

THE EFFECTIVE USE OF LANGUAGE IN COMBATING SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

Aliyu Alhaji Tanko

Abstract

The growing challenge of security in Nigeria is of concern to all and every effort must be employed to combat this challenge. Several efforts have been made by national security agencies to provide effective and endearing security mechanisms, yet, the problem of national security has continued to rear up its ugly head. This is one of such efforts to show that ineffective language use can threaten national security while effective use can enhance it. Language use in interpersonal relationship is like a double-edged sword. It can be used to destroy as well as be used to mend. The present democratic dispensation in Nigeria has been characterized by several sheds of crisis situation, most of which have been connected to or existed in ineffective, inappropriate language use by political players. (Azuka, 2012). This paper has been to examine how ineffective language use threatens the desired security of the nation. It also exposed how effective language use could enhance the management and resolution of the already threatened situation which affects interpersonal relationship of the society.

National Security has been a persistent problem that seemed to have defied solution in Nigeria since 1999. The development of any society to a large extent depends on the extent of the security of lives and properties of the citizens. A secured atmosphere will encourage intellectual minds who will be a great asset to Nation building; it will also guarantee an environment for the growth of infrastructural development. It is important to note that security is a concept that is prior to the state, and the state is created in order to provide that concept. Thomas Hobbes (1996) argued that the state is

in fact, the only way to provide security. Whether this is the case or not is often debatable in all scholarly and professional forays.

Therefore, if the state fails to provide such security, it loses it and obligations. Negligence of this vital ingredient of development has led to all manner of social ills, including violent crimes such as armed robbery, ritual killings, child trafficking, kidnapping, terrorism, militancy, religious sectarianism and other crimes. National security is not only threatened by political exclusion, economic marginalization and social discrimination, etc as previous researchers have discovered but also by ineffective, inappropriate language use.

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

Security and National Security

Security or National Security gives the import of safety of lives and properties of individuals. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995: 1282) defined security as "things that are done in order to keep someone or something safe". Security involves some

activities geared towards the protection of a country building or person against attack, danger, etc. Similarly national security can be defined as the actions and policies taken by a nation against all internal and external threats to its borders, economy, and stability. It doesn't have to be terrorism or an enemy nation, though it often is. Some views on what security are: "national security" revolves around the idea of protection of the nation and its interests. The goals of "ensure domestic tranquility" and "promote the general welfare".

National security, means "security from threats or attacks from people, organizations or countries that impact the well being of a nation and its citizen as a whole rather than of any specific individuals or within the nation. Such threats and attacks are usually directed at harming the lives of people and property. However, this does not rule out other illegal acts. For example, counterfeit currency may be circulated in a country to damage its economic health. It is believed, that national security is equally important for every country. However, the reaction of different countries to the perceived threat and the best way to counter it, determines their approach to national security" (eNote.com, 2011).

Any nation that experiences security threat of any sort would always strive to restore peace for development to be achieved. The issue of national security in Nigeria has been a thorn in her flesh since 1999 and has been worsened by the Boko Haram menace. Odunlami (1999:128) believed that security for any nation is a very important element for any form of development to take place. It is very unfortunate that people strive for development but do not know how to protect it when it is achieved, it becomes a fruitless effort.

Nigeria's Security Challenges

National security is important not only to the government, but to the nation as a whole.

National security serves many purposes. First of all, the armed forces are a very important aspect of national security. The Federal Republic of Nigeria has a very strong military to help ensure that the nation stays safe, however Nigeria's security concerns and threat perceptions emanated from many quarters, these include:- the threat of extreme Islamic sects like Boko Haram. high level of unemployed youths, Militia from the oil rich Niger delta, ritual killings, the Widening economic gap between the poor and the rich, influx of illegal migrants from the neighboring countries, emergence of political and regional thugs, and the collapse of the justice system. In addition, when threats are directed at the country there is an attempt to keep these threats isolated. National security is also concerned with emergency preparedness among many other things.

Boko Haram: Issues, Trends and Activities

It is important to state from the outset that an attempt to forcefully impose religious ideology or belief on the Nigerian society since her independence in 1960 especially in the Northern part is not new. The first major attempt in the post colonial period was led by the leader of the Maitatsine sectarian group in 1980s and eventually led to large scale uprisings. Thus, it can therefore be said that the emergence of this dreaded Islamic sect popularly known as the Boko Haram had its root and inspiration from colonial period as well as from the "Maitatsine" uprisings often early 1980s in particular.

Although Boko Haram could be compared in terms of philosophy or ideology and objectives to the Maitatsine sectarian group, its organizational planning, armed resistance, and modus operandi is Taliban (Danjibo, 2009).

During the colonial era, a revolutionary Mahdism which received little elite support but attracted "radical clerics" disgruntled peasants and slaves sought unsuccessfully to overthrow the British colonial regime which controlled the Sokoto Caliphate founded after the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio. With stark resonance today, northern

Muslim elites made a pact with the British colonialists that they would rule indirectly in return for British education not being imposed on the protectorate (Dearn, 2011).

The Maitatsine uprisings of the early 1980s, inspired by Cameroonian dissident preacher Muhammadu Marwa, catalyzed by massive socioeconomic inequality and, following on from constitutional debates in 1977 which polarized the country, were the first incidence of Islamic fundamentalist agitation against the secular state. At around the same time, two other Islamic fundamentalist groups emerged, Jama'atu Izalati Bidi'a Wa'iqamatic Sunna ("Society of Removal of Innovation and Reestablishment of the Sunna"), founded 1978 in Jos and known as "Izala", and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, a Shiite movement led by Sheikh Ibrahim Ei-Zakzaky, funded by Iran and in which Yusuf was thought to be a "major player" - exactly how and when Yusuf was involved and how this related to his links with Sheikh Jafar is unclear (Dearn, 2011).

Though some people have argued that both groups have been associated with Boko Haram's modern incarnation, there is no substantial evidence to justify this. In 2009, the Islamic Movement of Nigeria rebutted claims that El-Zakzaky was the founder of Boko Haram, arguing it could never be so against Western education when it owns 300 schools in Nigeria which teach a mixture of Islamic and Western. Izala threatened legal action against publishers of pictures of its members labeled as Boko Haram foot soldiers. What is clear is that the omission of constitutional debates in the 1970s, military rule under successive despots - including the jailing of El-Zakzaky by Sani Abacha's regime entrenched poverty in the areas where such groups are active and have been grist to the fundamentalists' mill (Dearn, 2011).

The time that this Islamic militant group emerged in the country is yet unknown. There were series of conflicting reports on their emergence in the northern part of the country. Information at the disposal of the different security agencies pieced together by Sunday Tribune of 12th February, 2012 indicated that contrary to the widely-held belief that the Boko Haram started around 2003, the group has been existing since 1995. It was, however, confirmed that the entry of slain Malam Mohammed Yusuf successfully radicalized the group and opened it to foreign collaboration, especially with the Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Details obtained by investigators revealed that the Jama'atul Ahlus Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad (Brethren united in the pursuit of holy war), also known as Boko Haram, started off its activism in 2001, under the leadership of the late Yusuf. From that year, the group had intensified its propagation of extreme Islamic doctrine, which sees Western education and democracy as corruptive and immoral (Sunday Tribune, 2012).

Furthermore, in 1995, the group was said to be operating under the name Shabaab, Muslim Youth Organization. It operated from the Indimi Mosque, located along Damboa Road, Maiduguri, Borno State and had one Malam Lawal as leader and another Malam Usman as secretary. It was learnt that in 1999, Lawal left Nigeria for further studies at the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia, thereby yielding the leadership of the group to the man known as Mustapha Modu Jon, commonly called Mohammed Yusuf. Yusuf's leadership was said to have opened the group to political influences and increased popularity. Although Yusuf's religious activism was linked to Kano, where he had brushes with popular Islamic clerics, he was said to have laid the foundation for the growth of the organisation. Details about the late Yusuf, however, indicated that, first, he was a favourite student of prominent Nigerian Islamic scholar

Sheikh Jafar Mahmud Adam and hailed from Gingir village in Jakusko Local Government Area of Yobe State, he was born on 29 January 1970 married four wives and had 12 children. By year 2000. Yusuf had won the respect and confidence of some clerics and youths at Indimi Mosque. He started presiding over some mosque activities and along the line: he upstaged all the teachers to emerge a leader. Many youths who followed him saw the older clerics as secular and anti-Sharia. According to the report, majority of his followers illiterate youths who engaged in petty trading or had dropped out of school (Danjibo, 2009) As time went on, Yusuf then established his own mosque in an area called Railway Quarters in Maiduguri, while also extending his preaching to the mosques located at Kandahar, Unguwar Doki (near Monday Market) and Millionaire's Quarters.

Investigators were also told that by early 2004, the Islamic sect had grown in states of presence with Borno, Yobe and Bauchi being notable and that some of the converted youths abandoned their studies to join the group. The ready-made army of followers were, however, said to be the Almajiri. It was after 2004 that the sect leaders were said to have established links with the Algerian Salafist Group, now known as Al Qaeda in Islamic Magreb, (AQIM), which gave them training on combat and use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). From trainings acquired in AQIM, it was gathered that members of Boko Haram were able to show dexterity in handling of weapons and manufacture of what is called "dirty bombs" through IEDs (Danjibo, 2009. Nigerian Tribune 30. January, 2012).

Providing Intelligence Information

The spokesman for Nigeria's Defense Headquarters has called on citizens to provide actionable intelligence to help combat the country's security challenges. Colonel

Mohammed Yarima said a joint task force is implementing measures that will bolster security across susceptible areas. "What we are doing is that we have got all the infrastructural facility... and we provide patrols all over the towns. We have also established check points at the entrance of the towns and flash areas," said Yarima. "We are also seeking the collaboration of people to make us perform our duties effectively and to make them sleep with their two eyes closed [feel protected]." Yarima said credible intelligence from citizens will help the security agencies efficiently resolve the country's security problems. His comments came after authorities in eastern Nigeria said a suicide bomb targeting a police official has killed 11 people. Officials say a bomber on a motorbike rammed into a police convoy in Jalingo, the capital of Taraba state. About 20 other people were injured in the blast.

The Concept of Language

Natural language has many unique properties among which are that it plays dual role in most known formal educational systems. McLaughlin (2006:19) seen 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. The means available to us in communicating our ideas and feelings is usually the symbols of a language which we choose to speak, write or gesture. According to Fromkin (2003:3), the possession of language, perhaps more than any other attribute, distinguishes humans from other animals. To understand our humanity, one must understand the nature of language that makes us human.. Thus, language is very important because it enables one to speak and be understood by others who are intelligible in the same language, Halliday in Webster (2003:404) on his own believed that language is a meaning Potential: a system-and process of choice, choice which typically goes on below the threshold of

attention, but can be attended to and reflected on under certain circumstances- most typically, though not exclusively associated with the evolution of writing.. Language is therefore a compendium of words, phrases, clauses and sentences which a user chooses from and strings together, systematically, to express meanings that are appropriate in a particular context. (Azuka, 2012).

The Use of Language for Security Challenges

Essentially, the meaning(s) of words we choose to use may be identified in context of situation.

Looking at the linguistic context of the term language can, we can distinguish between two different meanings in order to disambiguate it. As a verb, language can depict language potentialities, by implication, what it is able to do and how it is used in different ways to achieve what we want. We shall later in this paper discuss what language can do. On the other hand, language can as a noun could be used to mean a kind of container from which we extract elements. That container, in this context, is the human brain and mind in which grammar lies and grows. As Cook and Newson (200: 185) pointed out that, language is part of human inheritance; it is in our genes. However, just like other inherited attitude, this does not rule out variation between individuals as some may be more linguistic competent or communicative competent than others. Fromkin (2003: 33) in an excerpt from *Hippocratic Treatise on the Sacred Disease* see the brain as the messenger of the understanding (and the organ whereby) in an especial manner we acquire wisdom and knowledge. They therefore believe that language is the first cognitive model to be localized in the brain via scientific evidence. Kvidently, the brain contains a repertoire of language from which the individual selects to use. Chomsky (1955) in Kottak (2004: 399-400) argued that the human brain contains a limited set of rules for

organizing language, so that all languages have a common structural basis. Therefore, the brain as a container houses language and the carriers of language should select intelligently the appropriate component that denotes their meanings in specific contexts. This relates to language use which shall be given a special attention in this paper too. Meanwhile, let us examine that language can do in relation to man, society and the world.

Similarly, every normal human being depends, in all his social activities, on the use of language to do things. Finegan (2012:302) opined that people use language principally as a tool to do things: request a favour, make a promise, report a piece of news, give directions, offer a greeting, seek information, extend an invitation, jest help and do hundreds of other ordinary things. What we do with language can have positive or negative consequences on us. For instance, it could negatively affect us when it is used to curse, fire an employee, etc but positively when used to pray, propose marriage, tell the truth, etc. Considering conversation generally, Wardhaugh (2000: 280) asserted that it involves much more than using language to state propositions or convey facts. According to him, through conversation we establish relationships, and so on. The utterances we use in conversation enable us to do these kinds of things because conversation itself has certain properties which are well worth examining. It is therefore important to understand what utterances do, how they can be used, and specifically, how they can be used in conversation. In addition, language also performs a social function. Mey (2001:137) considered the social function of language from two points of view. First, he looks at its function from the content with a focus on what the conversation is about, the topic discussed, and how they are brought into the conversation: whether or not these topics are overtly announced or maybe presupposed, or hidden in other ways: what kind of

topic lead to other topics and why, etc. Secondly, he considers the function of language in creating an 'ambience', a context in which the conversationalists are able to pursue their (overt or hidden) goals. Sometimes, individuals simply, need to establish ties or union by a mere exchange of words. In relation to this, Wardhaugh (2000:281) noted that Malinowski (1923) ascribed a social function he calls phatic communion. To language which we employ for its affective values as indicator that one person is willing to talk to another and that a channel of communication is either being opened or kept open. So, the essence of this function is that each utterance is an act serving the direct aim of some social sentiment or other. Essentially, whenever we use language, we perform different kinds of acts. The utterances/words we use are locutions. Most locutions express some intent that a speaker has.

This tells why Austin and Searle in Wardhaugh (2000:283) ascribed an illocutionary function to language and sees language as illocutionary and performative acts. These have a signification that a speaking person is doing more than mere communication. In other words the illocutionary and performative functions of language show language as an action, a performance. Most verbs we use carry some illocutionary and performative forces. Such verbs include: pronounce, nullify, baptize, declare, congratulate, etc. This is why the declaration of June 12, 1993 Nigerian election as of null and void remained nullified with its negative consequences.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has clearly revealed the challenges of domestic terrorism and the national security in the country. It is equally obvious that domestic terrorism in the country especially since the return to civil rule in 1999 has constituted a serious threat to national interest, peace and national security and as well led to

internal population displacement, violation of fundamental human rights among others. Therefore, having known a number of factors responsible for this ugly situation among which include, making inflammatory and unguarded utterances that threaten national security and the effective use of indigenous languages in policy making and implementation in order to have very strong and peaceful society.

Recommendations

For any meaningful democracy to exist there must be peace to be enjoyed by every citizen. Nigeria needs peace and concentration for its continued existence, development and security.

It is in view of this that this paper recommends the following in order to enhance national security:

- (1) Nigeria, especially the political players, should avoid making and unguarded utterances that threaten national security.
- (2) People should strengthen their feedback mechanism and improve on their communicative competence.
- (3) Further studies should be done on national security by exploring how indigenous languages like Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, etc. could enhance National Security.

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- Aliyu Alhaji Tanko**
Department of Hausa,
Federal College of Education,
Kontagora,
Niger State.