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# Language, Literary Studies and Communication as Stimulants of Peace and Security in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses language, literary studies, and communication as stimulants of peace and security which are very necessary for harmonious living among citizens in Nigeria. In a country devoid of peaceful co-existence among citizens, and insecurity poses menace to lives, properties and national development, the paper seeks to elucidate how language, literary studies, and communication can be utilised as stimulants of peace and security. To achieve this aim, the paper first discusses the intricate relationship among language, literary studies and communication and then establishes how the trio can be utilised to stimulate peace and security in Nigeria. In the light of the efficacy of language, literary studies and communication in stimulating peace and security in Nigeria, the paper recommends that: (a) government and policy makers should support language education nationwide so that all citizens can become adept communicators since effective language use stimulates peace and security; (b) prominence should be accorded to the minor languages used by the various minority groups in the country apart from the three major languages that have been approved by the government; (c) policy makers and individuals should be encouraged to appreciate literary works in order to be expose to the range of cultural norms and values of many ethnic groups in Nigeria, which should be respected and defended; and (d) programmes, conferences, and seminars targeted at the peaceful coexistence of the nation's diverse population should constantly be organized in order to inform and educate members of society on the benefits of peace and security as well as how to handle disagreements amicably. The paper concludes with a call for the Nigerian society to take advantage of the efficacy of language, literary studies, and communication in stimulating peace and security in the country.

**Keywords:** Communication, Language, Literature, Peace and Security

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## 1. Introduction

Nigeria is one of the biggest nations in West Africa. It has a startling diversity and is multilingual in nature. The country is endowed with abundant natural resources that could elevate it to the status of a developed state, but instead the opposite is true because it is constantly challenged by social, political, economic, religious, and security issues that endanger the unity and peaceful coexistence of the country's diverse population [1]. 'Peace' and 'security' are basic necessities of human beings. Peace is a state of harmony characterised by the lack of violence, conflict behaviours and the freedom from fear of violence. 'Security', on the other hand, is the protection of a person, building, organisation or country against threats such as crime or attacks by local or foreign countries. Both peace and security are important in

every society. This is so because while security lessens and precludes harm and violent acts and also builds stronger, unified, energetic, and actively engaging societies, peace prevents dread and tension from people's lives, fosters progress, growth, and development of society, and encourages tolerance and understanding among citizens.

For decades now, there have been numerous threats to the unity and peaceful co-existence of the diverse people residing across the different states in Nigeria. The threat to peace and security in Nigeria have been occasioned by factors ranging from organised crimes, unequal distribution of national resources, tribalism, favouritism, ransom kidnappings, farmer/headers clashes, banditry, armed robbery among others. Due to this situation, innocent lives and properties

have been decimated thereby creating a negative impact on the nation in the form of poverty, disease, disillusionment, and internal displacement of individuals [3]. The depths to which security challenges have driven Nigeria as a country are incalculable. The nation's pathetic security situation is a huge source of worry since it keeps getting worse every day.

Numerous studies have examined language, or language and communication, as instruments for promoting peace, development, and national security in Nigeria. The most current of these studies will be evaluated nevertheless, to demonstrate their applicability and relationship to the current study. Mishina and Iskandar have examined the English language in Nigerian development in their study to learn more about how it contributes to the country's unification as a multilingual one [11]. Momoh has demonstrated in a different study how language usage might improve management and resolution of insecurity in the nation [12]. The main focus of Njoku's research is to examine how language might be used as a change agent to promote restoration and peace in Nigeria. According to the study's findings, Nigerian peace and security would be restored when language is used properly [14]. The contribution of language to the maintenance of peace in Nigeria has been evaluated by Tomtsu. The study discovers that language education in Nigeria can serve as a road map to national peace and democratic greatness [27]. Onuh conducts an examination of language use and successful leadership communication in a democratic society. According to the study, using polite communication tactics improves effective communication and assists leaders in gaining acceptance for growth and development in society [21]. Obadare examines the use of language to combat national insecurity. The study assesses the current status of insecurity in Nigeria as well as the significance of language in fostering peaceful cohabitation in the country. The findings indicate that the problem of national security is not solely the responsibility of the government, but that every Nigerian should work together to ensure the thorough, effective, and proper use of words in the approved language of communication [16].

The above studies are part of scholarly efforts to solve Nigeria's numerous challenges, and they are relevant to the current study in that they all focus on language and its various roles in Nigeria. The current study differs from the reviewed studies in that it investigates language, literary studies, and communication and how each of them can be used to promote peace and security in Nigeria, whereas the reviewed studies only investigated language and how it can be used to promote peace, security, and development in Nigeria. The foregoing preliminary discourse underscores the objective of this paper, which seeks to explain how language, literary studies, and communication can serve as stimulants of peace and security in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, the paper will first describe the triangular link between language, literary studies, and communication and thereafter explains how each of these concepts can stimulate peace and security in Nigeria.

## 2. Language, Literary Studies and Communication: The Nexus

Language, literary studies and communication are interdependent. Literary studies cannot exist without language; communication and language are also inseparable, and the three are closely entwined [20]. Language is a system of communication that transmits information through verbal or nonverbal signs [19]. The field of literary studies focuses on the analysis of imaginative writings including poetry, drama, and prose fiction [24]. Communication is a mechanism for two or more people to exchange information while they concentrate on the message being exchanged [22]. Whereas language is thought of as a means of communication, communication, on the other hand, is the process of employing language as a tool; and literature is the information or message that is communicated via language. The aforementioned outlines the link between the trio in a tripartite structure, a trio that is crucial to Nigeria's quest for peace and security. The next subsection examines language as a stimulant of peace and security in Nigeria.

### 2.1. Language as Stimulant of Peace and Security in Nigeria

Language is a universal tool that serves as the cornerstone of every community on earth. The term has been defined by numerous scholars. For instance, the delineation of language by Sapir (1963: 8) as "a wholly human and non-instinctive manner of transmitting ideas, feelings, and wants by means of consciously manufactured symbols" [17]. In Murthy's research, language is described as a means of communication that allows people to share their feelings, ideas, and thoughts with others [13]. According to the research of Okesipe and Okolo, it is a method of communication for a speech community [19]. The foregoing discourse underscores language as a means of communication and a marker of identity. It is a trait that all people share, a key difference between humans and other animals, and the driving force underlying human interactions [18].

The most effective means of communication for humans is language [4]. Every member of a linguistic community makes meaningful use of language to communicate thoughts, ideas, beliefs, needs, etc., all of which help the society as a whole run more smoothly [7]. Language plays a myriad of crucial roles in every linguistic community. Speaking on the roles of language as a stimulant of peace and security, Barber observes that it facilitates cooperation among citizens in a nation [8]. Adeyanju supports this view by asserting that cooperation among citizens is essential to the flourishing of the society because it assists members in achieving their goals [2]. He proceeds further to add that the cooperation that engender peaceful co-existence among members in society cannot be achieved without language.

To promote peace and security in Nigeria, all citizens must use language (whether indigenous language, the three major languages or official language) in an appropriate manner.

The reason for this is that the appropriate use of language can foster peace and unity among citizens while its misapplication can incite conflict. A number of conflicts, for instance, have occurred in Nigeria as a result of the inappropriate use of language. The recent horrific killing of Deborah Samuel, a female student at the Shehu Shagari College of Education, for allegedly making a derogatory comment about the prophet Muhammad, serves as a potent example of this misapplication of language. It is obvious that language misuse causes conflicts, which could culminate in the destruction of lives and property whereas its proper use engenders cohesion and togetherness. It is this cohesion that fosters the growth and development of any nation, which in turn supports and upholds peace and security.

Peace and security can be promoted and maintained through language education. Language education entails the planning, developing and implementation of the language arts curriculum in such a way that members are trained to acquire language skills that will facilitate the ability to cope with other life skills [6]. Commenting on the significance of language education in the search for peace and security, Okafor, Nwogu and Osuagwu state that language education helps to eradicate language barriers or the inadequate understanding of a language which will no doubt delay the progress of peace movement initiated towards conflict resolution [18]. They proceed further to note that language and peace are inextricably linked and that the attainment of peace in a country like Nigeria will require peaceful or cordial relationships among its citizens which cannot be realised without the appropriate use of language. Speaking further, they observe that the inadequate knowledge of a language could lead to the misuse of such language which can generate misunderstanding and conflict whereas the use of a common language or the knowledge of a language as well as its proper application inspires oneness and unity [18]. From the foregoing, it is axiomatic that language education is essential because it enables language learners develop into skilled and critical communicators.

The foregoing submission on the import of language education underscores the need for government and policy makers to encourage language education since language plays vital role in ensuring peace and maintaining security in any society. Apart from the three major languages (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa) which have been adopted as Nigeria's national languages, this essay advocates that government and policy makers should as a matter of urgency accord prominence to the minor languages used by the various minority tribes in Nigeria [11, 12, 18]. This is because not all people from the minority tribes would like to accept, adopt or learn Nigeria's three major languages. Bearing in mind that these people largely utilise their mother tongue due to the fact that they reside in their speech community, it behoves the government and policy makers to introduce measures that would assist them in mastering their mother tongue so that they can become skilled and critical communicators.

Language use in the above circumstance suggests multilevel communication. Since it has been determined that

English is Nigeria's primary official language, the government should develop a language policy that will assist citizens in becoming fluent in English while promoting the preservation of their mother tongue and cultural heritage. This would be a huge help in educating the people about the English language and the necessity to refrain from using words that could spark a rift by making contentious statements in public. As a result, people will be better equipped to resolve conflicts. The level of conflicts and feuds will significantly decrease if a language is widely accepted in a culture and completely understood by its users. Through books, movies, and everyday interaction, language has shown to be the most efficient way to preserve the histories and cultures of people. It is essential for passing down cultures from one generation to the next. According to Nwadike, language is the key that unbolts people's hearts [15]. This suggests that if members of a speech community are able to communicate effectively, it will result in their ability to live in harmony and safety.

## ***2.2. Literary Studies as Stimulant of Peace and Security in Nigeria***

Literary studies, also known as literature, refers to the study of texts created artistically by diverse authors on topics relating to the immediate society. It is the study or appreciation of literature, a kind of creative expression that entertains, convinces, enlightens, admonishes, and warns [24]. Literature highlights the positive, negative, and ugly aspects of society and frequently proposes solutions to the issues seen [5]. One of the essential features of the literature of any country, such as Nigerian literature, is the language employed for its expression. The language employed gives enough indication of the community or country where it originates [26]. Literary writers use literature as a very effective and impactful instrument to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings concerning social problems [9]. They utilise plain language to satirise or denounce antisocial behaviours. This demonstrates the growing awareness and role literature plays in exposing the wrongs in the society.

Literary studies play a significant role in the pursuit of peace and security through re-examining of history. Learning about the history and concerns of the many ethnic groups in Nigeria through literary writings is essential for teaching those history and concerns. This idea is supported by Fatokun who claims that literature displays situations, relationships, and conflicts that suggest it portrays a variety of cultural norms and values that ethnic groups in Nigeria should defend as a part of their legacy and identity [10]. In other words, literary studies reflect society and offer ethnic group principles, which in turn prevents the degradation of values in contacts and inter-ethnic conflict. Additionally, the information learned through reading literary texts exposes readers to situations that stay in their thoughts for the rest of their lives; in essence, mistakes in the past are avoided at all costs to avoid repetition [25]. For instance, authors can use literary works to describe a destructive war, its origins, causes, and its repercussions on the populace and society in

an effort to persuade readers to choose peaceful methods of dispute resolution over violent ones. The truth is that modern circumstances in every society are reflected in literary works. Any repercussions that a horrific war has on a fictitious society are merely a depiction of what wars do to the countries who have experienced them. Since literary studies are concerned with and project literary works that portray facts that are going on in any society, this is the importance of literary studies in every society. By employing this technique, literary authors use the power of writing to encourage peace in the society as well as identify the causes of insecurity with a view to preferring solution to them [5].

### 2.3. *Communication as Stimulant of Peace and Security in Nigeria*

One fundamental feature of man is the capacity to communicate [18]. Communication is the reciprocal exchange of knowledge and comprehension between two or more entities through any medium. It is a two-way process that involves both a speaker and a listener where language is used to communicate some messages and some feedback evoked [7]. Communication is central to all man processes as well as informs all of his activities. In other words, it is the centre of everything man does and permeates every aspect of his life. This is so because without it, man cannot execute “organised group processes that help to coordinate his activities in the society” [18]. The need of human to “co-habit and co-exist is entrenched in the communicative behaviour” since no man would desire to subsist “alone on the face of the earth” [17].

Communication plays a major role in Nigeria’s quest for peace and security in that it establishes all the networks required for the nation’s expansion and development. It aids members of society to develop, establish, and sustain relationships thereby reducing conflict greatly irrespective of their diverse cultural backgrounds. While communicating tips on how to maintain security and resolve disputes, communication informs and enlightens members of society about the advantages of peace and security through the planning of programmes, conferences and seminars aimed at peaceful coexistence of Nigeria’s diverse population. It is important for planning and making decision. It assists government and policy makers in obtaining data without which it may be impossible to plan or take any decision that can improve the nation’s security architecture and engender peaceful coexistence among its diverse population. Also, it is important to state that the quality of decisions made by government or policy makers depends largely on the quality of communication which makes possible the smooth and efficient working of a nation. Through exchange of ideas and information, communication foster unity of action in quest for a common goal. It unites citizens and enables coordination [21].

To attain, promote and maintain peace and security in any society, the content of communication must be accurate. What this implies is that, the message or information transmitted through verbal, nonverbal, written or visual

means of communication must possess facts and be devoid of prejudice and incitement that could lead to animosity between parties or groups of individuals from different tribal affiliation or religious background. It is crucial to note that without effective and meaningful communication, a nation’s progress and development will stagnate, peaceful co-existence among members will be a mirage and vital information that could help to uncover secrets of impending security breach will be hoarded. Communication can also be said to contribute to efforts to achieve peace and national security through involving citizens in a country’s affairs. This inclusiveness supports the development of a broadly inclusive national identity, which encourages active and engaged citizenship.

## 3. Recommendations

In light of the efficacy of language, literary studies and communication in fostering and upholding peace and security in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made: first, government and policy makers should encourage language education across all states to enable citizens become skilled and critical communicators since the proper use of language engenders peace and security. Secondly, prominence should be accorded to the minor languages used by the various minority groups in the country apart from the three major languages that have been adopted as the nation’s national languages. Also, policy makers and citizens should be encouraged to embrace literary works so that they can be exposed to a variety of cultural norms and values of different ethnic groups in Nigeria which should be respected and defended. Finally, programmes, conferences and seminars aimed at peaceful coexistence of the nation’s diverse population should constantly be organised in order to inform and enlightens members of society about the advantages of peace and security as well as how to resolve disputes amicably.

## 4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined language, literary studies and communication as stimulants of peace and security in Nigeria. The paper clearly revealed that language, literary studies and communication are tools that can stimulate peace and security if utilised effectively and appropriately. The study further showed that the right application of language, the studying of literary texts accompanied with communication that is truthful and devoid of prejudice and inciteful words will foster and uphold cohesion and peaceful coexistence of the nation’s diverse population.

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