Language Use during Election: Case Study of 2015 Gubernatorial Election in Selected South Western States in Nigeria.

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Abstract

Language is key in sustaining peace and order in any human society. Man as a social animal needs interaction. The key instrument of interaction within the society especially Africa, is the language that may be a body language, spoken words, written or sign language. This phenomenon affects all facets of human endeavor. However, understanding the language within a society is important for growth, peace, and cooperation

within the society. The involvement of military personnel and Youth Corp Members in the 2015 elections raised controversies in the nation using language (body language inclusive as index. This paper investigates the language use phenomenon in three selected States in South Western geo-political zone of Nigeria: Ekiti, Osun and Ogun, to find out the Social and political implication of the language of instruction cum the body language of the military personnel deployed to some states on the electorates during the gubernatorial elections in the selected States. The method adopted in carrying out the investigation is descriptive survey. We administered one thousand seven hundred questionnaire in the three states. Out of the total number of questionnaire administered, we were able to retrieve one thousand, five hundred and thirty one copies. Findings revealed that most of the respondents were multilinguals. About 5% claimed to be monolinguals. However, most of the monolingual respondents protested the use of presiding officers that did not understand the language and the culture of the voters: while the monolingual voters claimed to be totally disenfranchised. In addition, 45% of respondent express satisfaction with the involvement of military personnel, 30% felt it was wrong, 25% did not respond to the question. The paper suggests that such research should be carried out in other geo-political zones of the country for a better judgment of the situation.

Keywords: language, multilingualism, monolingual, election, gubernatorial, military disenfranchise.

Introduction

The phenomenon of language planning is common in multilingual society. The problem of language endangerment in Nigeria can be seen in the light of the submission stated in American Commission on Language Learning thus:

> "… We are proudly multicultural, polyglot nation, home to more than 350 languages. Yet we continually ignore opportunities to value, nurture, and sustain languages other than English-opportunities that would greatly enhance our

> personal, cultural, professional, and civic lives, as well as the economic strength and security of our nation (p. 1)".

Araromi (2018) in his comment on language policy implementation in Nigeria states that Nigeria is a multilingual and multicultural state that parades more than 500 indigenous languages alongside English as official language, and French as the de facto second official language. The official languages- English and French seem to be threats to the indigenous languages. Illuminating on English as Nigerian official language, Udoh (2003) note the evolution of Nigerian Pidgin as the unofficial lingua franca. In an attempt to break off from imperialistic ties, she states that the country choose three regional languages which are Hausa- spoken in the Northern region, Yoruba, spoken in the Western region, and Igbo, spoken by some people in the part of Eastern region. Udoh (2003) recognizes the existence of over 500 other languages in Nigeria that are regarded as minor languages, although some of them have some degree of official status in their localities. Udoh notes that local languages with official language status that are therefore, used as lingua franca include Efik, Ibibio, Edo, Fulfude. Udoh's view underscores the importance of language and language policy in Nigeria as a multilingual nation.

The National Policy on Education (Fedral Republic of Nigeria 2013:.9) unequivocally states that "language is a means of preserving the people's culture, s, and in the interest of National unity, each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In the section on primary education, it is stated that government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is in either the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, English. However, the current trend in Nursery/Primary education reveals that local languages are not allowed for both official and unofficial interactions. The school authorities derogatively refers to local languages as vernaculars in either public or private schools

to the extent that any pupil caught speaking any local language within the school premises is to serve other punishment by either, paying an amount of money or made to do some community service.

So, this paper investigates the impact of the language of instructions during election in three south western states in Nigeria. The findings for each of the three States are reported in the next sub-sections of this paper.

Ogun State Report

A total number of six hundred and fifty questionnaire was administered in Ogun State out of which five hundred and eighty-seven (587) was retrieved.

Gender:

There are two hundred and eighty-seven (287) male respondents; this number constitutes 48.9% of our total respondents while we have two hundred and ninety-one (291) females, which form 49.5%. Nine (9) 1.5% of the respondents are unspecified. The number is very insignificant; in essence, there is gender balance in Ogun State sample population.

Age:

On basis of age, youth for Ogun State constitute three hundred and fifty-four respondents making up 60.3% considering the age range of 18-37 years while adults make up two hundred and fourteen respondents (36.45%) of average age of 38 years and above. People who did not indicate their age are ten (10) 1.7% in number. The result shows that youth are more interested in politics and political matters in the society.

Education:

Eighty-four (84) respondents that constitute 14.31% of the sample population in Ogun State are primary school certificate holders; twenty-three (23) respondents that form 3.92% did not indicate their education background. The remaining 480 respondents had secondary school

certificate and above. We presume that at least, 81.77% of the respondents would have good understanding of the questionnaire.

Occupation:

Respondents occupations show that they are from all walks of life, including farming, artisans, public servants, civil servants, clergy, retirees, as well as herbalist. However, one hundred and nine (109), which is about 18.57% of the respondents, claimed to be students in higher institutions while seven (7) (1.19%) respondents did not indicate their occupations. It is interesting to note that six (6) (1.02%) of the respondents claimed to be full time housewives or homemakers.

Place of Birth:

The place of birth of respondents shows that majority are from almost all States in the country. (See appendix1). Due to the proximity of the Stat (Ogun) to Lagos, we observe that there is influx of people from Lagos to Ogun State as a neighbouring State; and this is seen as shown in the data collected. This increases the validity of our data base on the assumption that majority of respondents are honest with their judgment of what happened during election.

Local Government of Residence of respondents

All the Local Governments in Ogun State were represented in the data presented (See appendix 2). However, Ishara-Remo north had only one (1) respondent; Ifako-Ijaye: 3 respondents. We cannot give any ready-made reason for this; only two (2) respondents failed to give their Local Government of Origin. Statistics shows that 100% of our respondents reside in Ogun State. 94.89% of our respondents are Nigerian nationals while 1.02% did not indicate their nationality. However, we have no record of anyone claiming to be foreigner.

Language Use:

Three hundred and eighty (380) (64.74%) respondents claimed that Yorùbá is their native language while others claimed Yorùbá dialects such as Ìbàdàn, Ẹdẹ, Ìkáleẹ̀ Ègùn, Ìjẹ̀bú, Èkìtì, Ẹ̀gbá, Ìlàjẹ: others speak different languages in Nigeria such as Efik, Afemai, Idoma, Gbẹdẹ, Fulani, Isako, Benue, Ibira, Igala, Tiv, Isoko, Togo, Agbor, Etuna, Edo, Ekereni, English, Ukuani, Hausa, Irobo, Calabar. Ijaw Igbo, Ausi, Ishan and Kula; as their native languages.

This indicate that about 35.3% of the respondents are conscious of their speech forms. Hence, they identified with their Local languages. This confirms the movement of languages with speakers in language history.

Other Languages Spoken:

Ninety-one (91) 15.5% respondents claimed to be monolingual Yorùbá. There some others claimed multilingual, they speak languages such as Hausa (35), English (373), French (15), Latin (1), Igbo (37), and Pidgin (64). It is interesting to note that ninety-one (91) respondents claimed to be monolingual Yorùbá, one (1) Igbo. We could not dispute the claim because some of the people we interacted with in Yoruba responded in Ijebu while some spoke with Egba dialect.

The implication is that issue of monolinguals and bilingualism was observed. A monolingual individual is assumed to be able to speak and understand only one language which may impair communication with speakers of other languages that are also monolingual. The monolingual status as indicated in the data shows that:

Monolingual	**Language**
91	Yorùbá
1	Igbo
4	Hausa
1	English

If they are true monolingual individuals, then it means that 16.52% of the respondents' population will have communication problem, thus making the use of bilingual interpreters inevitable for the election. Again, some speakers claimed that Yorùbá is their second language; there are about twenty-seven (27) of them, which constitute 4.6%. Aside the three (3) Ègbá, 1 Onàdo, 1 Reẹ́mọ and 1 Ijesa speakers that claimed that Yorùbá is their second language, though the listed speech forms are dialects of Yorùbá. This raises the question, who speaks Yorùbá? Alternatively, do Yorùbá have native speakers? These questions are not within the scope of this paper; therefore, we will try to investigate the phenomenon in future research.

In addition, some of the respondents are able to identify the difference between Pidgin and English language. We presume that those who claimed to speak Pidgin can understand instructions given in English to some extent. Therefore, we expect that four hundred and thirty seven (437 – 74.45%) respondents will be well informed with instructions given to them either in English or Pidgin English as the case may be, with the engagement of youth corps as presiding officers during the said elections. The implication of this is that about 25.55% respondents will depend on second hand information given by interpreter, if any.

With the volatile nature of the political atmosphere in Nigeria, , there are claims of disagreement at the polling booths amongst party agents trying to pass information to electorates; which makes the said electorates confused. This information, we got from personal interview from some informants. Before we conclude on this, let us examine the language of instruction during the election as indicated in our data in Ogun State.

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Language of Instruction During Election:

The linguistic situation in different polling booths was reflected from statistics gathered on question (11), seeks to find out the language of instruction during the election under investigation. The result revealed that one hundred and eighty-five (31.5%) respondents claimed that English was the language of instruction in their polling booths. Two hundred and ten (210) 35.8% respondents indicated that Yoruba was the language of instruction in their polling units, one hundred and fifty-five (155) 26.41% respondents said it was English and Yoruba that were used. Two (2) 0.34% claimed the use of English and Pidgin while four (4) 0.68% claimed they used Yoruba, English and Pidgin; two (2) respondents did not indicate the use of any language at all.

This result shows that in areas where English is the sole language of instruction, the monolingual Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa etc. may be disenfranchised as a result of language of communication. And where only Yoruba is used, the monolingual English, Igbo and Hausa will also be disenfranchised. This makes the issue of the moribund Nigerian languages Policy in Education, where language of instruction at the lower primary

schools is supposed to be local languages, while the two other Nigerian languages are to be learnt in addition to the local languages in the secondary schools, a problem that needs urgent solution. If the policy was fully implemented, an Igbo youth corps serving in Yoruba land or Hausa land will be able to pass instructions and interact well with the members of the communities where they find themselves (Akinwande 2019:78).
Such situation will give more credibility to the election presided over by youth corps members that are native speakers of other Nigerian languages. Now, let us examine question (12) that seeks to find out whether respondents were satisfied with the language of instruction.

Response to the Question of Language of Instruction by the Presiding Officers at Polling Booths:
The main aim of this question is to find out the attitude of electorates to the language of instruction by the electoral officers during the elections under investigation. This is in line with the Yoruba adage that says '*bi eti o gbo yinkin, inu ki i baje'* meaning, spoken words are propellers of actions either positive or negative words.

Language choice and language control often have impact on the speaker and the hearer. In essence, appropriateness of language use is significant in enhancing proper or effective communication in a society. Misinterpretation of information, at times, is related to the level of linguistic knowledge the hearer has of the language of the speaker. In situation where there is partial understanding, response(s) may not be positive. From this background, we observe that five hundred and twenty six (526) 89.6% respondents in Ogun State are satisfied with the language of instruction during the gubernatorial election under investigation. The presumed reason for the high percentage that are satisfy with language of instruction at the polling unit as reflected in the computation of data collected is the level of western education of the people living in the State. One can conveniently say that only few that claimed to be monolingual Igbo and

Hausa that may be disenfranchised in the election. However, thirty-four (34) 5.7% respondents are not satisfied with the language of instruction, sixteen (16) 2.73% respondents did not respond to this question. If we add the two groups, this will give us 8.52%. Although, this percentage is low, but in elections, it matters. 1.00% is significant because one vote can determine the winner of the election. Therefore, everybody is supposed to be satisfied.

There are issues we may not be able to proffer immediate solutions to because our statistics is based on responses from individuals, which may have some degree of fallacy. Being as it may, the language of the election in Ogun has a high percentage of acceptability.

Osun State Report

The number of questionnaire administered in Osun state was 601 from which 599 copies were harvested. Statistics of responses to each question is presented below.

Sex:

Male respondents totaled three hundred and thirty-one (331 =55.3%) while female respondents were two hundred and sixty-eight (268 = 44.7%) in number.

Age:

One hundred and twenty-four (124=20.7%) respondents are between ages 18-27. Two hundred and seventeen (217) which formed 36.2% of the population of our respondents are between age 28 and 47; thirty-two (32= 5.3%) respondents are between ages 38 and 47. In addition, sixty-six (66 =11.0%) respondents fall within the age range of 48 and 57, while respondents of 58 years and above are 39 that is 6.5%. However, six of the respondents did not state their ages the figure represents 1.0% of the total population.

Education:

First-degree holders were one hundred and ten (110) which 18.4% is. HND holders were 5, representing 0.8%, ICAN holders were nine (9) 1.5%, those that did not state their qualification were one hundred and twenty-sic respondents which makes 21%. We presume that respondents in this category had at least primary school leaving certificate since the area covered within this group had been enjoying free education since 1955 during the time of Awolowo as the Premier of Western Region of Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that all respondents are expected to be literate enough in the language of the region, which is Yoruba; and might have partial understanding of the National language, which is English.

Occupation:

Thirty-one (31) of the respondents were teachers (5.2%). Thirty were traders (5.0%), twenty-four (4.0%) were artisans, one hundred and four (104) 17.4% were civil servants, seventy-six (76) 12.7% were students while six (6) 1% were clergy. Only three hundred and two of the five hundred and ninety-nine respondents indicated their vocation/profession. The implication is that two hundred and ninety-seven (297) 49.6% claimed to be unemployed. Although this figure indicates a high trend of unemployment in the State, we presume that some of the respondents that claimed to be unemployed assumed that only government employees were the only people employed because most of them felt the research was gathering data for employment.

Place of Birth:

Although majority of the respondents were born in Osun State totaling five hundred and fifty-two (552), which make up 92.2% of our respondents' population, the remaining forty-seven (47) 7.8% cuts across different parts of Nigeria and even Ghana.

Local Government of Residence:
Only fourteen (14) 2.3% of the respondents claimed not to be resident in Osun among the respondents during the election meaning that 97.7% reside in Osun. In essence, data collected showed the true picture of what happened during gubernatorial election in Osun in 2015.

State of Origin:
Seventeen (17) 2.8% respondents claimed other States of the federation than Osun. Twenty-two (22) 3.7% did not respond to the question. All others claimed to be indigenes of Osun State. This indicates the validity of the data collected. Five hundred and twenty-six (526) 87.8% of the respondents claimed to be citizens of Nigeria, two (2) 0.3% claimed to be non-citizens while seventy-one (11.9%) did not indicate their nationality.

Native Language:
One respondent (0.17%) did not respond to the question. The same number of respondents claimed Pidgin, French, Owan, Igede, Efik, Biran. Three (0.5%) claimed Igbo; same for Hausa while fifteen (2.5%) claimed English as their native language. Five hundred and seventy-one (95.3%) of them claimed Yoruba as native language in all. This implies that majority of them would feel Yoruba as their preferred language of instruction during the election (almost all respondents). Ten (1.7%) did not indicate language spoken apart from their native language nor respond to the question. This implies that five hundred and eighty-nine (98.9%) of them were multilingual.

11. This question seeks to investigate the Language spoken during the election:
Three (0.5%) respondents claimed that French was the language of instruction. The same figure claimed Yoruba and Pidgin were the language of instruction at the polling station. Thirty-four (5.3%) respondents claimed Yoruba and English were the languages of instruction. Sixty-six (11.0%)

respondents claimed Pidgin was the language of instruction at their polling units. Two hundred and two (33.7%) claimed Yoruba was the language of instruction while one hundred and sixty-one (26.9) said only English was the language of instruction in their polling booth.

This implies that those in the polling booths where only French was the language of instruction would be disadvantaged which is questionable because there was no indication that we have monolingual French speaking person in Nigeria. In polling booths where the electoral officers passed instructions in only English, the presence of any monolingual native language speaker would pose a problem in that the individual may be disenfranchised. In addition, where only Yoruba is the language of instruction, other non-Yoruba speakers may decide not to participate in the exercise.

12. **This question attempts to find out whether voters were satisfied with the language of instruction during the election or not.**

Four hundred and forty-eight (74.8%) respondents claimed to be satisfied with the language of instruction while forty-seven (7.8%) said they were not satisfied. While one hundred and four (17.4%) did not respond to the question. Although (74.8%) is significantly a high figure, the dissatisfaction of about 35 2% is significant in relation to election matters. If that percentage happens to be disenfranchised, it implies that the language of instruction or language policy in Nigeria needs to be revisited.

The realization of high percentage of electorates' satisfaction with the language of instruction during the election is due to the level of education of the electorates. But if within such an educated region, about 35.2% of the electorates were disenfranchised because of language of instruction problem during the election, then the use of non-native speakers or the national language policy needs to be reworked and implemented.

Ekiti State

The researchers administered 500 questionnaire in Ekiti state but the research assistants returned only 332 copies. Computation of Ekiti State responses to each question is the subject of discuss in the next sub-section.

Sex:

Male respondents totaled two hundred and eleven (211) while female respondents were one hundred and twenty one (121) in number.

Age:

Fifteen (15) which is 4.5% respondents were between age 18-27. One hundred and twenty-one (121) which make up 36.4% of the population of our respondents are between age 28 and 37; one hundred and thirty-eight (138) respondents are between ages 38 and 47; these constitute 40.9% of the respondents' population while sixty (60) respondents fall within the age range of 48 and 57 (18.2%).

Education:

First-degree holders were seventy-six (76) which 22.7% is. OND/NCE holders were two hundred and twenty-six (226), representing 68.2%, ICAN holders were fifteen (15) 4.5%.

Occupation:

Two hundred and fifty-seven (257) making up 72.3% of the respondents were civil servants. Sixty (18.2) respondents were public servants. Number of artisans among the respondents was fifteen (4.5%).

Place of Birth:

In Ekiti State 2015 gubernatorial election, non-indigene respondents were one hundred and fifty-one (45.5) while indigenous respondents were one hundred and eighty-two (182) 54.5%.

Local Government of Residence:
Statistics shows that respondents actually resided across the local government in State during Ekiti 2015 gubernatorial election.

State of Residence
Findings from our research shows that three hundred and seventeen (317) 95.5% of the respondents in Ekiti State were indigenes while fifteen (15) which constitute just 4.5% were non-indigenes.

Nationality:
Findings show that one hundred percent (100%) of our respondents are Nigerians.

Native Language:
One hundred and ninety-six (196) 59% respondents claimed their native language is Yoruba, sixty (60) 18.2% claimed their native language is Ekiti while sixty (60) 18.2%

Finding reveals that some of the respondents claimed other languages as their second language. Another Language;

On Speaker: Igbo and English	256	77%
Pidgin	15	8.25
Yoruba	91	27.3%
Hausa	15	8.2%
Igbo	15	8.2%
No Response	15	8.2%
Ekiti speaker with Yoruba as second language:	45	13.6%
Ika	15	8.2%
Monolingual Yoruba	15	8.2%
Monolingual Igbi/ika	15	8.2%

11. This question seeks to investigate the Language spoken during the election:

Sixty (18.1%) respondents claimed that Yoruba was the language of instruction in their polling units, one hundred and ninety-six (59%) claimed English was used to instruct them; 15 (8.2%) claimed the use of Yoruba and Pidgin, while another 15 (8.2%) claimed the use of Ekiti and English. Similarly, 15 (8.2%) claimed that the language of instruction is their polling booth was Igbo and English while another 15 (8.2%) claimed the use of English and Ekiti.

12. **This question attempts to find out whether voters were satisfied with the language of instruction during the election or not.**

Three hundred and one respondents (91.8%) respondents claimed to be satisfied with the language of instruction while fifteen (8.2%) said they were not satisfied.

Findings

In summary, the total the researchers retrieved one thousand five hundred and thirty-two questionnaire. Findings reveal that 53.6% of the total sampled electorates were male, while 46.4% were female. The implication of this is that male respondents were more available far more than female. Their age distribution was such that 19.7% were within the grouping of 28 to 37 years, 20.4% were within the age grouping of 48 to 57 years, while 16.7% were 58 years of age and above. The test on respondents' educational background revealed that 3.7% had primary school form of education. About 13.1% had SSCE, 44.95 had OND/NCE, and 35.7% had degree qualification, while 2.5% had a form of professional certification. The statistics shows that 50% of the respondents were not indigenes of the present state where they participate in election process while less than 50% were indigenes of the state. The result indicates that 39.8% of the sampled electorate in Ekiti state ate from Ogun State, while 21.1% were from Ekiti State.

Computation of the responses to the question on language of instruction reveal that 37.5% of the respondents confirmed that the electoral officers use English language as medium of instruction. 37.1% said they used Yoruba, 3.1% said they used Pidgin English; while 22.3% said they used English and Yoruba language in form of code-mixing. One thousand, four hundred and eighteen respondents, 92.6% of total respondents were of the opinion that they were satisfied with the language used by instructors, while one hundred and fourteen (7.4%) respondents indicated that they were not satisfied.

Technically, it is possible to ignore the dis-satisfied electorate; however, studies have shown that a single disgruntled person can create problems in a society if not carefully handled. Such person has tendency to agitate; he can also become irritated and restless thereby become subjectable to protest[1] In election matters, it is a common saying that one vote counts; therefore, a single miscast vote owing to language problem can result in election of a wrong candidate. Therefore, the research suggests that language related problems; need to be given adequate attention to encourage inclusive participation in the election. We note that the preparation for 2019 election and instructions during the election tried to correct this because youth corps posted were more or less from the region. In most polling booths, two youth corps presided; one of them understands the language of the people of the region quite well while the other hard partial knowledge of the language. This act is an improvement on the 2015 election process.

On the radio stations[2] we visited in each state, both federal and stare radios, issues of language of instructions during 2015 gubernatorial were raised

[1] The story of Abimelech and Jotham"s reaction is an example of disgruntled individuals that created problems for the people (Judges 9:1-57).

[2] The research team featured on programmes on radio in each state on the following FM radios where we discussed language related problems during the 2015 gubernatorial elections in the selected state.

and discussed with the suggestion that the National policy on local languages should be implemented across all facet of governance.

We found out that there were individuals who claimed to be monolinguals in each of the states. The claim may be doubtful because of the social-political interaction among different linguistic and ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, one cannot rule out the fact that the elderly women in the villages may actually be monolingual. In a situation where respondents see Yoruba as second language and various dialects as first language, it is possible for older speakers of the dialects to find it difficult to understand instructions in any other language.

Conclusion

Language is important in anything in human society. In election matters, electorate education, instructions, enlightenment and the likes need to be understood by electorates in order to involve all legible voters in the process. Therefore, printing of posters, jingles, instructions should be done in the language the electorate will easily understand. Any attempt to discourage election fraud and electing the wrong candidate needs to be given in the language of the immediate community. Therefore, Nigeria needs to revisit her language policy and implementation.

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