

# TOWARDS DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

The problems of National Development stem from socio-linguistic perspectives up to political situations. These are significant causes of crises in the Nigerian polity. Attempt is made in this paper to examine the concepts of Developmental English and National Development to see the close relationships between them in reducing crises in the various levels of human interaction. As the key to peaceful co-existence is language, so should English be tailored towards achieving desired goals from our cultures. English as a second language should be placed in perspectives of the multilingual Nigeria. Elements of an existing first language cannot be overlooked. This paper places English language in Nigeria in proper perspectives in time and space towards recommended goals of conflict resolution.

The tool of social engineering for inculcating values in a society is language which affects and adjusts attitudes within it. Language is considered indispensable as it serves as a sign of one's attitude and exposes the mood of its users.

Omolewa (1981) posits that "every society considers education as the most potent weapon for building the society". The focal point of attitudinal change lies in the onus of a functional disposition for the development of 'an English' which goals are developmentally oriented.

## **Concept of Education**

Various definitions have been given to education as a concept. A universal definition is hardly achievable. However, Fafunwa (1974) defines education as:

The process by which a young child or young adult develops the abilities and other forms of behaviour which are of positive or acceptable value to the society in which he lives and sees education as a process of transmitting growth in the right direction.

Here education is regarded as a process of knowledge acquisition, growth in skills and abilities, positive attitudinal change and healthy competitiveness in the culture of a people by an individual. This is necessitated by the individual's need to function successfully and contribute effectively to the development of his society.

Earlier, Nyerere (1967) saw education as:

The process whereby one generation passes into the next its knowledge and wisdom.

For Nyerere, education breaks the barriers of illiteracy and broadens a person's opinions about a matter thereby creating desired change in attitude.

Perhaps, Farrant (1980) draws a line when he refers to education simply as, “the process of learning to live a successful and acceptable life as members of the community to which one belongs”. This is clearly a summation that the functionality and developmental goals of education towards attitudinal change cannot be over-emphasized. Education has metamorphosed from simple consumption of knowledge to the purpose it serves in attitude and interest instrumental to national survival.

### **Concept of Development**

Unlike mere growth which refers to maturity in physiological properties, development has being defined by Ozigi (1979) as:

A rather vague and an all embracing term... it involves growth and progressive change. When we say an individual is developing... that person has shown definite change, maturity and progress in his physical, mental and emotional characteristics.

On a general term, development is thus a combination of physical, biological and human transforming environments of an individual or society towards phenomenally accepted societal goals. The improvement of society is determined by the capacity of the individual to harness and manipulate forces of nature by himself for the betterment and benefit of humanity. Society is not static and development is therefore dynamic. It is often believed that development should end only at death.

### **Concept of National Development**

There has been growing concerns over the years on the idea of National Development. This is more because of the multi-cultural nature of the Nigerian state. It is Musella (1970) who says, “We talk of national development when we are thinking in terms of growth, change and development that are taking place in the society”. Consequently, though the establishment and improvement of infrastructure are derogatorily regarded by some as the only yardsticks for national development, the definite change in attitudes of the people and their ways of life are primary, fundamental and even basic to human development that propel the forces of nature towards a holistic definition.

### **Concept of Development English**

English Language is seen as the widest spoken language in the world. (Bamgboye, Banjo and Thomas, 1997). The concept of developmental English is seen from the point of its role in evolving a unique linguistic tradition with choice from English as a second language which items are selected and utilized in communication, yet in conformity with the traditional norms and values of the Nigerian state.

### **Attitudes & Conflicts in Nigeria**

There is no gainsaying that a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society as Nigeria is bedevilled by conflicts of political, social and economic magnitude. This is not unique to it alone as right from the civil war era, the society has learnt to be civil in approach to national issues. However, the growing wave of inequality in economic distribution, ethnic bias and self aggrandizement has reduced the role of development and increased conflicts of sorts through deepening dependence on help from developed countries of the world. Even then, the resources natural to Nigeria are siphoned to feed companies of industrial nations with a wave of loss of value. Language is to be a focal point for repositioning the individual towards rebranding the nation.

### **Some Debasing Linguistic Items**

Some linguistic items that have constantly polluted the Nigeria policy are either borrowed or coined so much as to be processes to our evolving societal decay as:

1. "...Northern people are parasite..." (Asari Dokubo on Northern Nigeria)
2. "... Civil servant constitute only one percent of the entire work force..." (Audu Abubakar, over non-payment of outstanding salaries to state workers).
3. "...Baboon and Monkey will soak in blood..." (Muhammadu Buhari's campaign comment in 2010 against 2011 elections).
4. "... If you see my poster after four years, know that it is for my obituary..." (Olusegun Agagu as Governorship candidates of Ondo State in 2003 – 2009).

### **Issues of Conflict**

In 1 above, the entire Northern Nigeria is pushed to a crisis point which had to be managed only by the wrong choice of words from a south – south leader who is given credence by a government. This places grievances in the receivers and enmity on regions. This brings attitudinal challenges to the Nigerian reality.

In 2 above, statements of this sort expose the attitude to the work force of the state and could forestall his next election bid as governor.

In 3 above, the aggrieved presidential aspirant of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) could trigger national disaster.

In 4 above, Dr. Olusegun Agagu could be reigning curses for his future ambition which he might wish to decline.

### **Conclusion**

Except a pragmatic approach is undertaken to re-position our linguistic culture, conflicts could evolve that could be aggrieved to full blown crises that would reduce Nigeria to protracted upheaval as witnessed in countries like Iran versus USA, Iran versus Israel and others with lots of wastages in lives and property.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are required:

- ❖ Developmental English should be taught from the ages of acquisition to maturity in our schools.
- ❖ Specialized Guidance Counselors with good knowledge of evolving linguistic trends should be appointed to discover and check attitude of students in schools.
- ❖ The role of English language teachers must be spread to cover all aspects of students' curriculum from classroom up to the playgrounds.

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