IGBO DIALECTS AS A TOOL FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS OF INSECURITY PROBLEM IN SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

Eze, Cyprian Chidozie[1]

Abstract

The focus of this paper is on the use of language and not just language but appropriate language in coping with insecurity in Nigeria and South Eastern Nigeria in particular. The language of any society solves the communication needs of that society. At the same time, the dialect of any region or section of any linguistic community whether it has a written form or not solves the language communication need of that community. The Igbo language has many dialects. Although these dialects are intelligible to the speakers of the same language but the dialect community respect and honour the speakers of the same dialect. Igbo native speakers show more interest and preference for their dialects than any other. At the same time, they give more preference to their language than the English language which requires many years of formal education before one learns it. For this, the researcher calls for the use of appropriate dialect in addressing insecurity perpetrators.

Key Words: Insecurity, Language, Dialect, Security.

Introduction

Insecurity has become a serious threat to the life and property of the people living in the South Eastern part of Nigeria dominated by the Igbo speakers. We acknowledge the fact that the problem of insecurity is not only in the Eastern part of Nigeria but also all over Nigeria. There is no day in recent years that one would listen to the news, read the daily newspapers and not hear of robbery, kidnapping, killing, rape and all sorts of ear-destroying news in this country Nigeria. For almost a

[1] Eze, Cyprian Chidozie is with Lagos State University of Education Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos, Nigeria, cypeze62@yahoo.com

decade now the evil news of insecurity seemed to be more in the Northern part of Nigeria but in recent years the problem is seriously growing in the South Eastern part of the country, especially in Igbo states

As Okeke (2012:216) observed that National security has been a persistent problem that seemed to have defied solutions in Nigeria since 1999. If the above statement was made as far back as 2012, the insecurity is worse in this recent time. It has reached a time that people's heart fails them at the slightest sound. Many people live in fear, tears, worry, anxiety and hunger as a result of insecurity. In South Eastern Nigeria and other parts of the Nation measures have been applied to tackle the problem of insecurity but all to no avail. The government has applied force but the more they use force, the worse the insecurity grows.

According to Okeke (2012:217), National security is not only threatened by political exclusion, economic marginalization and social discrimination, etc as previous researchers have discovered but also by inappropriate use of language. He further stated that language to a great extent makes human existence worthwhile or chaotic. She considered language as a major factor in national security. As Okeke observed, language should be one of the major factors in national security. This paper also sees language and not just language but the right dialect as a major factor in national security.

Among the discoveries made by many researchers on the solutions to remedy insecurity, none has emphasised the importance of using appropriate dialect on solving the problem. Perpetrators of this problem use not just the language their agents understand but also the dialect they understand very well to convince them to carry out their evil actions.

Language and Security

Language is highly a pivotal tool to human society without which there is no assistance of any society. In other words, no language no society. As Ogunsiji (2013:128) stated, "The progress development and sustainability of a society are pivoted by the language of the society."

He further stated that a society that has a language that is lagging cannot develop since the anchor man is suspect. (Ogunsiji 2013:128)

Language is very important in human existence and one of the major characteristics of humans that differentiates them from other animals. Although, other animals communicate their communication system is not organized. It determines education. No language learning. It is common knowledge that most of the perpetrators are not well-educated in the English language. Some have received little or no formal education. Everyone acquires the mother tongue and understands better in the mother tongue, especially the dialect familiar to the person.

Akeem (2013:93) stated that the English language though regarded as an imperial language has come to stay to enrich the Nigerian language landscape and to slay all indigenous minority and majority languages Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba within a short period of concrete actions are not taken by individual families, linguistic communities and government at all levels. Presently, some English constructions have entered into Igbo communication and at the same time some Igbo constructions have penetrated our English construction or duplication is one of it which is the major theme of this paper. The present democratic government in Nigeria has witnessed an increase in insecurity more than ever before. Shedding of blood, kidnapping, rape and armed robbery are no longer news in Nigeria and Igbo land in particular where the attention of the paper is focused.

Njoku (2009:230) from the report made by the Institute for Peace and conflict resolution (IPCR) in October 2002, discovered as ethnic /religious conflict persists, they can acquire multiple faces: they can start with the dispute over territories and manifest attitudinal faces; 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. As Okeke (2009:217) states, 'The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) classified conflict under the following five headings to include; Economic manifestation of conflicts; social manifestation of conflict; political manifestation of conflict; security-related manifestation and psycho-cultural dispositions. Each ought to be carefully and rightly handled

through the appropriate use of the language and the variety that is understandable by the perpetrators of these conflicts whenever a sign of it is discovered. Despite the efforts of the (IPCR) in classifying conflicts based on the causes, an appropriate variety of language understood by the perpetrators needs to be used. Minor conflicts can escalate and become difficult to handle within a short period if the wrong language or variety of language is applied.

Language and Dialect

Language has been described as a means of communication while dialect is the variety of the language that is not the official variety. It may or may not have developed a written form. Every language spoken by a linguistic community has one or more varieties. Any other variety different from the standard variety is a dialect. Although many attempts have been made to define the language, All the definitions have ended up being characteristics of a language Syal and Jindal (2016:3) stated that everybody knows the answer to what is language but nobody has been able to come up with a standard definition that fully explains the term language.

(Okeke: 2006) Agbendo (2000:1) stated that the concepts of language, simply put are the system of rules and principles of human communication.

Language and culture go together; this is because language is used to interpret culture, Kuper and Kupper (1996:452) stated that:

> Language is there not only part of the culture but also a major and critical part. All those who seek to fully enter into and understand a given culture must accordingly master its language for only through that language can they possibly participate in and experience the culture.

As a critical part of culture, language cannot be separated from culture and every language provides an index of the culture with which it is most intimately associated. Bamidele (1999) as cited in Enete (2008:8) identified ten characteristics of language; creativity, arbitrary, duality, versatility, genetic transmission, pattern, congruity, and total feedback

displacement. These characteristics are specific to human beings and make human language superior to animals' language.

Language being part of culture has many functions in society that cannot be replaced by any other parts of culture. There is no human association and no society without language. The quality of language and the value placed on the language by the government and society determines the need it can serve in society. It could be for personal or interpersonal communication or for academic and specific purposes while and sometimes to showcase national or cultural heritage.

We should note that what a language is used for determines the assignment of roles to a language or dialect. In Nigeria, the role of education, administration, judiciary proceedings and media programs are done in the English language while everyday interaction is done in mother-tongue and Pidgin English. Considering the above, assigning a wrong role to a language or dialect in playing the role meant for another language or dialect will not get, the desired result.

Language according to Agbedo (2003:118), provides the unique medium through which the belief systems, world views, moral values and virtually all the basic ingredients of any given society are passed on from generation to generation. The language of any society solves the communication needs of that society. At the same time, the dialect of any region or section of any linguistic community whether it has a written form or not solves the language communication need of that community. Lyons 2009:27 says it is still fairly common to hear laymen talking about primitive language and even repeating the discredited myth that there are some people whose language consists of a couple of hundred words supplemented by gesture.

Lyon further explained that every language so far studied, no matter how primitive or uncivilized the society using it may appear, in other respects, has proved upon investigation to be a complex and highly developed system of communication.

The Problem of Dialect Variation among the Igbo Linguistic Community

Dialect is a variety of a language that is not the standard variety. It is the speech characterization of a region or a section of a linguistic community.

Oweleke (2007:80) defines dialect as the variation in the speech form of a people signalled by regional or social differences in phonological syntactic and lexical patterns.

The Igbo language is rich in dialects no one can say the exact number of dialects among the Igbo linguistic community. Oweleke (2007:81) attributes the existence of numerous and divergent dialects of Igbo as historical divergence, interference from other languages or geographical spread of the language over a very vast area spanning seven states of the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Manfredi (1989) as cited by Oweleke (2007:81) has identified seven major dialect zones in Igbo based on the lexical morphological and phonetic variations of the speech exhibited in these zones. The zones according to him include Delta, Enyom, Central, Plains, Oshimili, Omambara and the Savana. These dialects as observed by Oweleke despite exhibiting a great deal of lexical and phonological variations, they share a high degree of mutual intelligibility.

Nwaozuzu (2008:2) states:

> *Because of the complexities of topography, settlement, history, inter-regional communication and prestige of regional centres dialect boundaries are often vague, complex and difficult to delineate. Dialects are seldom subject to neat classification which we might want to have.*

He stated that are sometimes imposed on dialects. This is because no one point where a dialect gives way suddenly and another one begins. Nwozuzu (2008:10) goes further to classify Igbo dialects into eight groups which are:

1. West Niger Group of Dialect (WNGD)
2. East Niger Group of Dialects (ENGD)
3. East Central Group of Dialects (ECGO)

4. Cross River Group of Dialects (CRGD)
5. South Western Group of Dialects (SWGD)
6. North Eastern Group of Dialects (NEGD)
7. South Western Group of Dialects (SWGD)
8. Northern Group of Dialects (NGO)

However, despite the great efforts of Nwazuzu, he acknowledges that the classification does not claim to provide A final answer to Igbo dialect classification.

Accepted that despite the variations in the language the services of an interpreter are not needed hence there is intelligibility but everyone will understand better and appreciate being addressed in his or her dialect.

Dialects: A Tool to Solving Insecurity Problem in South Eastern Nigeria

We have been able to prove that Igbo has many dialects and although everybody may understand other dialects or the standard Igbo, they would prefer to be addressed their dialect. Take for instance, we know that in a city full of other dialects and other languages like Lagos an Igbo native speaker stops to look back on hearing people speak his dialect. In other words, one is more easily attracted to his or her dialect than the standard form of the language.

The government usually appoints politicians to handle the issue of violence in the affected communities. In most cases, the politician may not even attempt to speak the Igbo language but speaks English throughout his address to the perpetrators. In this situation, the only thing most of these perpetrators understand is that they were spoken to by the politician. They cannot narrate or understand what the politician said. This is evidence of ineffective communication. When a message is passed and the receiver has not received it, communication has not taken place.

In a situation where the politician uses Igbo, he uses standard Igbo or his or her dialect to address people who may not belong to the same dialect. The receivers may not pay much attention to the speech

made in another dialect. Even if they do, they may not understand very well. Being the popular means used by our leaders, we may not be able to stop or control the leader's appointment whomever they want but the message should be passed to the receivers in a way they can understand easily.

Even when the appointed person comes, he should be accompanied by one who understands the dialect. In the alternative, the middleman should be someone who understands, speaks Igbo and a native of the community where the perpetrators come from. This means that a thorough investigation must have been done and the perpetrators discovered before appointing the middleman.

At times the authorities look down on a particular language, dialect community or linguistic community and use the more prestigious language or variety of a language to address them while trying to solve some critical problems like insecurity in that community. Using the grassroots language and not just the language but the dialect understandable by the community will solve the problem more easily than going for the prestigious language or dialect. In the case of Igbo linguistic communities the use of the right dialect is inevitable. This is because the Igbo language has many dialects and each region values her dialect so much. It is important to note that people especially the Igbo native speakers put value in their language and more to their dialect than any other language or dialect. For this, using an adequate dialect to address them will give a more positive result than using any other language or dialect. To achieve this, the Igwe and his council members will be of immense use. The government can pass through this body and achieve its expected result.

Community traditional leaders who understand the language, the dialect and the culture of the people should not be neglected. Relatives of the perpetrators should not be neglected.

Igbo people respect elders, especially their relatives and listen to them when they speak. They respect traditional leaders more than they do politicians at a higher level. The reason for the above may not be far from being the fact they are more from the grassroots than the

politicians from a higher level. They speak their language and their dialects.

Conclusion

The Igbo language has various dialects. Despite the numerous dialects, they are understandable by other Igbo speakers but some require serious attention before others will comprehend. Igbo native speakers show more interest and preference for their dialects than any other. At the same time, they give more preference to their language than the English language which requires many years of formal education before one learns it. In solving the insecurity problem in the South Eastern part of Nigeria, the perpetrator's dialect is preferred and can-do wonders.

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