

NIGERIAN ENGLISH AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

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Abstract

English as a global language has developed many varieties ranging from Standard through Non-standard, dialects to national and regional varieties, resulting in different classifications such as “World English” or “New English”. This study discusses Nigerian English and insecurity in Nigeria in the digital age. The paper touches among other things Nigerian English. It also discusses and attempts to show how some Nigerian English expressions erroneously made can be corrected. The paper also discusses insecurity in Nigeria. The implication of insecurity and of deviation in Nigerian English has therefore been discussed this research paper recommends stiffer penalties for perpetrators of violence. It is hoped that the result of this research will provide a viable solution to the current security challenges in Nigeria.

Keywords: Deviation, Nigerian English, Syntax, Insecurity, Digital

Introduction

There exists at the moment a single superordinate variety of Standard English in Nigeria which can be regarded as ‘Nigerian English.’ Phillipson (2002) recognizes the existence of a variety of English Languages known as “Nigerian English” (NE). He described the dialect as “The variety of English spoken by educated Nigerians, no matter what their language and have enough features in common to mark off a general type. According to Romanine (2004). Nigerian English is the English language variety as used in Nigeria. Nigerian English is the variety of English that has been used in the region of the Niger, West Africa, for purposes of trade since at least the 18th Century, at missions since the 19th Century, and increasingly in education, administration, the media, and the 20th Century workplace. Especially since the formation by the British of a unified Nigeria in 1914. The existence of a single Nigerian English continues to be

debated and disputed within the country, in which there is a spectrum of usage from West African Pidgin English through varieties influenced by local languages, such as Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, to a general usage similar to other English-speaking West African countries (Bisong, 1995).

Oha (2005) has described English Language in terms of three concentric circles: The Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. According to this classification, Nigerian English belongs to the Outer Circle, defined by Kachru (2002) as regions of the world that were formerly colonized by Britain and the US, where English Language was the language of empire building. In this circle, societal penetration has resulted in the development of different sub-varieties, depending on the geographical, cultural and linguistic contexts. The identifying features of these varieties given by Kachru (2002) include elements from phonology, grammar, lexis, collocations, idioms, discourse and

style, code-mixing and code-switching, and a lack of homogeneity, hence the need for the use of Nigerian English for effective communication in the face of insecurity.

Nigerian English

Nigerian English has been the most popular variety of English that is easily understood in term of communication in Nigeria. The present cases of insurgencies in the country require prompt communication. It has long been a controversial idea, in that the idea of a "Standard Nigerian English" (SNE) is difficult to establish, considering the fossilization that has occurred in the formal instruction of English in many regions of Nigeria, due largely to a variety of factors including "interference, lack of facilities, and crowded classrooms. Due to the contact between British Standard English and Nigerian English, which have two very different sets of grammatical pronunciation, and spelling rules, there has arisen a predominant occurrence of "faulty analogy" (the assumption that because one grammatical feature resembles another in usage, the rules applying to the former also apply to the latter) in what Okoro (2020) refers to as "substandard" varieties of Nigerian English.

However, there are a few features that have united across Nigerian English communities that bridge the differences between different NE varieties pertaining to cultural values that are expressed uniquely in English terms. Two prevalent examples are "sorry" and "sir. The literal meaning of sorry usually indicates some sort of responsibility on the part of the person saying it; however, for all of the varieties of NE, it is used to express sympathy in a unique way, or to show empathy to whoever has experienced misfortune. "Sir," or the replacement of names with titles, indicates respect and a high value for politeness. The tacking on of "sir" to another title (i.e., "Professor Sir") illustrates a greater level of prestige than normal, or an instance of being more polite than the norm. Though the exact levels of Nigerian English usage are contested, one suggestion indicates there are

4 levels of usage within this nativized (but not indigenous) English.

Umummwangho (2009: 26), while expressing the opinion of Adekunle (1974) on three major dimensions of the Nigerian English identified, which shall be used to analyze the varieties of the samples of the Nigerian English, stated that there are varieties such as the ones that can be said to be the 'near native speaker variety' which can be identified with the educated elite in Nigeria; 'the local color variety' which is commonly found among the Nigerian literary prose writers; and the 'incipient bilingual type' that is characterized by local socio – linguistic factors. Umummwangho (2009) explains that it is equally desirable to briefly sketch the three varieties of English in Nigeria Using purely sociological praxis. The first is the near-native speaker variety whose main characteristic is that it is not much influenced by local socio-linguistic factors. Expressions that are commonly used can be traced to either American or British variety of English in terms of structural patterns, lexical items, idioms, allusion and proverbs. The variety is more prominent in the written forms than spoken. The local colour variety is marked with a preponderance of local ideas, attitudes and conceptual peculiarities. Here, there are borrowings, adaptations and translations influenced by the local lexical items, neologisms, idioms and proverbs from local languages and norms. Examples of this abound in Nigerian prose in English. The third variety is that which he calls the incipient bilingual type marked by local socio- linguistic factors with traces of inappropriate choice of synonyms or prepositions as well as omission of articles, which may reflect initial stages of the proper mastery of the English language (Umummwangho, 2009).

Insecurity

Nigeria today has witnessed and is bedevilled with several forms of insecurity in the country; ranging from piracy in the Niger-Delta to the forms of religious extremists, armed militants and ethnic militia groups

which threaten to bring about greater insecurity. The older forms of militia groups have metamorphosed into armed groups and have intensified their activities. Recently, there have been high incidences of insecurity that have resulted in deaths and psychological trauma for individuals and families in the country. This requires the citizens to be much more security conscious considering the threat by religious extremists to bring about greater insecurity than those that preceded them. Other security indices also include the growing unrest in the Niger Delta area and other parts of the country resulting in rise in violent incidents and kidnappings. Ethnic tensions, religious differences, unemployment and numerous social and political grievances are all fuelling the unrests in Nigeria and contributing to flashpoints for violence and creating insecurity in the country Imobighe (2002). This paper will place the current insecurity in Nigeria in context by reviewing the causes, implication and the rise in violent incidences which have characterized the Nigerian society in recent times; highlight the challenges; assess its political, religious and cultural implications to the nation.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

As Nigerian English is being advocated in times of insecurity for effective awareness, it is needful to know some of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. There is a dramatic increase in violence, terrorism and the like, in Nigeria today. Lawless sects are raising the tempo of their campaign in various parts of the country. We hear of series of bombings, shooting and killings, kidnappings, armed robbery, arson and so on. These take place from north to south, east to west and almost on daily basis. The phenomenon 'insecurity' has been extended to cover other spheres like economic and political insecurity. Imobighe (2002) examined the causes of insecurity to have include:

1. Porous borders – The free flow of migrants from other countries to Nigeria through our unguarded borders allows

criminals to enter the country without check.

2. Proliferation of Arms and Ammunition:

Several arms hauls have been ceased at our air and sea ports, some in very large quantities. This is not good for the country. These arms and ammunition end up in the hands of criminals who apply same in their nefarious activities in the country, thereby making life insecure for the people in their localities.

3. Oil Bunkering – Nigeria being one of the largest oil producing nations suffers from the activities of illegal oil bunkering. This activity is promoted by the spate of insecurity in the country. This is back-up with criminals who are ready to die in Nigeria water-ways. This therefore makes the coastal areas of our oil producing states unsafe.

4. Kidnapping – This is another visible sign of insecurity in the country. The perpetrators of this crime do not spare anyone and this new wave of crime seems to have supplanted armed robbery and other non-contact crimes. Since this act began in Nigeria, aged, children, male and female have been kidnapped for ransom. This has made life unbearable for the citizens. People now live in fear of falling victims to these criminals.

5. Militancy – According to criminal law, militancy is violence, illegal force or the illegal use of unjustified force or the intimidating effects created by the threat of this act. This word became pronounced in Nigeria when the Niger Delta people took up arms against government exploitation and environmental degradation of their area due to oil exploration and exploitation. This does not only exist in the Niger Delta area. Other parts of the country have witnessed militants who commit atrocities worse than the youths of Nigeria Delta whose area is given the 'brand name'. Until recently the word 'insurgence' was alien to Nigerian society. The activities of the Militant Islamic sect

popularly called “Boko Haram” have opened this chapter of militancy in Nigeria. Shootings, bombings, kidnappings, arson, car and suicide bombing in various parts of the country are said to be the handiwork of ‘insurgence’. These activities have heightened the spade of insecurity in the nation.

6. Fear and Distrust on Government - What the current trend of violence is imprinting on the psyche of Nigerians is that the government security apparatus is incapable of guaranteeing the safety and security of its people. This has; therefore, impact on the general human security of the people as the situation promotes fear, limits the peoples' ability to develop economically.

7. Unemployment – The rise in Crime wave in Nigeria since the mid-1990s was as a result of unemployment, economic decline, and social inequality, which are abetted by inefficient and corrupt police and customs forces (Robert, 2008). The idle minds became devil's workshop. These people who are mostly youth are easily recruited into militant groups and trained in to rob, kill, kidnap, smuggle, highjack to mention but a few.

8. Religious fanaticism/extremism – Religious fanaticism and extremism have been among the major cause of insecurity in Nigeria. The recent incidences of attack on churches and Christians in Northern part of the country by Moslem extremists have rendered several states in the north unsafe for lives and properties. Religious violence has been responsible for the collapse of one political order or the other throughout history.

Implications of Insecurity in Nigeria

Political Implication of Insecurity in Nigeria: The current security situation in Nigeria has forced the political leaders to a ‘rethinking national security’ as Ibrahim Bashir of the Daily Sun puts it. This situation demands Nigeria security agencies to rethink and refocus our national security resources on

the unique character of security threats in Nigeria (Ibrahim, Thursday, March 24, 2011). Nigerians are daily becoming more and more apprehensive about the security implications to the country before, during and after the elections. Shafiu S. Zurmi was right when he said that the general anxiety over the nation's security is germane and should be a source of concern to the government.” (Daily Sun, Friday January 21, 2011 p.19). The weakness of Nigeria's Criminal Justice System has been exposed greatly. This has posed a challenge and showed the ineffectiveness and delay in the implementation of the policy. (General A. S. Audu, July 17 2010) has given some imperative, one of which is the need for a more robust legislation on Anti-Terrorism. An effective and enabling Anti-Terrorism Act must provide the institutional and co-ordination framework for combating and eliminating the acts of terrorism in and against the Federal Republic of Nigeria provide for additional judicial guidelines to the Criminal Justice System for the effective and speedy prosecution of terrorists and must clearly enable NSO to conduct their anti-terrorism measures and activities across many of our national ethnic-centric, religious, political and social biases. Very important is whether the government will be willing to take the bold steps necessary to clearly articulate, communicate and implement whatever policy that is in place. Political instability sometimes results from uncontrollable state of insecurity in a nation. The growing insecurity challenges in Nigeria are signs of the growing popular discontent with the national political system and indications that past elections were not free and fair. Many years ago, John Calvin condemned any practice that could harm or oppressed the poorest element in society as spiritually and politically illegitimate by Brenda K. Savage). If the government is unable to control and solve the problem of insecurity, it means that that government for the common has failed. This is because the basic goals of any civilized are the survival and security of life and property. Karl Marx added a voice that “Insecurity as destabilizing” (Benjamin Ryan, 2008). This is

true in that when a nation is not secure it can destabilize the economy, agriculture, governance and increases criminality in the society. It can also destroy the structures put in place by the government for political stability.

Religious Implication of Insecurity in Nigeria. The tendency to hijack any form of violence and branding it religious is possible. Based on this the ‘outsider’ of religion will give it a bad name in order to hang it. Religious worship places are being desecrated through blood shedding resulting from indiscriminate bombing of religious worship centres. It scares members away from regular religious worship and fellowship. Insecurity in a nation can help spread or promote fake religious faith and practice. Violent or an insecure situation drives people into various religious groups not by reason of believing but for security purposes. In an environment where a particular religion commands majority, the residents would like to align with the popular religion there for the sake of securing their lives and that of their relations and possibly their business investments. Nothing thrives in an insecure environment. Economic, religious activities, as well as governance can be frustrating in such an atmosphere. Religion can play a positive roll of preaching peace and living out same in an environment that is prone to violence. Dialogue could be initiated amongst warring groups.

Cultural Implication of Insecurity in Nigeria It is expected that the continuous growth and development of ethnic communities into an integrated society based on Islamic solidarity cemented by increased inter-dependence and harmonization of shared values and goals will bring about transformation of the relationship between the various ethnic groups. But in a situation where there is insecurity this desire cannot materialize. Imobighe (2002) commenting on Warri experience said, “Rather than the expected evolutionary change towards ethnic integration and peaceful co-existence, what has taken place in Warri is a heightened

awareness of ethnic identity, extreme communal disharmony and a more intense rivalry and hostility (p.66). The incessant taking of life through bombing, shooting and other forms of violence renders the sanctity of life which many African cultures uphold to be baseless. The problem of suicide bombing which has become a very prominent way of destroying lives in the country is an act or practice which is condemned culturally in Nigeria. Writing on the abominable practices in the Igbo culture (Cyril Okorocho) pointed out four of such practices – homicide (including poisoning with intent to maim or kill); suicide; killing a totem animal or an animal dedicated to a spirit; and stealing or destroying yams, especially when already planted; incest. Most of these abominations have to do with life. According to him “if life is the sum mum bonum, then anyone who destroys it is committing a most hideous crime indeed”. Life is valued in all cultures. In most cultures, suicide is abhorred because of the value placed on life. Insecurity that arises from ethnic or tribal setting generates and leaves scars of ethnic prejudice, suspicion, distrust, hatred and discrimination. And culture consisting of learned modes of behaviour that are socially transmitted from one generation to the next, from one society or individual to another will be affected negatively by the wave of insecurity. The learned mode of behaviour will be overwhelmed with negative vices. In Nigeria most parents, due to unsafe learning environment preferred their children studying overseas. This trend is tantamount to cultural breakdown. These children are bound to imbibe new cultures which are alien to their ethnic group. The foreign and the local will basically be incompatible.

Conclusion

This work has unveiled the fact that there is what is called Nigerian English which is spoken by even the Nigerian elites that are not standard. Political instability sometimes results from uncontrollable state of insecurity in a nation. The growing insecurity challenges in Nigeria are signs of the growing popular

discontent with the national political system and indications that past elections were not free and fair.

Nigerian English has been the most popular variety of English that is easily understood in term of communication in Nigeria. The present cases of insurgencies in the country require prompt communication. English language has become the national language of communication in Nigeria which is spoken by average Nigerians. Societal penetration has resulted in the development of different sub-varieties, depending on the geographical, cultural and linguistic contexts.

Recommendations

- 1 When there is a high rate of unemployment there is always an increase in violence and crime making the country insecure. Also, an insecure environment will definitely result in job lose. Government should therefore tackle and arrest youth restiveness by investing on job creation.
- 2 The basic goals of any civilized society are the survival and security of life and property. These basic goals are not negotiable. Therefore, the ordinary Nigerians must be given protection at all cost through appropriate information, education, mobilization, job opportunity, pressure-group formation and legal requirements in our democratic politics
- 3 The failure of the security outfits in Nigeria to make use of their intelligence network to decode the security challenge, the militant groups and all such sects leave much to be desired. The country's Early Warning System Mechanism of preventing such ugly scenarios from erupting should be developed. The government should develop the Conflict Prevention Mechanism in the country
- 4 Precaution In the use of Force: The Nigerian Government has to take precaution in the use of excessive force to tackle the root cause of insecurity because Government force seems to galvanize greater retaliation by the 'criminals' and the

masses end up bearing the brunt - with more violence, deaths and destruction of innocent people, the poor and the rich.

- 5 The government should focus on the welfare of the people by providing jobs for our teaming youth, infrastructure like good roads, water, electricity and housing/
- 6 The government should tackle the problem of falling standard of education and medical care.
- 7 There is the need for a collaborative effort in solving the insecurity problem in Nigeria. The government should team up with foreign machineries to find solution to this monster that is threatening the fabric of the nation's peaceful co-existence.
- 8 Stiffer measures should be taken against perpetrators of such violent activities that bedevils the country's peaceful coexistence.

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