant' has a performative force behind it (illocution). He is also informing on the action he would take.

The effect Nnamdi Kanu's utterance will have on the Christians in the North is the perlocution. Generally, the use of the personal pronoun 'I' indicates that the speaker is already nursing the ambition of being the President of a 'would be' Biafra. Also, the utterance is capable of causing a rift between the Christians and Muslims in the North. Worst still, it means a Muslim cannot be granted asylum by 'Biafra.'

Part B:**Analysis i.**

To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done (Vanguard, 2014),

Nigeria fought a civil war for about three years, from 1966 – 1970. The then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon felt Nigeria should remain a single united entity rather than a section seceding. The slogan means that Nigeria should remain one nation (locution). As the President, and his use of the word 'must' indicate that he was asserting his authority (illocution). The effect of this statement is that those who were involved in prosecuting the war were encouraged in preventing some sections from breaking away (perlocution). Every Nigerian was encouraged to key into the Nigeria project.

Analysis ii.

We have no other country than Nigeria, let us savage it together

This slogan was very popular in the early 1980s during the Buhari – Idiagbon led administration. The locutionary act in the statement is its plain meaning of 'there is a problem with Nigeria but as citizens let us solve it together: The leadership of the administration seems to be informing in the first part of the statement and advising in the second part (illocution). The citizens' acceptance and change of attitude during the time is the perlocution.

Analysis iii.

“In God we trust” and America is “God’s own country” (Motanya & Toro, p.7)

George Washington was at the time always encouraging Americans that God was with them. They fought for independence and won just as God was winning wars for the Israelites, God has also given them fertile land and great people. The statement above simply means God is with America (locution), the President in reminding his people about their ‘Protector’ is the illocution. The effect of this utterance is the belief every American has that after God is America (perlocution).

Analysis iv.

Think of what you can do for America not what

America can do for you (Motanya & Toro, p.7).

Like George Washington, J. F. Kennedy understood the power of language and effectively used it to build America. He encouraged the American citizens to put America first before self. No wonder an American citizen is always ready and willing to die for America. Putting America first is the locution, advising the citizens is the illocution while accepting by sacrificing self is the perlocution.

Generally, good leaders build their societies with good tongue. Late Mao of China with his mastery of positive rhetorics was able to bring his people together. With the same language, he was able to resist the British government during the opium war. Similarly, Mahatma Ghandi made India what it is today by his series of power speeches. With such speeches he won independence from Britain for his people. Thus, Nigeria can solve her security challenges using the right language.

Conclusion

The power of the tongue is not in doubt; that is why even wars and conflicts are resolved on the round table with only speeches. The Nigerian Security Challenge is similar to a war situation. The Nigerian leaders and all of us must resort to using appropriate language that will unite the country rather than break it. Let us not continue to act like king Rehoboam in the Bible (1 Kings 12) who was presented with two kinds of language but opted for the advice of the young men and his kingdom was torn apart.

Young Men's Counsel	Elders' Counsel
My little finger is bigger around than my father's body. My father gave you a heavy load. I will add to your load. My father punished you with whips. But I will punish you with scorpions (vs. 10).	Help these people today. Serve them. Answer them with good words . If you do, then they will be your servants forever (vs. 7).

The elders' language was more endearing and accommodating than the aggressive young men's utterance. This should be a lesson for our leaders and all Nigerians.

Recommendations

It is often argued that language is never neutral as it can be used to build or destroy relationships, families and even nations at large (Motanya& Toro, n.d, p. 8) Nigeria's linguistic plurality has compounded the issue. There exist between 374 - 500 mutually unintelligible languages in the country (Oluwadoro, 2017, p. 49). Appropriate use of these languages including those that are non-indigenous will go a long way in addressing Nigeria's security challenge. The following recommendations are therefore made.

- i. Charity, they say, begins at home. Parents, who themselves are expected to know the effects of speech utterances should always teach children the need for use of appropriate language.
- ii. The nation's educational curricula should incorporate the teaching of pragmatics right from the secondary school level. As it is at the moment, it is only taught at the higher level of education especially the university and only to students of language. It should involve all and sundry.
- iii. Nigerian government should strengthen her laws on hate speech and inciting language. Having a law in place is one thing and enforcing it is another. Breakers of these laws should be apprehended and brought to justice.
- iv. Nigeria's worship centers (churches, mosques, etc.) also have a duty to perform. Leaders of these centers owe the nation a duty to add to their message of salvation, the need for their congregation to shun speeches or utterances that are capable of raising dust in the country.
- v. Institutions, organizations, and even the government can organize workshops for teachers and public speakers to enable them acquire necessary and appropriate skills in public speech.
- vi. Finally, the security agents should understand that words are more effective in resolving conflicts than missiles. The use of appropriate words will not diminish their military status nor will their military jargon be

altered. Their rules of engagement should also include language that will secure peace rather than start or escalate crisis.

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