Prevention, Management and Resolution of Political Conflicts in Nigeria: The Polite Language Approach

Donatus Chijioke Nwabunze[1] & Ngozi M. Obi[2]

[1]*Department of English and Literary Studies, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe,Anambra State, Nigeria*

[2]*Department of English and Literary Studies, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, NsugbeAnambra State, Nigeria*

Corresponding Author: Donatus Chijioke Nwabunze, **Email:** dnwabunze@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

As it has been observed by Aristotle centuries ago, of all the animals on earth, humans are the only beings endowed with the capacity to talk. They can as well use and manipulate diverse tools for various purposes. But the most important tool that makes them unique from other animals is their capacity to make use of speech to interact. Man is language; language is man. As social beings' people cannot get along in the society without it, as far as communication is concerned. However, apart from positive functions of language, it can also perform negative functions when used offensively. It can be used both as constructive and destructive tool. The world over, offensive language leads to conflict –serious disagreement, quarrel or dispute between one person and another, between two groups of people, and even between nations. Interestingly language can equally be used to prevent, control, manage or settle disputes. It is the view of this paper that global conflicts, with particular reference to Nigeria, can be prevented, controlled and managed if the citizens can learn to use language constructively in a manner that does not slur and smear others. This paper further argues that inter-personal, ethnic and national conflicts can be curbed in Nigeria with skillful application of polite language in any communication event. Conclusively, this paper is of the view that the avoidance of conflict-inducing language would enhance fellowship of Nigerian citizens, rather than fellowship of race, ethnicity, religion and class in the country. As an empirical study, the research has Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, and Deborah Cameron's verbal hygiene theory, as theoretical frameworks. It is hoped that the study will complement all the efforts government has been making in the prevention, management and resolution of various politically motivated conflicts which are threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation.

KEYWORDS

Conflict, Language, Prevention, Management and Resolution.

INTRODUCTION

Talking, that is, using speech is the most basic of all human behaviour. Man has innate ability to talk. This makes us to take language for granted, "something that we do without thinking much about it" (Chaika, 1994). Like fish which cannot exist without water, no person can functionally and actively exist as a member of any human society without ability to use language (Nwabunze, 2019). Human society is so intertwined with their language that it is not possible for one to express oneself meaningfully without the instrumentality of language. Social interaction takes place among human beings only because language enables them to share meanings. Use of language reveals peoples' cultural identities, social backgrounds, characters, intentions and feelings. As we make contact with others, we exchange information and share ideas through speaking –speaking conventionally governed by rules in respect of what we say and how we say it in order to ensure smooth and cordial relations. So, in all ramifications, we cannot do without language.

For the invaluable benefits of language to man as summarized above, majority of people unconsciously accept language as we accept the air and the food we breathe and eat for survival. Few people are conscious of how injurious language can be when used inappropriately. We are hardly aware of how other people feel about our language. Apart from positive functions of language, it can also perform negative functions when used offensively. It can be used both as a constructive and destructive tool. The world over, offensive language leads to conflict serious disagreement, quarrel or dispute between one person and another, or between two groups of people, and even between nations. Hence, how language is used greatly determines the nature of relationship between individuals and groups.

Nigeria is a multiracial, multi-religious, multicultural and multilingual nation. This heterogeneity hampers peaceful coexistence and national development, as the citizenry live in perpetual mutual suspicion. This partly explains why the country is today plagued with social upheavals and armed conflicts among the ethnic nation states that make up the country. Tribal conflicts and communal clashes are so commonplace that corporate existence of the nation is threatened greatly. The conditions threatening peace and security of the country are proliferative. Such conditions range from political differences, ethnic conflicts, religious differences, communal land disputes and Fulani herdsmen/farmers' clashes.

Perhaps the most protracted and most violent ethnic crisis in Nigeria is that of Jukun-Tiv conflict in the north central part of the country. The hostilities are such that they occur every now and then with

attendant loss of lives and properties. Presently, apart from open clashes, there are isolated cases with casualties. For instance, on August 29, 2019, a catholic priest, Rev. David Tanko was waylaid, killed and set ablaze together with his car. The deceased was going for a peace meeting with his fellow priests on how to put an end to the lingering Tiv/Jukun crisis when he was ambushed (The Cable, September 1, 2019). According a report in a national daily, a local government chairman, (a Jukun) who was spearheading a peace move was nearly lynched by Jukun militias on September 29, 2019, on the allegation of taking sides with the Tivs and the security agencies. Currently secret and open killings, as well as kidnappings are the order of the day. The root cause of this perennial dispute is traceable to land ownership and fear of political domination. (Daily Trust, October 3, 2019). Another lingering inter-community dispute is the one between Aguleri and Umuleri communities both in Anambra East local government area of Anambra state. The dispute dates back to colonial days. However, it escalated in April 1990 when the two communities had a violent confrontation that left hundreds of people dead and rendered thousands homeless (Vanguard, 8 May, 1999). The two communities are laying claim over a piece of land. In 1974, Abba in Njikoka local government area, Anambra state, invaded Ukwulu in Dunukafia local government area, also in Anambra state. Both communities recorded loss of lives in the ensuing clash. Again, the bone of contention here is the ownership of a piece of land. Another localized crisis in the country is the Warri crisis. This involves the ethnic groups of Itsekri, Ijaw and Urhobo. The dispute majorly centres on who are the true indigenes of Warri, the largest metropolitan city of delta state, Nigeria (Iweka et al, 2014).

The afore-mentioned crises are localized in that they are inter-ethnic and inter-communal; not of national magnitude. Some conflicts have national dimension with political undertones. A striking case in point was the Nigeria-Biafra war which lasted for about three years. The conflict was rooted in religious, cultural, political, economic and ethnic tensions following formal independence from Britain in 1960 (Wikipedia, accessed October 3, 2019). The war has ended, but agitations for an independent state of Biafra are still a source of national tension in the country. This shows that when a war is waged to suppress agitation for secession by a section of a country, if the root cause of the agitation is not addressed equitably, the agitation always resurfaces in different forms even when the war is over with the agitators as the vanquished. In the Niger Delta region of the country, several protest groups have arisen in demand for the indigenous control of oil and gas deposits by the host communities. The protesters often engage in violent confrontations with federal authorities. These and other violent clashes between the federal government and ethnic militias engender serious insecurity of lives and properties,

as well as political and economic instability in the country. In the midst of these, it is the view of this paper that harmony and peace can be achieved if the country's leadership can devise suitable language to address people's grievances.

One of the interesting findings in peace and conflict study is that language is not a problem in itself; it becomes a problem when it leads to disharmony by being used to dehumanize and demean a person or group of persons. As a heterogeneous nation, there are communication gap and misrepresentation of values and ideas among the citizenry due to diversity of languages and cultures. This keeps people apart. When members of a community are kept apart, ethnic loyalty is high, intertribal hatred is heightened, and national unity is weakened. The situation is worsened by the political leadership of the country which has penchant for defamatory and inflammatory languages. However, as destructive language induces conflict, so does constructive language enhance conflict prevention, control, management and settlement. It is the view of this paper that global political conflicts, with focus on Nigeria, can be prevented, controlled and managed if the citizenry and the leaders can learn to use language constructively in a manner that does not demean others. Avoidance of conflict-inducing language, especially by the political leaders, would enhance fellowship of Nigerian citizens, rather than fellowship of race, ethnicity, religion and class in the country.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

These days Nigeria is bedeviled with social unrests that threaten the peace and security of lives and properties, as well as the corporate existence of the country as a nation. Conflicts and disputes of various types erupt every now and then. In the not so distant past, we had the Zango/Kataf crisis, the Umuleri-Aguleri communal war, the Juku/Tiv tribal war, etc. In the Niger-Delta the government and oil firms contend with the militants; in the North-East, there is insurgency occasioned by the Islamic extremist jihadists named *Boko Haram.* In the middle belt, there are deadly clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, in which the latter slaughter defenseless villagers, including women and children in cold blood. In the Northwest bandits and cattle rustlers constitute security challenge, killing both the security agents and members of the society with reckless abandon. In the Southeast, the separatist movements, the IPOB (The Indigenous People of Biafra) and the MASSOB (The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra) push for secession from Nigeria. In addition to these, kidnappings, communal land disputes and religious crises are commonplace. The nation's religious and political leaders also aggravate the situation through foul language and unguided utterances. To contain these instances of

insecurity, government has put up various measures to manage and control the situation. Various studies have also been done by scholars on the issue of peace and conflict in the country. Out of these, however, the potency of language in generating and resolving conflicts has not been fully exploited. This is what prompted this study –to see how skillful and polite use of language by the political class can be an instrument in preventing, managing and resolving intergroup conflicts in Nigeria. As knowledge of a language serves as an entry point into the cultural life of a people, their ways of reasoning and handling issues; polite and hygienic use of such language can serve as a veritable asset in handling disputes among them.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study has one major purpose: to explore the possibility of the polite and hygienic use of language as an instrument for building sustainable peace, preventing, managing and resolving political conflicts in Nigeria.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant in many ways. It will serve as data bank for further studies on the prevention, management and resolution of social tensions in Nigeria. Government agencies and authorities would find it useful in their effort to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in the country. It would expose individuals and groups to the need for civil, polite and hygienic use of language in the society to promote good neighborliness and peaceful coexistence. The Nigerian populace would learn that the avoidance of demeaning and dehumanizing language goes a long way to nip a crisis in the bud.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, focus of discussion will centre on the concepts which are relevant to the topic of the paper. They include language, conflict, conflict management, conflict resolution, conflict transformation and conflict suppression.

i.   Language

Language is a means of communication among human beings in a community. Members of the society share ideas, express thoughts and exchange information through the use of language. It is a social art, and without its social interaction among human beings cannot take place. As a concept, language has no precise definition. Each technical definition reflects the professional background of the scholar. But,

however the definition, one common feature is that "...language is a means of communication used by man to express himself, control, manage and manipulate his environment, exchange information and make himself understood by his fellow man," (Nwabunze and Ezeife, 2013).

Human beings use language for various purposes; they can use it to promote peace and harmony, they can also use it to cause and promote disunity and conflict. In the society many are not aware of how others are affected and influenced by the way they use language. Language, being complex and multilayered; "every meaning can be expressed in more than one way and there are many ways to express any meaning," (Chaika, 6, 1994). Hence, being that language is the key, the gateway to a people's heart and culture, in the context of our study, Nigerian leaders should possess high communicative competence to enable them to use the right language politely and hygienically for desired result to be achieved.

ii.   Conflict

Disagreement among human beings is natural. Sometimes some disagreements are timely settled amicably before they escalate into conflicts. But most often disagreements generate into serious conflicts. This explains why conflict is said to be an "...intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence," (David, 19, 2006). In other words, conflict is a normal and acceptable feature in human relationship. However, what is abnormal and unacceptable is violent conflict.

As a concept, conflict has got a lot of definitions, many of which emphasize on its characteristics and components. According to Bartos and Wehr (2002), a conflict situation occurs when people or groups engage in hostility in pursuit of incompatible interests. Hence, one definition sees conflict as the "...pursuit of incompatible interest and goals by different groups," (David, 20, 2006). By these views it can be deduced that in every conflict situation, irreconcilable social goals are always involved, and hostility always ensues as the people involved in the conflict compete to attain their respective goals. This conclusion tallies with the argument of conflict resolution scholars that every conflict has its basis in human needs, the denial of which leads to violent conflicts, or differences which may degenerate into armed violence or armed conflict if not resolved timely.

iii.   Conflict Management

Conflict management embraces efforts and intervention strategies put in place to limit, minimize, contain or regulate conflict. It is a process of mitigating the destructive impacts of conflict through a number of measures, in collaboration with the feuding parties in the conflict. The term, *conflict management,* it seems, is an implicit admission that conflict is an intrinsic part of human existence, and that not all conflicts can be permanently resolved, (Shedrack, 2006). The philosophy behind this view is that a situation that cannot be avoided or prevented can only be managed and regulated. To John Burton, a peace and conflict study scholar, "conflict prevention," (Burton, 78, 1965), is part of conflict management. He uses the term to refer to various steps taken to stop or control conflict by making the conflicting parties develop collaborative and cooperative attitude in the conflict management process. Various approaches to conflict management include negotiation, mediation, arbitration and adjudication.

iv.   Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution suggests an idea of permanence or finality in the settlement of a conflict, with the feuding parties mutually satisfied with the outcome or verdict of the settlement. Technically, *conflict resolution* refers to a "variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts, the constructive solving of problems...," (Miller, 8, 2003). According to Miall *et al* (1999), the indices of a resolved conflict include the followings: the sources of conflict are literally addressed and settled; the interests of the parties are covered equitably; the terms of the resolution of the conflict are acceptable to both parties in the conflict; and; the conflicting parties are no longer hostile and can coexist in a friendly and peaceful atmosphere. According to experts, some conflicts are resolvable, while others are not; those that are non-resolvable are intractable, can only be managed, transformed or regulated. Shedrack Gaya Best says that a conflict over needs is resolved when the primary needs of the conflicting parties are taken care of, with their fears allayed. He furthers asserts that conflicts over values (like religion and political leanings) are most often intractable, (Shedrack, 2003).

v.   Conflict Transformation

Ordinarily *transformation* means to completely change something for the better; to make something to be positively the reverse of what it was, both in appearance and usefulness. This is a conflict management approach which comes after conflict resolution. It is aimed at getting the parties in a conflict to cultivate a new positive mind set, change their perceptions and attitudes, and build lasting relationships. The chief proponent of this approach is John Paul Lederach of the Eastern Mennonite

School of peace building. The idea is for the conflicting parties to bury the hatchet and do away with the conditions that caused the conflict and build a new platform of relationship void of hatred, rancour and hostility, (Miall, 1999; Jeong 2000). The process enables the third party in a dispute to go beyond conflict resolution and change the contending parties to begin to love themselves, become non-hostile and embrace peace.

vi.   Conflict Suppression

Suppression is the act of putting something like an agitation to an end through the use of force or coercion. *Conflict suppression* is a term used to describe a conflict situation where a stronger party or intervener takes undue advantage of their position to hamstring or muzzle up the voice of the weaker party in a conflict. Often the stronger party is averse to the principles of tolerance, fairness and justice, and balanced resolution of a conflict. This is mostly obtainable in a conflict between the government of a country and a section of her subjects. In such a situation the government in power employs coercive or brutal force to beat the weaker agitating party into submission. This results to an unsatisfactory situation where the suppressed party, feeling victimized, goes underground and carries on the conflict through other means available to them. (Shedrack, 2006).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this paper is hinged on the theory of verbal hygiene and politeness theory. The former was propounded by Deborah Cameron, while Brown and Levinson are the proponents of the latter.

Verbal hygiene is another version of communicative competence which advocates that in our daily interactions, be it in formal and informal settings; we should endeavour to use polite language which engenders good relationship, builds up people, enhances friendship, and respects other people's feelings. Verbal hygiene focuses on the need for people to avoid misapplication of language or conflict-igniting words. Both in pre- and post-conflict communications, sociolinguists maintain that inflammatory utterances or words which, like "gasoline," ignite or aggravate conflict should be avoided (Jija 2012). In other words, linguistic hygiene teaches that, just as people launder their clothes to make them clean, in

communication event, language should be *laundered* in such a way that it would be free of *impurities* and *viruses* that may likely cause conflict or dispute.

Politeness theory, according to its proponents, projects politeness in language use as a linguistic behaviour that promotes, albeit temporarily, a contextual comity among the participants in a communication event. This means that like comity of nations, a language user should promote peace by respecting the feelings and beliefs of their listeners; there should be mutual recognition of individual and cultural values of the participants in any language event. Observance of this rule in any interaction encourages the application of courteous language which edifies and builds up, rather the one that disparages and tears people down. Every person has identity, prestige or public image to protect. This is what politeness theory calls *face*. Brown and Levinson borrowed this concept from Erving Goffman's theory of 'face' and 'facework,' to teach how politeness can be applied as a technique to remedy the negative impact of misused language to the listener, and even the speaker. The theory of politeness advocates that language should be applied in such a way that the recipients should not lose face, even if the user is trying to their save face. The theory calls for refined or courteous linguistic acts which would serve as a buffer against face-threatening acts occasioned by misapplication of language. On this note, one can deduce that politeness in language is an effort on the side of the speaker to save their face as well as that of their audience from embarrassment.

From the foregoing analysis it can be inferred that politeness is a pragmatic and context-based concept, since it is something that can be practised and observed within the context of a speech event. The phenomenon is influenced by situational factors like power relations between the speaker and his listeners, the subject matter, discourse values, cultural backgrounds, etc.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

This paper is not a pioneer research on language as a central component in conflict matters. Nnuta and Ezeifeka (2017), did a research with the title; "Verbal Hygiene and Ethnic Politics in Nigeria: A Study of Selected Newspaper Print and Online Publications." (2017, 46). The paper investigated into the application of verbal hygiene as an approach towards attainment of unity, conflict resolution and sustainable development in Nigeria. The study discovered that there is relationship between poor verbal hygiene, hate speech, pre- and post-election violence, and ethnicity in Nigeria. Osimen, Aniga and Bateye (2015) carried out their research on conflict with the title: "The Impact of Language in Conflict

Management and Peace Building." (165). The paper asserted that conflict is an intrinsic part of human existence. It majorly viewed language as an instrument that is essential both in de-escalating and escalating a conflict. Another interesting work on conflict is the one done by Bua, Ada and Akinde (2015). The paper, entitled "Conflict Management and Resolution for the Sustainability of Educational Institutions in Nigeria," recommended that: rigidity should be avoided in negotiation, internal conflict should not be made public, dialogue and bargain should be applied in a fair, honest, equitable and acceptable manner (58). In his paper, "Language and Communication in Conflict Resolution," Adejimola (2009) examined the roles and functions of communication as one of the means of non-violent methods of conflict resolution. The paper concluded that language and communication play a central role 'in the management and resolution of conflicts or disputes between the two parties in conflicts' (001). Another research on conflict to be reviewed is the one that goes by the title; "Language as a Tool for Conflict Management and Resolution." It was written by Jija, T. (2012). The author was of the view that '...language is a venom which triggers off conflicts of whatever nature ...'as well as a 'veritable instrument for conflict management and resolution.'

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is purely qualitative. It made use of analogue and electronic library researches to gather data from print newspaper reports and online news, respectively. The texts used for data analysis were selected through purposive sampling technique. This was so since the texts selected were those characterized by unhygienic language. The selected texts were uttered by various leading political figures and opinion molders from various parts of Nigeria. These are people whose words carry weight such that they can sway public opinion and can determine the line of action taken by the people from their ethnic nationalities on national issues. Their words have the capacity to incite or quell social conflicts. Sources of data for the research included the *Guardian newspaper, Daily Sun newspaper, Premium Time.com, Sahara Reporters, Vanguard newspaper, Daily Independent newspaper, Daily Post Newsletter* and *Naij.com news.*

In analyzing the selected texts, Fairclough's 1995 three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used as a guide. Such text analysis centers on the description of the physical text, interpretation of the text at the interactive level, and explanation of the social and cultural situations that give rise to the text under study.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data presented below for analysis are the texts selected from various Nigerian print and online dailies. The analysis will be done along with the discussion of the implications of the unhygienic languages discovered in the texts. Each text is presented with its author, together with its date of publication.

Text 1: "The President's speech was completely unpresidential, lacking in patriotic stance and replete with manifest inconsistencies, contradictions, paradoxes and false performance claims which further confirmed that our dear fatherland is in wrong hands. The democracy speech is an insult to Nigerians, a mockery of democracy." – Kola Ologbondiyan, National Publicity Secretary of Peoples' Democratic Party; the *Guardian Newspaper*, 2nd October 2019.

The above text was a reaction to the speech presented by President Buhari on the 59th independence celebration of Nigeria. The language of the text is obviously uncouth and unhygienic, meant to annoy the presidency and the president and, probably, incite the public against the president. For the speech to be *unpresidential* means that it lacked presidential touch both in delivery and content. The speech was also said to be *lacking in patriotic stance*. This invariably projects President Buhari as an unpatriotic president; a hypocrite who preaches what he does not practice. Furthermore, according to the text, the speech was a mere jumble of *inconsistencies, contradictions, paradoxes* meant to confuse and *insult* the sensibility of Nigerians, whom, it seems, are being denied benefits of true democracy. This is so since the "...speech is an insult to Nigerians, a mockery of democracy. The text under review also indicates that the President's speech portrays him as a presidential misfit, self-trumpet blower who reaps where he does not sow. This is informed by the fact that the speech was a *manifest...false performance claims which further confirmed that our dear fatherland is in wrong hands.*

To the author of the text, who spoke in the first-person persona, the speech of the president was nothing more than a filibuster meant to bamboozle Nigerians and divert their attention from the real situation of things in the country. Coming from a leading member of an opposition party, the text is a political discourse, as no opposition ever sees anything good in the government of an incumbent. Thus, the text was aimed at casting the President in bad light, and to make the public to antagonize him as a non-performing leader. This kind of unhygienic language engenders political conflict which often raises

tribal sentiments, since the author of the text belongs to a different part of the country from president Buhari.

Text 2: "President Buhari is the most disingenuous person I have ever known...He doesn't even understand what it means to survive in a capitalist economy." –Adetokunbo, Pearse, on 'Why It's (sic) Difficult to Achieve Peace in Nigeria.' –*Daily Sun* Newspaper, 27th September 2019.

Analysis of the above extract will be done along with text 3 below.

Text 3: "We have a president who takes lack of empathy to a record level...Void of the emotional quotient necessary for successful leading of a country, President Buhari substitutes good governance with ceremonial proceedings –receive visitors and travel abroad..." –Oby Ezekwesili @obyezeks, 3rd October, 2019.

The above two texts are personality assessments of President Muhammadu Buhari by two Nigerians whose voices in national issues always attract public and political attention. The speaker in the second text describes the president as "... the most disingenuous person..." who... "doesn't...understand what it means to survive in a capitalist economy." For a person to be 'disingenuous' means they create a false sense of sincerity or modesty; to be discretely dubious or deceitful. The implication of this is that President Buhari is naïve, a kind of economic neophyte who has limited knowledge of how to handle a capitalist economy as a president. But to remain relevant before the masses he creates bogus impression of being a competent leader.

In text 3, the speaker projects Buhari, as an insensitive, or even a callous leader who is so bereft of 'empathy' that he is not moved by the hardship to which his maladministration has subjected Nigerians. The language of the text equates Buhari's paucity of leadership skills to that of, say, a hotel receptionist whose skills end in documenting the entry and exit of customers. To the speaker, the president places more premium on 'ceremonial proceedings' of 'governance' – 'receive visitors and travel abroad;' –than settling down and render 'good governance.'

The above texts are an epitome of uncivil and impolite language, which are inflammable enough to trigger off both political and ethnic conflicts; ethnic conflict because the authors of the texts are from different tribes from Buhari; and political conflict because they belong to opposition parties.

Text 4: "...In any case, as far as Danjuma is concerned, Ironsi was an evil man. In 2008 interview with the *Guardian* newspaper, Danjuma described Ironsi as 'a useless desk-clerk Head-of-State...'"

The above text is an excerpt from an online article –https://medium.com –by Rudolf Ogoo Okonkwo. The title of the article is 'Danjuma Has Gone Mad Again.' The writer of the text quoted Danjuma as saying that Ironsi is 'a useless desk-clerk' Head-of-State. Danjuma is a retired General of Nigerian army. Ironsi was former Head-of-State who was assassinated in a counter coup in July 1966, at Ibadan. To describe a head-of-state as a 'desk-clerk,' semantically verges on envy and hatred. *Desk-officer* simply denotes *receptionist* in a place like hotel. The language is so unbecoming of the person of General Danjuma, more so when history has it that he served under Ironsi as junior officer. The language is derogatory, foul, uncouth and demeaning. In a tribal and tribally volatile nation like Nigeria, the language is ethnically inflammable. The Igbos can connotatively interpret it as an insult to the entire Igbo nation. It is capable of igniting and fueling ethnic conflict between the Igbo people and the Jukuns to which T.Y. Danjuma belongs.

Text 5: "You must rise to protect yourselves from these people. If you depend on the armed forces to protect you, you will all die. This ethnic cleansing must stop in Taraba, and it must stop in Nigeria. These killers have been protected by the military; they cover them, and you must be watchful to guide and protect yourselves because you have no other place." –Gen. T.Y. Danjuma.

Like text 4, the above extract is credited to General T. Y. Danjuma as part of the speech he delivered in the recent past at a convocation ceremony of Taraba State University, Jalingo. In analyzing the speech, an analyst started by saying, inter alia, that '...the retired general ...excreted bees unto Nigeria's political space.' This description is metaphorical. *Excrete* is a language used to describe the forceful expulsion of waste matter (like feces) from the body. Like feces, which always has offensive odour, the general's language is socially foul and odoriferous. Like hard drug, the language can incense his target audience into an orgy of bloodletting. As the Speech of Mark Antony did to the roman plebeians in Shakespeare's *Julius Caeser,* Danjuma's speech can sting his people into rash and irrational actions that would lead to deadly conflict with people of other tribes, as they '...rise to protect yourselves from these people.' T. Y. Danjuma is not a mean figure in Nigeria. As one of the opinion leaders in the country, he should have known better than indulge in volatile and inflammatory language that would result in colossal loss of lives and properties. Agreed that there are mass killings of genocide magnitude attributed to faceless gunmen in the country, a person of Danjuma's caliber, and being one of the protagonists of the

176

Nigerian-Biafran civil war, he should have sought for a more civil language to vent his feelings; a language that would mitigate the already charged situation and dissuade Nigerians from taking up arms against one another.

Text 6: "There may be some bad in Africa, but there is also a whole lot of good. Why does this *short ugly little* man not talk about the good, and why does he, instead, always insist on drumming up and harping on the bad even when the evidence for his more often than not *bogus assertions* are not tangible and empirical? If you are not proud of your continent and your people, then you are not worthy of their respect or to be called a leader. Someone please explain all this to our *increasingly desperate, embarrassingly confused* and *impeccably shallow* outgoing Vice-President." –Femi Fani Kayode, Daily Post newspaper, 12th October 2019.

The above text was made by Femi Fani Kayode about the person of the current Vice-President of Nigeria, Prof. Yomi Osinbajo. Fani Kayode is an avowed, unrepentant critic of the present government of All Progressives' Congress (APC) in which Osinbajo serves as second in command. Name-calling and mudslinging are a stock in trade of Nigerian political discourse. Abusive language and defamatory remarks are freely used such that it seems a taboo for an opposition to see or say anything good about a government in power. We all know that Nigeria's Vice-President has small frame, but he is neither a midget nor a Lilliput. But even if he is, he should be assessed not by his physical appearance, by the content of his character. To emphasize on his natural shortcomings the way it is done here –*short ugly little* –is simply degrading and denigrating. The text goes further to paint Osinbajo in a very ugly and unpleasant language as a *desperate*, *confused* and *shallow* personality. Contextually, a person may be overwhelmed with anxiety at one time or the other, leading to a state of despair and befogged thinking. But for a person of Osinbajo, a professor of law, to be accused of intellectual *shallowness* is linguistically unhygienic and demeaning.

Text 7: "I challenge Igbos to secede if they are denied presidency in 2013. If they don't secede, let them go to hell. They have tried secession before, but they were defeated (sic) and failed and lost over one million people" –Junaid Mohammed, Daily Independent Newspaper, 7th October 2019.

Junaid Muhammed, the author of the above text, is a politician from Kano state, North Western Nigeria. The language sounds contemptuous, jeering and scornful, and has the connotative objective of deriding the Igbo ethnic region of Nigeria, which actually lost a war of secession. Semantically the speaker

sounds so pompous and self-important as if it were in his power to decide the fate of the Igbos in matters of the presidency of the country. The language projects the speaker as politically immature and insensitive of the negative effect of his language in the polity. From a regional online political opinion poll run by the researcher in Kano state, the author of the text under analysis, is not a political heavy weight, but such unguided mocking language is irksome. It is capable of provoking national political tension in the country.

CONCLUSION

Observance of the rules of language use in an interaction enhances the application of linguistic hygiene/politeness which prevents the use of insulting and offensive languages. Use of abusive language is an indication that the user does not consider the feelings of people affected by their language. From the analyzed texts above, it can safely be concluded that Nigerian politicians have no sense of linguistic decorum in the governance of the nation. This informs the reason for the prevailing charged and turbulent political atmosphere in the land. Hence, conclusively, this paper recommends that, for peaceful coexistence of the Nigerians, people in authority and corridors of power should imbibe the ethics of polite language and linguistic hygiene in handling the affairs of the land.

REFERENCES

Adejimola, A. S. (2009). Language and Communication in Conflict Resolution. *Journal of law and conflict resolution, 1*(1), 1-9.

Bartos, O. J., & Wehr, P. E. (2002). *Using Conflict Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bua, F. T., Ada, J. N., & Akinde, E. U. (2015). Conflict Management and Resolution for the Sustainability of Educational Institutions in Nigeria. *Journal of literature, languages and linguistics*, *6*, 58-64.

Burton, J. W. (1965). *Conflict and Communication: The Use of Controlled Communication in International Relations*. London: Macmillan.

Chaika, E. (1994). *Language: The Social Mirror* (3rd Ed.). Ontario: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Daily Independent Newspaper, 7th October, 2019.

Daily Post newspaper, 12th October, 2019.

Daily Sun Newspaper, 27th September, 2019.

Daily Trust Newspaper (October 3, 2019). Accessed October 3, 2019.

David, J. F. (2006). Peace and conflict studies: an overview of basic concepts. In Shedrack Gaya best (Ed.). *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa.* Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, pp. 15-34.

Ekeh, R. C. (1999). Nigeria: Aguleri-Umuleri Conflict; The Theatre of Fratricidal War, In *Searching for Peace in Africa*, October, 1999. (Accessed October 3, 2019).

Evughaye, joseph erhovwojese (2017). "Language as a Weapon Of Persuasion in Conflict Management: The Nigerian Government and Niger-Delta Ex-Militants Example." Unpublished thesis paper.

Iweka et al., (2014). The Need for Ethnic Integration in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Developing Country Studies; www.iiste.org; ISSN 2224-607X (Paper), ISSN 2225-0565 (Online), Vol.4, No. 4, 2014. (Accessed October 3, 2019).

Jeong, H. W. (2000). *Peace and Conflict Studies: An Introduction*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Jija, T. (2012). Language as a Tool for Conflict Management and Resolution in Nigeria. *Journal of Igbo Language and Linguistics*. 5 112-120. Retrieved from http.//www.linguisticsafricana.com.

Macaulay, R. (2006). *The Social Art: Language and Its Use* (2nd Ed.). Oxford, Oxford University Press, Inc.

Miall *et al.,* (1999). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*. Cambridge: polity press.

Miller, C. A. (2003). *A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies.* Geneva: University for Peace.

Nnuta, E. C., & Chinwe E. (2017). Verbal Hygiene and Ethnic Politics in Nigeria: A Study of Selected Newspaper Print and Online Publications. *Ogirisi: A New Journal of African studies, 13*, 46-69.

Nwabunze, D. C and A. C. Ezeife (2013). *Listening Skills for Effective Learning and Communication*. Onitsha: Coscan Associates.

Osimen, Goddy Uwa, Aniga, Ugo Samuel & Bateye, Omonike Rashidat (2015). "The Impact of Language in Conflict Management and Peace Building." *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*. 10(12), March-May. Pp.165-171.

Podusova, Antonina (2017). "Conflict Management in the International Conflict: Analyzing the Role of United Nations in the Western Saharan Conflict." A Master's Degree Thesis.

Psyche, Kennett (2011). "English as a Tool for Conflict Resolution." In Hywell Coleman (Ed.). *Dreams and Realities: Developing Countries and the English Language.* London. British Council. Paper 15. Pp 2-15.

Punch newspaper (October, 2019). Accessed on 3rd October, 1999.

Shedrack, Gaya Best (2006)."The Methods of Conflict Resolution and Transformation." In Shedrack Gaya Best (Ed.), *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa.* Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. Pp. 93-115.

The Cable, September, 1, 2019

The *Guardian Newspaper*, 2nd October, 2019.

Vanguard, 8 May, 1999.