

Language Use and Value Reorientation as Panacea for Corruption among Civil Servants in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study is premised on the influence of language use in curbing corruption and ensuring value reorientation in the Nigeria. The aim is to examine language use and value orientation as means of curbing corruption in the society. The study adopts survey research design. The population consists of all civil servants in Ekiti State of Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select (300) three hundred respondents from the (3) three senatorial districts of Ekiti State. A four point Likert scale questionnaire was used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and t-test statistics were used to analyze the data collected for the study. The findings indicate that there is significant relationship between language use and value reorientation in Nigeria. That means that language use and value reorientation have significant effect in curbing corruption. The study therefore, recommends that the language of the environment should be used to teach the child moral instruction All language users such as writers, poets, artistes, public speakers etc. should include in their works linguistic choices that can sensitize the public on upholding right and acceptable attitudes in the society.

Key words: Language use, value reorientation, corruption, society

INTRODUCTION

Language use service permits people to communicate tremendous range of attitude, information, biases and truth. Language has expressive and informative power that enables the users to

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communicate among one another what they do, and think as well as how they feel. From the foregoing, it can be inferred that language is a systematic means of communicating by the use of sound or conventional symbols. An American Philosopher, David (1997), says that only if words are felt, bodily presence, like echoes or waterfall, we can understand the power of language to influence, alter and transform the perceptual world. Language serves as a means of establishing the system of ideas; creates new levels and defines a new sense of well-marked social reality. Halliday (1978) opines that “the speaker can see through and around the setting of his or her semantic system; but he is aware that in doing so, he is seeing reality in a new light like Alice in looking-glass house.” He defines language as having meaning potential, and open-ended and theoretical infinite range of options in meaning” (Halliday, 1975). Hence, language serves as a means for the expression of content and social roles. This has to do respectively with the user’s experience of the inner world of his/her own consciousness as well as the communication role created by language itself.

Language expresses user’s identity (self-chosen or imposed identity) and as well affects their credibility. People are usually comfortable with the language they use to describe their own identity but they may not be that satisfied or at ease with the labels others place on them. Many people and even nations have taken labels having negative connotations imposed on them intentionally by others to depict some unacceptable behaviour patterns exhibited by them. This applies to Nigeria’s situation in which ‘Nigeria’ and ‘Nigerians’ have been given an appellation – ‘Naija’ is an informal terminology quite popular in the international community. In Aribiah’s (2000) observation, ‘Naija’ is a derogative term used for Nigerians when they exhibit unethical behaviour in government or business such as telling lies, rushing to board a train or plane, evading tax payment and many more. This observation depicted the importune behaviour patterns exhibited by Nigerians home and abroad. Thus, by the means of language use, what an individual or even a nation is noted for can be deduced.

Values as reflected in the National Policy on Education is to do the following:

- a. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals.
- b. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions.
- c. Moral and spiritual principles in inter-personal and human relations.
- d. Shared responsibility for the common good of the society.
- e. Promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children.
- f. Acquisition of competence necessary for self reliance in the nation.

Corruption is a form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority. President Muhammadu Buhari in a Speech in 2016, sees corruption as the greatest form of human right violation. Many factors are responsible for corruption and these include greediness, ostentatious living, poverty, unemployment, frustration, lack of integrity, and poor educational system. Dafinore (2010) asserts that the high rate of social vices in the country and high level of youth unemployment should be blamed on the poor educational system. He further opines that unemployed people take to criminal activities to survive.

In the same vein Oritsejafor (2010) asserts that some people in power are so corrupt that they have sworn with their blood that they will continue to milk Nigeria and Nigerians dry and that they do not care about Nigeria or Nigerians. They only care about the money they are making. He further asserts that Nigeria's greatest problem is nothing but corruption. According to him, Nigeria is a rotten country, there is corruption everywhere. Take away corruption and Nigeria would change the next day. Moreover Adeniji (2016) submits that the national unity is being threatened more than ever before because of marginalization, corruption and social injustice.

Moral institution as antidote to corruption

The family is the first socializing agent of the child while the school also is not left out as agent of socialization. Osalusi and Owoseeni

(2008) succinctly opine that the home and school are potent forces in moulding a child's morality. In the same vein, Adeniji (2016) submits that most values are derived from the family, religious teachings, community, cultural traditions and their teachings, school environment, peer groups, the media and personal experience.

Basic human values such as honesty, honour, responsibility and social justice promote relationships among people. Osalusi and Owoseeni (2008) asserts that some values that an individual needs to be a responsible individual include: patriotism, responsibility, self-discipline, self-respect, respect for elders, patience, perseverance, truthfulness, devotion, dedication to duty, sexual morality, brotherliness, tolerance, cooperation, integrity, modesty, good neighbourliness, forgiveness, social justice, faithfulness, contentment etc. It is to be added that the home lays the foundation for the inculcation of these values in the individual.

Vices are evil and detrimental to national development. They are synonymous with corruption and according to Osalusi and Owoseeni (2008) include murder, robbery, dishonesty, corruption, tribalism, wickedness, indolence, nepotism, drug abuse, misappropriation of public funds etc. Vices are inexhaustible with cybercrime being novel. Many families have shirked their parental role due to the socio-economic problems prevalent in the society. Igbo (2013) succinctly submits that social ills refer to baneful, unjust, unkind and evil conditions or harmful appetites and deviant from moral straightness, which are collectively called social vices. Vices, like virus, destroy the moral condition of the society and make way for social maladies or ills.

Obadare and Deji-Afuye (2006) assert that prevailing causative factors of moral decadence include unemployment, broken homes non-functional education, takeover of school from missionaries. Language is the vehicle that makes our communication possible. It makes our existence worthwhile Dario (1997) cited in Obadare, (2009). It is indeed the oldest phenomenon used by man at creation. It is a tool needed by an individual to communicate and function actively as members of their community. Obadare (2009) opines that Nigeria is a multilingual country with over 513 languages having English as her lingua franca

but rather than use this language advantage to curb the menace called corruption, the reverse is the case. As negative social behaviour influences language use negatively, perverse languages influence social behaviour pervasively. Obviously, many subtle expressions are used to code unacceptable behaviour patterns which characterize the debased value system and adversely influence the level of corruption in Nigeria. The linguistic choices that Nigerians use to express unethical behaviour have contributed tremendously to moral and value degradation. It is sadden to note that some national slogans are constructed more often than not to conceal Nigeria's debased value system. However, there is the need to recognize the enormous potentials of indigenous language and its instrumentality to sanitize the society if used appropriately to sensitize the people to turn away from corrupt practices. This study is, therefore, premised on the influence of language use in curbing corruption and ensuring value reorientation in Nigeria. Based on this, two research hypotheses were postulated

H₀1: Language has no significant effect on level of corruption in Nigeria.

H₀2: There is no significant relationship between language and value reorientation in Nigeria.

METHOD

This study adopted survey research design. It involves all civil servants in the three senatorial districts of Ekiti State. The Ekiti State Civil Service was stratified into three districts. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents from each local government making a total of 300 respondents. A four likert-type scale questionnaire was constructed to gather information for the study. The face and content validities of the instrument was established by experts in test and measurement. Test retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and the r- coefficient was 0.98 which implies high reliability. Data obtained through the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentage and mean) and inferential statistics (PPMC and t-test).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis presented in table 1 reveal that 99% of the respondents agree that language is a tool for effective teaching of morals and acceptable behaviour in the society and 74% indicate that human behaviour patterns can be changed through the use of language. It was further revealed by the respondents (63%) that value system influences the way people think and use language, language use help to build up trust among the users, enhances value reorientation, brings about change in cultural and ideological identity and bring correction to perception. This means that there is relationship between language and value reorientation in Nigeria.

In table 2, the data analyzed reveal that 66% of the respondents indicate that the use of some national slogans is an attempt to cover up the rot in the system and 57.3% agree that most national slogans depict corruption in Nigeria. However, the respondents (64%) indicate that national and international perception about corrupt practices in Nigeria can be stopped through the use of language. This is because language use brings about change in people's orientation on corruption and can be used to curb corruption. Corruption of language, if not checked, contributed to Nigeria's debased value system as indicated by 72% of the respondents.

Results of data analysis presented in table 3 reveal that the value of r-coefficient (0.86) was high and greater than the r-table (0.34) with P-value less than 0.05 level of significance. This makes the hypothesis to be rejected and concluded that there is significant relationship between language and value reorientation in Nigeria. Data analysis presented in table 4 reveal that t-calculated (3.09) was greater than the t-table (1.96) with P-value less than 0.05 level of significance. This makes the hypothesis two to be rejected. Hence, language has significant and positive effect in curbing corruption in Nigeria. Language has been revealed in the study as an instrument of curbing corruption and uplifting the value system in Nigeria. The finding of the study shows that there is significant relationship between language and value reorientation in Nigeria. Re-orientation of citizens should be done through the use of understandable language. The findings

corroborate Anegbogu and Mba (2001) that language is a means which human beings have devised for communicating ideas, feelings, emotions, desires etc. It was also revealed in the study that language has significant and positive effect in curbing corruption in Nigeria. Adokwe (2016) opines that language is helpful in fighting corruption. Table 2 shows that some national slogans depict corruption. Daniels (2006) asserts that language is the dress of thought Confucius, the Chinese philosopher is right when he said that if language is not correct then what is not, is what is meant. In table 3 there is a significant relationship between language and values reorientation. Obadare (2009) opines that language basically is peculiar to mankind and is used for many purposes. In table 4, it is established that language has effect in curbing corruption. Ibagere (2002) cited extensively by Obadare and Deji-Afuye (2006) itemizes ten functions of communication. They are Information, Socialization. Motivation, Debate, Discussion, education, cultural, promotion, entertainment and integration

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Showing the Relationship between Language and Value Reorientation in Nigeria

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Language use in Nigeria promotes unacceptable behaviour patterns.	98 (32.7)	37 (12.3)	20 (6.7)	145 (48.3)	2.29	Disagreed
Language is a tool for effective teaching of morals and acceptable behaviour in the society.	167 (55.7)	130 (43.3)	3 (1)	0 (0)	3.55	Agreed
Human behaviour patterns can be changed through the use of language.	178 (59.3)	44 (14.7)	30 (10.0)	48 (16.0)	3.17	Agreed
Value system influences the way people think and use language.	100 (33.3)	89 (29.7)	58 (19.3)	53 (17.7)	2.79	Agreed
Perverse language influences social behaviour negatively.	166 (55.3)	120 (40)	14 (4.7)	0(0)	3.51	Agreed
Language use help to build up trust among the users.	165 (55.0)	108 (36.0)	20 (6.7)	7 (2.3)	3.43	Agreed
Language use enhances value reorientation.	120 (40.0)	78 (26.0)	40 (13.3)	62 (20.7)	2.85	Agreed
Language brings about change in cultural and ideological identity.	80 (26.7)	120 (40.0)	60 (20)	40 (13.3)	2.80	Agreed
Wrong perceptions are corrected through the use of language.	155 (51.7)	96 (32)	24 (8)	25 (8.3)	3.27	Agreed

Mean greater than 2.50 agree, otherwise disagree'

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics showing the effect of language on the level of corruption in Nigeria

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Decision
The use of some national slogans is an attempt to cover up the rot in the system.	120 (40)	78 (26)	40 (13.3)	62 (20.7)	2.85	Agreed
Most national slogans depict corruption in Nigeria.	94 (31.3)	78 (26)	60 (20)	68 (22.7)	2.66	Agreed
National and international perception about corrupt practices in Nigeria can be stopped through the use of language.	178 (59.3)	44 (14.7)	30 (10)	48 (16)	3.17	Agreed
Language use brings about change in people's orientation on corruption.	155 (51.7)	96 (32)	24 (8)	25 (8.3)	3.27	Agreed
Corruption of language has really contributed to Nigeria's debased value system.	114 (38)	102 (34)	56 (18.7)	28 (9.3)	3.01	Agreed
Language can be used to curb corruption.	165 (55)	108 (36)	20 (6.7)	7 (2.3)	3.43	Agreed

Mean greater than 2.50 agree, otherwise disagree'

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for language and value reorientation in Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	r-cal	r-tab	Sig. (P)
Use of Language	300	3.22	1.09	0.86	0.34	0.00
value reorientation		3.46	1.21			

P<0.05

Table 4: t-test Statistics for effect of language on the level of corruption in Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	t-cal	t-tab	Sig. (P)
Use of Language	300	3.22	1.09	298	3.09	1.96	0.00
Level of corruption		2.09	0.89				

P<0.05

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the use of language is effective in ensuring value reorientation and curbing corruption in Nigeria. Corruption is like an ugly beast with two horns in the head and a spear to pierce and destroy the society. The attendant

consequences are innumerable. The effects are unquantifiably devastating. Etiebet (2010) asserts that if corruption is not tackled in its roots, Nigerians may not have hope. The system has thoroughly broken down because of corruption: institution reform, education healthcare, economy, security, infrastructure, power, youth employment etc. all have their fair share in the consequences of corruption. Language as a vehicle can be used to curb corruption to the barest minimum in our society. It is the only tool that can be used to inculcate the right values. Hence, this study recommends as follows:

- i The language of the environment should be used to teach the child moral instruction.
- ii Parents especially mothers should not allow communication gap to exist between them and their children
- iii Enlightenment programmes should be done in the language of the environment regularly on corruption and its attendant consequences
- iv Moral instruction should be resuscitated in our homes and schools using the language of the environment
- v Seminars and workshop on corruption should be organized frequently using the language of the environment
- vi The federal and state government should promulgate severe penalties for corrupt officials
- vii Curriculum planners should design curriculum that will reflect the moral values of the Nigerian populace.
- viii All language users such as writers, poets, artistes public speakers should include in their works linguistic choice that can sensitize the public on upholding and acceptable attitudes in the society.
- ix Exceptional multilingual skills are essential in protecting businesses (Clark, 2016) means of communication must not be limited to a means in educating the public.

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