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Peace and Conflict Management in Nigeria: Mapping the Historical Role of Language in Peace Journalism in the 21st Century

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Abstract
This paper examines the roles of language usage in peace and conflict management in Nigeria. It exposes the influence of language in mass media reporting by journalism in the 21st century. It traces the past and interprets the present based on the experience of the past to forecast the likely trend of event in future. Relevance instances of language communication bypass were among those factors examined by this paper to understand the effect of such on the peace and conflict restoration in the environment. Stages of conflict in Nigeria and how media portray conflict stories through language selection and usage in their reporting were identified. A chronicle of recent conflicts in Nigeria was explored to drive home every point made in this paper. Suggestions were also made on how best conflict could be covered to sustain peace and prevent conflict in Nigeria. It is therefore hoped that this paper would contribute immensely to peace and conflict management in this millennium and beyond.
Keywords: Peace, Language, Journalism, Conflict and Management.

1.0 Introduction

Peace and conflict resolution is a multidisciplinary field that analyses causes of war and systematic oppression, and explores processes by which conflict and change can be managed so as to maximize social justice and minimize violence. It encompasses the study of economics, political and social system at the local, national and global level and examined ideology, culture and technology as they relate to conflict and change. In different settings, this field of study is known variously as "peace and word order study", "justice and reconciliation study" etc. what distinguishes this field from others, however, is a concern with modalities of peace and the method of peace building (Abdullah, 2008).

In Nigeria today, peace is the prime value and sine qua none for development, yet the most elusive. In the recent time, the country is bedeviled by series of violent conflicts that have denied its citizens peaceful co-existence which have accounted for socio-economic and political challenges. For instance, the Niger-Delta conflicts, ethno-religious conflict in Jos, Kano riot, Boko- Haram insurgency in the northern parts of Nigeria among others.

The demand for this work is a derived demand, it seeks to evaluate the historical role of language used by the media in the discharge of their duties while reporting conflict and setting pace for peace in the society. Public perception of issues and events in any given society is largely shaped by the media. The fact that certain issues are covered by the media gives credence to such issues as conflict mapping and framing of news through the use of language (Nwabueze et al., 2010) as cited in Olorede, 2011.

Framing of news according to Olorode (2011) is "a way of giving some overall interpretation to isolated items of fact". Just as the media determine what dominates public discussion through priority and frequency of coverage of an issue, they further determined how they set agenda or how topic should be viewed.

Right from the beginning of human history, men have always sought to clarify, express and explain themselves. One single faculty that they have mainly relied on in achieving this purpose is language: a most fundamental distinction between human beings and other creatures (Adedimeji, 2010)

However, the media encode information through reporting, documentation and dissemination of information. All these are usually performed through the use of language: A vehicle of human expression. It must be mentioned that while doing this functions in most cases the media in their expressions, intonation and caption create communication bypass while framing theories and topics which have power to generate conflict or escalating the existing crises

The target of this work centered on drawing attention on past language role in conflict management in Nigeria and made suggestion for the betterment of such role for future coverage of conflict to sustain peace and prevent conflict in Nigeria through mastery of language construction in communication by the media.

1.1.0 Conceptual clarification

1.1.1 Peace

Peace is generally conceived as the absence of war or physical violence. However, scholars have made several attempts to dissect the concept, especially on the analysis of what constitute violence and how inimical it is to peace. Violence can be define narrowly as been a direct harm caused to a parson's body or broadly to include both direct harm and range of other social problems that have some degree of adverse consequences according to Barnett, 2007 as cited in Adedimeji (2012).

According to Longman dictionary of contemporary English (new Edition), peace is a situation in which there is no war between countries or in a country. It is a direct opposite of conflict or crises. Peace is a direct or original state of security and absent of social, political or religious tensions that can debar progress in human societies.

1.2.2 Conflict.

Conflict is actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interest. Conflict can be intrapersonal (internal or within oneself), interpersonal (between two or more people) or prevalent (affecting many people). Conflict is the result of many social vices such as social disagreement, conflict of interest and fight between two individuals, groups, or organizations.

It can occur between two individuals, groups of friend, within and between families, within ethnic groups and between organizations etc. Conflict is a common phenomenon which has become present at one time or the other in every environment. It is well pronounced among the youth and adults in Nigeria. This is because human beings have different backgrounds, interest, and worldviews (Saraki, 2013). It is the way we respond to conflict that determines whether it would be positive or negative. Therefore, conflict is what we make it to be. Positive conflict is constructive and negative conflict is destructive (Albert, 2007 as cited in Adam and Abdulsalam , 2013).

1.2.3 Aims of the study.

The aims of this study are presented in what follows.

- To investigate the role of language usage in peace and conflict management in Nigeria.
- To demonstrate how language usage in news framing and selection could serve as source of conflict.
- To identify the roles of language in news and agenda settings in media coverage of conflict stories in Nigeria.
- To explore relevant instances of language communication bypass as source of conflict in Nigeria etc.

2.0. Stages of conflict

Conflict as action is human driven. It cannot occur on its own without an operator which is human being. Therefore, it demands the media to identify those stages and report them adequately and objectively. News facts like historical facts are sacred, while opinion is free. The duty of the media to weight the news fact before it acceptance for report is the need to separate fact from fiction. According to Rasaq and Mahmud (2012) and Adam (2012), conflict may not become apparent until a "triggering event "leads to the emergence of conflict. Emergence may be followed quickly by settlement or resolution, or it may be followed by escalation which may be destructive.

The next stage that follows the escalation stage is usually de-escalation stage. At this stage, the conflict begins to get ameliorated between parties involved or due to the intervention by third parties involved toward resolving the conflict. While the final stage is re-escalation stage which denote the point of re-insurgent of conflict when both parties desist all plea or settlement of conflict.

2.1.0 Language and the media: A Critical review

The literature review on media and conflict management rarely considered language alongside formation of theory and framing of news agenda, irrespective of high significance role language plays in information selection, arrangement and publication. Language is the life blood of every individual, let alone the media. The role of Language cannot be over emphasized if truly the media needs achieved their desired aim. The style and techniques of most writers and reporters in most cases are been dictated by occasion, time and event each call for selective language use. Oladimeji and Oladokun quoted Confucius in 2003as in what follows:

"If language is not correct,
then, what is said is not what is meant,
If what is said is not what is meant,
then, what ought to be done remain undone".

However, over the time few researchers have shown interest in evaluative study of language and the media, even among the Linguist and the mass communication scholars in Nigeria. Most literature on language framing and time reporting were usually originated from developed country and only accessible to the few who may be privileged among the media houses (both prints and non-prints media).

Apart from the paucity of reliable literature on language framing and peace Journalism in low –income countries (which urgently calls for quantitative and qualitative mapping) , there are also unresolved issues of local and emergent languages which lacks well documentation. The effect of this is information denial or miss-information.

Language power in information dissemination can be observed in the style and method by which stories captions of most Nigeria news paper head-lines is usually framed. The utmost aim of most headings is to capture the attention of the targeted audience. Careful selection of words in language uses promotes peace journalism while otherwise generated conflict. A chronicles of instances explaining this will be explored later in this discourse.

Communication is chief purpose of language, the ability to use language for meaningful interactions is one great edge man has over every other living things. Goal-driven interactions have made it possible for man to increasingly improve on his living control and environment. Language is important because the individual is able to express content (meaning). Human perception and conception are conveyed through language in form of messages and messages are transformed into meanings. Language, meaning and society are thus the needed ingredient for communication (Sola, 2012). This stresses how cogent the need to critically review language selection and usage by the media in News framing and reporting to meet the challenges of insecurities , peace breakdown and disarmaments in the 21st century, the Nigeria's case.

2.2.0. News and Agenda setting

According to Adisa and Mahmud (2012), definitions for news are problematic because so many different factors influences it selection and production. There are also many different approaches to analyzing news selection, whereby each view the news from different theoretical perspectives. Therefore, news is what the news papers print in their news programs. Limiting the definition of news to this is not sufficient.

Okoye (2006), defines news as" the timely account of an interesting event which the public must know because it is important as it helps them to live their lives meaningfully" .However, what dictate the prominence of one news over another include proximity, prominence, magnitude, impact, timeliness and oddity. While agenda settings was coined by Mc Combs and Show (1972; 1993) to describe a phenomenon which had long been noticed and studied in the context of news reporting (cited in Olorede, 2011).

Agenda setting simply means the power to structure issues. The concept of agenda-settings holds that the media may not tell us what to think, but media certainly tell us what to think about (Baran, 2002; 385). In choosing and displaying news, editors, news room staff, and broadcasters plays an important part in shaping news that relate to conflict. This suggests that the news and agenda settings in the media are not separable. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but how much importance to attach to that issue. All this were achievable through the use of language by the media. In some instances, the media became subjective and not objective in their news coverage. Therefore, set agenda for people to belief through deliberate manipulations of language in their reporting. Carr (1961) once said that fact is nothing but interpretation matter most, a duty media have chosen for their audience in this 21st century through reporting and editing of News which create new orientations and behaviors capable of generating crises if not duly observed. A call for news and agenda studies in peace coverage and management is imperative to restore the fading peace in this 21st century Nigeria.

2.2.1 Language and News Framing; A source of conflict

Framing is a quality of communication that leads others to accept one meaning over another. It is a skill with profound effect on how organizational members or societies understand and respond to the world in which they live.

According to Fairhurts and Sarr (1996), framing consists of three elements; Language, thought and forethought. Language helps to remember information and act to transform the way in which we view situations.

Okunna and Omonugha (2008; 83) quoted Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) as cited in Olorede, Proposed five types of frames which the media often adopt in treating news:

1. Conflict Frame: This is said to be capable of reducing complex social and political problem to simple conflict, which emphasis placed on the performance and style of the combatant.
2. Human interest frame: This place emphasis on the personal and emotional side of an event, issue or problem.
3. Economic consequences Frame: This places emphasis on the economic impact or implication of an issue or event for the nation. This frame is used to make an event relevant to the public.

4. Morality frame: This adds a religious or moral charge to an event. It is often used in responses by news sources rather than expressed view of Journalists.
5. Responsibility frame: this presents the crises such that the responsibility for causing it resides with the government, an individual or groups.

The idea of identifying these aforementioned methods is to conceptualize the way and manners in which the media usually manipulate language through selection and placement of priority on coverage and reporting of events and stories in sentiments through strategic framing of news in an attempt to influence sectarian conflict. The media play vital roles in our societies as they serve as custodian of the past and current events.

Conflict is the bread and butter of Journalism. This is expected, because conflict sells. The potent instrument usually used in igniting conflict is dominantly language, take any news paper, listen to any news broadcast, watch documentation on television without any iota of doubt one is confronted by stories with potentials to spark conflict. The case of Nigeria is not an exemption in the ways and manner indigenous media have over the time contributed by stories with potential to spark conflict, indigenous media have over the time contributed to start conflict and escalate conflicts.

A chronicle of instances of media generated conflict in Nigeria is worthy mention for evaluative reasons within the frame of 21st century as indicated by our topic. A case of Jos crisis in Nigeria in historical parlance was credited to the Plateau state Radio – Television service were element of news portray by this media house fuel the said conflict. Equally, Daily Trust news paper dated 15 June, 2010 in its report was accused and charged to court on the fact that it triggered attacks in the state. The Vanguard News paper of Saturday, 27 March, 2010 with the caption 'Jos crisis: GOC Explodes! Dose not only create tension in the state but also doubted the integrity of the GOC which the media ascribe un-dew claim to the commander in it report. One of the lasting effects of this was tension generated between the commander and plateau state government.

The media Language in conflict reporting ranges from verbal to non- verbal tools of language communication. According to Rasak and Abduraheem (2012), the moment conflict erupt, mass media begins seek for exclusive and bizarre scenes to report even if those scenes do not serve any developmental purposes for the society.

The rate at which media manipulate language and causality figures without any credible sources is another source of challenges of media delivery in 21st century Nigeria. Orgy scenes are usually created in awkward manner, displaying photographs capable of instigating more violence, a good insight of memory was the Shagamu crises ignited by pictorial miss-representation in a report showing dead bodies belief to be Hausa claimed to have being killed by the Yoruba's , the effect was spontaneous killing of Yoruba's in the northern states in retaliation. Olorede (2011), in his field report and statistical analysis on news coverage of president Yar'Adua's ill –health in his book titled Press and Agenda settings reported that apart from other type of story that had a relatively high report picture stories is next, while he was able to take samples of news papers editions of Nigeria news papers namely the Nation, the Daily Trust and the Punch respectively. In His analysis, he disclosed that pictorial coverage of the health crisis amounted to tension over the president's ill-health.

The nature of story coverage on President Yar'Adua's ill-health (Olorede, 2011)

	The Nation	Daily Trust	The punch	Total
News	11(55%)	75(60%)	101(60%)	295(58%)
Editorial	30(14%)	21(17%)	11((6%)	62(12%)
Feature	18(9%)	7(6%)	15(9%)	40(8%)
Letter	6(3%)	4(3%)	11(6%)	21(4%)
Picture	39(18%)	16(13%)	25(15%)	80(16%)
Cartoon	3(15%)	1(1%)	6(4%)	10(2%)
Total	n = 215(100%)	n = 124(100%)	n = 169(100%)	n = 508(100%)

Olorede (2011), In his findings reported that Nigeria News papers on ill-health of president Yar'Adua's as shown above include straight news and picture which dominated the column of the three news papers where 295 news stories representing 50% of the total 508 news item on the issue. He stated the fact that three news papers created 80 (16%) pictorial report attested to the fact that picture can be used to ignite conflict through reporting, as picture speaks volume than words in some cases. He stresses that the uses of haggard-looking, emaciated, pale and diseases-ridden photographs of late president Yar' Adua' and the strategic placement on focal part of the three news papers mentioned earlier were responsible for tension and conflict experience in the country during the late president's ill-health.

Besides, the caption of the Guardian news paper of 19 June, 2013 reads "Soyinka shuns Achebe's burial" was another example of language conflict in mass media reporting of stories. This was a story portray to explain the absentness of the literary icon Prof. Wole Soyinka from the funeral ceremony of his colleague in

literary circle. The emphasis was reactions from both public and the concerned patties that reacted violently. All this was not but for miss- framing of news capable of generating sectarian conflicts. In most cases spontaneous miss – use of language and news framing techniques have over the time attributed to some undeniable factors such as ethnic coloration, factions among journalist and religious segregation and political influence among others. For instance, the Noble laureate in an interview granted by the Guardian news report faulted the caption mentioned above on the fact that the caption '' Soyinka, J.P. Clark ….. 'Shun is active. If they couldn't be present had been used, one wouldn't have bothered, that is shun is passive. 'Shun means you take a deliberate action. What kind of nonsense is that? Wole Soyinka quoted in the Guardian of 19 June, 2013. Language has power to express human thought and action, this mark the distinction between man and other creature. According to Adedimeji (2012),

The only reason Pythagoras was able to tell us that $a^2 = b^2 + c^2$ is a right angle triangle, Newton, that acceleration is a function of force; Einstein, that $E = mc^2$, Charles Boyle, that volume is a function of temperature and pressure, a function of volume was because they had the means, the medium of communicating these ideas – language. However this single opportunity avoids the media chance of generating conflict in their reporting as a result of poor mastery of language and News framing.

To be saved from this menace, the orientation of media and Journalism should be changed and re-directed toward promotional curses and developmental objective capable of moving the nation forward, likewise to surpassed the challenges of the present 21st century by a call for and practice of peace oriented journalism in Nigeria. If this is observed, it would promote national interest, growth, development and sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

2.2.2 Conflict sensitive Journalism.

This expressed sensitivity, accurate time mapping and reporting in language and pictorial representation. The ideal of sensitivity in journalism is to restore peace rather than promotion of violence. It identifies conflict, it roots and phases. The role of language construction in this manner matters most for every reporter, while the tone of reporting and documentation dictates how easy conflict can be resolved or ignited. In an utmost fair manner all parties involved in the settlement reporting should be addressed by the media through the use of formal Language and names claimed by the parties in conflict in addressing them rather than coinage of new Languages and words such as '' the Islamic sets in place of Boko-Haram with the former commonly used by media in Nigeria to report Boko-Haram activities. The result of this was that it generated religious sectarianism and conflict in Nigeria's case. In addition, the language such as terrorist, extremist or fanatics should be totally avoided. The language portray journalist as agent of conflict promotion rather than conflict restorations.

2.2.3 Peace Oriented journalism

Historically, for quiet reasonable time in the history of Journalism in Nigeria, conflict coverage has always been mapped with sensational stories. Language framing and captions s have ignited sectarian conflict and generated wars (both civil and political conflict) in the Nigerian history since independence. In most cases, conflict stories are created along tribal lines. Several scholars have suggested moves on peaceful options such as focus on causes or consequences of war or conflict, structure or cultural violence, dissociation from military option and ceasefire, report on indirect voices through structural or cultural violence. The chronicles of these, among others, were the attributes of peace oriented journalism as against sectarian conflict journalism in an imperative approach. An oriented journalism understands the stages of conflict first, what is going on? What are the underlying causes of the conflict? What are the full effects of the conflict on different constituent groups etc. the desire to provide answers to all the aforementioned questions was the aim of peace oriented journalism in their bid to the stoppage of conflict in the societies. All of these should be carefully considered when covering and reporting conflict stories.

2.2.4 Conclusion.

This paper examines the essentiality of language usage in peace and conflict studies in Nigeria, emphasizing the magnificent roles of journalism and media in the 21st century. The role played by the media in conflict situations, the power of journalists to resolve indirectly conflict and to escalate conflicts the case of conflict management in Nigeria. As the media can generate conflict, they can also diffused tension through justified reporting. There is no doubt that constructive uses of Language by media will promote peace in Nigeria if given due consideration. Language usage and news framing techniques have been justified with instances of media being a source of conflict in the cause of their duties in case of Nigeria.

Media do not set out deliberately to end conflicts (as this may not be within their power) but through accurate and impartial news reporting, they contribute greatly to reducing conflicts (Howard, 2007 as cited in Rasaq and Mahmud, 2012).

Penultimately, this paper examined agenda settings by the media in 21st century Nigeria's peace and

conflict mapping with focus on the role of language in peace documentation and report.

2.2.5 Recommendations.

Following our findings in this work, our recommendations are presented in what follows.

- Nigeria media should de-emphasize unnecessary concentration on crises stories.
- Language framing and News agenda settings by the press should always be objective and devoid of being subjective.
- Sensational coinage of words, names and image capable of igniting conflict should be avoided by the media. Language such as extremist, Islamic sect and the likes should be avoided totally. A spade should be called a spade.
- Stages of conflict must be mapped and reported without sensational language, tone or pitch in their account of conflict.
- Unnecessary communication bypass should be avoided while reporting stories.
- Undue scene should not be created with pictures in stories as such might ignite conflicts.
- Language laws and codes should be re-viewed by law makers to promote standard of indigenous press practice. Researchers alike should be encouraged in languages studies and their reports be adopted into uses by media houses since no language is barbaric. A multi-functional language approach to conflict resolutions should be encouraged.

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