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THE SYNERGY OF INDIGENOUS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES: IMPERATIVE IN REBRANDING NIGERIA'S BATTERED IMAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF TERRORISM FOR NATION BUILDING

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ABSTRACT

The rebranding Nigeria project was launched in Abuja in March 2009 by the former minister of communication Late Prof. Dora Akunyili with the emotional Slogan "Nigeria, good people, Great people". The Nigerian government embarked on this project because of the battered image of Nigeria before the international committees. This was considered necessary because a nation's development is tied to its image. Today without doubts, most Nigerians yearn for a Nigeria that would transform dramatically from the present undignified level of insurgency, insecurity, mass man-slaughter, poverty, diseases, rape, kidnapping and under development to a Nigeria that would be heaven of peace, progress, unity and good living. The paper examined the concept of rebranding, the roles of indigenous language with those of the English language in re-building Nigeria and achieving national unity. This will in turn usher peace, security of lives and property, and unity that would eventually rebrand the battered image of Nigeria to an investor friendly nation.

Keywords: Rebranding, Nation Building, Multilingualism, Nationalism, Patriotism

Introduction

Rebranding, according to Muzette and Lambkin (2006) is "the creation of a new name, term, symbol, design or a combination of them for an establishment brand with the intention of developing a differentiated (new) position in the mind of stakeholders and competitors, no doubt, it is herculean task marketing Nigeria brand in the international community. The moment you say you are a Nigerian, you are automatically labeled and stereotyped and watched like a mouse watching the predator – cat. You are denied entry into other countries and even when you are given visa, you are subjected to inhuman treatments at most international airports where special checkpoints are created, especially for Nigerians. The Nigeria travelers are subjected to rigorous and intensive security checks. All Nigerians are suspected fraudsters, racketeers, criminals, money launderers, thieves and any negative name you might think of. As if that was not enough, the Ebola Virus saga came on board. Nigerians were watched more than the Liberians that brought that into Nigeria. Nigerian Super Eagles were subjected to inhuman treatment at Gabon when they were denied entrance into the country despite carrying certificates certifying them Ebola free.

Nigerians at home are not helping matters. Our patriotism and spirit of nationalism are characterized according to Messner (1975) by arrogance and fanaticism, boastfulness and

intolerable chauvinism, narrow mindedness and discrimination, self-righteousness and bigotry, violence and inhumanity, unjust, exploitation, manipulation and other forms of social injustice. False patriotism in its social and international dimension has frequently led to racial and ethnic discrimination, class rivalry, corruption, kidnapping, armed robbery, envy and hatred and also to revengefulness and a threat to international peace which eventually may lead to conflicts.

Every day, Nigerians engage in religions and ethnic wars among themselves. Boko Haram has virtually ruined the North with many lives lost through the country. Kidnapping has become the other of the day. At one time or the other, Nigeria has been rated the most corrupt nation of the world. The shared values and norms that hold Nigeria together are gradually being eroded. The moral decadence is evident in Nigeria's social, political, legal, educational and religious system, structures and relationships.

The rate of breakdown families and friendships, the frequency of political violence and banditry, the cries of injustice, incessant industrial action in educational institutions (Polytechnics' 9 months strike is today an indelible mark), and the ferocity of unimaginable religious crises, the 419 syndrome, even in our financial institution testify to this fact.

According to Achebe (1983), Nigeria is not a great country. It is one of the most corrupt, intensive, inefficient place under the sun. it is one of the most expensive countries and one of those that give least value for money. It is dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar. In short, it is among the most unpleasant places on earth (P.11)

What about our youths? They are not left out. Nigeria does not care for her youths. They are not only socially, economically, politically and psychologically deprived, but also morally debased. They are used as thugs to win political positions. Most Nigerian youths are armed robbers, and only good at attacking and maiming people, kidnapping for ransom and they term it getting even with the government. The youth being the virile and productive bracket of every society ought to be cared for. The socio-economic engineering of the society depends on their strength and ingenuity and any human society deprived of her youth are destined to experience undue setbacks and/or prolonged crises.

Most foreign investors have deserted Nigeria and even our own sons and daughters in Diaspora no longer visit home for fear of losing their lives. It is this sordid picture so created that pushed late Professor Akunyili to launch the rebranding project. As she stated at the launching:

> Nigeria cannot wait until it solves all her problems before it can stand to give serious. Thought to rebranding its battered image. This negative perception has had destructive Effects on our people and stymied our growth and national progress (In Arriesike, 2010.P.50).

Adding his voice, the then Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, who represented Late President Shehu Musa Yar'Adua in the occasion said, "let us resolve that we would no longer be held ransom by fraudsters that give Nigeria and all of us bad name and image" (In Arriesike, 2010).

Building a nation takes more than this kind of acrimonious conditions we find ourselves. Elugbe (1999) defines national development as the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education,

economic well-being, mass participation in government. Lawal, Tolu & Oluwatoyin. (2011) posited that "development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when it is viable to provide qualitative life for her citizens". According to Gboyega (2003), development is an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications.

Nation building is important because the quality of life of the citizens of a country is a measure of its development. One wonders what to say of our development considering our battered image and poverty level. A nation can be built economically, politically and socio-culturally. The economic and political notion of nation building is with the aim of rebuilding our physical infrastructure and human capital in order to take our country forward. The nation focuses on accelerating economic and other reforms in a way that makes a concrete and visible difference to ordinary people.

Apart from economic and political endeavors, part of efforts towards nation building is that the nation should attach great importance to the development of national pride and identity. Perception and appreciation of its history and heritage – its art, literature and culture – is of paramount importance. Efforts towards these naturally contribute to the emergence of national and cultural identity. At the same time, facing the future, a nation must be able to instill in its people a sense of sharing of its future, that is, the sharing of its 'history in the making', so to speak. This is done through the verbalization of the national aspiration for the country like the rebranding project, vision 2020 and President Yar'Adua's seven point agenda. Rebranding is a long overdue call for the rebirth of the Nigeria nation and for us to rediscover ourselves and forge ahead in the globalized world.

Language as an Instrument of Rebranding Nigeria for Cohesion and Unity

If the socio-cultural aspect of the nation building is the promotion and preservation of our national identity and culture, our multilingual and multi-ethnic nature ought to be an asset, an embodiment of the cultural diversity and linguistic enrichment of the country. For Nigeria and Nigerians, it is rather a liability. Multilingualism in Nigeria has no positive value. In the words of Schwarz cited in Bamgbose (1991), difference between indigenous languages keep the people apart, perpetuate ethnic hostilities, weaken national loyalties and increase the danger of separatist sentiment (p.39). In essence, the nation today faces a serious test, a challenge of continuity and survival (Oladesu, 2002, p.14).

In recognition of the unique contributions of traditional society to moral formation, our views about Nigeria's indigenous languages and culture need to be revisited. This is really pertinent as stated by Gemma Burford. Lesikar Ole Ngila and Yunus Rafiki (2003):

> As members of an organization with the primary aim of promoting and preserving the traditional knowledge and culture of Africa, we are concerned that the colonialist or early missionary mentality is still very much alive in societies that we once colonized. There is still a widely held view that anything associated with culture and heredity values is pagan, and thus backward, as reflected by the vast number of urban Africans who feel embarrassed to associate themselves with their own cultural

> background. It is time for us to recognize this deeply rooted mentality as, the product of a particular time and of specific policies in human history, and to acknowledge the limitations it imposes on our development, as well as its devastating effects on the natural environment (p.53).

As the traditional Africans learn their socio-cultural roles in the family, among peer group, within socio-religious ceremonies and at moonlight games at the village square, they also learn the moral values of their people. Moral formation is an integral part of the education and formation of the human person from cradle. It was a communal way of life. All these are destroyed by modernity. Life is more individualistic. Children and especially the youths hide in the coolest of their rooms to watch morally destructive films and they are so influenced. Religion and families should encourage more of communal functions than solitary relation with the eternal reality.

Language is very important here. It is a potent vehicle of transmitting cultures, values, norms and beliefs from generation to generation and remains a central factor in determining the status or nature of any nation. The inclusion of indigenous language in education curricula is one indicator of the aspect of human behavior that would be unchanged if language did not exist, Isayev (1997) opined that "language is a nation's most obvious and important attribute. There is no such thing as a nation without a common linguistic basis" (p.86). The dominant inference from Isayev's observation is that for national integration, cohesion and development, there must be a language acceptable to all in running a nation's affairs.

The role of our indigenous languages in national integration cannot be over-emphasized. It not only serves the need for communication but is also a way of expressing other things. The language of any people forms part of the culture and is psychological because language is the tool for socialization, social cohesion and integration. Kayode (1997) added that a society that exists without language will have chaos, turmoil, vandalism, hooliganism and violence as the order of the day (p.6-7). Nigerian nation is an epitome of these vices. According to Gemma, Ngila and Rafiki,

> The greatest threat to the economic stability of the Africa continent is not its changing climate rather it is the gradual erosion of indigenous knowledge and the accompanying destruction of natural wealth – plants, animal, insects, soils, clean air and water – and human cultural wealth, such as songs, proverbs, folklore and social co-operation. This robs people of their ability to respond to social and environmental change, both by removing the resources base, and by attacking the foundation of human identity (p.12).

Therefore our indigenous language should be appreciated as means of preserving our different cultures. The English language has not been excluded in the process of rebranding. Nigeria has English as an official language. Through overt and covert means such as trade and commerce, education policies and ordinances, missionary activities, schools, literature, constitutions, job opportunities and political might, English became successfully entrenched in Nigeria. It is the only unifying language available to Nigerians in the absence of a national language.

English is also the global language used widely as language for social mobility and economic interaction and the command of English for modern communications technologies confer statues. Umera-Okeke and Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2010) noted that "by 1999, English was spoken by about 341 million people as their first language and roughly 500 million spoke English as their first or second language", the use of the English language should be seen as a response to the socio-economic change going on everywhere in the world today.

Moreover, English is the language of the internet, according to Global-reach biz, a tally of the language used on the web in 2000 found that 68.4 percent of all websites were in English, followed by Japanese, German and Chinese (http://globalreachbiz.globstas). English is often used as titles and substitutes for the great majority of foreign films. The same goes for computer games, music, magazine advertising etc. these media should be harnessed for educating and rebranding our youth and all in general as they are highly patronized.

Conclusion

The synergy of indigenous and English language can only breed love and accelerated nation building for Nigeria. Honestly, the wish of every Nigeria in the rebranding project as expressed by Professor Dora Akunyili in March, 2009 is that every Nigerian should work assiduously towards effective reincarnation of social values, national identity and national consciousness. Forces pulled from the indigenous and the English languages as the means of communication can arrest the horrible attitudes of Nigerians that congest the wheel of effective nation building and national unity. Sincerely speaking, what Nigeria owes her heroes- dead or living- particularly in the face of the unprecedented terrorism is a change of attitude, obedience to constituted law and authority, shunning corruption in all its ramifications and stoppage of mindless maiming and killings going on in the country, through the synergy of the indigenous and the English languages. Only then can the battered image of Nigeria be said to have been rebranded and truly ready for nation building.

Recommendations for change

Based on the discussions on rebranding Nigeria, the paper recommends that efforts should be made at promoting both the indigenous and the English language on the backdrop that language embodies culture and shared values of any society and is also an instrument of change. The culture and traditions that form an integral part of indigenous knowledge provide codes of conduct addressing all aspects of the community – economic, social, environmental and psychological. For when they are in place, they keep the society in its equilibrium. Nigerians should continue to use the English language as her national language while they wait for the birth of a national language. We should strike a balance between protecting our indigenous languages and culture and at the same time welcome the English as the language change of the world's technologies which we ought to be part of.

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