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Editorial

That performance in English Language in Nigeria has greatly dropped is no longer news. The fact is epitomized in the performance of students in public Examinations, especially the SSCE. This is also demonstrated in the alarming cases of the hydra-headed malpractice during public Examinations in the Country.

That the nation is seriously in a state of insecurity is no longer news. Then it was the militants in the Niger Delta, who are said to have surrendered their arms, even though in pretense and now the "Boko Haram" in the North under the guise of fighting against Western Education (Boko) which is not good (Haram). Nobody is sure of his or her security any more. The problem of insecurity has threatened the very unity of Nigeria. National Integration is now a mirage.

To foster unity and national integration, effective communication is a sine-qua-non. No effective communication can take place without a sound mastery of the language in use. The English Language is therefore, the focus since its laudable role as the official language of our dear nation is not in doubt. English is also the language of instruction, commerce, law, religion and instrument of literary writing in Nigeria.

Literature, generally regarded as the mirror of the society helps in national transformation and integration. Literature informs the people and conscientises them by appealing to their psyches. The beauty of any Literary work is encapsulated in the language. The author's mastery of the language as reflected in his text helps in winning souls (readers) for him. Therefore, literature cannot play a significant role in national integration without language.

This volume of NJECS centres on the role of Language and Literature in national transformation and integration. Papers published in this edition are well researched and ~~well~~ they examine the salient aspects of English, French and Literature in promoting performance in the subjects believing very strongly that their mastery will inevitably lead to better communication which will, in turn, engender the national integration needed to transform our beloved country and giant of Africa-Nigeria.

Baba, D. D. Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief.

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LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION AS INSTRUMENTS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA

OBUH, EMMANUEL IFEANYI and OMENOGOR, HAPPY DUMBI

Abstract

This paper identifies language and communication as significant means of resolving conflicts. People engage in communication for many reasons. This paper examines the roles and functions of communication as one of the means of non-violent methods of conflict resolution. Language is regarded by experts as the key to the heart of a people. Language and communication, therefore, are very crucial in the resolution of conflicts or disputes between the two parties in conflicts. Other non-violent methods of management and resolution of conflicts where the use of language and communication are inevitable include negotiation, dialogue, mediation, adjudication and arbitration. It is the opinion of this paper that the roles and functions of language and communication should be more focused, in order to find out the root causes, management, effects and resolutions of conflicts in the society.

Introduction

Peace is a desirable condition but conflicts are inevitable in any society. In view of this, language, information and communication are very essential in resolving conflict situations. Negotiation or dialogue can only take place where exchanging and sharing of information is possible. Communication, therefore, is the goal of language as mutual agreement is the goal of conflict resolution. In this paper, language, communication and conflict resolution are examined in a way to see their interconnectivity and productivity. Emphasis is placed on conflict management and resolution through language and effective communication in this paper. Peace, which is the main focus of this paper, is generally defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence. The main goal is about creating and maintaining a just order in the society and the use of non-violent methods in resolving conflicts. Among the non-violent methods of conflict management and resolution is the application of communication to resolve disputes. Language itself is nothing without the existence of communication.

Through language and communication we can see the heart of a people. This implies that language makes it possible to express feelings, emotions, views, ideas, opinions, perceptions as well as judgement about people, places, things, information and situations. Therefore, information about conflict and conflict resolution can be expressed in language.

Sapir (1963) says "Language is the key to the heart of a people" language is therefore conceived as a human and non-instinctive method of communication. Furthermore, Moulton (1974) defines language as a wonderful and rich vehicle of communication, that is, expression of ideas, wishes and commands, expression of truths and lies, etc. He opines that only human beings have the attribute of sending and receiving an unlimited number of messages. Language, therefore, is what defines human's humanity. This means that language is a feature peculiar to human being. Haugen (1974) describes language as man's most distinctive and significant type of social behaviour... learned anew by every child. Language and communication are inextricably linked in the heart of a people. Language as an instrument of communication is used to influence personality, to declare war, to oppose ideas, intentions and actions, to scatter, to generate violence. In another perspective, it could be used to entertain, inspire, educate, maintain relationship, settle disputes and make peace with people or communities.

Communication

Communication is the process of obtaining information or expressing thought and feelings. From this definition, it is obvious that human beings are naturally communicators.

Shannon and Weaver (1977) also define communication as "all the procedures by which one person may affect another". This implies that communication can take place not only in oral and written forms but also in music, pictorial arts and of course, all human behaviour. The definitions above clearly indicate that communication is a process that involves the transmission of message from a sender to a receiver with the intention to elicit feedback. Therefore, communication in this context refers to the process of sharing and exchanging information between personalities, groups and potential parties in a conflict situation. This implies that despite conflict situations, individuals or parties involved can still talk. Whenever it is possible to have a communication link between the two parties in conflict situations there is possibility of exchanging perceptions, assumptions and attitudes, which have been built up by conflict groups *visa-vis* each other. However, poor communication or absence of communication can easily escalate conflicts. The exchange and sharing of information can help in a great way to resolve crises and build confidence between the parties in conflicts and bring about peace.

Most of the non-violent methods of conflict management, according to Shadrack (2004), "such as collaboration, negotiation and dialogue as well as third party interventions like mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication, are largely dependent on effective communication? In a situation whereby the parties in conflict can talk together on issues tearing them apart with the genuine purpose of finding a solution to the conflicting situations. It is envisaged that the resolution of such conflicts is at sight Shadrack (2004) further states that:

Communication is a non-adversarial, cheap method of preventing and removing conflict situations, especially within the grip of the parties. Once communication is lost, parties risk getting into deeper crisis that cannot be easily resolved. Thus communication is invaluable for conflicts prevention in the first instance, and then for conflict resolution.

Some of the non-violent methods of conflict management connected with the use of language and communication such as negotiation and dialogue as well as third party interventions like arbitration and adjudication are briefly discussed as follows:

Negotiation

Negotiation has to do with an organization or form of carrying out a plan through some norms that are socially acceptable in achieving a predetermined goal or achieving significant steps through dialogue. Akinnawonu (2006) has argued that dialogue must be constructively employed in conflict situations in order to impact positively on the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Effective communication, therefore, is central to negotiation which is a direct process of dialogue and discussion taking place between at least two parties who are faced with a conflict situation.

It is realized that parties in conflict situations have to come together, talk together, agree together in order to find a solution to their problem. The end result of negotiation, according to Jeong (2000), is "to reach agreement through joint decision making between parties."

The principle of non-violent method, using dialogue is employed to talk and negotiate the interests of the two parties in conflict situations. Normally, there are no third parties involved in this process of "Open communication" or negotiation. Dialogue as a form of negotiation was judiciously used to resolve and minimize the violent activities of the militants of Niger Delta through the amnesty programme introduced by the federal government of Nigeria.

Arbitration

Arbitration is one of the methods of non-violent approaches to conflict resolution. This use of a third party

settling disputes through negotiating, communication, information flow and management is becoming more apparent in Nigeria. The arbiter hears the evidences from both parties involved in conflicts and may listen to witnesses, interview representatives of the parties, visit the areas in conflicts, assess claims, documents, lands and properties in dispute. After collecting vital information and facilitating discussion, negotiation, dialogue, listening and hearing meetings which are aimed at helping to make a critical decision about who is right or wrong, the arbiter then takes a bold step to ensure fair play and justice in order to restore peace. The achievement of arbitration as a means of resolving conflict depends on effective communication in the form of interaction, conversation, dialogue and negotiation. The efficacy of arbitration in resolving conflict is so potent that the writer is of the view that if federal government of Nigeria had been able to set up a high power-arbitration panel over Jos Perennial crisis, it would have become a history.

Adjudication

Sometimes, parties involved in conflicts may decide to resolve their differences in law courts and use litigation mechanisms. The aggrieved party who chooses this non-violent method is ready to take the verdict of the presiding judge either good or bad.

Counsel to the parties involved in conflicts will present their cases through addresses, giving information, arguments, claims, evidences, cross-examination, proofs, witnesses with the aim of winning after hearing and judgement delivered. Communication, information and logical presentation of facts and application of the legal procedures are some of the features of adjudication. A good example of adjudication is the conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon over the true ownership of Bakasi Peninsula. The Cameroonian Government claimed that Gowon, the Head of State of Nigeria in 1970s ceded the Peninsula to her under a legal agreement. When violent dispute engulfed the oil rich area, Cameroon headed for the world court in Hague to seek legal redress. The court adjudicated that Cameroon is the legal owner. The ruling became binding on both parties in the conflict. Adjudication is close to arbitration because they involve non-violent method of settling conflicts. As Shedrack (2004) noted;

There is no exclusivity in these methods of conflicts management. Most of them have properties that are common to other methods, for instance, negotiation, mediation and arbitration all depend on communication, dialogue, and negotiation".

The above quotation makes it clearly obvious that effective application of language and communication are very instrumental in resolving conflicts.

Language Strategies in Settling Disputes

Some language and communicative strategies are practiced during dialogue, negotiation, mediation, adjudication, etc. The mediator usually welcomes the two parties involved in disputes with warm greetings and introduces all the personalities on the mediation team. Shortly after the introduction, the business of the meeting is unfolded by addressing the problem and stating the mission of the gathering which is to resolve the conflict on ground and restore peace. The implications of the disputes on the socio-economic development are highlighted and discussed. The full cooperation of the two parties is therefore sought, stressing the need to promote peace and love.

The common language of the parties in conflict is automatically the language of conflict resolution but where necessary, interpreters are engaged to make everybody share and exchange information. Presentation of the grievances by each of the two parties will definitely enable the mediator to know the heart of the people concerned in the conflict at hand. Listening and speaking skills are very essential in order to follow and summarize the points made by individuals and the leaders of the two parties involved in the conflicts. The following language and communication strategies are employed to disseminate information during industrial conflicts: letters, press release, speeches, bulletins, press conference, communiqué, internet communication etc. Language and communication are the instruments that are actually used to dialogue, negotiate, mediate, arbitrate and settle disputes in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This paper is of the opinion that language and communication can be used to trace the cause resolution of the prevalent violent conflicts in Nigeria. Communication could be verbal or written. Therefore, this paper considers communication as one of the non adversarial methods of settling conflict. In view of this, it should be given attention in order to get to the root causes, information, understanding and resolution of the continued eruptions of conflicts in the 21st century. Although, some people may argue that it is neither the language nor communication forms that actually resolve disputes but the willingness of the parties involved in a dispute to restore peace and the level of agreement reached. Frankly speaking, the success and willingness to accept and allow peace to reign, firstly, lies in the mind (thought) and secondly, results in actions since there is a relationship between language and thought, therefore, communication is the vehicle of thought (Crystal, 1987).

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