

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE RE-ORIENTATION OF RURAL SOCIETIES TOWARDS NATIONAL UNITY

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Abstract

One of the causes of modern man's maladjustment is disunity. To be united is doubtless the most important virtue and need of the human life. It remains to be seen that, a human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community, which preserves certain expectations for the future. This paper examines the role of English Language in the re-orientation of rural societies towards national unity, the purpose of education and the integration of the rural societies into mainstream of the national life as common correlatives in the building of an enduring national unity. The research methodology employed is purely descriptive and the conclusive ground was that, orientation and re-orientation have to do with the root system of every individual in human society, and the permanent soil and background from which thought, aspiration and feeling spring and by which they are sustained.

Keywords: Language, national unity, rural societies

Introduction

The Nigerian nation is according to Yakassai (2012:16), a conglomerate of diverse ethnic nationalities most of which are yet to appreciate the importance of national unity. If there is a general agreement that unity is the bedrock of national stability, then, it is incumbent on every citizen to be part of every genuine effort at fostering unity for the overall good of our nation. This is a call to which this paper seeks to answer.

There are in Nigerian rural societies hidden away small villages where dwell primeval man without civilization, without religion, thoughtless and careless. One stick, pointed makes him a spear and fifty sticks tied together make him a house. Any talk about unity makes no sense to him because he can not see or think beyond his immediate environment. He lacks education and does not care for education. Often time,

such a state of the primitive societies cannot but challenge the educated mind. This challenge is prompted by the very fact that, this manner of life comes under the observation of other energetic societies that are in process of civilization in the same geo-political environment. The question that naturally follows is; how can the extreme contrasts between these two ways of life be reconciled to the benefit of both? Ajakpo (2010:76) opines that "the factor of transition cannot be overemphasized in the study of the primitive societies with respect to any attempt to galvanize them towards modern civilization".

We take the summation of Ajakpo (2010:76) to mean that, suddenly moving people from conditions of pressure to conditions of ease may in effect, produce demoralizing behaviour in them. And we argue further that, such ill effect may be the consequence of the transition, rather than the

consequence of the conditions in which the results were used. This is the point where re-orientation enters into relevance. We assert that, the rural societies in Nigeria can only be re-oriented to the consciousness of national unity through the vehicle of education that is fueled by the English Language, which remains the nation's official lingual franca. This will lead us into a brief history of the English Language.

A Brief History of English Language

The English with German, Dutch, Norwegian, Danish, etc. belongs to the Germanic group of languages. All of these tongues were said to have developed from a primitive language spoken in prehistoric times by the early Germanic tribes. The English Language was brought to Europe by some Germanic tribes namely, Angles, Saxons and Jutes between the fifth and the sixth centuries.

As an instrument of expressions, the English Language has been enormously improved by its borrowing from other tongues. It surpasses most other languages in its wealth of synonymous words and in its power of drawing peruse and subtle destructions. According to Spurr (1985:54,) "The English Language has a web of relationship with almost all world languages".

Healing a Dis-united Nation

It has always been quoted that "a house divided against itself cannot stand". We assert, for the purpose of this paper that, the quotation speaks to our moment as a nation because it draws attention to the moral choice that we have to make. It is doubtless that our nation requires bacon of healing well beyond the silence genius.

One major reason that has continued to be given as responsible for the deficit of unity in our nation is the colonization of the country. It is the view of some schools of

thought that, the nation's colonization was what produced affluent and poor and urban and rural societies in Nigeria. We assert that, it is largely a waste of time for us to continue to argue today about the pros and cons of colonialism and about whether colonial fractures were right or wrong. We premise our argument on the fact that, a lot of those who agonized about colonialism focus on its conquest and subjugation but pay little attention to the fact that this was in fact part of the turning of the wheel of human history, and anthropology has shown that, colonialism is the universal process of movement of human civilization. It is part of the human experience with domination, control and oppression, and it is pail and parcel of the struggle and negotiation for power among peoples. We hesitate not to agree with the assertion of Obote (1988:25) that "the story of colonialism is a vital part of the tapestry of the history of all nations of the world".

With what we have so far discussed, we believe that, the healing of our nation of the ill of disunity would be the result of a combination of factors, one of which is re-orientation through the instrumentality of the English Language. It suffices to say that, it is not only what kind of culture or society the individual is born into, but what kind of orientation he is given, that decides the development of his character. According to Chambers (2009:49) "Orientation breeds attitudes".

The Role of English Language in the Re-orientation of Rural Societies Towards National Unity

Our concern in this paper is to bring afore the fact that, the English Language has a vital role to play in the re-orientation of the rural societies towards national unity. A brief history of the English Language has earlier been stated, showing that, the language, as an instrument of expression,

has gained improvement by its borrowing from other tongues. It is common knowledge that English Language is the most spoken language in the world today, spoken in almost all nations of the world as either the optimal or the second language. We assert, therefore, that a language which has improved so tremendously as to gain global embrace, even though it does so by borrowing from other tongues, certainly has the propensity to lend to other tongues of any indigenous people in any nation of the world. Moreso, it is in fact the language of education in our nation. The fact remains that if the indigenous people in the rural societies in our nation would be brought to the mainstream of the national life, certain percentage of them must be caught and educated to educate own people. When that is done, the task of re-orientating the entire populace of the rural societies will naturally become easier.

At this juncture, it becomes imperative that, we delve into one or two purposes of education which are considered germane to the concern of this paper.

We assert that, the conclusion of the public in relation to education is unanimous to the effect that, there is nothing in the world that is more dangerous than suicide ignorance and conscientious stupidity. It, therefore, follows that, education is both unilateral as well as bi-polar in native to sieve the following purpose, among others:

- (a) delivery of knowledge
- (b) development of particular aspects of human personality or a harmonious integrated growth
- (c) Stabilized or social order, conservator of culture, instrument of change and social reconstruction.

From the foregoing, one can make the deduction that, a sound educational system is the only basis for the security of any given people. This assumption is premised on the fact that, an educated

populace would be able to defend themselves against some of the greatest enemies of mankind, ignorance, poverty and disunity.

History of Nigeria's educational system has been well told and needs no repetition. However, our concern here is not with history. It is rather whether or not education has been a vehicle for exacerbating the fracture or if it has affected some level of care to our apparent disunity. In the view of Akinpelu (2014:60), "the heart of sociality of man lies in education". If this holds validity, then we hesitate not to add that, education cannot be confined only to the processes of giving knowledge to children in school. That is to say, education should best be seen as one programme which goes on from birth till death, because all that men learn throughout life by various experiences and activities is education. Orientation and re-orientation are always the meeting point of education.

The expositions we have made above total up to the fact nothing kills ignorance better than education. This accord with Ali (2010:66)'s view that "education is ignorance greatest enemy".

Having earlier noted in this paper that, if the re-orientation of the rural societies in Nigeria must lead towards national unity it must of necessity be tailored towards the integration of such rural societies into the mainstream of the national life. We find it necessary to appraise the effect and value of social control on the national psyche.

Studies on social control have shown that unequivocally, the human nature is marked with unrestrained loopholes and the guarantee of peace without a standing agency set up and empowered by law to control human excesses. Such excesses can be seen as an attempt to condone dissidents that stand against unity in a given community of people or nation. This is one

area where the rural societies are in dire need of re-orientation. How do we answer the question; should education be made compulsory for every child in every society, urban or rural areas in Nigeria? We have earlier asserted in this paper that nothing kills ignorance better than education.

However, a man may choose to remain in perpetual ignorance irrespective of what anybody says. If that happens, should such a man be compelled by law of the social control to rid himself of his ignorance? This is a question that is bound to elicit diverse responses. For the purpose of this paper, we will confine our view to democratic nature of law as known to the lay man in the country. It is common knowledge that all human laws that are democratic in nature always stress the right to personal liberty and dignity.

In the view of Hart (2000:77) “the law of social control is imperative for any given people on the planet earth”. He goes further to assert that “a society without the law of social control is bound to have problems of controlling its member, and of having a uniform and binding moral standard within its social structure”.

The emerging fact from the foregoing is that, orientation and re-orientation is the open door through which education invades the life of the rural societies and the bond between citizenship and unity.

Conclusion

Our discussions, in this paper, have centred on the role English Language can be brought to play in the re-orientation of rural societies towards national unity. The re-orientation of the rural societies in a nation like Nigeria is considered genuine against the fact that when a people think that, any opinion they choose to form to which prejudice or self will or ignorance had led them, is good and must be true because they

hold them strongly, they are doubtless intellectually lost.

We have asserted in this paper that, the English Language, as the most commonly spoken language in the world and the official language in Nigeria, serves better as the language of primary contact with the people of every rural society for the purpose of galvanizing them towards national duty. This is achievable through the process of education which has the principal purpose of killing ignorance.

In conclusion, this paper has examined the subject matter from the perspectives of the history of English Language as having been borrowed from other tongues with capacity to lend to other tongues in the services of orientation and re-orientation of people. Secondly, from the imperative of the law of social control on the national psyche as being necessary to regulate the conduct of people in the human society with the end point of achieving unity which is the hall mark of political stability. The summary of everything discussed in this paper is total up to the fact that, the development of the thought and aspiration of the rural societies is contingent upon the level of orientation they are exposed to from which the role of the English Language cannot be discountenanced.

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