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French Language and Print Media for National Security and Transformation in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of French Language and print media in National Security and transformation in Nigeria. How the various print media such as newspapers, magazines, brochures, posters and so on can assist to reduce the rate of insecurity in Nigeria was discussed and the need for French as a second Language in National Security and transformation were looked into. The concept of National Security and the role of print media in National Security such as, educating the public, news on the move, tangible and portable and so on were highlighted and discussed for effective understanding of the topic. Recommendations on how to use French Language and print media for nation security and transformation were discussed such as the teaching of French Language should be made compulsory at both primary and secondary school levels, law enforcement agents should be trained in francophone countries and most of the news papers should be written in various indigenous languages for the grassroots citizens for their understanding and reduction in the tariffs on importation of prints and other equipment for production of print media should be reduced and subsidized. Conclusions were equally made by discussing the various issues discussed in this paper.

Keywords: National Security, transformation print media, newspapers, indigenous language French Language.

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country situated on the West Coast of Africa. It was colonized by the British and gained independence on October 1st 1960. There are indigenous languages in Nigeria besides English and French Languages that are regarded as official Languages and these indigenous languages include: Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo.

Global challenges in different academic, business, social, security, economy and political terrain demand the knowledge of more than a single official language. This was the reason why late head of State Sanni Abacha in 1996, considered the geographical location of Nigeria among neighbouring francophone countries and announced French as the second official language in Nigeria.

Although, several languages like English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Greek, Italian, Dutch e.t.c. are being used as official language world wide for business in politics, commerce and diplomacy. French is the largest language after English Language and not only that the only language spoken in all the continents of the world (Inyang, 2010).

In Nigeria French became widely known in 1960 with the growing need to interact with francophone neighbours. It was later included in the secondary school curriculum. In the mid sixties, France started encouraging the study of the language by offering scholarship to students of Unity schools and sponsorship of the one year abroad program for those in tertiary institutions of higher learning.

Inyang (2010) opined that with the cooperation of the French government, French centres such as Centre for French Teaching and Documentation, Alliance Française, Centre International d, Etude Française; Pilot schools and the Nigerian French project were established to promote the study of the language.

The knowledge of French Language can easily integrate in the global economic future through the French because most of the international jobs require French, international news and adverts are often made in international languages such as French; this enables one to be update in world news. All these have shown the relevance and the need for French Language in Nigeria.

PRINT MEDIA

The print media are to see news as a social product with utilitarian value. Review committee (2004) has the following objectives for print media in Nigeria:

- i. to reflect the centrality of development efforts;
- ii. to protect the basic interests of society;
- iii. to promote the exchange of ideal and information through accurate and balanced reporting as well as informed and objective comments and
- iv. To promote Afro-centric perspective by reflecting national and African coercers, aspirations, values and cultural traditions in their coverage and content.

Review Committee (2004) observed that ownership should be on constitutional principle of plurality of ownership and control. This means that the monopoly and concentration of media resources and infrastructures in the hands of well-to-do citizens should be avoided as this can pose a threat to the existence of a free and pluralistic press. On funding, the Review Committee (2004) states that the print media industry shall be provided with incentives such as single digit import and exercise duties on equipment, newsprint, ink and other production inputs of the industry as well as a waiver of the Value Added Tax (VAT) in the cover prices of news papers, magazines and other periodicals.

It was also stated in the report of the review committee on the content that the print media is charged with the responsibility of focusing on the development process in the country.

THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

The term "National Security" does not appear to have a precise definition. This is because of the nature and concept of national security and may vary from one state to the other. The term contains an ideological element which renders empirical evidence irrelevant as a mean of resolving the discussion.

However, Ehi (2009) identify two main tendencies in defining national security. The first is the state-centred concept which views national security interms of state-centred concept which views national security interms of defence and survival of the state. To him this conception;

- a. equates "defence" with "security" and bestows its protection to the military as the custodians of national security and
- b. Equates national security with security of the states.

The second tendency in the definition of national security involves the factoring of the state and the individual into the constituents of the definition. According to this definition, security involves freedom from danger or threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and well-being of her people. This takes into account the significance of human well-being in the security considerations of a country especially in a developing country like Nigeria. For instance, frequent bombing by Boko-Haram Islamic sects, kidnapping, vandalization of oil pipes, armed robbery indiscriminate killings in Northern part of the country and Niger Delta crisis among others have become ways of life of people in Nigeria. The law enforcement requires more efforts in terms of strategies, methods and equipment for handling these criminal acts. Also, the print media has been in position to curb these criminal acts by alerting the citizens whenever there is danger in a place through the use of newspapers, journals, magazines, posters and so on.

FRENCH LANGUAGE FOR NATIONAL BUILDING AND TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA

To built and transform a nation entails putting all resources together to give the citizens of the country a suitable and better life. These resources include: economic, cultural, linguistic, scientific, technological, natural and so on. There is no nation building and transformation without communication. Therefore, language plays a vital role in transforming and building a nation. The policies to be made are written with language. The business transactions and interactions with other countries involve the use of language. Nigeria as a nation needs to integrate French Language into the transformation and building of the country. This was made by the former late head of state of Nigeria, General Sanni Abacha on December 14th 1996 in Onyemelukwe (2004).

We have seen that we are virtually surrounded by French speaking countries and these countries are our kith and kin. But, because of difference intended in language of our Colonial masters, there is a vacuum communication with our neighbours. It is our interest to learn French.

This statement shows the relevance of French Language in building and transforms a virile and viable nation. We need the co-operation with our neighbours in its totality to transform and build the national security in our various borders in Nigeria.

There are several reasons for learning French Language in Nigeria.

- i. If Nigeria as a nation must assume the role of leadership in Africa and to stamp our authority and supremacy in all spheres of life, we must be fluent effective and proficient in the two most dominant official languages in Africa (English and French) (Onyemelukwe, 2004).
- ii. Globalization has made it easier for every one to do business anywhere in the world with problems. There is no business that can be transacted without language. And French Language is one of the languages in the world in terms of business, medicine, technology, science, security computer, arts and culture and so on. Therefore, Nigeria needs to incorporate French Language as to meet up with the growing challenges of globalization.
- iii. In Nigeria today to be 21st century compliance one needs to be French and computer literate. As this will be added advantage to the graduates looking for white collar jobs. In some establishments in Nigeria French Language has become a requirement for employment into many of the establishments. Inyang (2007) observes that one could be a better teacher, doctor, lawyer, secretaries, journalist, airhostess and military or paramilitary officer with the knowledge of French Language.
- iv. Ojelade (1999) observed that French Language as a second official language in Nigeria can be used for deliberations in International Organizations such as European Union, United Nations, African Union and others. He states that in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), eleven out of the sixteen members states are francophones. The situation of a non French speaking country here could be imagined. Therefore, in the political scene, Nigeria requires French for easy flow of communication.
- v. France is an expert in world technology. The invention of world's fastest train (TGV), leader in the production of automobile and electronics, one of the leaders in scientific and medical research, all accredited to France (Shryock, 2004).

Similarly, regional cooperation is also very important to avoid crisis and sometimes to resolve border disputes, conflicts, Trans border smuggling and other crimes. This cannot be achieved without bilateral talks between the affected countries. It will be a problem of both parties to discuss and may not understand each other because of the barrier created by language. This can lead to disintegration and complication of the issues. For instance, Nigeria peacefully settled and conceded some of its land around Bakasi area to the Cameroonians because both parties understand each other. Peace keeping missions and conflict resolutions become more problematic and impossible and regional cooperation becomes truncated without the knowledge of French Language (Obi & Agbagbatu, 2010).

VARIOUS PRINT MEDIA FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA

Print media have been the first form of mass communication, since the first journals after the invention of typography by Gutenberg in 1447 and monopolized the field until the mass production of the radio in 1920s. In the next 90 years, the television and the internet have claimed their own share of the media audience. Despite the technological advancements which allow us wireless access to the internet from pocket-size devices the special attributes of print media still render them an important source of information, as the World Association of Newspapers has pointed out that one billion people in the world read a newspaper everyday (Tasos, 2013).

There are several types of print media that can be effectively used for national security and transformations in Nigeria as noted by Jenny (2013) are as follows;

- i. **Newspapers:** This is the most popular and easily recognizable form of print media. Newspapers can be published daily or weekly and cover local and international news stories. A newspaper is usually divided into different segments, security sports news, cartoons and television listings. A newspaper is a useful means for the dissemination of information; this is why it had remained popular despite the advancement in technology which gives people the option of reading their news online. The most important story is usually featured on the front page, under a headline with a byline stating the name of the reporter who wrote the story. Different types of newspaper cater for different readers. For instance, some daily papers focus on the stock exchange, sports, current affairs, while others focus on sensational news stories. The newspaper with the most revenue because advertisers are willing to advertise in them since they know they will get more value for their money.
- ii. **Magazines:** It is a publication which is published on a set schedule; weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly. A magazine is usually funded by advertisers, outright purchase at magazine stands, from vendors and other distribution outlets, and through subscription by readers. It usually has a niche audience since they focus on a specific interest; a magazine focusing on national security would target those who have interests on national security and magazines focusing on transformation agenda of the

Federal Government usually targets its audience. Magazines can be available in specific regions or cities in the whole nation or even internationally

iii. **Newsletters:** This is a publication which usually deals with one topic which its subscribers find useful and which is distributed on a regular basis. Clubs, societies, churches, business and associations regularly produce newsletters to provide information to their members, employees and customers. Some newsletters are used as a means for making money because they are sold directly to subscribers. In Nigeria, political campaigns, the surge of Boko-Haram Islamic sects, transformation agenda of the government can circulate updates to people with similar interests using newsletters. In schools, newsletters inform parents about school activities, curricula and security situations around the society can be written on.

iv. **Posters:** A poster hangs on a surface and usually includes graphics, text or a combination of both. Posters come in various shapes and sizes, but for them to make impact they must draw attention. They can be used to promote or introduce a specific thing and are a common tool for advertisers; political campaigns and government in enlighten the citizens on national security. The message in a poster has to be brief and eye-catching as it targets a person on the move.

v. **Brochures:** This gives detailed information about the product or what happens in certain environment. These are mainly distributed at events or even at the main outlet when people need to read in details about the happenings in the environment. For instance, happenings in the three states where there is state of emergency announced by the president Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan.

Apart from these print media, direct mail, flyers, handbills/leaflets, banner, billboard, press releases and so on are also various types of print media that can be used for national security and transformation in Nigeria.

The Role of Print Media in National Security and Transformation in Nigeria

The print media is considered to be one of the most flourishing industries in Nigeria today. This medium is also particularly very popular to reach the target audience on various issues. The different types of print media give a plethora of options for people to reach a varied bracket of users. Therefore, be it newspapers or magazines, every medium has its particular roles, which should be considered to be of utmost importance by all the readers and clients. However, print media has its role in national security and transformation in Nigeria. Tasos (2013) discussed the following roles:-

- (1) **Educating the public:-** Since the mass circulation of the first Iwe Iroyin illiteracy rates in Nigeria has dropped massively and played a significant role in this change. The rise of newspapers circulation coincident with the rising literacy rates, it has helped in basic reading skills for providing information on political, economic, cultural, sports topics and recently the national security and transformation agenda of the present administration in Nigeria.
- (2) **News on the move:** - Most cities are composed of busy professionals who have little time to spare and who only have time to learn the news as they go to their job or back home. Modern technology has made it possible to connect to the internet from a mobile device, such as a smart phone and read the news from digital sources happenings in the country. However wireless connection is not available everywhere, while newspapers are written in indigenous languages and purchase at cheaper rate and a more practical way to read the news on the move.
- (3) **Democratic media:** - According to 1999 Nigeria constitution "freedom of information is a fundamental human right". Freedom of information requires all citizens of a country to be able to find information through official or independent sources, including mass media. However, not every one has the ability to use new age media, due to lack of infrastructure, financial resources or the knowledge to operate them. In this case, print media act as a guarantee for the public's right to information.
- (4) **Detailed Accounts:** - Despite the fast pace of modern societies people need detailed coverage of serious topics, such as national security of country, war or natural catastrophes, comprehensive articles are essential for the public's understanding of a delicate issues such as the surge of Boko-Haram Islamic sects, kidnapping, indiscriminate killings and political issues such as the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF) voting recently, campaigns and rigging of elections in various states. Constrained to the radio and television, print media segments are not as severely constrained by time. In addition, internet articles must be published as soon as an issue arises, potentially leading to inaccuracies on the initial draft, while print media are given the luxury of time.
- (5) **Tangible and Portable:** - Print media, unlike the web, radio or television media are tangible. Readers are engaged as they turn page after page to read articles, look at images and view advertisements in their favorite magazines or newspapers. The newspapers are often tossed after

reading; the life span of a magazine can go on for years. Magazines are passed along to friends, left on coffee tables as decor and stored on bookshelves for future reading and references. These factors represent an important aspect of print media that online advertising can't offer.

In the same vein, Isa (2007) discussed the role of print media as to ensure a peaceful national coexistence and progress, print media can be used to discourage such negative issues as ethnicity, dictatorship in leadership like the military rule and embezzlement of public funds, as it is very rampant aiming the politicians occupying positions of responsibility and related public officers in Nigeria. Perhaps if the print media in Nigeria were carrying out or were allowed to carry out their functions of investigating facts and writing the information out to the public, the recent scenario whereby some, ex-governors which include Saminu Turaki of Jigawa State, Orji Ugo Kalu at Abia, Joshua Dariye of plateau, Gbenga Daniel of Ogun State, Alao Akala of Oyo State and Chimam Nnamani of Enugu and the likes who were arrested by the anti graft commission, the EFCC for alleged money laundering and embezzlement might not have happened.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are put forward with the hope that they will serve as panacea for solving problems of insecurity in Nigeria and thus enabling the citizens to be security awareness of the happenings in their various environment.

- i. French teachers should be encourage to stay on the job by giving them incentives, better remunerations, sponsorship to seminars and workshops on the modern methods of teaching.
- ii. Print media should be written out in indigenous languages to enable the information gets to the grassroots. Especially, this time when insecurity is the ways of life in the Northern part of the country.
- iii. The law enforcement agents should be trained in francophone countries to enable them understand the speaking of French language at our various borders.
- iv. There should be a newspaper written in French language for people who understand French as the second language at our various borders.
- v. Government should assist in the importation of French books, journals, magazines and this will enable the literates to be aware of the security and culture of the francophone countries.
- vi. Also, the government should reduce the tariffs on importation of prints, other materials and equipment for the production of print media.
- vii. Newspapers should be given to citizens free at least ones in a month and this should be written in our indigenous languages for better understanding of the happenings in the nooks and crannies of the country.
- viii. Media owners should see it as matter of duty to always seek adequate protection for their staff especially those on sensitive duties in order to forestall various forms of attacks.
- ix. The Nigerian print media should continue to maintain its independence in all circumstances in its relationship with governments and its agencies, including the anti-graft agencies, so as to always maintain balance and keep the ship of anti-corruption afloat.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the various usefulness of French as a second language in Nigeria, various meanings of print media, and national security. It has discussed French language for national building and transformation in Nigeria. Various print media for national security were extensively discussed. Similarly, roles of print media were discussed and recommendations were offered for effective use of print media for national security and transformation in Nigeria.

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