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Influence of Language on Cultural Activation: Towards Peace Stability in Ondo Metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Ethnic composition and cultural diversity have antecedent challenges in the country, Nigeria, which necessitated the study on the influence of language on cultural activation towards peace and stability in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was used. The population of the study comprised people living in Ondo metropolis in Ondo state, Nigeria. The sample size of the study was one hundred and fifty (150) respondents selected through a snowball sampling technique. Two research questions were raised for the study. Data was generated through self-designed and structured research instruments by the researcher titled "Influence of Language on Cultural Activation towards Peace Stability in Ondo Metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria". It was based on a four-point Likert rating scale: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) and complemented with Focus Group Discussion (FGDs). The research instrument was validated by two experts in Test and measurement, while its reliability was determined through test-retest method at two weeks intervals. 0.70 was obtained as a coefficient reliability. Based on the findings of the study, conclusions were made that language is not a major factor that could bring people of different ethnicities and cultures together; rather, speaking a common language that is understood by people of different ethnic composition could promote peaceful co-existence. Based on the conclusions, recommendations were made that people should be made to respect and have regard for the language spoken by other members of ethnic groups. The government should organize language summits vis-à-vis national development. Nigerians should be made to understand that no language is superior to others, etc.

Keywords: Language, Cultural activation, Peace, Stability, Metropolis

1. Background to the Study

In contemporary Nigerian society today, the search for peaceful living and coexistence is a national burning issue that is preoccupying the minds of stakeholders who are crusaders of sustainable peace, stability and nation building, especially in this period of insecurity. As Agbelusi noted: The issue of insecurity in Nigeria has become something of grave concern to all well-meaning citizens, most of whom continue to wonder how the country arrived at such a dastardly situation where no one is safe; and worse still, rather abate, the problem is escalating and now totally out of control (Agbelusi, 2022, 1). Insecurity in Nigeria today has a long historical precedent, even before the nation gained its independence in 1960. Lack of peace and security challenge is a primordial issue, whose prevalence and persistence in Nigeria has been a source of worry and debate among Nigerian scholars, researchers and an assembly of leaders in the civil society.

Religion and politics have been prominent sources of peace breakdown, instability and insecurity in Nigeria (Oladiti, 2004, 1). In the Nigerian case, traditional religion and Islam predated colonialism, but Christianity became a force to reckon with at the end of the nineteenth century when the Europeans penetrated several parts of the country, Nigeria (Oladiti, 2004, pg 1). The coexistence of these religions and others constitutes a serious challenge to the peace, stability, and security of the country. The nation, especially in the Northern parts of the country, has witnessed several clashes between Muslims and Christians, which have claimed lives and property. Also, the traditional religion worshipers had clashed with the Christians, and lives and property were lost. In recent times, Boko-Haram insurgents, Banditry activity and Islamic Jihadist activities are challenges to sustainable peace, stability and nation-building in the country (Akinbi, 2015). Daily, national newspapers, media broadcasts, reports from the Ministry of Internal Affairs can hardly not report on Boko-Haram and other deadly criminal group activities, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. Kidnapping has become a lucrative trade and criminal activity which Nigerians are gradually seeing as a socio-crime that they are contending with. Herdsmen's activity is another dimension of insecurity in Nigeria. There is a growing complexity of farmers-herder conflict that is fast penetrating all regions in Nigeria. As Brotten noted, the rise of farmers-herder violence in Africa is more pernicious than fatality figures alone since it is often amplified by the emotionally potent issues of ethnicity, religion, culture and land (Brotten, 2021).

The farmers-herder violence over the past ten years has been a national problem, having political, economic and religious configurations. Population, pressure, changes in land use, and access to resources grow social inequalities, and declining trust between communities has rendered all apparatus to provide an enduring remedy weak and ineffective. Brotten (2021) pointed out that violence involving the pastoralist herders has significantly complicated peace, stability and security challenges in Nigeria. Further, the surge in farmer-herder violence has been much more concentrated in the southern part of the country, Nigeria. Wanton destruction of property, kidnapping, raping etc are features of farmer-herder violence in Nigeria.

Beyond farmer-herder violence, banditry, Boko-Haram, Islamic Jihadists, political thuggery and violence, another major cause of peace and security challenges in Nigeria is the nation's ethnic composition. Nigeria is a country with a highly fractionalized ethnic group, which is one of the myriad security challenges that are bedevilling the country. The multi-ethnic groups and diversity are a problem to peace and nation building in the country, Nigeria (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2021). The question of ethnicity has been one of the most topical

subjects today. Historically, Nigeria has a long way from being a multi-ethnic entity with political differences and background to the amalgamation of 1914 till the present structure of thirty-six states in the country today. Ethnicity has contributed immensely to ethnic conflicts in Nigeria because of long-standing revulsion or resentment towards ethnic groups different from one's own, fear of domination, which can also lead ethnic groups to resort to violence as a means to protect and preserve the existing ethnic groups (Adetiba, 2013).

There are three major ethnic groups in Nigeria: Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. However, there are other minor or sizable ethnic groups like Ijaw, Kanuri, Kakbari, Ibibio, Osoni, Ishekiri, Urobos, Igbira, Jukun, etc. Adetiba (2013) noted that ethnic groups in Nigeria make social integration, nation development and progress difficult in the country. Ethnicity has resulted in civil war (1967-1960) in the nation. Ethnic cleavages and overlapping with one's ethnic group are compounding the problem of development in Nigeria. Ethnicity has resulted in an unfair distribution of the nation's resources. It is a major setback to the socio-economic and political pressure of the country. It is evident from studies, comments, debates and opinions that the major destructive factor around round development revolves around ethnicity. Glickman (1995) attributes political processes to ethnicity. In any nation where national interest, rather than regional or ethnic interest, dominates minds, development will be a mirage. The implication of this is that after many years of independence, parochial and group interests have constantly resulted in peace and security challenges in the country.

Ethnicity is also accompanied by a language challenge, thus has a severe implication on cultural activation in a multi-ethnic country, Nigeria, today. The exact number of languages that are being spoken in Nigeria is difficult to ascertain accurately, as different ethnic groups speak different languages. The multi-language composition has accentuated distrust, suspicion and disunity. Language is a human tool of interaction and communication. Shashkevuli (2019) says that "language is the primary tool for expression and communication". Language is essentially a means through which members of a society communicate with each other. Language has also been identified as a strategy to achieve cultural activation.

Cultural activation is explained or defined as a consumer's recognition of the importance of providing cultural information to providers about cultural affiliation, challenges, views, etc (Segel, Reid-Rose, Adriana and Hernandez, 2016). However, in the context of this study, cultural activation is being looked at as a way of rejuvenating the components of culture which are gradually going into extinction. Lack of knowledge and information on culture by members of different ethnic groups in Nigeria constitutes a threat to peace and stability in the country. This has been a good source for writing positional research papers. Observably, from the extant studies on research, much has been accomplished empirically on the influence of language on cultural activation towards peace and stability in Ondo metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria.

2. Statement of the Problem

Ethnic composition of the nation, Nigeria, has been identified as a cog in the wheel of peace, stability, social integration, peace building and sustainable development in a holistic context. The multi-ethnic groups resulted in language variations, thus constituting a threat to a mutual understanding, integration and unity among the people of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, thus jeopardizing peace and stability in the country.

The study, therefore, was carried out on the influence of language on cultural activation towards peace building in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria.

3. Purpose of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the influence of language on cultural activation towards peacebuilding in the Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. Ascertain the impact of language on harmonization of people of different cultural variations in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria, and
2. Determine the influence of language on linguistic affiliations among the people in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria

4. Research Questions

1. Can language harmonize people of different cultural variations in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria?
2. Does language have an influence on peaceful co-existence among the people from different ethnicities in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria?

5. Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are significant in the following ways;

Firstly, the findings of the study will enable linguists to know the relevance of language on language activation towards peaceful living in Nigerian society.

Also, the results of the study will be reliable information on the position of language and harmonization of different cultural elements vis-à-vis peaceful living among people of different ethnic composition backgrounds in Nigeria.

Moreover, the results of this study will further show the influence of language on harmonization and utilization of people from disintegrating ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Lastly, the study will add to the extant or existing literature within the study or research area, thus becoming a good source of reference to researchers in future.

6. Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. This is because it was not possible for everybody in the population of the study to be covered. Therefore, the results that were generated were generalized to the entire population of the study.

The population of the study comprised people living in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria. The sample size of the study was one hundred and fifty (150) respondents selected through a snowball sampling technique. Data for the study was gathered through a self-developed, structured and designed research instrument, titled, "Questionnaire on Influence of Language Cultural Activation towards Peace stability in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria", Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly

Disagreed (SD) rating on 4; 3; 2 and 1 points. It was complemented by qualitative research instruments (Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)).

Two research questions were raised for the study. The research instruments were validated by two experts in Test and measurements, while the reliability of the quantitative research instrument was determined through a test-retest method at two two-week intervals. 0.70 coefficient of reliability was obtained. Data generated on the research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Frequency counts, simple percentages and mean), while data collected through the field were collated, transcribed and analyzed.

7. Presentation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Presentation of Results

Research Question One: Can language harmonize people from different cultural backgrounds in the Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Showing simple percentages, frequency counts and mean on how language harmonize people from different cultural backgrounds in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	REMARK
1	Understanding other ethnic groups' members' language will make me understand their culture and accept them	92 61.33	36 24	7 4.66	15 10	3.36	Accepted
2	I distance myself from other people from other ethnic groups because I do not understand their languages	4 2.66	9 6	25 16.66	112 74.66	1.36	Rejected
3	I will develop a likeness to people from another ethnic group if I can understand their language	102 68	26 17.33	14 9.33	8 5.33	3.48	Accepted

4	I do not trust and develop hatred for people from other ethnic groups because I can't comprehend their language	3 2	4 2.66	32 21.33	111 74	1.32	Rejected
5	I can only embrace and associate with people from other ethnic groups only if I can speak their language	107 71.33	24 16	10 6.66	9 6	3.52	Accepted
6	Once, I can speak the languages of people outside my ethnic group; therefore, there is no reason for mixing with them	5 3.33	6 4	29 19.33	110 73.33	1.37	Rejected
	TOTAL	313 34.77	105 11.66	117 13	365	2.40	Rejected

Table 1 shows the results of research question one. On item (1), 92 (61.33); 36 (24); 7 (4.66) and 15 (10) responses were obtained for Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD). On item (2), 4 (2.66); 9 (6); 25 (16.66) and 112 (74.66) responses were obtained for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD).

On item (3), the following responses were obtained: 102 (68); 26 (17.33); 14 (9.633) and 8 (5.33) responses were obtained for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD). On item (4), 3 (2); 4 (2.66); 32 (21.33) and 111 (4) responses were obtained for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD). On item (5), the following responses were obtained: 107 (71.33); 24 (16); 10 (6.66) and 9 (6) for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD).

Generally speaking, the results revealed that the average rating scale of four (= 2.50) is greater than the mean of the average rating scale of four (= 2.40), thus indicating that language has no significant impact on harmonizing or bringing together people of diverse ethnic backgrounds in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: Does language have an influence on peaceful co-existence among people from different ethnicities in the Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Showing simple percentages, frequency counts, and mean on does language have influence on peaceful co-existence among people from different ethnicities in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	REMARK
7	Understanding the languages of other tribes makes me accept their culture	123 82	16 10.66	5 3.33	6 4	3.70	Accepted
8	I do not accept other ethnic groups' culture simply because I do not understand their language	9 6	7 4.66	16 10.66	118 78.66	1.38	Rejected
9	I always respect and have regard for people whose language is understood	121 80.6 6	7 4.66	6 4	16 10.66	3.55	Accepted
10	Once a language is not understood, I disassociate myself from the people speaking it	3 2	10 6.66	18 12	119 79.33	1.31	Rejected
11	My discrimination of people from other ethnic groups is simply of my inability to communicate with them	115 76.6 6	22 14.66	7 4.66	6 4	3.64	Accepted
12	Ability to communicate with other people from other tribes will not enhance my association with them	2 1.33	4 2.66	16 10.66	128 85.33	1.2	Rejected
	TOTAL	373 43.66	66 7.33	68 7.55	393 43.66	2.5	Accepted

Table 2 presents the findings on research question two. On item (7), responses showed 123 (82); 16 (10.66); 5 (3.33) and 6 (4) for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD). On item (8), the following responses were obtained: 9 (6), 7 (4.66), 16 (10.66) and 118 (78.66) for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD). On item (9), responses obtained indicated: 121 (80.66); 7 (4.66); and 16 (10.66) for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD). On item (10), the following responses were obtained: 3 (2); 10 (6.66); 18 (12) and 119 (79.33) for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD).

Also, on item (11), responses got showed 115 (76.66), 22 (14.66), 7 (4.66) and 6 (4) for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD). Finally, on item (12), responses got indicated: 2 (1.33); 4 (2.66); 16 (10.22) and 128 (85.33) for strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD).

The results indicated that the average rating scale of four (= 2.5) is not lesser or higher than the mean of the average rating scale of four (= 2.5), thus indicating that language could positively have linguistic affiliation among members of various ethnic or tribes in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria. In other words, one's ability to understand and communicate with members of other ethnic groups could result in their closeness, interaction and mutual relationship.

8. Discussion of Findings

The results of the research question one indicated that language cannot harmonize people of different ethnic backgrounds in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria. What this indicates is that language differences are not a barrier to peace and stability in Nigeria. However, this negates the opinion of Akinsola (2021) that language diversity due to ethnic conglomeration and composition in Nigeria has always been a major challenge to the corporate existence of members of different ethnic groups in the country. Akinsola (2021) quoting Obasanjo's submission that ethnic sensitivity could not be left out in violence and war that have been witnessed or occurred in the country, Nigeria.

At the various FGDs conducted, respondents gave various opinions on the influence or impact of language on harmonizing different ethnic groups for peace and stability.

A respondent stated that:

Language variations due to ethnic composition and linguistic diversity are not the main challenge to peace and stability in the country; rather, in my opinion, people's attitudes towards the unity and development of the nation.

(FGSD) – A male respondent at Sabo community in Ondo town

Another respondent maintains that:

There is violence, wars and conflicts among members of the same language in Nigeria. What this means is that language complexity or difference has no significant negative influence on crises and violence that are occurring on a daily basis in the country. I think the problem is people's socio-economic

challenges, which need to be urgently addressed in the country.

The results of the research question two revealed a positive relationship between language and peaceful co-existence among people from different ethnicities in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria. The result agrees with the submission of Emanajo (2002) that if people of diverse ethnic backgrounds could interact, communicate and exchange views through a language they all understand, there would be no suspicion, misunderstanding and ethnic sensitivity in governance, business and personal dealings with one another.

During the FGDs, respondents or interviewees gave various responses. A respondent says that:

Once I can understand the language of people around me, I think I will not have a problem relating to them and seeing them as my brothers and sisters

FGD – A female interviewee at Odosida, Ondo town

In the same vein, another respondent submitted that:

Most of the major causes of ethnic conflicts and misunderstanding in the community here are that people are from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, if we all understand ourselves, i.e Igbo man understands Yoruba man, Hausa man understands Igbo person, there will be a peaceful co-existence, and clashes and conflicts will be minimal.

FGD – A male respondent at Oka Community, Ondo.

9. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, conclusions were made that language is not a major factor in bringing people of diverse cultural or ethnic backgrounds together in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria. However, that ability to understand a common language by people of different ethnic could promote peaceful co-existence in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria.

10. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the researcher made the following recommendations;

1. People should be made to respect the language spoken by members of other tribes or ethnic groups.
2. People should develop passion and interests to learn how to speak other languages spoken around them.
3. Nigerians should be educated that there is no language that is superior to another language in the nation.
4. Tolerance should be exhibited in a situation when one finds it difficult to understand other people's language around him or her
5. The government should organize language summits at the national level in the country on language issues vis-à-vis national development in Nigeria

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