

# LANGUAGE EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR PEACE BUILDING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examines the concept of language education and the role they can play in making peace building and sustainable development of Nigeria. It is only through language one can inform, persuade, and entertain, to dissuade one from acting, to give an account of an action or event in process, to give opinion, make suggestion and make value judgment. The paper has introduction, conceptual framework, Theoretical framework, Language Education and Sustainable Development such as the role in the area of education, the role in the area of economic development, Peace building and National Unity it has recommendations such as Teachers and students of tertiary institutions need to internalize the concept of sustainable development; what it represents and how it affects the educational system, their well being, and relationship with one another, such as improved economic growth and interpersonal relationship; acquiring good education; and fostering more peaceful communities where children live free from violence. When this understanding is in place, staff and students are motivated to do the right things within the institution, resulting in sustained progress and harmony in the society and shifts in the norms and behaviours in the long term. The development of any nation depends largely on the quality of education it offers its citizenry; as such the Nigerian government needs to be committed to funding the building of language laboratory across the colleges of education nationwide. This is because without a language laboratory, the language teacher may not be able to effectively teach language in school and this will hamper the goal of sustainable development both in the colleges of education and the country at large. Both the lecturers and management of colleges of education should make efforts to discourage the use of Pidgin language within the school environment in order to encourage students to be proficient in their use of language. This will help the students to improve on their spoken and written language which may also improve their academic performance and contribute significantly to the growth of the larger society after their schooling period. The language curriculum planners need to re-structure the curriculum to include interactive and patriotic elements that would ensure students interest*

*in citizenship and nation building goals in order to develop a positive mental consciousness of a "one Nigeria" mindset that would encourage unity and sustainable development after their education and conclusion.*

**Keywords:** Language, Education, Peace Building and Sustainable Development.

## **Introduction**

Language plays a crucial role in the coexistence and interactions of humans. It is the means by which they communicate with one another. The importance of the relationship between language and society cannot be overemphasized in the growth and development of a community. Language is an essential tool in the development of a nation especially a developing nation like Nigeria. Language can be seen as a lubricant that makes activities in a society flow smoothly. Abiodun and Ogbinaka (2018) assert that an individual uses language to communicate his thoughts inner feelings and psychological experience. Also, in order to establish social relationship, language is essential. It is a tool with which people express their ideas and feelings, thereby achieving effective communication. A society that needs to be developed needs to have means of communication that is a language that is generally accepted and understood by the majority in the society Abdullahi (2010). The teacher and learner as interactive whereby the learners are free to interact with the teacher as a result reducing anxiety. This paper strongly suggests that the CLL approach be used in teaching and learning English as second language in Nigerian schools especially in the colleges of education. This will greatly help to improve the learning and using of English language in the larger society.

Language is God's special gift to mankind. Without language human civilization, as we know it today, would have remained impossible. Language serves as a means of expressing ones feelings and ideas, and a means of achieving plans and aims. It is through language that basic needs of human interaction at both individual and collective levels are satisfied. Without language man would have remained only a dumb animal. This is because it is our ability to communicate through words that makes us different from animals. According to Nwobia (2015), language is the key that is capable of bringing about the development of a people. This development can translate in the form of technology, economic, social; political and educational developments. Hanna (2008) opined that language is a symbol of human feelings. As a weapon of development, language is employed to express government policies. However, the degree of acceptance of any government

policy is a function of the language through which the message is conveyed to the citizens.

Language and society are so much related. Their relationship cannot be underestimated. Language is the oil that lubricates activities within any human society Agwu (2016). It is an indispensable medium that helps man to achieve effective communication as it mirrors the mind in deep and significant ways. The English language has taken the position of a national language in Nigeria. There is no gain saying the fact that English has become a Nigerian language (Adegbite, 2004:56). The language has become an invaluable legacy of the British colonial masters. Several years after independence, English still survives and has assumed a more important status in Nigeria. This paper examines English as the language education, the language of economics and the language of unity in Nigeria.

Education at all levels and in all its forms constitutes a vital tool for addressing virtually all global problems. Education is not only an end in itself. It is a key instrument for bringing about changes in knowledge, values and behaviours and life styles required to achieve sustainability and stability within and among countries (Watson, 2015). Education has been seen as the greatest force that can be used to bring about changes. Aminu (2008) observed that the greatest investment a nation can make for the development of its economic, sociological and human resources is that of education. Education according to him provides us with people possessing the necessary knowledge and skills to win a nation's state and to even export brains.

Education is seen or believed to be the activity of preserving, developing and transmitting the culture of people from one generation to another (Ingram, 2014). It enables the people to develop the knowledge, values and skills to participate in decision making about them, individually, collectively and globally. This vision of development embraces environmental concern as well as issues such as the fight against poverty, human right, gender equality, cultural diversity and education for all. To this end, Education is a means through which sustainable development can be achieved.

This also explains why the Federal Government of Nigeria geared a policy towards attaining national development. According to National Policy on Education (2013). Education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument for change: any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an education revolution.

The expanded nature of peace building has left the Nigerian with a broadens responsibility. They now have a responsibility to rebuild along with a

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responsibility to prevent and react. The responsibility to rebuild includes a genuine commitment to lasting peace, to the protection of human rights and to the promotion of good governance and sustainable development. Regardless of how we choose to prioritize the issue of human rights in peace building, it must be addressed during the peace process if a society will ever be able to heal and reconcile in the aftermath of conflict. In order for justice and reconciliation to be successful, however, half of the population cannot be excluded due to discriminatory traditional gender roles. As human are important actors in peace building and the reconstruction of war-torn societies, the issue of human's rights cannot be neglected. Sustainable peace can help transform discriminatory values, ideologies and institutions and bring about peace. It is important to recognize that Nigerians is not only victims during conflict and its aftermath (Udombana, 2010, Agbalajobi, 2010 and Agu, 2007).

Sustainable development is a term widely used by politicians all over the world, even though the notion is still somewhat new and lacks a uniform interpretation. Important as it is, the concept of sustainable development is still being developed and the definition of the term is constantly being revised, extended, and refined (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001).

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Language**

Language is the major means of communication among a people. It provides a critical rallying point as well as an unmistakable form of identity for its users. In the world of today, language can serve as a vehicle through which nations can rise to global recognition. This is because, for wider communication in the global world that has virtually become a global village, we have come to realize that language will not only facilitate, but also enhance and promote cross- cultural activities. The general assumption of most literature on natural development in 1960's and early 1970's was based on economic growth or expansion of industrial production. Economists, sociologists tried to examine and draw attention to people's own conception of their lifestyle, life chances and motivation in order to see how they respond to apparent development opportunities.

In another definition by Munasinghe (2004), sustainable national Development is a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of

economic, social and environmental systems. Age (2005:85), identified some objectives which sustainable national development is expected to realize: increase capital income and employment, promoting human welfare satisfying basic needs; protecting the environment. Considering the path of future generation, achieving equity between rich and poor and participation on a broad basis in development and decision making is important from the above definitions, there are common phenomena which they all shared; that is prioritizing the development of the present generation without compromising the future generation.

## **Education**

Education is a basic objective of development and an importance end in itself. An input and output of development, education is fundamental to the broader notion of expand human capabilities that is the fulcrum of development. At the same time, education plays a key role in the ability of a developing country to absorb modern technology and to develop the capacity for self-sustaining growth and development (Todaro and Smith, 2009:369). In other words, education holds the master key that unlocks a country's potentials towards national transformation, and sustainable human national development.

Sustainable Development: As observed earlier on, in recent times, there has been a paradigm shift in defining development and the way it is practiced. This paradigm shift resulted in the adoption of Sustainable Development (SD), a concept which was highlighted in the Brunt land Report and at the Stockholm Conference of 1972 (UNECA, 2012). This shift, according to Hopwood et al, (2005) as quoted by Ahenkan and Osei-Kojo (2014) was borne out of the global link between environmental problems and socio-economic concerns and, also because earlier conceptions and approaches to development appeared to focus largely on economic and physical wealth despite the multi-dimensional and complex nature of development (Bellu, 2011). According to DiGiulio, 2006 sustainable Development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs". The organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001) as quoted by Ahenkan and Osei-Kojo (2014) also defines sustainable development as the development path along which maximization of human well-being for today's generation does not lead to the decline in the well-being of the future generation. These definitions suggest that sustainable development considers the needs of the future and current generations in tandem, and it is rooted in the pursuit of the well-being and welfare of the people (Ahenkan and Osei-kojo, 2014). Sustainable development is therefore concerned with the

creation and sustenance of the conditions for current and future generations of human to live well on this planet. Hence, as noted by Sims and Falkenberg, (2013) right from the beginning a multi-prong approach to the idea of sustainable society was taken that went beyond concerns for only the destruction of the national environment to include the concern for meeting the essential needs of all people and those needs are met in a sustainable way in consideration of the needs of future generations. Therefore, the objectives of sustainable development will require the protection of the natural resources upon which future development depends. For many advocates of sustainable development, valuing nature and human life in an intrinsic way has also become an integral part of development (Bakar, 2006). And according to the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 as quoted by Iechukwu, Njoku and Ugwuozor (2014), development is sustainable if “it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development could probably be otherwise called “equitable and balanced” development (Suobbotina, 2004).

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Theoretical Assumption** The theoretical assumption guiding this work is the theory of Community Language Learning (CLL) developed by Charles Curran in 1972 as quoted by Abiodun and Ogbinaka (2018). Community Language, Learning is an approach based on counseling techniques. This theory advocates that the usual teacher - student relationship in the classroom be replaced with the counselor client relationship. This is done with the intent of removing any form of challenge from the client which theoretically would help him or her to learn a second language without difficulty. In other words, this approach tries to erase anxiety, threat and other kinds of personal challenges an individual may encounter in the process of learning a new language. This CLL theory was inspired by Carl Roger's view of education: that all human beings are motivated to live up to their potentials, but they are hindered by personal challenges and by their environment. Once these difficulties are removed, each person can develop his or her full potentials. The relevance of this CLL theory to this paper is that when the difficulties to the learning of English are removed, learners in Nigeria will learn it with ease and be able to develop their full potentials as individuals to influence the society positively. This method reinforces the use of effective communication in teaching and learning language in the classroom. It views the relationship between the teacher and learner as interactive whereby the learners are free to

interact with the teacher as a result reducing anxiety. This paper strongly suggests that the CLL approach be used in teaching and learning English as second language in Nigerian schools especially in the colleges of education. This will greatly help to improve the learning and using of language in the larger society.

### **Language Education and Sustainable Development**

Language, like the people who use it has much to emit (conceive and express) to its environment. Perhaps, the biblical story in Genesis 11:1-9 illustrates, in clear terms, the role that language plays in national development. The building of the tower went on smoothly because the people spoke one language and thus understood each other. However, the anti-climax came when there was confusion in language, thus leading to the breakdown in communication. The outcome was the abrupt stoppage of work on the monumental project. The message is clear. While people constitute the soul of development in any society or nation, language constitutes the soul of communication among the people who execute sustainable development. So, like good education the proper use of language provides the knowledge, skills and values necessary for man to become an effective agent of change. Emeka-Nwobia (2015), (Catherine, 2011), adds a more interesting aspect of language by emphasizing the communication as well as the unifying nature of language: In Babel, as in our day, the role of language as a powerful Weapon in the hands of man for cohesion has by no Means diminished. Man has continued to use it as an Important tool for forging unity (Emeka-Nwobia, 2015) Thus, when people are able to understand each other and speak with one voice, development is often one of the surest beneficiaries. This brings us to the issue of multilingualism.

### **The Role in the Area of Education**

What should be the purpose of education? This is a question that has agitated the minds of teachers and policy makers all through the ages. The purpose of education in Nigeria is for national unity and development. This has informed many of the reform programmes of successive Nigerian governments. There have been initiatives by government on nomadic education, technical skills development, professional enhancement and continuous education among others. It is only through the English language that these basic educations at different levels can be achieved. Even the nomadic education has to be done in English language because the concept to be used in teaching at a higher level (right after primary three) has to be provided in the English language. The English language is the language of Education in Nigeria Ndimele (2006).

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Apart from the first three years of a child's life in the primary school that was mentioned in the National Policy on Education, the rest of the child's life in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, all academic activities must be done in the English language. English is the language of prestige per excellence and a firm knowledge of it is an assurance of climbing the educational ladder of success in Nigeria. Credit in five subjects including English and mathematics in the West African School Certificate is a passport to any Nigerian university and subsequently offers a speedy access to employment in the job market. Before development can come to a people, there must be a means of communication and language quickly comes to play (Emeka-Nwobia, 2015). Considering the many indigenous languages present in Nigeria today, it is quite difficult to impose an indigenous and unifying language because they number over four hundred. The language scenario in Nigeria would have been close to what happened at the Tower of Babel had not a foreign language, English, been introduced and used in the country.

### **The Role in the Area of Economic Development**

Language is the avenue to sustainable development in Nigeria. Economists in Nigeria believe that Language especially English is crucial for economic growth, as it helps them trade more widely on an international scale. Nigeria can do international businesses because we have English as our official language. The international community can easily and comfortably be reached because of the prestigious language. Language is very important when hiring a new employee. This underlines the fact that language especially English skills enhance business and trade, while also improving an individual's economic conditions. An individual's economic empowerment in Nigeria is closely linked with good command of English. A wide range of business categories in Nigeria including the banking industry, technology, the pharmaceutical industry, and even vocational workers such as carpenters and electricians see increased need for English language skills. A salaried professional with good English language skills can earn an average of thirty percent (30%) more than someone with no English language skills in Nigeria. The government of Nigeria firmly recognized that English is a key element of business communication and it is essential for attracting new investments. With government and companies pushing for far more English speaking workers, it can be expected that more individuals will view English, among other skills, as a step towards career advancement and higher pay. This is a motivating factor for individuals to learn English in order to obtain well-paid jobs within the most dynamic organizations and industries in Nigeria. Clearly, we all can see that

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prospective employees who can speak and write English well have better opportunities economically. This way, English language is a tool for sustained national development (Abiodun, and Ogbinaka, (2018), Nwobia, (2015) and Hanna, (2008).

### **Peace building and National Unity**

Language especially English serves as a tool for sustainable development in the area of national unity in Nigeria. Amidst the compounding complexities and wars in the northern part of Nigeria, the only language that still emits the spirit of oneness in Nigeria is the English language. More often than not, activities conducted in indigenous languages are seen as being ethnic or tribal, except in cultural celebrations or ethnic displays. This explains why, even during the first republic and during the colonial era, when English had not attained its present level of ascending in national and international affairs, political parties were formed in English language. However, the parties might have regional bases but the fact that they were named in English entailed their national identity. The Northern People's Congress (NPC), The Action Group (AG), The National Council of Nigeria Citizen (NCNC) after the excision of Southern Cameroun, National Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) etc, were formed to integrate all Nigerians and give them a sense of belonging. This trend has necessarily survived until today with all the national political parties formed and sloganeered in English (Nwobia, (2015), Hanna, (2008) and Maclean (2008).

### **Conclusion**

Peace building and sustainable development is development that has two key needs; development that meets the needs of the present generation and development that allows the future generation to meet their needs. It focuses on the development that embraces all aspects of the country including its economic development, social development and environmental protection for the present and the future. In essence, it incorporates issues on land development and human development such as education, public health and standard of living. Nigerian problems can; be addressed through the acquisition of early learning and quality education because the true development of a nation commences with the development of its human resources. The idea of sustainable development can be achieved in Nigeria when proficiency in English language is a key factor in acquiring good education, economic empowerment and national integration. The development of the knowledge and skills of individuals through education is only made possible by the language through

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which they are acquired. Hence, it can be said that English language works with education in Nigeria to bring about human and national development.

### **Recommendations**

Base on the above, the following recommendations are made;

1. Teachers and students of tertiary institutions need to internalize the concept of sustainable development; what it represents and how it affects the educational system, their well being, and relationship with one another, such as improved economic growth and interpersonal relationship; acquiring good education; and fostering more peaceful communities where children live free from violence. When this understanding is in place, staff and students are motivated to do the right things within the institution, resulting in sustained progress and harmony in the society and shifts in the norms and behaviours in the long term.

2. The development of any nation depends largely on the quality of education it offers its citizenry; as such the Nigerian government needs to be committed to funding the building of language laboratory across the colleges of education nationwide. This is because without a language laboratory, the language teacher may not be able to effectively teach language in school and this will hamper the goal of sustainable development both in the colleges of education and the country at large.

Both the lecturers and management of colleges of education should make efforts to discourage the use of Pidgin English within the school environment in order to encourage students to be proficient in their use of English language. This will help the students to improve on their spoken and written English which may also improve their academic performance and contribute significantly to the growth of the larger society after their schooling period.

4. The language curriculum planners need to re-structure the curriculum to include interactive and patriotic elements that would ensure students interest in citizenship and nation building goals in order to develop a positive mental consciousness of a "one Nigeria" mindset that would encourage unity and sustainable development after their education.

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