

Herders-Farmers' Communal Conflict in Nigeria: An Indigenised Language as an Alternative Resolution Mechanism

Olagbaju O. Oladotun[#] PhD and Awosusi Oladotun Emmanuel[^]

[#]College of Education & Social Sciences, Legacy University, The Gambia.

[^]Department of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Legacy University, The Gambia

Received 01 July 2019, Accepted 02 Sept 2019, Available online 03 Sept 2019, Vol.7 (Sept/Oct 2019 issue)

Abstract

Nigeria is heterogeneous by default with over 250 ethnic groups speaking over 500 different languages across the six key geopolitical zones. In a cultural and linguistic environment with diverse nationalities like Nigeria, conflict is a natural phenomenon. This is because it emanates from the differences in individuals or groups aspirations, values, or interests. These conflicts, no doubt, portend harmful effects on the country's cultural and social values; ethnic cohesion; social integration, stability and nation-building. Most recent and recurring communal violent conflicts are the socio-political upsurge in the North-Central Nigeria, specifically in Taraba, Adamawa, and Benue States between the Herders and Farmers. The origin of Herders-Farmers' communal conflict dates back to beginning of agriculture in Africa. Notable among the factors responsible for the recurring conflict between herdsman and farmers in North-Central Nigeria are socio-cultural and linguistic-related differences. Previous attempts to solve these incessant clashes have largely focused on communication, compensation, creation of cattle colony, proclamation of bans on grazing and so on. These approaches have left out the choice of language of mediation. Hence, this paper attempts to determine the causes of the conflict and proffer a linguistic approach in conflict management through the use of indigenised Hausa language as tool for mediation in herders-farmers' communal conflict in Nigeria.

Keywords: Herders, Farmers, Conflict Management, Indigenised Language, Resolution

Introduction

The present day Nigeria and its evolving socio-political turbulence is no doubt an offshoot of the colonial 'mistake' of 1914, which brought different groups, communities, nations, and territories together without making any conscious effort to harness their respective differences, but further deepened the differences for perceived political and economic reasons. The ineffectual management of these inherited differences, coupled with the absence of good governance and the increase in the level of poverty creates avenue for conflicts which have heralded the country since her independence. Nigeria has experienced different types of violent and non-violent conflicts that have negatively impacted on the country's population across the six geopolitical zones. As expected, peace and security have been badly undermined by the recurring conflict causing disorder, harm, displacement and even death in the country.

The Emergence of the Nigerian Fourth Republic in 1999 saw a new phase of conflicts and political instability of varying degrees, which continued to threaten peaceful

co-existence of the nation, and constitutes a clog in the wheel of national development (Maiangwa and Ahmadu, 2007). Apart from the recurring violent electoral conflicts, the insurgency caused by the Boko Haram extremist Islamic sect in Northern region; the militancy in the Niger Delta region; the increasing incidences of farmers-herders' communal conflicts in the middle-belt and other parts of the country; ruthless kidnappings and violent robberies, there are also incidences of cultism and separatist agitations of the Indigenous People of Biafra that have often turned violent. These conflicts come with negative effects on the country's cultural and social values; ethnic cohesion; social integration; stability and nation building. However, the most recent and recurring communal violent conflicts are the socio-political upsurge in North-Central and North East Nigeria, specifically in Taraba, Adamawa, Benue State and other states, between the Herders and Farmers.

Farmer-herder conflicts have existed since early beginning of agriculture in Africa (Fratkin, 1997). But it's continued evolving violent nature against the backdrop of social differences, resource scarcity, increase in the population of resource users, lack of adequate grazing reserves and poor state of the existing ones, unequal

*Corresponding author's ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6240-261X

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14741/ijmcr/v.7.5.3>

resource distribution and the consequent failure of patrimonial states. The current state of the North Central and North East regions pictures what Robert Kaplan (1994) explained as "the coming anarchy". Farmer-herder conflicts are among the key manifestations of this anarchy and this is premised on the socio-political composition of the country.

To put things in perspective, in the first half of 2018, more than 1,300 Nigerians have died in violence involving herders and farmers. The farmer-herder conflict has become Nigeria's gravest security challenge, now claiming far more lives than the Boko Haram insurgency. It has displaced hundreds of thousands and sharpened ethnic, regional and religious divides. It threatens and undermines national unity, stability and development. Several factors have contributed to this decades-long conflict and some of these are deforestation or environmental degradation in the far north, encroachment upon grazing grounds in the north: militia attacks; poor response on the part of the government to distress calls and failure to punish past perpetrators; and new state laws banning open grazing in Benue and Taraba States.

However, the roots of the conflict lie in climate-induced degradation of pasture and increasing violence in the country's far north, which have forced herders to migrate towards south; the expansion of farms and settlements have also swallowed up grazing reserves and blocked traditional migration routes; and the damage to farmers' crops wrought by herders' indiscriminate grazing. But three immediate factors explain the 2018-2019 escalation. First is the rapid growth of ethnic militias bearing illegally acquired weapons, such as those of the Bachama and Fulani clans in Adamawa State. Second is the failure of the federal government to deploy effective preventive action and foster friendly social relations between herders and farmers communities in the country. Third is the introduction in November 2017 of anti-grazing laws vehemently opposed by herders in Benue and Taraba States, and the resultant exodus of herders and cattle, largely into neighbouring Nasarawa and Adamawa States, thereby sparking clashes with farmers in those states.

Political and ethno-religious conflagrations have severally drawn the country to the brink of collapsing. It has engendered huge human death, internal displacements and refugee crisis, loss of investments, strained inter-communal relations, threatened internal security and societal balance. There is the high level of inter-ethnic and inter-religious vendetta in the country, to the point that it seems that Nigeria is now exhibiting the symptom of a collapsing state, whose members are perpetually at war with one another (Imobighe 2003). Several efforts such as deployment of huge security operatives, peaceful dialogue amongst groups and setting up of probe panels have been made to manage the recurring communal conflict have been embarked upon by the Nigeria government to solve the Herders-Farmers'

conflict in the country. Also, as a long-term solution, the government has unveiled a National Livestock Transformation Plan (2018-2027) with a view to creating cattle colonies or ranches for the herdsmen. This signals greater commitment on the part of the government, but they are yet to be implemented and the violence still continues (International Crisis Group, 2018).

In spite of these laudable efforts, there has been no significant decline in inter-communal conflicts in the country, especially with regards to the herders-farmers' clashes. This is perhaps because most of the efforts by the Nigerian government have largely focused on communication and not on the choice of language of mediation. Language is central to human communication and it has been described as tool of communication per excellence. Language plays an important role in communication, transaction and the negotiation of peace. Therefore, it is impossible to facilitate any lasting peace without a critical consideration of the mechanism of language in conflict management. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to propose the development and adoption of an indigenized language for prevention and mediation in herders-farmers' communal conflict.

Issues in Conflict and Conflict Management

Conflict is an integral part of human existence and social relations because it is inevitable in any social gathering, community, society and state at large. The inevitability of this phenomenon, however, necessitated its interpretation and definition by different scholars. These definitions describe conflict as an opposition, Hellriegel and Slocum (1996) posited that conflict is an opposition arising from disagreement about goals, thoughts, or emotions with or among individuals, teams, departments, or organizations. Conflict arises when the behaviour by a person or group is intended to hinder the attainment of goals by another person or group (Lindelow & Scott, 1989; Donohue & Kolt 1992). Wilmot and Hocker (2011) described conflict as a felt struggle between two or more independent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals, or differences in desires for esteem, control, and connectedness. Conflict as a state of incompatibility is described as a situation in which the concerns of two or more individuals operating within the unit appear to be incompatible (Darling & Fogliasso, 1999).

Incompatibility breeds conflict because it is a psychological state in which people cannot get along with one another in a community. Incompatibility of the herdsmen and farmers in the North-Central and North East states cut across economic, cultural and linguistic divides – these are some of the critical indicators of the persistent communal conflicts between these two distinct nationalities. In Benue State where the communal conflict is increasingly recurring, vast majority of the farmers are Tiv, Idoma, Agatu and Igede people who speak languages

totally different from Fulfulde, this implies that there is little or no socio-cultural and linguistic relations between the two opposing parties. This is why every slight encounter between the herdsman and farmers goes brutal and subsequently leads to bloodshed.

The increasing conflict between the two parties is premised on latent factor of aged-long strained social relations in term of language difference. Therefore, there is a dire need to manage these conflict situations to avoid the wanton destruction of lives and properties. Effective communication is no doubt, an effective way of managing conflict. But there cannot be any form of communication without the instrumentality of (verbal or nonverbal) language (Olagbaju, 2014). Therefore, the choice of language to be used for mediation in conflict management is of paramount importance because a mastery of the channel of communication is essential in conflict management situations. Adegbite (2017) posited that language mastery requires the possession of essential language skills. Most times, effectiveness in conflict management is largely tied to the effectiveness in communication.

Other forms of conflict management through communication include preventive measures, settlement, and resolution. Resolution as a mechanism in conflict management is aimed at proffering lasting solution to a conflict situation. It's a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflict through constructive problem-solving means distinct from transformation of conflict (Miller 2003). Conflict resolution tend to address the deep rooted causes of conflict and ensure that behaviour of the parties involved (herdsman and farmers) are no longer violent towards each other, while structure of the conflict are changed.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is hinged on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or the linguistic relativity theory developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. The theory states that the structure of a language determines or greatly influences the thought or behaviours of its speakers. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis holds that the grammar of a language orients speakers to certain aspects of experience and shapes the way they mentally represent that experience. Therefore, speakers of markedly different languages have different mental images or experiences of a similar state of affairs (Whorf, 1956). Whorf argued that language represents culture and can constrain the development of non-linguistic cultural norms. Similarly, Krauss and Chiu (1998) averred language is capable of influencing the behaviours of the speakers.

According to Boroditsky (2009), bits of linguistic information that enter into one person's mind, from another, cause people to entertain a new thought with profound effects on his worldview, knowledge, reaction, and subsequent behaviour. Although humans cannot express all their thoughts, without the instrumentality of

language; the theorists argued that thinking would have been impossible. The theorists explain how the brain can produce rational thought and behaviour through the mechanism of language (Boroditsky, 2009). Also, Krauss and Chiu (1998) opined that language is the principal vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge, and the primary means by which we gain access to the contents of others' minds.

Similarly, language influences the human behaviour because it is central to most of the social psychology phenomena such as attitude change, social perception, personal identity, social interaction, intergroup bias and stereotyping, attribution, and so on. Also, language is central and influences all that we do as individuals – our thought process, culture, choices, orientations, reactions to issues and so on. It is capable of causing conflict and restoring peace in conflict prone areas. In relation to this study, Taylor (2014) posited that the impact of language on thought can be quick, especially when the opening words in a mediation and conflict resolution session are constructed by the choice of function words which reflect not the content of their message but the way it is conveyed. Similarly, Olagbaju (2014) averred that indigenous languages are capable of appealing to the mind and consciousness of the listener. Therefore, the use of Hausa language which is an adopted lingua franca in the North-Central and North East Nigeria with the adaptation of selected sensitive vocabularies from the Fulfulde and several indigenous languages in the zone in mediation is capable of engendering lasting peace in the region.

Literature Review

Over the years, several African nations have experienced series of inter and intra communal clashes and conflicts which are premised on socio-cultural and identity-related differences among other factors. These conflicts are often products of a direct effect of an arbitrary demarcation of Africa lands without taking into cognizance the differences along cultural and linguistic identities. These mistakes of the colonial masters have not been adequately addressed by post-independence African leaders, Nigeria inclusive. Common conflicts in Nigeria are driven by these differences in people, language, culture, religion and interests among others.

Martha (2015) explored the relationship between language and identity and confirmed the fact that in a bilingual or multilingual society, there is always a dominant language. With focus on Ette people in Nigeria, She observed that a single language cannot mark the ethnic identity of the Ette people because of their multilingual nature and this has resulted to agitations from minority ethnic identities. Also, Sunday (2016) traced communal conflicts between the people of Agila in Benue State and Ngbo of Ebonyi State in Nigeria to disagreement over land. He stressed the need to undertake a thorough analysis of the conflict to

understand its background, causes, dynamics, parties (direct and indirect) and their positions. This, according to him will help in redesigning a new approach that will provide grounds for the resolution of the conflict.

Attempts to resolve ethnic-based conflicts in Nigeria have been complicated by the political and traditional/religious leaders through ethno-regional politics and religious sentiments. Alimba (2014) posited that Nigerian elites have not demonstrated enough seriousness and political will to arrest the situation. The outcome is that this has further deepened the underlying cultural and social differences among the different regions, communities, tribes and groups in Nigeria. These differences have plunged many tribes in Nigeria into inter and intra conflicts with the recurrent one being the Herders and Farmers communal conflict in North Central and North East Nigeria.

As a way of resolving the recurring inter-communal conflict among herders and farmers, several efforts have been geared by different international and local peace architects such the United nation (UN), African Union (AU), Economic Community of west African States (ECOWAS), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), civil societies and scholars on the strategic approaches and mechanisms to resolve and prevent this menace. The quest to find a lasting peace has propelled a shift to scholarly discourse on the importance of communication and language of mediation, not only in inter-communal conflict, but also other variance of conflict. Given this, it is pertinent, to bring to fore some of the literatures on role of language in conflict resolution, so as to bridge the gap that exists in literature which is one of the concerns of this paper.

Haman (2011), in his study about the herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria, found that farmer-herders' conflicts in Nigeria are managed through existing channels of traditional and modern mechanisms. The traditional mechanisms include social, economic, political and traditional leadership. While other conflict resolution channels such as administrative, legislative and judicial constitute the modern approaches. He thus, articulated an alternative proposal for managing of farmer-herders' conflict in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria, which emphasizes prevention strategies through good governance. No doubt, good governance as pointed out by Haman is a promising mechanism to resolving the herder-farmers' conflict, but he has did not to stress the need to create a common ground between the two parties by harnessing their linguistic and socio-cultural differences.

Chika (2016) explores the challenges of using English language in intercultural conflict resolution, and emphasizes the need to consider the different uses of the language in national and transnational conflict resolution. To her, if English is to be used as a tool for conflict resolution in Nigeria; it must accommodate the diversity of culture and language usage. According to Chika (2016), dispute escalation and resolution relies heavily on the

choice of words (language). This is because language is an instrument used either in mediation/resolution or escalation of a dispute. People from different culture and social units have been discovered to perceive the world through the lens provided by their distinctive languages. Language provides meanings through the repertoire of words that name the categories into which the language users have divided their world. However, in her work, the challenges were rightly explored, but the recommendation did not specify the language of mediation to be adopted in resolving communal conflicts in Nigeria.

Similarly, Ajibo, Onuoha, Obi-Kenguna, Okafor, and Oluwole (2018) examined the social dynamics of farmers' and herders clashes in Nigeria with emphasis on the effects of such clashes on the nation's life, causes and prospect for peace and lasting solution recommended an establishment of conflict mediation, resolution, reconciliation and peace building mechanism, but the study did not specify any mechanism to engender lasting peace between the farmers and herders. This is one of the concerns of this study. There is a need to recommend a language of choice for mediation and reconciliation in the troubled parts of Nigeria. Currently, Hausa language has been adopted as the language of mediation between herders and farmers in North Central and North East Nigeria. However, the choice of Hausa language like English has been described as a foreign language to the warring herders and farmers in Nigeria (Kperogi, 2016). In addition, Acheoah, Olaleye and Acheoah (2017) described language as an amalgam of the people's way of life that can enhance peace if properly deployed in conflict resolution. They noted that the linguistic identities of the people involved in the conflict have crucial roles to play in conflict resolution. The study concluded that effective use of language in conflict management presupposes the use of diverse discourse strategies which include imagery, special clause structure, repetition, call to action, the use of third-party, feedback, speech acts, personal pronouns, mutual contextual knowledge, among others. The study gave a sound recommendation on the choice of language but it was not contextualized to address the herders-farmers' conflict in North Central and North East Nigeria which is the focus of this paper.

Lastly, the review of literature has shown that bulk of the researches on language and conflict resolution dwell more on the causes, and dynamics of the conflict, with few resolution mechanisms hinged on preventive mechanisms. Literature has largely focused on issues but few have offered an alternative mechanism that bothers on the use of indigenized language, specifically Hausa language to ensuring lasting peace between the herders and farmers in North Central and North East Nigeria.

Socio-linguistic composition of the herders-farmers' community in north-central and north East Nigeria

The herders are predominantly *Fula* people (known as *Fulani* in Hausa language), who are spread across the

Sahel from the Atlantic Coast to the Red Sea, particularly in West Africa. The Fulanis generally speak the Fulfude language and some of them understand and speak Hausa language. There is diverse speculation about the origin of the Fulani herdsmen, as it seems to be unclear. Some anthropologists opine that the origin of Fula is connected with Egypt while others argue that the Fulanis have links with Israel or the Senegambia Region (Steven, 2015). However, the ethnic origin of the Fulani people may be traceable to the socio-economic interactions between an ancient West Africans and North Africans such as the Egyptians (Ikechukwu, 1996). A significant number of them are nomadic pastoralists, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry grass lands of the Sahel Savannah thereby making them the world's largest ethnic group numbering between 38 to 40 million people in Sahel and West Africa (David, 1996).

As an ethnic group, they are bound together by the Fula language, Islamic religious affiliation, historical origin and culture. The Fulani herdsmen occupy significant parts of Northern Nigeria such as Taraba, Borno, and Adamawa States, among others. The main Fulani sub-groups in Nigeria are: *FulbeAdamawa*, *FulbeMbororo*, *FulbeSokoto*, *FulbeGombe*, and the *FulbeBorgu* (Eyekpimi, 2016). The Fula people value their herds above anything and priority is given to their pastoral occupation. Therefore, in attempt to feed, tend and protect their cattle, herdsmen have often invaded farmlands and come into conflict with local farmers from other ethnic groups with different languages other than Fula.

An overview of the herders-farmers' communal conflict in Nigeria

The communal conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria is as old as the practice of agriculture in Nigeria. This conflict is as a result of competition for scarce values (i.e. land) amidst strained social relations. In recent times the conflict has assumed a new dimension with an increasing numbers of casualties and displaced people across the affected states of Taraba, Adamawa, and Benue among others. The manifest causative factors can easily be traced to the recent economic realities in the country which forced many people into crop farming, livestock and cattle rearing. The effect of this surge is the on-going ethno-communal crisis between farmers and the Fulani herdsmen over the limited land space in different parts of the country.

The conflict and clashes occur in a vicious cycle – as cattle graze on the farms of farmers and farmers in retaliation attacks the cows of the herdsmen and the herdsmen go on a reprisal attacks on the farmers. The brutal attacks and reprisal attacks by farmers and herdsmen have resulted to destruction of lives and properties. Ajibo et al (2018) reported that Fulani herdsmen and farmers communal conflicts have claimed over 3,780 Nigerians in attacks across the country excluding the injured and abducted. On the other hand,

farmers have killed countless number of cows and Fulani herdsmen in counter attacks for the destruction of farm lands and farm produce by cows. Other studies have confirmed that herders-farmers' conflicts have led to wanton loss of lives and threatens national integration and development (Duru, 2016; Adetula, 2016; Mamah, 2016; Ajijah, 2016). According to statistics provided by the Institute for Economics and Peace, 1229 people were killed in 2014, up from 63 in 2013, and Benue State seems to be the hardest hit in recent times.

Every conflict is a function of latent and manifest factors. Therefore, the communal conflict between herders and farmers in North-Central and North East Nigeria is premised on certain chain of factors which are both latent and manifest which range from social, economic, political to linguistic.

Economic Factor

One of the manifest causes of the increasing communal conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria have been coiled around the use of land resource which is aggravated by dwindling resources in recent years (Adisa, 2012). The population is dynamic and ever increasing compared to land that is relatively static. Therefore, more and more people will continue to compete over scarce values (land) and encroachment into farmlands provokes the farmers to go after their animals, and the herdsmen attack the farmers in a reprisal attack, thus conflict ensued.

Social Factor

The age-long strained social relations between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers are an underlying (latent) cause of the conflict. The farmers generally, see the Fulani herdsmen as nothing, but thieves and usurpers. As such the farmers don't want to have anything to do in common with the Fulani herdsmen.

Linguistic Factor

There is a difference between the languages spoken by the herdsmen and the farmers. Most of the crises between herders and farmers are complicated by the language barriers between them. Taylor (2014) noted that language plays a very important role in conflict management. Language is a tool for effective communication can either be competitive (Giebels & Noelanders, 2004; Olekalns & Smith, 2003) and cooperative (Donohue & Roberto, 1996; Putnam & Jones, 1982). Therefore, the language of mediation in conflict management must appeal to the emotions and system of thought of both parties. However, the adoption of Hausa language (which does not share linguistic features with the native languages of the herdsmen and farmers in North Central and North East Nigeria) as the language of mediation is a bit hasty because it has not been indigenised to appeal to the conflicting parties.

Political Factor

The inability of the government to intervene by taking appropriate preventive actions through quick response to distress calls and early warning signs are some of the factors fuelling herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria. Poor response to distress calls has made it difficult to stop crises that would have been prevented if government had responded accordingly. Also, politicians are beginning to see the socio-political friction as an ambience for political advancement, and have succeeded in widening the divide between the farmers and herders, especially in North Central and North East Nigeria, (Rasak, 2011; Fabusoro and Oyegbami, 2009).

Indigenisation of Hausa language as an alternative resolution mechanism for herders-farmers' communal conflict in Nigeria

As a nation under the mandate of United Nations which commits member states to conflict prevention and resolution, to ensuring global peace and security, the federal government of Nigeria has taken responsive actions to intervene and resolve the recurring deadly conflict between herders and farmers in North-Central Nigeria. However, the different intervention programmes implemented so far has not been able to effectively forestall or deter attacks by either of the conflicting parties. In that sense, the government is widely viewed not only lacking approach to resolving the conflict, but also the will to do so. Deployment of security agents, consultations, concession of certain portions of land as grazing reserves or cattle colonies among other interventions have been a dominant feature of the federal government's response to farmer-herders' conflict but the approach has not achieved the desired result so far.

In 2016, the National Assembly attempted to pass legislation to address conflicts between farmers and herders through the controversial National Grazing Reserve (Establishment) Bill 2016, which ultimately was not passed. This is largely due to the fact that the Land Use Act of 1978 vests all powers related to the regulation of ownership, alienation, acquisition, administration, and management of Nigerian land with the state governors (Agande 2017). Similarly, Benue and Taraba State Governments have enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Laws in response to the increasing deadly conflict between farmers and herders in their respective states.

In fact, strong criticisms and resentments have greeted the deployment of security agencies and concession of portions of land as grazing reserves or cattle colonies thereby further increasing ethnic divides, as many communities perceived the government as being insincere and biased. Although the military boys have been able to curb violence and repel invading militias in certain areas thereby enabling some of the displaced in

Benue State to return to their villages, herders-farmers' killings and conflict have continued unabated with many of the sacked communities remaining deserted. Several factors account for the limited effectiveness of the various intervention programmes of the government to contain or manage the herders-farmers' conflict. Some of these are inadequate personnel, poorly equipped military and the lack of an indigenised language that will appeal to the warring factions.

On the choice of language in the negotiation of peace between the herders and farmers, the Nigerian government has been heavily dependent on the use of Hausa language which is an 'adopted' lingua franca in the zone. Hausa language as currently adopted in peace mediation and negotiation is purely out of convenience because it is not spoken by majority of the illiterates in the rural areas who form the victims of the herders-farmers' clashes. These farmers speak Epira, Idoma, Tiv, Igala among other ethnic languages while the herders speak Fulfulde which is not mutually intelligible with Hausa.

According to Kperogi (2016), there are distinctions between the linguistic backgrounds of Hausa, Fulfulde and most of the indigenous languages in North Central and North East Nigeria. Although Hausa language is widely spoken in northern Nigeria, it's foreign to the country. Hausa language is Afro-Asiatic with roots in the Chadic language. People that are today referred to as Hausas in Nigeria are mixture of many tribes who only speak Hausa language as lingua franca. The evolution of Hausa language can be traced to the westward spread of Chadic languages across the Sahara, and later developed into lingua franca across West Africa basically for trading purposes (Ethnologue, 2018).

There are four broad language families in Africa namely Afro-Asiatic, Niger Congo, Nilo Sahara and Khoisan. Yoruba, Igbo, Idoma, Igala, Itsekiri, Epira, and many languages in southern and central Nigeria emerged from the Niger Congo language group same with Fulfulde, Berom, and other languages while Hausa, Angas, Tangale, Bole, etc. emerged from Afro-Asiatic language family (Kperogi, 2016). This shows that the languages of the two (herders and farmers) warring factions are from the Niger Congo language family which make them similar. Taylor (2014) posited that the choice of language in conflict management is important because it depends on the mediator's orientation to the conflict. In a bid to adopt an indigenous language in mediation and construction of peace, the Nigerian government adopted the Hausa language and codenamed the military operations to tackle herders-farmers' conflict in North Central and North East as 'Lafia Dole (Peace is a MUST)'. The choice of Hausa language in the mediation process is based on objectivity and the linguistic map of Nigeria because the language has the widest spread in North-Central and North East Nigeria and it also functions as the unofficial lingua franca of the zone.

However, decisions on the choice of language in the negotiation of peace go beyond the factors of such as language spread and ethnic considerations. The choice of language in conflict management plays a critical role in the process of building and sustaining peace. Therefore, the choice of Hausa language for mediation is largely questionable because the language shares little or no linguistic (phonetic, phonological or semantic) similarity with the languages of the two warring factions – Herdsmen (Fulde) and Farmers (Tiv, Igala, Idoma, Agatu etc). Citing the Rwanda example, Ngabonziza (2013) noted that language was used not only as a tool of communication but also by the means to distort the genocide ideology. Ngabonziza (2013) posited that indigenised language was used to change the peoples' psyche concerning genocide through a recreation of the peoples' culture. In the light of this, there is a need to indigenize the Hausa language to suit the purpose of mediation and conflict management within the North-Central and North East geopolitical zones.

Using the Rwandan experience, an indigenous language was engineered through powerful speeches, local slogans and slangs by the political leaders, elites and teachers in schools to change the people's minds and enhance a national rebirth. In the words of Ngabonziza (2013:5), 'Rucagu Boniface, former governor of north provinces' reached his target of demobilizing against people's genocide support by using slogans. Lexical analysis proves terms such as unity, reconciliation, peace, work, integrity have been used to the rate of 85% in Paul Kagame speeches in 2003'.

Indigenising Hausa language and adoption of same as the language of mediation in herders-farmers' conflict resolution in Nigeria have become expedient in the face of persistent aggression in the zone. The use of an indigenised Hausa language with familiar lexicons creates a sense of belonging in both the farmers and the herders. Also, it will take minimal amount of resources to indigenise the language since it is the dominant language and unofficial lingua franca of the region. It is believed that if the lexicon items in Hausa Language can be enriched to include selected items in Ffulde (for the herders) and local languages such as Tiv, Igede etc (for farmers), the warring factions will be pacified.

The choice of an indigenised language creates a common ground and tool for the negotiation of peace in herders-farmers' conflict in North-Central Nigeria. Language has become a prominent tool in conflict management. Communication is vital but the choice of language is central in mediation, arbitration and negotiation in the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict in a multilingual setting like Nigeria. For example, Benue which is one of the states in North-Central and North East Nigeria prone to incessant herders-farmers' communal conflict, has large numbers of illiterate farmers that can only communicate in indigenous languages such as Tiv, Idoma and Igede which are totally different from Ffulde (the language of the marauding herders).

This is perhaps one of the reasons conflicts between the herders and farmers are brutal and lead to bloodshed. However, the problem of language and cultural differences between the herders and farmers can be better managed with the instrumentality of an indigenized language – locally sourced slogans and native terms or slangs that support peaceful cohabitation, brotherliness, sanctity of the human life among other things - that is acceptable to all concerned if the language problem is solved by indigenising a common language. Ron (2009) averred that in a situation where language has become a sequence of clichés and slogans, the citizens turn more obedient and are made easier to rule.

Language choice in conflict resolution has been found to depend on factors such as culture (Adair & Brett, 2005), individual differences (Park, & Antonioni, 2007), power differences (Giebels, De Dreu, & Van de Vliert, 2000) and emotions (van Kleef, DeDreu, & Manstead, 2004). The choice of an indigenized language entrenches peace and cultural appreciation. From the foregoing, the continued use of Hausa language as a language of mediation in Nigeria presents a very big gap in the peace mediation process between herders and farmers. This is because the Hausa language adopted for mediation is alien, and as such incapable of shaping the thought process of the parties to the conflict. Turin (1950) through his theory on language and thought posited that there is relationship between language and thought. Thus, the use of an indigenised language can influence the behaviour of the herders and farmers to accept peace terms. Taylor (2014) explained that the choice of language can be focused on self or a desire to find ways to satisfy the needs of all parties.

Sincerity and fairness is required when making the choice of a language of mediation in a multilingual setting like Nigeria so that all the parties involved can objectively participate in the peace process. Cultural elements and value systems are parts of linguistic orientations that can be unconsciously incorporated into the psyche of the people when the right choice is made concerning the language of mediation. The choice of language is capable of influencing the outcome of a conflict. When the language of mediation is indigenised and mutually intelligible, persuasive and emotionally appealing, it tends to promote conflict resolution and encourage efforts to identify solutions that benefit in conflict situations.

Weingart, Prietula, Hyder, & Genovesse, (1999) and Taylor (2002) cited in Taylor (2014) posited that the use of a language that is perceived as foreign or associated with conflict escalation in the process of peace negotiation and mediation may not produce the expected outcome. This is because language is a powerful tool that is capable of affecting our worldview and convictions about issues. Based on this, it is strongly advised that the continued uncontrolled use of Hausa language in conflict resolution should be discontinued. This is because the herders are mostly from the Fulani tribe and they speak Ffulde and the farmers speak the different indigenous

languages (Igala, Idoma, Agatu, Tiv etc) that are from the same Atlantic Congo subfamily of the Niger-Congo family with Fulfulde. Therefore, the Hausa language should be indigenised for use in conflict resolution in herders-farmers clashes in North Central and North East Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned, the following recommendations were made:

1. Hausa language should be indigenised and employed in all peace negotiations, mediations and conflict management among herders and farmers in North-Central and North East Nigeria.
2. Language experts should be engaged to develop a robust vocabulary and introduce certain cultural elements from the lexicons of Fulfulde and other local languages of the farmers such as Agatu, Igede, Idoma, Tiv in North-Central and North East Nigeria, and incorporate them into the Hausa language forthwith.
3. Government at all levels should be sincere, prompt and proactive to distress calls and reports on herders-farmers' conflict in North Central and North East Nigeria.
4. The government and other peace actors should develop and deploy strategic indigenous preventive conflict management mechanism devoid of ethnic sentiment and bias.

Conclusion

Ethnic plurality among other things is responsible for increase in ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria. These crises have led to the wanton destruction of lives and properties across the nation. Notable among such conflicts is the recurring herders-farmers' clashes in North-Central and North East Nigeria with brutal attacks and reprisal attacks in villages in Borno, Adamawa, Benue, Plateau and Taraba States. Efforts to management the conflicts have largely focused on the mediation, payment of compensations and creation of grazing reserves or cattle colonies in some states of the federation. As laudable as these efforts are, there have been strong criticisms and calls that the government is biased.

Communication remains vital in the negotiation of peace and the mediation process and language is the tool. The choice of the language of communication is critical in meaningful persuasion. This paper suggested the development and adoption of indigenised Hausa language in the negotiation of peace between the herdsman and farmers. It was recommended the Hausa language which is the lingua franca in North-Central and North East geopolitical zones should be indigenised using lexicons of Fulfulde and other local languages in the region.

References

- [1]. Acheoah, J.O, Olaleye, J. I, & Acheoah, O.A (2017), Language in Conflict Resolution in Africa: The Discourse Strategies. *American Research Journal of English and Literature*, Vol. 3, No.1 Pp. 1-10.
- [2]. Adair, W.L. and Brett, J.M. (2005). The negotiation dance: Time, culture, and behavioural sequences in negotiation. *Organization Science*, 16, 33-51.
- [3]. Adebite, T. (2017). Conflict and resolution: the roles of language, culture, gender and literature. Retrieved online 23rd February, 2019 from www.researchgate.net/publication/317661533
- [4]. Adetula, D. (2016). *Understanding the Fulani herdsman crisis in Nigeria: Here is everything you need to know*, Retrieved online 20 February, 2019, from <http://venturesafrica.com/understanding-the-fulani-herdsman-crisis-in-nigeria-what-you-need-to-know>
- [5]. Adisa, R. S. (2012). Land use conflict between farmers and herdsman – Implications for agricultural and rural development in Nigeria.
- [6]. Agande, B. (2017, April 20). Army launches Operation Harbin Kunama II in Southern Kaduna. *Vanguard News*. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/army-launches-operation-harbin-kunama-ii-southern-kaduna/>
- [7]. Agbaje, O. (2005). "The 'U.S. Intelligence Report'", *The Guardian*, Tuesday, June 14
- [8]. Ajibo, H.T.; Onuoha, E.C.; Obi-Kenguna, C.N., Okafor, A.E. & Oluwole, I.O. (2018). Dynamics of Farmers and Herdsman Conflict in Nigeria: The implication to Social Work Policy Intervention. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 8 (7).
- [9]. Ajibo, H.T & Oluwole, I.O (2018). Dynamics of Farmers and Herdsman Conflict in Nigeria: The Implication to Social Work Policy Intervention, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 8 • No. 7 • J
- [10]. Ajijah, A., (2016), 'Church says 808 killed in southern Kaduna', December 29, viewed n.d., from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/219173-church-says-808-killed-southern-kaduna.html>
- [11]. Alimba, N. C. (2014). Probing the Dynamic of Communal Conflict in Northern Nigeria. *An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia* Vol. 8 (1), Serial No. 32, pp.177-204
- [12]. Best, S.G. (2006) *Methods of Conflict Resolution and Transformation in Best S.G.(ed) Introduction to peace and conflict Studies, A Reader*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd.
- [13]. Birjandi, Parvis. "A Review of the Language-Thought Debate: Multivariant Perspectives". Islamic Azad University (Science and Research Branch) – via EBSCOhost.
- [14]. Boroditsky, L. (2009). How Does Our Language Shape the Way We Think? . Edge.org. Retrieved March 18, 2013, from http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/boroditsky09/boroditsky09_index.html
- [15]. Chika, G. (2016). Language and culture as conflict resolution tools: Rethinking English as Lingua Franca, *British Journal of English Linguistics* Vol.4 (5).
- [16]. Darling, J. R. & Fogliasso, C. E. (1999). Conflict management across cultural boundaries: a case analysis from a multinational bank. 99.6:383-392
- [17]. David Lavison (1996) *Filani, Encyclopaedia World Cultures; Africa and the Middle East, Volume 9* Gale Group

- [18]. Donohue, W. A., & Roberto, A. J. (1996). An empirical examination of three models of integrative and distributive bargaining. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 7, 209-229.
- [19]. Donohue, W.A. & Kolt, R. (1992). *Managing interpersonal conflict*. Newbury Calif: Sage Publishers.
- [20]. Egenti, M.C. (2015). Multilingualism and the ethnic identity of the Ete People. Mgbakoigba: *Journal of African Studies*, Volume 4,(1).
- [21]. Ethnologue (2018), *Hausa*, Retrieved online February 26th, 2019 from http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hausa_language
- [22]. Eyekpimi, O. (2016). *History of Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes in Nigeria*. Retrieved from <https://infoguidenigeria.com/fulani-herdsmen-farmers-clashes>
- [23]. Fratkin, E. (1997) Pastoralism: Governance and Development issues. *Annual Review of Anthropology* P.(26).
- [24]. Giebels, E., & Noelanders, S. (2004). *Crisis negotiations: A multiparty perspective*. Veenendaal. The Netherlands: Universal Press.
- [25]. Gordon, P., (2004). Numerical Cognition Without Words: Evidence from Amazonia. *Science*. 306, pp.496-499.
- [26]. Hamman, J. A. (2011). Farmer-Herder conflict: Exploring the causes and management approaches in the Lake Chad Region Nigeria.
- [27]. Hellriegel, D. & Slocum, J.W. (1996). *Management*. Cincinnati Ohio: South Western College Publishing
- [28]. Imobighe, T.A. (2003a). "Introduction: Civil Society, Ethnic Nationalism and Nation Building in Nigeria" in T.A.Imobighe (Ed) Land Use Decree No.6, Cap 202. *Laws of the Federation of Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, pp.1-12
- [29]. International Crises Group (2018). *Stopping Nigeria spiraling violence* Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/stopping-nigeria-spiraling-violence>
- [30]. Kaplan, R. (1994) The Coming Anarchy. *Atlantic Monthly*, 27, 44-76.
- [31]. Kperogi, F. (2016). Nigerian languages are more closely related than you think. Retrieved online 5th march, 2019 from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/nigerian-languages-are-more-closely-related-than-you-think.html>
- [32]. Krauss, R.M. and Chiu, C. (1998). Language and Social Behaviour. In D. Gilbert, S. Fiske & G. Lindsey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (4th ed.), Vol. 2. (pp. 41-88). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- [33]. Language of Thought Hypothesis. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved online 23rd June, 2017 from www.iep.utm.edu
- [34]. Maiangwa, J. and Ahmadu, H. J. (2007) Reflections on and insights into the Nigeria's political instability since independence: Alternative proposal for consideration. *Maiduguri Journal of Arts and Social Science* 5(2), Maiduguri: University of Maiduguri Press.
- [35]. Mercy Corps. Retrieved online 21st February, 2019 from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Conflict-Mitigation-Economic-Growth-Nigeria-2017.pdf>
- [36]. Murnighan, J. K., Babcock, L., Thompson, L., & Pillutla, M. (1999). The information dilemmas in negotiations: Effects of experience, incentives and integrative potential. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 10, 313-339.
- [37]. Ngabonziza, A. J. (2013). The Importance of Language Studies in Conflict Resolution. *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies* Volume 2 Issue 1 (Article 4) Special Double Issue: Democratization Process in the Great Lakes Region: Progress and Challenges. Retrieved online 24th February, 2019 from <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jacaps/vol2/iss1/4>
- [38]. Okorie, A. N. (1997) Situational Conflict Management Strategies: Different Strokes for Different Folks) *Ilorin Journal of Education*. 17
- [39]. Olagbaju, O. O. (2014). Multilingual Education in Nigeria: Policy, Practice, Challenges and solutions. *Journal of Education and Practice* Vol. 5 (6), 118-127.
- [40]. Olekalns, M., & Smith, P. L. (2003). Simple frequency effects: Motivational orientation, strategy selection and sequencing, and outcome optimality in negotiations. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 39, 101-117.
- [41]. Orinya, S. (2016) Communal Conflict, Internal Displacement and Livelihood Security: An Analysis of the Agila Situation. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IHSSE)* Volume 3, Issue 10, October 2016, PP 80-88
- [42]. Park, H., & Antonioni, D. (2007). Personality, reciprocity, and strength of conflict resolution strategy. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41, 110-125.
- [43]. Pat Ikechukwu Ndukwe (1996), "Fulani" The rosen publishing group. New York Pp 9-17
- [44]. Putnam, L. L., & Jones, T. S. (1982). Reciprocity in negotiations: An analysis of bargaining interaction. *Communication Monographs*, 49, 171-191.
- [45]. Ron, A. (2009). Peace negotiations and peace talks: The peace process in the public sphere. *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Volume 14, (1) *spring/summer 2009*
- [46]. Steinel, W., De Dreu, C. K. W., Ouweland, E., & Ramirez-Marin, J. Y. (2008). When constituencies speak in multiple tongues: The relative persuasiveness of hawkish minorities in representative negotiation. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 109, 67-78.
- [47]. Steven, L.D. (2015). Native People of the World: An Encyclopedia of Groups, Culture and Contemporary Issues, Routledge Pp. 31-32.
- [48]. Taylor, P. J. (2002a). A partial order scalogram analysis of communication behaviour in crisis negotiation with the prediction of outcome. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13, 4-37.
- [49]. Taylor, P.J. (2014). The role of language in conflict and conflict resolution. *Negotiation Journal*, 23, 307-331.
- [50]. Van Kleef, G. A., De Dreu, C. K. W., & Manstead, A. S. R. (2004). The interpersonal effects of anger and happiness in negotiations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86, 57-76.
- [51]. Walter, Rodney (1970), *A history of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800*, NEW York, Oxford University Press.
- [52]. Weingart, L. R., Prietula, M. J., Hyder, E. B., & Genovese, C. R. (1999). Knowledge and the sequential processes of negotiation; A Markov chain analysis of response-in-kind. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 35, 366-393.
- [53]. Whorf, B. L. (1956). *Language, thought, and reality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- [54]. Wilmot, W.W. & Hocker, J. (2011). *Interpersonal Conflict*. New York: McGraw-Hill