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## **English Language And The State Of The Nation-Nigeria: A Means Of Peaceful Coexistence**

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to look at some of the English language contribution in the area of making a viable state of the nation (Nigeria) through its communicative means as far as the diverse nature of the country is concerned, and as well the multilingual and multi-ethnic composition that exists in Nigerian context. The paper therefore, will look at English language as yardstick in forging significant number of the different societies that hitherto go their several ways. As such, the aim of this paper is to investigate how the language (English) promote mutual understanding among the various societies in the area of economic activities, unity in diversity, social interreaction, political interreaction, and instructions in schools, which promote peaceful coexistence.

### **Introduction**

English language in Nigeria is as old as the country as a nation formally introduced in 1842 by the first batch of the missionaries who arrived Badagry for the purpose of evangelization as well as educating the citizens (Tomon,1981).

Nigeria become a sovereign Nation in 1914 when northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated, but prior to the exploration of the country by colonialists' various components existed as autonomous community's city – states, kingdom or tinpires for example in the north, we had Kanem – Borno Empire, Sokoto Caliphate in the south west, we had Oyo Empire and Niger Delta Kingdoms (Alobo, 2018)

With the first contact with European in modern times in the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Portuguese established trading posts along the coast and had particularly flourishing trade and diplomatic relations with Benin Kingdom and later European traders as British joined the trading activities. As such, the British replaced Portuguese around 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese basic pidgin was believed to have been re-lexified to become trylish - based, which as a result even the name of the formed capital of Nigeria. Lagos, was said to be of Portuguese



origin (Jibril, 1982). Therefore, Nigeria witnessed the first formed western types of school established was the one established in Badagry in 1842 (known as the church missionary school).

### **English Language in Nigeria**

English language has come a long way in Nigeria. It is about 200 years old. Even before the birth of the country as a nation, English has been in existence. A Language that exists in new environment for such a long time in midst of over three hundred other indigenous languages in bound to have many impacts on many and various environments. Thus, the adaption of English has been variously described by scholars as domestication or acculturation or indigenization or Nigerianization of English. Those factors led to the adaptation of English usage in Nigeria in peculiar ways in the countries environments. This on the other hand makes the language to be accorded with various verities depicting both Nigerian typology of English and dialects in which scholars such as: David Jowit (1996) from Bayero University and Nsukka Oji (1984) from University of Nigeria see the deviation of the variety rather than adaption. But, Aloba (2018) Claimed that there is the adaptation of the language`s (English) syntax; in the English in Nigeria to meet the communicative needs in Nigerians, which satisfy the peculiar needs of Nigerians.

Nigeria is one of the most multilingual country in Africa; the number of languages spoken has been identified in a survey as more than 300 Hansford et-al (1976). As the language policy recognizes English as the official language of Nigeria and the language of instruction in education after the first three years (Aloba, 2018). Most Nigerians are bilingual i e there native language and a language of wider communication , which, if they are educated, is English

### **English Language as A Facilitator of Economic Activities in Promoting Peace**

English become the effective trading lime as English first came to trade in slaves, and that continued to have impact on the citizens of a country even after the Europeans live after independence. Nigeria as a multilingual nation theme exists multiple minority languages with few major languages which lither to did not understand one another `s language and this calls for a different language to serve as a medium of communication therefore, English become one of the major languages that serve as lingua Franca to the diverse ethnics of the country in trading and commercial activities. Thus, helps in bringing together the various societies mutual



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understanding through trading which provides economic advancement that and serves as of poverty alleviation tool and thereby bring about peaceful, co-existence and mutual understanding between the different geographical ethnics and societies of the country, hence promotes peace in Nigerian as Nigerians live in any part of the country and work ; there ; thus an Igbo man can transact business with Hausa man, when none of them can speak other`s language but can resort English which promote inter-tribal economic activities that promote another mutual understanding.

According to Amfani (2016) “ official language is any language that is given a special legal status in a particular country, state or other jurisdiction. Typically, a country`s official language refers to the language used within government (e.g., courts, parliament, and general administration), and as well as a medium of instruction in education sectors in the case of Nigeria.

In Nigeria today there are only two official languages, namely English and French (even though English supersede French in term of usage). The two are foreign languages imposed on Nigeria as official languages (Amfani, 2019). With this it is evident that in Nigeria English serves as an official language in the public service in the communication and service to the public and work place. as such, the language become a medium of understanding between many societal ethnics of Nigeria as a result of coming together of public workers from various communities be it in corporate places, public and private organizations, which promote peaceful co-existence in the country.

### **English Language as A Unifying Factor in Promoting Peace in Nigeria**

English has contributed to the survival and continuous existence of Nigeria as a nation. This is because it provides a common language of communication for about four hundred ethnic groups that constitute Nigeria (Alobo, 2015), which enhances mutual understanding, peace and unity among the diverse tribes. Thus, according to Obanya (1982) “English play a unifying role in Nigeria because it is the only language common to Nigerians from diverse linguistic, social, cultural, religious and geographical background thus promotes peaceful mutual understanding and co-existence among these diverse ethnic. Thus, it is a common practice to find local languages including Pidgin ( which is an offshoot of English language lexicon) are used in



informal settings, in multi ethnics' context where the speakers are not educated or where, because of the existence of many small languages, there is no other language of wider communication.

### **English As a Facilitator of Social Interaction in Promoting Peace in Nigeria.**

The English language facilitate social interaction among the various ethnic groups at various levels such as the market place, at school, at place of work, in sports and other allied places. In fact, the language facilitates inter tribal friendship and marriage in Nigeria. In such inter tribal marriages in Nigeria today, it is a common thing an Igbo man marrying another tribe lady, or a Hausa man marrying an Igala lady or vice-versa, which provides peace and understanding between the two tribes and even beyond, which directly affect interest of the country's peaceful co-existence among her citizen.

### **English Language As Facilitator in the Promotion of Peace Through School System**

English is the medium of instruction from primary four to university level in Nigeria. Nigerian schools especially in heterogenous communities comprise of learners from different ethnics' groups with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, where the language binds these various elements together including the teachers, teaching and learning process for all subjects, except the indigenous languages, and all textbooks are written in English. However, English language cement all the linguistic and cultural differences that exist among the learners as such, they see themselves as one family which greatly influences peaceful co-existence and feeling of brother hood, which promote peace in the country as many out of them (learners) may one day be found to pilot the affairs of the country.

### **English Language as Means of Sociological Peace in Nigeria**

English language has enjoyed a tremendous sociological recognition in almost all Nigerians societies. This is in line with the wide coverage accorded to the language in many social and political gatherings and interaction among the diverse ethnic groups in the country be it in villages, towns or cities. Like urban areas such as Jos, different people with diverse linguistic background and culture migrated to Jos and Bukur (Amfani 2016). Thus, with this sort of manifestation the language (English) serves as a yard stick for interaction or medium that brings together different ethnics groups by linking them through means of lingua





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franca in gatherings such as wedding ceremony, naming ceremony, sports, politics etc that all serve as sociological processes which promote peaceful co-existence and understanding among community members; since on the contrary speakers of minor languages that are all can easily be inclined into languages and culture.

In a similar development, English language became language of social attachment to many societies within and outside the region of the country. For instance in the north, it is not only Hausa language that is the dominant language, there are other languages in many states such as: Bauchi, Taraba, Nassarawa Maiduguri, Plateau etc, but English language serves as a tool and as well an interlocutor for mutual intelligibility in commercial activities, social gathering, settlement of dispute, which breach the gap of grudges, ethnicity, hatred etc, that paves way for peaceful atmosphere among the different ethnics settling in one environment, society, community or nation in general. This attitude reached the extent that, a stronghold of feeling of oneness and brotherhood between groups reign in many societies, for example you may find in a market an Ibo man teasing a Hausa man business colleague and vice-versa using Hausa language as medium of communication.

English language is not limited to one part of Nigeria alone, it moves Nigerian issues upward into international status, where it is used in broadcasting stations in propagating societal peace, mutual understanding, and co-existence as brothers to all and sundry. This is notably seen in various programmes such as educating the audience, entertaining, exposing or informing were all rendered by the international media(s) such as BBC, VOA, France International, Deutsche Welle (DW) with aim of addressing some topical issues that concerns both the Africa and that of Nigeria airing societal issues in the country in which, many people find solutions and views on many subjects and thereafter became satisfied through the clarification made by these media stations that in many instances promote peace in the country. Furthermore, on the part of ethnics found intersecting in the country English language serves as the medium in doing away with societal menace in many capacities by virtue of being employed in giving information so as to address any sort of misperception or misunderstanding between ethnic groups. These are evident in many communities relations exhibited by many ethnic group, where various members of the southern communities that settled in Hausa communities admitted their commitment and readiness to live in



peace with co-ethnic settlers (people) using English to the hearing of the native and non- native speakers. This attitude promotes a yield a strong and mutual co-existence between the diverse ethnics in Nigeria,

### **English as a Means of Political Activities in Promoting Peace in Nigeria.**

In Nigeria English become a medium of political activities in which aspirants more especially those seeking for presidential seat, Senate President, Speaker of House of Representative all use English politically for wider communication in addressing their political will to the Nigerian citizens, where all sort of convincing words, phrases and sentences were employed in making promises to do with promotion and development of peace, unity, security and solutions to problems were the slogans in an attempt to convince the various ethnics of over 300 tribes. The language is used by those politicians because of the fact that it did not attract any ethnic feeling, it becomes a medium in which every society regarded as a solution.

### **English Language as Means of Entertainment in the Promotion of Societal Peace in Nigeria.**

English language become a tool in many programmes in the broadcasting stations such as VOA, BBC, Deutsch Welle, France International because of major programmes in relation to Nigeria . So are also our local radio stations right from federal radio station to states owned stations and private stations all played a vital role in entertainment of the populace with various programmes, more especially on topical issues and current happenings in dire need. These radio stations have various entertainment programmes such as drama, comedy, greetings to family and friends etc all with aim of indirectly educating and informing the audience. To one's surprise, the programmes are not only meant for Hausa natives alone, but for all that use, speak and hear the language. Thus, promote societal peace in the country.

### **English Language As a Means of Mass Mobilization in Promotion of Societal Peace in Nigeria.**

In treating issue to do with mass mobilization the media, ICT, social media and written aspects occupy major discussion. In the first place, the role of newspapers and magazines and even pamphlets as written forms of mass media play vital role in the promotion and sustenance of societal peace. In Nigeria various newspaper



are in circulation everyday life, these include newspaper such as: Vanguard Newspaper, Daily Trust, Punch, THISDAY etc. Also, sport Newspapers in the contemporary time are newspapers written in English and have wider currency/coverage among hitherto various ethnics football fans of the country. These English based newspapers have a wide coverage and were patronized by many people not only the elites due to the fact that, they carry a lot of messages and information that the large populace of Nigerian communities have keen interest because they derived and know about societal happenings within both their immediate environment and the country at large, and this keeps the society aware and current on what is taking place, which helps in societal peace and co-existence.

On the part of Information Communication Technology (ICT) both Microsoft and social media help in promoting peace in the Nigerian societies through the use English language. According to Amfani, (2016) in 2008 Microsoft recognized three major Nigerian languages (Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba) and translated all internet and computer terms into the three languages. The document in respect to Hausa is called MICROSOFT LANGUAGE INTERFACE PACK GLOSSARY 2008. The pack contains almost 2000 English entries arranged alphabetically, where the entries were translated into Hausa in a 158 pages glossary and referred to as-Hausa-latn-NG Tech Glossary OK. With this therefore, as the world now turn into global village, it gives room for many aspects of communication on various issues in relation to Nigerian societies as many words were therefore translated, and many lexicons of English turn into acronyms hence domesticated for clarification of many negative notions and ideas into vivid understanding and that brings solace to the mind of the people, where peaceful atmosphere takes place, as such promote peace and harmony will reign as far as the country is concerned.

Face book as another aspect of social media, English language has enjoyed remarkable recognition by virtue visit of Chief Executive of the face book organization Zuckerberge to Nigeria ” Amfani, (2016). This therefore, signify how the language has a booster national recognition. As such, going by the wide coverage face book occupied in Nigerian context in both economic, social, law, politics, government administration etc, it is clear evident that, as far as the language (English) is concerned face book and whatsApp as social media will go a long way in furnishing and addressing larger societies with societal happening, which will serve as corrective or preventive and educative measure in addressing many





issues that will promote and bring about societal peace, for example, a false fabrication to do with Nigerian societies may be corrected by those that wish Nigeria well by proven an true and authentic side of the story, and that equally promotes peace in the country.

### **English Language As a Means of Economic Link in the Sustenance of Societal Peace in Nigeria.**

English language dominates a strong commercial activities as such, it is certainly clear that this has implication on the use of the language as lingua franca. The language (English) became a language of buying and selling, and as a result influencing many people and at the same time serve as a bedrock for interaction and provides peaceful atmosphere for mutual understanding as partners in progress.

The presence of English outside mother tongue areas is evident due to seasonal migration for the purposes of economic activities (during dry season period), This tradition is not limited to only northern Nigeria but extend up to southern Nigeria. I could recall my 14 days visit to my elder sister at Uromi a town in Bendel State in 1986 presently Edo State, being the fact that her husband left for the town in the early 1970s for economic purpose as a business man from northern Nigeria (as supplier of herds of cattle), he was later accorded with recognition by both the Ishaam tribe (i.e the natives) and the Hausa people who are there for business purposes, but what is the language of communication for that purposes? It is English. Thus, employed it to settled many disputes between the natives and any Hausa man or woman and his pleading or observation is usually accepted, because of the recognition almost everyone has for him, and this brings a peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding between the two different tribes, which promotes national peace through the This tradition is in almost every part of the country as one can find an Ibo man living in a village in northern Nigeria for years or in a town or in a city, so is Hausa man also lives in a town, city or a village in either Yoruba, Ibo, or any other tribe community as a business man, a government or company worker. This brings a lot of societal peace between Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups which promotes national peace and development.

English language has the potentials of maintaining peaceful co-existence in many parts of the country. The above statement is an admission of the status of English language and acceptance in many areas in which



each and every part of the country is directly or indirectly affected with English as the language of government, media, instruction in schools, and also used in both Senate and House of Representatives. The language roles in the promotion of peace are all enveloped within the domain of interaction in positive manner among the larger citizens and ethnic members of the country.

### **Conclusion**

English language is simply a convenient language naturally embraced by speakers of local languages both in the rural and urban areas for socio-economic, mass mobilization, entertainment etc in both interaction and mutual intelligibility. As such this concerned. paper argues that, English has become a strong yard stick in bridging many gaps on the part of Nigeria's peaceful co-existence that hitherto brings many groups together that are not necessarily within one geographical location, where they resort to English to serve as means of communication and common agreement being the fact that majority of Nigerian languages are found in different locations. English language also serves as language of business, social activities, mutual intelligibility in many parts of southern Nigeria, where for instance in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Enugu etc the language serves as medium of business communication between multiple number of settlers of different languages and the dominant members of the land; through this interaction the spirit of partners in progress is developed and thereby promotes peaceful co-existence. As such, English language has become a strong tool as well as medium of Nigeria's societal peace as far as the country is concern.

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