

Effective Training of Border Security Agents in Languages for National Security and Development

Dibie, Godfrey Atunu (Ph.D)
Department of General Studies
Federal University, Wukari
Taraba State.
simichristianarichard@gmail.com

Abstract

Development has made the world to become a global village particularly due to the use of information and Communication Technology (I.C.T). This explains why interconnectedness and integration are very important and easy to come by. This ensures peaceful co-existence if well harnessed. To achieve this, the effective use of language has become a must especially by our security personnel, and in this case English and French Languages, the colonial and adopted official languages of Nigeria and her neighbours respectively. Nigeria must therefore take the training of her security personnel upper most. This has become an absolute necessity more so that security in the country is now at its lowest ebb, judging from the activities of Boko Haram, terrorist groups and armed bandits, especially in the North East, sea piracy, smuggling, incessant kidnapping, internal and external border disputes, among others.

Key-word: Boarder, security, languages, English and French.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a very big country with a population of over one hundred and seventy million people with English Language as her official language and French Language as her second official language, although so many Nigerians do not know that French language is Nigeria's second official language next to English. This was with effect from December, 1996 when the then Military Head of State, General Sani Abacha made two official pronouncements specifically on December 14th and 31st that year in favour of raising French to the status of the country's second official language.

It must be noted that Nigeria is not the only African country without any colonial linkage with France that has opted for French as her second official language. For example, it is constitutionally recognized as one of the two official languages of Equatorial Guinea (a former Spanish Colony). It is also in addition to their official languages, the preferred foreign language of Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome and 'Principe', as well as Egypt and Ghana (formerly colonized by Great Britain).

Dell Hymes (1972) argues that language competence is part of communicative competence. This is because through language we express our emotion, ideas, feelings and thoughts to our fellow people". It is a natural attribute of both humans and animals, with human's being more significant, complex and unique. This explains why Encyclopedia Americana (1983: 727) defines language as "the faculty and ability possessed by normal human beings and by no other species, using spoken or written utterances to represent mental phenomena or events".

For Yanhua Xia, 2014, Oral language is considered to be more important than written language so oral practice is more emphasized. This further throws more light to the importance of communication to human beings which is one of the basic functions of all languages. That is attributable to human beings alone. Communicative role enhances development and security. This is the more reason why the study of language by every individual cannot be over emphasized, including the military and the paramilitary. For the military and the paramilitary, effective communication is very important for effective management of Nigerian borders with other countries especially at this time of insecurity and insurgency brought by Boko Haram, in addition to the few hitherto existing ones.

According to Meads (1962), through language, humans as distinct from animals are able to organize and store up impressions and understandings of the social and physical world, transmit some to others who share the same language form and apply some to the new situations, perceptions of symbolic communication received from others.

Meighan (1986) says individuals respond to situations on the basis of how they perceive and define the situation and these definitions refers to the meanings individuals attach to the ongoing events in which they find themselves so as to arrive at an adequate interpretation of an event, which the investigator must understand both the various definitions of the situations by actors in the event and ways in which these different definitions intersect with one another.

The above clearly shows that communication remains a very vital tool for the existence and survival of man. This further goes to consolidate the importance of French and English as very important languages which will not only help the Nigerian Military/Paramilitary to be more productive in their jobs, it will certainly help them to engage in more useful and more result oriented service delivery in and around our border posts.

Language for Development and the Border Areas

A border technically refers to an area or region closer to a boundary. It is more commonly used to mean the boundaries between politically sovereign territorial entities (Hurst, 1979;3). He goes on to state that it is the main line that demarcates one country from the other. Hear him further:

As much, they define geographical boundaries and legal jurisdiction of political entities such as sovereign states, federated state, governments and sub-national entities. They are also regarded as a concrete representation of people's cultural value systems and statehood. However, for Africa, arguments have been advanced that the arbitrary nature of the borders as results of colonial exploitation has rather distorted the cultural systems of the people. Paradoxically, borders serving as the line that links and at the same time separates one country from the other could be a source of benefit and of detriment to a state depending on the extent to which they are secured. States therefore put the necessary measures in place to protect their borders on land, air and seaports.

In Africa, the existence of linear boundaries is linked to the Berlin conference of 1884-1885 where the European imperialist (Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Portugal) decided to divide African space amongst themselves as their sphere of influence. The period between 1880 and 1914 witnessed the scramble for and the partition of Africa. As indicated by Nugent

(2002) the process involved the normal pattern of verbal agreement and production of maps which were subsequently demarcated on the ground through a resort to a boundary.

Krasner (1999:13) stated that “a state that cannot regulate what passes across its borders will not be able to control what happens within it. This line of argument underscores the need for Nigeria to identify the challenges at our borders including the use of language and tackle them to ensure effective security at the borders especially when issues that threaten border security such as money laundering, human trafficking, drug and weapon trafficking are on the increase. This may explain while Bokon Haram is waxing stronger in Nigeria.

Based, on the above there is need for effective use of language to effectively contain the security of Nigeria. On this note, the use of English and French languages is paramount as most of the countries bordering Nigeria are French-speaking countries like Benin Republic, Cameroun, Chad, and Niger.

FRENCH AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES OF NIGERIA

French is the unifying and official language of all the neighboring countries of Nigeria, Benin Republic (in the West), Cameroun (in the East), Niger (in the North), and Chad (in the North East). All these countries which are former colonies of France are multi-lingual, Multi-ethnic and Multi-cultural. With the geographical proximity of Nigeria to these French countries, the importance of French language to the Nigerian Military/Paramilitary is therefore an obvious necessity if efficient and more productive services must be carried out in and around the Nigerian border.

FRENCH AS THE LEADING WORKING LANGUAGE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

According to Ojo (2012). French has for centuries been serving as the leading working language of key international organizations. It is either the only working language in these organizations or one of the languages accorded the special privilege of serving as the medium of official communication for transactions, discussions and political as well as economic decisions. Among these are all regional as well as continental, political and economic organization in Africa in which only French or French and English and in a few others Arabic serving as the only exclusive working language.

Among several African sub-regional economic communities in which French enjoys a pride of place as a working and official language are: L'union de Maghreb Arabe (UMA) La Communauté Economique des Etats de L'Afrique Centrale (CEEAC), La communauté Economique et Monétaire de L'Afrique Centrale (CEMAC) l'union Economique et monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMCA). Other African regional organizations where French serves as one of the official languages with English are Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Nigerian – Niger Joint Commission for Co-operation. The West African Currency and Marketing Board, the African Petroleum Producers Associations, the West African Court of Appeal and the Nigeria River Basin Commission.

THE NIGERIAN MILITARY/PARAMILITARY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FRENCH/ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR BETTER PRODUCTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT.

Considering the definition of Sureshkuman “2002” that Language is one of the prized possessions of human beings. It makes us the building blocks for any form of communication and knowing that Nigeria is surrounded by French speaking Countries as we have mentioned above, it becomes very obvious that, for a more effective communication to take place in our borders, in other words for the Nigeria Military/ Paramilitary to be able to discharge their duties very effectively as uniformed men, they must possess a very strong competence in languages like French and English. The Nigeria borders are usually very busy spots with people trooping in and out for various purposes. A situation where members of the Nigeria Military i.e. The Nigeria Army, The Nigerian Navy, The Nigeria Police and the Paramilitary i.e. the Immigration officers, the customs officers and others on their duty post are not able to engage in very effective result – oriented interrogations and discussions as a result of their inability to effectively communicate fluently in either French or English as the case may be. This can pose a serious threat and danger to the Nigerian State in so many ways like security, trade and investment, smooth flow of traffic and in the checking and control of diseases and epidemics like Ebola, Corona Virus and others.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria is actually surrounded by French-speaking countries and for her to ensure her security and integration and even development she needs to be conversant with French Language which is spoken by most of these neighbouring countries.

THE WAY FORWARD

The Nigerian security agents known for brutality, impatience and also to a large extent, regular display of unprofessional conduct. This lack of patience and irrationality sometimes causes war between countries. The case in point is the misunderstanding between Nigeria and Cameroun in the 1980s and 1990s when Nigeria was always at loggerheads with Cameroun. One of the contributory factors of this misunderstanding was the ineffective use of language. To ensure all is well at the border areas of Nigeria the following are suggested to be done so that effective human relations and security matters are not taken for granted. This will go a long way in promoting peace and development.

1. The government must put in place the policy of training of security men and women in the use of English and French language as most of the countries sharing borders with Nigeria are French-speaking while Nigeria is English-speaking.
2. French must also be made compulsory at the secondary school level in Nigeria to ginger interest in the language for the benefit of the country.
3. The bilingual status of the country must be enhanced by giving of higher scholarships to those who want to study French at our universities, looking at the benefit derivable from such policy as the two languages are all international languages. Nigeria stands to lose nothing at such a policy. After all, Africa is the centre piece of Nigeria’s foreign policy.

REFERENCES

- A.S. Hosby: Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. Ninth Edition, Oxford University Press.
Daily Times Newspaper (14th and 31st December, 1996) Lagos: Publishers of Daily Trust.
Encyclopedia Americana (1976). London: Oxford University Press.
Hymes D (1972). Theory of Communicative Competence.

- Krasner, S. (1999) *Sovereignty and Organised Hypocrisy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Meads, G.H. (1962). *Mind, Self and Society. In the stand point of the Behaviourt.* Chigaco: University of Chicago Press.
- Meighan R. (1986) *A sociology of Education*, London: Cassel Educational Limited
- Nugget, S. (2003)
- Ojo S.A (2002). *A comprehensive Revision Handbook of French Grammer*
- Ojo, A.S. (2012). *Practical French for Anglophone Learner*, Agoro: Publicity Company Limited.
- Y. Xia (2014). *Language Theories and Languages teaching – from Traditional Grammer to functionalism.* *Journal of language Teaching and Research.* Vol. 5 No. 3 pp. 539 – 565 May 2014 @ 2014. Academy Publisher Manufactured in finland. Dio104304jHr, 5.3.559.565