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## Language Education: A Panacea for Good Governance And Insecurity in Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*The degree and level of insecurity in Nigeria based on the available statistics by scholars is an issue of concern in our society. It is evident that these challenges of insecurity in Nigeria have affected different places, zones and hemispheres of human endeavour. So to say, language is a multifunctional tool and vehicle of life and as such needs to be handled with care. It can be useful in building good governance and at the same time serves as agent of destruction. However, the inability of the users to utilize language positively has led to most of the conflicts in Nigeria. On the contrary, the effective handling of the language also serves as a career opportunity to the users. Therefore, this paper looked at the brief historical antecedent of language in Nigeria, review of some key concepts, impact of good governance on the language education in Nigeria, influence of language in propagating insecurity and bad governance in Nigeria and selected factors of bad governance in language education. Finally, among others, it is recommended that Nigeria as a nation in all spheres of human endeavour should discard-off from all forms of derogatory terms and foul languages which can lead to conflicts and hate speeches thereby embracing unity in diversity for the national growth.*

**Keywords:** Language, language education, good governance, insecurity and security

One of the things for which Nigeria is known is that it is a multi- ethnic society. The difference tribes and ethnic groups that make up the nation have their own languages. Thus, multi- lingualism is one of the defining features of Nigeria. Over the years, socio- linguistics have tried to estimate the number of languages spoken in Nigeria but, till date, no research findings have given the exact number. Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus among scholars that there are well over 520 indigenous languages in Nigeria. These languages have been in existence before the advent of English language here. However, today, the English language, which is a second language to many Nigerians, has assumed a domineering position among the hundreds of indigenous languages in Nigeria. The supremacy of the English language over the indigenous language is such that a good command of the language is seen as a proof of good education. Often times, when a graduate could not express himself in Standard English, either in written or oral form, his education is called to question. Besides, it is common place today to have a parent say, “We do not speak Hausa, Yoruba or Igbo in the house”. Similarly, another version of this is “My children do not understand our native language”. All these point to the prestige accorded to the English language in Nigeria.

However, since the amalgamation of the northern and the southern protectorate in Nigeria dated 1914, there have been direct and indirect crisis ranging from cultural practicing, religious to political quest. Even with the freedom granted that had led to the creation of 36 states of the federation, the worst of these anomalies persist and gradually becomes insecurity which seem to have eaten deeply into the fabric of our society. Some of the challenges of insecurity in Nigeria are caused by political leaders due to the quest for political attainment. Sometimes for the purpose of political status, they utter inflammatory and derogatory statements that cause violence and destruction just for the aim of shifting in political power from one region to another.

Nevertheless, another issue of insecurity challenges in Nigeria is traceable to the utterances of the religious status. The use of unguarded and inflammatory utterances by our political and religious leaders has continued and often times, these lead to violence causing insecurity of lives and properties. The typical instances of insecurity challenges in Nigeria are: first, in terms of religion, the worshipping of God through “Jesus” and “Muhammed” is a threat to lives on the ground of supremacy; second, on the angle of politics, selection of leadership based on the region is a challenge to humanity; and on the area of education, the language subjects offered in schools have been discriminated, based on the ground of regional status. Therefore, this paper deals with the following sub- headings to achieve its aim: the brief historical antecedent of language in Nigeria a review of some key concepts, impact of good governance on the language education in Nigeria, influence of language in propagating insecurity and bad governance in Nigeria, selected factors of bad governance in language education, conclusion and recommendations.

### **The Overview of the Historical Antecedent of English Language in Nigeria**

The historical aspect of the English in Nigeria has no specific date. While some claimed that English language came into Nigeria in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, some say it began to play a significant role in Nigeria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when European merchants and missionaries arrived to Nigeria (Ike as cited by Daramola, 2001). However, the Christian

missionaries were the first to introduce the English language into the country. Before then, parents were teaching their children the tradition, local languages norms, and cultures which were also taught by their own parents too. After the introduction of the missionaries and also acceptance, parents started learning and also their children too on how to speak English language. Accordingly, Nwala (2015) pointed out that, earlier times, the kind of English being spoken were “Coastal English” and “Patua English”. The European masters and also the slave trade activities along the West Coast of Africa was believed to have paved the way for some cultures and norms which some of them are still in existence today.

In the year 1841, the British were able to enter into the Southern and South-Western regions and which raises the question of a language to adopt for communication between the indigenous people and themselves which is referred to as the guest. The year 1882, the English language was already spoken by the elites and also the children of the elites. English language was accepted and also implanted as the official language to be used in the country. It was approved in the corporate environment, corporate organizations and others. In the same vein, Tonkin (2003) pointed that places like Lagos, Badagry, Bendel, Calabar, Abeokuta has a lot of English speakers. English language was seen as a prestigious language, a language of success and power. During these times people no longer paid attention anymore to native languages, children in schools are now taught English language as using your native language is termed as “Vernacular” and also punishable in schools. This is all extent about the historical antecedent of English language in Nigeria for now. Let’s look at the conceptual analysis.

### **Conceptual Analysis**

**Language:** Language may be defined as a complex communication system of human involving sounds, symbols, signs and meaning used globally or universally to express thoughts, feelings, ideas, etc. among human beings. Sulaiman, (2012) viewed language as “the expression of communication of thoughts and feelings by means of vocal sounds, and the combination of such sounds to which meaning is attributed”. According to Ajayi and Oyetayo as cited by Charles and Musa (2015), language is a veritable vehicle of interaction and a means of education through which human beings pass their culture from one generation to another. Language makes it possible for human beings to think together, feel together and to act together. Prasad (2009) viewed language as a “system of conventional, spoken or written symbols by means of which human beings as members of a social group and participants in its culture, communicate”. Similarly, Anthony, Richard and Obiajulu (2016) defined language as a “system of structured arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which human beings make meaning and communicate with each other in a given community”.

Going by the various definitions made, language can be referred to as a means of communication which has to do with the transfer of messages from the sender to the receiver with the intention of getting feedback. However, the concept of language based on this paper, connotes two meanings. The first meaning indicates the group that uses a particular language for expressing actions and inactions, intentions and demands for what they need at a given time or moment or the use of words that convey meanings to the intended expressions and understood only the user. This aspect of language represents good governance. The second indicates the use of words or expressions by

eminent people in authority who the people look up to as model and whose commands they can obey. It is these groups of personalities that can incite or drive people to rise against other people or communities. In fact, this inciting unguarded utterance, inflammatory and derogatory languages that usually lead to insecurity challenges like violence, disobedience, destruction of public peace and threat to lives and properties.

**The language of education:** English has been widely used in the propagation of education in Nigeria and this is used in all facets of education. The important function of English in Nigeria appears to be most felt in the educational system. In all the levels of education in Nigeria, the English language enjoys the pride of place. For admission into any Nigeria University, a credit pass in English is required irrespective of the course of study. It is a compulsory subject of study in all the Nigerian Education Language Policy (FRN, 2014). The English language is the only language of instruction in schools especially at the upper primary, secondary and the tertiary levels. At the lower primary school where the indigenous languages are meant to be used, the English language is taught as a subject.

**Governance:** Governance is the way in which government exercise power for the management and distribution of a country's social and economic resources (Ogundiya, 2010). It is the process by which a state's affairs are managed effectively in the area of public accountability, fiscal responsibility, administrative and the political responsibility, responsiveness, and transparency, all of which must show the interest of the governed and the leaders (Aina, Narthaniel and Ibitomi, 2017; and Odo, 2015).). The basic features of good governance include the conduct of a comprehensive management where all the critical stakeholders are allowed to have a say in decision making process. The scope of governance is wide as it includes all the day-to-day activities of the government, such as the exercise of authority on the economic, political and administrative in all level in the nation. According to Aina et al, (2017), institution and structural arrangement, decision- making processes, policy formulation and implementation capacity, development of personnel, information flow and the nature and style of leadership within a political system part of the governance.

**Good governance:** Good governance by implication is when the government can carry out the activities mentioned above for the good of all the citizens. Good governance is integral to economic growth, the eradication of poverty and hunger, quality education and sustainable development. The issue is the problem that has crippled the growth of many countries in the world particularly, Nigeria. Good governance is among other things, about being participatory, transparent and accountable. Good governance is described as the government of the society. Good governance is the rightly exercising of authority, the ability to problem- solving and conflict resolution, the capacity to manage resources efficiently for development, and high level of responsiveness to the needs and the interest of the citizen (Otoghile et al, 2014, Aina et al, 2017). Good governance is the ability to be able to improve quality education to the children and youths that can get them gainfully employed after graduation. The education that is not only in theory but the one that can transfer theory to practice is termed as good governance. This type of education required the pupils and students to have an authentic learning.

**Security and insecurity:** Security is a feeling of being protected and a feeling of freedom from danger, fear, anxiety, oppression, and unwanted violence. Similarly, Akin (2008) viewed security as “the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, influences and actions” On the other hand, insecurity is the direct opposite of security. It is the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. For the purpose of this paper, insecurity is likened to the inability to take defensive measure against forces, lack of control against the harm or danger to an individual or group or what makes people vulnerable. This is the situation we face in Nigeria especially in this period of political and religious unrest due to the constant use of foul language, inflammatory, derogatory terms by the so called elite citizens and bad governance that can lead to under development.

### **The Impact of Good Governance on the Language Education in Nigeria**

There is a linear relationship between good governance and a functional language education. There cannot be a functional language education where country’s resources and power are not well utilized for the citizen of the nation. Florence (2015) viewed governance as the use of state resources and power in an accountable way to achieve and promote the well- being of the citizenry. This means that when the power and resources are not well managed for the welfare of the citizen, there is bound to be a problem. The power and resources in Nigeria are not well utilized by the people.

There has not been good governance in Nigeria in the past decades. The worst has been from democratic era when the country changed from the military dictatorship to the democratic rule. However, there is this belief that “good governance thrives in a democratic government” (Aina et al, 2017). Good governance thrives in a democratic setting. In a similar way, where there is no democratic government there can be no good governance. The submission here is that there are many indicators to reveal the lack of good governance in Nigeria. Many of these crippled our education and affected language education badly more than any disciplines.

The primary cause of the lack of good governance in Nigeria is the absence of visionary leaders to lead the country. Most of the leaders Nigeria ever had since the return of democracy in 1999 have been in power to pursue personal, ethnic and religious ambitions. These leaders had no vision for the good of the nation. Most of the developmental challenges Nigeria had today is attributed to these leaders who lacked good vision for the nation (Odo, 2015). Therefore, good governance requires the good role of responsible and responsive political, traditional and religious leaders.

Corruption is the abuse of public office for private gain, and it is an aspect of bad governance (Ogundiya, 2010). Corruption is evil, and it affects all areas of human lives. Corruption has become the way of life in Nigeria the case is worrisome in educational institutions. It is the agent for all other problems facing Nigeria as a nation depends on. The insecurity, unemployment, kidnapping, poverty, divorce, hunger and deprivation, injustice and others are some of the problems corruption is breeding in Nigeria. These are clear evidence of lack of good governance in Nigeria. This leads us to look at the influence of language in propagating insecurity in Nigeria.

### **How Language Propagates Insecurity in Nigeria?**

In a critical analysis, the Nigeria as a nation right from the independence era to the present date has witnessed several challenges of insecurity. Charles and Musa, (2015) identified the following factors that have been accounted to for insecurity challenges in Nigeria. There are: lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure, unequal distribution of materials to the citizenry, ethnic religious conflicts, weak security system in the country, very high level of unemployment rate, and most importantly use of inflammatory and unguarded words (language). These factors identified are peculiar to the problems of insecurity in Nigeria. However, this research work is also interested the influence of language in propagating insecurity challenges in Nigeria and how the same language should be used to protect a secure Nigeria. There is a saying that language is a double edged sword. It can be useful in building a secure nation and at the same time serves as an agent of destruction (Akin, 2008).

Igbuzor (2011) observed that “the use of words by users can build or destroy a society or nation depending on the situation and the purpose it’s been used”. The recipients of such words would always impact on security through interpretation or response to such words. History has shown that right from the early days of Nigeria’s existence till date; many of her leaders lacked the art of proper language use. They use language anyhow without really considering the after effect of their speech. Many of them have used inflammatory words (language) which are aimed at sowing hatred among the different tribes in Nigeria. Some even go to the extent of brewing open war through their unguarded statements thereby making the country insecure. The greatest security challenges in this present era is the by- product of the reckless speeches or what is called hate speeches made by some elites and leaders.

Accordingly, Charles and Musa, (2015) revealed that during the struggle for Nigeria’s political independence and self rule, some nationalists who the people looked up to make insidious and unguarded utterances at the slightest provocation that tended to puncture the unity of this nation. For instance, phrases such as “the mistake of 1914” are accredited to late sir Ahmadu Bello, during one of the independent conferences. Also, eleven days after Nigeria’s independence, Ahmadu Bello said: “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 use the minorities in the North as willing tools and South as a Conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us and never allow them to have control over their future (Charles and Musa, 2015).

The few instances highlighted above are clear pictures of hate speeches, foul languages and derogatory words used by our elites for selfish and personal gains. These utterances have caused insecurity challenges of many kinds such as protests, riots, killings, hatred and fear just to mention but few in Nigeria.

On the contrary, a good language usage builds a formidable and strongest nation in the world. For instance, one time president of the United State of America, George Washington said: “In God we trust”, “God’s own country”, etc. Today, America is the greatest nation in the world. Kennedy J. F. also said in America, “Think of what you can do for America not what America can do for you”. With these kinds of words, America has been peaceful and has risen today to the status of the world’s most powerful country. Indeed, good language usage can achieve a lot of good things which include building a

nation, peaceful co-existence of different kinds of people, national consciousness and most importantly a secure environment free of fear and threats to lives and properties.

### **Selected Outcome of Bad Governance on Language Education**

The lack of good governance is impacting Nigeria educational system in all ramifications of humanity. So to say, there are specific areas it affects language education. Among these selected factors are: research and infrastructural facilities.

Research in the Nigeria schools has been rendered useless because of the lack of funds. This is attributed to bad governance for the past decades. The government has money to build personal houses, sponsor political campaigns and other meaningful interests but no money to encourage researches in schools. With reference to language education, how many Nigeria universities can boast of well-equipped language laboratories for language education research? This question continues lingering and left unanswered. Provision of language laboratories is the only way; the language learners can exercise their competencies in language education. But the case is different in Nigeria today.

Corruption of our government officials has killed and buried research in language education and all disciplines of learning (Blench, 2019). Most educational research institutes are mere names but nothing to boast about. In Nigeria there is no new thing in language education; teachers and lecturers are not innovative in using ICT gadgets to facilitate language learning, rather the traditional ways of doing things still remain the order of the day. Because of corruption resources meant for the development of research institutes are in the hands of a few individuals who are politically powerful thereby hindering the growth of language education.

Infrastructural facilities in the Nigeria educational institutions are in a terrible condition. It is worrisome and nasty for students to learn English language and other indigenous languages in a shallow manner. The indigenous languages are not even encouraged to be studied in our schools. This is a clear reflection of the poor budgetary allocation to education ministry by the government. Good governance requires that enough funds be made available for all educational programmes. The Nigeria experience shows that poor budgetary allocation to education is meager, and this is against the UNESCO recommendations of 26% of the total allocation to the education sector (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2010; and Emenanjo, 2019).

A visit to some of the Nigerian universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of education revealed that the Nigeria government is not serious about education. There are poor office accommodations for lecturers, working conditions and classrooms for learning. English language or language education is the mother of other disciplines. It is the language every other discipline is being taught and communicated. Therefore, it requires a conducive atmosphere for its teaching and learning. Many instructors cannot spend a reasonable amount of time in their offices for reading and preparation for teaching because of the hostile nature of the offices. The same poor ventilation is applicable to the learners' classroom. The reason for this poor work is that the most of the contracts may be awarded to the elites themselves or the contracts are being awarded poorly with a subsidized amount. When such a scenario occurs, the contract executors are likely to do sub-standard projects.

In connecting these selected factors of bad governance to this paper, the result of the preceding is what we are witnessing today in the country as insecurity challenges.

The high rate of unemployment, insecurity of all kinds, hunger and deprivation, just to mention but a few are all by- product of insecurity challenges in Nigeria. Something must be done to improve our educational system otherwise the insecurity challenges may get worst in the nearest future.

### **Conclusion**

Language is a device for the exercise of power (Tonkin as cited by Charles and Musa, 2015). In performing this function, language is used to express the views, argument and ideologies of those who employ it. In Nigeria, people especially the leaders have used language recklessly for their selfish interest. Foul languages, derogatory terms and inflammatory statements that heat up the polity are the order of the day. With this situation, there is anxiety, fear, riots, kidnapping and killings all over Nigeria leading to serious security challenges. This piece of paper is of the view that our traditional rulers, political leaders, religious leaders and all the stakeholders should be transparent and accountable in their duties and be mindful of their utterances for the peaceful co- existence of the nation Nigeria.

### **Suggestions**

Based on the discussion of this paper, the following suggestions are made:

1. Nigerians in all spheres of human endeavour should discard-off from all forms of derogatory terms and foul languages that can lead to conflicts and other insecurity challenges.
2. The users of language particularly, the traditional rulers, political and religious leaders should be conscious and mindful of their utterances and consider the contexts and the situations the language is used.
3. Every government must make education a priority in the national agenda. More money must be allocated to language education for the improvement of researches and infrastructural developments.
4. Everyone who aspires to rule on any capacity should determine to rule transparently and be an example to others.

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