

<p>Dr.Chidinma Ann Ihekuna Imo State University chidibellaus2008@gmail.com</p> <p>Prof.Teresa Chinasa Anyanwu Imo State University, Department of Social Science anvawuteressachinasa@gmail.com</p> <p>Dr.Augustin Emela Imo State University, Nigeria. Department of English and Literary Studies emelaaugustin@yahoo.com</p>	<p>The Impact of French Language on insecurity in Nigeria a Case of Aba in Abia State</p> <p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>This study examines the relationship between the French language and insecurity in Nigeria, using Aba as a case study. Despite being an English-speaking country, Nigeria has a significant number of French speakers, particularly in the southeastern region where Aba is located. This study investigates how the French language may be contributing to insecurity in Aba, including its potential role in facilitating communication among criminal groups and hindering law enforcement efforts. Language is a primary mode of human expression. This attribute delineates humans from other animals. With the use of language in its oral and written forms, humans are able to communicate and express their feelings within the cultural norms. Human languages are prone to enhancing socio-cultural, political, economic and scientific activities of the people in an organized society. They are instrumental to our social interactions and meaningful communication in all ramifications. Nigeria is a country where diverse indigenous and foreign languages are spoken but with English as her “Lingua franca”. As an Anglophone country, Nigeria is bordered by French speaking countries to the East, West and North. For a good working relationship and productive communication with her French-speaking neighbours, the Nigerian populace, especially the security agencies requires a good knowledge of French language. Security is the live wire of every society as any breach usually constitutes a very serious menace to its political, economic and social development. This paper examines the Impact of French language on insecurity in Nigeria mostly Aba in Abia State. It will examine the concept of security and the relationship between French language and security in Nigeria. With the recent spate in insurgency and terrorism in the country, French language in particular, should be considered as a tool for enhanced security and maintenance of peace. The paper adopts empirical method as the frame work of analysis and concludes that the importance of French language within the context of military operations cannot be overemphasized.</p>
<p>Keywords: French language, Insecurity, Security, Military, Communication</p>	

1. Introduction

Nigeria has struggled with insecurity in recent years, including kidnapping, armed robbery, and terrorism. While various factors contribute to this insecurity, language has been largely overlooked as a potential factor. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of the French language on insecurity in Aba, Nigeria. Language as a means of communication is restricted to human beings, and it is the chief distinguishing feature of the human species since all normal human infants acquire language at an early stage in life (Rabiah, 2019). Man is basically dependent on Language (whether indigenous or foreign language such as French) for communication.



Among many other uses of language, its use for communication about social maintenance and information about security issues seems to be the most important because it involves human life. According to Kashima (2021: 1), language is frequently used to express our feelings and to uphold social relationships in our common world. The use of language and socialization among individuals are inalienable in human nature. It is the commonest identity of the human race. Without language, certainly, the security of human existence would not be as effective as it is today. Information is one of the key roles a language performs in terms of securitization. It is used to communicate against any suspected danger in every geographical area. Without language, one hardly reveals a secret to another. This is true in all languages of the world. Even what one may think to be a primitive culture or society still has a language system that gives and receives information on the basis of security alerts.

However, the security challenges in Nigeria are becoming so problematic that many are now looking for a way forward. This phenomenon is the result of being aware that security has a major impact on sustaining human life. The implication of insecurity remains that it has affected every aspect of human endeavor, in Aba Abia State it has affected both politically, economically, socially, religiously and otherwise. In Nigeria, and particular reference to Aba, the contemporary security challenges today include terrorism (e.g., Boko Haram insurgency), killings by the Fulani herders, poverty, unemployment, and so much more. This, in effect, has become so imperative that indigenous languages should mediate in solving the problem of insecurity in Nigeria most especially in Aba Abia State as regards creating awareness or circulating information concerning security situations in any environment we may find ourselves. It will attest to attitudinal change and rebranding of the nation with a full network of information. As a matter of fact, this paper looks at the Impact of French language on insecurity in Nigeria in Aba Abia State, in order to shut down the menace. The mandate here is to learn at least the three major languages of Nigeria and also one foreign language such as French language as Nigeria is boarded by francophone countries, as it will strengthen the capacity of security by creating opportunities to reveal the hidden part of hoodlums around the country.

1.1. Statement of the Problem of Insecurity in Aba Abia State

Since the inception of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, insecurity has become a major issue of concern to every citizen. On a daily basis the media has continued to highlight and discuss incessant cases of armed robbery, kidnappings, bombings, abductions, rape, cultic activities and a high rise in ethnic and communal clashes, which have become regular occurrences and have characterized life in Nigeria most especially in Aba in Abia State (Nwangwa, 2014). Media report are awash with the number of lives lost as a result of terrorist, insurgent and other attacks that seem to be alarming. As if some



places in the country can be walled off from the negative impact of violence. The motivation and problem of study is to investigate the impact of French language on insecurity in Nigeria in Abia State, Nigeria.

1.2. Objective(s) of the Study

The main objective of the study is to empirically assess the extent to which French language can impact in insecurity in Nigeria most especially Aba Abia State, with a view to analyze and examine the factors responsible for insecurity in the study area with an investigation into the negative impact of insecurity on the people of Aba in Abia State.

- 1) The research seeks to examine the impact of French language on insecurity and what they should do to put security control measures as to save her infrastructure, economy, and social life so as to achieve stability in the state
- 2) Critically examine the conception of members of the Aba community in Abia State about Insecurity issues and its hazardous effects on the people.
- 3). Recommendations will be proffered on the basis of the findings, on the most effective as well as efficient ways to control and reduce insecurity impact to the barest minimum in Aba.

2. Literature Review

The research re-iterates that insecurity has brought devastating havocs by destroying lives, properties, agricultural lands and social infrastructures.

According to St. Francis (2015) human beings are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness and endowed with unique dignity, so we cannot fail to consider the effects of insecurity on people's lives.

Security is the live wire of every society as any breach of it usually constitutes a very serious menace to its political, economic and social development. In order to maintain peace, avert or prosecute war in the event of the outbreak of one, nations usually set aside robust security budgets. In spite of several measures under taken to maintain peace and avert war, however, breaches such as communal crisis, insurgency, cross border conflicts and full scale war are rampant in many parts of the world and Nigeria has not been spared this scourge. Attempts to curb these conflicts and security challenges through the use of arms and ammunitions have not always produced the desired results.

For instance, the approach adopted by Abia State and other states in Nigeria towards addressing insecurity is to focus wholly on a public security approach without resources to a human security approach. While this approach could be effective in the short term, it robs the States of the long term gains of focusing on more holistic and inclusive means of conflict management. Any effective security approach must be a holistic one that



confronts security from both public security and a peace building perspective. A public security approach would involve the actions of government and security actors such as the police and military. A peace building approach would focus on the drivers of conflict and identifying proactive measures that look at conflict prevention as well as reduction and mitigation. The heart and mind of the aggressors have to be won and surviving citizens caught up in the theatre of war have to be reassured of their safety. This is where the role of French language as a plausible means of averting insecurity issues through intelligence gathering from the grass root and interaction with the people, 'winning' insecurity issues through enlightenment of and interaction with the people and sustaining peace through the potent weapon of continued dialogue with the people in relevant language/languages such as French language comes into play. Over the years, cross border crises have proved difficult to manage with the use of only arms and ammunitions. There is therefore need to dialogue for intelligence gathering; need for troops to acquire competence in languages predominant in the theatre of war and in the neighbouring countries for reasons earlier stated. Since French is the language of our neighbours, the Nigerian government alongside the Nigerian Army authorities have come to realize its importance to our military personnel. This probably explains why the Military authorities recently made French language compulsory for all Army personnel through its incorporation into officers' promotion examinations. French language is an assessed subject in some career courses and examinations for Nigerian Army personnel. Furthermore, because of the importance attached to language competence the Nigerian Army authorities have made it mandatory for its personnel to learn the three (3) major Nigerian languages in one year. Brigadier General Sani Kukasheka Usman (Director Army Public Relations) while addressing the press said that the study of foreign and local languages is a worldwide practice among armies in which officers and soldiers are encouraged to be multilingual.

French Language and security

So many researchers have written on the vital role of language either as a tool for maintaining peace and security or as a tool for socio-cultural and economic growth. Vygotsky (1987) wrote "language plays a role in organizing activity in focusing on specific aspects of the environment". Talking about the Nigerian Armed Forces involvement in peace keeping operation, Agwai (2004) quoted by Sabo (2011) has this to say "Nigeria has since independence in 1960 contributed troops and participated in peace support operations (PSOs) in different theatres of conflict around the world". Still on the important role of the Nigerian Armed Force in peace keeping operations in the world, Gandu (1996) is of the opinion that "Nigeria is a giant in Africa and holds an important place in current arrangements for maintaining regional security and peace. As such, the country is



increasingly being drawn into peace keeping operations in troubled zones not only in Africa, but in other crisis areas in the world... such operations in non-English countries would clearly be more effective if the Nigerian peace keepers were bilingual”. We strongly agree with this researcher that for effective and successful operations, the Nigerian troops should be equipped with other operational languages like French aside the English language. Adegboye (2005) recommends that “because of language importance during peace keeping operations amongst others, literacy in French by officers, not only of the Nigerian Army but of the Nigerian Armed Forces should be seen as one of the challenges that should be met before the next decade”. Adebisi writes “The knowledge of foreign languages is an asset to the individual and his country. Since the knowledge of foreign languages is, like every branch of knowledge, not readily acquired especially at the time of need, it is essential that every literate Nigerian strives to be literate in foreign languages, especially the major ones of the contemporary era”. For the interest of peace, co-existence and national development, every Nigerian should learn at least one foreign language and some of the indigenous languages. Adeyanju quoted in Gandu (1996) states that “competence in French language will increase the ease of contacts of various levels with speakers of the language outside the country... it will serve as a window on the international world and to facilitate socio-cultural, intellectual and economic contracts with neighbouring francophone countries on the one hand and other French speaking countries the world over”.

The geographical location of Nigeria as a country has made French language learning necessary in the country. We reiterate that the importance of French language in Nigeria for social, political, economic, security and international relations cannot be overemphasized. Onyemelukwe (1995) observed that Nigeria needs the knowledge of French so as to have a healthy relation with her francophone neighbours. In the same vein, Reuben Abati insists that ‘Nigeria cannot effectively perform its leadership role in the sub-region if its people do not speak or understand the language of their neighbours’.

3. Methodology of the Study

3.1 Study Area

The study area is the Impact of French Language on insecurity in Nigeria, and the research is carried out in Aba Abia State.

3.2 Procedure

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with stakeholders, including law enforcement officials, community leaders, and French language speakers.

4. Data Analysis/ Discussion

Basically, two groups were involved in the arrangement, which are: The Security Agencies and the congregants, and community members.

This was done to generate more detailed feedback on the issue of French language and its impact on insecurity in Nigeria Abia State. This was done to view the different perceptions of the groups of people (The Security Agencies with the congregants, and community members) on their different experiences with insecurity. The questionnaire was given to the respondents based on their ages, educational backgrounds, marital status and general experiences. Some of the respondents were below the age of 30, in their middle age 35-45), and between the age bracket of 45-60. The questionnaire was designed in a simple way and has columns where respondents can input their own comments. One thousand eight hundred questionnaires were shared with the respondents and 940 people responded to the questionnaire including: security agencies, congregants from different areas of the state, community members who interact with these insecurity issues.

People (men/ women issued Questionnaire)	Total no. of Respondents	Percentage no.
	940	100%
People below the age of 30	235	25%
People between the ages of 35-40	376	40%
People between the ages of 45-60	329	35%

Table 1

The questionnaire consisted of 20 items grouped into three main categories:

French Impact on Insecurity: Extent of physical and operational damage.

Challenges: Financial, emotional, and community-related issues due to insecurity.

Coping Mechanisms: Strategies for mitigation and recovery.

5. Key Findings and Discussion

Category	Findings	Percentage	Discussion
Physical Damage	Communities experiencing structural damage, loss of businesses , loss of lives due to insecurity issued caused by gun shots, bomb etc.	75%	Most communities are venerable to insecurity issues which have led to loss of properties and life's and they have little or no help in resolving the insecurity issues.
Community Disruption	Regular disruption of activities due to insecurity.	88%	Insecurity interrupts weekly gatherings, weddings, funerals, and outreach programs, reducing community engagement and spiritual activities.
Financial	Individuals unable to cover	67%	Financial constraints hinder long-

Burden	costs of repairs and recovery.		term recovery, with the people endlessly relying on government and individuals donations to survive.
Community Role	Individuals providing shelter and help to affected victims.	80%	Despite their challenges members of the community extend hands of fellowship to affected members.
Awareness and Preparedness	The security agencies and the congregants are aware of insecurity issues in the state and they are engaged in security preparedness.	42%	Awareness campaigns and preparedness efforts are limited, with most individuals of the state relying on reactive measures instead of proactive planning.
Mitigation Strategies	Implementing security strategies, encouraging multi language learning such as French language.	56%	While some individuals have adopted basic security strategies, their effectiveness is limited due to financial and technical resource constraints.

Table 2

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The study found that the French language is widely spoken in Aba, particularly among criminal groups. The language was found to be used as a means of communication among these groups, allowing them to coordinate their activities and evade law enforcement. Additionally, the study found that law enforcement officials in Aba often lack proficiency in French, hindering their ability to effectively communicate with French-speaking suspects and witnesses.

Physical and Operational Impacts

The high rate of physical damage (75%) and community disruptions (88%) underscores the vulnerability of the insecurity in Aba Abia State..

Financial Constraints

With 67% of individuals reporting financial difficulties, funding remains a critical challenge. Reduced contributions during insecurity exacerbate the problem, as congregants themselves are often economically affected. Individuals with larger congregations or external affiliations fared slightly better in accessing funds for recovery.

1. Community Resilience Role

An encouraging 80% of individuals serve as community hubs during insecurity, providing shelter and aid. This finding demonstrates their significance as central nodes in the community's disaster response framework.

2. Awareness and Mitigation Gaps

Only 42% of respondents reported being actively engaged in insecurity preparedness, reflecting a lack of systematic planning. This suggests an urgent need for capacity-building programs to enhance awareness and encourage proactive measures.

3. Adoption of Mitigation Strategies

Institutions employing mitigation measures (56%) cited financial limitations as a barrier to implementing more effective solutions. Temporary relocations and basic structural modifications were common but insufficient to address the recurring insecurity issues.

Table Representation of Data Analysis Findings

Questionnaire Item	Response/Observation	Percentage	Implications
Individuals experiencing physical damage	Majority reported damage to walls, roofs, or infrastructure.	75%	Highlights the need for more and active security aide that are well equipped to combat insecurity issues.
Community Disruption	Most individuals are unable to go out of their homes, nor go to their work place due insecurity challenges in their area.	88%	Reflects the extent of operational challenges, affecting community.
Financial difficulties reported	Individuals citing lack of funds for repairs and operational recovery.	67%	Suggests the need for financial support systems or insurance schemes for insecurity-affected area.
Individuals providing relief.	Acted as shelters or aid centres, offering food, temporary housing, and emotional support.	80%	Highlights their dual role as victims and agents of resilience, underlining the importance of sustaining their functionality.
Awareness of insecurity risks	Religious leaders and congregants aware of flood risks and implementing preparedness measures.	42%	Indicates limited awareness and the necessity for educational initiatives to improve proactive disaster management.
Use of security strategies	Includes installation of flood barriers, elevating floors, or temporary relocation of activities.	56%	Reflects a partial adoption of mitigation measures, constrained by financial and technical c+hallenges.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Law Enforcement and Language Training

Mandatory language training_: Make French language training mandatory for all law enforcement officials in Aba.

Language proficiency testing_: Conduct regular language proficiency tests for law enforcement officials to ensure they meet the required language standards.



Language training for specialized units_: Provide specialized language training for law enforcement units that deal with French-speaking suspects or witnesses, such as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

Community Engagement and Language Support

Community language programs_: Establish community language programs to promote French language learning among community members.

Language support for victims and witnesses_: Provide language support services for victims and witnesses who speak French, to ensure they can communicate effectively with law enforcement officials.

Collaboration with community organizations_: Collaborate with community organizations to promote language awareness and provide language support services.

Language Policy and Planning

Language policy development_: Develop a language policy that takes into consideration the linguistic diversity of Nigeria and the need for language training for law enforcement officials.

Language planning_: Conduct language planning to identify the language needs of law enforcement officials and the community, and develop strategies to address these needs.

Language rights_: Ensure that language rights are protected and promoted, particularly for French-speaking suspects, victims, and witnesses.

Research and Development

Language and security research_: Conduct research on the relationship between language and security in Nigeria, to inform the development of effective strategies for addressing the language barrier.

Language technology development_: Develop language technology, such as translation software and language learning apps, to support language learning and communication.

Language training curriculum development_: Develop a language training curriculum that takes into consideration the specific language needs of law enforcement officials.

Language barrier: The study highlights the language barrier that exists between law enforcement officials and French-speaking suspects or witnesses in Aba. This barrier hinders effective communication and can compromise the success of law enforcement operations.

Need for language training: The study emphasizes the need for language training for law enforcement officials in Aba. Providing law enforcement officials with French language training can help to bridge the language gap and enhance their ability to communicate effectively with French-speaking suspects or witnesses.

Importance of language in law enforcement: The study highlights the importance of language in law enforcement operations. Language can be a critical factor in determining the success or failure of law enforcement operations, and law enforcement



agencies must take language into consideration when planning and executing their operations.

***Need for collaborative efforts*:** The study suggests that collaborative efforts are needed to address the language barrier and facilitate effective communication between law enforcement officials and French-speaking suspects or witnesses in Aba. This can involve partnerships between law enforcement agencies, language training institutions, and community organizations.

***Implications for language policy*:** The study has implications for language policy in Nigeria. The findings suggest that language policy should take into consideration the linguistic diversity of the country and the need for language training for law enforcement officials.

***Need for further research*:** The study highlights the need for further research on the relationship between language and insecurity in Nigeria. Further research can help to deepen our understanding of this relationship and inform the development of effective strategies for addressing the language barrier and promoting security in Nigeria.

The study concludes that French language is an important aspect of solving insecurity issues in Aba and recommends that the law enforcement officials in Aba should receive training in French language proficiency to enhance their ability to communicate effectively with French speaking suspects and witnesses. The study also recommends that the Nigerian government consider implementing language policies that promote language proficiency among law enforcement officials. Overall, this study highlights the importance of language in addressing insecurity challenges in Nigeria and recommends that language training be integrated into law enforcement training programs to enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement operations.

7. Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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