

Improving on Second Language Use in Nigeria Languages as A Veritable Tool for Ensuring National Security

Zebulon C. Iwuala

(National institute of Nigerian Languages, Nigeria)

Abstract: This study examined improving on second language use among Nigeria Language as a variable tool for ensuring National Security. Two research questions guided the study. The sample of the study was 80 Igbo lecturers in Federal Universities in Nigeria. A-21 item questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was validated by two experts in language education and one from Measurement and Evaluation from University of Nigeria Nsukka. The instrument yielded 0.83 using Cronbach Alpha method. The result was analyzed using mean scores. The result showed that the lectures view the use of Nigerian languages (Igbo) as a weapon for national security as defective. This was attributed to poor awareness on the actual security problems in Nigeria, inability to teach issues related to security problems, non-integration of Nigerian languages (Igbo) and security education in the curriculum, and the inability of lectures to teach the three major languages (Igbo) in Universities effectively. This lack of awareness of the main security problems and its poor integration into the Nigeria languages (Igbo) curriculum was a defect, thus, a lot of challenges were identified by the study. The results show that the challenges to the use of Nigerian languages (Igbo) as a weapon for National security are varied and mainly in form of illiteracy among the people, which includes inadequate information on security issues by the populace, poor integration of language and security matters in the nations education, ethnic and political consideration in the recruitment of lecturers and students in public secondary schools in Nigeria also make cross fertilization of languages impossible. Also, poor integration of the three major Nigerian Languages in University curriculum makes it difficult for free flow of information among the different people in Nigeria especially in security issues. It was recommended among others, the integration of the nations indigenous languages into the curriculum and the use of the dominant ethnic languages as a medium of instruction in schools among others.

Key words: second language, Nigeria, national security

1. Introduction

Language has been defined in several ways by scholars and researchers in different perspectives. Language refers to the specifically human capacity of acquiring and using of complex systems of communication to share ideas in a given society. Wernieks (2010) observed that language originated when early *Hominids* first started cooperating, adapting earlier systems of communication based on expressive signs which helped them to express

Zebulon C. Iwuala, Associate Professor, National institute of Nigerian Languages; research area/interest: language education. E-mail: zebiwuala@yahoo.com.

their thoughts or feelings. Werniels further asserted that humans acquire language through social interaction in early childhood and children generally speak fluently when they are around three years of age. 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 culture uses, such 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 make combination possible, or set of utterances that can use practical from those rule. Agbedo (2010) observed that language can also be defined in social perspectives. Here, language is seen as a system of communication that enables human to cooperate in different fields of human endeavour. Agbedo further stated that in human communication, (Language), the ties between meaningful element and their meanings are arbitrary and a matter of convention. This definition stresses the social function of language and the fact that humans use it to express themselves and to manipulate objects and their various environments.

The communication function of language is stressed by Austin (2011), a functionalist theorist in language, who observed that grammatical structures are the result of adaptive process by which grammar is *tailored* to serve communicative needs of its users. This view of language is associated with the study of language in pragmatic, cognitive and interactional framework, as well as in socio-linguistic and linguistic anthropology (Bren, 2012). Language is the foundation of literacy (Tompkins, 2004). Acquiring language is one of the most complex tasks human which ever accomplished, as indicated by Ruddell (2008). According to Lawhon and Cobb (2007), language and literacy are rooted in social interactions. Similarly, Ruddell (2008) suggests that language acquisition is influenced by the language used at home. According to Anyanwu (2002), language refers to as system of symbols, signs and local acts arbitrarily created and conventionally used in communication. Viewed in this perspective, language is not the exclusive property of humans. Animals also use language. Hopkans (2010) define language as the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a place or race. Hopkans further observed that languages that are spoken in a given society are uncertain. Language play a crucial role in the exchange of ideas, attitudes and culture and behavioural patterns as a result of contact made based on varying purpose. Language plays multidimensional functions which range from social, economic and cultural, to communicative purposes. The above functions which language plays are articulated in Nigeria Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) is to;

- Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice and
- Promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding (p.7).

For the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria's national goals in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), education has to be geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. In order to achieve the above, there must be an effective means of communication of which language is indispensable. The researchers and erudite scholars observed that the above crucial roles of language came into reality due to the interaction or content effect of language which is attributed to social, communicative, economic, political, religious and cultural interaction or relationship that exist among different people in the society. It is through these interactions or contact patterns that lay the foundation and literacy level that exist in a given society. The sole aim of language is to communicate so as to attain a specific objective. Language is therefore fundamental to the existence of any society be it developed or not,

especially as it is either acquired as first language or taught as second language in school.

The Federal Government in the appreciation of the role of language affirms that it is a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion or integration as well as the preservation of the people's culture. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2008) explained that as an "organization appreciates what the expressive culture of any community means to its people, an embodiment of everything that matters to self-definition and group identity should be expressed in term of language of the people. Language, as the most dynamic component of that culture, is the repository of the worldview, values and mores as well as chief instrument for mass mobilization in a community. This role could be well-appreciated as every Nigeria child is expected to learn one of the three major Nigerian Languages. (FRN, 2014) Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba. The effectiveness of any educational system relies upon the attainment of her educational objectives. This implies that the system of education operational in a given society aims at making her entire citizens to be functional and responsible. According to Harris (2014), the primary medium of any educational programme is language. In contribution on the essential role of language Peters (2014), observed that language is the vehicle for the implementation of the curriculum of a given society in the class room situation. It is when the language used is known and understood by the teachers and the learners that all the educative processes can be made more meaningful, practicable and relevant. One of the basic or brain behind the National Policy on Education is to expose the learners to different area of studies, including the development of Nigeria languages and culture.

The Igbo language is a veritable tool to ensure the overall development of the Igbo child especially their intellectual skills (Okeke, 2012). It helps the pupils to be fluent in speaking as well as medium of instruction in school. Igbo as a second language in Nigeria plays no small role in the unification of Nigeria in area like the Judiciary, Media, and Commerce, Education as well as the language for integration with the outside world. It is against this enviable role which Igbo language plays in Nigeria that the Federal Republic of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education (2004, p. 16) asserts that;

The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the Language of the immediate environment for the first three years. During this period, Igbo language shall be taught as a Subject. From the fourth year, Igbo language shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction.

The above assertion made by the Federal Government was to enable the students to be proficient in speaking and writing of Igbo as a second language in schools. It makes for the ability to criticize oneself and also to look at things critically. It is important to note that pupils who read more, think better and argue more in their mother tongue (language) thus, will be more intelligent and achieved better in academic pursuits in school. Peters (2012), indicates that one of the functions of languages is to ensure proper interaction. It is language that enhances interactions in area of social, political, economic and cultural aspects of life with each other. Language also helps to express or indicates friendliness, cooperation, emotional instability, hostility, annoyance, pain or pressure that exist among people or nation as they interact with each other (Obi, 2013).

By implication, it helps to express or show the state of an individual or groups in a given society. Similarly, Okoro (2014) emphasized that "a society without language is like that without culture". It should be noted that the extension of the link between Igbo language and Igbo culture is rooted on the fact that language is the handmaid of culture, the two are inseparable and to separate a child from his language at the early stage of the school education makes the child not to have no regard for the language, hence, the child will find it difficult to cope with the societal demands.

From the above perspective, it can be inferred that the study of Igbo language in Nigeria as a second language comprise the basic knowledge, skill, right values and attitude which the student or learners of language receive from the school to ensure permanent change in their behavior and equally serve as a tool for ensuring national security. It is imperative that the Nigerian indigenous languages be used as a veritable tool for National security and development Idris (2013) observed that the Nigerian is made up different ethnic group with different languages. He further noted that the Nigeria language- Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba languages should be used as a medium of instruction in school to enhance the achievement level of the government as well as attainment of the educational objective in Nigeria. The interest of the present researchers is in the use of Igbo as a second language as a veritable tool for ensuring National Security. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic state. Marvin (2011) asserts that a multinational state is a sovereign state which is viewed as comprising two or more nations: These nations' perceptions of each other due to different political, economic, and social culture may endanger the National security or unity. Thus the language of the people may be used as a hub for the unity of the people which cuts across her economical, political, economic and socio-culture lives. A distortion of these webs of unity may entrench insecurity in the nation.

Beyond the foregoing however, the role of language as articulated in the Nation Policy on Education has been identified and discuss. Having said this, what then is National security? What relationship has it with the language of a Nation? To be secured is to be protected from certain possible risks (Hanson, 2012). A hungry man may view security in terms of the ability to provide food just as a blind person could view the ability to see security; a rich man might view a high fence as well as armed body guards as his security. A very religious person could simply consider closeness to God as the source of security just as other people could consider local deities or graven image as the source of their own security and protection from harm. Morris (2012) asserts that the different perceptions given to security amplify the importance attached to it.

The term, national security does not appear to lend itself to any precise definition. This is partly because; the nature and concept, the term contains and ideological element which render empirical evidence, irrelevant as a means of resolving the debate. Kerlinger (2013) identifies two main tendencies in defining national security. The first is the state-centered concept which views national security in terms of defense and survival of the state. This conception equates defense with security and bestows its protection to the military as the custodians of national security and (2) equate national security with the security of the state. The second tendency into the definition of national security involves the factoring of the state and the individual into the constituents of the definition. Accordingly, security involves freedom from danger or threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and well-being of the people. This takes into account the significance of human well-being in the security consideration of a country especially in a developing country like others. Jones (2013) observed that National security must include the capacity to provide the citizens with social, economic and political conditions conducive to happiness and relative prosperity. According to Al-Mashal (2012), national security should address the physical, social and psychological quality of life of a society and its members both in domestic setting and within the larger regional and global system.

Failure of the Nigeria State, despite availability of resources (human, financial and material) to take necessary steps to give effect to these rights account in part, for the intractable conflict or security problem in the country like the Boko Haram and Niger Delta crises. The maintenance of the law and order in Nigeria in recent times has been very challenging such that the ability and capacity to manage national security by the security agents/agencies being doubted by the citizenry. Primarily, the Federal Government of Nigeria is charged with the

responsibility of using military, police and other security agencies to protect every citizen from all forms of security threats and incidents like armed robbery, kidnapping, civil disorder, large scale violence, insurgency, killings, bombing and other forms of security breaches (Babatunde, 2013).

However, the opposite appears to be the case, judging from the spate of unfortunate series of violent attacks, killings and bombings being carried out by the so-called Boko Haram since 2009 till date. This situation was x-rayed by Johnson (2013) when he stated that the negative impact of this ugly situation (Boko Haram) on the country generally cannot be estimated on the economy as well as human lives and property. Infact, the state of affairs of the country over the activities of the dreaded Islamic sect is now a big sources of worry to all lovers of the country especially the security agents who are receiving all sorts of Odium from the top government brass and the citizens. In addition, those who have taken to domestic terrorism and the Niger Delta region through the formation of various youth militias and that of Boko Haram in the Northern part of the Country are saying that since nobody wants to listen and engage them, perhaps, violent as a means of expressing their grievances may be the best option. Of course, this has proved to be a truism because once these groups carried out their attacks, the government will be calling for dialogue (Eric, 2013). This spate of violence has also permeated the South East where the Igbos are fighting for their own severity under the umbrella of MASSOB (Idris, 2013).

Language has a lot of roles to play in this direction in stemming the tide of National insecurity in Nigeria. Bivona (2013) asserts that education has a link with national security as public and private schools educates their learners on what constitutes security threats and ways to avoid them. Bivona further asserted that recruitment into American military school is not based on physical strength of the person concerned but base on the educational attainment of the person concerned. But the use of language as a tool for weapon to ensure national security is fraught with many problems which borders on lack of language instruction related to national security, inadequate instructors and poor instructional resources on language and security matters.

Education has been seen as an instrument of par excellence for national development. Studies by Peters (2011) observed most security agents are without qualified education certificate. This according to him account for poor quality of education across-cultural linguistic integration by some security agents. To lend credence to this, Abubakar (2012) asserts that language education plays a crucial role in National security endeavors but unfortunately, most security agents in Nigeria find it difficult to learn other languages (dialects) of different communities that make up of Nigeria! Thus, the lack of language skills, national and global awareness among Nigerians and the security agents increasingly jeopardizes their ability to interact with local and global peers or participate meaningfully in business, diplomatic and military situations (Klein, 2013).

Along with a lack of language of instruction, what follows is insufficient knowledge about cultures in Nigeria. Klein further opined that too many Nigerians are deficient in global knowledge and awareness of their country's history and values. An understanding of history, politics, culture and traditions is important to citizenship and is essential for understanding Nigeria's allies and its adversaries. Ekeson (2012) explained that the shortage of language speakers leaves Nigeria State crippled in the ability to communicate effectively with others in diplomatic, military, intelligence and business contexts. In the face of the current security problems in Nigeria like Boko Haram, MASSOB uprising, Niger Delta crises, health and environmental problems, the significance of language as a tool to quell these problems or threats comes to question. Language is expected therefore to be the bedrock of human activities as through it people are able to express their feeling, emotions, ideas, opinions, perceptions as well as judgment about people, places, things, information and situations. Therefore, information about National Security and the threats to it can be expressed inform of languages.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to improve on second language use among Nigerian languages as a veritable tool for ensuring national security. Specifically, the study sought to:

- 1) Identify the perception of lecturers in the use of Nigeria languages as weapon for National Security.
- 2) Determine the challenges to effectiveness of Nigerian languages as a weapon for National Security.

3. Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

- 1) What are the perceptions of lecturers in the use of Nigerian languages as weapon for National Security?
- 2) What are challenges to the use of Nigerian languages as a weapon for National Security?

4. Method

This design adopted for this study was descriptive survey, which was used to obtain information from the respondents. The design was chosen because the study seeks to collect data on the particular features of a given population in a systematic manner such that the findings are expected to be generalized to the entire population (Nworgu, 2006). The area of the study was all the Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria. The population of the study was all the Igbo language lecturers in the Federal University in South-East Nigeria. The sample of the study constituted 80 Igbo language lectures drawn through stratified simple random sampling technique. A-21 item questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Items 1-6 were based on lecturers perception on the use of Nigerian languages (Igbo) as a weapon for National Security. Items 7-21 were based on the challenges in the use of Nigeria languages (Igbo) as a weapon for National Security. The instrument was structured on a 4-point likert scale on which the respondents acted on. The items in the questionnaire were weighted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) – 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Disagree (D) – 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1 point. The criteria mean was 2.50. The instrument was face validated by two senior lecturers in Language Education and one in measurement and evaluation all from University of Nigeria Nsukka. The Cronback Alpha co-efficient method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. It yielded a co-efficient of 0.83. A total of 80 copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved. The data was analyzed using mean scores. Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 and above was accepted value while item with a rating below 2.50 was rejected.

5. Results

The result of the data collected from the study is presented in Tables 1 and 2 according to the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of lecturers to the use of Nigeria languages (Igbo) as weapon for national security?

Table 1 MeanResponse of Lectures on the Perception to The Use of Nigeria Languages (Igbo) as a Weapon for National Security

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	MEAN	DECISION
1	Lecturers are aware of the main security problems in Nigeria.	2.00	Disagreed
2	Lecturers like to teach issue related to security problems in Nigeria Universities.	1.00	Disagreed
3	Lecturers believe that Nigeria languages (Igbo) curriculum should be integrated with security education in Nigeria secondary schools.	2.10	Disagreed
4	I encourage debates on security issues in Igbo language class in Nigeria Universities	2.20	Disagreed
5	I encourage the teaching of the three major languages In Nigerian schools.	1.80	Disagreed
6	I like to conduct debates on student's behavior in Nigeria Universities	1.75	Disagreed

Grand Mean = 1.85

Table 1 above show that the lecturers have negative perception in the use of Nigerian languages (Igbo) as the weapon for national security; hence, the mean (1.85) is less than the criterion means of 2.50.

Research Questions 2: What are the challenges to the use of Nigerian languages (Igbo) as a weapon for national security?

Table 2 Mean Response on the Challenges to the Use of Nigerian Languages (Igbo) as a Weapon for National Security

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	MEAN	DECISION
7	Illiteracy of the people on security problem in Nigeria	3.00	Agreed
8	Poor enlightenment on the people by the government on security issues	2.85	Agreed
9	Poor integration of languages and security matters in Nigeria educational curriculum.	3.20	Agreed
10	Poor equipped language laboratory.	3.50	Agreed
11	Inadequate lecturers in social linguistic.	2.50	Agreed
12	Inability of the security agents to speak different dialects in Nigeria.	3.00	Agreed
13	Poor communication skills among the security agents	2.75	Agreed
14	Low level of entry in terms of qualification by language of those enlisted into the armed forces.	2.75	Agreed
15	Multi-culture nature of Niger society	3.00	Agreed
16	Inadequate harnessing of NYSC programme in Nigeria	2.65	Agreed
17	Poor integration of the Nigerian languages in Nigerian university education system.	2.56	Agreed
18	Ethnic-political consideration in the recruitment and admission policy in Nigeria universities	3.00	Agreed
19	Non-inclusion of security education in University school curriculum	3.00	Agreed
20	Growing societal decay	2.75	Agreed
21	Poor family upbringing in Nigeria languages (Igbo)	2.50	

Grand mean = 2.80

Data presented in table two shows that the challenges to the use of Nigeria languages (Igbo) as a weapon for National Security vary from one level to the other.

5.1 The Findings of the Study

The result from table one above showed that the lecturers view the use of Nigerian languages (Igbo) as a weapon for national security as defective. This was attributed to poor awareness on the actual security problems in Nigeria, inability to teach issues related to security problems, non-integration of Nigerian languages (Igbo) and security education into the curriculum, and the inability of lecturers to teach the three major languages (Igbo) in

Universities effectively. This lack of awareness of the main security problem and its poor integration in the Nigerian language (Igbo) curriculum was a defect, thus a lot of challenges were identified by the study.

Table two shows the challenges to the use of Nigerian languages (Igbo) as a weapon for National Security which are varied and mainly in form of illiteracy among the people, inadequate information on security issue by the populace, poor integration of languages and security matters in the nation's education system and poorly equipped languages laboratory used in Federal University in South-East Nigeria. Other challenges are poor languages and communications skills on the security agents in the Nation, multi-cultural nature of Nigeria and poor harnessing of the language implications of National Youths Services Corps programme in Nigeria among others. Furthermore, ethnic and political consideration in the recruitment of lecturers and students in public secondary schools in Nigeria make cross fertilization of languages impossible. Also, poor integration of the three languages into University Curriculum makes it difficult for free flow of information among the different people in Nigeria possible especially on security issue. The above findings are in line with Babatunde (2013) who asserted that the distortion of information occasioned by improper communication results in inability to arrest problems like armed robbery, kidnapping, and the recent cases of Boko Haram in Northern- East Nigeria. Babatunde further observed that the insurgency in the North-East can be controlled with full scale information dissemination through language of the people on the evil effect of such a situation in civil society. Also Bivona (2013) in line with the above explained that education, language and national security are interwoven as through it the people will be informed on security problem or what constitutes security threat in every society. Education through language should be used to inform the people on the need for peaceful atmosphere in a given society, hence, education stakeholders should encourage the lecturers to be abreast of the diverse ethnic languages (dialects) that exist in Nigeria. Jones (2013) also observed that language has a social dimension as a result determine the perception of events that takes place in a given society. By so doing, when languages are perceived in varying levels, it leads to conflict and society threats. Language should therefore be used as unifying factors for human beings based on its transnational and interactional functions in homogeneity language structure. Brown (2012) asserts that with increasing ethnic language in Nigeria, the search for power, economic resource has taken linguistic dimension. It then becomes difficult to resolve security problem in Nigeria which is based on linguistic background just like the Boko Haram case in North East Nigeria.

It is therefore imperative for the gap in language and communication in diverse areas of Nigeria Society which encompasses political, economic, socio-cultural to be bridged by the full integration of the nation's languages and security education to be included in the nation's education system to stem down the tide of conflict in Nigeria. Furthermore, seminars, conferences and outdoor or open crusade should be carried from the grassroots level on the need for national language integration through intermarriage, local trade among Nigeria for peace to reign in the country. Language curriculum of schools should cut across ethno-linguistic background. Through this, language will be used as a weapon for ensuring national security in Nigeria.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Language is a veritable tool for all human beings. All her political, economic and social culture activities are achieved through language. The issue of National security can be addressed through language as free flow of information paves way for peaceful co-existence. A distortion of language may pose a security threat in a society like Nigeria and as such, the educational system will take serious, the integration of Nigeria languages and

security education into the nation policy on education.

Therefore, the use of language as a weapon for national security should take cognizance of:

- 1) Integration of the nations indigenous languages into the curriculum
- 2) Education of the people on what constitutes security threats
- 3) Provision of language laboratory for the teaching of the Nations indigenous language
- 4) Inclusion of security education as part of course of study in Federal University in South-East Nigeria.
- 5) Intensification of the NYSC programme in Nigeria
- 6) The use of the three dominant ethnic languages in Nigeria as a medium of instruction in schools.
- 7) Languages curricular should cut across ethno-religious boundaries.
- 8) The political class should ensure equity, justice and fair play in their dealing with the people.

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