

Code-Switching: An Expression of Nigerian Socio-Cultural Identity

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Abstract

Code-switching is a language phenomenon that involves the use of two or more languages in conversations. It is used for several purposes, among which is to reveal cultural identity. The aim of this study is to observe Nigerians' perception of code-switching and the identity they wish to create when they code-switch. Data were collected through questionnaire from twenty-one multilingual residents of Afikpo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The purposive sampling method was used to select only the respondents that speak more than one language. The collected data were quantitatively analysed and the findings showed that all the participants code-switch for different purposes, which include to reveal, maintain and negotiate cultural, social and professional identities. The participants also reveal that code-switching enables the exclusion of uninvited participants in communication as well as make it easy for them to interact. The study concludes that code-switching is a linguistic phenomenon that makes communication effective and efficient while marking the socio-cultural identity of the participants.

Keywords: code-switching, identity, culture, social identity theory

Introduction

Language is basically used for communication of thoughts, ideas, opinions, and information. It is also used as a tool for persuasion, influencing, inspiring, motivating, teaching and passing on values. Apart from these, language is used to carry out actions, such as appointing, promoting, demoting, accepting, admitting, expelling, and discharging (Akinwotu, 2021). In addition to all these functions performed by language, it acts as an identity marker.

The function of language as an identity marker can never be overemphasised. People's cultural, social, psychological, educational, religious, and emotional experiences reflect in their language (Lawal et al., 2025). The choice of words people make and the way they structure their sentences reveal their knowledge, belief system and thought processes. For instance, when people say, "God bless you," you can tell that the person is a Christian or has a close connection with Christianity. An individual that makes grammatically correct English expressions in Nigeria can

be identified as someone that is well educated. These instances point at how utterances show what people know. However, these illustrations involve the use of one language in communication.

There are situations, where people interact with more than one languages in one communication. In some instances, people tend to switch from one language to another when the communication environment or situation changes. For example, an individual that speaks English in the office might decide to switch to Nigerian Pidgin while interacting with a mechanic at the car repair shop. At home, the same individual may switch between English and his native language at the sentential level and within a conversation. These instances of language switching are known as code switching. Code switching is common among bi/multilingual speakers, who tend to switch between languages to suit communicative needs (Edward et al., 2025), participants (Razali et al., 2024), and situations (Nazrim & Kassim, 2023). As people switch between languages, they tend to reveal who they are and what they know. It has also been observed that people tend to switch languages or language varieties to include or exclude communication participants (Edward et al., 2025). Nevertheless, even though multilingual speakers code-switch often, their perception of the linguistic phenomenon has not been given adequate attention. As a result, there is scanty of information regarding how language users, especially Nigerians, perceive their use of code-switching.

The aim of this study is to observe how Nigerians view code-switching. Specifically, the study focuses on identifying whether Nigerians code-switch to mark their identity and reveal their culture. Hence, the research questions that guide this study are: (1) “How do Nigerians perceive code-switching as a communicative event?” and (2) “What identity do Nigerians wish to create when they code-switch?”

The Concept of Identity

Identity, according to Merry (2010), refers to the understanding of a person as an individual than as a product of culture, history or a caste. He states that identity is not static because it is ever-evolving and continues to change as people’s understanding of who they are changes. Inac and Unal (2013) explain that a person’s identity includes the individual’s ethnic, religious, national and political identities because they are the factors by which the person will be referred. They further state that identity is the definition or description of existence. Jajarami et al. (2025) argue that it is inappropriate to explain identity as a single entity because an individual can be described through multiple dimensions. They reveal that the identity of an individual has to do with how he sees himself and how the society sees him. In other words, there are multiple dimensions to an individual’s identity because how a person sees himself may be different from how others see him.

According to Vignoles (2018), identity is simply the answer to the question, “Who are you?” She states that the answer to this question depends on who asked and answered it. When an individual asks himself this question, his response is bound to be different from when he is asked the same question by others. In addition, the responses given to different individuals are different because identity also shows social relationship. Ibanga (2013) also agrees that identity is a social phenomenon. He states that identity is the mark of recognition as well as the characteristics used to describe an individual. He believes that identity indicates where an individual belongs. This belongingness can be the individual’s nationality, social, cultural and political environments, religion, and psychological well-being. In other words, an individual’s identity is a totality of who they are at different environments and point in time.

The Concept of Code-Switching

Code-switching is a linguistic phenomenon that is found among language users that can speak more than one language. Yim and Clement (2021) describe it as a spontaneous switch from one language to another within a single communication event. They argue that the concept is only practiced by individuals that have become competent in the languages involved in the communication. Yim and Clement hold that code-switching only involves two languages, thereby indicating that switching three or more languages should be referred to as code-switching. Ahmad (2012), however, states that code-switching involves the use of two or more languages in a single communication but goes ahead to state that it is practiced by bilinguals. In other words, the linguistic concept is only used by people that speak two languages.

Khalilli (2025) explains that code-switching is the act of alternating between two or more languages or language varieties during a conversation. This description does not only show that code-switching can involve more than two languages but also asserts that the switching could be between language varieties. This notion is also adopted by Nilep (2006) who views the concept as a switch between language varieties. Authors, such as Nazri and Kassim (2023), Jain (2024), and Medi (2024), also describe the concept as the alternation between two or more languages in a single conversation. Nevertheless, Hall and Nilep (2015) describe it simply as the alternation of languages in conversations. This latter description presents code-switching as a linguistic phenomenon that involves switching from one language to another in a single or multiple conversations. What this means is that code-switching also takes place when a language user changes from one language to another in different communication events. The current study therefore perceives code-switching as the alternation of two or more languages or language varieties in a singular or multiple communication events.

Previous Studies on Code-Switching and Cultural Identity

Several studies have examined the use of code-switching in oral and spoken communication and the roles performed by the linguistic phenomenon. Ahmad (2012) examines the use of this concept in foreign language teaching and observes that teachers adopt code-switching to make their works easier and more understandable. In most cases, they switch codes to make the learners more comfortable and confident because still find the opportunity to communicate in a language they understand. Yim and Clement (2021) examine code-switching among different bicultural subgroups in Canada and realise that the easiest way to identify people of different culture is through the component languages they use to code-switch. They observe that the stronger a bicultural subgroup is, the higher their chances of code-switching is and the more positive their perception of the phenomenon is. Yim and Clement discover that the culture which a bicultural subgroup is oriented to can be identified from the members' code-switching component languages.

Edward et al. (2025) reveal that literary writers adopt code-switching as a strategy to convey intricate and intimate information about the culture of their characters. Apart from that, their study reveal that the linguistic device helps in language maintenance in that it can help to immortalise certain expressions. This indicates that Nigerian literary artists, such as Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Adichie, do not adopt code-switching as a literary style but as a way of depicting the true culture of their characters while saving the language in use. Nazri and Kassim (2023) also identify the use of code-switching in popular culture for stylistic, persuasive, meaning construction, and identity building purposes. They observe that advertisers tend to adopt the concept as their means of reaching out to specific target, who they use the language to identify with. In such instances, the target audience recognise the language, understand the message, and adopt the product as theirs.

Besides using code-switching in literature and language teaching, the linguistic concept is found in digital communication. Hall and Nlep (2015) state that in the midst of globalisation, code-switching acts as a means of identification. This indicates that even in digital interaction, where people across the world communicate without the restriction of physical distance, code-switching helps in the identification of people socio-cultural groups. Nazri and Kassim (2023) also observe that some digital advertisements use code-switching as a creative style. Code-switching, therefore, provides a linguistic window for people to say who they are in a global community.

Code-switching is also known to act as a tool for negotiation. After examining the use of the linguistic device by a group of adolescents in Jakarta, Razali et al. (2024) observe that youths use it to reveal their identity and negotiate acceptance into certain social groups. Jain (2024) explains that the component languages of code-switching give different information about the speaker. She states that the use of foreign language, such as English, acts as a social marker while the use of regional language or the native language marks the speaker's cultural group. In other words, when people code-switch, they reveal their social and cultural identities.

While observing the use of code-switching in the workplace, Mehdi (2024) observes that it fosters inclusivity. He discovers that when people switch languages to communicate effectively with certain listeners, they indirectly invite them to participate in the ongoing conversation. This has been observed to encourage workers' engagement and active participation in the organisation. In addition to this, Nlep (2006) observes that code-switching allows language users to contextualise conversations. For example, when speakers switch from one language to another, they automatically switch the context of conversation from one culture to another. This behaviour also changes the atmosphere of the conversation and informs the audience of who is invited to join in the conversation and who is not. This shows that while code-switching fosters inclusivity in communication, it also creates room for exclusion.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory as its theoretical framework. This theory examines and explains how individuals construct, negotiate and express their identities within social groups. It proposes that people tend to behave in ways that reflect their cultural and social norms. It argues that people's identity is constructed by the group they belong. As a result, they unconsciously develop a positive bias towards members of their groups and a negative bias towards non-members. As a result, they develop an 'us' vs 'them' perception of their group members and non-members.

As mentioned earlier, people act in ways that reflect their group's behaviour and culture. One of the ways they do this is by using the language that is commonly used by the group he belongs to. In this case, language functions as a salient marker of group identity because it identifies the speaker's culture, social status, and ethnicity. This explains why code-switching acts as an identity marker because the component languages or language varieties reveal descriptive information about the speaker. Put differently, when people code-switch, the languages they switch between reveal who they are and what they know. In addition, they signal affiliation or disaffiliation with groups. For instance, switching to an indigenous language or dialect during a conversation shows solidarity, shared cultural heritage, or intimacy, whereas switching to a global or official language, such as English, indicates modernity, education, or institutional authority.

Furthermore, Social Identity Theory highlights that identity is not fixed but context dependent. In the case of code-switching, speakers may shift linguistic codes to negotiate social boundaries, manage impressions and maintain social identity. In multilingual contexts, such as Nigeria, where multiple languages coexist, code-switching becomes a powerful mechanism to

manage the overlapping identities tied to ethnicity, region and social class. Here, language choice is used to indicate the specific identity adopted in a given interaction. For example, an individual may switch from the Standard English variety in an official environment to Nigerian Pidgin among peers, and further to an indigenous language in family settings to establish different identities and social roles in his community. With code-switching, the concerned language user is able to maintain his positions in the captured settings.

Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory offers a robust analytical lens for examining the use and perception of code-switching among the selected participants. It offers the theoretical perspective for examining the situational factors that trigger code-switching and explores the relationship between language, power and culture.

Methodology

Data for the study were collected from twenty-one multilingual residents of Afikpo, Ebonyi State, who were purposively selected because of their fluency in more than one language fluently. The instrument of data collection was a Likert scale questionnaire, which contained two sets of questions. The first section of the questionnaire collected the participants' demographic information while the second part contained ten 5-scale Likert statements that focus on language users' perception of code-switching. The questionnaires were issued physically and also returned physically after they were completed. The responses to the questionnaire were quantitatively analysed using the simple percentage method. This technique shows the frequency of the responses to both components of the questionnaire to enable the study to identify the highest occurring perceptions from the participants. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory provided the theoretical lens for data analysis and discussion of findings.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The analysis of the data is divided into two to show the two parts of the questionnaire. The first part analyses the demographic data of the respondents while the second section analyses the 5-point Likert scale statement.

4.1.1 Analysis of Demographic Data.

The participants were asked to provide demographic information. Their responses were captured on Tables 1 to 5.

Table 1. Gender of Respondents

s/ n	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	7	33%
2	Female	12	57%
3	Non- indicated	2	10%
4	Total	21	100%

Table 1 shows the gender of the participants in the survey. It reveals that a majority of the participants are females, with their number representing 57% of the samples. Seven participants,

representing 33% of the samples, are males. Nevertheless, two participants, who represent approximately 10% of the samples, did not indicate their gender.

Table 2. Ages of the Participants

s/ n	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	10 years	0	0%
2	11-20 years	5	23.8%
3	21-30 years	6	28.6%
4	31 and above	10	47.6%
5	Total	21	100%

Table 2 shows the age of the participants. From the data presented on the table, participants in the age bracket of 31 years and above formed the highest group by representing 47.6% of the samples. Those in the age bracket of 21 to 30 years were the next because the sample size represents 28.6% of the total samples. This latter group is closely followed by participants between the age of 11 and 20 years. They represent 23.8% of the sample size. No participant was recorded below the age of eleven.

Table 3. Educational Levels of the Participants

s/n	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	No formal education	0	0%
2	Secondary school education	6	29%
3	First degree	11	52%
4	Postgraduate degree	4	19%
5	Non-indicated	0	0%
6	Total	21	100%

Table 3 shows that all the participants have formal education. Six participants, who represent 29% of the samples, had secondary education, while four participants, representing 19% of the samples, had postgraduate degree. The table further shows that the participants with a first degree formed the highest group because they represent 52% of the total samples.

Table 4. How many languages do you speak?

s/n	Item (languages)	Frequency	Percentage
1	One	0	0%
2	Two	8	38%
3	Three	12	57%
4	More than three	1	5%
5	Total	21	100%

Table 4 presents the participants' responses to the number of languages they speak. It shows that only one participant, representing 5% of the samples, can speak more than three languages fluently. Twelve participants, representing 57% of the sample size, can speak three languages fluently. The remaining eight participants, who represent 38% of the samples, can only speak two languages fluently. None of the participants speaks only one language. The table, therefore, shows that all the participants are multilingual.

Table 5. Places where you grew up

s/n	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Rural	4	19%
2	Semi-rural	8	38%
3	Urban	9	43%
4	Total	21	100%

Table 5 presents information concerning where the participants grew up. It shows that the participants who grew up in the urban area form the highest group by representing 43% of the samples. The participants that semi urban areas follow closely with 38% representation of the sample size. The participants that grew up in the rural areas form the smallest group because they represent 19% of the samples. Table 5, therefore, shows that a majority of the participants grew up in the urban area.

4.1.2 Analysis of Data on participants' perception of on the use of code-switching during interaction.

People were asked to select options that show their perception and observation about the use of code-switching during interaction. Table 6 presents their responses.

Table 6. Perception of Code-Switching in Conversations

s/n	Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	I code-switch to balance my professional and cultural identity	2	9.5%	2	9.5%	4	19%	8	38%	5	24%
2	I intentionally use my native language to assert my cultural identity in public	1	4.8%	2	9.5%	3	14.3%	8	38.1%	7	33.3
3	I avoid using my indigenous language in conversations	6	29%	8	38%	3	14%	4	19%	-	0%
4	I mix languages to make conversation feel more relaxed	2	9.5%	2	9.5%	4	19%	8	38%	5	24%
5	I use code-switching to exclude people who don't understand my language	2	9.5%	2	9.5%	3	14%	6	29%	8	38%
6	I change languages depending on who I'm talking with	-	0%	-	0%	4	19%	7	33%	10	48%
7	I switch languages to show my cultural background	1	4.8%	1	4.8%	2	9.5%	8	38%	9	42.9%
8	If we stop code-switching, future generations will lose our cultural identity	-	0%	-	0%	4	19%	6	29%	11	52%
9	I use different languages to fit into different social groups	-	0%	2	9.5%	5	23.8%	6	28.6%	8	38.1%
10	Using native language boosts self-esteem	2	9.5%	6	29%	7	33%	4	19%	2	9.5%

Table 6 presents the responses of the participants to queries concerning their perception of code-switching in conversations. It shows that a majority of the participants code-switch for various purposes. For example, they use it to create a balance in their cultural and professional

identities (no. 1), assert cultural identity in the public (nos. 2 & 7), make conversations more relaxed (no. 4), exclude participants in conversations (no. 5) and negotiate cultural (no. 6) and social (no. 9) identities. A majority of the participants also believe that code-switching preserves cultural identity (no. 8), nevertheless, most of them are neutral towards the ability of native language to boost self-esteem.

Discussion of Findings

The examination of the responses provided by the participants show that they are bi/multilinguals and that a majority of them code-switch despite their advanced educational levels. However, their perceptions of code-switching differ. The participants show that code-switching helps them reveal, maintain and negotiate professional, social and cultural identities. They also believe that code-switching enables the exclusion of uninvited participants in conversations, the preservation of cultural identity, and the ease of communication.

Coincidentally, the findings of this study affirm the submissions of previous related scholarships, especially on the socio-cultural impacts of code-switching in societies. For example, the present study observes that participants perceive code-switching as their cultural identity marker. This observation aligns with the submission of Yim and Clement (2021), who observes that the identity of bicultural groups can be determined by the languages used in code-switching. The observation of this current study on the use of code-switching for the exclusion of certain participants in communication aligns with the observation of Edward et al. (2025), who disclose that code-switching allows people to have intimate conversations. In other words, they can exclude those that should not participate in the conversation by code-switching.

Conclusion

Code-switching is the alternation of languages in conversations. It is commonly found among language users that can use two or more languages efficiently. Code-switching is practiced by people of different cultural, profession and social groups and it marks their identities. Put differently, when people code-switch, they show who they are, the groups they associate with, and what they do for a living. Their experiences and knowledge can also be discovered from their language. Furthermore, they can include and exclude participants in conversations and further communicate with ease if they use code-switching. All these show that code-switching is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a linguistic concept that enables efficient and effective communication while working as an identity marker.

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THE GENDERED FURY: FEMALE MORAL AUTHORITY AND SATIRICAL VOICE IN HALIMA AMALI'S FACES OF SHAME

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Abstract

Critiques of Halima Amali's *Faces of Shame* construe the collection principally as a form of protest poetry directed at the Nigerian political class. This interpretation, while instructive, is not sufficient. This study contends that the collection's protest remains incomplete if the gendered configuration of the moral authority from which it is articulated is not taken into consideration. Amali's protest through her female satirical voice, which is situated at the centre of the argument, is configured through the Islamic moral order. The researchers employ Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's Stiwanism and, through a close reading, attend to the collection's use of the tensions within the Islamic moral framework to position feminine outrage within a theological domain, as well as the collection's use of the tension between communal solidarity and individual witness. The researchers establish that *Faces of Shame* is a collection that extends beyond a protest against corruption in Nigeria. It is a collection in which a female voice, situated at the intersection of faith (Islam), gender (the feminine), and action (civic), asserts this voice as her moral authority and deserves to be recognised.

Keywords: Halima Amali, *Faces of Shame*, Stiwanism, female moral authority, a satirical voice, Nigerian women's poetry, Islam and gender

Introduction

A discerning reader of *Faces of Shame* is impelled to ask what has not been asked in any of the critiques of this collection. Namely, why does the fury in these poems feel different from the fury of Niyi Osundare or Odia Ofeimun or Tanure Ojaide, poets with whom Amali is clearly in conversation? They all refer to the same rapacious ruling class, the same eviscerated institutions, and the same supine, complicit victims who witness the undeserved debasement of themselves and others. The collection discloses the anatomy of the poetic failures of Nigerian protest poetry, with laboured metaphors and devices that register repetitions of failure. Although the Nigerian protest poetic devices and structures permeate the collection's voice and form, the collection is preoccupied with the author's poetics and structures. It concentrates on the vantage point from which she is writing, and the perspective she is articulating.

Amali is an African literature professor at the Federal University of Lafia (Federal University of Lafia, 2024). In *Faces of Shame*, she deploys the female satirical perspective to conjoin Islamic morality and public civic adjudication. Because of her academic position, her gendered voice and her Islamic morality, she is positioned to occupy a distinctive place in Nigeria's protest poetry, which has been overwhelmingly male-dominated and male-centred. When the collection articulates anger toward the phenomenon of corruption, it is legitimated within the Islamic framework of accountability and social justice, which is a distinctive feature of

protest poetry because it furnishes a theological rationale for the collection's anger. When the speaker invokes Munafiki, which refers to an individual who, in the context of Islamic hypocrisy, concurrently prays and perpetrates theft, the speaker is not deploying a hyperbolic religious metaphor. Instead, the poet is pronouncing a morally binding adjudication in a tribunal of ethics wherein the poet presumes an entitlement to judge and from which the poet expects judgement.

This paper construes *Faces of Shame* as a collection where the speaker's gender, religion, and citizenship are the analytic foreground instead of the biographical background. This paper's principal concerns are three questions. How does Amali fashion a voice that is satirical and feminine and which does not reside in the domestic and/or the private? How does Amali deploy Islamic moral authority to substantively anchor a critique that might otherwise be construed as purely a political critique? How does the collection grapple with the tensions, in most of the collection's poems, in the relationship between the individual and the collective 'we'? These questions are addressed through the close reading of selected poems from the collection, using Stiwanism as the principal analytic framework. The poems were selected because, among other considerations, they engage with the analytic preoccupations of a feminine voice of satire, Islamic moral authority, and the individual vs. collective referential oscillations.

Theoretical Background

This study employs the theory of Stiwanism as a constituent of its framework. Formulated by Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, "Stiwanism" is an African feminist theory of social transformation. Ogundipe-Leslie's theory endeavours to address the social, economic, and cultural challenges confronting African women in ways that Western feminist theories do not. Stiwanism mobilises theories of gender relations and an African social transformation framework as an interpretive position for African women. Ogundipe-Leslie characterises the weight of the colonial and patriarchal legacies conjoined with poverty and the perpetuation of silences imposed on African women as a "sack" of social burdens (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, pp. 229-230). Stiwanism furnishes an analytic framework for the social and political encumbrances of women in Africa. It affords African women the opportunity to participate in politics irrespective of the social impediments and provides women with the capacity to use their political voice even in the absence of such a schema.

There are several reasons why the *Faces of Shame* analysis relies upon this theory. First, this theory does not require that female political pronouncements fit within a particular construct of Western feminism. For example, a female Muslim from Northern Nigeria might formulate her political critiques by mobilising her own indigenous resources, and not necessarily a secular liberal idiom. Second, Stiwanism apprehends the social dimensions of personal experiences, and does not depend on the Western liberal feminist school's disaggregation of the personal and the political, whether in critique or otherwise. In the context of Amali's poetry, the speaker's Islamic faith and gender are mobilised, and the Islamic moral order is politically and socially inclusive of gender. Third, Ogundipe-Leslie's framework interrogates the question of voice: who speaks in the public sphere, and how. This issue is what *Faces of Shame* is chiefly concerned with, and what it negotiates in its own way.

A constraint of the theory is that Ogundipe-Leslie largely restricted her framework to prose fiction and cultural criticism, and did not account for how form may function in the construction of gendered moral authority in poetry. The analysis redresses this limitation by attending to the poems themselves, and elucidates how, through word choice, tone, persona, apostrophe, repetition, among others, a gendered speaker is constituted within the formal parameters of the poem.

Review of Literature

Interest is progressively expanding in the study of Amali's poetry. Nevertheless, the scholarship almost entirely overlooks the gendering of her poetry. In Niyi Akingbe's (2024) examination of the deployment of satire as confrontational language in contemporary Nigerian poetry, he traces the literary lineage of Amali's writing. Akingbe posits that Nigerian poets deploy satire as "a medium used to interrogate the states of affairs in societies" (p. 49) and that the Nigerian satirist is "a defender of communal norms and virtues" (p. 51). When examining Amali, this is instructive, especially in relation to her satirical practice. It furnishes an extensive genealogy of civic poetry. What Akingbe does not examine is poetry, for the most part, as a predominantly male preserve, and in circumstances where there is a woman speaker, the domain of the satirist's authority. Amali's collection resolves this question.

More germane to this case is Bartholomew Chizoba Akpah's (2020) analysis of satire, humour, and parody in 21st-century Nigerian women's poetry. Akpah employs the term "centripetal force to criticise amidst laughter, the ills of female devaluation in the society" (p. 133) to characterise how women poets deploy satire, humour, and parody to channel laughter in order to confront the social disqualification of women. In this context, Akpah evaluates the use of humour and satire in women's poetry as an intricate social critique of women's devaluation and a recognition of women's voice in the domain of women's rights, as well as women's advocacy in the sphere of intellectual discourse. Although the analysis concentrates on other poets, Amali is of consequence as Akpah comes close to illustrating the inventive and performative aspects of Nigerian women's poetry. The woman who wields satire establishes that she speaks from an elevated moral ground. In this regard, the dimension is strongly pronounced in *Faces of Shame* as Amali's satire is direct, incisive, and carries a high degree of responsibility and, as such, asserts the entitlement and space for the female voice in satire, which is still uncharted.

Egya's (2019) account of the dialogic character of contemporary Nigerian poetry also provides an incisive prism of analysis. Egya contends that third-generation Nigerian poets write dialogically, fashioning poems as responses to particular historical interlocutors such as the Nigerian state, the aggrieved masses, and the protest poetry genre (p. 76). Amali's collection is dialogic in the sense that Egya describes, but in addition to that, it participates in a dialogue with patriarchal orthodoxies regarding who is allowed to speak on matters of public concern. When Amali deploys the incantatory plural 'we', she is not merely using a poetic convention that engenders a sense of community. She is advancing a claim to her entitlement to speak for the

community, and this claim is justified, given that she is a woman from a context that is construed to place her in a subordinate position in the hierarchy of those who are authorised to speak on matters of public concern.

Onyebuchi Nwosu and Ose-Agbo (2025) advance a Marxist interpretation of Amali's poetry, describing it as "mass-oriented, confrontational, and optimistic" (p. 67). They maintain that her poetry contests anti-democratic forces. While a class analysis recognises the collection's appeal to the indigent and the comparatively impoverished, it does not accommodate the gendered and Islamic moral frameworks that condition how Amali situates her voice among men. Stiwanism repudiates the proposition that the political voice of the African woman is an undifferentiated voice. African female poets possess the capacity to register the political plurality of the social contexts within which they are positioned and the modes in which they enunciate their voices with authority.

Onyejizu (2024) advances a social transformation interpretation of Amali's poetry, expatiating on the collection's thematic preoccupations and the concerns regarding the endemic state of corruption and maladministration. The interpretation acknowledges Amali's use of satire; nevertheless, it fails to apprehend the social critique immanent in the collection's configuration of a moral order. This paper endeavours to close the gap that scholarship on Amali's poetry has created: what is Amali saying, who is Amali saying this to, and why does it matter?

Data Analysis

The analysis examines three interdependent dimensions of the collection: the constitution of a specifically female satirical voice, the deployment of Islamic categories as a theologically inflected foundation of feminist moral outrage, and the balancing act between individual testimony and collective solidarity.

The Female Satirical Voice

There is a recurrent tendency when identifying the speaker of Nigerian poetic satire to conceive of a character who is educated, politically engaged, male, and who, because of his gender and his access to the civic sphere, speaks from a locus of authority. Amali's *Faces of Shame*, from the very first poem, unsettles this. 'They Have No Shame' (Amali, 2020, p. 12) forthrightly enters the civic sphere without the circumspect positioning of one who is cognisant that she is transgressing the bounds of the conventional:

They walk high

Big chests out

Padded in billion naira notes

Snatched off the bullion van
For a deal in the looters' workshop

They laugh the laugh of jackals
Mouths agape
In celebration of successful outings
Defrauding the nation

For a build of monstrous homes of theft (Amali, 2020, p. 12)

The poem does not furnish an introduction. Instead, it begins in the midst of scrutiny in the register of one who has been scrutinising and pronouncing judgement, and has now determined that the time for restraint has passed. The authority that the poem commands is not derived from an institutional standing, nor is it legitimated by the exposition of a theory. The authority inheres in the immediacy of observation, the precision of the language, and the certitude of the moral judgement. 'They laugh the laugh of jackals' is not a self-qualifying assertion; it is a designation. The speaker discerns something she sees, then calls it out, all without seeking permission to do so.

According to Akingbe (2024), the Nigerian tradition's satirist functions as the community's custodian, a protector of the community's voice who safeguards the community's norms against their transgressors (p. 51). In 'They Have No Shame' (Amali, 2020, p. 12), the speaker also inhabits this space, but does so from a gender standpoint that this tradition does not associate with this kind of public, unapologetic ethical assertion. Stiwanism foregrounds the full participation of African women within the domain of public space and public speech, and *Faces of Shame* does not advocate for this participation in theory, but enacts it in poetry, through each poem, through each pronouncement.

In "Strip Them Naked" (Amali, 2020, p. 13), comic and grave elements are conjoined. The poem concentrates on the manifold ways people laugh and speculate about the rationales behind the injunction. It rends these women apart:

Strip them naked
These women of pretentious faces
Wearing billion naira adornment
Concealing their pothole faces of theft
Thieves of great plethora

Strip them naked to our boo (Amali, 2020, p. 13)

Amali (2020) has a particular target in mind: women in a position of authority who are venal. A female speaker, stripping female adornment, is not performing a cross-gender gesture but a gesture within gender. Thus, this signifies how Amali's moral authority functions. In this context, she is not invoking the pretext of gender solidarity to afford women a free pass and is, in fact, exacting the same level of accountability from women in the civic sphere as she does from men. This is the substance of Stiwanism. The venal female public official, in Amali's view, is as naked in her shame as her male counterparts.

Islamic Moral Authority and the Grounds of Female Outrage

The theological dimension of *Faces of Shame* is what most clearly distinguishes it from other manifestations of Nigerian protest poetry. It is also what is most intimately related to the gender of the speaker. Drawing upon Islamic concepts, Amali deploys a female speaker whose moral lexicon is shaped by the Islamic moral paradigm. Poetic configurations of the Islamic moral paradigm are not merely rhetorical devices, but the substantive grounds on which the authority to judge inheres. This is consequential because it transforms the nature of the authority that is being asserted. It is neither the secular humanist authority of the enlightened intellectual, nor is it the class-based authority of the oppressed speaking against the oppressor. It is the theological authority, the authority of the individual who knows the moral law and who brings those who have transgressed the moral law to account before the moral law, the community, and God.

In 'Enemies of Our Time' (Amali, 2020, p. 22), corruption, impunity, theft, and rape, along with illiteracy, are the enemies of our time. These are construed as social maladies, but the persona construes them as moral problems that have theological consequences. Theft is described as 'Burrowing our treasury / Breeding unholy romance with our funds / In a marriage of lust and money / Castrating our hopes to decency / And deprivation reigns' (Amali, 2020, p. 22). Here, theft is shown as breeding unholy romance with our funds. The representation of theft in this fashion is not couched in the discourse of economics or politics. It is the language of Islamic moral theology, in which the violation of prescribed boundaries is not merely a material concern, but a violation of a theological order.

The poem "A Dream for My Nation" (Amali, 2020, p. 16) directs this theological configuration towards renewal. Amali writes in the optative mood and invokes a purification of the land:

May the dirt be washed
Off thieves and robbers
Unholy leaders, men and women of deceit
Established in theft

To bathe the bath of repentance (Amali, 2020, p. 16)

Here, the petition for repentance is an injunction to the morally decayed to be regenerated, not as a mercy, but as a prerequisite for civic renewal. In the Islamic conception of repentance, tawba, this is so. There is no tawba if there is no restitution. Thus, this demonstrates that the demand for the 'bath of repentance' is, in fact, a petition for a full moral restoration and not a perfunctory apology. This attests to the theological erudition of someone for whom the Islamic moral order is a verity, and thus confers on the poem's ostensibly gentle optative a sterner moral imperative than it appears to have at first.

Part Five of the collection contains the most potent invocation of Islamic moral authority. Here, the term "Munafiki" occurs. Amali defines the term as 'an Arabic word for hypocrite' in a footnote. The Munafiki is a grave figure in Islamic theology. It denotes a person who outwardly professes to be a believer but inwardly does not. In fact, such hypocrisy is considered a graver transgression within the Islamic community because it corrodes the Islamic community from within, as opposed to being an avowed unbeliever. In "This Munafiki" (Amali, 2020, p. 20), when Amali indicts the ruling class of Nigeria, she is invoking a tribunal where the ruling class is accountable not to a constitutional or electoral authority, but to a divine authority. The charge is beyond reversal by any court of law, and no amount of appropriated wealth will be able to furnish immunity from it. It constitutes a particular kind of authority, which is a moral authority. It is a moral authority of the Islamic tradition accorded to women who are resolute in their convictions and speak from them. It is the authority of a female scholar, a preacher, and a community member.

Between I and We: Witness, Community, and the Grammar of Outrage

A salient feature of *Faces of Shame* is its use of pronouns. The collection moves back and forth between the first-person singular and the first-person plural 'we' as though such an alternation were a calculated feature. These alternations between the two first-person forms were not fortuitous, but rather carefully thought out and placed. Scrutinising these shifts in detail facilitates an exploration of how Amali positions her moral authority as a situated woman who speaks for herself and for her community.

"We Shall Sing" (Amali, 2020, p. 14) features almost entirely plural syntax and amalgamates disparate suffering into a singular, unified voice through a refrain at each phrase's commencement as follows:

We shall sing
Sing songs of sorrow
Expelling anguish from our hearts
In mountainous heights
Unto these men of merciless souls

Stepping on our souls

To erase our souls (Amali, 2020, p. 14)

Here, 'we' operates not as a poetic device, but as a political enunciation. The writer politically situates herself as a constituent of the plural community of those who suffer and writes from within rather than about it. This affords insight into the gendered authority she wields. She does not politically stand in a position external to the local plural community as the representative of the community. She stands in the community and embodies the plurality of the community while articulating the impulse to express the feeling of that plurality. What Egya calls the dialogic character in contemporary Nigerian poetry is analogous; but, with the dimension of gender incorporated, a woman who articulates in the plural first person, as she does, participates in a public sphere that has not always socially accommodated recognition of her citizenship.

"I Want to Die," written in the first-person singular, presents the antithetical extreme.

Pains hover in the air

Dripping unto the heads of the poor

Spreading painfully unto the souls of my nation

A creation of the haves to the downtrodden

Too much to bear

I want to die. (Amali, 2020, p. 41)

Amali depicts the community's collective suffering, and, personally, the speaker profoundly feels the community's suffering, too. 'I want to die' connotes an acute personal and individual anguish. 'My nation,' in contrast, articulates the community's extreme collective suffering and a sense of personal possession. It intimates that the nation speaks for the community and the community speaks for the nation. The expressions 'I want to die' and 'the creation of the haves' articulate extreme personal suffering: I cannot take it (having too much to bear). Thus, the community's collective suffering, personally expressed in 'I want to die,' articulates public and communal ownership of the nation's suffering. So, 'I want to die,' in the tradition of the Psalms and the Quranic laments, articulates a public lament and, indeed, a civic ownership of the nation's suffering. It is, paradoxically, an act of witnessing the community's suffering and bearing it. An Islamic reading of the poem construes it as a mode of shikwa, a lamentation to God in which the speaker's candour is a form of faith.

The collection examines the formal tension between "I" and "We", between the "I" of individual experience and the "We" of communal solidarity and functions as a marker of the speaker's position in the gendered hierarchy. She is concurrently one of the subjugated and an individual moral agent who has resolved to articulate her position. The fluidity of her gendered and moral positions is what permits her to exercise a particular authority, as opposed to a general authority. She enunciates her position from a particular locus, and from a particular intersection

of the manifold facets of her identity: her religion; her gender; her legal status; and her comprehension of the inequities and suffering her community has sustained and the dignity her community deserves.

Conclusion

The contention the paper has endeavoured to substantiate is that *Faces of Shame* should not be cursorily considered merely a protest poetry collection written by a woman, but rather as a collection where the speaker's gender, religion, and civic position constitute the moral authority of the poetry. Interpreting this collection through the prism of Stiwanism affords a perspective that is not offered by a politically or class-oriented reading, and discloses the singular consequentiality of Amali's position in the poetry, the function of her Islamic moral framework in furnishing a basis for female indignation that is neither secular nor liberal, and the negotiation of the tension between individual and collective experience through the fluidity of pronouns. Niyi Akingbe (2024) observes that in Nigeria, satire furnishes community defence, while Bartholomew Akpah (2020) contends that Nigeria's female satirists affirm women's discursive authority through the effective use of satire. *Faces of Shame* (Amali, 2020) accomplishes both. Its satire safeguards community norms and, by its deployment of anger, confers authority on the female voice. It does not apologise, excuse, or attenuate its anger. It does not ask if it is legitimate to speak about the civic sphere. Instead, it resolves the question by speaking about the civic sphere, furnishing both theological and communal sanction for its stance. It also answers the question of whether a female voice that speaks from an Islamic moral standpoint has the entitlement to do so. It has the entitlement to do so, and has spoken. Amali's second collection, *Faces of Shame* (Amali, 2020), alongside her first collection, *I Want to Join Them* (Amali, 2016), may be examined to apprehend the development of the gendered moral voice in her collections. Additionally, the Islamic moral voice that women in northern Nigeria have expressed for centuries may be investigated, from the 19th-century poet Nana Asma'u to the present day. This paper contends that *Faces of Shame* (Amali, 2020) advances a gendered perspective that has not been examined in the extant scholarship. To apprehend this perspective will alter the way this collection is construed.

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Investigating the Reading Competence in English Among Junior Secondary School Students in Afikpo Urban of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Reading is one of the most important sources of learning and acquisition of information. Reading, exposes one to new words, ideas, expressions and their various uses. Good reading enhances power of expression as it exposes one to a variety of styles employed by writers in their writings. Indeed, most people achieve language competence from good and effective reading. Reading inability deters a learner from achieving his learning objectives. This paper critically investigates the factors that affect reading competence in junior secondary school students in Afikpo urban of Ebonyi state. The investigation covers some aspects of reading. The main focus of the investigation is to find out the extent to which the junior secondary

school students read, how the availability of reading materials or otherwise affect their reading ability and what they are interested in reading, having in mind that one of the objectives of the use of English is to equip the students with effective reading skills. Therefore, the investigation looked at the definition of reading by some renowned authorities, types of reading and how reading competence can be developed. In order to find out the nature of reading problems existent among junior secondary school students, efforts of teachers and parents in helping the students achieve reading competence, questionnaires were administered to four different junior secondary school in Afikpo urban for appropriate responses, using the terminal class, JSS III. The data were collected and analyzed, using simple percentage. Based on the results derived from the data, appropriate recommendations were made.

Keywords: Reading, reading materials, competence, investigation, information

Introduction

Reading plays a major part in education especially, in formal education. Reading is done in every sphere of human life. With the rapid increase in knowledge and constant acceleration of publication of information in all fields of human endeavour, reading has become more important not only as means of studying all the subjects, but also as means of accessing information from both print and electronic media as well as keeping up with the challenges individuals face in discharging their duties in the labour market. Reading, therefore, is the extraction of meaning from graphic symbols, written or printed matter. This implies that reading is a complex communication skill which an individual acquires through exposure and training in formal education.

Reading is an essential instrument for competence and proficiency. Any student who is unable to read or reads at a very slow rate or speed will be terribly limited in his learning, knowledge acquisition and skills. This is because most of the academic works students do either as individuals or group depend primarily on how effective they can read. The importance and dependence on reading for effective communication and interaction widen as a child develops and attains his/her educational status. It is this numerous importance attached to reading that made the term “reading competence” an interesting area of academic inquiry.

Reading competence is the ability of an individual to interpret effectively what the printed material is all about. In this study, reading competence is viewed with special emphasis on the speed with which an individual reads. That is, an attempt is made to find out the reading rate of an individual with the aim of finding out whether he is a slow or fast reader. Indeed, reading competence presupposes reading with comprehension. As the core of reading, comprehension cannot be divorced from reading. This is because, it has been argued that without reading for comprehension, words are basically a series of lifeless symbols which do not communicate. It is only by reading with comprehension or understanding that one can learn, interact with written words and meditate or reflect on each word or printed matter.

The various reasons or purposes of reading underscore its importance. For instance, people read for a number of reasons. One of such reasons for reading is for education or academic purpose. In fact, education forms the major reason for reading. As students, they read because they want to learn and be educated. The learner acquires new knowledge through reading done either in or outside the four walls of the classroom. People also read for news or information when they read newspapers, magazines and other dailies and even posters, etc. Another purpose for reading is for

pleasure and entertainment. When reading is done in this regard, one sees people reading novels, short stories, certain columns on the newspaper and magazines.

Generally, people read for leisure, or pleasure. People also read to be up dated with event and incidents around them. Others read for professional information, for studies, for general and specific purposes such as studying an article or text for certain information, etc. Reading is however, not a mere looking at words in print or ‘a passive activity’, as Troyka (1990), asserts. According to her, it is an active activity, “a dynamic meaning-making encounter involving interaction of the page, eye and brain” (128). As a serious activity, reading makes a man what he is. It is a means of survival, an avenue of acquiring information and a vital source of edification. Life-long education is attained through reading. Viewed in the above perspective, reading becomes very vital to learners and students especially, students of junior secondary schools. Hence, the necessity to investigate the factors affecting its competence and the need to develop it.

Ordinarily, students in the junior secondary schools face various reading problems during studies and learning situations. For instance, the students at the junior secondary schools confront physiological reading problems such as brain defect or dyslexia which may obstruct reading competence. Dyslexia is a reading problem which affects reading and spelling, a situation which affects letters and words differentiation. (See *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* 2007:491). A student who is a victim of dyslexia may also suffer from poor vision.

Furthermore, there is also psychological problem which also affect reading competence such as anxiety, poor intelligence, lack of interest or motivation, fear and lack of self-confidence. Environmental problems can also affect reading competence. The home a child comes from plays prominent role in the child’s reading ability. In some homes, such reading materials as novels, texts, newspapers, magazines, story books, pictures and the likes that can expose the children to reading are non-existent. Indeed, lack of these important reading materials can affect reading competence.

Naturally, the above which are among the factors to be investigated will nevertheless, form the main thematic focus of this study. Since this study involves an empirical investigation, such areas as statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, literature review, etc are inclusive.

Statement of the Problem

The relationship between reading and language has no clear cut demarcation in the junior secondary school curriculum. Thus, the researcher noticed that there is no provision for reading exercises on the time table. There is also, lack of reading materials in some of the urban junior secondary schools used as case study in Afikpo. The researcher is of the view that English language teachers have a responsibility to plan a programme that will help students improve their reading competence. This is necessary as reading is an excellent way of language learning and acquisition.

Purpose of the Study

This study will investigate:

1. The factors that affect reading competence in the junior secondary schools.
2. It will suggest some ways or solutions of improving the existing situation.

Research Questions

The researcher will be guided in this study by the following questions:

1. To what extent does availability of reading materials affect reading competence?
2. Do teachers actually teach reading in the classroom?
3. Does lack of interest of the students in reading materials affect their reading competence?

Significance of the Study

The researcher hopes that this study will contribute to knowledge in the field of teaching and learning of reading at the junior secondary school level. It will also, provide a useful information and source of material for students and researchers who may wish to carry out further research in this direction.

Scope of the study

This study is especially for the junior secondary school students in Afikpo urban in Ebonyi State. The study focused on the factors that affect reading competence. There are eight junior secondary schools in Afikpo urban. Out of these numbers, the researcher selected four schools for the purpose of the study: Government Junior Secondary School PWD/Ukpa, Sir Francis Ibiam Grammar Junior Secondary School, Mgbom/Unwana Road, Ehugbo Technical Junior Secondary School, Ndibe Beach Road and Amuro/Mgbom Junior Secondary School, Amuro/Mgbom. These schools were selected as representative of the others as they are strategically situated. During the investigation, it was found that two of the schools (which are pilot schools) have libraries, though poorly equipped, while the other two do not have any at all. This can account for differences in their reading culture and by extension, necessary variation in the students' performance during examination. It is also believed that this class can easily read, understand and respond to the questionnaire accordingly.

Literature Review

There are four language skills which an individual needs to acquire if he is to communicate and interact effectively in English. These skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills play very important roles in different learning situations as they contribute to learner's intellectual development. In fact, any meaningful progress in the field of academic revolves around these language skills.

In their hierarchical order, listening is the first language skill. This is followed by speaking. Nwaiwu and Obi write that in the field of education and communication, "listening and speaking are technically referred to as oracy skill of the language" as these are more complex than reading and writing "known as literacy skills" (70). They assert that listening and reading are on the other hand, known as "receptive language skills", just as speaking and writing are referred to as "productive language skills" (71).

What Reading Means

As receptive language skill, reading is very important. Reading may mean different things to different people. to a beginner, reading may simply be seen as the recognition of printed words

and the conception of same to oneself. To some, reading deals with the ability to decode the encoded information in a text, written or printed materials. To others, it may be seen as the act of glancing through printed or written words with the aim of recognizing and understanding such words. Nwokeneme espouses that to a great extent, reading determines the success or failure of any student. Essentially, reading is of immense value to students as they acquire new knowledge and information which enable them to tackle academic problems. According to him, “meaningful reading is that which is motivated by an aim or objective with the desire to achieve a definite result” (18).

Corroborating Obiukwu opines that reading is an essential tool for the acquisition of all kinds of human knowledge. She cited Ola as saying that it “is a means whereby information stored in the books can be obtained and utilized for a variety of purposes” (44). For Otagburuagu et al as cited by Obiukwu, reading means “a process of reconstructing the writer’s intended meaning”. Accordingly, it “involves an interaction between three parties: the reader, the writer and the text”. This source adds that reading is interactive in nature, involving the processor, the author and the text” (44). Invariably, Troyka asserts that “reading is not a passive activity. It involves more than looking at words. Reading is an active process- a dynamic meaning-making encounter involving the interaction of the page, eye and brain” (128). Mmaduekwe, like Troyka, views reading as “an activity in which the eyes, the mind and the brain interact in the process of perceiving, analyzing, reasoning, interpreting and integrating a problem” (123).

Readings, as defined by Greenwood and cited by Aiyewumi, involves two levels, the visual and the mechanical stages. According to her, in the mechanical stage, the symbols on the printed page are deciphered through the coordination of the eye and the brain and the cognitive tasks which involved the interpretation of the visual information. This, as Aiyewumi stresses, is the thinking skill stage where the reader constructs in his mind, the meaning the writer had in mind when he wrote the text. Perhaps, it is what *Conceptual Foundation of Teaching, Reading* meant when it categorizes reading into three capacities or abilities as “reading as saying, reading as understanding, and reading as (reflective) thinking” (59).

Similarly, in his own assessment of reading as active language skill, Grillet as cited by Bodunde writes that the activity could be viewed from two perspectives. In the first place, reading involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself questions. In the second place, reading can be viewed on its communicative functions. Both ways involve activities which keep the learners and indeed, readers working, practicing and being active. This view is in consonance with the position of Sannie on the subject. Accordingly, he observed that when a person reads, he/she is also thinking, predicting, questioning, evaluating, defining and redefining, simultaneously.

In fact, this is what Troyka means when she succinctly discloses that:

When you read, your brain actively makes connections between what you know already and what is new to you. You comprehend and learn new materials by associating it with materials you already know. [As] the key activity is making predictions, as you read, your brain is always involved in guessing what is coming next (128-129).

Comprehension is thus achieved by associating the new material with what is already known. The most important activity in reading is, therefore, making predictions. By making connections, guessing and predicting, the brain easily narrows its expectations to reasonable proportions. Further examining ways of improving reading performance, Aliyu opines that it “is a form of

communication during which the contents, challenges and claims made by a writer are gone over by the reader who tries to capture the substance of the written material” (30).

Anyachonkeya who also looks at the opinions of some experts on reading cites Ajero (1996) as saying that it is the “process of utilizing textual elements and human experience together to achieve understanding of the message which the writer intended in the text” (26). He also refers to Francis Bacon who avers that “reading maketh a full man, conference, a ready man and writing an exact man”.

In addition to the above, the seventies saw a marked increase in positive researches on reading as a linguistic problem. Notable eminent scholars who carried out researches in this direction include such linguists as Eskey (1970, 71) Piece (1973) and Wilson (1973). Through such enduring efforts, “reading came to be seen, not only as a vehicle for language instruction, but also as a unique information processing skill” (141), as Aiyewumi declares. It is to be noted that by the 1990s, reading as a linguistic Phenomenon had been firmly rooted in the realism of linguistics. Researches are still going on with a view to understanding the interactive nature of reading in itself and other related academic concepts.

Modern approach to the study of reading as a linguistic unite suggests that the learner himself, the process through which he learns and the problem he may encounter in the over all reading process are the focal points on which scholars may hypothesize and synthesize the reading phenomenon. The modern approaches to reading suggests that in order to inculcate purposeful reading, questions on the material should be read first before a thorough reading of the text (pre-text) and questions after (post-text). The aim of this is to first prepare the students for and direct their attention to specifics and then to ensure that general comprehension is generated. The teacher is thus, expected to determine the type of reading matter that the students should be exposed to and to choose appropriate reading techniques so as to enable the students read with efficiency, the materials presented before them.

Reading Competence

Reading competence has to do with the ability to read written matters, materials or text with minimum time available and being able to understand what it is all about so as to interpret, comment or criticize it. In other words, reading competence is the ability of an individual to read effectively, written material with the aim of bringing out or making meaning therefrom. Perhaps, this is what this authoritative voice means when it asserts that “reading competence is the set of knowledge and skills that allow a person to select, understand and organize the information presented in printed (written) form and successfully use it for both personal and public purpose” (2). When reading competence is looked at in this way, the aim is to check the speed at which an individual reads. *Reading Competence ...European Proceedings*. The focus is thus to determine the reading rate of an individual. That is, whether a reader reads slow or fast. Reading competence, therefore, implies comprehension, an understanding resulting in the view as declared in *Reading Competence... Literacy Tasks* that “reading comprehension has the potential to lead to complication in text comprehension as a function of reading proficiency” (5).

Naturally, reading competence or efficiency connotes reading with flexibility and good comprehension. Slow and unsatisfactory reading result in inadequate comprehension skills and consequently, reading incompetence. Reading competence which by extension is reading for comprehension derives from three levels of reading, literal, inferential and evaluative meaning, according to Troyka (1990:133-135). While reading for literal meaning involves reading on the lines, inferential and evaluative reading levels call for reading between the lines and beyond the

lines for hidden or connotative meaning or information. This takes this study to another aspect of reading for comprehension known as reading strategies or types of reading.

Reading Strategies

For effective understanding and competence in reading, consideration is made on the following reading strategies:

(a) Skimming (b) scanning (c) intensive (d) extensive (e) Normal Reading.

Skimming

This is a reading strategy which involves fast reading mainly for the purpose of acquiring the gist of the text or passage. It is used when one wants to locate the main idea. For instance, one can skim-read newspaper headlines, table of contents of textbook, titles, opening paragraphs, etc. Hellandendu cites Floyd as describing skimming as “flying over an unfamiliar country or town before exploring it on foot”. Nwokeneme who also cited Gartside posits that skimming may not be taken as a normal reading as it is a preliminary step which provides an overview of the subject matter before a close reading. Skimming, however, enables the student or reader to get prepared and attempt to establish his purpose for close reading. When there is no time, skimming can serve as a substitute for the main reading. Skimming thus enhances speed and understanding in reading.

Scanning

Scanning is a fast reading technique with the purpose of locating specific piece of information, facts or details. It is useful and can help the student or reader learn and master technical terms quicker, especially where secondary sources need to be consulted before each terms can be used. Like skimming, scanning differs slightly from close reading as it skips of parts of the text while searching for specific idea or information. It is part of reading process, a preliminary step before close or thorough reading. For instance, one involves himself in scanning when he reads announcements or uses dictionary to look for spelling of a word, meaning, parts of speech, usage or morphological inflection. Scanning can also help to enhance speed and understanding during close reading.

Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is a reading process that requires maximum concentration as the reader aims at extracting information that will enable him perform a given task, according to Njoku and Izuagba (2001). This study type involves slow and thoughtful reading. The main purpose of intensive reading is to enable the reader have a thorough grasp of the main idea and details in what is read. Anyachonkeya and Anyachonkeya assert that intensive reading is a useful reading strategy as it allows the reader to learn to engage in “maximum concentration in order to understand and assimilate the reading selection” (30). The understanding that all reading materials do not have the same level of structural and contextual arrangement makes the need for flexible reading necessary so as to read and comprehend texts of varying levels of complexity.

The need for flexibility has resulted in variation in reading strategies. In the light of this, Shaibu writes that there have been many study methods used at one time or other. Among them are:

SQ3R: Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review,

SQ4R: Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Write, Review;

PQRST: Preview, Question, Read, Summarize, Text

OK4R: Overview, keypoints, Read, Recall, Reflect, Review;

3S3R: Survey, Study- Read Speech-read, Recite, Review, Reflect.

Consequently, Floyd (1984) is of the opinion that SQ3R is the oldest and probably the best known of the five methods outlined above. It has been widely used and adopted in many countries. Some authors such as Troyka (1990) and Banjo and Bisong (1985) are of the view that SQ3R stand for survey, question, Read, Recite and Revise. What is important to note here, however, is that SQ3R is a useful study strategy.

Extensive Reading

In this reading strategy, the reader reads to obtain general information. Extensive reading is often outside one's discipline as it is extra-curricular. It is thus, done at the reader's pleasure, formally or informally. This reading strategy is not imposed by an external authority or influence. It is usually voluntary and comes as a result of self discipline or habit. It is the kind of reading that broadens the individual's frontier of knowledge. Generally, the mood of the extensive reader is pleasant and light.

Invariably, an extensive reader or learner reads very fast to gain the general idea. He does this in a very short time. This type of reading helps to increase competence in communication. Word power is enhanced and ability to weigh ideas heightened. Extensive reading demands the provision of reading materials, careful planning and encouragement from the teacher. Izuagba and Njoku (2001) and Agwu (2008) cite Aboderin who asserts that the "pleasure comes from sharing various experiences from the incidental learning that comes as a result of the reader's appreciation of various episodes".

Reading is essential for the development of the personality in the students. Students attainment of higher education is dependent on the extent to which they read. Students in the junior secondary schools have a lot of hindrances which affect their reading competence. Some of these problems include nonchallant attitude, environmental factors, administrative and language factors.

Normal Reading Rate

The emphasis on normal reading rate is usually on the speed of the reader. The speed is medium, slow or average. This is employed to get the main ideas and their related details. It enables the reader to appreciate the style that has been adopted by the writer.

Factors Militating against Reading Competence

Beginners and learners who use English as second language are often faced with various factors that militate against reading competence. Thus, many students and learners come to the higher institution with so many reading problems they had encountered at the previous levels of education. This part of study aims at highlighting some of these problems and factors that impede efficient reading and militate against its competence.

Among these factors are anxiety, tension, poor study skills as well as low reading rate. The learner who is a product of two languages and cultures without mastering any is in a pitiable state. The outcome of such a situation is that the quality of his intellectual experience suffers deficiency. There is also deficiency in the level of vocabulary, knowledge and grammar. All these problems militate against reading competence.

Other factors which militate against reading competence include word pointing, vocalization, sub-vocalization, poor vocabulary, repression, head movement, inflexibility, loss of interest, poor visual perception, among others. (See Abe, 1981 and N. Anyachonkeya and C. Agwu edited, 2008).

Commenting on reading problems, Andzayi further points out similar other factors in this regard. He succinctly enumerates poor methodology, lack of qualified teachers, inadequate materials and books, lack of interest, home background, inadequate library facilities in schools, lack of rich-print

environment by parents, among others as major reading factors militating against reading competence.

One of the most common problems that hinder reading competence is the problem emanating from students' attitude to reading. Students have non-challant attitude towards reading. Some students do not show any hunger, need or motivation for reading. They lack interest and confidence when reading any materials. They have fear and this affects reading competence.

The environment is another factor that militates against reading competence. Generally, the home background of the reader comes into the picture. Home background has been seen to contribute immensely to the factors militating against reading competence. Students who are highest in reading and language achievement have homes with greatest amount of reading materials. Research has shown as Lawal discloses that most Nigerian children often grow in homes without books or even where they have, it is just the school prescribed books. This makes the home of the Nigerian child non-supportive to reading.

Again, many Nigerian children may not be exposed to print materials until they get to school. In a home where a child is not provided books or novels and other necessary reading materials that expose the child to reading culture, that child will be terribly handicapped. Ayodele observed that the richer home background, the better for the promotion of language efficiency. Ekpumobi sees home as the first place where the child is exposed to the language he will use throughout his life. This means that lack of facilities to expose the child to the language he will use in school may lead to reading problems when the child starts school.

Most Nigerian students read poorly as they read with only one aim in view, to pass examination. Thus, they do not read for pleasure (Emenyonu, 1982, Unoh, 1983, Ekpumobi, 1990). This apparent lack of interest in reading may deter one from developing the skills necessary for extensive reading. Fast and extensive reading will enhance reading competence which a student will require for reading comprehension both at school and later on his life.

Another factor that affects reading competence is administrative problem. This has to do with the curriculum planning. Lack of specific time table for reading and exercise affect students reading competence as they have limited time in the school for reading. Thus, Ade-Ajayi observed that "...absence of reading period on a school time table was due to no knowledge of proper teaching techniques, overcrowded classrooms and inappropriate techniques in teacher training college" (29). Ojo stressed that even in schools where English is taught, the amount of time allotted to reading in the school time table is inadequate. This inevitably affect reading habit of students and by extension, reading competence.

Language level used in the textbook is a very important factor that militate against student reading competence. When the language is above the reader's level, the reader will not understand the content of the materials. This makes reading difficult and uninteresting for the child.

Factors Facilitating Reading Competence

A number of factors can facilitate reading competence. Among these are environmental factors, self confidence and method of teaching.

The home environment has a great effect on the development of pre-reading skills. The foundation laid for a child in the home is very important in the upbringing of that child. In a home where a child has access to reading materials such as books, magazines, newspapers, short stories, novels, etc, the child is highly stimulated and so the hunger to read is aroused at the early stage in life.

Generally, the aim of instilling in young children, pre-reading skills at an early stage is to establish and reinforce the child's understanding of the relationship between print and spoken words. It is aimed at finding out about the child's awareness of the task of reading. Umolu suggests that parents need to recognize that children learn more from what they do than what they say. She asserts that

“if children see you reading in the home, they will grow up with the concept that reading is important, and they will not need any one to lecture them later on the nature and value of learning to read.

Self confidence facilitates reading competence. When a reader has confidence in himself, he reads better. This is beneficial because the more a child reads, the more his brain is sharpened. This makes him to gradually develop himself as an excellent reader.

Another important factor that can facilitate reading competence is the method of teaching. The teacher indeed, plays an important role in the life and development of a child. There is the need for the teacher to engage the children or learners in reading exercises in the classroom and even outside the classroom by giving them comprehension passages to read and answer the questions that follow. When they do this many times, they gradually develop good reading skills and become efficient readers.

Reading is necessary for education to succeed. It makes an individual to function effectively in the society. As an individual reads widely and voraciously, he acquires the ability to communicate effectively. Moreover, the individual becomes enlightened intellectually and socially.

Methodology

The present study employed descriptive survey design method. Population of the study comprised all secondary schools in Afikpo urban. The study adopted purposive sampling technique in the selection of sampled schools in Afikpo urban (due to their strategic locations), whereas random sampling method was used in the selection of the respondents in each school. Data for the study were collected through a structured questionnaire which were administered to the respondents. A total of 720 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents out of which 710 copies were returned in usable form. The qualitative data obtained were analyzed, using frequency account and simply percentage.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Below are the data presentation and analysis. The data will be presented first, then followed by the analysis.

Research I: Do teachers actually teach reading in the classroom?

Table showing students responses on whether they were taught reading at school.

S/No	Question Item	Yes		No		Total
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
1.	Does your teacher teach reading in the classroom?	130	19%	580	81%	710
2.	Does your teacher often read story book to you in the classroom?	210	30%	500	70%	710
3.	Does your teacher often ask you to read aloud in the classroom?	250	35.4%	460	64.6%	710
4.	Does your teacher often give you drilling on silent reading?	230	32.4%	480	67.6%	710

5.	Does your teacher often ask you to read fast in the classroom?	300	42.2%	410	57.8%	710
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Source: Field Survey 2026

In question item 1, table 1, 130 respondents, representing 19% of the population said that their teacher taught them reading in the classroom. However, 580 or 81% of the respondents did not agree that their teacher taught them reading in the classroom. Similarly, in question items 2 and 3, while 210 and 250 respondents, representing 30% and 35.4% of the population respectively, not only agreed that their teachers often read story books to them and often asked them to read aloud in the classroom, 500 and 460, representing 70% and 64.6% of the population responded that their teachers neither read story books to them nor asked them to read aloud in the classroom. On the same hand, while 300, representing 42.2% of the population agreed that their teacher often asked them to read fast in the classroom, 410, or 57.8% gave negative answers.

Research Question II: To what extent does the availability of reading materials affect reading competence?

Table showing students responses on the availability of reading materials.

S/N	Question Item	Yes		No		Total
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
1.	Do you have school library in your school?	355	50%	355	50%	710
2.	Do you often go to the library for private reading?	460	64.7%	250	35.3%	710
3.	Do your parents encourage you to read?	600	84.5%	110	15.5%	710
4.	Are you provided relevant reading materials at school?	463	65.2%	247	34.8%	710
5.	Have you ever been to Afikpo public library for your personal reading?	384	54%	226	45.9%	710

Source: Field Survey 2026

Question numbers 1, 2 and 3 of table 2, where 355, 460 and 600 respondents, representing 50%, 64.7% and 84.5% said that they have library in the school, often go there for their private reading as well as being encouraged by their parents to read, 355, 250 and 110 others, representing 50%, 35.3% and 15.5% answered in the negative. Whereas question numbers 4 and 5 where 463 and 384, representing 65.2% and 54% of the population replied that they were provided reading materials at school and that they have been to the public library for personal reading, 247 and 226 others, representing 34.8% and 45.9%, respectively, said no.

Research Question III: Does lack of interest of the students in reading materials affect their reading competence?

Table showing students' responses on whether lack of interest in reading materials affect their reading competence.

S/No	Question Item	Yes		No		Total
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	

1.	Do you lose interest in reading in the classroom due to anxiety and tension?	531	74.7%	179	25.3%	710
2.	Do you feel discouraged to read due to unfamiliar language of the textbook?	431	60.7%	279	39.3%	710
3.	Does unconducive reading environment affect your interest in reading?	95	13.3%	615	86.7%	710
4.	Does time factor affect your interest in reading	300	42.3%	410	57.7%	710
5.	Do you enjoy reading at all?	555	78.1%	155	21.9%	710
6.	Do you often read for pleasure?	500	70.5%	210	29.5%	710
7.	Have you ever been given any material reward by your teacher or parents for reading?	474	66.7%	236	33.3%	710

Source: Field Survey 2026

Question numbers 1, 2 and 3 of table 3 with 531, 431 and 95 respondents, representing 74.7%, 60.7% and 13.3%. on the one hand, showed those who lose interest in reading in the classroom due to anxiety and tension, felt discouraged to read due to unfamiliar language of the textbook and unconducive reading environment affect their interest in reading, 179, 279 and 615, representing or 25.3%, 39.3% and 86.7%, on the other hand, depicted those who did not lose interest in reading in the classroom due to anxiety and tension, did not feel discouraged to read due to unfamiliar language of the textbook and whose interest in reading were not affected by unconducive environment. Whereas 300 and 555 representing 42.3% and 78.1% affirmed that time factor affect their interest in reading and that they enjoyed reading, respectively, 410 and 155 others, representing 57.7% and 21.9% were not affected by time factor and did not enjoy reading at all.

Finally, the figures 500 and 474, representing 70.5% and 66.7% said that they often read for pleasure and been given material rewards for reading, the other 210 and 236 or 29.5% and 33.3% respondents gave negative answers.

Discussion of Findings

The researcher investigated the “Factors Affecting Reading Competence in English Among Junior Secondary School Students in Afikpo Urban, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. To enhance this, five research questions were drawn to guide the study. Judging from the responses from the questionnaires above, it was established that something needs to be done in order to facilitate reading competence. Looking at the responses from research questionnaire 1-5 which test whether the teachers taught reading and various reading methods or rate used, on the one hand, and how he helped the students to develop reading competence, on the other hand, the following are imperative. While 130, 210 and 250 representing 19%, 30% and 35.4% of the population said their teachers taught reading to them, often read story book to them and often asked them to read aloud in the classroom, the other 580, 500 and 460 or 81%, 70% and 64.6% did not. Again, 230 and 300 which represent 32.4% and 42.2% declared that their teachers often asked them to read silently and fast in the classroom,

respectively, 480 and 410 which represent 67.6% and 57.8% of the entire population respondent negatively. None of the responses above measured up to half of the entire population under investigation. Consequently, this portrays that the teachers were not really helping the students to develop their talents in reading competence. The teachers should, therefore, help to encourage the students to develop their talents in reading by teaching them the various skills in the classroom. The responses arising from questionnaire items of table two test how the existence of library or otherwise affect reading competence. The 50%, 50% responses from the first questionnaire item depict that half of the population has libraries in the schools, the other half do not. The implications is that the unavailability of libraries in some schools will inevitably cause dearth in reading materials and consequently, affect reading competence. However, the various responses emanating from questionnaire items 2-5 of the some table which test whether students go to the libraries for private reading, parents encouragement to read, availability of reading materials and ever been to Afikpo public library for personal reading, though there were variation in answers, the affirmative responses were significant. Thus, we have 64.7% and 35.3%, 84.5% and 15.5%, 65.2% and 34.8% and 54.1% and 45.9%, respectively. Altogether, the affirmative responses emphasize certain urge and interest to read, on the one hand, and availability of reading materials on the other hand which consequently portray reading culture and thus, enhance reading competence.

The responses from questionnaire items 1-7 of table three which variously test what constitute lack of interest in reading, and the incentive given o encourage interest in reading, the following responses were available. Whereas 74.7% and 60.7% of the respondents affirmed that they lose interest in reading due to tension and unfamiliar language of the textbooks, and other 179 and 279, representing 25.3% and 39.3% others did not. Conversely, while 13.3% and 42.3% or 95 and 300 less number of the entire population agreed that unconducive environments and time factors affect their interest in reading, the other 86.7% and 57.7% or 615 and 410 of the entire population were not. Thus, this indicate that more number of students are adaptive to language and environmental factors to reading and positively influence reading competence. Nonetheless, in questionnaire items 5-6 where students interests for reading at all or reading for pleasure were tested, positive responses were received. While 78.1% and 70.5% or 555 and 500 which portrayed about 75 percent of the population and relatively greater number affirmed, 21.9% and 29.5% others did not. These responses encouraged interest in reading which lead to reading competence. Finally, in questionnaire item 7 which enquired whether teachers or parents encouraged reading through material rewards, the responses were in the affirmative, attracting 66.7% more and 33,3% less number of the population or 474 and 236, respectively. This goes a long way to emphasize teachers and parents roles in encouraging reading culture and reading competence.

Summary

Having examined the factors affecting reading competence in Junior Secondary School Students with specific reference to Afikpo Urban of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, the researcher summarizes as follows: Reading should state early in every child. Seminars on reading should be organized in junior secondary schools to improve reading and reading habit. Students should develop interest in reading.

Conclusion

The need for reading in our junior secondary schools should not be over emphasized. Reading is one of the major ways of knowing the thoughts and experiences of other people which results in the acquisition of knowledge. Reading is very essential for the development of the personality in

the students. Students should have this in mind especially, students of Urban Secondary Schools in Afikpo of Ebonyi State as their quest for academic attainment depends largely on the extent to which they read.

Recommendations

Bearing in mind that the importance of reading is the key to achieving higher academic goals and excellence, the researcher makes the following recommendations arising from the findings.

1. There should be constant administration of summary and comprehension exercises in the classroom to enable the students learn how to read.
2. The school authorities should include reading as a separate subject in the school time table so as to enable students see reading as a serious examinable subject. This will help to improve students' acquisition of the skills involved in reading.
3. The government should properly equip libraries in the schools to expose the students to wide range of reading.
4. The Ministry of Education should ensure that teachers employed to teach reading in schools are well trained.
5. Students should be made to take reading practices very serious, considering the fact that their effectiveness in the society depends on their ability to be proficient readers which enhance their expressiveness.
6. Parents should encourage their children by providing them with the necessary textbooks.

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LANGUAGE EDUCATION: TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

When an individual is trained to acquire language skills, it helps to facilitate his/her ability to cope with other skills, which results in personal development that leads to his/her participation in physical, economic, political, social, infrastructural and every other aspect of development. Language education qualifies and enables an individual to apply the skills learnt and acquired into work to achieve sustainable development. It is with language that manpower is built, the workforce responsible for making sure that sustainable development is actualized in a given society. Language imparted by professionals is applied into use. Evidently, the people involved in development and its sustainability must communicate at one time or the other in order to achieve their purpose. Hence, language learned or acquired is needed. The paper therefore, examines the role of language and language education

in the attainment of sustainable development. It explicates the concepts of language education and sustainable development. It goes on to examine the impact of language education on sustainable development. The paper concludes with recommendations that would promote language education and ensure development and its sustainability.

Keywords: Language Education, sustainable, sustainability, development

Introduction

In the contemporary society, people at all stages and spheres of life get educated for different reasons and interests. Language is used as a tool to impart knowledge and transmit information to a particular group of people. Hence, the learning of language is imperative for the development of an individual who eventually develops the physical, economic, academic, environmental, social, political, structural and infrastructural aspects of the society for the betterment of the nation and its citizens. The primary concern is to examine how language education can help in the sustainable development goal. When developments are made and sustained, language education is a viable tool for it. It is a tool in the sense that teaching and learning a language especially the language of the environment of the users, the mother-tongue called first language (L1) and that of a second language (L2) used for communication by a group of people, information will be easily conveyed regarding how to achieve development and its sustainability. Language education helps to produce manpower through the acquisition of skills for development and its sustainability. Language has been defined by various scholars (linguists), all pointing to the fact that it is a system of rules, conventions, arbitrary symbols, codes written or spoken which a group of people communicate with. It is seen as an agreed and understandable symbols used in conveying information and interaction between persons or individuals. Education could be seen as a system of teaching (training) and learning at formal, informal and vocational levels. Language education is the process of planning, developing and implementing the language arts curriculum in such a way that one is trained to acquire language skills that will facilitate his ability to cope with other life skills (Amadi 2014:1). When individuals learn a particular language whether L1 or L2, they apply it in the different areas of development and the sustainability of it. Knowledge is imparted through language acquisition. Information is relayed or conveyed with the use of language. Also, it is with the use of language that development is made and sustained. Development could be seen as increase in growth whether physical, economic, academic, environmental, political, social etc. it is a process of gradually becoming bigger, stronger or more advanced. Also, it is a process of increasing business, trade and industrial activity. A change that makes a product, plan, idea etc better. Development is an evolutionary process in which the human capacity increases in terms of initiating new structures, coping with problems, adapting to continuous change, and striving purposely and creatively to attain new goals. Mensah (2019:4). Sustainability could be seen as a state of maintaining the existing achieved improvement in whatever aspect of life. If something is sustainable, it means maintenance of any positive impact/achievement. It also means being able to continue for a long time without causing damage to the environment. Therefore sustainable development means development that can be continued either indefinitely or for the given time period. Mensah (2019:6). The concern of this paper is to examine the relationship that exists between language education and sustainable development. It will further x-ray how language can be effectively utilized in the transmission of sustainable development ideas to the general populace, both in Nigeria and in other modern societies of the world.

Language Use in a Developing and Developed Society

Language is used in various aspects and spheres of life. It serves different purpose or roles. It is this purpose or role that makes a language important to its users. It is basic to man. With Language man has the capacity for dealing with changes in his environment. With it, man is able to organize his society as well as face the various emergencies of life. Through it, man's survival in a competitive world such as ours is guaranteed. Below are the functions of languages.

- ❖ Education: It is through language that we educate and receive education instructions, class lectures, tutorials and all forms of pedagogical activities that go on in schools are carried out through the language medium.
- ❖ Socialization: Language acquisition is imperative for socialization for people to mix and interact freely with one another, language is needed without it, people are likely to view one another with suspicion and this hinders interaction, integration and socialization.
- ❖ Documentation: Language is a vehicle through which we document information for future use and for posterity. Most of the things we know today are possible because they were documented for us to read. Breakthroughs and other research findings can easily be preserved for generations to come through documentation using language.
- ❖ International Relations & Diplomacy: All these can only be possible through language. No nation is capable of living in isolation without language with which a healthy international relations and diplomacy can be achieved. Languages like English, French, Latin, German (among others) are called international languages because their usage cuts across national boundaries. With such international languages, the entire universe is reduced into one global village, where nations can easily have access to world's science and technology. In addition, peace and mutual existence are sustained through such international languages.
- ❖ Governance and Administration: Language facilitates general administration and governance of a people. Think of the constitution or rules and regulation of a group of people. It is with language that such important documents are written and interpreted.
- ❖ Humanization: Language humanizes mankind as it is only human beings that can use language for the purpose of communication. This makes man a superior creation of the Almighty God.
- ❖ Commerce and Industry: For all forms of business transactions, production, distributions' including international trade, language is simply inevitable.
- ❖ Development: A nation without language can hardly develop. It is through language that research and breakthroughs are made, reported and developed for the benefits of the larger society. The Development which Japan has recorded today through breakthrough in technology wouldn't have been possible without language. In Nigeria, the importance which the national policy on education attaches to the languages policy issues goes to justify the function and importance of language as agent of development, Nwaiwu and Obi (2008:60-64).

Furthermore, the uses of English language in Nigeria are enumerated as follows;

- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Commerce and Technology
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Unifying Instrument
- ❖ Lingua Franca
- ❖ Judiciary
- ❖ Mass Media

Following are:

- ❖ Governance and administration

- ❖ Religion
- ❖ Music & entertainment

Nwaiwu and Obi (2008:64-68)

Language Education

As earlier mentioned, Amadi (2014:1) opines thus, “language education is the process of planning, developing and implementing the language arts curriculum in such a way that one is trained to acquire such a way that one is trained to acquire language skills that will facilitate his ability to cope with other life skills. Language is a medium of communication between the sender and receiver. Both the sender and his receiver are literate as a result of language education.

Background of Language Education in Nigeria

Early efforts in language education (in formal, western type of education) was introduced into the country by the Christian missionaries just before the middle of the nineteenth century. For about four decades after that initial date, both the nature and main thrust of language education in the country were completely left to those missionaries to decide (Taiwo 1980: 10 – 11, Fafuna 1974:92). And given the well-known belief of the missionaries, first, that the African child was best taught in his native language (Hair 1967:6), and, second, that the interests of Christianity would be served by actually propagating religion in indigenous languages. It is not at all surprising that the teaching and learning of indigenous languages received much genuine attention in those early days of western type education in the country. But not everybody liked or approved of the products of such a system of education. Quite on the contrary, members of the then elite were widely of the view that the people turned out under that system of education were not well enough suited to the job market of those days, whose unsatisfied needs were for persons with training in English rather than in the indigenous languages (Taiwo 1980:11). Influenced perhaps only in part by such views, the governments in the country began as from the early 1980’s gradually to intervene in Education of the country with a view to according English a lot more prominence in it. Overtime, that policy succeeded so well that interest in language education in the country shifted substantially away from the indigenous languages. Towards English, the language of the colonial masters. Proof of this was that, first, pupils and their parents gradually formed the opinion which is regrettably still widely held even today that it was financially more rewarding to study English than any of the indigenous languages, second, certification became conditional upon passing English, and, finally, the various governments in the country from the colonial times till well pass the attainment of political independence in 1960 rarely felt that they had any duty to promote the study of the indigenous languages whereas they considered themselves obliged to encourage and even enforce the study of English. Luckily for the indigenous languages, however, the realities of the situation then, as now, were such that the teaching of the indigenous few school children,, if any at all, in those days spoke any English before actually entering school. Such children therefore had will-nilly to be instructed in the medium of their mother – tongues until they had gained enough proficiency in English by their fourth, fifth or even sixth year in school to be able to receive all or most formal instruction in it. But even up to this stage, the mother-tongue existed as an optional subject on the curriculum, particularly in the case of those languages like Efik, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba that were lucky enough not only to have been reduced to writing but also have sufficient reading materials both sacred and secular for use in teaching school children.

Awobuluyi states further the birth of national policy on language education by quoting (Bamgbose 1976: 12 – 13) thus, “Not only have some indigenous languages thus been taught in schools since formal western type education was first introduced into the country, after the attainment of political

independence in 1960, the wisdom of giving English so much importance in Government and education also began gradually to be questioned. Thus, some people felt, and openly canvassed in parliament for English to be replaced as official language by one of our indigenous languages some twenty years after independence”. He continues by quoting (Osaji 1979: 159) thus “others who were particularly worried by the problem most people in the country actually have in understanding English and communicating well in it, advised that more effort should be put into the teaching of the major indigenous languages to enable them to serve as an alternative to English as official means of communication in Government and business”. The overall effect of suggestions and pressures of this kind was to bring about an important shift in the attitude of the government, particularly at the Federal level to the indigenous languages. The shift took, to begin with, the form of an admission by government of what had long been known to linguists and anthropologists, namely, that a language is simultaneously a vehicle for a people’s culture and a means of maintaining and indefinitely preserving that culture. The implication of this, which government came to see and appreciate, is that we are not ultimately to lose our national identity together with our rich indigenous cultures, then we must begin to pay more attention to the teaching of our indigenous languages. In addition to seeing the relationship between language and culture, the government also came to see the indigenous languages more clearly for what they had all along been, viz, a veritable and practical means of communication, some of which could be very easily be harnessed for effecting national integration, a matter of paramount importance for a country still struggling to consolidate its independence. Government began from the late 1970s onward to take official interest in, and make policy pronouncements on the teaching of the indigenous languages, instead of concerning itself solely with English as hitherto. Thus in an official document first published in 1977, revised in 1981, and titled Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE). The Federal Government for the first time laid it down as a policy for the whole country that:

- a. In primary school, which lasts six years, each child must study two languages, namely
 - i. His mother-tongue (if available for study) or an indigenous language of wider communication in his area of domicile, and
 - ii. English language
- b. In Junior Secondary School (JSS), which is of three years duration, the child must study three languages, viz:
 - i. His mother-tongue (if available for study or an indigenous language of wider communication in his area of domicile.
 - ii. English language, and (iii) just any one of the three major indigenous languages in the county, namely, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, provided the language chosen is distinct from the child’s mother-tongue
- c. In Senior Secondary School (SSS), which also lasts three years. The child must study two languages, viz
 - i. an indigenous language and (ii) English language

It should be recalled at this juncture that French and Arabic existed under the policy as language options at both the junior and secondary school levels. Government formulated policies regarding education and language teaching. The government’s power is placed well beyond doubt or dispute, a brand new subsection was written into that portion of the country’s 1989 Constitution dealing with the educational objectives of state policy. The subsection in question, viz: subsection 19(4), says simply that “Government shall encourage the learning of indigenous languages. Each of the languages is by definition a mother tongue, in theory they all qualify to be taught as school subjects

under the NPE policy on language education in primary and junior secondary schools. However, because most of them have such small numbers of speakers, it would not appear at all practical to actually teach them as school subjects for precisely this reason. According to Brann (1977:47), the former National Language Centre, now transformed into the current language 1976, suggested that, in addition to the three major languages, viz: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba only the following nine of the remaining 387 or so indigenous languages in the country should be allowed to feature in the country's formal school system: Edo, Fulfulde, Ibibio, Idoma, Igala, Ijo, Kanuri, Nupe, and Tiv.

As regards the teaching of indigenous second languages, Awobuluyi (1998:3/5) states that the National Policy on Education, as indicated earlier, requires each school child at the Junior secondary school level to study one of those three languages in addition to his mother tongue. However, for practical reasons, as also indicated earlier, many school children cannot actually study their mother tongue but must study an indigenous language of wider communication instead in primary school as well as at the junior secondary school. In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and as a means of preserving the people's culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba

Therefore, Language, whether indigenous or foreign, first language (L1) or second Language (L2) is studied and acquired by all for the sake of communication, which eventually is a vital tool for development and its sustainability.

Sustainable Development

Development

Development could be seen as increase in growth, whether physical, economic, academic, environmental, social etc, and in all aspects of life. It has been defined as the process of gradually becoming bigger, stronger or more advanced. It can be seen as the process of increasing business, trade and industrial activity, change that makes a product, plan, idea etc better (Longman Dictionary 1978:463). These and other definitions are used to shed light on the discourse.

Development as a concept has been associated with diverse meanings, interpretations and theories from various scholars. Development is defined as an evolutionary process in which the human capacity increases in terms of initiating new structures, coping with problems adapting to continuous change and striving purposely and creatively to attain new goals, (Poet, 1999 cited in Du Pisani, 2006).

According to Reyes (2001:), development is understood as a social condition within a nation, in which the needs of its population are satisfied by the rational and sustainable use of national resource and systems. Todaro and smith(2006:) also define development as a multi-dimensional process that involves major changes in social structures, attitudes and institutions, as well as economic growth reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty” Mensah (2019:4 of 21)

Sustainability

Sustainability, on the other hand, could be seen as a state of maintaining the existing achieved improvement in whatever aspect of life. If something is sustainable, it means maintenance of any positive achievement. The word sustainable means (1) able to continue without causing damage

to the environment. (2) able to continue for a long time” (Longman Dictionary 1978: 1780). Literally, sustainability means a capacity to maintain some entity, outcome or process overtime. (Basiago: 1999). However, in development literature, most academics, researchers and practitioners (Gray & Milne 2013, Tjarve & Zemite 2016; Mensah & Enu-kwesi, 2018; Thomas 2015), apply the concept to connote improving and sustaining a healthy economic, ecological and social system for human development. Stoddart (2011) defines sustainability as the efficient and equitable distribution of resources intra-generationally and inter-generationally with the operation of socio-economic activities within the confines of a finite ecosystem. Ben Eli(2015), on the other hand, sees sustainability as a dynamic equilibrium in the process of interaction between the population and the carrying capacity of its environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without producing irreversible adverse effects on the carrying capacity of the environment upon which it depends. From this standpoint (Thomas, 2015) continues that sustainability brings into focus human activities and their ability to satisfy human needs and wants without depleting or exhausting the productive resource of their disposal. This, therefore, provokes thoughts on the manner in which people should lead their economic and social lives drawing on the available ecological resource for human development.

Hak, Janouskova, and Molden (2016) have argued that transforming global society, environment and economy to a sustainable one is one of the most uphill tasks confronting man today since it is to be done within the context of the planet’s carrying capacity. The World Bank (2017) states that this idea calls for innovative approaches to managing realities. In furtherance of this argument, DESA UN (2018) posits that the ultimate objective of the concept of sustainability, in essence, is to ensure appropriate alignment and equilibrium among society, economy and the environment in terms of the regenerative capacity of the planets life-supporting ecosystems, in the view of grossling- goldsmiths (2018) It is this alignment and equilibrium that forms the focus of a meaningful definition of sustainability” in the present discourse.

Sustainable Development

This apt and interesting subject has been a very important discourse in the contemporary time. Olalede (2017: 4) puts it thus, “the term sustainable development only came to the fore in the Brunt land report published in 1987” When development is made, it has to be sustainable. If not sustained, the society wobbles economically, politically, socially, educationally, agricultural etc, and eventually declines in individual expectations/demands. Mensah (2019:5-6 of 21) states that, “sustainable development has become the buzzword in development discourse, having been associated with different definitions, meanings and interpretations. Taken literally, sustainable development would simply mean “development that can be continued either indefinitely or for the given time period (Dernbach, 1998,2003, Lele, 1991; Stddart,2011).

Structurally, the concept can be seen as a phrase consisting of two words, “sustainable” and “development”. Just as each of the two words that combine to form the concept of sustainable development, that is “sustainable” and development”, have been defined variously from various perspectives. The concept of SD has also looked at from various angles, leading to a plethora of definitions of the concept. Although definitions abound with respect to SD, the most often cited definition of the concept is the one proposed by the Brund Hand Commission Report (Schaefer & Crane, 2005). The Report defines SD as development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Acknowledging the pervasiveness of WCED’s definition, cerin (2006) as well as Abubakar (2017) argue that SD is a core concept within global development policy and agenda. It provides a mechanism through which society can interact with the environment while not risking or damaging the resource for the future. Thus, it is a development paradigm as well as concept that calls for

improving living standards without jeopardizing the earth's ecosystems or causing environmental challenges such as deforestation and water and air pollution that can result in problems such as climate change and extinction of species (Benaim & Raftis, 2008; Browning & Rigion, 2019). According to Kolk (2016), SD is achievable through the integration of economic, environmental and social concerns in decision-making processes. However, it is common for people to treat sustainability and SD as analogies and synonyms but the two concepts are distinguishable. According to Diesendorf (2000), sustainability is the goal or endpoint of a process called sustainable development, Gray (2010) reinforces the point by arguing that while "Sustainability" refers to a state, SD refers to the process for achieving this state.

Some scholars interested in development studies have highlighted the pillars of sustainable development. As a visionary and forward-looking development paradigm, SD emphasizes apposite transformation trajectory anchored essentially on social, economic and environmental factors. According to Taylor (2016) the three main issues of sustainable development are economic growth, environmental protection and social equality. Based on this, it can be argued that the concept of SD rests fundamentally on three conceptual pillars. These pillars are "economic sustainability", "social sustainability" and "environmental sustainability"

Economic Sustainability: Economic Sustainability implies a system of production that satisfies present consumption levels without compromising future needs (Lobo, Pietriga & Appert, 2015). Traditionally, economists assuming that the supply of natural resource was unlimited placed undue emphasis on the capacity of the market to allocate resource efficiently, (DU & Kang, 2016). It is also believed that the economic growth would be accompanied by the technological advancement to replenish natural resources destroyed in the production process. Economics consist of markets where transactions occur. According to Dernbach (1993), there are guiding frameworks by which transactions are evaluated and decision about economic activities are made. Three main activities that are carried out in an economy are production, distribution and consumption, but the accounting framework used to guide and evaluate the economy with regard to these activities grossly distorts values and this does not augur well for society and the environment.

Social Sustainability; social sustainability encompasses notions of equity, empowerment, accessibility, participation, cultural identify and institutional stability (Daly, 1992). The concept implies that the people matter since development is about people. Basically, social sustainability connotes a system of social organization that alleviates poverty (Littig & Griebler, 2005). However, in a more fundamental sense, "Social sustainability" relates to the nexus between social conditions such as poverty and environmental distraction (Farazmard, 2016). At the social level, sustainability entails fostering the development of people, communities and cultures to help achieve meaningful life, drawing on proper health care across the globe. According to Kolk (2006), social sustainability is not about ensuring that everyone's needs are met, rather, its aim at providing enabling conditions for everyone to have the capacity to realize their needs, if they so desire. Anything that impedes this capacity is considered a barrier, and needs to be addressed in order for individual, organization or community to make progress towards social sustainability (Brodhag & Taliere, 2006; Pieroban, 2019)

Environmental sustainability; the concept of environmental sustainability is about the natural environment and how it remain productive and resilient to support human life. Environmental sustainability relates to ecosystem integrity and carrying capacity of natural environment (Brodhag & Taliere, 2006). This indicates that sustaining environment and its natural resources is an important aspect of human development.

Adding her opinion to the discourse Olalade (2017:2) cites Durphy et al (2000) that sustainable development recognizes that both the economy and society depend on the biosphere and the

environmental processes taking place within it. Hence, the main goal of a sustainable development process is sustainability which ultimately leads to improved quality of life (Schal tegger et al, 2003). She then mentions development goals thus, “sustainability development can only be achieved in a society if there is political stability, social coherence and opportunities for economic development which are still lacking in most developing countries. The concept will thrive in a society where human rights and inequality has been decreased (Huber,2013). According to a UN (2013) report, “Poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development” are the primary objective and vital requirements for sustainable development, which eventually leads to the protection of the environment. The UN millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) report, *Living beyond our means*, states that “development policies aimed at reducing poverty that ignore the impact of our current behaviour on the natural environment may well be doomed to failure”. There is also a need to institute and build the capacity of national and regional institutions in most developing countries, so that they are capable of implementing, monitoring and evaluating sustainable development goals. Financial support and technical adaptation and transfer from developed countries would also strengthen institutional capacities in developing countries (DESA, 2013).

The Impact of Language Education on Sustainable Development

In actual fact, for developing and its sustainability to thrive in our nation, there is the need for language teaching, learning and acquisition. It is with language that communication is made possible among the citizens of this great country. Amadi (2014:1) quotes (Abdulkarim, 2008) thus: “Language is the vehicle of communication and expression used in all human interactional situation, political, commerce, Education and culture. Language is a tool for communication and a means for creative expression and ability. Language education gives the individual skills to assimilate and synthesize information about events and life. Amadi (2014:2-3) also quotes Ogu, (1992) in affirmation that the role of English language is so pervading and total that one may begin to battle in his/her mind whether English is still a foreign language in Nigeria. This is because English language has been adopted and appropriated by Nigerians, used as the language of education and has been made to fill the roles reserved for the native language. Without language skills, it will be impossible for an instructor to transmit instructional knowledge and train certain skills. When instruction of language, the learner is filled with joy and this motivates him/her to acquire both mechanical and technical manpower. The mastery assures an individual of being productive in other spheres of life. It equips on individual for a better tomorrow.

Language Education is very paramount in the development of an individual and eventually the nation is developed by the same individual. It is the language learned and acquired that will help in this situation. Amadi Corroborates this thus, “Language education is a quintessence for national development. Any curriculum geared toward producing manpower needed for national development is functional education. Skills are inculcated through language. Language education trains one in literacy skills for life-long education. Without language, it will be impossible for an instructor to transmit instructional knowledge further on this, language is the engine of all human information dissemination. No doubt, it serves a crucial role in all human life, its knowledge and how to effectively use it to achieve individual and national objective is a necessity the role and the impact of language education in development and its sustainability. Maintenance of whatever that is established is very paramount in the nation. Language is not an aim in itself but an instrument of communication and cognition and is acquired best when used this way. Engaging in activities where the target language is not the purpose but a medium of obtaining information related to

one's personal interests (arts, science, technology, business, international affairs, travelling, sport, hobbies etc), can be highly motivating, rewarding and productive.

A look at the different pillars of sustainability development and how language education can be applied to ensuring its realization is crucial. To this end, we state and emphasize the pillars of sustainable development, which include the following:

1. **Economic Sustainability:** a system of production that satisfies present consumption levels without compromising future needs: In the chain of economic distribution, there are Producers – Wholesalers – Retailers then to Customers. A proper observation will inform one that, for all these economic entities to exist, develop and get sustained, languages that is acquired through learning is inevitable. Producers communicate with one another in order to fulfill their objectives, likewise the wholesalers, Retailer and the consumers. Those that are interpreting and analyzing the economy, especially the Nigerian economy need to communicate with the use of language. For all Nigerians to develop and sustain the economy, Language is vital.

2. **Social Sustainability:** Social Sustainability was opined by scholars to encompass notions of equity, empowerment, accessibility, participation, cultural identity and institutional stability. The concept implies that the people matter since development is about people (Benaim & Raftis, 2008:). Basically, social science trainability connotes a system of social organization that alleviates poverty “(Littig & Griebler 2005) when we mention social and sociological aspect, we talk about humans in their interactions, how people relate with one another. Of course, the relationship that exists between nations (international diplomacy) states communication which is done using acquired and learned language. Policies cannot be formulated and executed without language. It is through speaking that human beings socialize. Laws are enacted with it strategies and skills of development and maintenance are conveyed/transmitted through language.

3. **Environmental sustainability:** the concept of environmental sustainability is about the natural environment and how it remains productive and resilient to support human life. Environmental sustainability relates to ecosystem integrity and carrying capacity of natural environment (Brodhag & Talioere, 2006:). As earlier stated, economy and society depend on the biosphere and the environment processes taking place within it. Human beings are involved in the whole process of activities carried out in the ecosystem. The productive and resilient abilities found in the environment is always coordinated and controlled by humans who do that using the language of the environment which is acquired through learning. People develop and plan developmental strategies that are achievable and sustainable with the use of acquired and learned language as a means of communication.

From the foregoing discourse, it is clearly evident that language is an indispensable tool in the actualization or attainment of sustainable development. This is because the major role of language in a society is to facilitate communication among the citizens. It is only when meaningful communication takes place that individuals are able to galvanize human and material resources for the realization of set national development goals. For example, language teaching and learning provide the only avenue through which worthwhile ideas, abilities, competences, technical and vocational skills, value systems and cultures of a society are transmitted to learners. This explicates the crucial role of language in education since citizens of a given society would be able to contribute to sustainable development only when they are adequately exposed to meaningful and worthwhile education. Thus, economic, social and environmental sustainability (which scholars consider as indicators of development) cannot be fully achieved in the absence of language, through which citizens of a given society interact, cross-breed ideas, galvanize human resources, plan and execute their conceived development agenda for sustainable growth and development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been established that an individual is taught a language of the environment, whether first language (L1) which is regarded as mother tongue or second Language (L2), which is either another language used by other tribes in the society, seen as indigenous language, especially Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba in Nigeria, or foreign Language like French. English language is a foreign language that has been accepted by Nigerians as Lingua Franca (Language for communication, interaction, integration and pedagogical activities in schools in Nigeria). This language is taught to enable an individual use the skills for development; personal development and that of the nation. Language learning/acquisition builds manpower, the workforce responsible for developing the environment, social, economic, and other aspects of development and the sustainability of all these. The citizens of the nation cannot be developed and be used to develop the nation without language. Developments cannot be sustained outside language learning and acquisition. Hence, the need to prioritize the teaching, learning and acquisition of language for development and its sustainability. The paper concludes by recommending the following: (i) for developments to be made and sustained, government should make provision for training of qualified and certified manpower/workforce by making available instruments (equipment) that help in language teaching, especially equipping language laboratories. (ii) ensure that language teaching is prioritized in schools and in vocational training centres.

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Language and Culture: The Role of Tiv Language in Preserving Tiv Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

Language and culture are closely interconnected aspects of human society. Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle through which culture, traditions, beliefs, and values are transmitted from one generation to another. This paper examines the relationship between language and culture among the Tiv people of Benue State, Nigeria, with particular attention to the role of the Tiv language in preserving Tiv cultural heritage. The study discusses how proverbs, greetings, folktales, songs, naming systems, and oral traditions reflect the worldview and identity of the Tiv people. The paper also highlights the challenges confronting the Tiv language, including the growing influence of English language, urbanization, and declining language use among younger generations. The study concludes that the preservation of the Tiv language is essential for sustaining Tiv cultural identity and recommends deliberate efforts toward language promotion and cultural education. The study adopts Cultural Linguistics Theory as its analytical framework.

Keywords: Language, Culture, Tiv Language, Cultural Heritage, Indigenous Language, Tiv People

Introduction

Language and culture are inseparable elements of human existence. Every society uses language as a medium for expressing cultural values, beliefs, traditions, and social practices. Culture refers to the total way of life of a people, including their customs, beliefs, norms, arts, and social institutions, while language is the primary instrument through which these cultural elements are communicated and preserved. Among the Tiv people of Nigeria, the Tiv language plays a significant role in maintaining cultural identity and transmitting traditional knowledge. The Tiv people are predominantly found in Benue State and are known for their rich cultural heritage, oral traditions, and communal lifestyle. Through language, the Tiv people preserve their history,

values, and worldview. This paper explores the relationship between language and culture among the Tiv people and examines how the Tiv language contributes to the preservation of Tiv cultural heritage.

Concept of Language and Culture

Language is a system of communication used by a group of people within a particular society. According to scholars, language is not merely a tool for communication but also a repository of cultural knowledge and social identity. Through language, people express thoughts, emotions, and cultural experiences.

According to Ogunsiji and Farinde (2012), language is “a means through which members of a society communicate their thoughts, feelings, beliefs and cultural values.”

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o argues that language carries culture and preserves the identity of a people.

Culture, on the other hand, refers to the shared beliefs, practices, customs, norms, and values of a group of people. Culture influences how people interact, dress, eat, marry, celebrate, and relate with one another. It shapes the identity of a community and distinguishes one group from another. Ibrahim (2022) describes culture as the behavioural patterns, beliefs and practices shared by a group of people and transmitted from one generation to another.

The relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted because language reflects the cultural realities of a people. Cultural practices are often encoded in language through idioms, proverbs, songs, folktales, and rituals. Therefore, the loss of a language may result in the gradual disappearance of cultural identity.

The Tiv People and Tiv Language

The Tiv people are one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are mainly located in Benue State, with smaller populations in neighboring states such as Taraba State and Nasarawa State. The Tiv language belongs to the Benue-Congo language family and serves as an important symbol of Tiv identity. Traditionally, the Tiv people are known for farming, communal living, storytelling, music, dance, and respect for elders. These cultural practices are preserved and transmitted through the Tiv language. The Tiv language is widely spoken in homes, markets, traditional gatherings, places of worship, political rallies and ceremonies. It functions as a means of social interaction and cultural continuity among the Tiv people. This study is anchored on cultural linguistics as developed by Farzard Sharifian, this theory posit that language reflects and transmits the cultural knowledge, values, beliefs and worldview of a speech community through linguistics community expressions such as proverbs, folktales, idioms, songs and greetings, cultural knowledge is passed from one generation to another. In the context of this study, the Tiv language serve as a repository of Tiv cultural heritage therefore, its preservation is essential for sustaining the identity, traditions and indigenous knowledge of the Tiv people. Data collected for this work was through interviews, some Tiv native speakers in Wannune were interviewed to get data, and through introspection as a native speaker of Tiv language. Secondary sources of data was used, from credible sources on Tiv cultural heritage.

Tiv Language as a Carrier of Culture

Proverbs and Wise Sayings

Proverbs are an important aspect of Tiv culture. They are used to teach morals, wisdom, and social responsibility. Chinua Achebe describes proverbs as the palm oil with which words are eaten, highlighting their significance in communication and cultural preservation. Tiv elders often

employ proverbs during conversations and dispute resolutions to communicate deeper meanings and life lessons. For example, Tiv proverbs encourage hard work, honesty, patience, and respect for elders. These proverbs preserve indigenous wisdom and reflect the worldview of the Tiv people. Tiv proverbs are a foundation of Tiv culture, using metaphorical language to convey moral lessons, social advice, and practical wisdom in everyday situations. Of all Tiv verbal art forms, proverbs are among the most consistently used in daily interaction. They are employed by both elders and younger people in conversation. Tiv proverbs also serve various social functions: they can be used to advise, correct, shame, praise, or help a speaker navigate difficult situations without losing face.

Comprehensive Tiv Proverbs Collection

1. Agbo ka awa tso inya I pav-

Literal translation: When the water yam grows bigger, the ground will break and give space for it.

Meaning: Do not worry about the size of a problem; when the time comes, there will always be a way out.

2. Or iwan veren aver pe timin nguhar ga-

Literal translation: A crippled person does not choose when to act crippled.

Meaning: You cannot change who you are.

3. Ahi nga hian orapireshe atsenge ahar ga-

Literal translation: A blind person cannot burn two pans of roasted nuts.

Meaning: Once bitten twice shy.

4. Bagu kun a tsuwe a pase ahu-

Literal translation: When a monkey jumps, it must let go of the tree branch.

Meaning: When you stop something, you must stop it completely.

5. Aluer hyev mula ake yo kwaghyan seer aseer kpatema-

Literal translation: When a rat is swollen, it becomes more food for the cat.

Meaning: One person's misfortune can be another person's gain.

6. Bua u alu a tsa ga, ka Aondo a hulen wen iji ye-

Literal translation: A cow without a tail depends on God to chase flies away.

Meaning: God takes care of the helpless.

7. Or u nan yav a ityô i agher yô nana nder a wegh ku human-

Literal translation: He who sleeps with an itchy anus wakes up with a smelly hand.

Meaning: Actions have consequences.

8. Hungwaja soo ka ityo ki kamen-

Literal translation: The cricket loves its head to be pressed.

Meaning: Some stubborn people only respond to force or discipline.

9. Ka we tsembeh orapireshe iyough u ogbongu hondu-

Literal translation: When peeling yam for a blind man, you keep blowing a whistle.

Meaning: Be transparent when dealing with those who cannot see or are unaware.

10. Or u ke soo myam zende a butu-

Literal translation: A foreigner likes sleep so he carries his mat about.

Meaning: Prepare for what you know you need in life.

11. Iyuhe ka mtwem-

Literal translation: Jealousy is ashes.

Meaning: Jealous actions eventually return to harm the person who initiates them.

12. Tyough ki he a kela kar dyer sha inu ga-

Literal translation: The head is there so they will not use the knee for measurement of the cap.

Meaning: The person involved in an issue should be the one to explain it.

13. Kon mom hingir ikyo ga-

Literal translation: One tree does not make a forest.

Meaning: Unity and cooperation are essential for success.

14. Nginya ngi agahar a nyiin kpa I gbe-

Literal translation: A horse has four legs yet it sometimes falls.

Meaning: No one is perfect; humility is important.

15. Kwagh yan u shohor undu kon ga-

Literal translation: The food meant for a toad does not climb trees.

Meaning: What is meant for you will come at the right time.

16. Or u tso tse aii yol ga-

Literal translation: The canoe man does not sleep with dirt on his body.

Meaning: Your work should reflect in your life.

17. Ze gbem hembra ikpagher-

Literal translation: Doing something repeatedly brings improvement.

Meaning: Consistency leads to success.

18. Ka we lu a kpagh u vende Mngishim ga-

Literal translation: When you have a bag, you do not reject garden eggs.

Meaning: Do not hastily reject help or gifts.

19. Gbenda lihe nah kpa nyor ya-

Literal translation: The road is long but it reaches home.

Meaning: Do not give up; persistence leads to success.

20. Ka mtila u ivo I teen I er-

Literal translation: It is how a goat stands that it is sold.

Meaning: Your behavior determines your value.

21. Faga wa ime hembra tugh-

Literal translation: Ignorance is darker than the night.

Meaning: Lack of knowledge is very dangerous.

22. Ka we lu a ikyondu nga u de ave sha kor-

Literal translation: If you do not have clothes, do not keep touching the rope.

Meaning: Do not interfere in matters that do not concern you.

23. Or fe iyange I tondon gbum ga-

Literal translation: No one knows the day a stone may wound his toe.

Meaning: Life is unpredictable.

24. Orhyundu hunde kpa fa a yange a kasua-

Literal translation: Even a mad man knows the days of the market.

Meaning: Do not underestimate people; even the reckless have limits.

25. Iche mende tsea ichugh-

Literal translation: The hair is on the head, not on the forehead.

Meaning: Do not treat everyone carelessly or the same way.

26. Mimi hembra tyumbu –

Literal translation: truth is greater than collateral

Meaning: being honest pays

27. Ishimawan ine mkom –

Literal translation: Patience gives contentment.

Meaning: one should learn to be patient to overlook somethings

28. Mbakoon kon omboo ga –

Literal translation: It is impossible to bend a dry tree.

Meaning: there is time meant for everything and we shouldn't wait till its late

29. Uwaa sen tswen hure – A stream flowing alone has many bends.

30. Kpev yar ikyoo gema koso iyongo ga – A male goat acts for itself.

31. Atseree wua alom –

Literal translation: Trickery killed the hare.

Meaning: one should desist from craftiness

32. Uya gege uya ihoon ve –

literal translation: you have eaten so much now you have eaten the rotten thing.

Meaning: Excess leads to bad consequences.

33. Orpinen tsum ga –

Literal translation: one who ask does not get lost.

Meaning: He who asks gets it right.

34. Iti idedoo hembra tungu – A good name is better than money.

35. Or ye wan tswen ga –

literal meaning: Nobody enjoys a child alone.

Meaning: one should learn to let others benefit from what they have

36. Ka tema I mongu Mbagbera ve fe iwa er-

Literal translation: It's by sitting together that Mbagbera knows how to do blacksmith.

Meaning; unity and togetherness bring knowledge and progress.

Cultural linguistics theory explains that language is a repository of a peoples cultural knowledge values and worldview. This evident in the Tiv proverbs which embody the wisdom beliefs and moral principles of the Tiv people. Proverbs like **gbenda lihe nah kpa nyor ya**. **Gbenda** represents challenges then **ya** represents success. This proverbs reflects and teaches that no matter how difficult a situation or task is, with determination one can get it done. This proverb is a reflection of the committed spirit of a Tiv man and through such proverb, the Tiv language preserves indigenous knowledge and transmits it from one generation to another. Therefore the continued use of Tiv language is essential for safeguarding Tiv cultural heritage.

Mimi hembra tyumbu, which means being honest pays. This encourages honesty and the spirit of honesty is handed down from generations.

Ka tema imongu mba gbera ve fe iwa er. Empathizes that unity and togetherness bring knowledge and progress and this knowledge is preserved through the use of proverbs as handed down from generation. The naming system is another way the Tiv values are preserved, names like Angbaindoo which is all about brotherhood and love, Bemdoo,encouraging peaceful coexistent and Suurshater which is putting your trust in God. These names represent and encourages unity, peaceful living and total trust in God and these values are preserved and handed down from generations through names.

Greetings and Respect

Greetings in Tiv culture are highly significant and reflect respect, humility, and social relationships. The Tiv language contains various forms of greetings depending on age, status, and situation. Proper greetings are regarded as signs of good upbringing and moral discipline.

The use of respectful expressions in Tiv demonstrates how language reflects cultural values and social structure. **U ndever (good morning), u pande ve (good evening), msugh** etc.

Folktales and Oral Tradition

Folktales are important components of Tiv oral tradition. Traditionally, elders narrated stories to children in the evenings to teach moral lessons and preserve community history. These stories often involve animals, heroes, and supernatural beings.

Through folktales, young people learn virtues such as honesty, courage, kindness, and obedience. The Tiv language serves as the medium through which these stories are preserved and transmitted across generations. Stories about the hare and its trickery ways are often told from generation to generation.

Traditional Songs and Dance

Traditional Tiv songs and dances are deeply connected to language and culture. Songs performed during marriages, festivals, funerals, and social ceremonies communicate communal values and historical experiences. The lyrics of Tiv songs often contain praise, advice, satire, and historical narratives. Without the Tiv language, the meanings and cultural significance of these songs may be lost.

Naming System

Names among the Tiv people often reflect cultural beliefs, historical events, family circumstances, or religious values. Tiv names carry meanings that reveal social identity and family heritage.

For example, some Tiv names may express gratitude, describe birth circumstances, or honor ancestors. The meanings embedded in these names can only be fully understood through knowledge of the Tiv language and culture.

names like:

Tyowua -the kinsmen have killed

Ngodoo- mother is good

Mbatsavwua- witches has killed

Ngohide-mother has returned

Terhide- the father has returned

Tarvihi- the world has spoiled

Ortserga- nobody lives forever

Orhemba- someone pass another

Igbadoo- maternal lineage is good

Tereramodoo- God has done me well

kwagghemba- I am defeated

Aondonenge- God sees

Mluwankumam-I am contented with my lot

Bemdoo-peace is good

Msurshima- my solace

Aondokator- God is king

Orseer- someone has added

Oryina- a human is not supernatural

Mbakosun- people are gossiping about us

Suurshater- trust in the Lord

Hemenseter- lead us Lord

Dooshimauter- the love of God

Sueseter-support us Lord

Msendoo-prayer is good

Tyoapine- the kinsmen will ask

Angbaindoo- a sibling is good

Ornguga- there is no man

Mbasen- people are laughing

Mbalamen- people are talking

There are also names given to children because of circumstances, for instance at the death of a father the next child if it's a boy is named **Terundu** or **Terhide** meaning, father has left or father has returned. **Ngoudu** is given to female children who lost their mothers or mother figures. A mother or family that has gone through a lot of difficulties or challenges will name their child **Yanguchan** which means house is difficult depicting the situation at home. **Movihimze** none is bad, is usually given to a child that the family has a history of birthing girls. **Kumawuese** literal translating it is enough to give thanks. This is a name given to a child whose family has been blessed with many children or good things. **Mgbanyi**, when a mother is not regarded or not treated well in her husband's home, such a mother names her son **Mgbanyi** which means I am nothing. Tiv names tell stories, there are children bearing names of presidents and prominent people, you hear names like Shehu, Shagari, Buhari, Tinubu, Jonathan, Akume, Awolowo, Obasanjo, Thabo Mbeki, Mandela even Mugabe.

Ankpe More is a name of a girl who was born at the time the brand of more beer was released. Despite the civilization and exposure, the Tiv pattern of naming children is still practiced.

There has been a shift in naming as we often hear biblical names or Christian inclined names, for example:

Tomuter, Shashimaiter, Ivseter, Ivimter, Aondosoo, Ivandeiter, Shaikumiter, Kenena, Lianter.

The above are Christian names with godly meaning.

Challenges Facing the Tiv Language

Despite its cultural importance, the Tiv language faces several challenges in contemporary society.

Influence of English Language

English language, being the official language of Nigeria, dominates education, administration, and media communication. Many parents encourage their children to speak English more frequently than indigenous languages, leading to reduced fluency in Tiv among younger generations.

Urbanization and Globalization

Urbanization and globalization have contributed to cultural changes among Tiv youths. Many young people living in urban areas prefer English or Nigerian Pidgin to Tiv language. This situation threatens the continuity of indigenous linguistic and cultural practices.

Decline in Oral Tradition

Modern technology and changing lifestyles have reduced the practice of traditional storytelling and communal gatherings. As oral traditions decline, cultural knowledge previously transmitted through language may gradually disappear.

Parental Attitudes toward Tiv Language Acquisition

Due to modernization and globalization parental language choices has greatly been affected. Many parents now prioritize English and foreign cultural practices over the Tiv language, resulting in weakened inter-generational language transmission. Consequently, the Tiv language is gradually losing prestige posing a serious threat to the preservation of Tiv cultural heritage.

The Need for Preservation of Tiv Language and Culture

The preservation of Tiv language is essential for maintaining Tiv cultural identity and heritage. Indigenous languages serve as repositories of traditional knowledge and collective memory. When a language disappears, aspects of culture attached to it may also vanish.

To preserve the Tiv language and culture, the following measures are necessary:

1. Tiv language should be encouraged in homes and communities.

2. Schools should promote the teaching of Tiv language and literature.
3. Cultural festivals and traditional events should be supported.
4. Tiv folktales, songs, and oral histories should be documented.
5. MEDIA organizations should broadcast programs in Tiv language.

These efforts will help preserve Tiv cultural heritage for future generations.

Conclusion

Language and culture are closely related aspects of human society. Among the Tiv people, language serves as a powerful instrument for preserving cultural identity, traditional values, and historical knowledge. Through proverbs, greetings, folktales, songs, and naming systems, the Tiv language reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Tiv people.

However, the Tiv language currently faces challenges arising from modernization, urbanization, and the growing dominance of English language. There is therefore a need for deliberate efforts to preserve and promote the Tiv language as an essential component of Tiv cultural heritage. Preserving indigenous languages like Tiv is not only important for cultural continuity but also for the protection of linguistic diversity and African cultural identity.

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Harnessing Nigeria's Linguistic Diversity for Market Intelligence: A Case Study of Plateau Languages in Socio-Economic Transformation

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Abstract

Nigeria's vast linguistic diversity, with over 500 indigenous languages, presents both challenges and opportunities for socio-economic development. While market research in the country has historically emphasized English and, to some extent, Pidgin, this narrow linguistic focus overlooks the strategic value of multilingual data for understanding consumer behavior and enhancing market intelligence. This article explores how Nigeria's linguistic resources, with special attention to Plateau State — one of the most linguistically diverse regions in the world — can be harnessed for socio-economic transformation. Major Plateau languages such as Berom, Ngas, Mwaghavul, Tarok, Goemai, and Ron are examined as case illustrations of how indigenous languages shape trade, communication, and local economies. Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative, descriptive case-study approach based on documentary analysis of relevant literature and secondary materials. The discussion argues that multilingual data can offer useful insights into market trends, brand loyalty, and community-specific needs across diverse sectors, including agriculture, healthcare, education, and financial inclusion. However, challenges such as under-documentation of minority languages, lack of natural language processing tools, and policy neglect remain significant obstacles. The study concludes that rethinking linguistic diversity as an economic resource, rather than a barrier, is vital for inclusive development in Nigeria. It recommends stronger policy frameworks, technological innovation, and public-private partnerships to integrate indigenous languages into national and regional market intelligence systems.

Keywords: Multilingual Data, Market Intelligence, Linguistic Diversity, Plateau State, Socio-Economic Transformation, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria is widely recognized as one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with estimates ranging from 500 to over 520 indigenous languages spoken across its six geo-political zones (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2022). This diversity, far from being a mere cultural artifact, holds enormous potential for economic development when systematically harnessed for market intelligence. Language shapes how people think, communicate, and make consumer choices, thus becoming a key variable in understanding markets and designing socio-economic policies (Bamgbose, 2020). However, conventional approaches to market research in Nigeria continue to rely heavily on English and, to some extent, Pidgin, neglecting the deep insights that indigenous languages could provide about consumer behavior, local identities, and purchasing decisions. At the national level, Nigeria's major lingua-cultural clusters — Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo — have historically dominated the narrative of language and commerce. Yet, this framework often overshadows other regions with rich linguistic mosaics that play critical roles in shaping local economies. Plateau State, situated in North-Central Nigeria, is a unique case. With more than forty indigenous languages, Plateau is considered one of the most linguistically diverse areas not just in

Nigeria, but globally (Blench, 2021). Among its most widely spoken languages are Berom, Ngas, Mwaghavul, Tarok, Goemai, and Ron, each serving as a cultural anchor for local communities and facilitating trade, traditional governance, and intergroup relations. This multilingual reality provides fertile ground for rethinking market intelligence — not as a one-size-fits-all English-driven exercise, but as a nuanced, language-sensitive strategy that reflects consumer realities at the grassroots.

The intersection between linguistic diversity and socio-economic transformation is particularly relevant for Nigeria's emerging digital economy. The rise of mobile technology, social media, and artificial intelligence has made it increasingly possible to capture and analyze large volumes of multilingual data. For instance, analyzing consumer conversations in indigenous Plateau languages such as Ngas or Mwaghavul on local radio stations, town markets, or digital platforms can reveal patterns of demand, trust, and brand loyalty that may not be visible through English-only data collection. Similarly, tailoring financial services, healthcare campaigns, or agricultural innovations in Tarok or Berom can enhance accessibility, acceptance, and impact among rural populations who may not be proficient in English.

Despite this potential, Nigeria's market research ecosystem faces significant challenges in integrating multilingual data. The dominance of English as the official language and as the medium of instruction in schools has led to the marginalization of indigenous languages in formal economic planning. Furthermore, Plateau's smaller languages are under-documented, and the absence of robust Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools for them limits their visibility in big data analytics. These challenges highlight a critical gap: while Nigeria's linguistic diversity could serve as a driver for inclusive socio-economic transformation, insufficient attention to multilingual data risks entrenching inequalities and limiting innovation.

This article therefore seeks to interrogate the role of multilingual data in market intelligence with a specific focus on Nigeria, while situating Plateau State's major languages as a microcosm of the broader national reality. By exploring how Berom, Ngas, Mwaghavul, Tarok, Goemai, and Ron — alongside Nigeria's other major language blocs — influence consumer behavior and market structures, the study underscores the importance of harnessing linguistic diversity as a tool for development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing recognition of language as a critical factor in economic communication, Nigeria's market intelligence practices remain predominantly monolingual or limited to major lingua francas such as English, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. This neglects the vast number of smaller linguistic communities whose economic behaviors remain undocumented and unaccounted for. Consequently, businesses risk missing market opportunities, while government policies may fail to capture the full range of citizen experiences and aspirations.

Objectives of the Study

This paper seeks to:

1. Explore the role of Nigeria's linguistic diversity in shaping consumer behavior and market dynamics.
2. Analyze the potential of multilingual data in strengthening market intelligence systems.

3. Demonstrate how harnessing linguistic diversity can contribute to Nigeria's socio-economic transformation.
4. Identify challenges and propose strategies for integrating multilingual data into policy and business practices.

Research Questions

1. How does Nigeria's linguistic diversity influence market behavior and consumer engagement?
2. What role can multilingual data play in enhancing market intelligence in Nigeria?
3. In what ways can multilingual insights drive socio-economic transformation?
4. What challenges hinder the integration of Nigeria's linguistic diversity into market research, and how can they be addressed?

In light of these questions, this paper argues that Nigeria's multilingual resources, when systematically documented and analyzed, can serve as a powerful tool for socio-economic growth and inclusivity. The Plateau examples presented in the paper are therefore treated as illustrative case examples drawn from the reviewed literature and contextual discussion; they are not presented as the results of a new field survey or experiment conducted by the authors. This approach provides a basis for examining the potential of multilingual data for market intelligence while identifying areas requiring future empirical investigation. The study relies on secondary documentary materials, particularly the literature cited in the paper on Nigerian multilingualism, Plateau languages, language policy, multilingual communication, and the technological processing of language data. The materials were purposively selected for their relevance to the study objectives and research questions. The analysis is thematic, focusing on the relationship between language, market communication, consumer engagement, socio-economic participation, technological possibilities, and the challenges of incorporating minority languages into market intelligence. This paper adopts a qualitative, descriptive case-study design based on documentary analysis. Plateau State is used as the focal case because of its marked linguistic diversity and the relevance of its indigenous languages to local economic and social activities.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative, descriptive research design to examine how Nigeria's multilingual environment can support the generation of market intelligence. Data were collated from multilingual sources, including consumer expressions, local-language interaction, interviews, and observations. The use of indigenous languages alongside English enabled study to capture culturally and linguistically specific information that may not be adequately represented in English-only data. The collated data were translated, coded, categorized and thematically analyzed to identify recurring consumer needs, preferences, attitudes, buying behaviors, and market trends. These findings were then interpreted as market intelligence, providing insights that can support product, and market communication development.

Multilingual Data

Multilingual data refers to information collected and processed in multiple languages, including spoken, written, and digital texts. Such data may arise from social media interactions, consumer surveys, product reviews, advertising content, and everyday communication in markets. In Nigeria, multilingual data includes both dominant national languages (Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and

Nigerian Pidgin) and minority languages like Tarok, Mwaghavul, Goemai, Afizere, and Berom in Plateau State, which carry vital economic and cultural information.

Market Intelligence

Market intelligence involves gathering and analyzing information about markets, competitors, and consumers to guide decision-making. It encompasses customer behavior insights, demand trends, and competitive positioning. For multilingual societies, incorporating linguistic diversity into market intelligence ensures inclusivity and cultural relevance.

Linguistic Diversity

Linguistic diversity refers to the range of languages spoken within a geographical space. Nigeria's multilingualism mirrors both unity and fragmentation. On one hand, it enriches cultural heritage and provides multiple channels of communication; on the other, it complicates market outreach and policy uniformity (Bamgbose, 2020). In Plateau State, for example, Ngas, Mwaghavul, and Tarok speakers may respond differently to market surveys depending on whether the survey is in Hausa, English, or their native languages.

Theoretical Framework

Sociolinguistic Theory

Sociolinguistic perspectives emphasize the relationship between language and society. In Nigeria, language choice reflects identity, solidarity, and trust. For example, a trader in Jos Main Market may be more inclined to share authentic views if interviewed in Tarok or Mwaghavul than in English, which is often perceived as elitist (Yakubu, 2019).

Consumer Behavior Theory

Consumer behavior theories explain how cultural and linguistic contexts shape buying decisions. A Berom-speaking farmer's preference for an agricultural product may hinge on whether advertisements or extension services are delivered in Berom, Hausa, or English. Language thus directly influences how products are perceived, trusted, and adopted.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Diffusion of Innovation Theory explains how innovations spread within a social system. Language plays a key role in this diffusion process. In Plateau State, awareness campaigns about mobile money services gained faster acceptance when promoted in Hausa and local languages, rather than in English alone.

Big Data and Natural Language Processing (NLP) Approaches

Modern theories of big data emphasize how unstructured multilingual data (texts, audio, online posts) can be processed through NLP to yield actionable insights (Chakraborty & Joseph, 2017). For Nigeria, this means developing AI models that recognize not only English and Hausa but also underrepresented Plateau languages like Mwaghavul and Goemai.

Multilingual Data as a Bridge Between Language and Economy

The theoretical assumption in this paper is that language is not just a cultural resource but also an economic asset. Businesses and governments that neglect minority language speakers risk excluding large consumer segments. In Plateau State, for instance, Tarok and Afizere speakers constitute vibrant communities engaged in agriculture, trade, and crafts. Their economic

contributions are significant, but their voices may be underrepresented in market surveys conducted only in English or Hausa.

Moreover, linguistic diversity influences not only consumer preferences but also access to socio-economic opportunities. Health campaigns, agricultural extension services, and financial inclusion projects that adopt a multilingual approach often report higher participation and adoption rates. Thus, the interplay of sociolinguistic, consumer, and innovation theories provides the framework for analyzing how Nigeria's linguistic resources can be systematically harnessed for transformation.

Nigeria's Linguistic Landscape

Nigeria is home to one of the richest linguistic ecologies in the world, with more than 500 languages spoken across its diverse ethnic groups (Eberhard et al., 2022). Four languages dominate in terms of spread and socio-economic influence: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Nigerian Pidgin.

Hausa functions as the main trade language across Northern Nigeria and parts of the Middle Belt, including Plateau State. It is widely used in markets, transportation, and media.

Yoruba dominates commercial and social interactions in the South-West, particularly Lagos, which doubles as Nigeria's financial hub.

Igbo is central to trade networks in the South-East and has diasporic economic influence across Nigeria.

Nigerian Pidgin serves as a unifying urban lingua franca, bridging gaps across ethnic lines, particularly in cities like Lagos, Abuja, Warri, and Port Harcourt.

These dominant languages not only enable interethnic communication but also shape consumer markets, advertising, and business negotiations. However, this concentration on "big" languages risks marginalizing the vast number of minority languages that drive rural and local economies.

Plateau State as a Microcosm of Linguistic Diversity

Plateau State exemplifies Nigeria's multilingual reality. The state is estimated to have more than 40 indigenous languages, including Ngas (Angas), Mwaghavul, Tarok, Goemai, Berom, Afizere, Ron, Pyem, and others (Blench, 2021). These languages, though not nationally dominant, are deeply entrenched in the daily socio-economic lives of their speakers.

1. Ngas (Angas): Spoken predominantly in Pankshin and Kanke LGAs, Ngas serves as both a cultural and economic tool. Traders in rural markets often negotiate and build trust in Ngas, even if they can communicate in Hausa or English. Market surveys conducted in Ngas elicit more candid responses compared to those in Hausa (Yakubu, 2019).

2. Tarok: Tarok speakers, found mainly in Langtang North and South LGAs, are known for their strong participation in agriculture, military service, and local politics. In the agricultural sector, buyers and sellers often rely on Tarok for price bargaining, making it a critical language for agricultural market intelligence.

3. Mwaghavul: Spoken around Mangu, Mwaghavul plays a crucial role in local trade and communal festivals, where economic transactions intertwine with cultural practices. Businesses promoting products such as fertilizers or farm implements achieve better penetration when communication includes Mwaghavul.

4. Berom: The Berom people, native to Jos South, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom, play an influential role in mining, crafts, and agriculture. Their language is a powerful tool for community mobilization, especially in grassroots initiatives and local cooperatives.

5. Goemai: Concentrated in Shendam LGA, Goemai is widely spoken in local markets and administrative centers. It has potential for commercial advertising, particularly in food and agro-allied industries.

Economic Potential of Linguistic Diversity

The economic relevance of these languages lies in their role as vehicles of trust, loyalty, and participation in the market economy. In Plateau State, a farmer in Langtang may respond more positively to an agricultural extension message delivered in Tarok than in Hausa or English. Similarly, advertising a microfinance service in Ngas or Berom can yield stronger adoption rates than generic Hausa-based messaging.

Beyond Plateau, similar trends are visible across Nigeria. For example: Hausa-language campaigns significantly boosted mobile money adoption in Northern Nigeria.

Igbo-language branding strengthens cultural connection in Southeast trade networks. Pidgin-English marketing by telecom companies like MTN and Globacom has successfully captured urban youth markets. The implication is that linguistic diversity is directly tied to economic participation and market penetration. Local languages not only carry consumer insights but also reduce the risk of alienation and mistrust in economic initiatives.

Linguistic Marginalization and Its Costs

Despite this potential, most Nigerian businesses and policy actors remain focused on English and a handful of lingua francas. This creates what Odebode and Afolabi (2021) term “linguistic invisibility”, where large consumer groups—especially rural populations—are excluded from economic data collection. In Plateau State, minority languages like Pyem or Ron rarely feature in surveys or advertisements, even though their speakers are economically active.

The economic cost of this neglect is substantial: businesses may underestimate demand, governments may misalign policies, and communities may feel excluded from development initiatives. By contrast, multilingual market intelligence that incorporates minority languages can provide a fuller, more inclusive picture of Nigeria’s socio-economic realities.

Defining Multilingual Data for Market Insights

In market intelligence, multilingual data refers to consumer-related information expressed in diverse languages across spoken, written, and digital platforms. This data includes social media conversations, product reviews, call-center transcripts, trade negotiations, rural market surveys, and local advertising messages. In a multilingual country like Nigeria, relying only on English-language data excludes the majority of consumers, especially rural dwellers.

For instance, a farmer in Mangu (Plateau State) may call a radio program in Mwaghavul to discuss fertilizer shortages, while a trader in Langtang may express her opinion in Tarok about fluctuating crop prices. If these communications are captured only in Hausa or English, valuable nuances may be lost. Multilingual data thus ensures cultural inclusivity and accurate representation of consumer needs.

Current Practices in Nigeria’s Market Research

Traditional Nigerian market research has largely been conducted in English, sometimes supplemented with Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Pidgin for wider reach. While effective at a national scale, this approach often overlooks minority-language consumers who may not be fully comfortable expressing their views in dominant tongues.

For example: National telecom surveys typically use Hausa or English in Northern Nigeria, leaving out Goemai or Tarok speakers in Plateau's rural regions. Consumer preference studies in Jos often default to English or Hausa, yet many Berom and Afizere traders negotiate primarily in their mother tongue. This gap underscores the need to systematically collect multilingual data from Nigeria's diverse communities. The sources of these multilingual data in Nigeria are:

1. **Social Media Platforms:** Platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), and WhatsApp have become spaces where Nigerians mix languages freely. Posts often feature code-switching between English, Pidgin, Hausa, and local languages like Tarok or Berom. These unstructured multilingual posts can be analyzed for consumer sentiment.
2. **Radio and Community Media:** In Plateau State, community radio stations broadcast in local languages such as Mwaghavul, Ngas, Tarok, and Goemai. Call-in programs and adverts in these languages offer rich, real-time multilingual data about consumer opinions.
3. **Market Surveys and Focus Groups:** Surveys administered in indigenous languages elicit more authentic and detailed responses. For instance, respondents in Shendam LGA may give more nuanced answers in Goemai compared to Hausa.
4. **Consumer Service Interactions:** Call centers and mobile money services often record consumer complaints in multiple languages. Analyzing these conversations provides direct feedback about product accessibility and customer satisfaction.
5. **Traditional Market Transactions:** Plateau's rural markets—like those in Langtang, Pankshin, and Barkin Ladi—are rich linguistic spaces where buyers and sellers negotiate in local languages. Capturing this oral data can reveal consumption patterns invisible to formal surveys.

Technologies for Processing Multilingual Data

Modern Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools can help convert raw multilingual data into meaningful market insights. However, Nigerian languages remain underrepresented in computational resources (Chakraborty & Joseph, 2017).

Machine Translation (MT): Tools that translate Tarok or Mwaghavul into Hausa/English can make rural consumer voices accessible to wider business audiences.

Sentiment Analysis: AI models can analyze positive or negative consumer feedback in languages like Ngas or Berom.

Speech Recognition: Transcribing radio call-ins in Goemai or Afizere for further analysis.

Text Mining: Extracting keywords from multilingual social media posts about products and services.

Currently, most NLP systems in Nigeria are optimized for English, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, leaving minority languages marginalized (Yakubu, 2019). Developing resources for Plateau languages can improve the inclusivity of market intelligence.

Case Examples of Multilingual Data in Practice

Telecommunications Industry: MTN and Globacom have successfully deployed Pidgin and Hausa-based advertising, which significantly boosted consumer engagement in Northern and urban markets. **Agricultural Extension in Plateau State:** Pilot projects where information on improved maize seeds was shared in Tarok and Mwaghavul reported higher farmer adoption rates than when the same message was delivered only in Hausa.

Health Campaigns: COVID-19 awareness messages in Ngas, Goemai, and Berom reached rural Plateau communities better than English-only campaigns.

Opportunities Ahead

Harnessing multilingual data in Nigeria holds great promise: Businesses can segment consumers more effectively by identifying preferences expressed in local languages.

Governments can design policies based on localized feedback, ensuring grassroots participation. NGOs and development agencies can reach vulnerable groups by analyzing indigenous-language concerns in health, education, and finance. Plateau State, with its dense multilingualism, offers an excellent testing ground for multilingual market intelligence models that could be scaled nationwide. Language is more than a tool of communication—it is a medium of participation in socio-economic life. In Nigeria, where consumer decisions, market negotiations, and political mobilization are deeply tied to linguistic identity, multilingual data can serve as a catalyst for inclusive socio-economic development (Bamgbose, 2020). Harnessing linguistic diversity enables governments, businesses, and development agencies to design programs and products that reflect the lived realities of citizens across ethnic and linguistic groups.

Agricultural Development

Agriculture remains the backbone of Nigeria's economy, employing about 35% of the labor force. Yet, many extension programs fail because they are delivered in English or dominant lingua francas that do not resonate with local farmers.

National Example: Agricultural campaigns in Hausa increased fertilizer adoption in Northern Nigeria compared to English-only initiatives.

Plateau Case Study: In Langtang (Tarok-speaking areas), farmers responded more positively to training on improved cassava cultivation when information was provided in Tarok. Similarly, Mwaghavul-speaking farmers in Mangu adopted hybrid maize seeds faster when messages were translated into their local language.

Implication: Collecting multilingual data on farmers' needs and tailoring messages in their indigenous languages enhances agricultural productivity and food security.

Healthcare Access and Public Health Campaigns

Health outcomes are strongly linked to effective communication. Multilingual data can identify language gaps in health campaigns and ensure inclusivity.

National Example: During the COVID-19 pandemic, multilingual radio jingles in Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo improved compliance with preventive measures.

Plateau Case Study: Local campaigns against malaria and maternal mortality were more effective in Berom and Goemai-speaking communities when delivered in their mother tongues. Health workers reported higher attendance at vaccination clinics when messages were aired in Afizere rather than English (Yakubu, 2019).

Implication: Using indigenous languages in health communication reduces misinformation and increases trust in medical services.

Financial Inclusion

Access to banking, credit, and digital finance is a major driver of socio-economic empowerment. However, many Nigerians remain excluded because financial institutions often communicate in English or Hausa, neglecting local languages.

National Example: Mobile money adoption in Northern Nigeria surged after companies launched Hausa-language USSD codes and customer support lines.

Plateau Case Study: In Shendam, Goemai-speaking traders preferred microfinance institutions that explained repayment procedures in their mother tongue. Similarly, Berom-speaking artisans in Jos South showed higher willingness to join cooperative savings groups when the terms were explained in Berom rather than English.

Implication: Financial literacy campaigns and services offered in minority languages can expand financial inclusion and empower grassroots economies.

Education and Skills Development

Language is central to knowledge transmission. In Nigeria, reliance on English-only curricula often excludes learners from rural and minority-language communities.

National Example: Studies show that children taught in their mother tongue during the first three years of schooling perform better academically than those taught only in English.

Plateau Case Study: Non-formal vocational training programs in Mwaghavul and Ngas significantly improved participation among young women in tailoring and entrepreneurship initiatives. Conversely, programs delivered exclusively in English had lower attendance and retention rates.

Implication: Harnessing multilingual data about learners' linguistic preferences can help policymakers design inclusive educational strategies that support literacy, skills acquisition, and employability.

Cultural Industries and Local Markets

Nigeria's cultural industries—music, film, crafts, and festivals—are deeply rooted in language. Data from multilingual platforms can guide investment in cultural tourism and creative economies. National Example: The success of Nollywood films in Yoruba and Igbo demonstrates the economic value of indigenous-language creativity.

Plateau Case Study: Festivals like Nzem Berom, Ilum OTarok, Pu'uskat (Mwaghavul festival), Bit Goemai and Pusedung (Ngas festival) attract local and international visitors. Market intelligence gathered in Berom, Tarok, Mwaghavul, Goemai and Ngas about consumer spending patterns during these events can inform tourism development strategies.

Implication: Local languages are not barriers to development but assets for cultural and economic sustainability.

Toward Inclusive Socio-Economic Transformation

The examples above demonstrate that multilingual data is not merely about preserving languages but about unlocking socio-economic opportunities. By systematically integrating Nigeria's linguistic diversity into agricultural programs, health campaigns, financial inclusion projects, and education, policymakers can design interventions that are culturally resonant and economically effective. Plateau State, with its rich linguistic tapestry, illustrates the transformative potential of a multilingual approach. If minority languages like Tarok, Goemai, or Afizere are integrated into development frameworks, they can bridge the gap between grassroots realities and national transformation goals.

Data Collection Challenges

Collecting multilingual data in Nigeria faces both structural and methodological obstacles.

Low literacy levels: Many Nigerians, especially in rural Plateau communities, are literate only in their mother tongue or may be semi-literate in Hausa or English (Yakubu, 2019). This makes it difficult to design standard written surveys.

Dialectal variations: Languages like Tarok and Mwaghavul have dialect differences that complicate the process of creating uniform survey instruments. For instance, a word in Tarok used in Langtang North may have a different connotation in Langtang South.

Resource constraints: Unlike Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, most Plateau languages lack dictionaries, orthographies, and standardized writing systems (Blench, 2021). Without these, data collection becomes inconsistent and prone to misinterpretation.

Technological Limitations

The potential of Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in analyzing multilingual data is limited by the lack of digital resources for Nigerian languages.

Underrepresentation of minority languages: While Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo have some digital corpora, Plateau languages like Goemai, Berom, and Afizere are virtually absent in NLP databases (Chakraborty & Joseph, 2017).

High cost of digitization: Developing language models for hundreds of Nigerian languages requires massive investments in computational linguistics and data annotation.

Error-prone machine translation: Existing machine translation systems often fail to capture cultural nuances or idiomatic expressions, leading to distorted insights. For example, a Tarok proverb about farming may be mistranslated into meaningless English text.

Policy Neglect

Nigeria's language policies focus on English as the official language, with Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo recognized as major regional languages. Minority languages, including those in Plateau State, receive little institutional support (Bamgbose, 2020).

Market surveys: Most national surveys—such as Demographic and Health Surveys—use Hausa in Plateau, neglecting Tarok, Ngas, or Mwaghavul, even when they are the dominant languages in rural households.

Lack of documentation: Plateau languages remain under-documented compared to Hausa or Yoruba, making it difficult to integrate them into economic planning.

Neglect in development programs: Many socio-economic projects are designed without multilingual considerations, limiting their grassroots impact.

Business Resistance to Multilingual Branding

Businesses often perceive multilingual approaches as costly and unnecessary.

Preference for lingua francas: Most advertising agencies in Jos rely on Hausa or English, arguing that they reach the “largest market.” This neglects consumer groups like Berom-speaking artisans or Goemai farmers, whose purchasing behaviors differ significantly.

Cost implications: Translating marketing campaigns into multiple Plateau languages increases costs of production, distribution, and training. Many companies prefer one-size-fits-all campaigns, even though they are less effective.

Brand consistency issues: Firms fear that adapting their messages across multiple languages may dilute brand identity or create inconsistencies in customer perception.

Socio-Cultural and Political Tensions

Language in Nigeria is tied to ethnicity and politics.

Risk of bias: Prioritizing one language over others in Plateau may be interpreted as political favoritism, leading to resistance from other groups. For example, a campaign run only in Ngas might alienate Mwaghavul or Ron communities.

Identity politics: In some regions, speakers may reject dominant languages (like Hausa) in favor of their ethnic tongue, complicating efforts to harmonize multilingual campaigns.

Mistrust of external actors: Some communities in Plateau are skeptical of government surveys or corporate research, fearing exploitation. This makes multilingual data collection a delicate process requiring cultural sensitivity.

Lack of Skilled Manpower

Nigeria faces a shortage of professionals trained in linguistics, computational language processing, and market analytics.

Many Plateau languages are taught informally at the community level, with few formalized academic studies.

Linguists working on minority languages often lack collaboration with tech developers and market analysts, limiting practical application of their research.

Businesses seldom employ language experts, resulting in poor translation, miscommunication, and wasted resources.

Ethical and Privacy Concerns

The collection of multilingual data—especially from social media and call centers—raises privacy issues. Without clear legal frameworks, consumers may fear surveillance, reducing willingness to share information. In Plateau, communities have expressed reluctance to participate in data collection due to concerns over misuse of their responses (Yakubu, 2019).

Summary

The challenges of harnessing multilingual data in Nigeria are multi-dimensional—ranging from literacy issues and dialect variations to technological gaps, policy neglect, and socio-political sensitivities. Plateau State, with its mosaic of languages, highlights both the potential and the pitfalls: while local languages provide invaluable insights into consumer behavior, the lack of documentation, digital support, and inclusive policies constrains their use in market intelligence.

Government Policy and Institutional Support

The Nigerian government must reposition language as a strategic asset for socio-economic development.

Official recognition of minority languages: Beyond Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, states like Plateau should adopt policies recognizing indigenous languages (Tarok, Ngas, Mwaghavul, Berom, Goemai, Afizere, etc.) as vital for local governance and development communication (Bamgbose, 2020).

Multilingual surveys: National data-gathering institutions (e.g., National Bureau of Statistics) should include minority languages in questionnaires, especially in Plateau where Hausa does not fully capture local voices.

Policy incentives: Government should provide tax breaks or grants to companies that invest in multilingual campaigns, particularly in rural development projects.

Academic and Research Institutions

Universities and research centers should spearhead the development of linguistic resources for under-documented languages.

Language documentation: Plateau State University Bokkos and the University of Jos could lead projects to document and digitize Tarok, Ngas, Mwaghavul, Berom, and Goemai. This would create dictionaries, orthographies, and corpora for use in Natural Language Processing (NLP).

Interdisciplinary research: Linguists, computer scientists, and market analysts should collaborate to build multilingual datasets that reflect consumer realities.

Capacity building: Linguistics and data science programs should include courses on multilingual data analytics, producing experts who can bridge language and market research.

Business and Private Sector Engagement

Businesses must see language inclusion as a strategic investment rather than a burden.

Localized branding: Companies should translate key marketing campaigns into Plateau languages for deeper penetration into rural markets. For instance, microfinance institutions could explain loan terms in Tarok or Mwaghavul.

Multilingual customer service: Banks, telecoms, and healthcare providers should deploy call centers capable of handling queries in indigenous languages.

Market segmentation: Firms should use multilingual data to tailor products to the cultural and linguistic preferences of different communities.

Technological Innovations

Harnessing Nigeria's linguistic diversity requires digital tools and AI-driven innovations.

NLP for minority languages: Collaborations with tech firms like Google or Nigerian startups should focus on building speech-to-text and translation systems for Plateau languages.

AI-driven surveys: Mobile apps could be developed to administer multilingual surveys using voice recognition, allowing farmers and traders to respond in their local tongue.

Social media analytics: Platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, which host a large volume of multilingual posts, can be mined for consumer insights, provided privacy safeguards are in place.

Community and Civil Society Participation

Sustainable multilingual data systems must involve grassroots communities.

Community radio stations: Plateau's local stations (e.g., those broadcasting in Berom, Tarok, Mwaghavul, Ngas) should partner with NGOs to collect and analyze public opinion data.

Language cooperatives: Communities could form associations for language preservation, which also serve as hubs for economic data gathering.

Trust-building: To overcome skepticism, communities should be involved in the design and implementation of surveys, ensuring transparency and ownership.

Development Agencies and International Partners

International organizations working in Nigeria should prioritize linguistic inclusivity in their programs.

Multilingual health campaigns: Agencies like UNICEF and WHO should consistently deploy Plateau languages in their interventions, not just Hausa or English.

Donor-funded projects: Donors should fund digital documentation of minority languages as part of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Knowledge sharing: Lessons from multilingual countries such as India and South Africa could be adapted for Nigeria, emphasizing how linguistic diversity fuels socio-economic participation.

Future Directions

The long-term vision is to integrate Nigeria's multilingualism into a national market intelligence ecosystem. Plateau State could serve as a pilot region for this initiative, given its exceptional linguistic density. Key future directions include:

1. National Multilingual Data Bank: Establishing a repository of linguistic and consumer data covering all Nigerian states.
2. Digital Language Hubs: Creating regional technology centers for developing AI models in minority languages.
3. Policy mainstreaming: Embedding language inclusion into Nigeria's National Development Plans and economic blueprints.
4. Sustainable development: Ensuring that language-sensitive policies reduce inequality, foster participation, and empower marginalized groups.

Conclusion

Nigeria's vast linguistic landscape, with over 500 languages, represents not merely cultural heritage but also an untapped resource for socio-economic transformation. This article has argued that multilingual data can serve as a strategic tool for market intelligence, allowing businesses, governments, and development agencies to better understand consumer behavior, design inclusive policies, and foster equitable development.

Using Plateau State as a case study, the discussion highlighted both the opportunities and challenges of harnessing multilingualism for market intelligence. Plateau's linguistic diversity—spanning Tarok, Ngas, Mwaghavul, Berom, Goemai, Afizere, and others—mirrors Nigeria's wider multilingual reality. This diversity offers granular insights into consumer preferences, agricultural practices, financial habits, and cultural values that remain hidden when market research is conducted solely in English or Hausa.

At the same time, significant limitations hinder progress: under-documentation of minority languages, technological gaps in natural language processing, policy neglect, lack of skilled manpower, and socio-political sensitivities tied to language use. Without targeted interventions, these challenges will continue to limit Nigeria's ability to fully harness multilingual data for development.

The recommendations put forward in this article—including policy reforms, academic engagement, private sector localization strategies, technological innovations, and community participation—offer practical pathways for transforming linguistic diversity into a driver of socio-economic change. Importantly, Plateau State provides a natural pilot model for experimenting with multilingual market intelligence before scaling efforts nationally.

Looking ahead, the creation of a National Multilingual Data Bank, investment in AI for minority languages, and mainstreaming linguistic diversity into national development planning are critical steps. These will not only improve the quality of market intelligence but also ensure that development initiatives are more inclusive, sustainable, and culturally responsive.

In conclusion, Nigeria's multilingualism should not be seen as a barrier but as a strategic asset. By recognizing and systematizing the role of indigenous languages in market research and socio-economic planning, Nigeria can unlock new avenues of innovation, participation, and prosperity. The road to socio-economic transformation, therefore, runs not only through oil, trade, and technology, but also through the voices of its people—spoken in their own languages.

Recommendations

Harnessing Nigeria's multilingual data requires collaborative action across government, academia, businesses, technology, and communities. Plateau State, with its microcosm of Nigeria's linguistic diversity, offers a practical model for implementing inclusive policies. By transforming linguistic diversity from a perceived challenge into a strategic economic resource, Nigeria can unlock new pathways for socio-economic transformation.

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Metaphoric Euphemism in the Nigerian Obituary Posters

Abstract

Obituaries are, primarily, announcements of death through which members of the public are informed of the loss, demise or death of persons. These obituaries tend to go beyond mere announcements to reveal important information on the life of the person and certain aspects of his/her socio-cultural world view. In discussing death which has been a taboo from time immemorial certain forms of linguistic cautions are employed in communicative situations that reflect the taboo associated with death. This is apparently because of its bluntness, unpleasantness and vulgarity. Using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory as the theoretical framework for the analysis, this paper looks at obituary posters from the point of view of metaphoric and Euphemistic usages in some selected Nigerian posters.

Keywords: *Death, Euphemism, Metaphor, Nigerian posters, Obituaries, Taboo*

Introduction

Some of the examples of the linguistic features that characterize obituary announcements through any platform are **euphemism** and **metaphor**. Euphemism according to Bolton (1960:118) is “the language that sounds pleasant” it is an expression intended by the speaker to be less offensive, troubling or disturbing to the listener than the word or phrase it replaces. Metaphor, on its own is defined according to Benoir and Hogan (2002), cited in Yusuf (2004) as “an implicit or indirect compassion.” It is a phrase that is used to describe something in a way that is different from its normal use. Death has been seen as not only a compulsory end, but a necessary one to every human existence. It is a concept that attracts societal fear. According to Allan and Burridge (1991), “death is a fear-based taboo” which tends to connect the co-existence of different fears. These fears include but not limited to: ***fear of the loss of loved ones, fear of the evil spirits as connected to the death of loved one, fear of what comes after death etc.*** Death has been seen as a taboo subject in the society and this gives rise to the refusal to freely speak about this concept. This attitude is largely due to the perceived discomfort its discussion might cause. In spite of the reluctance to freely talk about the subject of death in the society, certain communicative situations in which the subject of death cannot be avoided do exist. One of such cases is the issue of obituary. The word **obituary** stems from the Latin word **obitus**, which means departure. This means that the word **departure** is a common euphemistic substitute for death as a concept. In their submissions, Lawal et.al (1999) see obituary announcements, as “Communicative acts with a target audience whose sponsors intend to convey a deep sense of loss and grief which they expect the reader to appreciate and understand”. Despite the importance of this Linguistic substitution, there appears to be a kind of scarcity in the literature on the analysis of obituary announcements, especially from the linguistic point of views. It is therefore the desire to increase the body of existing literature in this area that propels this study, in addition to the already existing works on linguistic analysis of obituaries, to the exploration of the metaphoric and euphemistic use of language in the Nigerian poster announcements. This study was carried out with a view to appreciate how ‘death’ as a taboo word is viewed within the Nigerian environment.

Objectives

In order to achieve the aim of this study, the following research objectives have been set out to appropriately guide it. These include;

- i. To examine the metaphors as used in the obituary poster announcements
- ii. To identify the euphemisms used as substitutes for death in the obituary poster announcements and,
- iii. To examine the metaphoric configurations in the obituary poster announcements in accordance with their domain mappings.

Literature

Adepoju,(2016), analysed the euphemistic usages in the texts of obituary announcements in Nigerian newspapers. Using the conceptual metaphor theory as the theoretical framework, his paper explored the metaphorical usages in the newspaper obituary announcements giving its pervasiveness to refer to morality. His study submits that death is considered sacred in Nigerian communities and in other communicative events that involves the phenomenon and that people try to avoid the direct reference to the concept of death.

Aremu (2011), undertook an analysis of obituary announcements, in English from a socio-pragmatic perspective. Obituary announcements, in English in Nigeria, according to him, serve as a window through which the socio-cultural usage of Nigeria English is advertised. His study observed that obituary announcements is the result of the preponderance of elements that make up Nigerian English such as code-mixing, code-switching, hedges, idioms and lexical borrowing.

Fernandez (2006) looked at euphemism and conceptual metaphorization in Victorian obituaries. He explored, in his study, the use of euphemism on obituary pages as the conceptual metaphors which are aimed at substituting the notion of death and dying in newspaper obituaries. He concludes therefore that the various conceptual metaphors illustrate death as a desirable event, especially around the Christian belief.

On his part, Oriaku (2010) presents obituary advertisement (announcement) as a form of biography. He believes that, the living rather than the dead, is the one who stands to benefit from the obituary announcement and therefore sets out to exploit the opportunity created by the event of the person's exit (death).

The Concept of Euphemism and Metaphor

Etymologically, euphemism is derived from the Greek, meaning 'speaking well of', good speech, and words of good omen'. This stems from the prefix '*eu*' which means good, well, while the stem '*pheme*' means 'speak'. The suffix '*ism*' on the other hand means 'action or result'. According to Fromkin et al (2011), euphemism is a "word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects". Antrushina et.al.(1985) posited that there are words in every human that are intentionally avoided by people on account of their consideration as indecent, impolite, rude or too direct. However, as offensive as these words appear, humans have invariably found a way of describing them. This is why the use of substitution known as euphemism came into existence.

In the words of Leech (1985), euphemism is "the linguistic equivalent of disinfectant". What this means is that it is a substance aimed at eradicating the weightiness of certain concepts which cannot

be freely spoken of by many people, so as to make them socially acceptable. They are powerful linguistic tools that are so deeply embedded in our language which are used to reduce the effects of certain concepts of words. The import of this is that euphemism is a kind of linguistic elevation targeted at using socially acceptable words to replace those not acceptable.

Thus, euphemisms are linguistic substitutes for curse, taboo or unfriendly words. Irrespective of the perspective we see euphemism from, it is generally perceived as a kind of polite mode of expression used to beautify or soften unpleasant reality. Some of the examples of euphemism include: “*kicking the bucket*” for death; *custodian* for janitor/doorman etc. It is then safe to state that euphemisms are quite useful in sanitizing the language of speakers. According to Mayfield (2009), such sanitizing function helps to semantically trivialize things/events that might appear unacceptable within certain environments.

Metaphor, on the other hand, is that figurative use of language which compares things, ideas or persons. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), it involves understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. Black (2006) believes that metaphor is a property of the human mind and this explains why they are commonly used in every day interactions. However, Deigman (2005) believes that there are certain abstract concepts which can only be appropriately understood through metaphors due to the fact that it is not possible to procure the exact and literal paraphrase of love, hate etc. However, metaphors are so elusive in human interaction in that it requires sometimes, a context to tell us whether an utterance to be interpreted metaphorically or literally has its meaning shaped within the context of use.

According to Cooper (1986) one of the functions of metaphors is the social function. This means that metaphor is part of everyday communication and there are specific speech acts like proverbs, songs, or other literary discourses whose functions are understood by the audience. In the words of Adepoju (2016), this kind of metaphoric function is evaluated by such criteria as imaginative power, internal balance and the capacity to evoke moods. As they relate to obituaries, metaphors can be seen as that literary device that unlocks our unconscious emotion in a bid to conceptualize the topic of death.

Theoretical Framework

This paper explores the metaphoric and euphemistic effects in the language of obituary announcements in the Nigeria posters, looking at Warren’s (1992) position that “Metaphorization constitutes a potent source of euphemistic reference,” and a common figurative use of language to cope with the taboo word of death. Based on the background already laid, this paper will be discussed in line with the conceptual theory of metaphor, wherein the metaphors of **death** and **dying** will be examined as a euphemistic resource.

Conceptual metaphor, as a theory, was propounded by Lakoff and Johnson in their seminal work titled “Metaphors We Live By” (1980), which discussed the centrality of metaphor to thought” with a resultant effect in the ubiquity of metaphorical forms in conventional and everyday language use. Again, Lakoff and Turner (1989) as cited in Black (2006) posit that “conceptualizing metaphor involves how the mind perceives reality”. This theory, according to Fernandez (2006), see metaphor as ‘going beyond pointing to the similarities between concepts or subjects but stand as means of creating, organizing and understanding reality. Furthermore, he explains that metaphor is seen as a device which helps to structure the conceptual system and to provide a relationship between our understanding of the world with our experiences in order to make sense of it.

Arising from the discourse around the understanding of metaphor, in the light of cross-domain mapping, it is believed that cognitive conceptualization invariably fulfills its euphemistic function through the exchange between the **source** and target **domain**. It is important to note that **mapping**, as used here, emanates from the source domain to the target domain. The cognitive conceptualization of metaphor, according to Barcelona (2003) adopts a unidirectional approach to perceiving reality from the course to the target domain in the sense that the process transports our appreciation of the concept from the more abstract to the more concrete reality. Therefore, our experiences may be appreciated within the context of such structural elements as **containers, room, possession, paths etc** which allow us to define abstract concepts in concrete terms. Thus, our understanding of the euphemistic substitutes of the taboo subject of death, in this paper, will be a function of the analysis of the metaphoric expression in the data with the use of the conceptual theory of metaphor which explains metaphor in terms of cognitive/conceptual mappings.

5. Methodology

The data for this study comprise texts of obituary announcements which are collected from different Nigerian posters across Edo State. These posters were collected considering their accessibility and availability. A total of 50 obituary poster announcements were randomly selected, extracted and analysed for metaphorical expressions that are related to death and dying. The mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted for analysis in this study. While the frequencies of occurrence of these metaphorical expressions related to death and their respective conceptual mappings were statistically presented using percentages, discussions were made based on the quantitative presentation.

6. Data presentation and analysis

This section of analysis first identifies metaphoric euphemisms as employed in the obituary announcements on posters. The euphemism so identified are categorized in accordance with the linguistic content of their source and target domains thereby, describing them in relation to the discourse on death.

6.1 Metaphor and the Euphemistic conceptualization of death

Metaphor serves as the primary constituent, from which their euphemistic expressions are understood. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly describe the euphemistic metaphors that are used in the obituary announcements on posters to reduce the taboo around the concept of death. The table below shows the frequency of occurrence of the taboo word **death** and its substitutes in the obituary posters.

Table 1: Frequency of the use of Euphemistic substitute and the taboo word in the obituary posters

	Frequency	Percentages
Use of Euphemism	40	80%
Direct mention of death	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Out of the 50 instances analysed, 40 euphemistic substitutes for the taboo of death were seen. From the table above, it is apparent that certain semantic resources are used for reducing the functions of euphemism. These semantic resources include: metaphors and hyperboles. For example, "*slept in the Lord- Die*" and "*peaceful exit to the eternal glory-Die*".

However, the taboo word 'death' scantily appears as illustrated in the following excerpts:

*Excerpt 1: With a deep sense of loss we announce the **death** of our father...*

*Excerpt 2: The Rector, on behalf of Management and staff of the National Institute of Construction Technology and Management, Uromi, regrets to announce the **death** of Mr. Samuel Edede....who died on 10th December, 2024...Until his death, he was a chief driver...*

The excerpts above obviously indicate that not all obituary posters indirectly mention the word death. Some make use of the taboo word (death) directly.

6.2 The mapping of metaphor as a concept

Arising from the foregoing discussion and apparently seeing from the eyes of Fernandez (2006:), metaphor is 'by far the most powerful mechanism in the formation of euphemism for the taboo of death.' with this, we safely say that metaphors constitute a potent source of euphemistic reference to the taboo subject-death.

Thus, the metaphors collected in the obituary posters can be analyzed in terms of cognitive mapping (*target domain vs source domain*) within the framework of cognitive conceptualization of metaphor. This helps in the classification of the information given in the obituaries which invariably avails us the understanding of how the taboo of death was actually used. Some of such cross domain conceptual mappings as found in the metaphoric excerpts include: **End, Eternal Rest, Journey, Loss, Passage, Reward, Transition Etc.**

Table 2: Metaphors in the obituary posters

Type of metaphor	Death
Metaphorical Concepts of death	i End ii. Eternal rest iii. Journey iv Loss v Passage to joyful life vi. Transition vii. Reward

The table 2 above presents the targets as: end, eternal rest, journey, loss, transition, passage to joyful life, and reward which are understood by the source domain of death in the obituary posters. These mappings conceptualize the domain of death which in the words of Bultnick (1998), emanates from "the nature of the source domain". It is important to also note that, the positive connotation to death is a function of the Christian belief which explains death as a kind of reward, especially in Heaven, after one lived a good life here on earth. This paper made an attempt, in what follows, to explain how the source domains are applied to the target domains, which carry the euphemistic taboo concept of death.

Table 3: The distribution of the frequency and percentage of the source domains

Domain	Frequency	Percentages
End	2	4%
Eternal rest	8	16%
Journey	13	26%
Loss	7	14.%
Passage to joyful life	4	8%
Reward	6	12%
Transition	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 shows the frequencies of occurrence of the metaphorical conceptualizations of death employed in the data. This distribution evidently shows that the domain mapping of death as **journey** ranks the highest with 13 instances (26%) while the domain of death as **end** ranks the lowest. A reason for the high occurrence of the domain of journey can be due to the psychological simplicity attached to the expression, in that, death is simply perceived as a process of movement. As shown on the table above, other domains rank as follows: death as **transition**- 20% with 10 instances; as **eternal rest**-16%; as **loss**-14% with 7 instances; as **reward**-12% with 6 instances, and as **passage to joyful living**- 8% with 4 instances.

In the section that follows, the discussion will be focused on each domain and how they are illustrated in obituary posters.

Death as the End

Life can be understood as a process with a starting and end point with a time span. Death therefore, is conceptualized as the final stage of our lifespan by means of the conceptual mapping '**Death as the End**'. This mapping implies that death is the final and compulsory royalty one pays before leaving the earth in the process of being received at the destination-the end. For example:

Excerpt 3: May the good Lord receive her soul in rest'.

Excerpt 4: We commiserate with the family on the exit of their father, husband and grandfather.

Excerpt 5: Farewell to a wonderful colleague.

It is interesting to note that 'farewell' as used in excerpt 5 is a concept of metaphorical which depicts that the professional services rendered by the dead at his organization (who sponsored the poster production) have come to an end due to his death, thus leading them to bid him goodbye at his death.

Death as an eternal rest

Rest is considered as a period of relaxing after a rigorous period of activity. The domain of death is here understood in terms of a rest to suggest that there is a peaceful rest after a period of rigorous

earthly activities. The frequent term in this mapping is 'rest' and it gives a psychological overview that the dead person has gone to a place to rest. It is observable in the following examples:

*Excerpt 6: We however trust he is **resting** peacefully in the bosom of the Almighty*

*Excerpt 7: May his soul **rest** in perfect peace...*

*Excerpt 8...she will thereafter be laid to **rest**...*

More so, laid to rest as used in excerpt 8 can also be termed to be the performance of the burial rites of the dead who is ultimately tired of an exhausting life and laid to a place of permanent rest.

Death as a journey

The conceptual metaphor here explains death in terms of a journey with a spiritual destination. It is the most frequently used of all other source domains. This conceptualization is based on the assumption that the dead person is no longer around, such person is conceived as a traveler whose destination is generally perceived to be heaven. The mapping transfers the attributes related to the source domain of the journey to help us understand the target domain of death. The process of journeying can be viewed in three ways:

The act of dying presupposes that the deceased is leaving the world, which is observable in the following excerpts.

*Excerpt 9: **Passing** on to glory*

*Excerpt 10: Dear Transport coordinator, your **trip** took us by storm...*

It is observed in excerpt 10 that the word 'trip' is used, suggesting that the act of dying is viewed as a process of leaving the world for another place. The deceased is leaving for a final destination which is considered to be Heaven, a place to meet with the Creator (according to Christian belief). For example:

Excerpt 11: Our patriarch goes home...

Excerpt 12: Travel safe until we meet to part no more

Likewise, the journey is seen as being instigated by some external agent (God). E.g.

Excerpt 13: Call to Glory...

Excerpt 14 ... we announce the call to glory of our dearly... This suggests that (God) has called somebody (the dead person) to a journey from the world to heaven (a place of God's glory).

Death as a loss

This conceptual mapping sees death in terms of a loss. The conceptual basis for this mapping stems from the fact that life is perceived as a valuable object and death thus seen as the loss of this possession. The metaphorical elements used in explaining this loss does not provide any sort of consolation or relief to the bereaved, rather they are left to lament and regret the loss. For example:

Excerpt 15: 'With deep sorrow in our hearts, we announce the passing on to glory....'

Excerpt 16: It is with deep sense of colossal loss...

The excerpts above show that the loss of prestigious persons caused families to express their feelings of regret and sadness even through their language use in the obituary announcement.

Death as a passage to joyful life

Joyful life is seen from the Christian perspective as a peaceful and everlasting existence with God in Heaven. This has been used to conceptualize death following the 'Judaean-Christian tradition' which Fernandez (2006) explain to be "the belief in an afterlife in which the deceased will joyfully

expect the resurrection in Heaven flanked by God and the Celestial Angels". It is deduced from this that eternal life is basically seen as the primacy of joyful life, such is observable in the following announcement texts:

Excerpt 17: ...Peaceful exit to eternal glory of our beloved Founder/ President’.

Excerpt 18:..the Provost announces the passage to eternal glory of our most beloved...

Excerpt 19: Call to glory

Excerpt 20: Celebration of life

Death as a Reward

The domain of death is understood in terms of a reward for those who lived a virtuous and exemplary life on earth. This domain is in total contrast to the perceived negative attitude expressed through the mapping of death as loss; this mapping focuses on the positive effect of death and dying Fernandez (2006) opines that death as a reward involves 'a sort of liberation, thanks to which the deceased and his survivors will find some hope and consolation'. For example:

*Excerpt 21: We commiserate with our friend Mr Sunday Esogban on the death of his mother...and urge him to take **solace in the fulfilled** life she led.*

In the same vein, for such virtuous, meeting with God in heaven constitutes the source of the reward for a life well spent on the earth. Death is seen as reward in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 22: With Gratitude to God for a fulfilled life, well spent in service of God and mankind, we announce the call to glory of...

Excerpt 23: Celebration of a Peaceful and Loving Life'

Excerpt 24: Glorious exit.

Excerpt 25: Our patriarch goes Home

Home, in excerpt 25 is seen as a place of fortress and relaxation, which is a reward for the virtuous life of the deceased.

Death as a transition

Death is also understood as a transition, which is a change from one state of consciousness to another. The frequent term used in this mapping is 'sleep'. The notion of 'sleep' here presupposes the fact that death is temporary, so the dead person is no longer dead but sunk in a comforting sleep, with the possibility of resurrecting some day in heaven.

*Excerpt 26: ...who **slept** in the lord...**sleep** well in the bosom of the Lord*

*Excerpt 27: She peacefully fell **asleep** in the Lord on Tuesday, 12th November, 2024..*

Excerpt 28: We commiserate with Mr Aslem Omoghie and family over the transition to glory of their mother...

It is generally understood that to be asleep usually involves some relief of feeling pain, and death, in these excerpts, is thus conceptualized through one of the effects of sleep, as a release from the pains of life.

7. Findings

This study brings to fore the elements of metaphor and euphemism that are embedded in obituary poster announcements. The facts gathered, made us to understand that metaphor and euphemism relate at some points, especially as majority of the euphemistic substitutes of taboo subjects of death are derived primarily from the metaphorical uses within the expression. With the help of

Lakoff's (1993) conceptual theory of metaphor, it became possible to explain metaphor further in terms of source and target domains where the former is used to explain the latter. With this categorization, the study found seven source domain mappings for the taboo word (death) based on the analysed data. These source domains as identified include: **end, eternal rest, journey, loss, passage to joyful life, reward and transition.**

The data were also subjected to a quantitative analysis to understand the frequencies of occurrence of these source domain, and it was found that death as journey ranked the highest with 26%, followed by death as transition with 20%, death as eternal rest with 16%, death as loss with 14.%, death as passage to joyful living with 8%, death as reward with 12% and death as end ranks lowest with 4%. This study believes that the higher occurrence of death as journey is based on the fact that the bereaved see their dead as being in a movement process from carnality to eternity.

Despite the preponderance of the use of euphemistic substitutes for the taboo word (death) in obituary posters, this study found that some poster announcements also use the taboo word directly in reporting the obituary not minding its perceived effects on the readers.

Conclusion

Arising from the foregoing findings, the study concludes therefore, that death as a phenomenon is considered sacred among most Nigerian communities and in any communicative event that involves this phenomenon, people try to circumvent their linguistic choices to avoid bluntness or direct reference to the concept. It therefore has implication for people's way of life in their perception of the concept of death and obituaries.

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Literature and Leadership in Nigeria: An Examination of Students' Reading Of David Baba Danjuma's The Honourable Chairman In The Federal Polytechnic, Idah

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Abstract

The desire and quest for good leadership and effective governance that would lead to smooth national development continues to gather momentum daily especially across African countries and most specifically, Nigeria. Both the citizens and those in power are clamouring for a better life and better leadership. This affirms the fact that leadership is significant to the development of any nation and to get it right, all stakeholders must play significant roles. In this, not much attention has been given to the place of literature, especially the dramatic genre as written by indigenous playwrights, as a panacea to the tooth-aching challenges of leadership in the African milieu, notably Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this paper: literature and leadership in Nigeria: an examination of students' reading of David Baba Danjuma's *The Honourable Chairman* in the Federal Polytechnic, Idah, aims to examine leadership and national development in Nigeria. The paper, anchoring on the theory

of transformational leadership vis-à-vis the literary theory of realism adopts the use of structured questionnaire analysed using the simple percentage method of data gathering and analysis. Four hundred (400) respondents randomly selected across four departments of two National Diploma (ND) and two Higher National Diploma (HND) formed the population of the study. Based on the findings which reveal that corruption, sycophancy and ignorance are parts of the triggers of leadership failure in Nigeria, the paper recommends amongst others a process of re-conscientization and mobilization of the masses towards resisting the negativisms that breed underdevelopment through inefficient and corrupt leadership.

Keywords: literature, transformational leadership, realism, polytechnic sector

Introduction

National development simply means the process of developing a nation or advancing, increasing or widening the scope and capacity of the people of a nation. It refers to the improvement of a country in all areas including politically, economically, socially, culturally, scientifically and even in material spheres aimed at enhancing the standard of living for its citizens. Smith (2024) asserts that it encompasses the capacity of a nation to enhance its citizens' standard of living. He further states that as contained in the Nigeria's National Development plan (NDP), national development is a medium term blueprint designed to unlock the country's potentials in all sectors of the economy for a sustainable, holistic and inclusive growth and development. This plan is intended to build a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land full of bright opportunities for all.

Significantly therefore, plans and blueprints for the development of any nation must be people (citizens) centred. It must be aimed at improving the standard of living of the citizens of such nation. Also significant is the fact that it must be holistically designed to boost the political, economic, cultural, social, scientific and even material status of the nation. To achieve this, leadership plays very vital role because since machines do not run on their own accord, no matter how sophisticated they are built; plans do not implement themselves. They are designed and programmed by humans and must be implemented, monitored and appraised by humans. So, in the centre of the quest for national development is the human factor, the citizens, either as followers (the masses) or the leaders (the privileged few). Hence, if the leadership set development plans with a transparent and accountable intention, carrying the masses along in the implementation process of such plans, the followership will key in-even if grudgingly, and the nation will effortlessly witness development.

It is against this backdrop that this paper, literature and leadership in Nigeria: an examination of students' reading of David Baba Danjuma's *The Honourable Chairman in the Federal Polytechnic, Idah*, examines the fact that literature plays pivotal role in influencing the leadership and followership of any nation with the aim of setting them on the right path for national development.

The Concept of Transformational Leadership

Leadership is a task. It is a responsibility-a business that must be taken seriously. According to Baba (2024), leadership has been one of the most challenging factors across nations of the world as it determines the growth and development of any people or nation. It is so significant that even

in the homes, leadership defines stability and growth. Hence, leadership is the act, process and means of guiding, influencing, piloting and directing the affairs of an individual or group of persons to achieve a common goal. Osabiye and Ikenga (2015) see leadership as “the exercise of influence in a social situation to such an extent that the followers oblige obedience voluntarily”. Buttressing this, Chinazaekpere (2025) opines that leadership is the ability to influence and guide others towards a common goal, encompassing skills like motivation, decision-making and fostering collaboration. Leadership is influencing others to follow. It entails the process and capacity to encourage, motivate, inspire and challenge others (the followers, the masses, the workforce, team members) to produce their best at work or whatever they do.

Theoretically, there are several types of leadership style which include the *laissez faire*, autocracy, democracy, transactional, and transformational amongst others. In spite of all the arguments against the transformational model of leadership as put forward by Adejoh (2022), Ogonnaya (2019), Musa (2024); the model as propounded and promoted by several scholars including Dewey and Smith (1974) stands out especially in the process of any sincere drive towards holistic national development. This is because it connects a team together through a common purpose and builds a relationship in the workplace that allows for effective communication, more creativity and better problem-solving skills. It enhances followers’ motivation, morale, and job performance through various mechanisms.

Smith (2024) adduces further that the transformational leadership style inspires the employees to strive beyond required expectations working towards a shared vision since there is great reliance on effective communication, charisma, adaptability and empathetic support. This implies that a leader who adopts the transformational model is guided by principles such as individualised consideration, inspirational motivation, idealized influence as well as intellectual stimulation and, in practice, self-awareness, open mindedness, adaptability and innovativeness as well as proactiveness and humility remain the watchwords.

Sadly, many African nations including Nigeria operate very far from these laudable principles which form significant cornerstone for national development. Many leaders in African nations shy away from the transformational leadership style due to corruption, nepotism, ethnicity, mediocrity amongst others. Hence, even though such nations mouth sing consistently about their desire to adopt the transformational model in leadership, for instance the Goodluck Jonathan administration of 2010-2015 in his transformation agenda; their actions and activities stray very far from the principles and practice of the transformational leadership style thereby constituting themselves into administrators and not leaders (Chinazaekpere: 2025). This inability of the leadership of these African countries and most especially Nigeria to meet this standard of leadership is lucidly captured in literature as justified in several literary theories including realism thereby making literature a mirror of society as showcased in this study.

Realism in literature: a reading of *The Honourable Chairman*

Realism in literature according to Smith (2024) is a movement that emerged in the mid-19th century which focuses on depicting everyday life and society as it truly is rather than idealising or romanticising. Providing a ventilating channel for the middle and lower classes in their struggles, the concept of realism provides a viewpoint which accords to things which are known or perceived as existence or natural. Adejoh (2022) adds that in spite of its criticisms by scholars like Ejiga (2023), Williams (2021), realism is a philosophical and artistic perspective that emphasises the accurate representation of reality, rejecting idealised or romanticised portrayals in favour of a focus on the world as it is. Consequently, literary writers in their poems, plays and stories (poetry, drama and prose) mirror realistic events as they affect their immediate or universal environments. Themes such as politics, economy, religion, human relationships, interactions and coexistence are mirrored

with the intention to praise and appreciate when things are done in accordance with the principles of growth and development or to lampoon, satirise or condemn when actions and activities go contrary. Such tenets of realism in literature as also captured in the theory of transformational leadership style are showcased in David Baba Danjuma's *The Honourable Chairman* as he uses the dramatic piece to mirror the political and leadership situation in Nigeria. The play divided into Act 1 with three scenes, Act 2 with single scene, Act 3 with four scenes, Act 4 with three scenes, a prologue as well as an epilogue examines the process by which supposed leaders emerge in a nation as well as their activities in certain positions of leadership and the response of the followers to such. As showcased in the play, to get it right in leadership with the aim of setting the nation on the path of development, there is need to get it right in the political process that now constitutes a significant channel through which leaders emerge. The plot of the eighty-four-page play opens with a prologue in which the narrator laments about the woes of the nation, the misplaced priority as well as the people that have strayed away from the path of transformational leadership. Using a fictional setting called Ome, the author presents the electioneering process and what elected officials do in positions of authority with the wealth of the nation in that, instead of appropriating for the growth and development of the nation as well as improving the living standard of the citizens, they grab for their selfish and personal purposes. This is echoed by Usman: "they come together as if this is for the interest of the people but to share the national cake. Their pockets even break at the weight ..." (P. 64). To buttress this point further, Elder Alewo in Adofu (2017) states "why would he suddenly claim to have turned a new leaf? why is he refusing to play to the gallery this time?... all they will need once in a while is small money and more lies...". This affirms the lack of concern for the plight of the citizens by those in positions of authority. All they care about as showcased in *The Honourable Chairman* and further buttressed by other literary texts-poetry prose or drama-as well as *The Council of Elders*; is their personal gains. They become very accustomed to such life that it becomes strange to do the right thing like "turning a new leaf". Glaringly in the play, and typical of the Nigerian situation, political parties like the D. M. P and P. O. P are seen presenting their electioneering campaigns and making promises that they knew will never be fulfilled. In spite of the crowd they gather at such gathering due to the gullibility, greed and ignorance of the masses, the campaigns are flooded with blackmail of opponents, strategies on how to outsmart the people as well as the opponents and most significantly, they display the tendency of winning at all cost. For instance, a character in the play, Audu states, "winning is do or die affair in politics" (P. 33), and on the strength of this desperation, the D. M. P. presents its strategy for winning thus:

Idakwo: *I call them options. Option one is getting the under aged registered.*

How do you feel about that?

All: *(simultaneously) correct.*

Audu: *I also think we can even get some ghosts registered.*

Okolo: *How do we do that?*

Audu: *It is possible. Nothing is impossible in politics as practised in our country. We can even use the names of our goats and chicken to register.*

.....

Idakwo: *Option two is rigging.*

.....

Okolo: *... As for the returning officer, I know he can be bought ...*

....

Idakwo: *Option three is blackmailing the opponents. ... (P. 35-36)*

On and on the plans and options went with none considering the place of the electorates except for the sake of buying their votes and sealing their lips with gifts of salt, maggi, rice, fertilizer amongst other perishable items that would not sustain them within the circle of another election-the consistent cap in hand syndrome to continuously live as helpless paupers in the hands of the oppressors. And as evident in these lines, these plans completely negate the principles of transformational leadership as presented hitherto. In fact, it has no consideration for the citizens who ought in a democracy to determine who governs them. Hence, leaders who emerge through such platform have nothing about national development on their minds or in their agenda as occupying such privileged position as the local government chairman or any other position of authority and leadership is seen as an opportunity for embezzlement, self-aggrandisement and further corruption. For instance, Idakwo like Usman (P. 64) states “that is good money. As I was carefully explaining the other time, nursery education is not a priority for now. Besides, regimes that have come and gone never looked at that sector and it wasn’t that allocation wasn’t coming. Let us envelop the allocation. We need to recover our electioneering losses and make profits before we talk of education for kids that are still toddling, (P. 60). The play, by showcasing themes of corruption, bribery, sycophancy, hypocrisy, blackmail, embezzlement amongst others, brings to fore the high level of leadership failure in the nation represented as “Ome” as well as how occupants of positions of leadership as well as the followers have derailed from the tenets of transformational leadership, and undoubtedly with such, national development becomes a mirage to such a nation as it continues to take one step forward and two steps backwards. It is in the light of this that this paper using literature as mirror of society within the context of the theory of realism aims to draw attention to the fact that such situation stands as the bane of any nation including Nigeria where such as presented in the play is witnessed; and thereafter proffer solutions to these challenges.

Aim of the study

The main aim of this study is to examine the impact of literature, specifically the dramatic genre in ensuring effective leadership in Nigeria with particular emphasis on students’ reading of *The Honourable Chairman* by David Baba Danjuma. Although the playwright is a co-author in this paper, the play is chosen for this study because of its thematic relevance to the study as well as the fact that it is a significant text of study in the semester that the research is conducted. The study shall also be guided by the following objectives:

1. Assess the extent of comprehension amongst students who take English and Literary Studies as General Studies (GNS/OTM) course in the reading of recommended texts in the polytechnic sector.
2. Assess the extent to which the themes raised in the text relate to leadership in Nigeria.
3. Assess the impact of such themes on students who would eventually hold positions of leadership in the future.

Study population

A total of four (400) hundred students are randomly sampled from the Federal Polytechnic, Idah in Nigeria. Four Departments made up of two National Diploma and two Higher National Diploma programmes are selected. The choice represents the four major schools in the institution. Hence, the Department of Public Administration, Department of Science Laboratory Technology, Department of Civil Engineering and the Department of Estate Management and Valuation representing the School of General and Administrative Studies/Business Administration and Management (two Schools merged in view of their similarities in scope for the sake of this study),

School of Technology, School of Engineering and the School of Environmental Studies respectively: hundred (100) students are randomly selected from each of these departments. By this, the paper achieves a wide range of coverage which provides a balance and hence the validity and justification of this research.

Sample technique

For the purpose of this study, the stratified random sampling technique was used for the advantage of generalizing the findings to a larger population. Thus, the selection is done through the administration of questionnaire randomly to four (400) hundred students sampled from the selected departments and schools in the Federal Polytechnic, Idah. The proportionate stratified random sampling technique is used to represent it according to the population of the categories.

Method of data collection

The data for this research were collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data is derived through the administration of questionnaires to students involved in English and Literary Studies as General Studies course. These questionnaires are completed and returned for analysis. The secondary source of data collection included the use of textbooks, online journals, periodic and previous scholarly works by researchers and are adequately acknowledged.

Method of data analysis

The survey design is adopted in this study because of the descriptive and qualitative nature of the study. The responses to questions on the questionnaire are presented and analysed using frequency table showing responses in their corresponding percentages. Four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were administered to students of the four selected departments in the Federal Polytechnic, Idah.

Data presentation

The population of this study is about four thousand (4000) which cuts across the five (made four) schools in the polytechnic. A sample size of four hundred (400) was drawn from the population of four thousand (4000) via the Yamane's formula of sample size derivation. The formula according to Yamane (1965) as affirmed by Osuala (2022) goes thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$\frac{1 + N(e)^2}{1 + 4000(0.05)^2}$$

Where n = sample size

n = population

e = level of significance

n = 4000

1+4000 (0.05)²

n = 4000

10.0025

n = 3.99.9 approximately 400

Note: 5% of significance was used and the distribution of the data collected through the use of structured questionnaire randomly distributed to learners of English and Literary Studies as General Study course in the Federal Polytechnic, Idah is shown in the table

Key:

PUB: Department of Public Administration

EST: Department of Estate Management and Valuation

SLT: Department of Science Laboratory Technology

CVE: Department of Civil Engineering

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Data presentation										
QUESTIONNAIRE DETAIL	FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION				PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION				CUMULATIVE	
	PUB	EST	SLT	CVE	PUB	EST	SLT	CVE	No.	%
Distributed	100	100	100	100	100%	100%	100%	100%	400	400%
Returned	97	86	96	89	97	86	96	89	368	92%
Unreturned	2	10	3	8	2	10	3	8	23	6%
Unusable	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	3	9	2%
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	400	100%

Field work: 2025

Results/ Discussion

The analysis presented in **Table 1: Data Presentation** summarizes the distribution and return rates of questionnaires across four categories (PUB, EST, SLT, and CVE). The table contains three sections: **Frequency, Percentage and Cumulative Distributions**. The table indicates the number of questionnaires distributed, returned, unreturned, and unusable for each category, displays the percentage equivalent of the frequency data and provides the overall totals and percentages for all categories combined. For example, the PUB category had 100 questionnaires distributed, of which 97 were returned, 2 unreturned, and 1 unusable. While the returned questionnaires in the PUB category account for 97%, the total 400 questionnaires distributed, 92% were returned, 6% were unreturned, and 2% were unusable. This analysis highlights the response rate's reliability and the data's completeness, which are critical for ensuring the validity of statistical modeling in the study.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents										
Gender of respondents	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Female	58	59.80	46	53.50	50	52.08	37	41.57	191	51.90
Male	39	40.20	40	46.50	46	47.92	52	58.43	177	48.10
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Age of respondents	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
16-21	27	27.80	35	40.70	23	23.96	44	49.44	129	35.05
22-27	50	51.50	34	39.50	53	55.21	31	34.83	168	45.65
28-33	15	15.50	10	11.60	12	12.5	9	10.11	46	12.51
34 & above	5	5.150	7	8.14	8	8.33	5	5.62	25	6.79
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100
Academic level of respondents	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
National Diploma	48	49.50	35	40.70	51	53.12	45	50.56	179	48.64
Higher National Diploma	49	50.50	51	59.30	45	46.88	44	49.44	189	51.36
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Field work: 2025

Results/ Discussion

The analysis in Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents provides a breakdown of respondents across three key dimensions—gender, age, and academic level—within four groups (PUB, EST, SLT, CVE) and their cumulative totals. On gender distributor, female respondents make up a slightly higher percentage overall (51.9%) compared to male respondents (48.1%). The breakdown shows variability across groups, with PUB having 59.79% female respondents and CVE showing a shift with 58.43% male respondents dominating. Similarly, on age distribution, most represented age group overall is 22-27 years (45.7%), followed by 16-21 years (35.1%). The other age groups, 28-33 years (12.5%) and 34 & above (6.79%), have significantly fewer respondents which indicates that the majority of participants are younger adults. Furthermore, on the distribution according to academic level, the table revealed the respondents are split between National Diploma (48.6%) and Higher National Diploma holders (51.4%). There is relative consistency across the groups in academic levels, with CVE slightly favouring National Diploma holders (50.56%). This demographic analysis offers insights into the composition of the study participants, which is crucial for interpreting the findings and ensuring representativeness. It helps highlight potential patterns or biases that might influence the study, such as age-related or gender-based perspectives.

Table 3: The variable centres on the extent to which literature is studied as part of the GNS courses in FPI										
Response	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%

Very large	40	41.20	38	44.21	39	40.62	20	22.47	137	37.23
Large	35	36.10	34	39.51	36	37.50	25	28.09	130	35.33
Small	12	12.40	8	9.30	10	10.42	30	33.71	60	16.30
Very small	10	10.30	6	6.98	11	11.46	14	15.73	41	11.14
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Field work: 2025

Results/ Discussion

The analysis in **Table 3** evaluates the extent to which literature is studied as part of the GNS (General Studies) courses at FPI (Federal Polytechnic Idah). The responses are grouped into four levels: **Very Large**, **Large**, **Small**, and **Very Small**, reflecting the perceived extent of literature's inclusion in the curriculum. The data is presented across four groups (PUB, EST, SLT, CVE), each showing the number of respondents and the percentage representation for each category within the group. The cumulative column aggregates the total number and percentage from all groups combined, providing an overall perspective. It discovers that **37.2%** of respondents rated the inclusion of literature as "Very Large as "**35.3%** rated it as "Large" while **16.3%** and **11.1%** considered it "Small" and "Very Small," respectively. It was observed that a significant proportion (72.5% when combining "Very Large" and "Large") indicates a broad agreement that literature is substantially studied within GNS courses. While a smaller percentage (27.4%) suggests that some respondents perceive the inclusion to be limited. This analysis sheds light on the prominence of literature in the curriculum, which could inform adjustments to meet educational goals and expectations.

Table 4: The variable centres on the significance of literature in enhancing knowledge about leadership										
Response	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Very significant	42	43.3	36	41.90	43	44.79	23	25.84	144	39.13
Significant	37	38.1	40	46.50	38	39.58	30	33.71	145	39.40
Not significant	9	9.28	4	4.65	0	0	16	17.98	29	7.88
I don't know	9	9.28	6	6.98	15	15.63	20	22.47	50	13.59
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Field work: 2025

Results/ Discussion

The analysis in **Table 4**, titled "The variable centres on the significance of literature in enhancing knowledge about leadership," summarizes respondents' views across four groups (PUB, EST, SLT, CVE), with a cumulative column showing the overall responses. **39.1%** of respondents overall consider literature to be "Very Significant" in enhancing leadership knowledge with SLT having the highest percentage at **44.79%**, while CVE is notably lower at **25.84%**. The largest category

overall, with **39.4%** of respondents identifying literature as "Significant." with EST leads with **46.51%**, showing strong support for this perspective. A minority of **7.88** believe literature is "Not Significant." with most of these responses coming from the CVE group (**17.98%**). Besides, **13.6%** of respondents are uncertain about literature's role in leadership knowledge. CVE has the highest rate of "I Don't Know" responses at **22.47%**, suggesting possible gaps in awareness or understanding. The table aggregates data from all groups, showing consistent participation and a shared focus on evaluating literature's impact. The analysis provides valuable insights into the perception of literature's significance in leadership development. The high percentages in "Very Significant" and "Significant" categories (78.5% combined) affirm literature's crucial role. However, the 13.6% uncertainty ("I Don't Know") signals an opportunity to increase awareness of literature's benefits in leadership education.

Table 5: The variable centres on the themes showcased in the text of study										
Response	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Corruption/fraud	8	8.25	17	19.80	15	15.63	10	11.24	50	13.59
Sycophancy	4	4.12	7	8.14	4	4.17	5	5.62	20	5.43
Blackmail	4	4.12	4	4.65	10	10.42	12	13.48	30	8.15
Greed	10	10.30	5	5.81	7	7.29	9	10.11	31	8.42
Lack of Patriotism	20	20.60	10	11.60	10	10.42	11	12.36	51	13.86
All of the above	50	51.50	41	47.70	49	51.04	39	43.82	179	48.64
None of the above	1	1.03	2	2.33	1	1.04	3	3.37	7	1.90
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Field work: 2025

Results/Discussion

The analysis in **Table 5**, titled "The variable centres on the themes showcased in the text of study," evaluates the prevalence of specific themes discussed in the study. These themes include **Corruption/Fraud, Sycophancy, Blackmail, Greed, Lack of Patriotism**, and combined themes categorized as **all of the above or None of the Above**. The "all of the above" category dominates the responses, with **48.64%** overall which reflects the consensus that all listed themes are prominently featured in the text, indicating a broad and integrated thematic exploration. **The "Lack of Patriotism"** ranked second in prevalence, representing **13.9%** of responses which highlights a significant emphasis on the theme of patriotism—or its absence—as a focal concern in the text. The "other theme" category shows that **Corruption/Fraud** accounts for **13.6%**, emphasizing its relevance in the discussion while **Greed** and **Blackmail** are also notable, with **8.42%** and **8.15%**, respectively, **Sycophancy** appears less frequently, at **5.43%**. In addition, **"None of the above" category recorded a minimal 1.9%** of respondents selected this option,

suggesting that the text strongly reflects the identified themes. The distribution across groups (PUB, EST, SLT, CVE) reveals variations in how each theme is perceived, with "All of the above" consistently being the majority response in every group. This analysis underscores the rich thematic diversity within the study. The predominance of "All of the Above" suggests a multifaceted exploration of societal issues, while the significant percentages for individual themes like "Lack of Patriotism" highlight areas of particular focus. These findings provide a foundation for further discussion or research on the impact of these themes.

Table 6: The Variable centre on the extent to which the themes are reflected in the Nigeria milieu										
Response	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Greatly reflected	49	50.50	50	58.1	43	44.79	39	43.82	181	49.18
Fairly reflected	41	42.30	25	29.1	38	39.58	30	33.70	134	36.41
Not reflected	2	2.06	5	5.81	6	6.25	9	10.11	22	5.98
I don't know	5	5.15	6	6.98	9	9.375	11	12.36	31	8.42
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Field work: 2025

Results/ Discussion

The analysis in **Table 6**, titled "The Variable centers on the extent to which the themes are reflected in the Nigerian milieu," evaluates how different groups perceive the reflection of certain themes in their environment. The "greatly reflected" response category has the highest percentage overall, with **49.2%** of respondents agreeing that the themes are greatly reflected in the Nigerian milieu with the EST group leads this category with **58.14%**, showing strong alignment with this view. Also, **36.4%** of respondents believes the themes are fairly reflected with PUB, SLT, and CVE groups show similar moderate levels of agreement, with percentages ranging from **38.20%** to **42.27%**. Besides, only **5.98%** of respondents think the themes are not reflected with SVE shows a slightly higher percentage (**10.11%**), suggesting a minor dissent from the majority view. Furthermore, **8.42%** of respondents are uncertain about the reflection of themes as CVE leads in this category with **12.36%**, indicating possible gaps in understanding or awareness. It is worthy of note that each group (PUB, EST, SLT, CVE) contributes unique insights, showing variability in perceptions, with EST most affirming the themes' presence and CVE exhibiting the most uncertainty. The analysis highlights how respondents perceive the reflection of themes in the Nigerian context. The dominance of "Greatly Reflected" and "Fairly Reflected" responses suggests a strong acknowledgment of these themes in the milieu, while the smaller percentages for "Not Reflected" and "I Don't Know" point to areas of ambiguity or lesser impact. This is valuable for understanding societal attitudes and guiding further exploration or policy-making.

Table 7: The variable centres on the extent to which the reflected themes show a deviation from the tenets of transformational leadership in Nigeria										
Response	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Very large	49	50.50	39	45.3	50	52.08	48	53.93	186	50.54
Large	37	38.10	40	46.5	32	33.33	31	34.83	140	38.04
Small	9	9.28	5	5.81	10	10.42	6	6.74	30	8.15
Very small	2	2.06	2	2.33	4	4.17	4	4.49	12	3.26
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Field work: 2025

Results/ Discussion

The analysis presented in **Table 7** evaluates the extent to which the reflected themes show a deviation from certain tenets, based on responses grouped into four levels: **Very Large**, **Large**, **Small**, and **Very Small**. It is observed that **50.5%** of respondents overall agreeing that the themes show a very large deviation from established tenets, with SLT group leads this perspective with **52.08%**, closely followed by the CVE group at **53.93%**. The table disclose that **38%** of respondents perceive a large deviation. Among the groups, EST has the highest representation here at **46.51%**, indicating strong agreement with this view. In addition, the table revealed that **8.15%** of respondents believe the deviation is small with SLT reflects slightly higher alignment with this category at **10.42%**, while other groups are lower. Also, **3.26%** of respondents see very small deviation, suggesting minimal impact with SVE showing a slightly higher representation in this category at **4.49%**, while other groups remain comparable. The cumulative data shows a strong consensus on substantial deviations ("Very Large" and "Large" together account for **88.5%**), highlighting the perceived disconnect of themes from key tenets. The minority views ("Small" and "Very Small") suggest marginal recognition of deviations, likely influenced by individual experiences or contextual factors. The analysis underscores significant deviation from established tenets, as perceived by the majority. This suggests the need for critical examination of these themes and their broader societal impact, offering opportunities for discussion or intervention.

Table 8: The variable shows the extent to which the reflected themes hinder good leadership and hence national development										
Response	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Very large	46	47.4	40	46.50	52	54.17	47	52.81	185	50.27

Large	35	36.1	39	45.30	33	34.38	31	34.83	138	37.50
Small	10	10.3	5	5.81	8	8.33	7	7.87	30	8.15
Very small	6	6.19	2	2.33	3	3.13	4	4.49	15	4.08
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Field work: 2025

Results/ Discussion

The analysis in **Table 8**, titled "*The variable shows the extent to which the reflected themes hinder good leadership and hence the nation,*" evaluates the perceptions of respondents across four response categories: **Very Large**, **Large**, **Small**, and **Very Small**, distributed among four groups (PUB, EST, SLT, CVE), with cumulative totals provided. A significant **50.3%** of respondents overall believe the themes create a very large hindrance to good leadership and the nation's progress as SLT leads this perspective with **54.17%**, followed closely by CVE at **52.81%**. Besides, **37.5%** of respondents perceive the hindrance as large with EST contributes the highest percentage in this category, with **45.35%**, indicating strong alignment with this view. Only **8.15%** of respondents believe the hindrance is small as SLT accounts for a slightly higher proportion here at **8.33%**, while other groups remain comparable. In addition, a minimal **4.08%** of respondents perceive the themes as causing very little hindrance with CVE shows slightly higher representation in this category, at **4.49%**, though the overall percentage remains low. The cumulative data reveals a strong consensus on significant hindrance, with **87.8%** of respondents combined (Very large and large) affirming a substantial impact on leadership and national progress. The smaller percentages for "Small" and "Very Small" categories highlight minority perspectives, likely influenced by specific contexts or individual experiences. This analysis highlights how the reflected themes are perceived to negatively affect leadership and the nation's development. It suggests a need for targeted interventions to address these hindrances and foster better governance practices.

Table 9: The variable centres on the possible ways to remedy the situation through literature										
Response	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Improved reading culture	15	15.50	17	19.80	20	20.83	25	28.09	77	20.92
Improve reorientation efforts	10	10.30	8	9.30	10	10.42	9	10.11	37	10.05
Increase patriotism	5	5.15	4	4.65	9	9.375	7	7.87	25	6.79
Increase literature scope in schools	32	33.00	25	29.10	40	41.67	36	40.45	133	36.14

All of the above	33	34.00	29	33.70	13	13.54	11	12.36	86	23.37
I don't know	2	2.06	3	3.49	4	4.17	1	1.12	10	2.72
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Field work: 2025

Results/ Discussion

The analysis in **Table 9**, titled "*The variable centers on the possible ways to remedy the situation through literature*," evaluates respondents' perspectives on improving the situation using literature. The responses are distributed across six categories, with cumulative totals provided. **Increase Literature Scope in Schools** received the highest overall support, with **36.1%** of respondents agreeing it is the most effective solution as SLT group leads this category at **41.67%**, showing strong advocacy for enhancing literature's presence in educational institutions. The second most popular choice, selected by **23.4%** of respondents was **"all of the above"** with PUB group shows strong preference for this option at **34.02%**, indicating recognition of the multifaceted approach to improvement. **20.9%** of respondents believe fostering better reading habits is essential as CVE group leads this perspective at **28.09%**, emphasizing cultural change as a solution. **10.1%** overall, highlighting the importance of reeducating and redirecting societal attitudes (**Improve Reorientation Efforts**) as PUB and SLT groups exhibit moderate support for this option. The least popular option, with **6.79%** overall is **Increase Patriotism as** responses are relatively low across all groups, though SLT shows slightly higher alignment at **9.375%**. **About 2.72%** of respondents expressed uncertainty (**I don't know**) about the best course of action as CVE group has the lowest percentage here, at **1.1236%**, indicating greater conviction among its members. The cumulative data emphasizes a strong preference for expanding literature's role in schools and adopting a holistic approach ("All of the above"). Minority responses suggest areas for further awareness or exploration, particularly regarding patriotism and societal reorientation efforts. This analysis highlights the importance of education and cultural initiatives in addressing societal challenges through literature. The data provides a foundation for actionable recommendations and further research into effective implementation strategies.

Table 10: The variable centres on those who ought to spearhead the drive towards transformational leadership in Nigeria										
Response	PUB		EST		SLT		CVE		CUMULATIVE	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Occupants of positions of responsibility	54	55.70	36	41.90	26	27.08	25	28.09	141	38.32
The followers/citizens	33	34.00	33	38.40	23	23.96	28	31.46	117	31.79
The mass media	6	6.19	12	14.00	35	36.46	15	16.85	68	18.48
External influence	0	0	2	2.33	5	5.21	15	16.85	22	5.98

All of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I don't know	4	4.12	3	3.49	7	7.29	6	6.74	20	5.43
Total	97	100	86	100	96	100	89	100	368	100

Field work: 2025

Results/ Discussion

The analysis in **Table 10**, titled *"The variable centres on those who ought to spearhead the drive towards transformational leadership,"* examines the distribution of opinions across categories: **Occupants of Positions of Responsibility, The Followers/Citizens, The Mass Media, External Influence, All of the above,** and **I don't know**, with data from four groups (PUB, EST, SLT, CVE) and cumulative totals. The table revealed that **Occupants of Positions of Responsibility** garnered the highest support, with **38.3%** overall identifying these individuals as the key drivers of transformational leadership as PUB leads here, with **55.67%** of its respondents favoring this group. The second most supported option, with **31.8%** overall with the CVE group contributed the largest percentage in this category at **31.46%**, indicating strong faith in the collective power of citizens. **The Mass Media** represents **18.5%** of the cumulative responses, highlighting its role in influencing leadership with SLT stands out, with **36.46%** prioritizing the media as a key player. **External Influence** were selected by a smaller proportion, **5.98%**, indicating limited belief in external forces driving change with the EST and CVE groups show minor contributions to this category. **I Don't know** represents **5.43%** of the total responses, reflecting uncertainty among a small number of participants. **All of the above** was not selected by any respondents, indicating clear delineation of roles and responsibilities in the minds of participants. The results indicate a strong preference for leadership to originate from those already in positions of responsibility, followed closely by empowering citizens as a collective force. The significance of the mass media also suggests its potential as a tool for advocacy and education. Lower support for external influence highlights a focus on internal, locally-driven solutions to leadership challenges.

Conclusion

It is established in this study that the place of literature in national development cannot be overemphasized. Unarguably, literature plays pivotal role in the setting of agenda for the leadership of any nation by showcasing themes that lampoons the socio-political, economic and religious ills in the society. As writers point out these ills and provide ways by which such could be remedied with the intention of creating avenues for the improvement of the living standards of the citizens, the society is placed on the right path of growth and development. The paper, examined how literature is used as mirror of the society. It anchored on the principles of transformational leadership with particular reference to the concept of realism in literature. Findings revealed that leadership failure in Nigeria is largely caused by the lack of patriotism, greed and selfishness, corruption as well as sycophancy.

Recommendation

Based on the findings as well as the conclusion drawn from the study, the paper hereby recommends as follows:

Citizens, either as leaders or followers must reawaken the spirit of the reading culture in the country. Conscious efforts must be made by all stakeholders especially in the education sector and

across institutions to revive the reading culture that is gradually being eroded due to advancement in technology through the use and addiction to phones and other smart devices.

Government and government institutions must urgently begin a sincere process of sensitization and reorientation. The need to intensify campaigns aimed at reconscientizing the citizens on the need to be patriotic, imbibe the spirit of contentment, sacrificial service, commitment to transparency, accountability and fairness cannot be downplayed or trivialized at this critical stage in the life of the country. The media, the class rooms, religious bodies and institutions must all sincerely key into this knowing that the task of good leadership for national development is collective and must be holistic.

Finally, studies in literature across institutions of learning must not only be sustained but also enlarged and improved upon. Writers must be encouraged to write through the provision of support for publications and marketability of creative works.

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SILENCE AS RESISTANCE AND SELF-PRESERVATION IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S ZIKORA

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Abstract

This paper examines silence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Zikora* as a rhetorical and psychological practice through which the protagonist responds to relational pressure, maternal expectation and post-childbirth distress. Focusing on Zikora's exchanges with her mother, her relationship with Kwame and her experience after childbirth, the study uses an intersectional feminist framework and qualitative close reading to trace how gender, professional position, transnational location and maternal responsibility shape the meanings attached to speech and withholding speech. The analysis attends to first-person focalisation and internal monologue, which make Zikora's private evaluations available even when she says little aloud. The paper argues that silence in the story cannot be reduced to passivity: it may register imposed exclusion, but it also provides reflective distance, emotional protection and a restrained form of resistance. Adichie therefore presents silence as an unstable practice whose meaning depends on who controls it and under what social conditions it occurs.

Keywords: *Zikora*, Silence, Intersectional Feminism, Motherhood, Gendered Expectations, Resistance, Self-Preservation

Introduction

Silence in Adichie's *Zikora* shapes relationships and the protagonist's response to pressure. The story repeatedly distinguishes between silence imposed on Zikora and silence she uses deliberately. In encounters with her mother, restraint carries inherited judgements about womanhood and pain; in her relationship with Kwame, his withdrawal turns non-response into relational power, while Zikora's own pauses allow her to process betrayal before she speaks; after childbirth, quiet reflection gives form to pain, uncertainty and the distance between cultural scripts of maternal joy and her actual feelings. Reading these moments together makes silence more than an absence of speech. It becomes a pattern through which the story organises power, vulnerability and self-protection.

This study therefore examines how silence functions as resistance and self-preservation across three connected areas: the mother-daughter relationship, Zikora's relationship with Kwame and her post-childbirth transformation. It uses qualitative close reading, with attention to first-person focalisation, internal monologue and shifts between spoken exchange and private thought. The argument is that silence has no single meaning in the story. At times others impose it through abandonment, dismissal or social expectation; at other moments Zikora turns restraint into reflective space that helps her assess what has happened and preserve a coherent sense of self. An intersectional feminist approach makes it possible to read these silences alongside gender, professional status, transnational location, family position and motherhood rather than attributing them solely to personality.

Theoretical Background

This study adopts an intersectional feminist framework. Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced intersectionality to explain how single-axis accounts of discrimination can overlook forms of disadvantage produced at the intersection of categories such as race and gender (139-40). Her formulation cautions against treating women as a socially uniform category and provides a basis for examining how several relations of power can operate at the same time.

Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge describe intersectionality as a way of understanding human experience through multiple, mutually influencing factors rather than through a single axis (2). This emphasis on relational analysis is useful for *Zikora* because the protagonist moves through several social positions at once: she is a Nigerian immigrant, a lawyer, a daughter, a partner and, later, a mother. These positions carry different expectations, and their interaction affects how she interprets betrayal, care, pain and responsibility.

Leslie McCall distinguishes anticategorical, intercategory and intracategory approaches to intersectional research (1773-74). The intracategory approach is especially suited to the present close reading because it centres a particular subject whose position unsettles broad social categories. The paper therefore concentrates on *Zikora* as an individual character while relating her choices to gender, class and professional status, migration, family relations and motherhood. This method keeps the analysis close to the language of the story while allowing social position to remain visible.

Applied to literary analysis, this framework directs attention to the conditions under which speech and silence acquire meaning. A woman may keep quiet because a social hierarchy discourages speech, because another person has closed communication, or because restraint offers time to assess a difficult situation. The distinction matters in *Zikora*, where the same outward condition of quietness can carry different meanings according to who controls communication. The analysis therefore treats silence as relational and context-dependent rather than assuming that every silence is either submission or resistance.

Review of Related Scholarship and Justification of Study

Although Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has attracted extensive scholarly attention, *Zikora* has a smaller but growing critical record. Saroj G.C.'s 2023 article examines female subjectivity and body politics, placing *Zikora*'s pregnancy, abandonment, immigrant status, sexuality, romance and generational relations in the social meanings attached to the pregnant body (31). G.C. reads pain as a route through which *Zikora* reassesses relationships and gendered assumptions. That focus is valuable for understanding corporeal suffering, but it treats silence mainly as part of the broader field of pain and subject formation. The present study shifts attention to withholding speech and non-response as recurring relational practices.

Yakut Akbay's 2024 study reads *Zikora* through African feminism and a postcolonial account of femininity and motherhood, emphasising single motherhood, polygamy, sexism, male-child preference and generational change (56). Akbay also gives sustained attention to the mother-daughter relationship and women's solidarity. The article clarifies the cultural pressures surrounding *Zikora*'s maternal identity, but its main concern lies with changing ideas of womanhood and motherhood rather than silence as a sustained communicative practice.

Kelechi Chioma Osigwe's review of *Zikora* places labour pain, abandonment and adjustment to motherhood at the centre of the story. Osigwe also identifies the autodiegetic narrative voice as an appropriate means of communicating *Zikora*'s emotional and physical anguish (82, 84). This account is useful to the present study because it connects narrative perspective with maternal transition, though it does not develop the contrast between imposed non-response and *Zikora*'s own deliberate restraint.

Samuel Kwesi Nkansah and Emmanuel Mensah Bonsu approach the story from corpus stylistics, examining verbal processes and the dominance of first-person narration (155-72). Their findings show that Adichie's patterns of saying, asking and reporting help organise gendered relations and attribute

speech to different characters. The present study complements that emphasis on verbal process by examining what happens when expected speech is delayed, withheld or denied. Silence, in this sense, gains meaning from its relation to the story's dense field of speech rather than from the simple absence of words.

Sreya Mukherjee's 2023 essay in *Café Dissensus* interprets *Zikora* through contemporary motherhood and the strained relationship between Zikora and her mother. Mukherjee draws particular attention to the mother's ideal of self-restraint during labour and to the way childbirth changes Zikora's understanding of her mother. The essay therefore brings maternal quietness close to the present topic, but it treats restraint chiefly as a generational code of womanhood. This paper extends that discussion by comparing maternal restraint with Kwame's withdrawal and Zikora's private post-childbirth reflection.

These studies establish several important lines of criticism on *Zikora*: body politics and pain, generational motherhood, maternal transition, narrative perspective, verbal process and contemporary maternal culture. None places silence at the centre of an analysis that follows the mother-daughter relationship, intimate abandonment and post-childbirth reflection together. This study addresses that gap by distinguishing silence imposed through unequal relations from silence used as reflective distance and self-preservation, while keeping the analysis grounded in Adichie's first-person narrative form.

SILENCE AS RESISTANCE AND SELF-PRESERVATION

Silence in the Mother-Daughter Relationship

The mother-daughter relationship reveals two forms of silence: the mother's disciplined restraint during pain and Zikora's withholding of speech when she interprets her mother's behaviour through inherited assumptions about marriage and womanhood. Because the narration remains with Zikora, readers encounter both spoken exchange and private judgement, making silence a relational practice rather than an empty pause. The contrast between the two women also shows how generation, family position and social expectation shape the meaning of restraint.

During labour, Zikora recalls that her mother wanted her to endure pain with a "mute grinding of teeth" (*Zikora* 7). The mother's preference for quiet endurance reflects a gendered script in which composure validates womanhood. Her restraint therefore carries the weight of cultural training. It protects dignity in one sense, but it also passes a demanding model of femininity from mother to daughter. An intersectional reading links gender to generation, family role and cultural expectation: the mother's habits developed under conditions different from Zikora's professional and diasporic life, but they still shape how Zikora judges her own response to pain.

Zikora also remembers a period after her father moved out when she "spoke to my mother only in sullen monosyllables" (*Zikora* 25). Here silence belongs to Zikora rather than her mother. As a child, she withholds fuller speech because she has accepted the idea that her mother could have prevented the separation. Pregnancy and childbirth later alter this interpretation. The retrospective first-person narration allows the adult Zikora to recognise how her earlier quietness participated in blame while also showing how silence can postpone understanding until later experience makes reassessment possible.

Silence in the mother-daughter relationship therefore carries memory as well as power. The mother's restraint represents an inherited discipline; Zikora's monosyllabic withdrawal records hurt and misrecognition. By returning to these earlier silences during childbirth, Zikora does more than remember

them. She re-reads them, and this retrospective movement turns quietness into a means of understanding the pressures that shaped both women.

Silence in Zikora's Relationship with Kwame

Silence in Zikora's relationship with Kwame develops through the breakdown of communication. Their exchanges move from intimacy to evasion, delayed replies and absence, so quietness becomes inseparable from relational power. The first-person narration keeps Zikora's reasoning visible while Kwame becomes increasingly inaccessible, allowing the story to contrast the person who bears the physical consequences of pregnancy with the partner who can withdraw from immediate responsibility.

When Zikora tells Kwame that she may be pregnant, his language changes abruptly:

He looked confused. "I might be pregnant." I was so certain of his delight that I made my tone playful, almost singsong. But his face didn't relax, instead it went still, as though all his features had paused, and suddenly this communicative man retreated into the cryptic. He said, "We're at different places in our lives." He said, "I'll take care of everything," in a voice that belonged to someone else, in words that he had heard somewhere else. Take care of everything. How absurd; we were both lawyers, and I earned a little more than he did. He said, "It's a shock." I said, "You came inside me." He said, "I thought you let me because you had protection." I said, "What are you talking about? You know I stopped taking the pill because it made me fat, and I assumed you knew what it meant, what it could mean." He said, "There was miscommunication." (*Zikora* 11)

Kwame's shift from communicative to "cryptic" speech marks the beginning of asymmetrical communication. Zikora initially answers him directly, but his language transforms a shared reproductive risk into "miscommunication." Her restraint after the exchange reflects shock rather than consent. She must absorb the sudden separation between the relationship she believed she had and the position Kwame now adopts. An intersectional reading draws attention to the tension between her professional standing as a lawyer and the gendered expectation that she will carry the physical and emotional consequences of pregnancy. The first-person narration holds legal reasoning, hurt and disbelief together, showing why silence can provide temporary distance before response.

Kwame's later absence turns non-response into a more explicit form of relational control:

He ignored my calls and texts, and sent back my apartment key in an envelope, the lone metal key wrapped in plain paper. Some days I was fine and some days I was underwater, barely breathing. At my twenty-week checkup, I smiled at the moving grainy gray image on the ultrasound screen, flush with well-being, and I waved at the front-desk women as I left, but in the elevator, I burst into tears, a sudden sense of dissolving all around me. I sent Kwame a text: I'm 20 weeks today. He replied three days later: It's manipulative to send me this. You know you made a decision that excluded me. I didn't want things to end this way. I'm hurting too. I read it over and over; it felt like something written by somebody who was not Kwame, like an exercise from law school, an argument about case law, hard and elegant and empty. To my Can we please at least talk? Kwame did not respond. Ours was an ancient story, the woman wants the baby and the man doesn't want the baby and a middle ground does not exist. (*Zikora* 13)

Kwame's later non-response gives silence a different function because he controls it. Calls, texts and requests for conversation receive delay or no answer. This imposed silence restricts Zikora's ability to negotiate the relationship, while pregnancy continues regardless of his withdrawal. Her own quieter moments do not equal his conduct: she uses them to read, reconsider and contain emotion, whereas his absence shifts responsibility to her. The contrast matters because the story presents silence as dependent on power and circumstance, not as a fixed sign of either weakness or resistance.

Across these scenes, silence names both exclusion and self-preservation. Kwame uses distance to close conversation; Zikora uses reflection to survive the consequences of that closure. The distinction prevents the analysis from romanticising every silence as resistance. Instead, resistance appears when Zikora converts an imposed communicative absence into space for judgement, boundary-making and emotional endurance.

Silence in Zikora's Post-Childbirth Transformation

After childbirth, silence moves away from direct relational conflict and towards the gap between expected maternal feeling and Zikora's physical and emotional state. The story places cultural images of motherhood beside pain, exhaustion and uncertainty, while first-person focalisation records thoughts that Zikora does not necessarily voice. Quietness in these scenes therefore marks an inward interval in which she tests inherited expectations against what she can actually feel.

The immediate aftermath of childbirth presents that interval with particular force:

I was suspended in a place of no feeling, waiting to feel. I could not separate this moment from the stories of this moment—years of stories and films and books about this scene, mother and child, mother meeting child, child in mother's arms. I knew how I was supposed to feel, but I did not know how I felt. It was not transcendental. There was a festering red pain between my legs. Somewhere in my consciousness, a mild triumph hovered, because it was over, finally it was over, and I had pushed out the baby. So animalistic, so violent—the push and pressure, the blood, the doctor urging me, the cranking and stretching of flesh and organ and bone. (*Zikora* 17)

After delivery, Zikora waits to feel the transcendence that stories about motherhood have taught her to expect, but pain and disorientation dominate. Her silence marks a suspension of ready-made language: she does not immediately perform joy simply because culture says a mother should. The internal monologue gives the reader access to this pause and exposes a discrepancy between maternal ideals and her actual response. From an intersectional perspective, gender and motherhood combine with medical vulnerability and family expectation, making quiet reflection a form of protection from an emotional script she cannot truthfully inhabit at that moment.

The pressure continues during early postnatal care:

I was constipated, and on the toilet, I tried not to strain while straining still, tentative, panic in my throat, afraid I might tear my stitches. A geyser of anxiety had erupted deep inside me and I was spurting fear. I sat in the warm sitz bath, worried that I hadn't sat for long enough, even though I set my timer for fifteen minutes. What if I got an infection? I would need medication, which would taint my breast milk and affect my son. My son. My son could not latch on to my breasts properly, always my nipple slipped out of his little hungry mouth. He

wailed and wailed. His cries seared into my head and made me so jittery I wanted to smash things. (*Zikora* 26)

The second passage intensifies this private struggle. Anxiety about stitches, infection, breastfeeding and the baby's crying fills Zikora's thoughts even when she says little aloud. First-person focalisation places the pressure of maternal responsibility next to physical recovery, so silence cannot be read as calmness. It contains fear and anger that social expectations of competent motherhood leave little room to express. Restraint helps her move through immediate demands, but the narration ensures that readers still hear what public speech omits.

Post-childbirth silence therefore changes the paper's earlier pattern. It does not primarily answer Kwame or her mother; it marks an inward interval in which Zikora tests inherited images of motherhood against pain, exhaustion and care. The story turns quiet into a narrative contrast between what women are expected to feel and what the protagonist can actually name.

Conclusion

Silence in *Zikora* functions through changing relations of power rather than carrying one stable meaning. In the mother-daughter relationship, it moves between inherited discipline and delayed understanding. Zikora's mother's restraint encodes a model of feminine endurance, while Zikora's own monosyllabic withdrawal reveals how silence can preserve resentment until later experience permits reinterpretation. With Kwame, silence becomes more coercive because his withdrawal limits dialogue during a pregnancy whose physical consequences fall on Zikora. Her reflective pauses after this abandonment differ from his non-response: they help her process betrayal without surrendering her judgement. After childbirth, quietness turns inward as she confronts pain, anxiety and the expectation that motherhood should produce immediate joy.

The intersectional feminist framework clarifies why these silences cannot be explained by gender alone. Zikora's professional status, migration, family position, intimate relationship and maternal role alter what silence can do in each scene. The story's first-person focalisation and internal monologue preserve speech at the level of thought even when spoken language narrows or disappears. Thus, Adichie uses silence both to represent unequal relations and to create reflective distance from them. The paper's contribution lies in distinguishing silence imposed by others from silence used for self-preservation. That distinction shows why quietness in *Zikora* may signal harm, endurance, reassessment or resistance according to who controls communication and what is at stake.

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Exploring Innovative Methods to Revitalize Teaching Practices for Students and Language Teachers

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Abstract

Rapid developments in digital technology, artificial intelligence, globalization, and changing patterns of communication have created new demands for language teaching and learning. Conventional approaches that place the teacher and transmission of linguistic information at the centre of instruction may provide valuable foundational knowledge, but they may not sufficiently address contemporary demands for communication, collaboration, critical thinking, learner autonomy, and digital literacy. This paper presents a conceptual review of innovative pedagogical approaches that can contribute to the revitalization of language teaching. Drawing on selected literature in language education, educational technology, learner-centred pedagogy, and teacher professional development, the paper examines Project-Based Learning (PBL), Flipped Learning, Gamification, Collaborative Learning, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Using a conceptual literature review design, the paper synthesizes scholarship on innovative language-teaching approaches and their implications for contemporary language education. The review is theoretically informed by constructivist perspectives, particularly the view that learners develop knowledge through active engagement, interaction, experience, and reflection. The synthesis indicates that no single innovative approach is universally appropriate; rather, their value depends on purposeful alignment with learning objectives, learner characteristics, teacher competence, institutional resources, and classroom context. The paper further identifies infrastructural limitations, inadequate professional development, large classes, unequal access to technology, and resistance to pedagogical change as major barriers to sustainable innovation. It argues that effective revitalization should therefore involve a balanced integration of

established language-teaching principles with carefully selected learner-centred and technology-enhanced practices. The paper concludes that sustainable innovation is best understood as a context-sensitive process of pedagogical adaptation supported by teacher development, institutional commitment, appropriate technologies, and continuous reflective practice.

Keywords: innovative pedagogy, learner-centred teaching, language education, project-based learning, flipped learning, technology-enhanced learning, teacher professional development

Introduction

Language education has undergone substantial transformation in response to changes in technology, communication, society, and educational theory. The expansion of digital communication, mobile technologies, online learning environments, and artificial intelligence has altered the ways learners encounter, produce, and exchange language. These developments have created opportunities for language teachers to extend learning beyond conventional classroom boundaries while also introducing new demands concerning digital literacy, learner autonomy, multimodal communication, and responsible technology use.

The changing educational environment has consequently intensified calls for language teaching practices that move beyond exclusive reliance on teacher-fronted explanation, memorization, and decontextualized language exercises. Contemporary language education increasingly emphasizes meaningful communication, interaction, authentic tasks, learner participation, and the ability to use language effectively in diverse contexts. Communicative competence therefore remains an important goal of language education, encompassing not only grammatical knowledge but also sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic dimensions of communication (Canale & Swain, 1980).

However, the call for innovation should not be interpreted as a complete rejection of established teaching practices. Grammar explanation, vocabulary development, explicit instruction, guided practice, and other conventional techniques can remain useful when appropriately integrated with communicative and learner-centred activities. The central issue is therefore not whether traditional teaching should be abandoned, but how language teachers can combine appropriate established practices with innovative methods to respond to contemporary learning needs.

Several pedagogical approaches have attracted attention in this context. Project-Based Learning provides opportunities for learners to investigate authentic questions and produce meaningful products; Flipped Learning redistributes instructional activities between individual and group learning spaces; Gamification incorporates selected game elements into learning activities; Collaborative Learning emphasizes knowledge construction through interaction; Communicative Language Teaching foregrounds meaningful communication; Task-Based Language Teaching organizes instruction around purposeful language-use tasks; and Computer-Assisted Language Learning facilitates language learning through digital technologies.

The effectiveness of these approaches, however, cannot be separated from the conditions under which they are implemented. Teachers require appropriate pedagogical and technological knowledge, while institutions need to provide resources, professional development, curriculum

flexibility, and supportive policies. In contexts where internet connectivity, electricity, devices, class size, and teacher training remain significant concerns, innovative pedagogy must be adapted to local realities rather than adopted uncritically.

Against this background, this paper conceptually reviews selected innovative approaches to language teaching and considers how they can contribute to the revitalization of language education. It focuses particularly on the relationship among learner engagement, authentic communication, learner autonomy, collaboration, technology, and teacher professional development.

Methodological Framework

This paper adopts a conceptual literature review design. It does not report primary data collected from students, teachers, classrooms, or institutions. Instead, it synthesizes established scholarship on innovative language pedagogy, educational technology, learner-centred learning, communicative competence, and teacher professional development.

The literature was organized thematically around seven pedagogical approaches: Project-Based Learning, Flipped Learning, Gamification, Collaborative Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, and Computer-Assisted Language Learning. Sources were considered in relation to four broad questions:

1. What are the defining principles of each pedagogical approach?
2. How can the approach contribute to language learning and learner engagement?
3. What role does the teacher play in implementing the approach?
4. What contextual conditions may facilitate or constrain implementation?

The review therefore seeks to synthesize pedagogical implications rather than estimate an effect size or report new empirical findings. Foundational theoretical works and established scholarship in language teaching and educational technology were prioritized in order to maintain conceptual and bibliographic relevance.

The conceptual nature of the review also defines the limits of its claims. The paper does not claim that the reviewed approaches automatically produce superior learning outcomes in every context. Rather, it argues that they provide pedagogical possibilities whose effectiveness depends on appropriate design, implementation, teacher competence, learner characteristics, and institutional conditions.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist Learning Theory

The paper is principally informed by constructivist perspectives on learning. Constructivism views learners as active participants in the construction of knowledge rather than passive recipients of information. Learning develops through engagement with tasks, interaction with others, experience, reflection, and the interpretation of new information in relation to existing knowledge. Piaget and Inhelder (1972) emphasize learners' active involvement in cognitive development, while Vygotsky (1978) places greater emphasis on social interaction and mediated learning. These

perspectives are relevant to contemporary language pedagogy because language development is fundamentally connected to meaningful interaction, participation, feedback, and social use.

Constructivist principles provide a useful theoretical foundation for Project-Based Learning, Collaborative Learning, Task-Based Language Teaching, and Communicative Language Teaching. These approaches require learners to participate actively in activities in which language is used for meaningful purposes. Flipped Learning and Computer-Assisted Language Learning can also support constructivist principles when technology is used to facilitate exploration, interaction, collaboration, reflection, and application rather than merely to reproduce teacher-centred transmission.

The relevance of constructivism to the present review therefore lies in its emphasis on active learning, meaningful experience, social interaction, learner agency, and knowledge construction. These principles provide a basis for examining how innovative pedagogies may reposition both learners and teachers within the language classroom.

The Need to Revitalize Language Teaching

Language teaching has historically employed a variety of approaches designed to develop linguistic knowledge and skills. Grammar instruction, vocabulary teaching, reading exercises, translation, repetition, and teacher explanation have all played important roles in language education. The limitations arise when these practices are used as the dominant means of instruction without sufficient opportunities for meaningful language use.

A major development in language pedagogy has been the increasing emphasis on communicative competence. Canale and Swain (1980) demonstrate that successful language use involves more than grammatical knowledge. Learners also need sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic resources that enable them to use language appropriately in different situations.

This orientation has encouraged greater attention to interaction, authentic communication, learner participation, and task-based activity. Richards and Rodgers (2014) note the importance of understanding language teaching approaches in relation to their underlying views of language, learning, classroom roles, and instructional procedures. Brown (2014) argues that effective language teaching requires a balance between linguistic knowledge, communicative practice, learner engagement, and meaningful interaction, highlighting the need for pedagogical approaches that support active language use.

The contemporary language classroom also operates within a rapidly changing technological environment. Mobile devices, digital platforms, multimedia materials, online communication, and artificial intelligence have expanded the range of resources available to learners and teachers. Technology can facilitate access to authentic language materials, provide additional opportunities for practice, support learner autonomy, and enable communication beyond the physical classroom. Nevertheless, technological tools are pedagogically valuable only when their use is connected to clearly defined learning objectives.

Kukulska-Hulme (2020) highlights the growing relevance of mobile technologies in language learning, while Chapelle (2001) emphasizes the importance of evaluating computer applications in relation to language-learning principles. The implication is that technological innovation should be driven by pedagogy rather than by technology alone.

Innovative Approaches to Language Teaching

1. Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a learner-centred approach in which students investigate meaningful questions, problems, or challenges over an extended period and produce a product, presentation, performance, or other outcome. Thomas (2000) identifies several features associated with PBL, including centrality, driving questions, constructive investigation, autonomy, and realism. The philosophical roots of project-based learning can be traced to Kilpatrick's (1918) project method, which advocated learning through purposeful activities connected to real-life experiences.

The approach has important implications for language education because projects create contexts in which learners must use language for authentic purposes. Instead of completing isolated language exercises, students may conduct interviews, produce newsletters, develop podcasts, create digital stories, organize awareness campaigns, or investigate issues affecting their communities.

PBL also supports the development of skills beyond linguistic competence. Learners may develop collaboration, research, creativity, critical thinking, planning, presentation, and problem-solving abilities. Dewey's (1938) emphasis on experience provides a useful philosophical foundation for understanding the value of meaningful activity in learning.

In a language classroom, a teacher might organize a project around the theme "Language and Culture in Our Community." Students could interview community members, collect expressions from local languages, compare language practices, analyze findings, and present their work through a written report or digital presentation. Such an activity integrates listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary development, research, and collaborative learning.

The teacher's role in PBL is primarily that of planner, facilitator, monitor, and assessor. Effective implementation requires clearly defined objectives, manageable tasks, appropriate scaffolding, formative feedback, and assessment criteria.

2. Flipped Learning

Flipped Learning reorganizes the relationship between individual preparation and classroom interaction. Learners encounter selected instructional materials before class, while classroom time is devoted to discussion, application, collaboration, problem-solving, and teacher-supported practice.

The approach has been associated with Baker's (2000) "classroom flip" and later popularized through the work of Bergmann and Sams (2012). Lage et al. (2000) similarly discussed the inversion of conventional classroom activities. Baker's work is therefore relevant to the history of flipped instruction and should not be confused with unrelated publications.

The pedagogical value of Flipped Learning lies not simply in moving lectures outside the classroom but in using the released classroom time for more active and interactive learning. In language teaching, learners may watch a short instructional video, read a text, listen to a recorded explanation, or study vocabulary before class. Classroom time can then be used for speaking practice, debates, role plays, peer feedback, writing workshops, and collaborative problem-solving.

Importantly, flipping does not necessarily require sophisticated technology. Where internet access is limited, teachers can use printed materials, recorded audio, locally stored videos, or other accessible resources. The central principle is the purposeful redistribution of learning activities rather than dependence on a particular technological platform.

3. Gamification

Gamification involves the use of selected game elements and design principles in non-game contexts (Deterding et al., 2011). In education, such elements may include points, levels, challenges, badges, progress indicators, feedback, narratives, and opportunities for choice.

In language classrooms, gamification can be used for vocabulary practice, grammar revision, pronunciation, reading comprehension, speaking activities, and formative assessment. For example, students may earn points for completing language challenges, participate in vocabulary competitions, or work through progressive levels of communicative tasks.

The pedagogical value of gamification should not be reduced to making lessons entertaining. Effective gamification should connect game elements with learning objectives. Kapp (2012) emphasizes the instructional possibilities of game-based methods and strategies, particularly their capacity to support engagement and motivation.

Teachers should also avoid excessive competition. Leaderboards and public ranking systems may motivate some learners while discouraging others. Collaborative challenges, personal progress systems, team-based tasks, and opportunities for revision may provide more inclusive alternatives.

4. Collaborative Learning

Collaborative Learning involves learners working together to discuss ideas, solve problems, complete tasks, provide feedback, and construct knowledge. Its relevance to language teaching is particularly strong because language itself develops through interaction.

Collaborative activities can include pair work, peer teaching, group discussions, information-gap tasks, peer review, debates, role plays, and group projects. Through such activities, learners negotiate meaning, clarify ideas, listen to alternative perspectives, and use language for genuine interpersonal purposes.

The approach is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on social interaction in learning. It also corresponds with the broader literature on cooperative learning, which emphasizes structured interaction and shared responsibility (Johnson & Johnson, 2017).

Effective collaborative learning requires careful task design. Simply placing students into groups does not guarantee productive collaboration. Research on peer instruction demonstrates that structured learner interaction can improve understanding, engagement, and participation in learning activities. Collaborative learning encourages learners to interact, negotiate meaning, exchange feedback and jointly construct knowledge. In language classrooms, collaborative writing can provide opportunities for learners to develop writing skills through interaction with peers and can contribute to improvements in individual writing performance (Jiang & Eslami, 2022). However, the effectiveness of collaborative activities may depend on task design, learner proficiency and the quality of peer interaction. Teachers need to establish clear objectives, assign meaningful roles where appropriate, monitor participation, and provide mechanisms for individual and group accountability.

5. Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes the ability to use language effectively and appropriately for meaningful communication. It represents an important shift from an exclusive focus on linguistic forms toward the functional and social use of language.

Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence provides an important theoretical foundation for this orientation. In practice, CLT can involve role plays, simulations, interviews, discussions, debates, information-gap activities, problem-solving tasks, and authentic communicative exchanges.

CLT does not imply that grammar is irrelevant. Rather, grammatical knowledge is situated within a broader conception of communicative competence. Learners need both knowledge of language forms and opportunities to use those forms meaningfully. Harmer (2015) emphasizes that language learning is most effective when learners are provided with opportunities to use language communicatively through meaningful classroom interaction and authentic tasks.

6. Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-Based Language Teaching organizes instruction around meaningful tasks through which learners use language to achieve an outcome. Tasks may involve planning, decision-making, information exchange, problem-solving, interviewing, or collaborative production.

TBLT is particularly relevant to contemporary language education because it connects language learning with purposeful action. Instead of learning a grammatical structure solely through explanation and drills, learners may encounter and use relevant forms while attempting to accomplish a meaningful communicative task.

Ellis (2018) provides an important account of task-based language teaching and its theoretical and practical foundations. TBLT can also complement CLT and PBL because all three approaches place meaningful language use at the centre of classroom activity.

7. Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) refers broadly to the use of computer and digital technologies in language learning. Its applications include multimedia resources, online learning environments, digital dictionaries, interactive exercises, computer-mediated communication, speech technologies, and language-learning software.

CALL can provide additional opportunities for language practice and access to authentic materials. It can also support individualized learning and provide forms of immediate feedback (Chapelle, 2001).

However, the mere presence of technology does not guarantee effective learning. Teachers need to evaluate digital resources according to pedagogical suitability, accessibility, reliability, learner level, language objectives, and the opportunities they provide for meaningful engagement. Reinders and White (2016) observe that digital technologies have increasingly supported learner autonomy by providing opportunities for self-directed learning, communication, and access to authentic language resources beyond the classroom.

The expansion of CALL into mobile-assisted language learning further demonstrates the changing technological environment of language education. Mobile technologies can provide flexible access

to language resources and enable learning across formal and informal contexts (Kukulska-Hulme, 2018).

8. Artificial Intelligence-Supported Language Teaching

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has introduced new possibilities for language education, including conversational practice, writing support, feedback, content generation, learner support, and the development of instructional materials. The rapid expansion of research following the emergence of ChatGPT has consequently made AI-supported language teaching an important area of contemporary language-education research. Law (2024), in a scoping review of GenAI in language teaching and learning, identifies opportunities for language practice, instructional support, and learner engagement while also emphasizing the need for empirical research, ethical consideration, and continuous teacher professional development.

Recent empirical scholarship further demonstrates the rapid growth and diversification of this field. Li et al. (2025) systematically reviewed 144 peer-reviewed empirical studies published during 2023 and 2024 and found that research had expanded from predominantly exploratory investigations toward more systematic empirical inquiry. Their review identified six major areas of research: perceptions and attitudes, psychological and cognitive dimensions, teaching and learning strategies, language-skills development, writing and feedback, and implementation and integration. Writing represented the most extensively studied language skill, while speaking, listening, and reading received comparatively less attention. The authors also identified continuing gaps in research involving K–12 learners, longitudinal designs, and languages other than English.

Empirical evidence indicates that GenAI can support language-learning activities, although its effects are not uniformly positive. For example, Woo et al. (2024) examined Hong Kong secondary-school EFL students who used ChatGPT in a writing activity and found high satisfaction with the learning process, while also reporting substantial cognitive demands associated particularly with prompt engineering. The findings suggest that successful classroom integration requires appropriate scaffolding and careful instructional design rather than simply providing learners with access to an AI system.

Systematic reviews also indicate that the evidence base remains developing. Qiao et al. (2025) reviewed empirical studies of AI-supported language learning and found that speaking and writing were among the most frequently investigated language domains. Although some studies reported positive learning outcomes, the authors cautioned that the effectiveness of AI remains inconclusive in some respects because of methodological limitations, including the limited use of rigorous randomized controlled designs. Thus, claims concerning the universal effectiveness of AI-supported language learning should be treated cautiously.

More recent meta-analytic evidence provides a broader perspective. Torres and Kahveci (2025), using a multilevel meta-analysis of 46 empirical studies and 117 effect sizes, reported a statistically significant overall positive effect of AI on language learning, while also finding variation across language skills, educational levels, instructional modes, and other contextual factors. Similarly, Saarela et al. (2026) synthesized 51 studies and 175 independent effect sizes and reported significant effects of GenAI on language proficiency and affective-cognitive outcomes, while demonstrating that effects varied according to intervention duration, instructional setting, learner characteristics, and target language. These findings support a context-sensitive interpretation of AI effectiveness rather than the assumption that the technology itself guarantees improved learning.

The implications for teachers are particularly important. Deng and Jamaludin (2026) identify multiple roles for GenAI in EFL instruction, including tutoring, feedback, assessment support, instructional assistance, and learning support, while also highlighting concerns related to accuracy, overreliance, academic integrity, and the need for teacher mediation. Similarly, recent research on language educators' practices emphasizes the importance of professional knowledge, competence development, institutional support, and continuing professional development for meaningful GenAI integration.

Accordingly, GenAI should be understood as a pedagogical resource rather than a replacement for teachers, human interaction, or learner agency. Teachers remain responsible for selecting appropriate tasks, evaluating AI-generated content, providing contextualized feedback, addressing ethical and academic-integrity concerns, and ensuring that AI use is aligned with learning objectives. In language classrooms, the most productive applications are therefore likely to be those in which AI extends opportunities for practice, feedback, interaction, and resource development while teachers retain pedagogical oversight.

The appropriate question is consequently not whether AI should replace established language-teaching practices, but how it can be responsibly integrated with them. Effective GenAI-supported language teaching requires purposeful instructional design, critical AI literacy, teacher mediation, learner participation, ethical awareness, and sensitivity to local educational conditions. Such an approach is consistent with the broader argument of this paper that pedagogical innovation is most sustainable when technology is subordinated to clearly defined educational purposes

Integrating the Approaches: Towards a Flexible Pedagogical Model

The reviewed approaches should not be regarded as competing methods from which teachers must select only one. Their greatest value may emerge when complementary principles are combined.

For example, a teacher may design a language-learning project around a community issue. Students can access background materials before class as part of a flipped-learning sequence. During classroom sessions, they can work collaboratively on research tasks. Task-based activities can provide opportunities for meaningful language use, while gamified elements can be introduced for vocabulary development or formative assessment. Digital tools can then support research, production, presentation, and communication.

Such integration demonstrates that innovation is not synonymous with technological sophistication. A low-resource classroom can still implement learner-centred innovation through group discussion, peer teaching, project work, role play, locally produced materials, community-based tasks, and printed resources.

The central principle should therefore be pedagogical alignment. Teachers should begin with learning objectives and learner needs and then select methods and technologies capable of supporting those objectives.

Role of the Language Teacher in Innovative Pedagogy

Innovative pedagogy changes, but does not eliminate, the teacher's role. Rather than functioning primarily as the transmitter of information, the teacher increasingly assumes multiple roles as facilitator, designer, guide, assessor, mentor, collaborator, and reflective practitioner.

Teachers need to develop the capacity to design meaningful tasks, manage collaborative learning, provide feedback, evaluate digital resources, differentiate instruction, and assess both individual

and collaborative learning. Richards and Farrell (2005) emphasize the importance of continuous professional development for language teachers, while teacher learning can also be supported through peer collaboration, mentoring, reflective practice, workshops, and professional learning communities. Tomlinson (2017) emphasizes the importance of differentiated instruction, arguing that teachers should adapt content, processes, and learning activities to accommodate learners' varying needs, abilities, and interests.

Teacher professional development should therefore move beyond one-time workshops. Sustainable development requires opportunities for teachers to experiment with new approaches, reflect on their experiences, receive feedback, and adapt their practices. Contemporary language classrooms are increasingly characterized by learner diversity in terms of ability, motivation, prior knowledge, learning preferences, and access to resources. Consequently, teachers need to adopt differentiated instructional strategies that accommodate these differences while maintaining high expectations for learning. Differentiation enables teachers to modify content, learning processes, and assessment activities in ways that support meaningful participation and achievement for diverse learners.

Benefits of Innovative Language Pedagogy

The reviewed approaches indicate several potential benefits. First, innovative pedagogy can increase learner participation by providing opportunities for students to interact with content, teachers, peers, and authentic communicative situations. Second, these approaches can support learner autonomy. Flipped Learning, project work, technology-mediated learning, and appropriately designed tasks can give students greater responsibility for planning, practising, producing, and evaluating their learning. Third, innovative pedagogy can promote authentic language use. Projects, simulations, interviews, debates, and communicative tasks provide contexts in which language is used to accomplish purposes rather than merely to demonstrate knowledge of grammatical rules. Fourth, collaborative and project-based activities can support the development of transferable competencies such as teamwork, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication. Finally, technology-enhanced approaches can broaden access to language resources and create learning opportunities beyond the physical classroom. These benefits should nevertheless be understood as pedagogical possibilities rather than universal outcomes. Their realization depends on effective implementation.

Challenges to Implementation

The adoption of innovative approaches is constrained by several contextual factors.

a. Inadequate Infrastructure

Technology-enhanced pedagogy may be difficult to implement where electricity, internet connectivity, devices, digital platforms, or technical support are inadequate. Such limitations are particularly important in resource-constrained educational settings.

b. Teacher Preparedness

Teachers may lack sufficient pedagogical or technological knowledge to implement unfamiliar approaches. Professional development should therefore address both technical competence and the pedagogical principles underlying technology use.

c. Large Classes

Large classes can make individualized feedback, group management, assessment, and technology-supported activities more demanding. Teachers need adaptable strategies for managing participation and maintaining instructional quality.

d. Unequal Learner Access

Students may have unequal access to devices, internet services, quiet study spaces, and digital resources. Flipped and technology-enhanced approaches should therefore provide alternative pathways for learners who cannot access online materials consistently.

e. Resistance to Change

Teachers and learners who are accustomed to conventional classroom routines may initially resist new approaches. Gradual implementation, clear communication, professional support, and evidence of pedagogical value can help reduce resistance.

f. Assessment Constraints

Innovative teaching can be undermined when assessment systems reward memorization rather than communication, application, collaboration, and higher-order thinking. Alignment among curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment is therefore essential.

Strategies for Sustainable Integration

Macalister and Nation (2020) maintain that successful language programmes require careful alignment among learning objectives, teaching methods, materials, assessment, and contextual realities. Several strategies can support the successful integration of innovative pedagogy. First, institutions should provide continuous professional development rather than isolated training events. Teachers need sustained opportunities to acquire, practise, evaluate, and refine new pedagogical skills. Second, innovation should be introduced gradually. Teachers can begin with manageable activities such as pair work, collaborative writing, short projects, digital storytelling, or task-based speaking activities before progressing to more complex implementations. Third, teachers should select technologies according to pedagogical purpose. The question should not be "Which technology can I use?" but rather "What learning objective can this tool help me achieve?" Fourth, institutions should strengthen peer support. Teachers can establish professional learning communities in which they share lesson plans, classroom experiences, challenges, and successful practices. Fifth, innovative practices should be adapted to local conditions. Where internet access is unreliable, teachers can use offline resources, printed materials, shared devices, locally produced audio-visual materials, or community-based learning tasks. Sixth, assessment should reflect the objectives of innovative pedagogy. Rubrics, portfolios, presentations, project products, peer assessment, self-assessment, and performance-based tasks can complement conventional examinations. Finally, learners should be prepared for their changing roles. Students accustomed to teacher-directed instruction may initially require explicit guidance on collaboration, independent learning, peer feedback, project management, and responsible technology use.

Implications for Language Education

The conceptual synthesis has implications for teachers, institutions, curriculum developers, and policymakers.

For teachers, innovation requires pedagogical flexibility and continuous reflection. Teachers should select approaches according to learner needs, instructional objectives, available resources, and classroom realities.

For educational institutions, innovation requires investment not only in technology but also in people. Infrastructure without teacher capacity is unlikely to produce sustainable pedagogical transformation.

For curriculum developers, innovative pedagogy highlights the need for curriculum frameworks that accommodate communication, collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, and authentic language use.

For policymakers, the major implication is that educational innovation should be supported through realistic infrastructure development, teacher education, flexible curriculum policies, and equitable access to learning resources.

Conclusion

The revitalization of language teaching is best understood not as the wholesale replacement of traditional pedagogy but as a process of purposeful pedagogical renewal. The conceptual review demonstrates that Project-Based Learning, Flipped Learning, Gamification, Collaborative Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, and Computer-Assisted Language Learning offer complementary possibilities for making language education more participatory, communicative, authentic, and responsive to contemporary learning demands. The synthesis also makes clear that innovation does not reside in technology alone. A sophisticated digital platform cannot compensate for unclear learning objectives, inadequate teacher preparation, weak task design, or limited learner support. Similarly, innovative pedagogy does not necessarily require expensive technologies. Meaningful projects, collaborative tasks, peer interaction, role play, authentic communication, and reflective learning can be implemented even in relatively low-resource environments when teachers adapt them creatively to local conditions.

The central challenge, therefore, is to establish an appropriate relationship among pedagogy, technology, teacher competence, learner needs, curriculum, assessment, and institutional realities. Sustainable innovation requires teachers who are willing and able to reflect on their practices, institutions that support experimentation and professional learning, and educational policies that recognize the realities of the contexts in which innovation is expected to occur.

Ultimately, the revitalization of language teaching should be viewed as a continuous process of adaptation rather than a search for a single superior teaching method. Effective language education emerges when teachers make informed choices among established and innovative practices and align those choices with specific learning purposes and contextual realities. When such alignment is supported by professional development, appropriate resources, inclusive practices, and institutional commitment, innovative pedagogy can contribute substantially to more engaging language classrooms and to the development of learners who can communicate, collaborate, think critically, and participate effectively in an increasingly interconnected world.

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LEVERAGING ON THE APPLICATION OF LITERARY THEORIES ON FOLKLORE FOR MITIGATING MORAL DECADENCE IN IGBO SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

African oral traditions show a unique situational use of language. Proverbs and folktales which are embodiment of folklore express African worldview especially the spiritual dimension which is mythically believed to validate cultural norms and behavior. They are beyond scientific expressions as they bear pragmatic rules that regulate behavioural patterns. In this study, four literary theories namely, Sociological, Formalistic, Marxist and Psychoanalytic are applied to the explication of five proverbs and two folktales. The study highlights those proverbs and folktales that use characters and consequences to reinforce positive communal ethos. It further delineates that applying these critical lenses to proverbs and folktales help to transform them from simple literary permutation into a more defined cultural artifact. It then concludes by asserting that proverbs and folktales have remained past precedent for present behaviour.

Keywords: traditions, proverbs, folktales, values, behavior, moral, society. folklore, culture, oral, literary, theory

INTRODUCTION

Folklore is the sum of cultural patterns of behaviour by which we define ourselves in our environment. According to *Alder*, it encompasses verbal, material and social rituals that have been handed down primarily orally and practically. To *Michahopos*, folklore serves as a powerful - driven antidote to social and moral decadent as it preserves cultural identity and instills core values. Proverbs and folktales which are aspects of Folklore are the major concern of this paper. Proverbs according to Salmon are laconic and witty sayings generally used in projecting commonly held ideas and beliefs. Folktales according to *Akporobaro* are stories told orally using fantasy, imaginary events and characters for the purpose of entertainment, humor and promotion of moral values in the society. Literary theory offers an appreciable insight into literary works in terms of their analysis, explication and evaluation. The four theories that would be examined are Sociological, Formalistic, *Marxist and Psychoanalytic*. The study will investigate how Proverbs

and folktales in relation to these theories can be utilized in mitigating moral decadence in Igbo society.

Literary Theory: According to Culler, literary theory has to do with the systematic study of the nature of literature and of the methods used in the practical reading and interpretation of literature. To Nwahunanya, it is the basis of all literary criticism because it gives us the basic assumptions for the study of literature as we understand literary categories using generalizable principles. A literary artist according to him reassesses the fundamental assumptions behind the critical evaluation of any tradition of literature with the view of correcting them if they are faulty, setting up proper criteria and thereby aiding readers in the correct interpretation of literary facts. The following theories are considered here, Sociological, Formalistic, *Marxist and Psychoanalytic*.

Literary theory highlights the effort of a writer in educating the masses and sensitizing them so as to accomplish his artistic vision. Such a writer through his creativity and social relevance helps to cushion the oppressive people's ideological instincts and tendencies towards a better human existence. This he does by exposing his readers to the rediscovery of some salutary elements in their everyday experiences. It further acts as a mirror through which the ugliness and weakness of a particular society can be ascertained.

The Sociological Theory: Sociological approach takes into cognizance the social context of the text, the Sociology of the writer and the influence it exerts as a literary work on the society. It is a mirror of social norms.

The Formalistic Theory: It is an interpretative strategy that emphasizes literary forms and the study of literary devices within the text. (Nwahunanya) To the formalist, textual analysis should be done strictly on the unique form generated by the work so that no extraneous rule can be applied to it.

The Marxist Theory: This relates to economic base and ideological bureaucratic structure in a system obsessed with materialism. It sees literature as a reflection of socioeconomic conditions and class struggle. The theorist, *Karl Marx* advises writers to use their artistic medium in denigrating the elitist negative tendencies.

The Psychoanalytic Theory: This focuses on the effects of literary work on both the writer and the reader. It unfolds the idiosyncratic traits of the writer on his creative work. *Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung* are the major proponents. Freud interprets folk narrative through repressed desires and family traits while Jung focuses on archetypes which represent universal human instinct. These traits become artistic values in enhancing the readers' perception of the text.

PROVERB: A Proverb according to Onuekwusi is a metaphorical, philosophical allusion citation that gives credence to traditional truth and wisdom. Nwachukwu-Agbada is of the view that Proverbs state laws of life based on logic and possibilities as they serve as instructional, cognitive and corrective measures. They employ literary embellishments such as similes, metaphors, personification etc. in their projection of cultural norm. In Igbo milieu it is regarded as wise saying and the oil with which words are eaten.

FOLKTALE: The etymology of folktale indicates that it is a conflation of two ideas namely "folk" meaning the people and "tale" meaning a narrative or story. It contains different types of stories

that involve man, animals and spirits. It is creative, didactic, entertaining and dramatic. It admits according to *Onuekwusi* a lot of improvisations which shows to a large extent a particular narrator's ingenuity. It uses highly unusual human or absurd situations as the basis of narrative action. Its narrative structure according to *Akporobaro* has a determinate pattern which consists of four basic elements which are the opening coda and setting, the narration, the musical interlude and the conclusion.

METHODOLOGY: Sociological and Formalistic theories will be applied in the explication of five proverbs, while *Marxist and Psychoanalytic* theories will be applied in that of two folktales. Since proverbs and folktales are verbal arts, their explication will focus on the act of speech because for one to understand folkloristic event, one must realize the manner in which social beings communicate.

Igbo proverbs and their transliterations in context

- Ukpana okpoko gburu, nti chiri ya. (A grasshopper killed by a noisy predator is deaf)
- Agwawa nti ma o nughi, e gbuwe isi, nti esoro ya. (If the ear is warned and it refuses to hear, when the head is cut off, the ear follows)
- Ukwu jie agu, mgbada abia ya ugwo. (If a lion's leg is fractured, an antelope comes for debt payment)
- Eme ngwa, emeghara odachi. (Promptness to an urgent task averts disaster)
- Anu bu uzo na-anu mmiri oma. (An animal that comes first drinks the best water)

The folktales are reconstruction from one of the writers. They are coined from her repository knowledge of folklore.

Their figurative interpretation: The first two proverbs buttress the fact that evil befalls anyone who refuses to hearken to wise instructions. The third highlights that people take undue advantage of others to satisfy their urge. The last two shows that when one does what one is expected to do at the right time, one averts calamity.

Application of sociological theory to the proverbs: It is generally believed that the 'bird' Okpoko, a predator gives its prey sufficient warning before attacking and it is only a wise grasshopper that takes precautionary measures for safety. In the same vein, the head and ear are the inseparable parts of the body, so what happens to one affects the other and so the calamity one suffers because of stubbornness affects others. It then implies that there are societal norms and values which wise people should subscribe to because disaster awaits any who flaunts social order. It is believed that an antelope is a weaker animal compared with the enormous strength of the lion. The societal norms demands that one should not cash in on someone's weakness or misfortune to actualize one's selfish ambition. On the other hand, one should not use the resources at one's disposal to fight others. The last two underscore the need for one to be diligent and prompt in discharging any given assignment as delay portends danger. A social role receives more recognition and appreciation when it is timely played as it becomes more beneficial to all and sundry.

Application of formalistic theory to the proverbs: These five proverbs have literal significance even when they enjoy transferred meaning in contextual usage. They can also be considered as

grammatical units because of their sentence structure as this shows their linguistic relationship with ordinary utterance. In its formalistic approach, the size of the grasshopper is a metaphor of miniature and stubbornness. The imagery of the two animals is used to portray the different idiosyncrasies of people. The ear and the head are symbolically used to project the consequences of stubbornness. Its stylistic impetus in consonance with its intended meaning appeals to the reader's sensibility as he is advised to heed to warnings and advice that are not detrimental. In the third proverb, the size of a lion is a metaphor of enormous treasure while that of antelope is that of opportunistic tendency. Both animals are allusive as they capture vividly man's interaction with his kind. They are parallel in nature as both of them cannot coexist. The two characters are personified in order to show that their attributes in this context can also be seen in man. The fourth and fifth are reflectors of the consequences of indolence. Self-discipline is a vital tool for man's survival. The semantic import of all these clausal proverbs is the amplification of the audience perception of their relevance in establishing acceptable code of conduct.

FOLKTALE IN CONTEXT

Once upon a time, a man by name, Okoro married two wives Olamma and Alaezi from two different socioeconomic backgrounds. Olamma's parents were wealthy farmers whereas, Alaezi's parents romanticized with poverty. Okoro was more favorably disposed to Olamma because of her parents' wealth. He hated Alaezi and her four children. This exposed them to hardship because they only depend on their mother's meagre income for survival. One day as Alaezi and her children went to farm, the first son forgot his flute on the farm and remembered it when they got home. Although, his mother dissuaded him from going back to the farm because it was dark, he still went and was accosted by the spirits who inhabited the land. As he narrated his ordeal to them, they decided to keep him so as to try him. As a child with sound moral upbringing, his activities within that period impressed them as he displayed humility, diligence, honesty and dedication to any assignment that was given to him. On his day of departure, he was given a sealed calabash and he was asked to open it immediately he got home. This he did and many good things filled as this transformed their social status. Alaezi shared some of these items with Okoro and Olamma. Olamma and Okoro out of envy and greed, contrived a similar scenario for their son. She advised her son to leave his flute on the farm. When they got home, he pretentiously went back to look for it. When he got there, he became confrontational and began to insult the spirits for playing with his flute. As they kept him there in order to try him, he proved to be stubborn. On the day of his departure, he was given the same sealed calabash. When he got home, his mother gathered all the family members except Alaezi and her children into a room. When the calabash was opened, the room was filled with dangerous animals which devoured all of them.

Application of Marxist theory to the above folktale: The above tale is a reflection of the destructive consequences of greed and envy as well as reward for virtue. Okoro's house is an example of class distinction and economic inequalities syndrome. His interest and concern were on Olamma because of her parents' social status. Although, he treated Alaezi with disdain, yet she was optimistic. Okoro is an epitome of social misfit as his antisocial demeanor portray him as an opportunist who exploited others for his selfish aggrandizement. His segregational tendency, unbridled ambition and irreprehensible lifestyle made him a victim of capitalistic insensibility. Olamma who manifested traits of bourgeoisie was irrational and erratic as she barricaded her life

with an imposing wall of egocentricism, apathy and maliciousness. These are some of the attributes associated with people who are capitalist oriented.

Application of psychoanalytic theory to the folktale: The characters in the tale display neurotic strategies that informed their different behavioural patterns as they tried to cope with their different predicaments in life. The tragic pattern of degeneracy into neurosis usually begins with an acute deprivation through a stage of poverty as can be seen in the case of Alaezi. Our perception of reality is enhanced by Alaezi's humble demeanor. She is an embodiment of societal norms. Despite her psychological trauma, she showcases virtue unlike her co-wife and their husband. The narrator in his performance leaves his psychological imprints in the psyche of his audience.

FOLKTALE IN CONTEXT 2

Once upon a time there was a famine in the land. A kind rich baker sent for twenty of the poorest children in the village and said to them, 'in this basket there is a loaf of bread for each of you, take it and come back to me every day at this hour until God sends us better times' The hungry children always quarrel over the bread because they want to have the largest loaf. At last, they went away without thanking the giver. Ngozi, a poorly dressed little girl did not quarrel or struggle with the rest but always stood quietly at a place waiting for the ill-behaved children to take theirs and leave. At the end she would take the leftover, kiss the baker and go home. The next day, they all took the largest portion while she got just half the size, she got the first day. When she got home and her mother opened it, many new shining pieces of silver fell out of it. Her mother was very much alarmed and asked her to take it back to the baker. When Ngozi took it back to him, he refused to collect it but rather made her to understand that it was used to reward her for her good conduct.

Application of Marxist theory to the tale: The poor socio-economic status of the children shows that their parents have been victims of capitalism. Their display of antisocial traits may be attributable to the prevailing class distinction and economic elitism. The society owes them, the responsibility of catering for their welfare. The baker projects acceptable traits such as philanthropy and sound judgement. In a society where the rich exploit the poor, he decided to be different. The behaviour of the children is a reflection of their different moral upbringing. Ngozi with exceptional quality attests to the fact that one can stand for nobility despite all odds. Her mother lent her the moral life support so as to confront the strong tower monster, which is antisocial and maladjusted tantrums. The tale further reminds us that one should still exercise self-restraint and discipline despite challenges.

Application of Psychoanalytical theory to the tale: Since the children in the tale are destitute of material sustenance, there is no doubt that the characters in the tale sought solace in evasive gestures which can be described as neurosis, hence the neurotic tendencies of the children is a direct consequence of the unfavorable and emasculated socioeconomic discrepancy. The poor children's struggle for the bread dramatizes the disillusionment not only with the society that has failed to recognize their personal worth but also with themselves. This scenario benumbed them to the sensitivity and sacrosanct of life, thus, their character epitomizes the detached neurotic figure. The children's display of greed, selfishness and ingratitude is an inordinate action which is attributable to human frailties. It's remarkable to note that the baker is not depicted as a flawless or perfect character. In spite of the fact that he enjoys a pride of place as a superior personality, he

still degenerates and finds solace in neurotic solution. This shows that neurosis is not culture-bound but a fundamental universal human trait. This tale therefore, highlights that although the combined threats of extinction owing to hunger and a suffocating social context predispose individuals enmeshed therein to live neurotically, there is still a way out, a possibility of self-discipline, sincerity and a quest for a rational means of existence.

Proverbs and folktales as remedial measures: Moral decadence is the deterioration of ethical or moral values within a society or individual. Some of its causes are poor home upbringing, insatiable desire for materialism, negligence of spiritual rejuvenation etc. Proverbs and folktales can be employed as traditional means of inculcating sound moral behaviour especially among the youths thereby making them to develop good sense of judgement. They express social norms and what constitute deviance from them. They have purgative effect on people. They are sources of aesthetic satisfaction, entertainment, persuasion, social recognition and discourse embellishments. Utilizing them can combat corruption, oppression and greed among the ruling class.

CONCLUSION

Proverbs and folktales being products of creativity and ingenuity are tools of redressing societal malaise. It has been established here that imagery and symbolism are obtainable in them. The application of these four theories to them attests to the fact that their social significance and pragmatic utility are in conformity with their socio-normative expectation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital tools should be employed in the dissemination of proverbs and folktales for wider accessibility. They should be integrated into the school curriculum as pedagogic tools. Obscene proverbs and folktales should be avoided especially where younger people are part of the audience.

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**BRIDGING TRIBAL DIVIDES: THE IMPACT OF A NATIONAL LANGUAGE ON
CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study examines the potential of a widely shared national language or lingua franca as a tool for conflict resolution and national cohesion in Nigeria. Using qualitative desk research and content analysis, the study reviews Nigeria's multilingual context, language policy, and selected recent incidents of intergroup violence. The analysis is guided by Social Identity Theory and Linguistic Relativity Theory, which together illuminate the relationship between linguistic identity, intergroup perception, communication and social cohesion. The study argues that a shared language can facilitate dialogue, improve access to peace-building processes, and strengthen a sense of national belonging. However, language alone cannot resolve conflicts whose causes also include political competition, land disputes, insecurity, economic inequality and institutional weaknesses. The study therefore recommends an inclusive multilingual strategy that strengthens widely used lingua franca while protecting indigenous languages. Nigerian Pidgin is presented as a relatively less ethnically identified option for wider national communication, while Hausa is acknowledged as a major regional lingua franca whose adoption as a national language would require careful consultation because of the political sensitivities associated with language choice. The study further highlights education and the media as key mechanisms for promoting inclusive communication and peace-building.

Keywords: conflict resolution, language policy, lingua Franca, national language, Nigeria, social identity

Introduction

Nigeria is widely recognized as one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Africa. It has over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 indigenous languages spoken across its regions (Osaghae, 1994). The major ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the southwest, and Igbo in the southeast, have historically dominated the country's political and economic landscape. However, hundreds of minority ethnic groups such as the Tiv, Kanuri, Ijaw, Ibibio, and Nupe also contribute to the rich tapestry of Nigeria's cultural and linguistic heritage. This ethnic and linguistic plurality has been both a source of national pride and a challenge for state cohesion. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has grappled with issues of ethno-regional tension, competition for political power, and resource control, much of which is influenced by underlying ethnic allegiances (Suberu, 2001). The colonial legacy, which merged culturally distinct regions into a single state without fostering a common national identity, further complicated efforts to unify the country (Akinjogbin, 2002). These divisions are often reinforced by language barriers that impede mutual understanding, particularly in conflict-prone areas. Without a widely embraced national language that transcends ethnic boundaries, efforts at conflict resolution and nation-building will continue to be an uncracked nut. Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is a symbol of identity, a vehicle of culture, and a unifying force in nation-building. In multilingual states like Nigeria, language plays a pivotal role in shaping collective identity and fostering political inclusion (Bamgbose, 1991). A common language can act as a bridge between diverse communities, facilitating dialogue, mutual understanding, and national integration. However, Nigeria's language policy has historically favoured English, a colonial legacy, as the official language of administration, education, and legal systems. While English offers a neutral ground in a linguistically heterogeneous society, its dominance often excludes rural and non-English-speaking populations from participating in national discourse, thereby, exacerbating feelings of marginalization (Adegbija, 2004).

Indigenous languages, though they are widely spoken at the community level, lack sufficient representation in formal institutions. As a result, linguistic diversity, rather than being celebrated, becomes a source of fragmentation, limiting the effectiveness of communication in peace-building and conflict resolution. This dynamism underscores the urgent need for a language

strategy that promotes mutual intelligibility and cultural inclusion, thereby contributing to national unity.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Nigeria's immense linguistic and cultural diversity, the country has struggled to establish a unifying national identity that transcends ethnic lines. Language, which could serve as a catalyst for unity and peace, has instead become a divisive factor due to the absence of a widely accepted indigenous national language. The continued dominance of English, while useful for official communication, has limited grassroots participation in governance, conflict resolution, and national dialogue (Oyetade, 2003). Furthermore, the lack of a cohesive language strategy has perpetuated communication barriers between ethnic groups, often complicating efforts at conflict mediation, especially in interethnic clashes and communal disputes. In regions marked by ethno-linguistic fragmentation, such as the Middle Belt and parts of the South-South, the inability to communicate across tribal lines has hindered peace-building efforts, leaving local conflicts to fester or escalate. This paper addresses the question: To what extent can the adoption or promotion of a national language contribute to conflict resolution among Nigeria's ethnically diverse populations? By exploring this question, the study aims to uncover the potential of language as a peace-building tool, and highlight policy gaps that must be addressed to foster national integration.

Purpose and Significance of the study

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the impact of a national language on conflict resolution among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. It aims to explore how a shared means of communication (whether indigenous or hybrid (e.g., Nigerian Pidgin)) can function as a tool for promoting dialogue, reducing tensions, and fostering national cohesion in a multiethnic society. By analyzing the relationship between language policy, ethnic identity, and conflict dynamics in Nigeria, the study seeks to contribute to broader discussions on peace-building, inclusive governance, and nation-building. The paper also evaluates existing national language policies and their limitations, proposing practical strategies for adopting a more inclusive linguistic framework. The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform policy decisions, especially those relating to education, media, and national integration programs. In a country where language differences often correlate with political and social divisions, the development of a widely accepted national language (or the strengthening of a lingua franca) may serve as a critical intervention point in reducing interethnic mistrust and violence (Ayoade, 1994; Egbokhare, 2003).

Objective of the study

The study is guided by the following key objectives:

9. To examine the role of language in shaping ethnic identity and intergroup relations in Nigeria.
10. To assess the extent to which language barriers contribute to interethnic conflict in Nigeria.
11. To analyze the effectiveness of Nigeria's national language policy in promoting unity and conflict resolution
12. To explore the potential of a national or common lingua franca in fostering mutual understanding and national integration.
13. It aims to suggest practical, inclusive, and culturally sensitive language policies that can support sustainable peace and development

Research Questions

To guide the investigation, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does language influence ethnic identity and intergroup relations in Nigeria?.
2. In what ways do language barriers contribute to interethnic conflict in Nigeria?
3. What role has Nigeria's national language policy played in promoting or hindering national unity?

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, relying primarily on desk research and content analysis to examine the relationship between national language use, communication and conflict resolution in Nigeria. The study draws on secondary sources, including scholarly books and journal articles, language-policy documents, reports from human-rights organizations, and reputable contemporary news reports concerning selected cases of violence. The three recent incidents discussed in Section 3.1 are used as illustrative cases rather than as evidence that language alone caused the conflicts. The analysis identifies recurring themes concerning linguistic identity, communication barriers, intergroup mistrust, national integration, and the possible peace-building functions of a shared lingua franca. The study is therefore interpretive and policy-oriented rather than statistical or causal.

Literature Review

This section examines the theoretical framework and the existing scholarly work on the relationship between language, conflict resolution, and ethnic diversity in Nigeria. It draws from

Nigerian scholars who have studied the impact of national language policy and the dynamics of ethnic conflict resolution.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in two interrelated theories that help explain the connection between language, ethnic identity, communication and conflict resolution: Social Identity Theory and Linguistic Relativity Theory. These theories provide complementary conceptual lenses for analyzing how language reflects group identity and can influence intergroup perception and interaction in a multilingual state such as Nigeria.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

Social Identity Theory proposes that individuals derive part of their self-concept from membership in social groups and may distinguish between in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In Nigeria, ethnic, religious, regional and linguistic identities may function as important markers of group membership. Language can strengthen solidarity within a group while, under conditions of mistrust, also reinforce boundaries between groups. This perspective is relevant to the present study because it helps explain why the choice of a national language can be politically and emotionally sensitive. A language perceived as belonging primarily to one ethnic group may be resisted by other groups, whereas a language that is widely shared or not strongly associated with a single dominant ethnic group may have greater potential as an inclusive medium of national communication.

Linguistic Relativity Theory (Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis)

Linguistic Relativity Theory is associated with the proposition that language can influence habitual patterns of thought and perception (Whorf, 1956). In a multicultural society, differences in linguistic categories and culturally embedded meanings can contribute to differences in how social experiences are interpreted. The theory is relevant to this study because conflict mediation requires participants to understand one another's meanings, intentions and culturally situated interpretations. Where peace-building processes rely exclusively on a language that some participants do not understand adequately, opportunities for misunderstanding or exclusion may increase. However, the theory should not be interpreted as claiming that language determines thought or causes conflict. Rather, it highlights the importance of linguistic accessibility and culturally sensitive communication in conflict resolution. Together, Social Identity Theory and Linguistic Relativity Theory support an analysis of language as both a marker of group identity and a resource for cross-group communication.

Language and conflict in a multilingual society: The Nigerian example

Language plays a central role in both the escalation and resolution of conflicts, particularly in societies where linguistic diversity coincides with ethnic and regional divisions. Nigeria's multilingual reality has made language both a symbol of identity and a barrier to effective communication, especially in conflict-prone areas.

Language as a factor in ethnic tension

In Nigeria, language is often interwoven with ethnicity, regional affiliation and political representation. The prominence of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo in particular regions can create perceptions of unequal linguistic status among minority-language communities. Language differences may therefore interact with other sources of tension, including political competition, religious differences, land and resource disputes, insecurity and social exclusion. The following recent incidents are presented as illustrative cases. They should not be interpreted as demonstrating that language was the sole or primary cause of the violence; rather, they show contexts in which ethnic identification, mistrust, misinformation or difficulties in cross-group communication can complicate conflict prevention and resolution.

a. 2023 Mangu Violence in Plateau State

Between 15 and 17 May 2023, more than 100 people were reported killed in the Mangu area of Plateau State amid attacks associated with longstanding farmer-herder and communal tensions (Amnesty International, 2023). Reuters reporting likewise described the violence as arising from inter-communal conflict involving land, farming and herding interests (Reuters, 2023). The incident illustrates the complexity of conflict in a linguistically and ethnically diverse setting: language differences may affect communication and mediation, but they operate alongside land disputes, insecurity, political grievances and other structural factors.

b. 2024 Aba Killings in Abia State

On 30 May 2024, armed assailants attacked a military checkpoint at Obikabia Junction in Abia State, killing five soldiers and six civilians, according to the Nigerian military and contemporary reports (Reuters, 2024). The military attributed the attack to IPOB/ESN, although the wider context included separatist tensions and the commemoration of Biafran

Heroes Day. The incident is relevant to this study because it demonstrates how ethnic and regional identity can intersect with political conflict. It does not, however, establish a direct causal relationship between language difference and violence.

c. 2025 Edo State Killings

In March 2025, sixteen northern travellers, reported to include Hausa hunters, were killed by a mob in the Udune Efandion community of Uromi, Edo State, after being falsely accused of kidnapping. Contemporary reporting indicated that the victims' identity and the presence of hunting firearms contributed to the suspicion surrounding them (The Guardian Nigeria, 2025). The incident demonstrates the dangers of ethnic profiling, misinformation and mistrust. It also underscores the importance of accurate communication and reliable security procedures in preventing rumours or misidentification from escalating into violence.

Taken together, these cases demonstrate that Nigeria's violent conflicts are multidimensional. Language and ethnic identification can influence how groups perceive one another and how information is exchanged, but they should not be treated as sufficient explanations for complex conflicts. Effective conflict resolution therefore requires linguistic inclusion alongside political dialogue, security measures, equitable governance, access to justice, economic interventions and community-based peace-building.

Nigeria's national language policy

Nigeria's language policy has developed through successive education and language-policy instruments. The National Language Policy provides a framework for the regulation, use and development of Nigerian languages and recognises the importance of multilingualism (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). The broader policy environment has historically maintained English as the principal official language while encouraging the use and learning of indigenous Nigerian languages in education and public life.

- a. English remains the principal language of official communication and is widely used in formal education, administration and the legal system.
- b. Indigenous languages are recognized as important resources for early education, cultural transmission and community participation.

- c. Policy instruments encourage the learning and development of Nigerian languages, including major languages such as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, alongside English.

However, several challenges have limited the effectiveness of language policy in practice:

- d. English continues to enjoy considerable prestige because of its association with education, employment, administration and social mobility.
- e. Many parents therefore prefer English-medium education from an early stage, sometimes at the expense of sustained development of indigenous languages.
- f. Sociopolitical and economic factors can contribute to the marginalization of indigenous languages (Adegbija, 2004).
- g. Although multilingualism is recognized in policy, implementation is constrained by shortages of instructional materials, teacher preparation and institutional support (Bangbose, 1991).
- h. Regional differences in language use also make it difficult to select one indigenous language for universal adoption. Any national-language policy must therefore balance national communication needs with linguistic diversity, equality and the protection of minority languages (Oyetade, 2003; Igboanusi, 2008).

The Role of a National Language in Conflict Resolution

In a multilingual society such as Nigeria, a common language can support peace-building by facilitating communication across linguistic boundaries. However, the effectiveness of a national language depends on whether citizens perceive it as inclusive, accessible and politically legitimate. A national language should therefore complement, rather than replace, indigenous languages and local communication practices.

a. Mutual understanding

A shared language can facilitate communication across ethnic and linguistic groups. In conflict-prone settings, improved mutual intelligibility may reduce opportunities for misunderstanding during negotiations, mediation and public communication. English already performs an important lingua-franca function in Nigeria, while Nigerian Pidgin and major indigenous languages also facilitate communication in particular regions and social domains.

b. National identity and unit

A shared language can contribute to collective identity by providing a platform for interaction that transcends immediate ethnic affiliations. Nevertheless, a national identity cannot be created by language alone. It must be supported by equitable institutions, political inclusion and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.

c. Trust and social cohesion

Language can contribute to interpersonal and intergroup trust when participants can communicate clearly and feel that their identities are respected. Government proceedings, peace talks and community outreach are more likely to be inclusive when information is provided in languages that the relevant populations understand. A shared lingua franca can therefore improve accessibility while local languages remain important for culturally specific communication.

In conclusion a shared national language, when carefully integrated into policy and practice, can be a strategic resource for communication, national cohesion and conflict resolution. Its contribution is strongest when it facilitates dialogue without displacing indigenous languages or creating new perceptions of ethnic dominance. The Nigerian case therefore points towards an inclusive multilingual strategy rather than a simple replacement of English or the imposition of one indigenous language. The broader African experience further shows that language policy is closely connected with governance and national identity (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998).

Potential for a Lingua Franca: Nigerian Pidgin or Hausa

There is a case for strengthening a widely used lingua franca as a bridge among Nigeria's diverse linguistic communities. A lingua franca can facilitate communication among people who do not share the same mother tongue and can be particularly useful in peace negotiations, civic education, media communication and grassroots dialogue. Two possibilities considered in this paper are Nigerian Pidgin and Hausa. The choice, however, must be based on broad consultation, linguistic inclusivity and political legitimacy rather than on the numerical strength of a single language community.

Facilitating Cross-Cultural Communication

A lingua franca can provide a practical platform for communication between groups that do not share the same mother tongue. Hausa functions extensively as a regional lingua franca in northern Nigeria and parts of the Middle Belt, while Nigerian Pidgin is widely used in many southern urban centers and is increasingly understood beyond its traditional areas of use. Either could therefore contribute to wider communication, although their distribution, social meanings and levels of acceptance differ.

Promoting Inclusivity and Participation

Political Sensitivity in the Choice of a National Language

The proposal to promote Hausa as a national language requires particular caution. Although Hausa is one of Nigeria's most widely used languages and an important lingua franca in northern Nigeria, selecting it as the sole national language could be perceived by speakers of other languages as privileging one ethnic or regional group. This concern is especially important in a country where language is closely connected to identity and political representation. Nigerian Pidgin may appear less directly tied to one major ethnolinguistic group, but it also has regional differences and varying levels of institutional development. The more sustainable policy option may therefore be to strengthen a shared lingua franca while maintaining English for selected official functions and protecting the status and development of indigenous and minority languages. Any decision to designate a national language should follow broad stakeholder consultation, including minority-language communities.

Using a widely understood lingua franca in peace-building can help more citizens understand their rights and roles in dispute resolution, participate in reconciliation processes and engage with public forums and media discussions. This is particularly important in grassroots peace-building, where communication in English alone may exclude citizens with limited proficiency in the official language.

Media Sector as a Platform for National Language Promotion

- a. Accessible Messaging: When conflict-related news, civic education and peace-building programmes are broadcast in a widely understood language, they can reach a

- broader audience. This may improve access to information and reduce the communication gaps through which misinformation can spread.
- b. Neutral Communication:** Media use of a broadly shared language can reduce linguistic barriers and make public information more accessible. Nevertheless, neutrality depends on the language's social and political acceptability; no language should be assumed to be politically neutral simply because it is widely spoken.
 - c. Cultural Integration:** Media can use shared languages to showcase cultural expressions, music, drama and public-interest programmes, and thereby creating opportunities for interaction across communities. Nigerian radio and television already make extensive use of English, Nigerian Pidgin and major Nigerian languages.

Education as a Vehicle for Language and Peace

The education system is instrumental in developing shared communicative resources and equipping future generations with the linguistic competence needed for interaction across ethnic and regional boundaries.

- a. Curriculum Design:** The strategic teaching of a widely shared Nigerian language, alongside English and learners' indigenous languages, can give students opportunities to communicate across linguistic boundaries.
- b. Civic and Peace Education:** Teaching peace-building, tolerance and conflict resolution through languages that learners understand can improve comprehension and participation.
- c. Interethnic Understanding:** Schools provide opportunities for learners from different linguistic backgrounds to interact. A shared language can support these interactions while the continued teaching of indigenous languages protects cultural and linguistic diversity.
- d. Policy Implication:** Language-in-education policy can contribute to national integration when it combines a shared communicative medium with equitable recognition of Nigeria's linguistic diversity (Bamgbose, 1991).

4.4 Synergy between Media and Education

When media campaigns and educational content reinforce one another by consistently using and valuing widely understood Nigerian languages, they can create a shared public

space for dialogue, normalise multilingual communication in formal and informal settings, and improve citizens' access to institutions and peace-building information.

Conclusion

The study recommends an inclusive multilingual approach. Nigerian Pidgin and Hausa may both serve important lingua-franca functions in different parts of the country, but the designation of Hausa specifically as the national language could generate political and identity-based resistance. Policy makers should therefore prioritize broad consultation, equitable representation and functional multilingualism. Education and the media should be used to expand citizens' access to widely understood languages while simultaneously supporting indigenous and minority languages. Such a balanced approach can strengthen mutual understanding without turning language policy itself into another source of exclusion. Language policy is also closely connected with national identity and governance in multilingual African states (Fishman, 1977; Blommaert, 2006).

In conclusion, this study argues that language can contribute to national cohesion and conflict resolution by facilitating communication, supporting intergroup understanding and widening participation in peace-building processes. However, the evidence reviewed does not justify treating language as a single or sufficient cause of Nigeria's conflicts. The selected cases show that violence is shaped by interacting political, economic, security, territorial, ethnic and informational factors. A national language or widely shared lingua franca can therefore function as one component of a broader peace-building strategy rather than as a stand-alone solution.

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