LANGUAGE USE: IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACE AND GLOBAL RECONCILIATION

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Abstract
In the world today, there are the prevalent issues of insurgency, violence and conflict. Existing power relations are being attacked as people factionalize themselves, questioning the continued existence of the powers that be. This has resulted in a chaotic and traumatized society. It is in line with the foregoing that this paper examined language use, drawing attention to its implications for peace and global reconciliation. This study was hinged on the speech acts theory which sees language as acts -- performances and actions. Some speeches were used to show how language use can construct or deconstruct, build or destroy. The paper identified that since language is the only vehicle for communication, ineffective language use could result in acts that are chaotic and, by extension, harmful to global peace. The paper posited that language use should become effective by taking cognizance of the issues of clarity, relevance, precision, appropriacy, harmony, tolerance and accommodation. Recommendations were finally made on the need to work for global peace and reconciliation through sensitization on proper language use, so that henceforth, language would be faced with peaceful and reconciliatory elements.

Keywords: language, peace, global reconciliation

Introduction
Language is one phenomenon that has remained ever current and has continued to receive unabated attention by scholars and thinkers. Given its status as man’s distinctive attribute and inheritance, it has prevailed on and influenced all aspects of man’s life and existence. Language is seen as a rule govern system of symbols that enables users to generate meaning and, in the process, define reality (Tremblay, 1995 in Dada, 2010). Language is thus a tool in man’s hand for the coordination of activities and realities of life. This coordination is made possible through communication. Communication is the process of transmitting, receiving, acting upon message/information, thoughts, ideas, attitude, and feelings through mutually agreed codes and symbols (Oyewo, 2000 in Dada 2010). Language is arguably necessary for the communication of thoughts, feelings, experiences, and complexities of life.

Communication, which involves the interaction between people could be interpersonal or mass. It may involve people engaging in face to face dialogue or information being transmitted to a large number of people simultaneously via traditional or new media. Whatever be the form or mode of communication, there should be effective language use so as to make the content of communication understandable. The world today is continually heating up. Across the globe, troubles are being fomented as a result of the disenchantedment of people with bad governance / mistrust and poverty. There have been the predominant issues of conflict, insurgency, uprising, and war most of which are resultant effects of communication gap or breakdown. Breakdown in communication may be an aftermath of poor language use and communication that lacks effectiveness. Effective communication does not only involve the ability to use constructions that conform to the rules of grammar. It extends to the ability of individuals to use language appropriately and constructively. Appropriacy in language use takes cognizance of precision, objectivity, tone, clarity and audience assessment.

The minds of individuals have been ravaged by conflict and violence which are social constructs. Such minds can also be cleansed through language use. This informs Adedimeji’s (2004, p.10) assertion that all social problems are created by man and can be solved by effective communication and efficient messages. This paper therefore attempts to broaden the need for effective language use so as to cut down on global violence and usher in an era of reconciliation and peace. It highlights that the fire of violence can be quenched, and minds healed, if language users select words and structures carefully so that communication content would be devoid of dual interpretation, ambiguities, dehumanizing and destructive tendencies.
Linguistic versus Communicative Competence

To advance this writing, it is wise to also note the concept of communication bringing to the fore its relevance to the discourse. Communication has attracted various scholarly thoughts and publications. Like manner, it has been given varying definitions. All definitions point to the fact that communication involves the giving and receiving of a message which will be acted upon. The responses a communication act evokes could be positive or negative. For some researchers, the reason for any of these could be on the content of the message. However, for linguistics as well as for this paper, the positive and negative responses/feedback to the act of communication depend greatly on language use. Strategies in language use could save a situation or destroy it. It means that actions and reactions to situations are consequent upon the language used in transmitting the message. Competence in language use, thus, is a field which is essential to the existence of man in a given society.

Adeyekun (2010, p.3) cites Hamilton and Parker as describing communication as “the process by which people share thoughts, ideas and feelings with each other in commonly understandable ways”. For these authors, communication involves the transmission of intentions to one another. Still on the definition, the author quotes Lucey T. who defined communication as involving the interchange of facts, thoughts, value, judgment and opinions. This definition is vital to this writing also, because it exposes the fact that people’s opinions and judgment on issues of interest can be exchanged during communication.

Communication may be engaged in through an oral or written medium. Whatever way it is, they all involve the use of language. When one talks about language use in communication, two concepts of competence come to mind; the first is linguistic competence and the other is communicative competence.

The term linguistic competence is credited to Noam Chomsky (Holmes, 2013, p.440; Otagbura (1995, p.7). Linguistic competence accounts for the correctness and grammatically correct use of language use in communication. It entails adhering to the rules of grammar of a language during communication. Communicative competence was modeled after Searie (1973), Broughton and Brumfit, et al (1978), Canale and Swain (1980), Richard and Rocharis (1989), (as cited in Otagbura, 1995, p.7). It took language use beyond Chomsky’s linguistic competence to incorporate fluency in the act of communication. By fluency, we mean using language appropriately to suite situations and purposes. It goes beyond knowing the conjugation of verbs, concord/agreement to the mastery of the various techniques employed during speech to spur people to action. For Otagbura (1995), communicative competence includes the following abilities;

1. Match the language with the situation;
2. Appreciate the nature of the participants and the role they are required to play in the communication process;
3. Recognize the purpose of the communication;
4. Use the right words phrases, and sentences for communication;
5. Assign the right set of meaning to the words, phrases and sentences which are used in the communication process (7).

Otagbura’s typology stipulates that communicative competence in general terms talks about language use in situations which involve choosing the right words for specific contexts to generate the intended meaning for the purposes of communication. For him, the use of language for communication requires being competent in both linguistic and communicative acts.

Furthermore, Yule’s account of communication competence will also throw more light on the thought process of this paper. He used the term communicative competence (CC) to cover the notion of linguistic competence. This is to say that, he discussed linguistic competence as a sub-theme of communicative competence. Yule (1995, p.197) divided CC into three components namely: grammatical competence (GC), sociolinguistics competence (SLC) and strategic competence (SC). Although he pivoted it to the L2 situation, however, generally, one can use it to cover all language situations. His concept of CC refers to accuracy in the use of words and structures of a language. In other words, it is making reference to the correctness of language use in relation to the application of its rules. This concept is equivalent to Chomskyan’s concept of linguistic competence.

The sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use a language effectively and give appropriate interpretations. Language competence here is based on certain social contexts. Holmes (2013, p.440) also sees this as knowing the sociolinguistic rules for speaking in a community, in other words, accounting for the appropriateness in the use of language in different social contexts. Language use in diverse social contexts can be said to be target driven. The target is for a purpose; therefore for any purpose, be it for peace or war,
language use should always hit its target. For peace and global reconciliation, language use should be employed to advance its course. It accounts for the inherent meaning in these two expressions, “shut the door” and “please, shut the door”. In using language especially for peace processes, there is the need for the right choices so as to avoid unintended or unintentional meaning being transmitted.

Lastly, Yule's strategic competence refers to the ability of a language user to organize a message effectively and to compensate, via strategies, for any difficulties (1996, p.197). SC, understandably, is a communication strategy employed when a transmitter of a message uses known examples to express the unknown. Put the other way, it means the ability of a language user to express him/herself using analysis that both the sender and receiver of a message are familiar with. For this paper, Yule's concepts of grammatical and sociolinguistics competence are equally vital to effective language use to ensure peaceful co-existence of people in a society.

Otagbunu (1995, p.1) brought to the fore the role communication plays in ensuring peace in his following words “communication determines the friends we make, the crisis we provoke, the war we fight and indeed, the peace we enjoy”. In the above assertion, communication is seen as a factor non-negotiable in the quest for the peaceful co-existence of people in a given society. Relating this to language, human beings communicate and they do so using language, a factor which determines the uniqueness of man. Therefore, to achieve communication, human beings use language. It entails that competence in language as an act of communication goes a long way to determine the course of existence of humans. Reiteratingly, James et al (1995, p.2) state that communication makes way for the understanding of people, as well as predicting their responses to situations. When people are understood, their response to situations is predicted and it, in turn, helps to move a course for peace or divert ugly situations that could generate crisis.

Indeed, to maintain relationships and the peaceful co-existence of nations, the act of communication should be mastered. A mastery of this act involves a mastery of language use. Suffice it to say that communicative competence involves using language appropriately to achieve a desired goal. It then justifies the indispensable role of language in achieving a desired goal. Thus, the role of language in reconciliation processes cannot be questioned.

The competent user of a language, so to say, can transform the world into a practical and functional global village. Therefore, by using language effectively, peace is ensured and transforming the world to a functional global village reveals the fact that global reconciliation processes have been achieved.

Language as an Act
Language is a very vital means of human communication. Through it, ideologies, identities, feelings, etc. are shared. The Encyclopedia Britannica Online posits that language is “a system of conventional spoken or written symbols by which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in each culture, communicate”. Through language, the co-operative existence of people is ensured. Language is a means by which members of a speech community exchange their views, take decisions, convey these decisions, agree or disagree on sensitive issues, make resolutions, persuade to actions, etc. Fulfilling this function, language could be analyzed as a viable tool to achieve peace and reconciliation. Language is specifically human, a characteristic which differentiates humans from other creatures of God. Through it, the fundamental desires of human beings are achieved as well as the fulfillment of man's social needs.

Language is also thought and action. This suggests that language constructs the way we think and the way we act and, rightly, a positive thought leads to a right action, an action which in turn breeds peace. However, when the thinking is not right, the acting generates friction and thus, conflict ensues. Therefore, if cooperation amongst people is to be achieved, there must be a sharing of values, an understanding of one another, an agreement or a disagreement (i.e. an agreement to live in peace and a disagreement to give conflict a chance).

Language performs various acts. Just as Obi-Oke (2011, p.10) stipulates, languages perform the function of information sharing, social communication, politics, empowerment as well as an instrument of thought, education, rational, critical, logical or propositional thinking and learning. This justifies the fact that language is essential to the life, peace, harmony and well-being of a society and, indeed, the world. Through its acts, the mental processes, behaviours of people and personalities are formed. The expression level of language use ensures the special act of expressions; conveying and communicating in an acceptable way so as to promote peace and harmony.
More so, at the level of pragmatics, language makes way for meaning construct and interpretation. Language use should be situational, that is, to say situations determine or cal for language use. In any society, in times of critical situations, language as speech acts has the capacity of dousing all fears.

Furthermore, language is used to negotiate peace, question and evaluate the progress of a phenomenon, discuss and debate political issues and governmental processes, as well as effect socio-political actions, persuade international interactions, etc. In line with this, Nkwankwo (2011, p.30) asserts that language is a pivot around which all human activities rotate, without which human co-operation will be obstructed. It is greatly an act which avails people the opportunity to communicate their ideas, innovations and inventions, knowledge, challenges, success, etc. Without the effective use of language, a nation and its conquest will be non-existent. Wallwork (1971,p.12) further posits that language is an instrument of action, of influencing and persuading people, of conveying orders and information, as well as a thought process. This means that language can be put to different uses. It serves as a medium by which issues in government relations amongst nations are discussed and plans executed. Then, if that is the case, language can be put to effective use in ensuring global peace and reconciliation. A competent language use is able to hold nations together in times of crisis. Obi-Okoye postulates that in performing its function, language performs what he refers to as contact function. By contact function, he opines that “language is used to open, hold and end social contact” (2). Thus, anyone who is competent in the communicative function of language has the ability to ignite a war or create a path for peace, just as the contact function of Obi-Okoye explicated. Any misuse of words in law making, transmission of government policies, global relations, congresses or even at times of election manifestos, etc. can serve as an act of igniting war.

To this effect, current studies in linguistics emphasize what language is used for other than the forms of the language viz-a-viz correctness in grammatical and phonological structure. Just as Yule has it that “lessons are likely to be organized around concepts such as ‘asking for things’ in different social contexts rather than the forms of the past tense in different sentences” (194). By this, the focus on the communicative function of language is brought to limelight.

Peace and Global Reconciliation: Conceptual Appraisal

Peace and global reconciliation have become issues of global concern and debate since the issues of violence, conflict and wars which are social constructs have skyrocketed. Conflicts arise as a result of ideological and philosophical differences, mistrust, misperception, unattainable basic needs and fears of inadequacies. These result in the perpetuation of violent acts which usually culminate in collective trauma and fueling of cyclic violence. Lendreath (1997,p.13) posits that “contemporary conflicts are intra-state arising between factionalized identity groups, who live in a close proximity with each other”.

Peace and global reconciliation are terms synonymous with movement away from violence and conflict to a state of harmonious co-existence of individuals and societies. Gulboa (2009,p.96) has indicated that societies across the globe witness various forms of conflict. High intensity conflicts culminate in the violence seen in interstate wars while in low intensity conflicts, violence is limited to the activities of irregular forces against regular armies as is evident in the Boko Haram insurgency and the activities of ISIS, Al Shabab, Hamas, Taliban and others.

It is in view of the foregoing that Parent (2010,p.280) sees peace as a state of harmony which involves the lack of conflict or violence, which “subsumes all the solutions necessary for political, social and economic equality and justice”. The notion of peace thus challenges every condition and situations which build up against individual advancement and societal growth.

Lerche (1999,p.50) has categorized peace using the negative and positive parameters. Negative peace is suggestive of the absence of violence and conflict while positive peace involves all activities directed towards conflict resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation. This categorization has brought to the fore that peace is not a pronouncement of cease fire. It is achieved through actions and attitudes that are constructive, conservative, and transformative.

It is pertinent to point out that peace often walks in the wake of reconciliation which itself is an aftermath of conflict resolution. Scholars and thinkers across the globe have given thought-provoking postulations about reconciliation which aim at ushering in an era of harmonious co-existence between individuals and societies.

For Kriesberg (1998,p.184), reconciliation involves “the process of developing a mutual reconciliatory accommodation between formally
antagonistic persons or groups" which culminates in the establishment of "a relatively amicable relationship established after rupture in the relationship". Fisher (1999, p.83) sees reconciliation as the process of "re-establishing harmony and co-operation between antagonists who have inflicted harm in either a one-sided or reciprocal manner". These views about reconciliation seem to leave the concept on the threshold of conflict resolution. Thoughts have resonated that beyond conflict resolution there should be conflict transformation which should aim at the reconstruction and rebuilding of individual and societal attitudes, values and preferences. Gulbo (2009, p.95) sees reconciliation as going "beyond formal peace agreement to changing the beliefs, goals, attitudes and emotions of a greater number of society members regarding conflict" and, engaging such people in the" transformation from hostility to amiability". Bloomfield (2003, p.2) re-echoes the concept of conflict transformation in his assertion that reconciliation is a process which includes the search for truth, justice, forgiveness and healing which empowers individuals to "co-exist" and to develop the "degree of cooperation" needed to live alongside people who have dehumanized and inflicted pains on them.

The treatise above has made certain establishments. Conflicts arise, escalate and are de-escalated or terminated through proper management which involves negotiations and mediation that culminate in resolution and reconciliation. Such mediations are done at different levels by encounter groups, truth and peace commissions, tribunals and panels. Mediations and negotiations can only take place if armed with the indispensable tool of genuine dialogue and interactive conflict analysis. Sufficient to say then that, peace and global reconciliation are attainable only through the dialogic processes of negotiation and mediation capable of transforming destructive tendencies into constructive and creative ideals. Conflicts have gone beyond borders as, the eruption of conflict in one part of the globe can lead to its escalation in another part. There is then every need to curb such trends through conscious and painstaking efforts that would culminate in the construction of a peaceful and harmonious society.

Language Use: Implications for Peace and Global Reconciliation
It has been established that the society revolves around the dialogic language use. Thus, language plays a pivotal role in human and, by extension, societal existence and survival. Language use takes into cognizance three major communication skills: using language for different purposes, changing language according to situational contexts and needs of listeners and, following the rules of the language. It is the manipulation of these skills that helps in meaning mapping and interpretation. Language use also has attendant problems. In the main, inappropriacy and ambiguity can characterize language use and make communication difficult. As has been ascertained, there is inter-connectivity between language, communication and meaning. Language is used in and for communication and it is only when appropriacy is applied that communication can be meaningful. Hence, communicative competence is a necessary skill that communicators need to acquire, for without it, communication and language use become cumbersome as what is intended may not be understood and, what is understood may not be what is intended.

Language use has great implications for peace and global reconciliation. Proper/effective use of language makes for a peaceful and harmonious society while improper language use fuels crisis and leads to a traumatized and chaotic society. As Adebimpe (2004, p.10) rightly pointed out, language serves to form or deform, inform, reform, transform, or destroy man and his society.

Every human society depends on some form of communication network, from the most primitive to the most advanced, to function effectively. Given this scenario, communicators should not lose focus of the implications of language use. Language use could be categorized into two; peace talks and hate speeches, all with attendant implications. Peace talks are all communications geared towards the creation of harmonious co-existence of individuals while hate speeches, according to Neisser (1994, p.337) include "all communication (whether verbal, written, symbolic) that insults a racial, ethnic and political group, whether by suggesting that they are inferior in some respect or by indicating that they are despised or not welcome for any other reasons". Hate speeches are incitement and can spark off violent reactions. They are war waged on others by means of words (Kayambazinha and Mayo, 2002).

Below are some speeches that illustrate the destructive implications of language use.

You should not be bothered with cockroaches of politics.
Cockroaches are only found in the toilets even at homes; if you see cockroaches in your house, crush them.

SPEECH II: A Speech made by General Mohammed Buhari as reported by Lila Binniyan.

God willing, by 2015, something will happen. They either conduct a free and fair election or they go a very disgraceful way. If what happened in 2011 should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood.

One factor that runs parallel in these speeches is the use of inciting and inflammatory words that carry the illusionary force and percolation of violence. They violate the cooperative principles of quantity and quality because they are over biased statements that are baseless. Thus, the implication of language use in such speeches is the potency of inciting words in the creation of an orderless and chaotic society.

This view is also heightened by the media. This is evident in the reports of Adebayo (2015) that it was the use of inflammatory words that sparked off the 2011 post election violence in Nigeria. According to the source, General Mohammed Buhari, the then presidential candidate of the defunct Congress for Progressive Change had directed crowds in Hausa language at his campaign rallies to “protect their votes at all cost including killing and elimination of others….. It was these inflammatory public comments made before, during and immediately after the 2011 elections that led to the death of over 88 people and the displacement of more than 65,000 individuals in April 2011”.

Peace talks on the other hand carry the same potency as hate speeches but in opposite dimensions. As hate speeches are capable of breeding chaos, peace talks have the capacity to calm every ravaging storm. What happened in Nigeria immediately after the 2015 presidential elections is a case in point. The country was on the verge of crisis eruption but one phone call by the former president, Goodluck Jonathan to the then elected President, Mohammadu Buhari saved Nigerians from such. Below is an excerpt of the phone call made on March 31, 2015 as cited by Olademeji (2015).

Your Excellency, how are you.

Congratulations......

You’d find time to come one of these days so that we can sort out how to plan the transition period. (www.punching.com)

This speech is a perfect example of effective language use. It recognized the humanity of the other, Jonathan addressing Buhari as “Your Excellency” even before he was declared winner of the 2015 presidential polls. Again, it brought to light the phatic function of language as used in fashioning interpersonal relationships. More also, it saved the nation from the doom that was looming. According to Limen (2015) “by making that call, the president saved Nigerians a great deal of pain... lives would have been lost and properties would have been destroyed”.

The foregoing exemplifies how language use in communication has dual capacity of either formenting conflict or conflict resolution. Gulboa (2009, p.88) lends weight to this in his assertion that the activities of the media in global communication are capable of either bridging or fueling conflicts. He gave instances of the violence in Rwanda and the Danish Cartoon Controversy fueled by the activities of the media. To this end, scholars have advocated for increased media consciousness in language use. The media, both traditional and new, should be used to whittle down the prevalence of conflict and violence so as to usher in an era of peace. As the evolution of the new media has widened the information space, information permeates and penetrates national borders and boundaries. Up to the minute bits of information are assessed through various media; live broadcast, talks, blogs, texts, pictures, videos, twits, You Tube, My Space, e-mails, Face book and their likes. Such should be harnessed to diffuse information on the activities, processes, approaches, mediations, negotiation and advocacy that make for lasting peaceful relationship (Cole and Crawford, 2007, Gulboa, 2009,p.98).

Scholars have also developed concepts like peace linguistic( De Matos 2014) and Peace journalism (Gulboa, 2009,p.101). These are related concepts propounded with a view to teaching skills necessary for conflict resolution, reconciliation and, by extention, peace building. Peace linguistics advocates for the shading off of the dehumanizing nature of language use. It stipulates that peaceful language carries peace building force laced with life improving tendencies which should be explored in today’s world to dampen the spirit of factionalism and violent revolutions.

Peace journalism, in a similar vein, recommends that reasons behind violence be exposed as antagonistic parties are given empathy and equal treatment. This singular act has the potentiality of de-escalating violence and heightening peace and conflict resolution. The
application of these twin concepts in language use would invariably create a society devoid of violence and conflict; a society one would be desirous of living in.

Having seen what effect language use can have on the mind set of people, the onus now lies on communicators to be more proactive in the choice and use of language. All avenues should be harnessed to ensure the society is stirred back to a state of harmony.

Conclusion and Recommendations
This paper has attempted a discourse on language use and its implications for peace and global reconciliation. The society revolves around and functions on the dialogic use of language. To this end, the survival and continued peaceful existence of the society depends greatly on language use which could be patterned in line with the dualistic notions of constructivism and deconstructivism. Thus, language becomes destructive when it has the capacity to spark off conflict and chaos, and constructive, when it is laced with humanizing tendencies capable of calming every storm. In view of the foregoing, there is every need to note that appropriacy should be applied in all forms of communication so as to make language use clearer and more explicit. This paper noted that the world has heated up and it is only effective language use that would prevent it from dropping and exploding. This is why the notions of peace linguistic and peace journalism are given credence as their application by all people in all quarters has the capacity to melt down violence, de-escalate conflict and usher in an era of peace and harmonious living. It is on this premise that the following recommendations were made:

i. There should be clauses in the law that promotes freedom of speech which will checkmate inciteful language use.

ii. Proper language use in the act of communication should be enshrined in the mission statement of every government establishment as well as political parties.

iii. Most of all, there should be the strict implication of punishment on anyone who violates these laws especially sections 95 and 96 of the 2010 electoral Act in Nigeria which prohibits the negative use of language during campaigns.

iv. The evolution in language use has gone beyond looking at the grammatical structure to its communicative function. Therefore, researchers should focus more on the sensitization on proper language use to ensure peace and harmonious co-existence of people in the society.

v. The style and tone of language should be laced with peaceful and reconciliatory elements.

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