Impact Of Language On Governance And Government Policies: Implication On Tinubu's "Renewed Hope Agenda" In Nigeria

[1]Naziru Ahmad Atiku, [2]Boboye Taiwo Adekemi And [3]Malobi Ngozi Juliana

[1-3] Department of Languages, School of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Oko, Anambra State

Corresponding email: atikunaziru85@gmail.com

Abstract

Language plays an indisputable significant role in governance. As the primary tool for communication and interaction, language connects those that govern and the governed. It remains a crucial instrument for policy formulation and proclamation. Generally, governments use language to introduce the developmental policies they have for their citizens. The skillful word crafts that the government employs in the formulation and proclamation of the policies entices the citizens to overwhelmingly embrace and support the policy with utmost resilience. Governments in Nigeria have been using good diction to lure and win popularity from the masses as well as their optimistic impression. Therefore, this paper attempts to survey how some recent previous governments including the present government use language to impart optimism in the minds of Nigerians. The paper concludes that language is an indispensable tool that plays a central role in governance. However, the paper offers recommendations among others that governments should endeavour to fulfill and deliver their policies and promises trough diligent implementations not mere rhetoric.

Keywords: *Language, Governance, Policy Formulation, government, Nigerians*

Introduction

Language is an indispensable medium of interaction absolutely needed by every government, organization, society or any group of people aspiring to attain efficacy in governance and craving for effective communication. It is an exclusive phenomenon that human beings are endowed with, as social animals, to communicate their feelings, desires, and share information. Corroborating this view, Chomsky (1979) asserts that language and society are so much related and this relationship cannot be underestimated. Language is the oil that lubricates activities within any human society. He concludes that language is an indispensable medium that helps man to achieve effective communication. Basically, it is inconceivable for any group of people or society, devoid of language to exist in order. The significant role language plays in our lives cannot be overrated. It forms the basis for human development and advancement. Moreover, language as an instrument of communication fosters tolerance, cooperation, and understanding; at same time it debars impatience, dissociation, distrust, hatred, and misunderstanding. (Eno-Abasi, 2003) claims "the absence of an established effective communication between the ethnic groups becomes the basis for bigotry and hatred". This means that it is through language that people understand each other's feelings, attitudes, and reverence which consequently makes them develop production, appreciation, propensity, and general understanding and forbearance. Hence, the necessity of language in governance becomes obvious. According to Wikipedia (2023) governance is the process of interactions through the laws, social norms, power (social and political) or language as structured in communication of an organized society over a social system (family, social group, formal or informal organization, a territory under a jurisdiction or across territories. The symbiotic relationship between language and governance can be established in the fact that both are some sorts of interactions. Governance is an interaction between those in the position of authority and those that are being governed. Language strengthens this interaction when skillfully used or weakens it when used in an unskillful manner. Language in governance plays a tremendous role in influencing, inspiring, and motivating others. Since language is the cornerstone of human communication, and interactions, it shapes the way we perceive and understand others. It is the significant means that leaders employ to communicate their policies, visions, and missions to their followers and also use it to motivate them and garner their support towards achieving those visions.

Through language leaders shape mentality, psyche, build relationships, and leverage collaborations from the public.

Generally, every government, administration or regime whether civilian or military junta must have a vision and mission and a comprehensive plan of action intended to achieve and realize these visions (policies). The government or leaders of the government have to use language to express these policies to their subjects or subordinates. It is against this background that this paper aims to examine the impact of language on policy formulation and proclamation by several governments in Nigeria including the present administration of president Bola Ahmed Tinubu and its policy of "Renewed Hope Agenda".

Conceptualizing Clarification

Language

Language as a complex phenomenon overflows definition. Linguists unanimously argue that no single definition comprehensively covers the meaning of language in its entire ramification. This idea lies in the fact that meaning of language can be envisaged from multifarious standpoints. The standpoints may include linguistic, cultural, intellectual, social, cognitive, philosophical, etc. However it has been defined by the English Oxford Dictionary as, "the system of spoken or written communication used by a particular country, people and community typically consisting of work used within a regular grammatical and syntactic structure". Richards and Schmidth (2010) see language as a system of human communication which consists of the structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation) into larger units e.g. morphemes, words, sentences and utterances". Williams (1993:91) states that modern linguistic theory is based on the assumption that the primary and fundamental function of language is communication. (Deacon 1997) claims that language is our unique and complex mode of communication. Basically language is used to communicate. According to Anyachonkeya (2007) communication is the act of passing information or conveying thoughts, ideas or feelings from a given source or person through a medium or channel to another person or group of persons or particular destination where it is received. This shows that there is an inextricable relationship between language and thought. ".

Aristotle (1937) says "language is a speech sound produced by human beings to express their ideas, emotions, thoughts, desires and feelings". In addition to communication human beings use language to express and share their feelings, ideas, thoughts and desires. As human beings communicate, the words they use convey meanings or sense and their meaning or sense is what affects their emotions, thoughts, perspectives, opinion and morality. Bloch and Trager (1942) define language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which social groups cooperate. Moreover, Lyons corroborates Bloomfield by defining language as the principal communication systems used by a particular group of human beings within the specific society of which they are members. Wikipedia Online defines language as a system of signs for encoding and decoding information.

Governance

Governance as a concept has a lot in common with language. It is a complex phenomenon that almost resists a single definition which covers the extents of its meaning. Its meaning and usage depend on the social, political, and economic context of the term and the person or organization's intended purpose. Thus, it has been variantly defined by many scholars and organizations. According to the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP 2002) governance is the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political, and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector. United Nations (UN 2001) refers governance to the activities of all political and administrative authorities to govern their country. International Monetary Fund (IMF 2001) governance is a concept in which a country is managed, including economic, policy, and legal aspects. According to Wikipedia (2022) governance involves decision-making, rule-setting, and enforcement mechanisms to guide the functioning of an organization or society. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governance However, Harland Cleveland (1972) pioneered governance's usage as an alternative to public administration. He identified governance with a cluster of concepts. Chhortray and Stoker (2009) view governance as "about the rules of collective decision-making in a setting where there are plurality of actions or organizations and where no formal control system can dictate the terms of relationship between these actors and organizations. Furthermore, Rhodes (1997) argues that

governance signifies a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing; a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed. Kooiman (2000) opines that governance highlights the role of the state in steering action within a complex social system. It signifies the development of strategies for the coordination of economic activities and management of resources to satisfy the societal needs and ensure sustainable development. Basically, governance refers to the administration of the affairs of people in an organization, state, or country which involves harnessing their available resources, based on consensus, to meet their basic needs. Although governance is important as far as administering the affairs of people is concerned, good governance is the most important thing a society needs.

Good Governance

The concept of good governance came into limelight in the early 90s when the World Bank adopted it as one of its conditions for lending to developing and underdeveloped countries. In its 1992 report titled "Governance and Development" it argues that good governance is the way in which power is used to regulate the economic and social resources of a country for development. Today, the term is globally used by national and international organizations with the aims to minimize corruption, promote accountability, involve all concerned in decision-making process and respond actively to the needs of the society. Meanwhile, most of the definitions of good governance come from the United Nations and its sub-organizations. According to UNESCAP, 2009 cited in Wikipedia 2021 good governance is the process of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption and with due regard for the rule of law. Since there is no universally accepted definition of good governance, the United Nations identifies 8 major characteristics of good governance. According to the United Nations (UN 2015) good governance must be participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law. Chibuke (2015) views good governance as the separate process of management or leadership that makes decisions, defines expectation, grants power, and verifies performance for the general good of the state and its citizens. Also Mishra (2003) defines good governance as a trust with trust, a commitment of the

people for the people, a social contract for the greatest good, the collective conscience of the community. Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan asserts that good governance is the single most important factor in eradicating poverty, and promoting development. Notwithstanding, good governance ensures transparency, promotes trust among stakeholders, and obliges members of the society to be responsive, cooperative, and resilient in the realization of government policies.

Effects of Language on Governance

Language has the greatest role among all the factors that support governance. Though what heads of government say, in governance, is important because it affects the lives of the people socially, economically and politically; how they say it is more important. The language used by these heads of governments to introduce new policies should be impactful. Thus, every government should choose appropriate words to describe its policies and course or patterns of activities. Politicians use rhetoric strategically in ways that they believe will increase support from the general public for their policies Riker (1996). Richard, C.I. (2020) discussing the nature of language and governance argues that language plays a prominent role in governance. He added that governance is not an abstract entity; it is personified in actors and actresses, who are principally men and women that make decisions and implement them within their areas of jurisdiction. He further identifies four prerequisite elements of human development for one to participate as an effective actor or actress has to be developed intellectually, educationally, socially, and technologically. He concluded that none of these elements can be fully attained without language. This highlights the central role language plays in all aspects of governance in addition to its primary role of means of interaction and sharing information. Bamgbose in Ker (2010) also affirms that

> ... It is true that there cannot be good governance unless the governed can participate effectively in the political process such participation involves having access to adequate information". He further argues that what citizens need most is access to (information) and access can only be in a language….

Language as a powerful tool for communication debars misunderstanding which creates bigotry and hatred; fosters unity, development, and ties among citizens. Language plays a prominent role in maintaining law and order, inspiring focused action, achieving goals and objectives of the governed, and addressing the basic needs of the society.

However, sometimes a government may tend to use words, metaphors, or rhetoric expressions that are originally associated with a negative mood. Such language provokes negative reactions from the people and induces a negative impression in the individuals towards the government and its policies. Language influences public opinion using words which individuals have negative reactions towards (Bradley and Lang 1999) tempt them to pass negative judgment on the government and its policies.

Government and Policies

The word government is a catch-all term with a wide range of meanings; its meaning ranges from state economic system, political administration, a group of people that make decisions in a society or organization. According to dictionary.com 2023, the word government means the political direction and control exercised over the actions of the members, citizens, or inhabitants of communities, societies or states. Since the meaning of government is relatively contextual, in this context the term refers to a group of people or a single individual who takes the responsibility of making decisions, laws, or policies for a country, state, society, or organization. These decisions are authoritative as such they must be honoured by every member or resident in that society. They are also impactful on the behaviour, activities and lives of the members or residents.

Policy on the other hand refers to a set of political promises formally expressed by a government to win the residents support, commitment, and resilience. Thomas R. Dye, (1972) defines policy as whatever the government chooses to do or not to do. Formulation of policy is one of the fundamental functions of government and its sole responsibility. The policy expresses what the government intends to do to its populace. It explicitly states courses of actions or strategies for

achieving desired objectives to attain sustainable development. Meanwhile, Richard Rose (2008) argues that policy is not a decision; it is a course or pattern of actions. The actions we are concerned with in this case are government decisions to act or not to act, to change or to maintain some aspects of the status quo (Birkland, 2001: CH, I). Policy is an action which employs government authority to commit resources in support of a preferred value (Considine, 1994). These policies are framed, formulated and articulated by governments, using appropriate language to tag them, with strong determination to implement them and solve societal demands or needs.

Generally, tagging policy is a global phenomenon however; several governments in Nigeria have tagged their policies which are meant to highlight the focal points of their administrations. Such policies include; 'The Green Revolution" by Shagari's administration. This policy, using the word "green", hoped to lay much emphasis on the agricultural sector by utilizing agricultural products to subsequently revitalize key sectors of the economy. President Obasanjo tagged one of his policies as "Consolidating Democracy". Using the word "Consolidate" aims at strengthening the resuscitated democracy (after years of military rule) by injecting moral strength in the mind of the politicians to join hand and support democracy. In addition to his Consolidating Democracy, Obasanjo later introduced another policy and tagged it "NEEDS" (Nigerian Economic Empowerment Development Strategy). When Yar'adua assumed the mantle of leadership, he framed his policy and tagged it "7-point Agenda". Yar'adua identifies seven key factors of the economy that when reinvigorated would grow the entire economy. The seven factors are Power and Energy, Food Security, Wealth Creation, Transport Sector, Land Reforms, Security, and Education. President Good Luck came up with a new policy during his own tenure in 2011 and tagged it "Transformational Agenda". Like his predecessor, he promised to transform some key factors of the economy with the aim of achieving general transformation in the entire sectors and economy of the country.

Furthermore, in 2016 President Muhammadu Buhari in line with his campaign promises to bring about positive change in the country, identified his administration with the policy of change, thus, launched "Change Begins with Me". The main objective of his policy is to instill discipline and patriotism in the attitudes of Nigerians. This attitudinal change was meant to break away from the

past ways things were done and corrupt practices that plague key socio-economic sectors of the country. Finally, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu coined his policy "Renewed Hope Agenda" to lessen the pain and hardship Nigerians found themselves as a result of some stern economic policies of his predecessor.

Effects of Language on Government Policies

The significance of language in governance and policy formulation cannot be overemphasized. As the government cannot be devoid of policy, so policy cannot be devoid of language. Generally, every government has a policy (what it intends to offer to its citizens) which are clearly articulated using language. Formulation of policy requires careful choice of words or diction to persuade the citizens and win over their support in actualizing the goals of the policy. It is this careful choice of words that impels the populace to buy into the government's aspirations with resilience, to realize the goals of the policy. Retrospectively, here is a survey of impact of language on recent previous governments and some of their policies: In Shagari's "Green Revolution" two words were appealing that they aroused hope in the mind of Nigerians and made them quickly yield to support the policy and their support as civic duty to push Nigeria to a higher strata of development for better life.

However, Obasanjo chooses to use "Consolidating Democracy". These two words enticed the sensibility of the citizens to succumb to the policy and makeover the image of the country and the state of affairs after more than a decade of successive military regimes. Since what people were yearning for then was democracy, the word 'Consolidate' made them infer that the democracy needed to be strengthened and supported. Accordingly, in his second term, Obasanjo, considering the economic situation of Nigerians, framed another policy and tagged it "NEEDS". Although the word "NEEDS" is an acronym standing for "Nigerian Economic Empowerment Strategy", it denotatively signifies the necessity of life. The word was so catchy that it was meant to encapsulate the developmental needs of the country socially, economically, and politically.

The use of the word "seven" by President Yar'aduwa to formulate his policy convinced Nigerians that their numerous demands and problems cannot be realized and dealt with at a time. Therefore,

Nigerians felt that holding down these multifold demands within reasonable limits, would allow the government to focus on a few handful fundamental problems which when catered would secure Nigeria a thriving economy for sustainable development.

Meanwhile, President Good luck Ebele Jonathan used the word "transformation" in his policy which was able to pacify agitations from several pressure groups as it assuaged the pain and suffering of the people by envisaging major changes in the way their resources are managed for their betterment. Accordingly, President Buhari was identified in his policy with the word "Change". The word signified a tremendous breakaway from the manner and style of the previous governments. The President went further to say "Change begins with me" which gave Nigerians the idea that this time around it would not be the bottom-up but rather top-down change. Recently, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu used the words "Renewed" and "Hope Agenda". Consequently, when Nigerians lost hope with Buhari's "change agenda" and became disillusioned with the word change, Tinubu used the words 'Renewed and Hope" to regenerate Nigerians' faith in his administration and inspire their support and resilience. The word "renewed" is meant to inspire a fresh hope in the minds of Nigerians.

Conclusion

Every government in the world has a policy, a set of programmes and policies it intends to fulfill and deliver to its subjects which are communicated in language to the citizens. This clearly highlights the position of language in governance as it remains the indispensable medium that allows citizens access to adequate information about government policies (Chomsky 1979, Bamgbose in Ker, 2010). Therefore, it is indisputably obvious that language plays a central role in governance. Thus, the impact of language on governance is as that of water in the life of living things. Chomsky, 1979 substantiates this claim "Language is the oil that lubricates activities within any human society".

Recommendations

Since policy affects every citizen in the country, governments should express their policies in unambiguous language that can be understood by the citizens easier.

Governments should endeavour to fulfill and deliver their policies and promises through diligent implementation not mere rhetoric.

Governments should employ language expertise from different regions of the country to interpret and explain the actual meaning of the policies to the masses in their indigenous languages to avoid misapprehension.

Governments should accompany the implementation of their policies with inspirational and impressionable words to allure the populace and win their support and resilience.

Reference

Adegbija, E. (1994). "The context of language planning in Africa: an illustration with Nigeria". In Putz, M. (ed.) Language Contact.

Adegbite, W. (2004). Bilingualism-biculturalism and Utilisation of Africa Languages for the Development of African Nation. /Ibadan.

Bartik, T. (1994). Jobs, Productivity and Local Economic Development: What Implications Does Economic Research Have for the Role of Government? National Tax Journal, 47(4), 47-61

Bevir, M. (2013). Governance: A very short introduction. United Kindom;Oxford University Press

Birkland, Thomas A. 2001). An Introduction to the Policy Process; Theories, Concepts, and models of Public Policy Making (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe).

Bradley, Margaret M. and Peter J. Lang. 1999. "Affective norms for English words (ANEW): Instruction manual and affective ratings." *Technical Report C-1*, The Center for Research in Psychology,   University of Florida.

Chibuike, J.N. and Fafiolu, G. (2015). Promoting good governance in Nigeria through pre-election discourse: the challenges for the media. *Research in Humanities and social Sciences* 5(2):46 – 55.

Chomsky, N. (1957). Language: The Properties of Human Language. Oxford: Educational Press.

Danladi, s.s. (2013). Language policy: Nigeria and therole of English language in the 21st century. *European Scientific Journal* 9, 19.

Dye, Thomas R. (1972). Understanding Public Policy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall).

Elugba, B.O. (1990). National Language and National Development. In Emenanjo, E.N. (Ed.), Multilingualism, Minority Language and Language Policy in Nigeria (pp. 10 – 19). Agbor Central Books Ltd.

Emenanjo, E.N. (1990). In the Tradition of Majors: Lessons in language engineering for the majority languages. In Emenanjo, E.N. (Ed.), Multilingualism, Minority Language and Language Policy in Nigeria (88 – 98). Agbor: Central Books Ltd.

Enitan, A. (2004, April 20). Imperatives of Good Governance. Vanguard. P.35Eno-Abasi, E.U. (2003). Tonal Reconstruction in Eastern Lower Cross Lects.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998). National Policy on Education. Yaba-Lagos: NERDC Press.

Feiock, R. (Ed.) (2004). Metropolitan Governance: Complict, Competition, and Cooperation. Washington,DC: Georgetown University Press

Ihejirika, R.C. (2006). Language and National Development. The Implication for Nigeria. *Journal of School of General Studies (JOGS),* 1 (1), 68 – 74.

Jean-Marie Guehenno "10 conflicts to watch in 2016". Foreign Policy, January 2016.Jowitt, D. (1991). Nigerian English Language Usage. Lagos: Longman Nigeria Plc.

Ker, D. (2010). "English language, democratic trends and national development". Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association. 13(1) 1-5.

National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (2004), Abuja: National Planning Commission.

Norris, D. (2001). Prospects for Regional Governance under the New Regionalism: Economic Imperative versus Political Impediments. Journal of Urban Affairs, (23), 557-571.

Northouse, G. (2007). Leadership Theory and Practice (3rd ed.) New Delhi:Sage Publications Inc.

Obiegbu, I. (2015). The English language and sustainable development in Nigeria. *Open Journal of Political Science Published* 3, 82 – 86.

Ogbodo, J.C. (2003). National language policy implementation and national development. Nskka Journal of the Humanities, 13, 39 – 48.

Pham, M. T. (2009). "The Lexicon and Grammar of Affect as Information in Consumer Decision Making: The GAIM." Social Psychology of Consumer Behaviour. Ed. Michael Wanke. New York: Taylor   and Francis: 159-192.

Rhodes, R. (1997). Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance Reflexivity and Accountability. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Riker, William H. 1996. The strategy of rhetoric: Campaigning for the American *constitution.* New   Haven: Yale University Press.

Stephen, M. U. (2018). Negative Affective Language in Politics. Political Science Faculty Publication and Presentations: Boise State University.

Stoker, G. (1998). Governance as Theory: Five Propositions. International Social Science Review,   50 (155). 17-28

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific, "What is good governance?" Available on https://www. unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance. pdf

Wale, A. (2003). Multilingualism and national development. In Oyeleye, L.S. and Moji Olateju (Eds.). Reading in Language and Literature (pp. 153–167). Ile-ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press Ltd.

Wallwork, J.F. (1969). Language and Linguistics: An Introduction to the Study of Language. London: Heinemane Educational Books Ltd.

Wikipedia   (2021).   Governance.   Retrieved   from https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/governance