NATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF LINGUISTIC TRANSLATION

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Abstract

Language is the most important and unique property of man because it enhances communication which is a basic requirement in the life of any group of people. Humans use language as a powerful tool to ensure peace and security. Peace and security consolidate a new way of seeing, understanding and living in a nation or society which helps in promoting mutual exchanges, overcoming distrust and differences. Despite the relevance of language to humans, multilingualism can create problems or challenges to national peace and security. Nigeria is a multilingual country in which the exact number of languages has not been determined. This has made cross-ethnic communication difficult. It is also the major cause of bitterness including suspicion among the different linguistic groups in the country. This paper stresses that a diversified country like Nigeria with many languages and dialects which are gradually becoming mutually unintelligible can be linked together through linguistic translation. The gap created by the multiplicity of languages in Nigeria thereby hindering national peace and security can be bridged to a barest minimum through linguistic translation because most Nigerians are literate to some extent in their native languages.

Keywords: *Language, Multilingualism, Linguistic Translation, National Peace and National Security.*

Background to the Study

Language is a phenomenon that is synonymous to the human nature because it defines our humanity. It is the most important and unique property of man that enhances communication which maintains and animates human life. Crystal (1985) defines language "the most frequently used and most highly developed form of human communication we possess" (p.247). Ayannini (1990) in a similar view sees language "one thing that sets the human being apart by a wide margin from any other creature on earth" (p.29). Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2007) in agreement also states that "the possession of language, more than any other attribute, distinguish humans from other animals" (p.1). Babatunde sums it up. Language, the divine benevolence to man is so inexorably tied to the effective existence of man in the society that any meaningful discussion of man must begin with it, it steers the course and ends the discussion (p.1).

Language is further seen as man's principal weapon for growth and development through the expansion of thought. With language, man appropriates all that others before him have acquired, controls his environment and exploits whatever that is there, maximizes and expands

his capacity and power (Adekunle 1990). In short, language has a key role to play in all human activities. It goes beyond the simple act of communicating information. It is an index of man's humanity, instrument of his growth and development as well as a means of establishing and maintaining relationship with others. Despite the relevance of language to humans, multilingualism (the multiplicity of languages co-existing in a given area) can create problems or challenges. Adekunle (1990) opines: The problems of man's development and growth become increasingly complex and intricate when the individual is   n o t   m o n o l i n g u a l   o r monocultural. The failure of any development programme becomes greater and more dismal when the individual has got to operate within a multilingual speech community (p.158).

This paper stresses that a diversified country like Nigeria with many languages and dialects which are gradually becoming mutually unintelligible can be linked together through linguistic translation. Linguistic translation renders works (literally, scientific and technical) of one language to another. The gap created by the multiplicity of languages in Nigeria thereby hindering national peace and security can therefore be bridged to a barest minimum through linguistic translation.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this paper is to stress that a diversified country like Nigeria with many languages and dialects which are gradually becoming mutually unintelligible can be linked together through linguistic translation.

Literature Review
Multilingualism and the Nigerian Situation

All the definitions of multilingualism are put together conveying the fact that it is a situation where more than two languages are used in a speech community. "Multi" means many or several while "lingual" has to do with the linguistic situation or language. The combination of the two makes it a situation of many or several languages. It is a complex linguistics situation. Yusuf (2012) defines it as "a situation in which two or more languages operate within the same context" (p.903).

The origin of language itself is difficult to phantom let alone the origin of multilingualism. One thing we know is that, multilingualism has become widespread such that it could be termed a societal phenomenon. Multilingualism is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that arises as a result of language contact. Factors such as political annexation, marital relation, economic transaction, migration, cultural association, educational acquisition and border among others bring about multilingualism. (903). One of the setbacks of multilingualism is that it impedes cross-ethnic communication. Rufai (2000) points out: Impediment in communication impedes understanding and harmony. It encourages distinctiveness and the same time discourages sense of belonging. Communication between government and the governed is impeded and the propagation of ideas for national interest is made difficult" (p.59). This can invariably hamper national peace and development. Another shortcoming of multilingualism is the difficulty of choosing a national language. In most cases, languages compete among themselves and scramble for national recognition or official status (Yusuf 2012). Nigeria is one

of the countries with many languages co-existing. Mbisike (2005) state that "Nigeria is a good example of a multilingual society" (p.189).

The resultant effect of multilingualism in Nigeria is that communication is not easy. And Olajide and Yinka (1999) point out that "communication is central to human existence… being the most important factor in attaining social harmony"(p.37). Multilingualism in Nigeria is one of the major causes of crisis that hamper national peace and security. Olugbodi (1990) in agreement with this states; One of the major problems of multiplicity of languages in Nigeria is lack of unity because the great number of mutually unintelligible languages makes understanding extremely difficult. This is the major cause of bitterness and suspicion among the different linguistic groups in the country. it has also encouraged favouritism, nepotism and other social ills because many Nigerians in positions of influence in the country naturally tend to favour, at the expense, and to the annoyance of other linguistic groups, those who can speak their languages…"(p.36).

The concepts of National Peace and Security
The early approaches to the concept of peace often sees it as absence of war, and by logical extension as stated by George-Genyi (2013), "war is the absence of peace"(p.58). The early peace studies was strongly motivated by the reflection on the tragedies of the Second World War and by a sense of crisis of human survival caused by the danger of a total nuclear war between the two superpowers (Matsuo19). This perspective of peace as stated by George-Genyi (2013) "is faulty because it really does not tell us the meaning of peace"(p.58). This is true because at most times there is no war and at the same times no peace! Peace is therefore believed to be much more than absence of war. Galtung defines peace "as the absence of violence and not as the absence of war" (p.167). However, the usefulness and validity of his definition of peace depends solely upon the definition of violence. He therefore defines violence as "everything which prevents the full realization of innate somatic and mental human potentials"(p.168). He further puts it in a little different way that "violence is anything which produces a gap between the physical and mental potentials of human beings and their actual conditions" (p.168). From this perspective of poverty, underdevelopment, oppression and other social ills afflicting billions of people largely in developing countries like Nigeria can be seen as manifestations of violence, and, from this perspective again, their elimination should be viewed as necessary conditions of peace.

However, Ibeanu cited in George-Genyi (2013) attempted to explain peace in sociological terms as "a conditions of social harmony in which there are no social antagonisms" (p.58). She stresses this further by defining peace as "a condition in which there is no social conflict and individuals and groups are able to meet their needs, aspirations and expectations" (p.58). All these can be achieved through addressing issues of poverty, underdevelopment, oppression and other social ills afflicting the masses, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. There is a nexus between peace and security of a nation. The two concepts are intrinsically linked to consolidate a new way of seeing, understanding and living in a nation or society. This helps promoting mutual exchanges, overcoming distrust and differences.

Mesjasz (2004:5) defines security as "public good which provides benefits to all members of a community as it are made available to any one person". David cited in Nwanegbo 2013) see security as the condition of feeling of safety from harm danger and absence of threats to acquire values. This is why the feeling of insecurity arises more from the worries about daily life. Security is the pillar upon which peace could be achieved and sustained; and peace is equally the pillar upon which security could be achieved and sustained. Most of the threats to peace and security in Nigeria are a direct result of the problems of multilingualism of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear.

Linguistic Translation as an Antidote for National Peace and Security
From the discussions of multilingualism and the Nigerian situation in particular, it may be obvious to state here that it is the cause of many crisis, violence and conflicts that are threatening the peace and security of Nigeria as a nation. Some of the problems of multilingualism identified earlier in this paper (with particular reference to Nigeria) ranges from impediment in communication, inability to choose a national language to lack of unity among the different linguistic groups. The problems highlighted here can all have a serious effect on the peace and security of Nigeria as a nation.

This paper is rooted on the fact that linguistic translation can help to manage these problems to a barest minimum. Linguistic translation can be seen as a multi-dimensional link to achieve national peace and security. This is in line with what Allwood (1985) states that "intercultural communication or communication between people of different cultural backgrounds will probably remain an important precondition of human co-existence"(par.1.1). Linguistic translation can be the best option towards achieving this. Cardford (1965) defines linguistic translation as "the communication of the meaning of a source languages text by means of an equivalent target languages"(5). Mheta (2006) sees translation as "the process by which the chain of signifiers that constitute the source language(SL) text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language(TL)" (Par.1.5). Linguistic translation bridges the gap between people of different culture. It carries values of the culture of the source and target language (Carmen 2005).

Linguistic translation can help in the midst of the multilingual situation in Nigeria because most Nigerians who are proficient or not in English are proficient, at least, in their mother tongues. And since language is a powerful tool that humans use to exist and manipulate to develop themselves and their society, there is need to carry everybody along not minding their linguistic group. There is agreement among linguistic scholars that linguistic translation contributes to the maintenance and development of linguistic diversity. It therefore stands to reason that translation exist because of linguistic diversity (Grin 2009 and Zafra 2004). In Nigeria, many languages are used, and that total communication is more diverse; and as a consequence of higher diversity, the demand for translation services is obviously higher, all other things being equal. This can help educate people on peace and security initiatives and other government activities as well.

In the midst of tension resulting from suspicion from different ethnic groups, the attempts by our nation to replace English with any of the indigenous languages to serve as official language proved abortive. It is the non-recognition of the indigenous languages rather than their recognition which sometimes leads to divisive movements. Linguistic translation can also help mitigate the trend of the indigenous languages from declining in the face of globalization.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Language provides humans with the possibility, like other animals to communicate their ideas, feelings, thoughts and aspirations. It also makes it possible for them to learn and adapt to changing situations and circumstances to avoid conflicts and violence which can hamper peace and security of their society. In Nigeria, the multilingual situation denotes the fact that aggregate communication rather than takes place through one language takes place through several languages because many Nigerians are not proficient in the official language English. This inhibits the communication of new ideas. It further breeds disunity among the different linguistic groups. All these pose a serious threat to national peace and development. These problems can be resolved or managed through a highly creative process of linguistic translation. Works (literary, scientific and technical) in particular languages be translated into indigenous languages to enhance harmony of ideas to facilitate national peace and development.

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