

## **A Discourse On Language Expressions And Ethnic Rivalry: Implications On Competition, Crisis, And Development In Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Ethnic languages present forms that represent the consciousness of different regions in Nigeria and African societies at large. A discourse on language expression demonstrates how language is used to convey historical and social meanings, national identities, power relations, and inter-ethnic relationships. The multi-ethnic/multi-lingual makeup of the nation has contributed to the plurality of languages in use in Nigeria and has constituted various biased speeches, competitions, and rivalries in the linguistic, political, and social patterns of communication in Nigeria. People align with their ethnicities and demonstrate diverse linguistic and emotional loyalties and attachments to their various indigenous languages and cultures. This paper thus, uses examples of unhealthy language expressions from individuals of the three major ethnic groups, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, the minority regions, Ijaw (Niger Delta), and Nigerian Pidgin expressions; to highlight some of the speeches that are associated with ethnic group's intentions and attitudes which beget competitions, rivalry, and crisis, that impede effective development in Nigeria. The theoretical framework for this study is based on Fairclough's stages of discourse analysis which sees the text (speeches) as discourse, as a discursive practice, and as a social practice that shows how language has been used in identity construction and conflict generation. This article recommends that language expressions/speeches made in public domains should be that which provide and promote social change, equitable national policies, unbiased inter-ethnic representations, and development in Nigeria. It concludes by advocating for the use of neutral statements/speeches in national and ethnic communications, and the provision of adequate enlightenment to avoid hate speeches to achieve a unifying ethnic cohesion, peaceful coexistence, adequate distribution of power, and development in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Language; Expression; Ethnicity; Rivalry; Competition; and Development.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Language expression discourse centers on language use and how it constructs social meaning. Language models reality that shows the influence on individuals' thought processes within the environment. These speeches portray ethnic attachments, support, and special loyalty to their groups rather than achieving national developmental values that will be beneficial to all citizens.

The linguistic picture of Nigeria is one that has the potential to create problems for the standardization of its language usage in political and cultural communication because the indigenous languages exist side by side with English, the three major indigenous languages, the minority language Ijaw, and Nigerian Pidgin. Each of these languages struggles for supremacy, ethnic loyalty/utility, and recognition in the Nigerian environment.

In this research, Discourse focuses on the way in which your respondents draw on differing interpretive repertoires based on their interpretation of the context in which the communication takes place. The researcher focuses on the way in which language is used in diverse settings, and among different ethnicities in Nigeria. In a discourse analysis, the researcher's task is to identify the context;

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and the various interpretive repertoires; and try to explain each scenario, to arrive at an understanding of the reactions, of the respondents from different ethnic regions, and of the different scenarios of the discussions/speeches. (See Johnstone, (2017), work on Discuss analysis.

However, the greater value of language lies in its communicability, which is the individual's ability to use and decode the words in each context. This portrays language as an organized activity that uses words to accomplish its designated function. (Njemanze, 2013). Thus, as languages expand, they are elaborately used, their strength changes and they serve multiple purposes in their environment. As stated in the Guardian Newspaper; *We live in a country where those who demand equal rights and freedom to end the wave of injustice and marginalization are hurriedly declared terrorists, while real terrorists who invade communities and kill hundreds of innocent people are pampered and given government protection* (Guardian Newspaper, 2021).

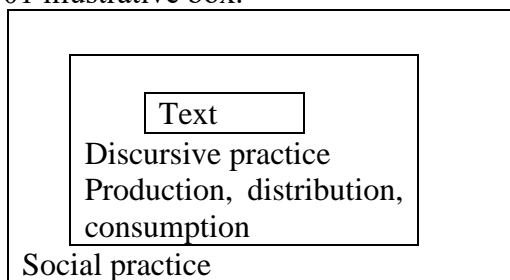
In Nigeria today there abound language expression and interaction of different ethnic groups which differ in shared cultural heritage, beliefs, political/religious ideologies, customs/values, and morals. The dominance of ethnic identities can beget rivalry and/or competition which may breed conflict. This has affected issues of national development in Nigeria. Matters relating to language expression in Nigeria reflect ethnic consciousness largely because Nigeria is a nation with visible linguistic fragmentations. There are diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria with only three ethnic groups and languages considered as major: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba languages and ethnic groups. Despite these categorizations, there are also the minority languages represented by Ijaw and the Nigerian Pidgin whose usage and positions have always been riddled with controversies.

The current population of Nigeria has been estimated to be over 225 million people (National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria; 2023) with various categorizations on the number of indigenous languages. Bamgbose (1993) and Lewis (ed) Ethnologue (2009) posited between 400 and 520 indigenous languages existing in Nigeria. There is a further division of Nigerian states into thirty-six and the federal capital territory while each state is further divided into six geo-political zones comprising the south-south, southeast, southwest, northeast, northwest, and North-central zones. Each zone has between five and eight states with the least having between eight to fifty-one local government areas. The local governments have a total of 774 local government areas in Nigeria. (See Udoh (ed) (NLGS) project 2003).

Hence, the plurality of Nigerian languages makes the language situation kinetic, languages interact, compete, and struggle for recognition. Most times the weaker ones go into extinction and lose their prestige. Nigerians have at different times and reasons demonstrated linguistic and emotional attachments to the various indigenous languages, thereby creating competitive avenues that may revitalize or kill a language.

### 1.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that drives this research is the theory and analytical model of the first component of Fairclough's 2001 three-dimensional concept of discourse: the text. This is the first component in Fairclough's 2001 illustrative box.



### Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Conception of Discourse

In the three layers of analysis posited by Fairclough, the text can be seen as discourse, as discursive practice, and as social practice. This article is embedded in the discursive practice which gives shape

of form to the genre in use and how it is consumed. The focus of this study is its correspondence with the descriptions that led to the various crises in Nigeria. These include.

- The direction and dimension of an exchange.
- The social relations that people enter in discourse.
- The third constraint is the ability of the powerful participant in a discourse to make subjects of their interlocutors.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigeria has always experienced these vices in the distribution of her resources. These problems have their roots in competition within the ethnic regions in the nation. Ethnicity in Nigeria is concerned with recognizing Nigerians as the dominant majority or minority ethnic groups within the same society. This attitude has impeded major developments in Nigeria, especially in the development of its neutral language policies. The thrust of this paper, therefore, is to demonstrate using the expressions of language examples of the three major ethnic groups; Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, and the Ijaw (Niger Delta Region) and Nigerian Pidgin which showcases hate speech and rivalry, to show that language expressions/speeches made in public domains should be that which provide and promote social change, equitable national policies, unbiased inter-ethnic representations, and development in Nigeria and not the other way.

The use of the discourse strategy in this research aims at utilizing the diverse multiple disciplinary origins of Discourse analysis, such as – sociology, sociopsychology, anthropology, linguistics and philosophy, communications studies, and literature (Grant *et al.*, 2005). Many writers have contributed to the field of discourse analysis, but prominent among them are Norman Fairclough and Michel Foucault. Norman Fairclough is the father of critical discourse analysis. He interprets discourse analysis from a linguistics and language perspective. Fairclough sees discourse as: "a social practice which constructs social identities, social relations, and the knowledge and meaning systems of the social world .... This assertion both reflects and produces the ideas and assumptions relating to the ways in which personal identities, social relations, and knowledge systems are constituted through social practice."

In a competition of this kind, choice, interest, and support from policymakers who have the right to marginalize or popularize a group within their environment determine the power of survival or marginalization. Competition or rivalry is a major feature that reduces the rate of development of any multi-ethnic society. The competition also breeds communal conflict protest, agitation, and sometimes war (Wilkens & Okamoto (2002) and Jekayinfa (2002). The interests exhibited by the various ethnic groups in Nigeria have drastically reduced the rate of her national development. This in turn has hindered the adequate propagation and growth of minority ethnic groups.

Nigeria is not alone in this type of chaotic situation and struggle. Some other African countries are also involved. Competitive ethnicity and rivalry date to the colonial period when the initial group to be colonized acquired better national opportunities. This has also been the practice and experience in Nigeria. Thus, Mezieobi (1994) observed that "Whatever is done in Nigeria, particularly at the governments' quarter had ethnic undertone. In employment, admissions into schools, distribution of amenities, social relationships, ethnic affiliations, and attachments are very strong and manifest conspicuously. Mezieobi informs that the attachment of a Nigerian; first to his ethnic group before the nation, is the bane of Nigeria's national unity, consciousness, and socio-political integration. This research concludes by advocating for the use of neutral statements/speeches in national and ethnic communications, and adequate enlightenment to avoid hate speeches for the promotion of a unifying ethnic cohesion, peaceful coexistence, adequate distribution of power, to achieve national values, and enhanced development that will be beneficial to all ethnic groups in Nigeria.

## **2.1. Conceptual Issues: Ethnic Rivalry, Competition, and Development**

### **2.1.1. Ethnic Rivalry and Competition**

Ethnic rivalry and competition have been known as offshoots of ethnic identity which in turn has been a strong influence on the behavioral pattern of a class or society. These identities reflect diverse loyalties within society. Competition has always been attributed to the eruption of conflict. This according to Horowitz "...may seem pedestrian but from the theoretical implications of competition, there is usually increased ethnic tension, there is a reaction where there is assumed dominance" (see Horowitz 1985: 95-140).

Ethnicity as a concept has attracted several discussions by scholars. It is practically a situation where a group of people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds cooperate and interact with others with distinct backgrounds. Ethnicity has a strong link with language because it is the instrument with which people and their cultures are identified. In the words of Hawkin (ed) (1995:137), ethnicity refers to "a group sharing a common origin, culture or language". In other words, this group of people shares a unique cultural and social heritage that is generationally transferred to its members.

Ethnicity is further described by Nnoli (1980:5) as "A social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups". This author further explains that "ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries". Thus, ethnicity binds together smaller groups who have common interests. In the words of Ogugua (2004:7), "It is characterized by a common consciousness of being one in relation to the other ethnic groups relevant within a policy". This often induces inter-ethnic competition for the available resources in such a nation.

Ethnicity involves a kind of informal interest group within the same society, it is therefore not uncommon for an ethnic group to manifest an aspect of culture, religion, language, or history that may induce competition in such a society. Competitive ethnicity and rivalry in Nigeria brought about a kind of upsurge of marginalization, alienation, and struggles from the status designation of either the majority or minority of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. There has been competition over the nation's resources and appointments have often led to conflict and violence.

These occurrences have aroused the consciousness of the dominant and the downtrodden class of ethnic groups who co-existed within Nigeria and have created a reinforced common consciousness among the various competing ethnic groups. Such consciousness often induces agitation, conflict, and even war. Agitation, conflict, and even war have been differently expressed in Nigeria through rejection on linguistic, cultural, political, social, or religious grounds. It has induced inter-ethnic discrimination in educational institutions (such as catchment area preferences given to the northerners based on their low education status), marriages, jobs/employment, and even leadership. In the history of Nigeria, it was only one time that a minority ascended the ladder of presidential leadership in the country and there has been a series of agitation from the northern region, in the guise of Boko Haram insurgency. These identification clauses have reduced the pace of the nation's development pace and continued agitations for equity, justice, and fair play.

### **2.1.2. Development**

This is a concept that has varied definitions and interpretations. It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that encompasses the improvement and enhancement of all aspects of human life. Development denotes advancement, change, and improvement in all aspects of human living standards. Development in this paper is examined in relation to the national situation in Nigeria. Thus, Nnoli (1980) describes it as; a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with their physical, biological, and inter-human environments, transforming them for their own betterment and that of humanity at large...". This is an indication that development is dominated and determined by humans, to improve and transform their environment. Developing the Nigerian society thus implies the advancement, improvement, and transformations of the various ethnic regions in Nigeria by the Policymakers.

Hence, a nation's development centers on the general improvement of that country in all areas of politics, economy, social, cultural, scientific, and material spheres, and its capacity to enhance the citizens' standard of living. The advent of the human communication process enhances the developmental goals of learning and the political and economic development of an individual. A lot can be achieved through proper communication. Thus, in the opinion of Njemanze (2007:182), language development embodies, applied, and practiced skills that generally improve education in a nation. It enhances the educational needs and status of a country and above all, it is central to the development of a functionally literate nation. (Njemanze 2007). Through language development, the various ethnic groups will understand the process of making a safe speech without bias or sentiments and acquire basic public speaking skills and protocols that do not inflame competition or rivalry within the nation.

The educational needs and status of any nation are usually unique to that society, while the level of a nation's mastery of language usage and public speaking skills is dependent upon the context of usage. A good language development plan will ensure mastery and proficiency attainments by users. This should pose a great concern to policymakers in Nigeria. Hence, there should be a review of their language expression strategies in public communication, in the public domain.

## **2.2. Language Expressions and Power in Communication**

Njemanze and Ononiwu, (2020), describe language expression and communication as twin concepts that are basically essential to man. Both concepts are intrinsically connected because language gives life and power to communication and has always been central to the study of man in his environment. It is also a dynamic construct with social relevance, especially in its usage environment. Thus, language, communication, and power are social phenomena that showcase the heritage of not only one individual but of all the people who belong to a speech community (a group of people who live together and speak a similar language). Njemanze and Ononiwu (2020).

Fairclough (1989) posits that "Power is not just a matter of language. Physical force, oppression, political patronage, and cultural ideology may involve language as a medium of transmission or focus. Again, Njemanze (2015), states that language can be used to direct the activities of other people or influence their behavior. In that case, the language is performing a directive role. - When language is used to seek compliance or control over the forces of nature they may, however, be carried out outside the domain of linguistics", but it is still clear, that the role of language and its apparatus in the demonstration and transmission of power cannot be ignored.

The focus of this research revolved around how language expressions act as a powerful force and are enacted through communication and within discourse. The language of ethnic agitators or political speeches has its own power; the type of power that controls members of a group. "Such control may impact on the actions and cognitions of the less powerful by limiting their freedom from doing certain things and influencing their minds so that they would do the bidding of the powerful" Fairclough (1989). Another notable scholar in discourse study, Van Dijk (1998:254) agrees with the above submission by observing that; "Besides the elementary recourse to force to directly control action (as in police violence against demonstrators or male violence against women in Northern Nigeria), the modern and more effective power is cognitive and enacted by persuasion, dissimulation, or manipulation, among other strategic ways to change the mind of others in one's own interest".

Fairclough (1989:46) further explains that power in discourse deals particularly with "Participants, controlling and constraining the contributions of nonpowerful participants". This idea was supported by researchers such as Johnstone, B. (2017), Kosterec, M. (2016), and Prasad, B. D. (2008) in their descriptions of diverse analysis patterns. Fairclough (1989) distinguishes three types of constraints: constraints on contents, constraints on relationships, and constraints on subjects. The first constraints perhaps pertain to the constraints derived from the conventions of the discourse type used; the direction and dimension of an exchange. An example is a discussion between a highly ranked political officeholder and his subordinate, or a militant and the oppressed. The second one involves the social relations that people enter in discourse, like an instructor (political leaders or freedom activists) and his relationship with his learners (the masses, and/or the followers) who receive tutorship from him.

The third constraint is the ability of the influential participant in a discourse to make subjects of their interlocutors, (the various speeches that induce rivalry or even war). These can be seen in the way some agitators make subjects of the citizens through their speeches.

### **2.3. Language Expression, and Attitude in Nigeria**

The Nigerian situation is such that language enables its speakers to relate to their environment, to describe and identify natural and cultural objects, and to organize and coordinate their activities such as social, religious, economic, and political expeditions without giving our cultural identity the opportunity to thrive in its society. Attitude reflects an individual's collective behavior and people's feelings about other people. This in turn may determine the vitality (growth/death) of a region and its values. Attitudes are often flexible; they change through personal introspection and often affect the status, population, and ethnic inclination of users.

In another opinion by Fasold (1984:148), "Language attitudes are often the reflection of attitudes towards members of various ethnic groups and people's reactions to language varieties...." This situation is prominent in Nigeria where the continuous adoption of the major ethnic languages as the major official language has influenced the negligence given to other minority languages and Nigerian pidgin to co-function communication in Nigeria despite their maximized utility in the Nigerian speech environment. Attitude studies are greatly influenced by national policies, and because Nigeria is highly multilingual, attitudes are usually explained through language expressions. Hence, planning, and national policies should take into consideration the ethnic groups that exist within the minority groups and help them to attain prominent levels of stability because issues relating to language in Nigeria reflect ethnic consciousness. Nigeria has continued to battle with its ethnolinguistic challenges which has been detrimental to its development plan.

Since Nigerian independence, ethnic issues and rivalries have continued to impede the adoption of any other official language except the English language. A language that does not favor those with little education. A country that gained its independence sixty-three (63) years ago is expected to have expanded its entire status over time. Ironically, the education needs of individuals in Nigeria are barely represented in our society. The major ethnic groups: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba have dominant attitudes towards enhancing their communication through mother tongues. This selfish attitude has hindered the expansion and development of other languages in Nigeria. Indigenous language users are concerned with dominating communication in Nigeria using their language alone. The Hausa are interested in using their language to replace English in the North likewise every other ethnic group while the minorities adopted the use of Nigerian Pidgin which is widely spoken and understood by many Nigerians.

The upsurge of indigenous languages has suppressed various attempts made by policymakers to establish a composite national language of communication and expression. An example was the (WAZOBIA) which has not produced an encouraging result because of ethnic competition. No ethnic group wants to lose her language even when the users are very few. Unfortunately, the practice in Nigeria is often that of visible disparity between policy and practice, language planners have not had a better opportunity to draw up an all-embracing language plan to suit people with different languages, attitudes, cultures religions, and diversity of communication, hopes, and aspirations. Language expressions beget crisis, competition, rivalry, and insecurity which showcase ethnic attitudes toward the implementation of adequate policies that bring development.

## **3. METHOD**

There is a range of methods and approaches to the analysis of content, but their unifying feature is that they involve close readings of texts of people's speeches to identify concepts and themes that might be revealing of core or underlying messages within the content. This research collated media coverage of ethnic speeches at different scenes and events. These expressions are obtained from speeches of individuals of the three major ethnic groups, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and the Ijaw (Niger

Delta regions), and Nigerian Pidgin expressions. The major data gathered were articles from the different ethnic agitators that were either published in the national newspapers or on the internet. The selected crisis was collated from 2000 to 2023 as data for discussion. The style of analysis adopted in this research is proposed by Fairclough (2001) which centers on experiential, relational, and expressive values used by the researcher.

Generally, this research reviewed the problems inherent in the power of language use in diverse contexts, using the impressions of political and ethnic discourse in Nigeria, and the effects of language use in the display of coercive power and force within the environment. The modes of discourse used in this article are the interpretive approach and exposition, which reveal the intention of the ethnic group against another while decoding the meaning and significance of language expressions from the perspective of the participants in a particular discourse. Impressions on the implications of the speeches were reviewed and instances of the tone, positive, negative, or neutral positions were used to unravel its impact on the various provocations, rivalries, and ethnic clashes in Nigeria.

## **4. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1. A Discourse on Language Expressions and Ethnic Rivalries in Nigeria**

The heightened crisis and insecurity in Nigeria, have brought to the fore the following examples which have been very prominent in the nation's memories, since 2000 till date. The overall rise in violence targeting civilians around the country has continued to thrive as if it is a comfortable way of living in Nigeria. Political violence by communal and ethnic militias persisted, and violence targeting civilians constituted over 60% of their activity. The Islamic State – West Africa Province (ISWAP) Lake Chad faction further expanded its operational base to areas outside the operational base of the Boko Haram insurgency resurged in the northwestern part of Nigeria. Also, the South-South/ Niger Delta part of Nigeria hijacked the oil-producing areas and carry out bunkering and unleash violence against foreigners who work in the oil industries in the region.

Nigeria's southeast region where the Igbo ethnic region belongs is crying of maximum negligence, marginalization, and malignment in federal resource distributions and political appointments and has remained active without any recourse to the feelings of the people from the region. Also, the Southerners are agitating for the release of one of their sons who has been a voice for the liberation of people of the region but has been held without release from detective custody, even after trial and bail granted. Hence, seat-at-home has been imposed on all towns and cities in the region for almost two (2) years now. This takes place every Monday and sometimes on other days and has negatively affected all-round development in the region.

The Yoruba region and ethnic group reside in the southwestern region of Nigeria. They have also, like every other Nigerian region, their group of agitators that request their basic human rights and better treatment in Nigeria too. They are the AREWA group, MEND, Oodua People's Congress, and many others that serve as their voices. The Yoruba nation's self-determination groups have been in existence for many years. Although some of these contemporary Yoruba groups were formed before founding the Oodua People Congress (OPC), the OPC became divided into separate groups, and the fractionalization resulted in the formation of organizations such as the Oodua Liberation Movement (OLM). The splinter groups claimed that OPC lacked a political pathway, was too confrontational, and lacked a clear organizational goal. Recently, some other new groups have emerged, Ojo, (2023) informs, such groups include, the Federation for Yoruba Culture and Consciousness (FYCC), Oodua Republic Front (ORF), Oodua Self-determination Groups (COSEG).

The Ijaw regions are identified as the South southern part of Nigeria. They are considered the minority group in Nigeria, but they are the major oil-producing state of Nigeria. They have been at the front of agitation because of severe marginalization. They do not have basic infrastructures, as a region, they are surrounded by rivers and big seas but lack bridges or even roads to access the area, yet their oil services sustain the needs of the nation and are part of Nigerian exports. They have the laudable militant group in Nigeria who in the past years were given amnesty and their weapons were retrieved from them. Fairclough (2001:112) posits that in critical discourse analysis, the experiential value of

words should be seen as clear attempts to show how “the text producers’ experience of the natural or social world is shown in a text (speech)”. Obviously, there are agitations in every region of Nigeria. The concept of discourse analysis may vary, but in this research, it will help us.

- **Understand how language expressions construct social reality:** Through the analysis of the various examples of speeches of individuals from various ethnic groups. Language is used to construct meaning and transmit information which depends on cultural, political, religious, and social factors that shape communication and social reality.
- **Provide insights for political, religious, and social exchange that propagate rivalries and crises:** This can be achieved through the identification of biased language use and/or power imbalances. Language expressions can be used to challenge improper norms and promote more equitable and inclusive communication.

An instance is a protest that broke out because of different security personnel’s molestations of people within Nigerian cities and states. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2020, a video went viral showing a Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Nigeria, (SARS) officers dragging two men from a hotel and shooting one of them outside. A few days later, protests erupted across Nigeria, because it became a regular occurrence for these police squads to kill young people with new cars or pricey phones.

On 11<sup>th</sup> October, SARS was disbanded by the government, although that was the 5<sup>th</sup> time since 2015 that the Nigerian authorities pledged to reform the police and disband SARS. Protesters continued demanding better reform but got only empty promises.

20<sup>th</sup> October was very remarkable as it was the day the Nigerian army violently repressed a peaceful protest at the Lekki toll gate, shooting at the protesters and killing so many people but officially reported the death of only 12 people, which the Nigerian authorities have covered up till date. The Lekki Toll Gate Shooting brought so much sorrow to the country and still does. Ironically the protesters, known as the “Soro Soke” (meaning “Speak up” in Yoruba dialect) have vowed to fight until justice is obtained.

#### **4.2. Extracts and Examples of Crisis Induced by Language Expressions in Nigeria**

Below are extracts of selected language expressions and crisis-induced speeches by different agitators from diverse ethnic groups, which showcase ethnic competition, malignment, deprivation, rivalry, and sometimes war in Nigeria. The words of the various speakers referred to in the texts below bear eloquent testimonies to Fairclough’s (2001) position above. These words presented the agitators’ assertions.

The continuous bombing and attacks of Boko Haram on individuals, offices, and institutions in Nigeria, undermine the general perception of a democratic nation but reflect the attempt of people in authority to assign specific roles to specific regions, undermining the others.

##### **Extract 1- Hausa Region**

A statement from El Rufia, a former minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who just served out an eight-year tenure as a governor of a northern state goes as follows.

- a. “Peter Obi has a 100% chance to win Tinubu and Atiku (in the just concluded Presidential election) but he is an Igbo man, we rather go to war than see Igbo win. (El Rufia”  
<https://igbotimesmagazine.online> 2023/02/22.)
- b. In another statement by the same Hausa Northern politician, former Governor Nasiru El Rufia, addressed a group of Islamic clerics using the Hausa dialect on the declaration of Islamic political Supremacy, made comments that amount to divisive, bigoted, hateful, and completely unpatriotic speech to a group of Islamic leaders/clerics in Kaduna state and the subsequent planned invasion of the whole Nigeria by Muslims. ([http://opr.news/39468827230608en\\_ng?client+mini\\_detail](http://opr.news/39468827230608en_ng?client+mini_detail), June 9, 2023).



### **Transcript of El-Rufai's controversial statement about the role of religion in Kaduna governorship**

According to Mohammed Babangida, *Mr. El-Rufai was addressing a group of Muslim clerics in Kaduna after his party election, the All-Progressives Congress (APC), was declared the winner of the governorship election. Below is the English translation of the statements Mr. El-Rufai made in Hausa.*

*“Why did I pick Dr. Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe to be my deputy in 2019? First, I did a thorough calculation that most of those who are not Muslims don't vote for our party (The All-Progressives Congress). Most of them. So, why should I give them the deputy (governor) position? I did my calculation, and I knew we could win the election without giving them (the position of deputy governor).*

*First, that's a purely political issue. It's politics. You want to win an election; you're looking for people who will vote for you. We have observed that since we started practicing democracy, we know places we used to win elections and those places we don't. We've done that calculation politically. That's the political point of it.*

*“Secondly, what we wanted to prove to people, and thank God in the last four years, we've vindicated ourselves and proved that a government that has a Muslim as governor, a Muslim as deputy governor, a Muslim as SSG (secretary of state government), a Muslim as chief of staff, a Muslim as finance commissioner, will not cheat Christians in Kaduna State. And everywhere we go we tell them “Yes, that's it; the top government hierarchy in Kaduna State are Muslims but can any Christian in Kaduna prove that we've oppressed them? Is there any district that we didn't renovate schools? Is there any district where we didn't construct a hospital? Is there anywhere that we didn't construct roads? Is there anywhere that we didn't help farmers whether they voted for us or not? We've given everyone their entitlements.*

Van Dijk (1993:254) affirms the above submission by observing that; “Besides the elementary recourse to force to directly control action, the modern and more effective power is ... enacted by persuasion, dissimulation, or manipulation, among other strategic ways to change the mind of others in one's own interest” El-Rufai's remarks have generated outrage, both physically and on social media. Unfortunately, the constitution of Nigeria is such that there should not be a Muslim-Muslim representation but rather a Muslim-Christian representation. However, some politicians from northern Nigeria are undermining other ethnic tribes and religions. This has been and is still causing a terrible crisis in the Nigerian nation and has hindered development.

c. The Northern coalition kicks against calls for Nnamdi Kanu's release and insists he must face trial.

Eniethan-Mattews (2023), writes that “The Federal authorities must resist the Igbo campaign of blackmail using Nnamdi Kanu's release as a precondition for sustainable peace in the land; and ask the following questions: How would the relations of the over 500 personnel of the various paramilitary organs who were indiscriminately attacked and killed while on duty posts at various checkpoints because of the incitement by Kanu feel?

d. Also, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2023, and August 13, 2023, Killings in Plateau State, were a huge crisis because there were large numbers of Christians in the area. Not long ago, the governor of Plateau State- Northern Nigeria asserted that 30,000 bandits are in his state, hence, he “re-imposed a 24-hour curfew in Plateau local government areas (LGA). There were attacks by gunmen in the council area which led to the loss of lives and properties. Punch Newspaper July 9, 2023.

### **Extract 2- Igbo Region-Southeastern Nigeria**

The Igbo tribe is home to the former Biafran region, which was involved in a bloody separatist war with Nigeria between 1967 and 1970 (Lewis, (2022)). The aftermath of the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War has witnessed the resurgence of the new separatist movement aimed at promoting the self-determination of the Biafra state. It is worth noting that since the Biafran war and after it, until now, no person from the Igbo ethnic region or tribe has been allowed to rule Nigeria as its president. The marginalization has been so much to the point that there arose a pro-Biafran group who have been

calling for a referendum or splitting of the country so that the Igbo can go their way and become the Biafran Country they were before the birth of Nigeria.

The next speech is that of Simon Ekpa one of the proponents of Southeastern agitators for Biafran nation or referendum in Nigeria. Simon Ekpa, the acting Director of Radio Biafra, a disciple of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, on Wednesday, said a referendum should be conducted within the next six months. Ekpa warned that a failure to conduct a referendum within six months would be catastrophic. He said this while calling on the United States, US, President, Joe Biden; the United Nations, the UN; the European Union, and the EU, among other international bodies to ensure a referendum takes place in Nigeria.

Ekpa, in a series of tweets, said the UN should not allow a repeat of the Biafran war before calling for the conduct of a referendum. Hence one of Ekpa's speeches goes thus:

A. *"Biafra: It Is Time for Referendum -Simon Ekpa Tells UN, US, EU*

*He wrote: "Referendum for Biafra nation is now overdue @JoeBiden you did it during South Africa apartheid if Biafra is not investigated within the next 6months, it will be very catastrophic @UN @EU\_Commission@Europarl\_EN @eu\_eas @10DowningStreet @IsraeliPM.*

*"The @UN must not wait for another 30 years before they can conduct a referendum for Biafra. Your lackadaisical stance in handling South Sudan gave birth to the situation there today. Biafra war started in 1967 till date and you are waiting until we start throwing bombs everywhere again?"*

In another report from The Nigerian Tribune newspaper, Mayowa Oladeji (2023) writes, "Simon Ekpa declaring second Biafra war, deploy soldiers to Southeast – Ohanaeze tells Tinubu."

b. Simon Ekpa issues fresh two-week sit-at-home order in Southeast

The self-described prime minister of Biafra and freedom activist has once more ordered a two-week sit-at-home ban in the Southeast.

*Simon Ekpa, who issued the previous week's sit-at-home order, listed five justifications for South Easterners' compliance with the directive. He emphasized that the IPOB leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's immediate and unconditional release was sacred and that the purpose of the sit-at-home order was to aid in the liberation of the Biafra country.*

These speeches align with Fairclough's (1989:46) opinion where he explains that power in discourse deals particularly with "Participants". These constraints are visible in the speeches in this research. The participants are members of the various ethnic groups where such a leader comes from, his people react positively to whatever the speech expects.

### **Extract 3 – Yoruba Region – Southwestern Nigeria**

Furthermore, in different ethnicities, such as in the Yoruba region, it is very common to read and see articles such as.

- a. "Pro-Yoruba nation agitators ground activities in Ondo". The agitators are members of a Pro-Yoruba nation group, Ilana Omo Oodua. Protesters demanding a Yoruba nation, have stormed Akure, the capital of Ondo State, agitating for the breakaway of the ethnic group from Nigeria.
- b. PREMIUM TIMES learned that the protesters, who are currently holding their rally, have grounded activities in the state capital. Some parts of the roads are blocked, obstructing vehicular movements.
- c. PREMIUM TIMES saw pictures of hundreds of the agitators with placards, on Saturday morning. During the protest, a self-styled Yoruba activist, Sunday Adeyemo, threatened to disrupt the 2023 general elections in the Southwest states of Nigeria.

- d. Some high-profile Nigerians have said only an urgent restructuring would save Nigeria from breaking up. It would be recalled that 17 southern governors in Nigeria also called for restructuring but President Muhammadu Buhari appears not to be perturbed by the development.
- e. According to Sahara Reporters New York. Yoruba Nation Agitators to File Fresh Suit Challenging 1999 Nigerian Constitution at Abuja High Court: The apex body of Yoruba self-determination and self-preservation struggle, the Ilana Omo Oodua Worldwide (IOO) filed a fresh suit challenging the making and validity of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria at the Abuja division of the Federal High Court.

#### **Extract 4 - South- Southern Region - (Niger Delta/ Ijaw)**

There are various crisis-inducing speeches in this region, and they include.

The Punch newspaper also reported Asari Dokubo's statements as follows, "....so I am not afraid of arrest, but they will never arrest me. If they do the consequences of my arrest will make Nigeria to be history. Nigeria will be on fire. This is because the last time I (Asari Dokubo) was arrested, the Nigerian oil production was reduced to 700 Barrels, but this time it will be zero. This time we (Asari's group/ Niger Delta militants) are ready for the Nigerian security operatives, and they (his followers) will match the government, violence-by-violence, intrigues-by-intrigues, bullet-by-bullet, and blood-by-blood punchng.com July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.

#### **Extract 5 - The Nigerian Pidgin expression examples.**

##### **Example I - Topic – Boko Haram**

These statements are made in Nigerian Pidgin and are from the Ijaw region which uses the language more than any other tribe in Nigeria.

"mak dis pipul kom do dia nonsense bomb 4 Naija Delta mak we tel dem say ...militants and Boko Haram no be mates; ... l-a-y-e. we go roast dem ... fri dem. Dem no say militants senior dem. So mak dem relax..." (WAZOBIA Facebook Discussion Board assessed 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018).

*(Meaning - Let these terrorists come to the Niger Delta region and try their bombing, then, we the Niger Delta Militants will tell them that "Militants and Boko Haram are not mates, honestly, we will roast and fry them up. They do not know that Militants are older than them in the games of terrorism. They had better be calm and not upset us")*.

However, many groups in Nigerian society have used ethnic languages as their language of communication, such groups include the Boko Haram Sect, the Niger Delta militants, the Biafra movement, AREWA, MEND, Oodua People's Congress, and many others, have rediscovered the need to reassert, their tradition and cultural heritage through expressions in their cultural language. These sects have many other reasons for their militant resurgence and have become movements and groups that are powerful social forces in our time, one which has increasing momentum to induce rivalries, competition, and even war in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Njemanze and Nwulu (2013:127)" state that the multiplicity of ethnic groups has increased the diversities in the Nigerian nation. There had been a series of inter-tribal crises, wars, and attacks that erupted over every little provocation. The less represented ethnic groups generate hostilities that beget crises that paralyze meaningful activities in Nigeria. This has destroyed lives, and valuable properties of people, and disorganized the nation's development systems.

**Table 1** Other examples of ethnic crises are represented in the (updated) table below.

YEAR	CRISIS
2000	Bayelsa Clash, Etsako Edo State Clash, Warri Communal Clash; Ijaw/Itshekiri Lagos Clash; Oodua People’s Congress/Hausa Traders Sharia riot in Kaduna, Aba reprisal killing of Sharia victims, Ife/Modakeke Osun State war
2002	Party (ANPP) Clash in Kwara State and Communal clash at Ado-Ekiti in Ekiti State.
2003-2007	Series of tribal clashes by militants in Niger-Delta States and clashes in the Northern States.
2003-2010	Series of bombing in Northern Nigeria
2010-2013	Series Of Killings and Bombing by The Boko Haram Sect In different parts Of Nigeria and Abuja and their recent harassment at Lagos State (Kaduna, Jos, Plateau, Kogi) and many Killings.
2014-2016	Kidnap of over 270 Chibok school girls and serial bombing in Abuja and Jos. There has been oil pipeline vandalization in the Southern zones, political clashes in the riverine areas, and recently Fulani herdsmen attacks on innocent women, etc. in Nigeria.
2020 - 2021	EndSARS riot and military killings of protesters in Nigeria.
2021 -2023	Nationwide Prison and jail breaks which resulted in random killings, kidnap and broad daylight public attacks of hooded gunmen who escaped without a trace to date. The killings in Imo State by “Unknown Gunmen” Military Barack attack and killing of soldiers.
2023	Plateau State Killings in Northern Nigeria. The continued killings in Imo State by “Unknown Gunmen”

Sources: Partly from Tell Magazines, Nigerian Tribune, Punch Newspapers/ Punch.com, The Sun Newspapers, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) News, internet, and <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2021/02/nigeria-end-impunity-for-police-violence-by-sars-endsars/> between 2000-July 2023. (See Njemanze and Nwulu, 2013)

Nigeria has been known to have socio-political, economic, and religious instability, since the inception of her independence. Each ethnic group assesses the other with the utmost suspicion. The educational systems are crippled by the day and the citizens are far from achieving functional policies and development.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

The affluence of language expressions and communication comes along with sharing language, to promote connections and roots to ancestors and cultural histories. Another challenge that faces all societies is the need for the sustenance of reduced competition and rivalry. We all know that reduced competition begets stability is desirable, but it should not be at any price. Governments by giving grants for research to explore more research in language expressions. Ethnic groups should also be allowed to retain the use of their cultural languages in all human areas of endeavor but not for hate speeches or any speech that will showcase bias. It is believed that if these recommendations are carried out, Nigerian society will see more peaceful and stable years ahead.

This paper also observed that the multiethnic multilingual nature of Nigeria breeds diversity which has been the major impediment to the achievement of balanced equity and development in Nigeria.

Having recognized that language has an important value as a symbol of national, ethnic, political, religious, and cultural identities in Nigeria, this paper notes that we have maintained the slogan of “Unity in diversity” to explain our unity in the face of differing loyalties. This slogan reflects not only the diversities of the people who have come together as one nation but has remained as a motif that tends to increase our differences and enhance inadequate uniformity in our dealings with one another. In each of the issues examined in this article, language expression plays a prominent role that induces rivalry, competition, or even war through negative expressions that lack decorum, respect, ethnicity, and values. Hence, spoken, or written communication between people, especially serious discussion of a particular discourse reveals the power of language to create and/or reproduce social, religious, or political realities which may not be favorable to all tribes in a nation.

It is also worth noting that Nigeria’s pervading multi-ethnic vices have been used to generate ethnic disparities, violence, and negativities which have only impeded the establishment of an adequate language and communication plan needed to achieve safe speech in the country. Multi-ethnic Cohesion will enhance peaceful co-existence, better understanding of cultural values and norms, mutual interrelationship, and reduced aggression. This in turn will breed better development in the nation.

Also, the many cases of crisis as presented in this study were included because of extreme linguistic and ethnic loyalties. This should be curbed to generate a better environment for language and social development. There is also the need for proper ethnic integration to carry everyone along the path of development. Unfortunately, some majority states have been converted to become the “sleeping majority”. These retrogressive positions have induced constant competition that breeds crisis, and sometimes war.

Having examined the tasks that impede proper development in Nigeria, this paper advocates for the adoption of a unifying national policy that will facilitate the existence and maintenance of the various indigenous languages, reduce competition that springs up through biased expressions, achieve better cultural cohesion, and reduce hate speech that begets rivalry and competition. In conclusion, the researcher advocates for the use of neutral statements/speeches in national and ethnic communications, so that language expressions/speeches made in public domains would be that which provide and promote social change, equitable national policies, unbiased inter-ethnic representations, peaceful coexistence, adequate distribution of power, and adequate enlightenment for the promotion of a unifying ethnic cohesion, and enhanced development in Nigeria.

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