

Understanding and Appreciating Language for Peace Building in Nigeria

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Abstract

Language is the appreciation, acceptance or promotion of multiple cultures, applied to the demographic makes-up of a specific place, usually at the organization level, e.g. school, business, neighborhoods, cities or nations. In a political context, it has to mean the advocacy of extending equitable status to distinct ethnic and religious-group without promoting any specific ethnic, religious, and cultural community values at central. Nigeria, being a pluralistic society with different ethnic groups and cultures need to make use of native language in a school system for easy understanding of these numerous culture for peace building in the society. Language education will accommodate one another for peaceful co-existence.

Keyword: Language, Embracing, Celebrating, Building, Peace

Introduction

Language according to Olaoye, (2010) is incontrovertibly the corner stone of any educational process; it is the means of communication as well as a subject in the school system. Language is the key tool in the realization of the objectives of the education. In contemporary Nigeria society, there are many societal ills ranging from exam malpractices, rape, drug abuse, lack of respect for elders; embezzlement, lack of transparency to the dishonesty and mistrust.

The pertinent question therefore is how language can be used to instill positive attitude in the society. Language according to Shalmi and Donald (2010) is non – materials; as such its use and misuse can make or mar situation. For example, in Nigeria some religious adherents believe that their religion is superior to other religions. They thus refer to non – adherent as “Kafis” arne, and such other names. These words mean unbeliever and heathen, respectively. They are used derogatively, scornfully and with much venom and hate (Hoffman 2008). The use of such words can spark rows the result of which can be very unpalatable for both parties. To avoid chaos and conflicts, vulgar or offensive language should be avoided. (Hbsbaum 2000) affirms that language is the moral torch bearers of the society that can be used positively in attitudinal change. It brings total overhaul of the individuals engaged in any kind of violent and conflict to the benefits of self and overall good of the society in which they live.

Conceptual Clarification

Language: Language according to (Dare 2011) is an embodiment a distillation and a codification of human values. A meaningful contemplation of human existence is impossible without but bringing language into the picture. Language as distinctive and invaluable human heritage is the veritable vehicle for the acquisition and transmission of knowledge. Language according to De Dreu and Weingrat (2002) is the faculty that thought to be fundamentally different from and of much higher complexity than those of other species. Human language is highly complex in that it is based on set of rules relating symbols to their meanings, thereby forming an infinite number of possible innovation

utterances from finite number of elements. Language is thought to have originated when early hominids first started cooperating, adapting earlier systems of communication based on expressive signs to include a theory of other minds.

Amason (1996) asserts that language is processed in many different locations in the human brain, but especially in Broca's and Wernicke's areas. Humans acquire language through social interaction in early childhood, and children generally speak fluently when they are around three years old. The use of language has become deeply entrenched in human culture, and apart from being used to communicate and share information, it also has social and cultural uses as signifying group identity, social stratification and for social grooming and entertainment. The word "Language" can also be used to describe the set of rules that makes.

All languages rely on the process of Semiosis to relate a sign with a particular meaning, spoken and signed languages contain a phonological system that governs how sounds or visual symbols are used to form sequences known as words or morphemes, and a syntactic system that governs how words and morphemes are used to form phrases and utterances. Written languages according to Hobsbainm and Ranger (2000) use visual symbols to represent the sounds of the spoken languages, but they still require syntactic rule that govern the production of meaning from sequences of words. Languages evolve and diversify over time, and the history of their evolution can be reconstructed by comparing modern languages to determine which traits their ancestral languages must have had for the later stages to have occurred. A group language that descends from a common ancestor is known as a language family.

Language is at the heart of our values. It is unquestionably the repository of the culture (s) we call our own, and is the main means that we have in projecting our identity our hopes and fears, our mission and vision and the way we perceive our network of relationships as members of a community and as citizens of a nation are all articulated via, the vehicle of language. At times, this interaction is one-to-one and face-to-face. At other times, it is many-to-many and displaced by the literate culture of books, policy documents and the electronic media. It is no surprising therefore to find out that language use and choice is central in determining the extent to which individuals and communities make meaningful contribution to national development, hence to political stability and sustainable democracy. According to Sen, (1999:1) development is econometrical but it is also a social and representation. It is about reinforcing values of independence, self-reliance, respect for human dignity and (universal) human rights.

The Uniqueness of Human Language

Human language is unique in comparison to other form of communication, such as those uses by animals, because it allows humans to produce an infinite set of elements and because the symbols and grammatical rules of any particular language are largely arbitrary, so that the system can only be acquired through social interaction. On the other hand, can only express a finite number of utterances that are mostly genetically transmitted, human language are also unique in that its complex structure has evolved to serve a much wider range of functions than any other kinds of communication system. (De Dreu, and Weingart 2003)

Language do not differ only in pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar, but also through having different cultures of speaking" some cultures for example have elaborate systems of "social deixis" system of signaling social distance through linguistic means. Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social! Activities as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society.. The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.

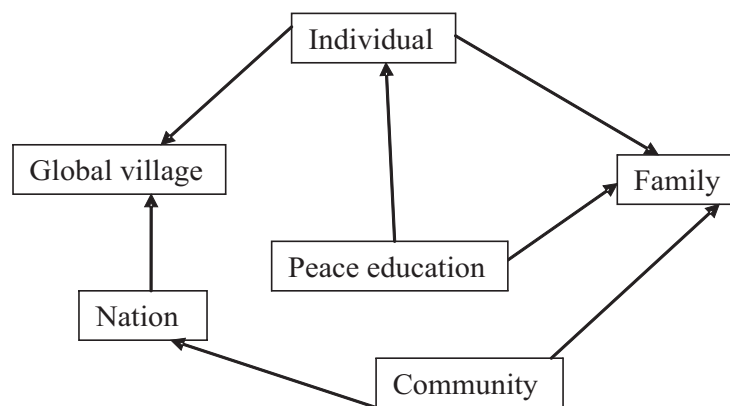
In a similar vein, Cotterell (1978:1) explains that language is “not only a means of communication with other people, it is also a vital feature of conceptual thought”. According to Strang (1969:3) language is “an articulated system of signs primarily realized in medium of speech”. In his own view, Joos (1948) considers language as “a set of neutral patterns in the speech center”.

Halliday (1975:16) assumes a pragmatic approach by describing language as “meaning potential, an open end and theoretically infinite range of options in meaning”. He buttresses his positions by categorizing and describing the principal functions of language, thus: language as functional components – ideational options, interpersonal component and a semantic function. The first set of options relate to the content of an utterance. Here, the speaker articulates his experience of the phenomena of the external world, and of the internal world of his own consciousness. Such phenomenon may be tagged the OBSERVER function of language. This implies language is employed to project the real world. The inter-personal component of the semantic system reflects the function of language as a means whereby the speaker participates in the speech situation. It may be referred to as INTRUDER function of language. That is, the speaker through the opinions in this component adopts a role, or a set of roles, vis-a-vis the participants in the speech situation, and also assigns roles to the other participant while accepting <or rejecting> those that are assigned to him, the speaker expresses his own judgments, his own attitudes, his own personality, and in so doing expects certain effects in the hearers. These are regarded as the `expressive – conative` functions of language.

Concept of Peace and peace Building

Peace is being seen as orderliness, which indicates the absence of conflict once there is no war, peace is said to reign, especially in a volatile society like Nigeria. Peace is one of the four pillars of reconciliation. These pillars have identified by Ochoche (2004) in Ben-Opera and Tai (2013) include truth, forgiveness, acceptance and justice. Where there pillars of peace according to National Council of Educational Research and Training (2006) is prime requirement for progress and national integration. Peace involves all aspects and dimensions of human existence in an interdependent way. Only those according to Olowo (2013) who are at peace with themselves can be with others and developing the sensitivity it takes to be just and caring toward nature. Spiritual and psychological peace is neither stable nor viable without social economy and ecological peace. Going by this, peace must be built on the platform of love and sincerity.

Peace should be made a culture and this can be achieved through education with the use of method that is centred on peace. Peace implies reciprocity, Values, such as love, freedom and peace can be added only by giving them to others. Peace for one self that excludes peace for others is a dangerous illusion (NCERT 2006) in (Olowo 2013). Education for peace or peace education put succinctly, has two-fold purpose; an empower individuals or citizen to choose the way of peace rather than consumer of peace. In view of this, peace education is a significant component of holistic basic education that aims at the total and comprehensive development of citizens in on a given society (NCERT 2006) in (Olowo 2013). Peace begins with the individual and spread to the family, to the community, to the nation and to the global village. Promoting a culture of peace therefore, involves a two-pronged strategy. The members of a society according to (Olowo 2013) are to go through orientation concerning peace rather than towards violence. In the same vein, socially, economically and political systems have to be re-oriented to peace. Education will only make these two strategies to be effective.



Peace education: How it spread to the larger society

Source: Olowo (2013)

Peace education according to Johnson and Johnson (2006) is the teaching of information, attitude, values and behavioural competences needed to resolve conflict without violent and to build and maintain mutually beneficial, harmonious relationships. The ultimate goals of peace education is for individuals to maintain peace among themselves (Interpersonal peace), (inter group peace) and countries and cultures, (international peace) peace education aims at eradicating all forms of conflict and building a culture of peace in the society. Peace education helps in developing human personality and strength respect for human right and fundamental freedom, develops the attitude of understanding, tolerance and friendship among individuals and groups. It also assists to solve religious crises, ethnic crises, and unhealthy competition among individuals, groups and nations. Peace education serves as the bedrock for the advancement of cooperation and brotherhood among individuals (Adedaju and Fakokunde 2010).

Peace building therefore requires the reconciliation of differences, offering apology and forgiveness on past harm or misdeed. There should be no pretence in extending the hand of forgiveness and offering apology for peace building to make impact and long-lasting. There are instruments that can make peace building possible in Nigeria, such instruments are Oputa panel, the Yoruba elders forum, the Arewa consultative group, the Edo etc and the truth and reconciliation commission of south Africa that was established after the apartheid regime to see the dehumanizing treatment suffered by people are example of peace building mechanism (Coser 1968) peace building according to Talla, Aparu, Aliyu, Dawood (2010) thrives injustice, fairness to all, equity, trust, friendship, mutual respect, communication, encouragement of others, aggregated aspirations and similar elements. The underlying principle is that a man who is free from inner and domestic conflicts is able not only to behave in a less aggressive manner but also a maker builder of peace (Coleman and Resebry 1964).

Language As Peace Building in Nigeria: The place of language in attitude training and modification cannot be overemphasized as language is the most fundamental and important weapon for the up-liftment of the under privilege, the marginalized, the un-informed and the illiterate in the society. Education whether formal or in-formal is carried out through the medium of some languages; and language, whether spoken or written is the vehicle through which knowledge is imported (Awoniyi, 1978 in Olaoye, 2003).

Language, according to Opera Shalm and Nwanti (2010) is capable of destroying or minimizing relationship as attested to by the saying that, the tongue is sharper than the knife” language can be use to ridicule or condemn anti-social vices such as corruption, assassination, kidnapping, political struggery and religious intolerance oppressive or dictatorial rule and other forms of human degradation and undemocratic practices. Language therefore can be used to settle dispute and thereby conflict can also be managed in the society (i.e in any ethnic groups: in this vein therefore, the society or ethnic group requires orientation and re-orientation essential for the survival of any society.

Since society cannot be without conflict, this therefore require any ethnic groups to understand the language of one another so that dispute or conflict can be solved or managed the medium for the achievement of this is through the inculcation of values of language education which are honesty, trustworthiness, transparency, the promotion of morality, fairness and civil virtues. Conflict management should aim to minimize affective conflicts at all level, attain and maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict, and use the appropriate conflict management strategy; this is to inculcate the rule behind the use of language in a polite manner against the opponent so as to bring peace and happiness to the society. In order for conflict management strategies to be effective, the appropriate language should be applied or use between the two parties (Opega 2004).

To this end, therefore, the teaching and learning of language will afford the learner an understanding of the problems of the society or between one ethnic groups of the other. Any society ethnic groups and cultural groups depend on their articulation of indigenou languages or in the language the people have the greatest affinity with. Since a given political thought is always express through the use of language, the language determines the statutory, success or otherwise of given democratic experiences.

Conclusion

It has been shown that language is the major means of communication in any society. It is in this regard that, this paper believes that since attitude can be formed and changed, language can be used to correct and change the attitude of people in any given society, toward conflict uproar. Language has been described as a machine tool that makes society to be at peace and conflict free environment. This therefore calls for the adoption of language of education which highlights societal ills and promotes virtues such as transparency, honesty, trustworthiness and tolerance as a way by which language services as conflict management tools.

Recommendations

In view of the above conclusion in mind, the paper recommends that, federal government, stakeholders in the educational system and curriculum planners should put in place effective languages in Nigeria should be made compulsory in all levels of the educational system.

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