

Ethnicity, National Integration And The Language Factor In Nigeria

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Abstract

Studies have shown that Nigeria has over 400 indigenous languages as well as over 250 ethnic groups. Each of these ethnic groups has its different language, culture and religion. Because of these differences, conflicts usually arise amongst them. These conflicts often degenerate into violent clashes and trigger off senseless wasting of human lives and properties worth billions of naira. There is hostility and unhealthy rivalry amongst the ethnic groups. This situation destabilizes the polity and hampers national integration and unity. The contest for political power in Nigeria is driven by ethnicity and sectionalism rather than nationalism and unity. The sense of oneness is lacking, what obtains is ethnic attachment, ethnic loyalty and solidarity which overrides collective national interest. The damage that ethnicity has done is astronomical and could lead to national disintegration if nothing is done. It is therefore high time we re-awakened the fire of nationalism amongst Nigerians; the type that the politicians who fought for our independence had. Nigerians must be re-orientated and must be made to know that they belong to one nation and should be committed to the 'national cause' not to ethnic and religious loyalties. It is the spirit of nationalism that will pave way for national integration and unity. This paper posits that national integration can be achieved through an intensive re-orientation towards nationalism. This orientation must be packaged and delivered in the language that people understand, considering the multilingual nature of Nigeria. The paper therefore advocates the use of local languages alongside the English language in reaching out to people. Through this, the larger populace would be reached, ethnic opposition would reduce and peaceful co-existence would be achieved. This paper is hinged on the theory of CUP (Common Underlying Proficiency), in additive bilingualism.

Keywords: *Ethnicity, Sectionalism, National Integration, Re-orientation, Nationalism, Additive bilingualism.*

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation-state made up of over 250 ethnic groups. These ethnic groups have different ancestry, different languages, cultures and religions. Nothing really bound them together

except for the fact that they belong to the same geopolitical entity called Nigeria. Hence, there is no feeling of national unity amongst them.

Agbedo, cited in Njoku and Ude, stated that, "the exigency of the colonial situation took no

cognizance of the salient consensual features that constitute a national character before lumping the pre-colonial disparate nations into one federation” (92). This is true because the ethnic groups in Nigeria can best be described as ‘units of nations within the nation-state. In fact, they are different nationalities lumped into a single political entity called Nigeria. As a result, the sense of oneness (that is, the sense of belonging to a single nation state) is lacking. What obtains is ethnic attachment, ethnic loyalty and solidarity, which over-rides collective national interest.

This attitude has led to unhealthy rivalry amongst the ethnic groups. They fiercely contest for political power in order to gain control of the national resources, so that they can re-allocate them to favour members of their ethnic group and political affiliations. Other groups are marginalized in the process and this is a major cause of conflict in Nigeria.

Another major source of conflict in Nigeria is the language factor. It goes hand in hand with the problem of ethnic diversity. There is multiplicity of languages and sentimentality attached to the languages by members of the linguistic groups that own them. No language community wants to be dominated by another. The elevation of any one indigenous language above the others as a national language, will elicit volatile reactions from the

other linguistic groups. Hence, the federal government has been very cautious about this.

So, tension continues to rise, tempers continue to flare, conflicts continue to erupt in different parts of the country at the slightest misunderstanding, because of the unhealthy rivalry amongst the ethno-linguistic groups that make up the Nigerian nation. Nigeria has been grappling with the problem of national integration since inception. The ethno-linguistic configuration of the nation has made it an uphill task.

Bloodletting conflicts are daily on the increase in different parts of the country, cases in point are the herdsmen clashes with the local farmers and the continued insurgence of the ‘Boko Haram’ sect. If nothing is done to arrest the problems at hand, this political entity called Nigeria can disintegrate.

This paper posits that national integration can be achieved through re-orientation. It advocates rekindling the spirit of nationalism amongst Nigerians. This means, re-awakening patriotic feelings, loyalty and allegiance to our country Nigeria, by mounting a massive and intensive re-orientation programme throughout the nation. Nigerians should be made to know that loyalty to the nation should transcend over ethnic, religious or linguistic concerns. They should be reminded of the fact that despite our diversities, we are all one. For this message to get to a wider audience and make impact, the paper advocates that our

indigenous languages, alongside the English language, be used to package and deliver it. The paper uses the theory of CUP (Common Underlying Proficiency) in additive bilingualism to support its stand.

Clarification of Concepts

Ethnicity: Ethnicity simply means the fact of belonging to an ethnic group. It is the inter ethnic perceptions which generate negative attitudes, prejudice, discrimination and ethnic identity among the ethnic groups. Ethnic group is defined by Onwuejeogu as “a section of population, which is by virtue of sharing a common cultural characteristics separate them from others within the population (4). Max Weber, a German sociologist also defined ethnic group as:

Those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or customs or both because of memories of colonization and migration (12)

Other indices of an ethnic group are: a common homeland connected with a specific geographical area, a common language and tradition, including food preferences and a common religious faith (Njoku, 618). Ethnic group has also been defined by Tsoyale as:

A composition of interacting members, who define themselves as belonging to a named or labeled

social group whose interest they identify, and which manifest certain aspects of a unique culture while constituting a part of a wider society (1).

Hence, ethnicity is seen as shared cultural identity involving similar practices, initiations, beliefs and linguistic features passed over from one generation to another.

Zagefka, avers that there are two accounts of ethnicity: the primordial’s view, which believes that ethnicity is ‘fixed’ and the constructivist view, which sees ethnicity as ‘constructed, i.e. subject to human agency. Isajiv, in the same vein states that the primordial’s view of ethnicity is “something given, ascribed at birth, deriving from the kit and clan structure of human society, and hence something more or less fixed and permanent” (2).

There is a recent shift from the primordial’s approach to ethnicity. For instance, Zagefka states that “the recent storyline is that ethnic groups are constructed rather than primordial; that is, they are based on construction and choice rather than blood and inheritance” (230).

Sectionalism: According to Wikipedia, sectionalism is loyalty to one’s own region or section of the country, rather than the country as a whole. It is restriction of interest to a narrow sphere; undue concern with local interests or petty distinctions at the expense of general well-being (web).

National Integration: The word integration is derived from a Latin word ‘integratio’ meaning the act or process of making whole. It is the act of combining differentiated elements into a unified whole. Bello-Imam, sees national integration as:

The harmonized co-existence of diverse social groups under a polity, be they classes or ethnic or interest groups, under some consistent national values or objective in order to consolidate the unity of their people into ‘one indivisible indissoluble sovereign nation’ (226).

National integration according to Khurana is “the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different castes, religions, regions and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one” (2). He further avers that this kind of integration is very important in the building of a strong and prosperous nation.

Again, according to WAEC e-learning, “National Integration is a process of creating a sense of national consciousness, uniqueness of identity and loyalty among people with different socio-cultural identities (racial, ethnic, languages, religion etc.) into a single political society” (1). In the Nigerian context, national integration does not mean that kind of unity that comes from linguistic and cultural similarity. It is unity in spite of our great differences; in other words, it is unity in diversity.

Nationalism: The meaning of nationalism is two dimensional. First, it means support for the creation of a sovereign nation which does not currently exist. Hence, Akindele and Adegbite see nationalism as “the feeling of belonging to a nationality ...having solidarity and sharing common socio-cultural and linguistic habits” (69). On the other hand, nationalism means having patriotic feeling or sentiment towards one’s country or nation. It also means showing allegiance and loyalty to one’s country. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, nationalism means being loyal and devoted to a nation and having a sense of national consciousness. For the purpose of this paper, the second meaning which equates patriotism is adopted.

Additive Bilingualism: Bilingualism is the ability to speak two languages, while multilingualism is the ability to speak more than two languages. A person becomes a bilingual when he acquires a second language in addition to his first language. Additive bilingualism is an approach in second language teaching in which the second language is seen as an addition to the learner’s first language rather than a replacement for it. It is a situation where a second language is learnt by an individual or a group, without detracting from the development of the first language.

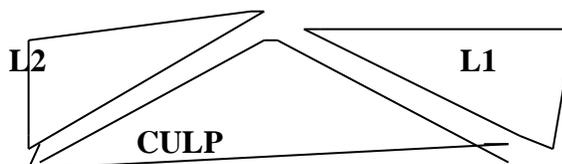
Here, both the first and the second languages of a bilingual, develop side by side, none

overshadowing the other. The two cultures also thrive side by side, none dominating the other. In additive bilingualism, educational support is offered in tandem with second language instruction.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is hinged on the theory of CUP (Common Underlying Proficiency), which supports additive bilingualism, in bilingual education. This theory was developed by Professor James Cummings in 1984. He is one of the world's leading authorities in bilingual education and second language acquisition.

The theory of CUP states that, in the course of learning one language, a child acquires a set of skills and implicit meta-linguistic knowledge, which can be drawn upon when working in another language. It is these skills and knowledge that Cummings refer to as common underlying proficiency. It is illustrated in the diagram below. He believes that this provides the base for the development of both the first language (L1) and the second language (L2). It follows that any expansion of CUP that takes place in one language will have beneficial effect on the other language(s).



The implication of this theory is that students should be encouraged to continue their native language development, while the second language is added. As Cummings states; “conceptual knowledge developed in one language helps to make input in the other language comprehensible” (web n.p). For instance, if a child already understands the concepts of ‘justice’ or ‘honesty’ in her own language, all she has to do is acquire the label for these terms in English. She has a far more difficult task, however, if she has to acquire both the label and the concept in her second language.

Cummings draws a line between additive bilingualism in which the first language continues to be developed and the first culture valued while the second language is added; and subtractive bilingualism in which the second language is added at the expense of the first language and culture, which diminish as a consequence. According to him, students working in an additive language environment succeed to a greater extent than those whose first language and culture, are devalued by their schools and by the wider society. The position of this paper in consonance with the above theory is that, our various indigenous languages should be allowed to be developed alongside the English language.

Ethnicity and its Attendant Problems

Ethnic groups, whether primordial or constructed, have the same characteristics. The members are

sentimentally attached to their ethnic identities. They tend to promote the interest and needs of their ethnic groups above national concerns. There is this feeling of sympathy and loyalty towards members of the same ethnic group.

Ethnicity generates a sense of group exclusiveness on the basis of which discriminations are made. Negative attitudes and prejudice are developed against other groups. The separatist tendencies are founded on parochial loyalties, i.e. solidarity of “in groups” to the exclusion of the “out groups” and non-accommodation of other interests. This has resulted into intractable conflicts that have endangered the unity of this country.

There are about 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. The three major ones are the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Igbo in the South East and the Yoruba in the South West. Other ethnic groups include: the Edo, Ijaw, Tiv, Kanuri, Ibibio, Jukun, Igala, Nupe and Idoma to mention but a few.

Review of literature shows that Nigeria has witnessed several outbreak of violent ethnic conflicts in different states of the federation. As recorded in Success Project, below is an overview of areas where eruptions of ethnic conflicts have taken place across the country:

Among the prominent ones are: Yoruba- Hausa community clashes in Shagamu, Ogun state; Eleme-Okirika in Rivers state; the intermittent

clashes in Kano, Kano state; Zango-kataf in Kaduna state; Tiv-Jukun in Wukari, Taraba state; Chamba- Kuseb in Taraba state; Itsekiri-Ijaw/Urhobo in Delta state; Aguleri- Umuleri in Anambra state; Ijaw-Ilaje conflict in Ondo state; Basa –Ebura in Naswara state; Hausa/Fulani – Sawaya in Bauchi state; Fulani-Irigwe and Yelwa-Shendan, both in Plateau state; Hausa-Yoruba clashes in Idi-Araba, Lagos state; and Ife-Modakeke in Osun state (3).

Ethnic conflicts arise from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations; or out of the consciousness to survive, or quest to attain certain goals that are considered to be of great value, which are perceived as being blocked. Ethnic conflicts also arise from suspicion and mistrust and from the fear of being dominated. It can also arise from intolerance and hate-speech from one ethnic group against another. Nigerians, instead of harnessing their diversities towards national development, have become slaves to their ethnic origins. Their allegiance is largely focused on ethnic concerns to the detriment of nation building.

Ethnicity has permeated all spheres of life in Nigeria. In fact everything done in this country, in both public and private sectors, has an ethnic undertone. Ethnic struggles are usually focused on rewards of the political system. Thus, ethnicity has resulted in the following evils:

- Fierce competition for political power via the ethnic platform
- Deliberate marginalization of other ethnicity groups by the ethnic bloc that gains political power
- Differential opportunities of employment
- Lopsided government appointments at the federal level. A case in point is the ministerial appointment of the current Buhari led administration, which favoured the Northerners more than any other group. The appointments were based on ascriptive relationship. The president failed to create the balance needed for national unity.
- Lopsided allocation of national resources and
- Discriminatory admissions into federal institutions. This is a country where admissions to federal institutions are given on quota basis rather than merit. They tag some groups as 'educationally disadvantaged', and lower the cut off mark for admission for them; while others in the same country are denied admission even if they merited it, simply because they fall under the group tagged 'educationally advantaged'.

Discriminations of all kinds are rife in this country and all these cause dissatisfaction to those who feel marginalized. So, they mobilize their kit and kin to protest to register their dissatisfaction. These protests most times become violent and hamper meaningful development as a nation.

Of recent, ethnic conflict has taken another dimension between the Fulani-herdsmen and farmers in various states across the nation. The Fulani-herdsmen have resorted to burning down farm lands, killing people indiscriminately and razing to the ground whole communities, especially in Benue state, Nasarawa state, Taraba state and Edo state. This has led to new trends in the polarization of communities. This situation hinders national development, national integration as well as national unity.

The Language Factor in Nigeria

Literature records that there are more than 400 languages spoken in Nigeria, though there is no consensus on the exact number. The diverse number of languages spoken in the country hampers communication. Communication gap breeds mistrust, suspicion and conflicts. It also makes governance difficult. Hence, Nigeria adopted English language to bridge this gap in communication. English is also a second language in Nigeria; it plays multifaceted roles in the affairs of this country.

The federal government, in a bid to harmonize and organize the myriads of languages spoken in the country, came up with a language policy embedded in the Nigerian Policy on Education in 1977. This document was revised in 1981 and again in 1998. The 1998 version elevated Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as the 3 major Nigerian languages. This

recognition was based on the number of speakers of these languages and the geographical area they cover.

This is an attempt by the federal government to recognize the indigenous languages in a multilingual country where the English language has taken a colossal stand over the indigenous languages. English language is not only the language of political administration; it is the language of inter-ethnic communication among Nigerians. It is also the language of education, judiciary and commerce; it has also acquired the status of an official/national language.

The federal government realizing the need to preserve the people's cultural values, came up with the policy statement cited in Njoku and Izuagba:

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 Nigerian languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection the government considers the 3 major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (29).

The policy statement recommends that every Nigerian child should learn one of the three major Nigerian languages in addition to his mother tongue. The government hopes that learning the other tongue will minimize ethnic antagonism

which over the years has been the bane of our desire for unity (Njoku and Izuagba, 29).

The issue of language has been very volatile in this country. There is this sentimental attachment of people to their local languages, such that no linguistic community wants to be dominated by another. No linguistic group wants to be relegated to the background. Even the WAZOBIA image met with hostility, which is why its implementation is not being enforced. According to Njoku and Izuagba:

The recognition accorded to the three major languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) is resented by the other language groups who see the policy as a form of language imperialism and have resisted the teaching of these three languages in their domain (37).

Again, Nigerians are not ready to accept one indigenous language over 399 others as a national language. Enahoro, cited in Njoku, asserts that:

All the languages of Nigeria have equal validity, or if you please equal lack of validity, before the law and under the constitution. No linguistic group has the right, moral or constitutional right to impose his (sic) language on any other linguistic group in the country (621).

Because of this hostility, no Nigerian language, not even the major 3, has evolved to be the Nigerian national language. Hence, English language

continues to play the role as the national language in the face of the linguistic complexities plaguing Nigeria.

In many societies, it is normal for members to have a command of two or more languages especially in multilingual societies like China, India, Germany, and USA. So, multilingualism is not peculiar to Nigeria. By making English a second language and a compulsory school subject, every Nigerian citizen automatically becomes bilingual and in some cases multilingual. But the truth is that what is being experienced in Nigeria is 'subtractive bilingualism', a situation, where the second language is added at the expense of our indigenous languages and cultures. Many of our local languages are going into extinction. We therefore strongly advocate the development of our various indigenous languages, alongside the English language.

Factors Militating against National Integration in Nigeria

Nigeria is a large nation-state housing diverse nationalities that are 'potential nations'. Literature has it that there are over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. Ethnic cleavages have remained a critical problem to national integration in Nigeria. Ojo avers that "rather than integrating into a cohesive community with a common sense of one national identity and destiny, citizens of Nigeria are

returning more and more to primordial affiliations for identity, loyalty and security" (1).

Past Nigerian governments have made efforts towards national integration. They have set up different programmes which are all efforts geared towards national integration. Such programmes include:

- The national Youth Service Corp scheme
- The establishment of unity schools in all the states of the federation.
- The introduction of National Sports Festival and Inter-Collegiate and NUGA sporting competitions.
- The establishment of the National Orientation Agency
- The introduction of civic education in our primary and junior secondary school curriculum and so on.

Other things put in place to remind Nigerian of their single nationhood include: the national flag, the national Anthem, the national pledge, the coat of arms and the national public holidays. Yet, national integration has remained a mirage in this country. Many factors militate against national integration. Amongst these are the following:

Ethnicity: As said earlier, ethnicity is a sentimental feeling of closeness among a group of people that have the same culture and ancestry, in exclusion of others outside the group. The unhealthy rivalry amongst the ethnic groups results in violent clashes across the country. The effects

of these clashes such as loss of human lives and properties and incessant disruption of civil society, are pointers to the fact that ethnicity hampers the effort towards development and national integration. Other resultant evils of ethnicity mentioned in the previous section such as; marginalization, differential opportunities of employment, lopsided allocation of national resources, discriminatory government appointments into public offices etc, also militate against national integration.

Added to the problem of ethnicity is **the language factor**. The multiplicity of languages in a single polity makes communication difficult. It is through communication that collaboration and co-operation occur. Because the different linguistic groups that make up the polity fail to understand one another, there is suspicion, mistrust, antagonism and lack of peaceful co-existence amongst them. This is the major reason why English language was brought in to bridge the gap in communication and to ensure smooth governance. Thus, English became the language of interaction among the bulk of the citizens of Nigeria. There is no doubt that English language is important to the Nigerian nation because of the roles it plays, but this paper wants to underscore the fact that our indigenous languages should not be totally neglected, if we must achieve national integration.

Boundary disputes: This is a corollary of ethnicity. It has led to serious violent communal clashes that claimed uncountable number of lives and properties. The rate at which these communal clashes erupt hinders peaceful co-existence and national unity.

Hate Speech: The recent public announcement being flashed by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) states that:

Hate speech is not a joke; it incites genocide and crime against humanity. Most Africa's civil wars are caused by hate speech from one tribe against another. We don't want it here. The Federal government stands firm against hate speech.

Hate speech is indeed a bane on our attempts in national integration. It provokes violent non-verbal reactions and pitches Nigerians against one another. This further polarizes Nigeria along ethnic lines. Even the current minister of information, Lai Muhammed, affirms that rising cases of ethnic and religious disharmony are all products of hate speech.

Religious Bigotry: This is the upholding and expressing of unreasonable opinions and beliefs about one's own religion and refusal to change them. It is the refusal to tolerate other forms of religion. Nigeria is a secular state where people have right to various modes of worship. In spite of this, a sect of Hausa Muslims practice extreme

religious bigotry. They find pleasure in burning churches and hacking down innocent Christians at the slightest provocation. Until this fanatic set of Muslims are tamed, National integration would remain a mirage. The section that follows explicates how our local languages, will help us to achieve unity in diversity.

Re-Awakening of a Single National Consciousness via our local languages

To re-awaken means to revive, to re-invigorate, to bring back to life something that is dead. It is a fact that Nigeria came into being as a result of the 1914 amalgamation, which saw different nationalities lumped together as a nation. Some scholars have made disparaging statements concerning this incident. For instance, Agbede said “the idea of Nigeria as a nation is a ridiculous colonial contrivance that can hardly stand the litmus test of nationhood” (149). Similarly, Saro-Wiwa, the martyred activist of the Ogoni people, cited in Ayoola, stated:

The Ogoni people have settled in this area as farmers and fishermen... before the British colonialist invaded them in 1901 ... By 1960, when colonial rule ended, the British had consigned the Ogoni willy-nilly to a new nation, Nigeria consisting of 350 or 50 other peoples held together by force, violence and much argument in Britain’s commercial and imperial interests (51).

These scathing remarks are because Nigeria is a polity housing people from different ethnic groups with diverse cultures, languages and religion. But, multilingualism and ethnic diversity is not peculiar to Nigeria. Other countries like USA, China, India, etc. have made progress and have harnessed their diversity to their advantage. We believe that Nigeria can make something good out of her diversity.

Recall that there was a point in history when patriotic sons of this great country, put aside their differences and came together and fought for Nigeria’s independence. The likes of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello and so on; their love, loyalty and devotion to the country, and their zeal to free Nigeria from the grips of colonialists, did not ebb until their aim was achieved in October 1960. It is this kind of nationalism, this kind of single national consciousness that has to be re-awakened in the citizens of Nigeria. This is an ideology based on the premise that loyalty and devotion to the nation-state, surpasses other individual or group interests. It is the re-awakening of patriotic feelings, national loyalty and the strong desire to build Nigeria and make her truly great. We strongly believe that our diverse ethnic values should be pooled together and channeled towards building a greater Nigeria, rather than the divisive and parochial interests that are threatening our collective existence.

Language is a cementing factor in human relationships; it is an invaluable tool for communication among humans. Babajide cited in Utazi states that “Language constitutes that quality of human peculiarity, that unique attribute of man’s distinctiveness and that priceless mandate of superiority over the entire creation” (24). Language has the power to influence human thoughts and actions. Language can make or mar human relationships. It can also shape public opinions. Adedimeji cited in Utazi confirms that:

Mere words that language produces can make and prevent wars, create understanding or inflame prejudice, form constitutions or destroy them, justify man’s worst actions or express his highest ideals (24).

The point we want to underscore here is that language is a form of action that generate counter reactions in forms other than language. Hence, we should be very careful how we use language. Careful choice of words, how and when they are used, have tremendous effect on the receiver. A message misinterpreted or decoded wrongly, could lead to a whole myriads of problems. We strongly believe that the rightful use of language will enhance communication flow and improve relationships in Nigeria.

Umera-Okeke avers that “an understanding of a language will help you express what you really want to say in a clear and straight forward way,

without being misunderstood” (emphasis added) (10). This is where our indigenous or local languages come in. In the dissemination of the message of nationalism and patriotic re-awakening, the national orientation agency has to partner with people from the different linguistic groups, who can fashion the messages in their various local languages, in such a way that the people’s heart would be touched and positive results would be achieved.

The federal and state governments of Nigeria have a huge responsibility in this regard. It is not enough trying to reach the people they govern through the medium of English language. The truth is that only a few section of the Nigerian populace can actually understand the full import and the nuances of the English language. We therefore strongly advise that the people should be reached via their local languages.

Yan Dam citing Mac Mcginley a professor of military science at Carrol College, states that:

Languages obviously are hugely beneficial if you are able to speak to someone in their own native language. Not only are you able to better understand them and communicate with them, but the fact that you try to communicate with them in their own native language probably would indicate a respect for their language and culture (1).

Similarly, Nelson Mandela, cited in Oyekanmi and Ume states that, “if you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head; If you talk to a man in his own language, that goes to his heart” (44). This confirms the necessity of using our local languages to package and disseminate this message of patriotic re-awakening to the citizens of Nigeria.

Again, the principle of ‘linguistic relativism’ of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, states that languages differ in how they encode events and concepts. As a result, speakers of different languages think about the world in different ways. Words that are not offensive in one language may be offensive in another language. Therefore, in encoding the message, that Nigeria is one indivisible political entity, that people’s loyalty and devotion should be geared towards building Nigeria, and not to any parochial or group interests; the local languages should be used. As said earlier a larger section of the Nigerian populace, though they may have a smattering knowledge of English, may not be able to understand the full import and the nuances of the language. Encoding and delivering the message of patriotic reawakening in the local languages of the people will make the message get to their hearts and elicit positive result

Recommendations

In view of the discussion so far, the paper recommends the following:

- The national orientation agency at both federal and state level should widen their scope of responsibility. They should fashion out ways of reaching the people at the grass root level with this campaign of ‘One Nigeria’ conveyed in their local languages.
- They can reach out to the rural areas with drama and theatre groups to teach lessons on national integration
- Patriotic sermons can be preached in the churches as well as the entire mosques across the federation.
- Civic education curriculum in our schools should include lessons on patriotism and national integration.
- Hate speech should be avoided not only among the politicians, but also among the citizenry.
- Nigerians should shun ethnic politics which is the mother of nepotism and sectionalism.
- There should be equity and justice in the allocation of national resources.

Conclusion

The achievement of national integration depends on a just government for all citizens. Developing a single national consciousness is a conscious decision that requires deliberate policy and efforts. The citizens of Nigeria need more enlightenment campaigns to re-awaken them to their civic

responsibilities. With collaborative efforts, we can make the best of our diversity.

Again, we are not in any way questioning or undermining the position and the role of English language in Nigeria. We are rather focusing on finding a way to build bridges towards the collective existence of the nation, despite our ethno-linguistic differences. Borrowing the words of Oyekanmi and Ume, we sincerely; advocate “a better management of our diversity through the recognition of our diverse cultural and linguistic identities and the optimal utilization of these identities for a better socio-political climate” (55). Being together for fifty eight (58) years is not a joke. Let us shelve our differences therefore, and collectively build a united and a greater Nigeria.

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