

EFFECTIVE HUMAN SECURITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT; THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Eunice Henry Omwirhiren,

*Department of English
Federal College of Education
Zaria.,*

Corresponding Author: *Eunice Henry Omwirhiren, +2348137319999, sindikekeno@gmail.com*

Abstract

Human security can be termed as a rapid response to the complexity of both old and contemporary security threats ranging from kidnapping, terrorism, ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, health pandemics and global recessions. This paper explores the role of language as well as literature in curbing the menace that has posed as a threat to human security and development issues in Nigeria. It proffers suggestions on how language can help in the achievement of virtually all the sustainable developmental goals (SDGs) from quality education to healthy living, motion of peace and inclusive societies, industrialization and innovations, implementation and revitalization of global partnership and others for the purpose of national transformation.

Keywords: Human Security, Sustainable Development, Language, Development

Introduction

The major index for measuring the success and development of any nation is finding out the extent to which the socio-economic, socio-cultural and economic programs have thrived in its implementation (Bashar, 2017). Provision of peace, security and providing a safe ground for development for citizens is the topmost priority of any nation, Hussein et al, (2005).

Human security aims at protecting people as well as promoting peace and creating an enabling environment for continuous sustainable development. (UNTFHS, 2017)

Human-Security

Human security is a trending prototype for understanding global vulnerabilities and its proponents challenge the age long belief of national security through military security by arguing that the proper target for security should be aimed at the human rather than national level. Human

security reveals a people-centered and multi-disciplinary understanding of security which involves a number of research fields, including development studies, international relations, strategic studies, and human rights (Danjibo, 2013).

Gladius (2017), states that Human security is freedom from fear and from want. It is a basic requirement for human development. Human development aims at expanding opportunities to living a long and healthy life, continuous acquisition of knowledge (education) and gaining access to resources which is a gateway to having a decent standard of living (material well being)

Human security entails safety and protection against harm. It embodies the protection of a country, a building or a person against attack or danger. (Atta and Kyari 2014).

Nwankwo (2013) defines it as a state of wellbeing characterized by

freedom from danger, risk, lack, uncertainties etc

Human security entails primarily citizens having security at home, in their offices, places of worship and within the community.

UNDP (2003) reports that human security addresses two types of threat:

- Chronic embedded threats to security like hunger, disease and violence against women.
- Sudden and painful changes such as consequences of conflict, natural disasters and sudden economic downturn.

The reports explain that human security and development are the basis of inclusive human rights; these are freedom from fear and freedom from wants. In summary, human security gears towards individuals living in peace and harmony, freedom from diseases, unemployment, hunger, political oppression, environmental degradation this brings about justice, fair play, tolerance, protection of human rights and a level playing ground for all citizens to participate.

Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable development goals can also be referred to as global goals. SDG's are designed and committed to bring the world to several life changing 'zeros'. Such as Zero poverty, hunger and Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), threat to life and discrimination against women and girls (Nbuezor & Ozioka (2015) cited in Bashar (2017). This development brings about progress, advancement and the wherewithal to provide for the material well-being of all citizens. Sustainable development is majorly in pursuit of harmonizing the basic human needs and it tailors it down to two major factors:

1. That humans are at the core of development

2. That we are borrowers of the earth for our children and we must hand it on to them in a reasonable usable shape.

As such, language becomes veritable tool for social interaction and effective language is needed to function properly in all areas. Elley (1991) states that "A person is functionally literary when he has acquired knowledge and skill in reading and writing which enables him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally absorbed into a cultural group.

Language predates human existence; it is a means of communication and also a powerful means of disseminating knowledge and ideas. Worthy of note is that language and communication are vital tools that are used to achieve social transformation. Hence, language is a formidable tool through which social, political and economic development could be achieved (Canary, 2011).

It is imperative that every human society has to keep its languages active in order to transmit instructional knowledge and trained skills such as the cognitive, affective and the psychomotor. This is the juncture where language and literature is synergized to form the core of every educational institution as education is seen as a lifelong process which begins from birth to death. It is a means of socializing any individual to acquire useful and useable knowledge, skills and training in order to become a fully developed useful member in the society; effective communication has played an important role in many aspects of everyday life and has led to the development of the concept of a modern society.

Literature review

Language cannot be isolated in uttering speech sounds, also, it is not possible to relate or interact with people

without some speech art to it. Hence language cannot be separated from literature. Standard language is different from a language that is kindled with rhetoric. Chidi Amuta (1983) defines literature as "a product of people in society, a social institution, super-structural manifestation of a fundamentally material process, the process of creation of ideas and values within the limits prescribed by the social essence of language." Succinctly, Esonwanne (2002) asserts that language and literature are not mutually exclusive as being tools for sustainable development; as Nigerian literature embodies external beauty but empirically, it is the reflection of public taste, a social product expressed through the medium of language.

Asade (2000) reiterates that Literature, through language, warns people of dangerous and anti-social practices, ridicules people of mean and despicable character, criticizes such evils like corruption, injustice, nepotism, bribery, economic and political sabotage, oppression, colonialism and neocolonialism, dictatorship, racism or colour segregation, literary theft, money laundering, examination malpractice, cultism, armed robbery, militancy, abduction, drug peddling, human trafficking, election rigging, arson, sectarian crisis, looting, extra-judicial killing, etc.

Good poetry, songs and music, especially those philosophical ones which extol good virtues and deride ignoble course or action are capable of correcting societal ills. When people gather to interact in various communities, ironies, proverbs, metaphors and symbols are employed in their conversations to embellish their use of language. This is the same style some writers always adopt to create beautiful

stories which mirrors humans experience in the society, which is not exclusively different from oral speech. Suffice to say, one thing Nigerian literature aims at is to reshape the psyche of Nigerians to make them conscious of the state of things in the polity and to awaken in them the consciousness of the need to change their situation and contribute to a sustainable national development.

Security Challenges In Nigeria

In a society, individuals need justice, equity, fair play and respect to be able to cope. This makes it pertinent for all citizens to be obliged the right to live in an environment that is devoid of social antagonism. What this implies is that, all citizens need freedom from dysfunctional relationships, dramatic experiences and below standard life conditions (Nweke,1998). Every citizen also deserves the right to information and the freedom of action to be able to fulfil social responsibilities. As such, the government is saddled with the responsibility to ensuring that all citizens have equal right, obligation and opportunities before the law.

However, in the last few years in Nigeria citizens have witnessed and are still witnessing social class distinctions and inequalities in the distribution of resources, social rights, privileges and power thereby making it possible for a wide margin between the wealthy and the poor and it has made poverty a gateway to crime. Others include corruption, high rate of inflation, mismanagement and misappropriation of public funds as a result of poor governance which has led to the inability of the Federal Government to protect and support its citizens physically, socially and emotionally (Nnoli, 2006). What the Nigerian society is experiencing right now is a high level of political, religious

and ethnic interest, economic distress and a high level of youth unemployment which has exposed the Nigerian youth to a higher level of decadence and has made the susceptible to drug abuse, gangsterism, armed robbery, political hooliganism and other social vices leading to insecurity. Obviously this high level of insecurity will hamper sustainable development of the society.

An outlook of human security challenges in Nigeria

Nigeria is faced with an unprecedented wave of different but overlapping security crises - from kidnapping to extremist insurgencies. Almost every corner of the country has been hit by violence and crime. Awortu (2015) explains that the scale of insecurity threatens the very fabric of Nigerian society: "With every attack, human lives are lost or permanently damaged and faith in democracy and the country is diminishing."

One of the recent horrifying threats for the Nigerian populace is the frequent kidnapping of school children from their classrooms and boarding houses. Over a thousand students have been abducted from their schools since December 2020; many were released after thousands of dollars was paid as ransom. Some of the kidnapers are commonly referred to as "bandits" in Nigeria. These criminals raid villages, kidnap civilians and burn down houses.

The north-west is the epicentre of these attacks. In Zamfara state alone, over 3,000 people have been killed since 2012 and the attacks are still going on. Hundreds of schools were closed following abductions at schools in Zamfara and Niger state, where children as young as three years old were seized. Even though the North-east is the worst hit with insurgency its effects

reverberates through the entire country..." (Awortu, 2015:213).

Herders and farmers clash is another major issue that is posing a serious human security challenge in Nigeria. Violent disputes between nomadic animal herders and farmers in Nigeria have been going on for many years. One major reason for this disagreements is the tussle over land and water, as well as grazing routes, which have been exacerbated by climate change and the spread of the Sahara Desert, as herders move further south looking for pasture. Thousands have been killed in clashes over limited resources. The resultant consequence of all these dastard acts is its effect on the food and nutrition, health, education and protection which are the primary need of every individual.

Theoretical framework

The analytical frame work adopted for this study is the Sapir-Whorfian theory of language since the study is premised on the role of language and literature in achieving effective human security as a stepping stone to achieving successful SDGs.

Edward Sapir first introduced this theory in 1929 and it was subsequently developed by Benjamin Lee Whorf in 1938 with his idea of linguistic relativity which posits that a speaker's spoken language is relative to his perception. This further reveal that a man's way of thinking and being expressive relies much on his socio-cultural environment. Viewing SDGs goals from the prism of this theory and relating it to human security, Robinson (1996:4) maintains that wherever people are put in the center of the developmental process, issues of language will always be made a priority. Djite (2008:8) posits that attention to language issues is crucial to a successful and sustainable

development: 'No matter how one defines development, it cannot be achieved without reference to language as an important factor and real development is not possible in the world without the integration of local languages and the full participation of all her human capital'.

Djite (2008:109) cited in Ezeh et al. (2020:7) further observes that 'the assumptions about language made by the proponents of development in the world are simply incorrect: even the use of 'supposedly simple (European) language that people do not understand, portrays a lack of understanding of the people in focus. Consequently, when two cultures and languages meet, the need for translatability arises. According to Zygmunt (2008:36-37) cited in Ezeh et al (2020:7)

Suffice to say, translatability is an in road to consciousness of the challenges that arise as a result of intercultural understanding and inter-language communication. The lexicon of the language mirrors objects and ideas created by the mind of a given language user who differs in custom, behavior and tradition from other language users.

Language and literature for effective human security

There is no gain saying that language influences the achievement of the nation's developmental goals. According to Leech (1974), language basically has five major functions in the society and they include being: Informative, expressive, directive, phatic and aesthetic. Each of these functions, if properly harnessed can help to achieve the sustainable development goals in the following ways:

- Enhancement of the thought pattern of the mind of the individual and by extension the community. Given that beliefs are thoughts, it waters the

mind with ideas to create goals. Without language, even the idea of the SDGs cannot be conceived.

- Interpretation of the established SDG goals.
- Execution of the Sustainable developmental goals.
- Evaluating the developmental process and making amendments: Language can be used as a measure of effectiveness of the developmental process, taking cognizance of the setbacks and improving and building on viable goals.

This is not limited to an individual but it extends to the larger society given that beliefs and culture are thoughts. Kaplan (1966) asserts that each language of the world is influenced by a thought pattern that's unique to the culture or the collective customs and beliefs of the people. This thought pattern is visible in the way the sentences in a paragraph are ordered and structured. Each language has a distinctive way in which sentences in a paragraph are written, that is, reflective of the thought process. So most times when we make decisions, it is more of the cultural experiences stored in our brain that make our decisions. Even if we are not aware of it, culture influences how we see the world, what decisions we make, how we approach problems, and how we solve them. This makes culture to foster a more extroverted personality style, we can expect more need for social interaction. Additionally, Individualistic cultures foster more assertive and outspoken behavior. When the general population encourages these gregarious behaviors, more ideas are exchanged and self-esteem increases. This makes it evident that without language the idea of the SDGs cannot be conceived.

The role of language and literature in sustainable development

Language is a window through which we look at a nation's culture, traditions and history. With language, people are able to communicate with one another. Communication therefore, plays an important role in the process of creating a sustainable way of life around the globe. People who are multilingual and multi-competent in communication strategies can have a greater appreciation for the interconnectedness of modern life.

It is no gain saying that the nation is empowered and developed through its communication with other countries. English is the key to socialization between individuals and among countries of the world. Nigeria is a multilingual/multicultural community. Consequently, different languages abound. There are many ethnic groups in Nigeria and it is English language that functions as a national language. Such groups can function effectively as one through English language. The argument for the use of an indigenous language to serve in the domain of a national language has remained controversial in Nigeria. This is where the role of English cannot be relegated to the background. Again, in the area of curbing and solving security problems, English language has an integral role to play. It serves as a unifying and an integrative factor that brings people together and usher in the spirit of oneness and togetherness. In Nigeria, if the English language is accorded its role, unity and peace will be tremendously restored. The role of English in this domain should be recognized especially in the present Nigerian society where the country faces a lot security challenges and other issues that border on the country.

Conclusion

The English Language is an indispensable tool for national unity,

integration and global communication. It plays a pivotal role in the attainment of sustainable developmental goals. This work advocates total utilization of the English language roles especially in the contemporary Nigerian society where corruption, underdevelopment, security quagmires have eaten deep into its fabrics. English should be allowed to perform its role most importantly in nation building. The English language is the language of Education in Nigeria; helps in economic empowerment; it is the avenue to sustainable development. English is equally the language of nationalism. It plays a significant role in almost all spheres of human endeavor, be it in education, politics, the judiciary, administration, economics, religion, government, business and legislation. Summarily, it is the key factor to unending development in Nigeria in specific areas such as education, national unity and the overall nation building of the country as this will be of immense help in placing a check on human security.

Literary works also can help in creating awareness of security challenges and measures to be taken to curb them.

References

- Amuta, C. (1983). The Nigerian Civil War and the Evolution of Nigerian Literature. *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 17 (1): 85–99.
- Awortu, B. E. (2015). Boko Haram Insurgency and Underdevelopment of Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* (5) 6, 213-220.
- Asade, B.K (2000). Language, Literature and National Development in the 21st Century. NCCE Publication.
- Attah S. C & Kyari Y.B (2014). Social Security as a Brand of Human Security: An Approach for Peace and Development in Nigeria. *A Journal of Research Issues and Ideas*. 13 (2).

- Banga, D. (2015) The Role of Language in Human Life. *IJELLH Vol 3 (4)*.
- Canary, H. E. (2011). Communication and organizational knowledge: Contemporary issues for theory and practice. Communication and organizational knowledge. Routledge.
- Danjibo, N., (2013). The Imperative of National and Human Security as Panacea for Peace and Development: A Theoretical Discourse. In *Isaac Olawale Albert et al (Eds.) the Security Sector and Conflict Management in Nigeria. Peace and Conflict Studies programme*, University of Ibadan.
- Djite, P.G.(2009).The Socio-linguistics of Development in Africa. *African Journal of Educational Development, 29,73-79*
- Elley, W. B. (1991). Acquiring literacy in a second language: The effect of book-based programs. In Bell, T. (1998). Extensive reading: Why? And How? *The Internet TESL Journal, IV(12) December*
- Esonwanne, U. (2002). Long Drums and Cannons: Nigerian Dramatists and Novelists 1952 - 1966. (Book Reviews). *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal 34(1): 153*
- Ezeh, N.G. and Udaba, R.O. (2020). The Role of Language in Achieving The World's Sustainable Goals (SDGs). *European Journal of English Language and Literary Studies. 8 (6)*.
- Glasius, M. (2008). Human Security: from Paradigm Shift to Operationalisation: Job Description for a Human Security Worker, *Security Dialogue. 39(1): 31-54*
- Leech,G.(1974) *Style in Fiction : A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional (2nd ed)*. Longman publishers..
- Moore, R.S. (2007). The Basics of Counter insurgency. *Small Wars Journal*.
- Nnoli, (2006) *National Security in Africa: A Radical New Perspective*. PACREP.
- Nwanko J. I (2013): *Managing Education for National Security*, Journal of Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP). Uneage Publishing House.
- Nweke, G.A. (1988). Some Critical Remarks on the National Security Question: *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs. Vol. 12. pp. 1-7*.
- UNTFHS Human Development Report, 2017.
Hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1994_en_chap5.pdf.