



THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN RESTRAINING GLOBAL TERRORISM AND HOOLIGANISM

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ABSTRACT: *The concern of this paper is that language education, among others, is a means of controlling terrorism and/or hooliganism in our society. It maintains that terrorist or hooliganist activities result in destruction of properties, physically wounded victims and deaths. With any, or all of such consequences, every member of a community becomes a casualty. This is a social problem that brings about considerable influence on a number of individuals and has negative consequences for a large number of people within a society. Based on personal observation and relevant literatures, it is demonstrated that wrong use of language can ignite misunderstanding, with attendant anti-social activities such as terrorism and/or hooliganism. And it is the same language, if appropriately used, can assist in limiting or curbing such deadly activities. It is concluded that any language to be used as a medium of communication should be mastered by a speaker, and especially, the teacher, whose mis-use of language in classroom can only lead to mis-understanding and lack of interest with negative consequences.*

KEYWORDS: Language, Communication, Education, Terrorism, Hooliganism

INTRODUCTION

Our society has been traumatised by the prevalent records of anti-social behaviour and activities with which several nations and states have been and are being afflicted. This occupies a central place in global discussions as it cuts across nation-states around the globe: hardly do we hear that a country is rank-free from any social problem.

In Nigeria, for instance, listening organs have become conversant with the Niger Delta battle in the South; the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northern part of the country; and most currently, the Fulani Herds-men assault in the middle belt and certain areas in the country. Chukwu et'al (2014) also refer to the actors of the Palestinian struggle in Middle East and the Jihadist movement in Mali, whose "activities are all justifiable struggles by act and conscience", (83-84). Disregarding any form of justification, activities of these types possess elements of criminality, and are consequently antagonistic and unacceptable. Indeed, no amount of extenuation is commensurate with the level of destruction usually caused by these acts of insurgency, some of which are even criminally intended, devoid of any rationalisation.

The examples provided above are of terrorist activities or acts of hooliganism depending on the surrounding circumstances. This is to respect the subject matter of our discussion, and it does not suggest, in any way, that terrorism and/or hooliganism is the sole reason for the idea of a social problem. In discussions of a similar kind, one would also recognise robbery; kidnapping; unemployment; poverty; unwanted pregnancies, regionalism and linguistic



conflicts, and some other behavioural acts which have been found socially problematic and unacceptable in any community of humans. Among the many possible ways of addressing this particular issue of terrorism, this paper recognises and proves that language education can be instrumental to the control of this problem.

Conceptual Clarifications

(a) Education and Language

What usually appears immediately on the mind after the mention of **education** is the school. This stands for why it is defined as the process of teaching and learning, usually at school, college or university (see Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English – New Edition). An anonymous source from the net even has to substitute school with education in enumeration of socialising agents. The source is so generic, and yet restrictive, to mention that education plays a large role in the socialisation of children: referring to the school's function as a socialising agent in providing "the intellectual and social experiences from which children develop the skills, knowledge, interests, and attitudes that characterise them as individuals and that shape their abilities to perform adult roles" (1).

In a wider consideration, education can be described as a learning process of training that is ubiquitous in existence. The implication is that there is education even in the family and other social institutions which act as agents in the socialisation of individuals. In an answer to a question – *What is the difference between education and schooling?* James Bailey defines education as "the culmination of facts, experiences, and thought that is gained over a lifetime." And schooling, according to him, "is a formal process generally associated with the institution of education – pre-kindergarten through 12th grade schools + university level courses..." (See James Bailey, 2013: 1). Perhaps, it is outright to define education as a developmental process of learning and/or acquiring skills, habits beliefs, values, and several kinds of knowledge. The definition is similar to Kure's description of the term as "the act of imparting moral values, life skills, useful information and problem solving ideas into a learner" (Kure, 2013:13). This can be achieved in any of the several social institutions, beginning from the home which traditionally is regarded as the primary agent of socialisation.

It is suggested from the above that education, in an open-ended sense, is found everywhere in our social institutions. But certain institutions are specifically established for the sake of knowledge transmission. Such must always be contrasted with those that carry out natural transfer of this knowledge. The way knowledge is acquired in the home, for instance, is not comparable with what is obtainable in school. While the former is natural, the latter is planned, and this is where the idea of **formal education** finds its place. It is defined as "the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded "education system", running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full time technical and professional training" (Smith, 2007:7). It is consistent with organised and standardised pattern of education, structurally administered in line with a given set of rules, regulations and norms which form a rather rigid curriculum as regards objectives, content and methodology. An example of this is what we go to learn in schools, colleges and universities. Formal education institutions are administratively, physically and curricularly organised and require from students a minimum classroom attendance. There is a programme that teachers and students alike must observe, involving



intermediate and final assessments in order to advance students to the next learning stage. It confers degrees, N C E, diplomas, and other certificates, pursuant to a set of regulations.

It is important to be reminded that everything that has to do with teaching and learning is done through language, which may be regarded as the chief means of knowledge transfer from a teacher to the learner. Let us define language simply as the use of sounds and letters in combination for words and higher units of grammar for effective communication. It includes, by extension, the use of body acts and extra-linguistic signs of various kinds to convey a number of messages. Crystal (2008) summarises that in his definition of language as “The concrete act of speaking, writing or signing” (265). The Language aspect of human existence is outstanding and indispensable. That important nature of language shows its powerful nature on human lives. Following from its chief role as an instrument of communication, as acknowledged in teacher-learner interaction, language also fuels crisis, causes death and influences decisions of different kinds. Using the role of language as an instance, Wood (2006) also acknowledges the power of language. According to him; “language has a fundamental role in the conveyance of political goals to the audience in order to provoke, prevail and persuade the audience towards the intended goals and meanings” (In Kazemian 2014: 2). It is the same language that can be used in curbing terrorist as well as hooliganist activities in the society. Learners at all levels therefore, need to be well educated on accurate and proper use of language, and hence the need for language education as made available in the education curriculum.

(b) Terrorism and Hooliganism

When an individual or group causes trouble by fighting or engaging in any act of violence, such is seen either as a terrorist or a hooligan. This simply suggests that terrorism and hooliganism both refer generally to acts of violence. In specific terms, however, terrorism represents the acts of people who struggle for liberation from a form of maltreatment, while hooliganism is associated with such individuals that are merely out to torment fellow humans. The attempted differentiation is in line with the denotative accounts from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (New Edition) which defines terrorism as “the use of violence such as bombing, shooting, or kidnapping to obtain political demands such as making a government do something” (p.1821), and a hooligan as “a noisy violent person who causes trouble by fighting e.t.c.” (p. 846). What such a person does is described, therefore, as an act of hooliganism.

Further away from the basics of meaning, extensive research has shown that terrorism is a problematic term with conflicting definitions. In the words of Demir and Varlik (2015),

The concept of terrorism is one of the most disputed terms in social sciences... the problem of defining the term ‘terrorism’ is well known and has been examined extensively. Apart from the problem of distinguishing it from guerrilla warfare, crime or mad serial killers, the well-known phrase ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’ is often used to highlight the term terrorism’ (44).

Chukwu et’al express in a similar manner, that “terrorism is one of the concepts that have received varying interpretations characterised by sentiments, interests and ideology” (83). It is understood from the authors’ explanation that the meaning of the term ‘terrorism’ is relative, and generally hard to be agreed upon by scholars and political players. While some persons



regard it as a criminal act against fellow humans, some others link it closely with the struggle for emancipation which is considered as an authentic means of seeking redress and liberation from oppression, suppression and marginalisation of any form. For Shariatmadan (2017), use of the term ‘terrorist’ is stoppable, owing to its subjective status in the description of concepts. In supporting explanations, the author is of the view that:

The word ‘terrorist’ itself can be a barrier rather than an aid to understanding. We should try to avoid the term, without attribution. We should let other people characterise while we report the facts as we know them (1).

By characterisation of terrorism, or ‘terrorist’ as that author prefers, it is meant that the meaning of the term is dependent on context and intention. These same contexts and intentions have been set out by different national and international bodies. Reference is made to the EU, for example, which defines terrorism as:

Acts such as attempted murder, kidnapping e.t.c, where the aim is of ... seriously intimidating a population, or unduly compelling a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation (Shariatmadan, 2017:2).

It has now become clear that what is terrorist for one person can be none-terrorist for another, and this expressly means that individuals and nations have personal and subjective interpretations about the concept of terrorism. The Nigerian situation too may be found relevant, particularly of the protesting indigenous people of Biafra and the killer-herdsmen. While the former has been formally declared a terrorist group, the latter is not, and this, we may say, is based on what the Nigerian Government defines for the idea of terrorism.

Kaldor (2003) describes terrorism as “a technique increasingly used by extreme religious and/or nationalist political movements as part of an array of forms of violence mainly directed against civilians” (1). In an expanded discussion, the author associates these violent movements especially with educated but unemployed and indigent young men who have sometimes sought to legitimise the ‘semi-criminal’ activities from where they can earn a livelihood.

It is already an acknowledged fact that terrorism comes in different forms including fighting and other violent activities. If this were not to be accompanied by certain justifications as exemplified earlier, terrorism would simply be seen as an alternative term for hooliganism. Yet, the later can be said to be a similar term to the former for the fact of their shared features. Let us say, in other words, that terrorism and hooliganism are cousins; each of them involves violent attacks on fellow humans. Associating it with the game of football, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, uses hooliganism as “the term used to describe disorderly, violent or destructive behaviour perpetrated by spectators at association football events” (1). Generally, such ‘disorderly, violent or destructive activities can be carried out on any group of individuals for no just course. After any consequences, every member of a community becomes a casualty. Such terrorist activities destroy the victims’ ways of life, and this brings about considerable influence on a number of individuals and has negative consequences for a large number of people within a society. Terrorism/Hooliganism is generally a deviant behaviour in a disapproved direction; it is unwanted, undesirable, intolerable and generally problematic.



Data Collection Procedure

This research is opinionated; the authors have expressed their opinions on the spread and menace of terrorist and hooliganist activities in the globe, and the possibility of such activities being controlled, particularly through the teaching and learning of the correct aspects of language use. In terminological terms, therefore, personal **observation method** has been primarily used in the collection of data for this paper. As members of a given society, the authors have been much familiar with the sub-sisting problems, one of which is terrorism as selected for discussion.

Some amount of information was obtained from secondary sources; these are text books and other conference as well as journal papers that have been consulted for a clearer understanding of the subject matter.

Use of Language in the Control of Terrorism and Hooliganism

Language will ever be regarded as an indispensable phenomenon in human existence. The knowledge of language is a condition for communication on functionally human existence which is also conditional. What this means, in alternative terms, is that language is there centrally for communication, and there cannot be a functional human society without communication. Knowing a language, therefore, suggests one's ability to communicate with one's fellow speakers.

As important as language is recognised to be, it has the capacity to generate both positive and negative consequences: it brings peace and causes unrest; produces unity and can cause disunity; it destroys any relationship but can build up same, depending on whether the form of language employed at a particular time and place is appropriate or inappropriate, and equally fits in the surrounding circumstance. This is what Chukwu et'al (2014) mean when they say:

Every situation expects peculiar mode of language use, just as every occasion expects a fitting dress mode. A mode of language use that is at odds with its context is likely to be counterproductive, igniting misunderstanding, confusion and sometimes reprehension (83).

From that point of view, it could be said that wrong use of language, from a sociolinguistic angle, can ignite misunderstanding, with attendant anti-social activities such as terrorism and/or hooliganism. And it is the same language, if appropriately used, can assist in limiting or curbing such deadly activities.

It may be logical at this point to emphasise the importance of language in education. A teacher must attain a certain level of communicative competence and ensure same in their learners. We are not so concerned with the idea of linguistic competence which emphasises the knowledge of language structure. Of particular relevance to our discussion is that language should be studied and used communicatively in extra-linguistic context to be able to solve certain societal problems. So, besides the mastery of sentence constructions, an individual need to be educated on certain language skills in relation to the society.

Strategically, a speaker should be able to manage a linguistically shaky discussion: a sort of communication breakdown that may occur in the interactive session with the audience. Their tone must be socially friendly, and not suggestive of pride, sentiments, prejudice and animosity.



The ability to maintain those expressions that conform to the socio-cultural standards are all expectations from the speaker, whose success depends, to an extent, on communicative competence.

CONCLUSION

A society is said to be transformed when change is effected for a better state. This can be seen from the broad view of quality and standard of life, which can be qualified in terms of the progress and development in economy and other areas of life. With transformation in place, there will be improvement in Agriculture, Education, Infrastructure, Communication, and all other things that may be found necessary for the well-being of the human life. All these are not possible in an environment that is full of terrorist activities.

The citizens of a country need to be well educated for them to think and create ways of ensuring this change, and this is where the teacher is found very useful. His duty is to give knowledge to learners to get them educated so that they can be useful to themselves and the society in which they live. This can only be achieved by good teachers who, according to Godihal, “are essential for the effective functioning of education systems and for the quality of learning processes” (1). Indeed, good and effective teachers assist learners to understand the amount of knowledge richly available for consumption.

This, we must resume, cannot be effective without a good knowledge of language, which is the sole agent of communication. On the significant role of language in national development, Abekah also acknowledges that: “Professionals such as the teacher, ... among other individuals who contribute to national development all use language as a medium of communication” (1). Yet, any language to be used as a medium of instruction should be mastered by the teacher, whose mis-use of language in classroom can only lead to mis-understanding and lack of interest with negative consequences.

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