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## EDITORIAL DESK

**T**he Centre for General Nigerian Studies has continued to be a frontier for knowledge dissemination through her series of publications, among other activities being performed by the directorate.

This volume 5 journal of Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Economy of March 2025 housed a total of 18 well researched articles from scholars across the geographical boundaries of the Africa sub region. The team of experienced editors subjected the articles to peer review, and their plagiarism checks have satisfied the guild of editors.

The journal is recommended to researchers, scholars, lecturers, and students to read, and the planners can leverage on recommendations as panacea to the doldrums confronting the socio-economic and educational spheres of the Sub Sahara Africa nations

I wish all the contributors and readers Barka Eid Fitri and Easter in advance

**Prof. M.O.B Mohammed FNAEAP**

*Lead Editor*

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## LANGUAGE: A VERITABLE TOOL FOR PROMOTING ETHICAL VALUES AND PEACE IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Language plays a vital role in shaping human thoughts, attitudes and actions. It is essentially a veritable tool to mould the thoughts, worldview and the actions of children through adolescence and adulthood with a view to instilling in them ethical values of their communities that will galvanise them to appreciate the concept of peace in the atmosphere of which there could only be growth and development. Ethical values are principles that guide human behavior, decision making and actions, ensuring that they align with moral standards and promote the well-being of individuals, communities and society as a whole. These values serve as the foundation for distinguishing right from wrong, good from bad, and just from unjust. Since promoting ethical values requires a multifaceted approach, this paper will look into the levels at which ethical values are promoted and the strategies language could be deployed to teach and learn ethical values which are shaped by a combination of factors. Strategies with which language could be used to promote peace will also be highlighted. By leveraging language to promote ethical values and peace, we can foster a more harmonious, respectful and compassionate global community.*

**Keywords:** Language, ethical values, peace, conflict resolution, conflict prevention.

### Introduction

The possession of language, more than any other attribute, distinguishes humans from other animals. To understand our humanity, one must understand the language that makes us human. According to the philosophy expressed in the myths and religions of many people, it is language that is the source of human life and power. To some people of Africa, a new born child is regarded as a thing, not yet a person until it acquires or learns a language. Thus, according to this tradition, we all become human because we all know at least one language. Linguistic knowledge, thus means that you can speak and be understood by others who know that language. This means that you are able to produce sounds which signify certain meanings and to understand or interpret the sounds produced by others. This applies to normal-hearing individuals.

Deaf persons produce and understand signs just as hearing persons produce and understand spoken language. If you know a language, you know, without being aware of it, which sounds are part of the language and which are not. This knowledge is often revealed by the way speakers of one language pronounce words from another language. Knowledge of a language also includes which sounds may start a word, end a word and follow each other. Knowledge of the sounds patterns in

one's language constitutes just part of our Linguistics Knowledge. The most important aspect of knowing a language is knowing that certain sounds or sound sequences signify or represent different concepts or meanings. Knowing a language is therefore knowing the system which relates sounds and meanings. When you don't know a language, the sounds spoken to you in this foreign tongue mean nothing to you. Thus, it is the knowledge of the language you speak that brings about your competence and performance in the language.

It is the focus of this paper, therefore, to enunciate how effective use of language could promote ethical values and peace in our society. It is crucial that agencies of children's upbringing like the parents, the society and the federal agencies that are responsible for national orientation come up with programmes of upliftment, education and sensitization that will promote ethical values and peace in our society at large. Here are some of such agencies of national orientation in Nigeria:

- (a) National orientation Agency (NOA) whose mission is to promote national unity, integration and values.
- (b) Federal Ministry of Information and Culture whose mission is to manage information and culture development.
- (c) National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) whose mission is to promote civic education and citizen engagement.
- (d) Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) whose mission is to foster understanding of international relations and Nigeria's foreign policy.
- (e) Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution whose mission is to promote peace building and conflict resolution.
- (f) National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO) whose mission is to preserve and promote Nigerian culture.
- (g) Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) whose missions are to provide public service broadcasting respectively.
- (h) News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) whose mission is to provide news dissemination services.

Other organizations that contribute to national orientation are:

- i. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)
- ii. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- iii. Community Based Organisations (CBOs)
- iv. Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)
- v. Educational Institutions
- vi. Media Outlets.

These agencies and organizations play crucial roles in promoting ethical values, national unity, civic engagement, cultural awareness and peace in Nigeria.

### **Core Ethical Values**

One important ethical value is respect, that is, treating others with dignity and worth. Respect begets respect. When citizens respect one another in the course of their interactions, there will be no conflict but mutual understanding. Another core ethical value worthy of note is honesty. It denotes truthfulness and transparency in the words and actions of citizens. If this core value were imbibed, the moral decadence as exemplified by the level of corruption in our society today would be obliterated. Another important core value is integrity. This has to do with consistency between

principles and actions. Citizens with the value of integrity detest nefarious activities that could put them into disrepute. They are consistently upright in their principles and actions.

Fairness is another core value we must promote. We must encourage justice, equality and impartiality in our dealings with fellow citizens. It is in the atmosphere of fairness that peace prevails. Another core ethical value is responsibility. This value calls for being accountable for one's actions and consequences resulting from such actions. Compassion is another important core value which enables citizens to be empathetic and care for the well-being of others. To be non-maleficence is another value that encourages citizens to avoid harm to others. Beneficence is another core value that promotes the general good while loyalty remains the commitment to relationships and community. If all the communities in Nigeria take the advantage of local languages, that is, their respective mother-tongue to instill these core values in the children and the adults, the peace we so much desire shall be realized in the entire society.

### **Promoting Ethical Values with Language**

Every human being acquires a language at birth in its immediate environment. It is in that language the child perceives the world. The community into which a child is born has its ethical values. So, using the language of the community to promote its values involves deliberate choices to convey respect, empathy and inclusively. Here are strategies to promote ethical values through language:

#### **Teaching and Learning Ethical Values**

Ethical values can be taught and learned. Ethical values are shaped by a combination of factors such as:

##### **(a) Formal Education**

It is in the school curricular that ethics and moral education can be integrated into academic programmes such that the societal values are instilled into young, children that will mature them into adulthood. In formal education, ethics courses that involve ethical theories, principles and applications could be taught and learned.

##### **(b) Informal Education**

This involves family upbringing of the children through parental guidance, role modeling and socialization. The community is also involved in informal education whereby they encourage citizens to participate in volunteer work and community service. Cultural and religious institutions play significant role here by teaching moral principles and values.

##### **(c) Life Experiences**

Through personal relationship with one another, citizens learn from interactions with one another. In citizens' work environments, they observe, learn and adopt organizational values. The social media and online platforms are credible fora that expose citizens to diverse perspectives.

##### **(d) Respectful Language**

This could be achieved by using inclusive language. In other words, you avoid language that excludes or marginalizes certain group. This could bring about contempt and arouse conflicts. Using non-discriminatory language or refraining from using language that perpetuates stereotypes or biases will go a long way to promote ethical values and peace. The use of respectful tone that is considerate and polite will enhance harmonious relationship devoid of acrimony.

**(e) Empathetic Language:**

Through active listening or paying concerted attention to others and responding thoughtfully to them, ethical values and peace are readily promoted. Empathetic expressions such as phrases that acknowledge others feelings and perspectives will also promote societal values and peace. This could also be achieved when we encourage dialogue and exploration of peaceful means of resolving conflicts.

**Inclusive Language**

Avoiding jargon through the use of accessible language to ensure understanding; being mindful of cultural differences and adapting language accordingly, and using languages that avoids gender biases go a long way to promote societal ethical values and peace.

**Ethical Communication**

This strategy has to do with honesty in communication. If citizens communicate truthfully and transparently, ensuring that messages are clear and concise, take responsibility for their words and actions, the promotion of the societal values and the peace we so much desire shall be guaranteed.

**Language in Action**

Citizens should use Language to apologize sincerely for mistakes, offences, infractions against fellow citizens to acknowledge harm and take responsibility for same. Citizens should be mindful of the impact of words on fellow citizens. And to foster constructive dialogue, citizens should encourage open and respectful discussion on issues that are contentious with a view to bring about amicable resolutions. By incorporating these strategies into daily communication, individuals can promote ethical values and contribute to a more respectful, empathetic and peaceful society.

**Promoting Peace with Language**

Language plays a crucial role in promoting peace in any society. It is in the atmosphere of peace the growth and development of the society could flourish. Here are some ways language can be used to promote peace:

**(a) Peaceful Communication:**

This is achievable through non-violent language. Citizens should avoid using aggressive or inflammatory language against one another. By using a tone that is respectful, considerate and polite, the peace we desire much will be realized in the society. Paying attention to others and responding thoughtfully through active listening will bring about peace in the society.

**(b) i. Conflict Resolution:**

Another way by which language could be used to promote peace is by conflict resolution. Language could be used to facilitate mediation and resolve conflicts peacefully. Problem – solving language which focuses on solutions rather than problems will help to promote societal peace.

**ii. Language Patterns for Conflict Resolution:**

Such language patterns include de-escalation language which reduces tension and emotions. Reframing or rephrasing negative statements positively will douse tension and bring about resolution or conflicts. When citizens acknowledge or recognize the perspectives other citizens view issues, and also validate or confirm other party's emotions and concerns, there wouldn't be

conflicts. Also, when citizens place emphasis on shared goals and solutions with the use of future-focused language, conflicts shall be kept at the arm's length.

**(c) Promoting Understanding:**

This strategy is achievable through cultural sensitivity. This is using language that is respectful of cultural differences. Promoting understanding also involves the use of inclusive language that brings citizens together, rather than exclude or marginalize others. Also important is clear communication that ensures that messages are clear and concise to avoid misunderstanding.

**(d) Fostering Empathy**

This is achieved through storytelling to promote empathy and understanding. Perspective-taking through the use of language that encourages the consideration of multiple perspectives to foster empathy. Developing emotional intelligence through language and communication will also foster empathetic feelings of citizens.

**(e) Language of Peace:**

Peaceful vocabulary through the use of words that promote peace and understanding is desirable for establishing societal peace. Using positive language that focuses on positive and uplifting language will ensure a peaceful society. So also should language be used to raise public awareness campaigns about peace and conflict resolution.

## **Conclusion**

Language serves as a powerful tool for promoting ethical values and fostering peace in society. It shapes thought, behavior, and interpersonal relationships, enabling the transmission of core values such as respect, honesty, integrity, fairness, and compassion. Through formal education, informal socialization, and everyday communication, language facilitates moral development and civic responsibility. When used inclusively and empathetically, it promotes understanding, de-escalates conflict, and supports peaceful coexistence. A more ethical, harmonious, and socially cohesive society can be cultivated by harnessing language across families, institutions, and national agencies.

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