

UTILISATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ADULT EDUCATION: IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The adoption of English language as official language by many countries provides English language the potency of being an inevitable tool essential for educational instruction, national security and development in Nigeria and beyond. Thus, this official language policy pronouncement has over the years influenced the social, religious, educational attainment and behavioural dispositions of Nigerians and others within their immediate locality and international arena. Besides, the use of English language as Nigeria's official Language has strengthened political and social instrument of change towards national unity, security and development in the sense that almost all contestants try to use English language to present their manifestoes to lure electorates. However, the sudden rise in number of ethnic conflicts and protests involving adults in recent times, clearly calls for review of existing national language policies in countries that strictly encourages utilization of English Language in adult education, so as to enhance maximum national security and development. Therefore, this paper strives to contribute to the national security and development of English speaking countries within Africa and beyond, through the utilisation of English Language in Adult Education.

Key words: Adult Education, Development, English Language, National security

Introduction

The power of British rule over Nigeria and other African colonised territories depended greatly on the ability of the colonised to comprehend what the coloniser is saying, hence, the need for English language became paramount (Adegbija, 2004). The conquest of indigeneous languages across various colonised territories, strengthened the dominion of the coloniser with respect to slavery and forceful migration (Babatunde, 2001). Also, Fanilola (2008) asserted that, British colonisers relegated and branded the language of the colonised in each territory as that of slaves, thus the adoption and utilisation of English language became a necessity.

According to Gawrycki and Szeptycki (2011), language is a vehicle of power and authority, and a sure means of political governance. They further posited that, the importance of language (e.g., English Language) cuts across socio-cultural interactions, government decisions, political debate, media output which supports overall national security and development. In essence, the utilisation of English language in Adult Education is to enable adults who missed the opportunity of formal education in English language to adapt to current societal demand, and to enable them positively live, interact and influence members of their immediate community, without negatively affecting their traditional or religious values (Lo Bianco, 2010).

The importance of utilising English Language in Adult Education cannot be ignored, as it helps to bring people of different origin and languages together under one platform, lends support to their crucial differences by suppressing disharmony, thereby creating room for adequate national security and development. This paper buttresses the importance of utilising English language in adult education for national security and development.

Potency of Utilising English Language in Adult Education

Amidst the various problems plaguing Nigeria and Africa at large, is that of multiple ethnic and indigenous languages (Kamwendo, 2010). English Language has the potency of transcending and transmitting cultures, values, norms and beliefs from generation to generation, and remains a central factor in determining the status or nature of any nation. According to Enahoro (2002), Nigeria has a disunited language, and a nation without a common linguistic norm, is bound to experience diverse ethnic conflicts. The conclusion from the aforementioned is that, the use of English language as an official language is capable of ensuring national integration, unity and meaningful development.

In Nigeria and other African countries, multilingualism seems more of an obstacle to major economic breakthrough and development, as competing languages scramble for national recognition, thereby instigating violent reaction. (Idoho & Olubodun, 2022). However, English Language has simple straight forward word formation that adult can learn, and can also utilise whenever it is demanded. To this end, the essence of Adult Education may never be accomplished without the utilisation of English language. This dominating impact of utilising English language for Adult Education is that it helps to eliminate the imposition and competition of mother tongue against a nation's official language and thereby supports collectivism (Simpson & Oyádé, 2008).

Possibilities Associated with Utilising English Language in Adult Education

English Language is majorly considered as a language of integration and adult education helps the language to perform this role effectively in the sense that politicians who are not vast in English tend to go through adult education programmes to gain more knowledge of the use of English for more effective communication. According to Idoho, J.A & Olubodun, O.A. (2022), the problem of poor and ineffective learning of the English language has been noticed among pupils across all levels of education in Nigeria. It is believed that this problem is not limited to the pupils, it is even more prominent among adult learners of English who go against all odds and learn the language. This enhances the spirit of togetherness and this explains why even the colonial era, when English had not attained its present level of ascendance in national and international affairs, existing political parties utilized English language as their major means of communication towards nation building. For instance, The Northern People Congress (NPC), The Action Group (AG), the NCNC (National Council of Nigerian Citizens after the excision of southern Cameroon), and National Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) were formed to integrate all Nigerians and give them a sense of belonging till date. Without any doubt, English language has been recognised as the most acceptable means of expression, even by individuals who protest against its global dominance, because it readily helps to convey an intended cravings in a way that can be understood by the responder (Kamwendo, 2010). Actually, English language has been found to be void of hidden agenda in inter-ethnic relationships or transactions, hence serves as the language of patriotism, political integration and productivity. Subsequently, all ethnic agenda that are capable of bringing about disunity is neutralised, while national unity is promoted through intelligible usage of English Language.

Irrespective of how noble and good an idea is, if it is not expressed in English Language, it is considered less significant, divisive, and an ethnic jingoist or a tribal apologist in a country where English language is officially recognised, the reason being that English Language is suitable for phatic communion, ceremonial purpose, keeping records, information dissemination, self-experiment and embodiment of thought among the various linguistic groups in Nigeria and beyond (Kolst, 2010). The most required linguistic basis that constitutes a requisite for the existence of any nation is provided by English Language, thus with English as the common tongue to all the ethnic groups, the collective sentiment of belonging together despite ethnic differences is forged.

English Language and National Security in Nigeria

Nigeria is currently experiencing a build up of a foreseeable crisis of a gigantic magnitude, as the nation has had several tales of insecurity over time, which depicts the present democratic experiment that has been characterised by several shades of crisis situations comprising genocide in the name of civil war to several ethno-religious riots, Boko Haram insurgency, Niger Delta resource control agitation, Biafra secession threats, cases of armed robbery, kidnapping etc (Ogundepo, Oladeji & Adebajo, 2017). The decaying level of national insecurity in Nigeria has been alarming, as it has been a sour tale of one security challenge over another, especially since the return to democratic rule in 1999.

Thus, Sobola and Sotoyinbo (2011) asserted that the present democratic privilege has been branded with diverse crisis situations which seem to have aggravated the existing unresolved insecurity challenge in Nigeria, beginning with the witnessed genocide in the name of civil war between 1967 and 1970, a war was caused by ethnic bigotry and tribal intolerance. Till date, oil pipe vandalization by Niger Delta militants in recent times, severe threat for secession by Biafra apologists, and unruly display of violence by Arewa Youths are borne out of the failing state of control, thereby signifying a deficit in communication and poor comprehension of the language with which security information is passed across to residents in Nigeria (and beyond).

Insecurity is a deterrence to sustainable unity and development of any society. According to Ogundepo, Oladeji and Adebajo (2017), the security challenges plaguing Nigeria are mainly emitted through ethno-religious crises, disputes over territories, environment agitations and resources controls, perceived political marginalization and social discrimination. The current economic recession which is claimed to be the worst for Nigeria in the last 29 years has also added to prevalence of criminal activities and security challenges. Hence, the utilisation of English Language in Adult Education is direct measure targeted at creating an egalitarian society where everyone understands each other, irrespective of the community he/she finds himself/herself, as well as a means of engendering national security which is a prerequisite for development.

According to Okeke (2012), the state of insecurity, especially in Nigeria, has been a challenging and disturbing issue in Nigeria, as several security experts and security agencies have provided topnotch, effective and endearing security mechanisms and suggestions which have been either ignored or defiled by the ugly situation till date. In like manner, the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria has been characterised by several sheds of crisis situation, most of which have been connected to ineffective, inappropriate language use by political players.

Similarly, Oguniola and Babatunde (2017) stated the utilisation of English Language aids the use of verbal symbols that speakers put in order according to a conventional code to communicate ideas and feelings to influence the behaviour of others. To this end, since English language is a compendium of words, phrases, clauses and sentences which a user chooses from and string together systematically, to express meanings that are appropriate in a particular contexts, such can be used adequately to propagate messages that are intended to bring a fortified secured environment. The utilisation of English Language strengthens and promotes a feeling of having affiliation to the immediate society among learners in Adult Education, as such security messages can also be sent across different ethnic communities to bring about social cooperation, peaceful co-existence and understanding between conflicting parties (Jegede, 2009; Okeke, 2012).

Sobola and Sotoyinbo (2011) construe security as a potential liberation and safety from physical, political, economic, or socio-economic attack. They opined further that security means a protection or safety of people against all kinds of molestation from external or military attack, economic war, poverty, illiteracy, diseased, ill health political humiliation, or suppression, social exploitation and criminal acts. A nation is secure when citizens are free from threats to life and property, enjoy socio-economic well-being and live in peace and tranquility. Actually, security is not traditional or military

activity, and it is not military hardware, though it may include all that. Security is development and without development, there can be no security.

Corroborating this view, Ogunsola and Babatunde (2017) asserted that security is more than inclination of state protection against any attack, especially external invasion. Therefore, Jega (2007), posited that security consists a situation in which citizens can be liberated, live in harmony and safety, participate fully in the process of governance, enjoy protection of fundamental human rights, have access to resources and necessities of life and inhabit in an environment that is conducive to their health and well-being.” If one agrees with the views expressed above about security, then it is convenient to assert that Nigeria is actually grappling with security challenges. This corroborated Meyer s (1999)’s ssertion that insecurity arises out of ineffective communication that breeds violent conflicting actions and reactions to a large extent in the society.

Njoku (2009), asserted that most perpetrators of crisis in Nigeria often hide under the cover of non-comprehension of security instruction, as such are not aware of security details on different posts and some have depicted their ignorance with the use of interpreters during communication, thus the utilisation of English language strengthens interpersonal relationship that are anti-conflict in nature. Furthermore Njoku (2009), posited that ethnic and religious conflict erupt in different shades; for instance, they can start with dispute over territories and manifest attitudinal antagonism (as Ife- Modakeke conflicts), from struggle about environment to resources control (Niger Delta), killing of the Igbos in the North whenever there is religious riot, etc. Generally Language in the education sector, enables that a peaceful society and coexistence is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed positively over several years and generation.

Fromkin (2003) posited that the utilization of English Language, just as other languages, distinguishes humans from other animals. In the words of Finegan (2012), the utilisation of English Language in education (Adult Education inclusive) makes it an essential tool for requesting a favour, making a promise, reporting a piece of news, giving directions, offering a greeting, seeking information, extending an invitation, requesting help and other necessities, which summarily culminates into security and development of any society, if well utilised.

English Language and National Development

English Language has been associated with human and societal development, as it has helped in facilitating social communication, as well as nurture mutual cooperation among different ethnic groups. Actually, development of any nation is strictly anchored on the intense social communication and cooperation of that nation with other nations, especially through its adult population that are able to communicate in English language. o this end, an Adult Education aimed at developing a nation must be implemented in English Language, using simple comprehensible methods of teaching. Globally speaking, the world is a linguistic unit, where each nation depends on linguistic intercourse with another.

English Language being a medium of communication in Adult Education helps to strengthen the rapid growth and economic divergence of a nation, as without a good grasp of English Language by adults in a community, the development of that nation is surely bound to be on a standstill (Spolsky, 2012). National development is imbedded in the interlocking nature of communication, which is made easy through the utilisation of English Language in Adult Education, and furthermore encouraged in international relationship ties that brings about economic advancement. The ability of a learner in Nigeria (adult inclusive) to communicate in English language is considered a valuable asset to national development, as with such communication advancement of citizens in English language, there is bound to be serene political and security interests, free from multi-lingual strife for dominance that brings about unresolved ethnic conflicts. Besides, the potency of utilising English Language in Adult Education is that it helps promote tolerance and intercultural awareness that begin from home, not minding the fear of homogenization concerning local cultures and customs. This does not negate that fact that utilising English Language in Adult Education helps to popularise foreign culture and products over one's indigenous ingenuity.

Considering global advancement, utilisation of English language for education purposes has become a threat to indigenous cultures, thereby reducing local linguistic value (Vu, 2018). However, Wright (2012) posited that a national development is inconceivable without a common language, because without communication social structuring amongst human beings would become impossible. Thus, the utilisation of English Language in Adult Education enhances positive collaboration in creating perceptible commerce that leads to the development of societies through the sharing of tangible information associated with knowledge, art, and values in comprehensible communication (Kamwendo, 2010). To make a nation globally competitive in this present dispensation, the use of English language is inevitable for development to take place.

Kamwendo (2010) advanced that the uninterrupted utilization of English as the nation's lingua franca is tantamount to perpetuating colonialism or imperialism, yet there is no alternative indigenous language that can assume the role of English, hence there is need to deliberately control the level of utilization, to save indigenous cultures. This implies that English Language is a nation's most obvious and most important attribute, as there is no such thing as a nation without a common linguistic basis (Vu, 2018). The overriding implication of utilizing English language in Adult Education is that it stirs up national unity, interconnection and sense of belonging that brings about meaningful development and peaceful coexistence.

The utilisation of English language for education and other purposes, makes it a better medium of expression towards creating better civilisations and control over indigenous ethnic conflicts resulting from diverse cultures. This exerts a cogent point that, were it not for the utilisation of English language, civilisation would not have been possible, and human interpersonal communication would be like that of animals, each man would live like animals, and as such scarcely able to afford for himself all the necessities required for survival. According to Wright and Wright (2016), teaching adults in English Language enable the coming together of large groups for dissemination of facts that help to maintain the well-being of the population.

Wright, (2016) further opined that the utilization of English language enable each citizen in the state upholds their obligation to contribute in a meaningful way, to the provision of the needs of the state as a fully integrated whole, as it becomes stress-free to channel energy towards a particular direction where everyone is trusting each other and trustworthy. However, where there is a major ethnic difference in the language spoken and/or understood by the majority, there is bound to be a disorganized society where each person is considered fraudulent, unreliable, hateful, less empathic and indeed violent. This being the case, the utilisation of English Language in the area of education has brought about an egalitarian society.

Likewise, a polyglot society like Nigeria, 'forging ahead' is of crucial importance, than the quest for superiority among the competing languages that scramble for official status, thus there has been several challenges associated with nation-building in the midst of ethnic diversities. Besides, the uniform development of the society often becomes very onerous, when some ethnic groups deliberately decide to retain their mother tongue, at the expense of any declared official language for official communication. Sad as it may appear, this is the exact picture of Nigeria, where more than 250 varieties of languages exist, and level of development is relatively odd across the country.

Simpson and Oy tádé (2008) asserted that the backward and uneven trend of development across Nigeria seem closely associated with crave for individual ethnic identity, and as a concern are considered as contemptuous, rather than unifying elements in the process of national development. Therefore, Nigeria relies to a significant notch on English language for administration, economic, social and educational purposes, because it abets nation-building and peaceful coexistence internally, as well as strengthen external relations. In addition, the utilization of English language in Adult Education has broken the barrier associated with different influences such as political invasion, marital relation, economic matter, cultural relationship, educational attainment, religious affiliation etc.

Conclusion

This paper provides an extant perspective on the impact of the use of English Language in adult education, in a bid to bring about improved national security and development that is void of ethnic marginalisation and political uprising in Nigeria. Although, it was posited that the use of English Language in adult education often seems difficult due to addition to cultural and traditional practices of adult learners, yet it is also possible that the utilisation of English Language will help to reduce widespread misconception that generates conflicts and political protests involving adults in Nigeria. The utilisation of English Language provides room for clearer, meaningful and comprehensible communication in social and educational interactions involving adults of different ethnicities, thereby leading to national unity, serene communal atmosphere, improvement in security and positive development, without any detrimental negative effects on the dignity and rights of the adult. The positive impacts associated with the utilisation of English language in Adult Education can be fully experienced through the supportive use of different educational media that depict national security and development, equity in politics, administration, business, sports, diplomacy, communication, media, education, creativity, literacy, constitution, law etc.

Recommendations

To ensure the utilisation of English Language in Adult Education, aimed at bringing about national security and development, the following are recommended:

1. There should be review of educational policies related to Adult Education, in the aspect of utilization of English language in both formal and informal learning settings in Nigeria and beyond.
2. Improvement on educational activities that enhance security consciousness and dispel misconceptions that promote disunity among adults in various communities in Nigeria should be encouraged, so as to strengthen national security and development.
3. Seasoned English language educators should be employed and integrated into various Adult Education Centres across Nigeria, to boost the interest of the adult learners in the use of English language for communication, education and social interaction purposes.
4. Free extra-mural centres should be equipped with adequate Basic English language teaching materials to bring about a rapid response to learning among adults in Nigeria.

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