

**LANGUAGE AS A TOOL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A FOCUS ON  
EKOSODIN COMMUNITY**

**BY**

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## **APPROVAL PAGE**

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## PLAGARISM CERTIFICATION

I, DANIA OSEREMI CLEMENTINA, with matriculation number ART1901331, declare that this work titled “LANGUAGE AS A TOOL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION” has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test with a score of \_\_\_\_\_%) and does not violate any copyrights regulations.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to Almighty God my creator, my strong pillar, my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He has been the source of my strength throughout this program and on his Wings only I have soared.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and Foremost I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Almighty God for his love and guidance.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on language and conflict Resolution in Ekosodin Community Ovia North-East Local Government of Edo State. Human beings are the most unpredictable creatures and the differing nature makes disagreement inevitable and sometimes it can lead to long-lasting conflicts. This can be resolved by employing the use of language as a communication tool. Data for this study was collected through interviews and participant observation. The theoretical framework for this study one Politeness theory by Brown levinson and communication Accommodation theory by Giles and Coupland. Findings revealed that the use of positive, tone and polite terms can help in resolving conflicts. The study recommends that these should be imbibed by all, as it will go a long way to make the society a peaceful place for us all.

Key words: Peace, Conflict, Use of Language, Communication, resolution.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background of the Study

This work examines language serving as a tool for conflict resolution. Conflicts are a part of life. According to Sapir (1963) “Language is the key to the heart of a people”. Language is therefore conceived as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. This functional knowledge of language symbols that human experience has achieved in the way of dealing with situation can be communicated through language.

Language is a means of expressing thoughts and feelings Nnamani (2012). She states that human beings use language to structure and organize their experience in the society where they live. Odo (2003) defined language as something associated with what people do, eat, wear, produce, sell and buy. He stressed that there is hardly any human activities that is not attributed or explainable to language. Achilike (2007) also remarks that language is appreciated as a means of preserving the people’s culture and promoting national interest and unity. She therefore, defines language as human and non instructive method of communicating ideas, feelings and desire by means of a system of sound, symbol used by a nation or race. She re- states that it is a system and a convention that characterize interaction of one or more communities of human being.

Language is important in people's lives. It is with language that people communicate their ideas (Crystal, 1987:10). The ideas people communicate to one another cover, among other things, ways of doing things that are cultural beliefs which bind members of the society together.

'A language', refers to the speech form of a given community of people (Fowler, 1974). The meaning of 'language' is in contradistinction to 'dialect' in that any speech form described as 'a language' is mutually unintelligible with any other speech form in the world. The second perspective defines 'language' as a system of communication for giving, receiving, and even hiding information. This perception of language covers what Chomsky sees as 'a set of very specific universal principles which are intrinsic properties of the human mind and part of species genetic endowment' (Downes, 1984:20).

It is this second definition that is relevant to our work in that language here plays a significant role in people's daily life. This role is partly social, and partly psychological. The social deals with culture and the psychological with human behaviour and human interactions. From all these definitions, there is no doubt that language plays a significant role in people's daily existence. Conflict is a term derived from a Latin word, 'confligere' which means 'strike together' (Aniga, 2004). According to Fernandes (2008), the word conflict conjures up associations of tensions, disruptions, and violence with the expectation of making anything in form of life uncomfortable. With this view in mind, conflict is something to be avoided or even suppressed for it is an evil wind that blows no

good to anyone. Nwolise (2001) sees conflict as "a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other but not by both. Each party is mobilizing energy to obtain a goal and each party perceived the other as a barrier or threat to the goal".

According to Dougherty and Pfaltgrat (1981), conflict is "a condition which one identifiable group of human beings is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable groups because these groups are pursuing what are or appear to be incompatible goals". To Isumonah (2001), it is "a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests". Suffice all the above views of scholars on conflict to mean that "conflict is the product of institutionalized disagreement over ideas, needs or interests" (Owoeye, 2009:3). Every person has their ideas, beliefs and thought process and they approach the issue according to their abilities, urges and desires. This distinct behavior of humans give on to differing opinions and conflicts. Conflicts are often considered to be part of human nature due to a combination of biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors. From a biological perspective, humans, like many other animals, have evolved to compete for resources such as food, territory, and mates. This competitive drive can lead to conflicts when individuals or groups have conflicting interests.

Psychologically, humans have a range of emotions, motivations, and cognitive biases that can contribute to conflicts. For example, issues such as ego, pride, fear, and the desire for power can all play a role in creating and exacerbating conflicts.

On a social and cultural level, norms, values, and beliefs differ among individuals and groups, leading to disagreements and tensions. Additionally, historical and societal inequalities, as well as political and economic systems, can contribute to conflicts.

It's important to note that while conflicts may be a part of human nature, humans also have the capacity for empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Many societies and individuals actively work to mitigate and resolve conflicts through communication, negotiation, and diplomacy.

Conflict is an inevitable part of life. There are some people who seek it out and even manufacture it for various reasons, but even if they did not exist, the rest of us would still find ourselves clashing with each other.

Some of our clashes are inevitable - scarce resources, for instance, can lead to our having conflicts of interest. Problems of this type can be traced back throughout human existence: two tribes would battle for the same hunting grounds, for example; while in the modern world competition between companies battling for customers may lead to legal clashes.

But it is not just about resources. Since we all see the world in different ways, what I see as polite, artistic, moral, or whatever, you may see as not being so at all. Our ideas and beliefs will therefore be in conflict.

We should not concern ourselves with the existence of these differences too much; they are inevitable to some degree. What is far more important is how we reconcile them. Developing skills, compassion, empathy, and wisdom will help us avoid much of the harm that can be caused in their absence. One important example is in politics, where we need to elect people who have the qualities I have mentioned. Too often we look for someone who claims he/she can deal with conflict issues through other means, and it rarely ends well.

If we can see conflict as a challenge, and something inherent in human life, then we can focus on dealing with it in the best possible way rather than being concerned about its very existence. Language plays an important role in shaping the way conflicts unfold and resolve. It is the key to the hearts of people. Language can be provided in several forms of verbal, non-verbal and written. Humans use language as the vehicle of communication to enable engagement for many reasons and purposes. Language plays an important role in shaping the way conflicts unfold and resolve. It is the key to the hearts of people.

Language can be used to reframe conflicts in a way that makes them more manageable. For example, instead of framing a conflict as a "win or lose" situation, it can be framed as a problem to be solved. This can help people focus on finding a solution that works for everyone, rather than trying to "win" at all costs. Language can also be used to build trust and understanding between people in conflict. By using language to express empathy and understanding, it's possible to build a foundation for resolving the conflict.

## **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Conflict has existed for as long as humans have, it is an inevitable part of the human life.

Every person has their beliefs, ideas, goals, thought process, and they approach the issue according to their abilities, urges and desires. This distinct behavior of humans leads to differing opinions and conflicts.

Language can play a role in escalating or deescalating a situation, often non-verbal forms can provide an insight into someone's thoughts and behaviour towards the other, sometimes words are not required to initiate a conflict, it is the actions or non-verbal cues that can trigger events. Some of the main problems include the problem of miscommunication. Any time one party misunderstands or misconstrues the words or actions of another, it has the potential to create conflict. Language used can either incite hatred and division or empathy and understanding, having a command of language is a powerful communication tool to be able to avoid the painful consequences of unresolved conflict.

Conflict can involve powerful negative emotions and can cause people to engage in negative behaviour that escalates conflict and damages relationships. Violence is not a good way to resolve a conflict as it is extraordinarily high risk. Violence begets violence and the conflict only gets frozen till the vanquished has a chance to re-ignite the conflict. All these problems are what this study seeks to proffer solution to.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

On the basis of the foregoing stated problems, the following questions are raised:

- (i) How can style of language help resolve a conflict?
- (ii) What are the Language strategies in settling disputes?
- (iii) What are the factors preventing the use of language for peace and conflict resolution?
- (iv) What are the problems of language and communication in conflict resolution ?
- (v) What are the use of non-violent communication in conflict resolution?

### **1.3 Aim of Study**

Humans are the most unpredictable creatures and their differing nature makes the disagreements inevitable and sometimes it can lead to long-lasting conflicts. The aim of this study is to examine how language can be used to resolve conflict rather than cause it.

#### **1.3.1 Specific Objectives**

This research also aims at achieving the following objectives:

- i. to refute the claim that conflict is a problem.
- ii. to enlighten readers on the importance of communication. Communication is a key factor in resolving conflict.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

In the study area, this Study will be pertinent as it will broaden the reader's knowledge and understanding of the subject matter - Language as a Tool for Conflict Resolution -

and prepare our minds on why to positively embrace conflict in our everyday lives and work to resolve it. In addition, it is very crucial as it aids in identifying the problems that come with the use of negative language in conflict resolution, the need for negotiation and mediation and the importance of communication. This knowledge will help us view conflict not as an issue but as an avenue for growth.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The scope of this study is on language and conflict resolution. In Ekosodin Community Ovia North-East Local Government of Edo State.

### **1.6 Definition of Terms**

**Language:** language, a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. (Encyclopedia Britannica, google)

**Conflict:** Conflict can be defined in many ways and can be considered as an expression of hostility, negative attitudes, aggression and misunderstanding. (Wikipedia)

**Dispute:** Dispute is an argument or disagreement, especially an official one between, for example, workers and employers or two countries with a common border: a bitter/long-running dispute. (Cambridge English Dictionary)

**Peace:** Peace is a stress-free state of security and calmness that comes when there's no fighting or war, everything coexisting in perfect harmony and freedom. (Vocabulary.com, google)

**Ideas:** Ideas are what exists in the mind as a representation (as of something comprehended) or as a formulation (as of a plan). (Dictionary.com, google)

**Beliefs:** Belief can be defined as the mental acceptance or conviction in the truth or actuality of some idea. (Schwitzgebel, 2010).

**Communication:** Communication is a process that involves sending and receiving messages through the verbal and non-verbal methods. Communication is a two-way means of communicating information in the form of thoughts, opinions, and ideas between two or more individuals with the purpose of building an understanding. (byjus.com, google)

**Negotiation:** Negotiation is a dialogue between two or more parties to resolve points of difference, gain an advantage for an individual or collective, or craft outcomes to satisfy various interests. The parties aspire to agree on matters of mutual interest. The agreement can be beneficial for all or some of the parties involved. (Investopedia.com, google)

**Mediation:** Mediation involves the intervention of a third person, or mediator, into a dispute to assist the parties in negotiating jointly acceptable resolution of issues in conflict. The mediator meets with the parties at a neutral location where the parties can discuss the dispute and explore a variety of solutions. (Commerce.gov, google)

**Arbitration:** A means of settling disputes without recourse to law. The arbitrator will hear the case of the parties and make either a binding or an indicative judgment. (Oxford Dictionary)

**Adjudication:** Adjudication is the legal process by which an arbiter or judge reviews evidence and argumentation, including legal reasoning set forth by opposing parties or litigants, to come to a decision which determines rights and obligations between the parties involved. (Wikipedia)

**Diplomacy:** Diplomacy comprises spoken or written communication by representatives of state, intergovernmental, or nongovernmental institutions intended to influence events in the international system. (Wikipedia)

## **1.7 Methodology**

The paper features a qualitative research method which relies on primary sources. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing written or spoken words and textual data. It may also focus on body language or visual elements and help to create a detailed description of a researcher's observations. Researchers usually gather qualitative data through interviews, observation and focus groups using a few carefully chosen participants. A probability sampling method known as simple random sampling was used to select participants. This method allowed for a representative sample of the population, which strengthened the validity of the findings.

## **1.8 Study Area**

## **Ekosodin Village**

Ekosodin village is in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. It shares its eastern boundary with the University of Benin. According to the Odionwere of the Village, the thistory of Ekosodin dates back to the 19th century when the land was given to its early settlers by Oba Obanosa who reigned in the Benin Kingdom in the 19 century. The village was established as a farm settlement. As at 1963, the population of Ekosodin was 177 (from 1963 census). In 1991 with the influx of students, the population rose to 1811. Presently, the village has an estimated population of 7,000 (Ekosodin Youth National Development Association, 2003) since the local result of 2006 census result is not yet out. Accommodation problem at the University of Benin have forced many students and some of the staff of the university to seek accommodation in the village since it shares a common boundary with the university. This has led to a change in the form and character of the village.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The literature is replete with critical perspectives on the extent effective conflict management can be achieved through judicious use of language. In this section of the Study, we examine conflict as an Avenue for growth, the importance of communication as well as define some relevant concepts relating to language and conflict.

## **2.1 The Concept of Language**

Wardhough (2006) asserts that “language is what a particular society speaks”. Atolagbe (2004) opines that human language is a useful tool of communication to mankind while Adeyanju (2004) also observed that “Language is incontrovertibly central to all human activities as it is crucial to either peaceful co-existence or disunity among members” The above definitions have made us to know that language promotes communication and mutual intelligibility amongst individuals and the society at large. It is the key to all human endeavours. It motivates social interaction thereby promoting active involvement in public life. From the foregoing, it is apparent that the importance of language in conflict management cannot be overemphasized.

In the issue of Nigerian languages; Elugbe (1990) opines that “... every language which is indigenous to Nigeria; which has definite location, and is part of an indigenous culture, is a Nigerian language”.

The lesson learnt from Elugbe’s view above is that such a language must have its root in Nigeria soil and must have native speakers who are Nigerians. Nigeria is a multilingual nation endowed with many languages that scatter all over the surface of the country.

According to Bamgbose (1991), there are about 513 languages in Nigeria. The fact remains that Nigeria is a multilingual nation. Given the multiplicity of languages, it becomes necessary that a decision must have to be taken on the role each of these languages would play in the scheme of things. This was why the National Policy on Education (NPE) specified the roles and status of each language in education and in our polity. The languages policy statement with regards to the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages as L2 states that:

”The government of Nigeria believes that preserving the people's culture and promoting national unity requires children to learn one of the three major languages of the country, in addition to their own mother tongue. The three major languages are Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo.”

The above statement emphasized the need to use indigenous languages as a means of fostering unity and preserving the culture of the country. Besides, it will minimize ethnic antagonism, hostility and conflict which over the years have been the bane of the country's unity

## **2.2 The Concept of Conflict**

According to Himmes (1980), "Conflict is a purposeful struggle between collective actors who use social power to defeat or remove opponents and to gain status, power, resources

and other scarce values ... "While to Kriesberg (1982:7), conflicts exist when two or more parties believe they have incompatible objectives.

According to Fernandes (2008), the word conflict conjures up associations of tensions, disruptions, and violence with the expectation of making anything in form of life uncomfortable. With this view in mind, conflict is something to be avoided or even suppressed for it is an evil wind that blows no good to anyone. Stagner in. Nwolise (2001) sees conflict as "a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other but not by both. Each party is mobilizing energy to obtain a goal and each party perceived the other as a barrier or threat to the goal".

According to Dougherty and Pfaltgrat (1981), conflict is "a condition which one identifiable group of human beings is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable groups because these groups are pursuing what are or appear to be incompatible goals". To Isumonah (2001), it is "a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests". Suffice all the above views of scholars on conflict to mean that "conflict is the product of institutionalized disagreement over ideas, needs or interests" (Owoeye, 2009).

### **2.3 Nigerian Languages as Veritable Tools for Conflict Management**

According to Chima A. N. E. (2008), Language can be seen as a repository of knowledge about the personality and culture of the individual. It may also be argued that language to some degree influences social change and development.

Nwolise (2001) sees Conflict Resolution as "the removal of the root causes of a conflict and the progression, transformation or amelioration of the relation between the parties involved in the conflict". Nwolise (2003) .further includes that in conflict resolution, truth, justices and objectivity are .inevitable tools for generating lasting peace. However, this can be done by a' third party through negotiation, mediation, intervention, or by war etc. Miller (2003) sees conflict resolution as a "variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation of conflict". Miall et al (1999) are of the view that with the term "conflict Resolution", it is expected that the deep-rooted sources of conflicts are addressed and resolved and behaviours are no longer violent nor attitudes hostile any longer. In a similar vein, Mitchell and Banks (1996) see conflict resolution as an outcome in which the issues in an existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties, self sustaining in the long run and productive of a new positive relationship between parties that were previously hostile adversaries.

From the above views of scholars, it is clear that conflict resolution, according to Shedrack (2003) as reported by Owoeye (2009) connotes a sense of finality where the parties to conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict

is resolved in true sense. Having deliberated on the above concepts that conform to this study, it becomes necessary in this Study to trace the root causes of these conflict and how maximum utilization of Nigerian indigenous languages can enhance effective management cum resolution of these conflicts.

### **2.3.1 Causes of Conflicts**

A lot of events, occurrences, actions and happenings that have negative connotations might lead or result to conflicts. These are characterized by religious intolerance, political instability, economic meltdown, misappropriation of public fund, looting of state treasury, class discrimination, etc. These emanate from the leaders to the led, the managements to the subjects, the supraordinates to the subordinates.

Besides, conflicts could equally arise between one state and another state; one tribe and another tribe; one religious sect and another 'religious sect, etc. As earlier claimed, a lot of factors lead to the causes of conflicts and they are too numerous to mention. According to Bassey (2000), the lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, animosity, violence and disunity, which characterize Nigeria today, and threaten her peaceful co-existence are traceable to these factors.

The tremendous diversity presented by the ethnic composition, social economic structure and physical characteristics of the country has had far-reaching consequences for the nature of protracted social conflict in Nigeria. As a matter of importance and on a more serious note, Imobighe (2002) condemned, in very strong terms this negative view of

ethnicity often canvassed as the 'malignant' cause of instability in Nigeria. According to him:

“Ethnic diversity and intermingling is a normal part of Nigerian society, and it has not always led to conflict. In fact, different ethnic groups have welcomed each other into their communities and provided land for them to live on. This diversity and interaction has created a rich and vibrant culture in Nigeria.”

#### **2.4 Language and Communication in Conflict Resolution**

According to Adejimola, A.S (2009) Language in action can be seen in terms of verbal, non- verbal and written media. Therefore, language and communication are sinequanon in this world of words and continued eruptions of conflicts or disputes. What defines human's humanity is language which is the vehicle of communication. People, therefore, engage in communication for many reasons and for the purpose of this Study, we shall examine the roles and functions of communication as one of the means of non-violent methods of conflict resolution. Language is regarded by experts as the key to the heart of a people. Language and communication, therefore, are very crucial in the management and resolution of conflicts or disputes between the two parties in conflicts. As important as language and communication are in conflicts and conflict resolutions, they are not properly focused in the works of many writers and researchers. This Study, therefore, identifies communication as a significant means of resolving conflicts.

Other non-violent methods of management and resolution of conflicts where the use of language and communication are crucial and significantly inevitable include negotiation, dialogue, mediation, adjudication, arbitration as well as the use of the mass media. It is the opinion of this Study that the roles and functions of language and communication should be more focused, analysed and utilized in order to find out the root causes, management, effects and resolutions of conflicts in the society.

### **2.5 How often do you stop and Think about how Important Communication is?**

When you are unable to find the language to communicate it affects you on a cognitive, emotional and behavioural level. The science of psychology and linguistics (Psycholinguistics) is a science that looks at how illness or problems related to language emphasises the cognitive mechanisms. The language that we use to communicate when in conflict can be harmful and can fuel negative emotions, resentment, fear and bitterness. What makes these emotions so damaging is that with unresolved conflict they can linger and metastasize to the point where relationships are destroyed, leading to estrangement.

Given the ubiquitous nature of conflict, the language used to communicate in conflict can arise to lasting social and behavioural changes.

“The language a person chooses to speak is based on their perception of the language's prestige and the importance of the nation or nations that speak it. So, people may choose to speak a language because they see it as being powerful or influential, or because they want to associate themselves with a particular nation or culture.”

### **2.5.1 Communication**

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) defines communication as the process of obtaining information or expressing thought and feelings. Going by this definition, it is obvious that human beings are naturally communicators. Shannon and Weaver (1977) also define communication as “all the procedures by which one mind may affect another”. This implies that communication can take place not only in oral and written media but also in music, pictorial arts, theatre and, of course, all human behaviour. The definitions above clearly indicate that communication is a process that involves the transmission of message from a sender to a receiver and which has the goal of eliciting a reaction or reactions (feedback). What happens, therefore, can be explained in a way of stimulus-response process.

What communication is all about can be summarized as follows:

- i. It is seen as a process.
- ii. It takes place between two or more people.
- iii. There has to be a message, which is sent from one person to another.

- iv. That message is sent through a medium.
- v. The received message will generate or provoke appropriate behaviour or reaction.
- vi. Communication is the bedrock of any social system.

Communication in this context refers to the process of sharing and exchanging information between personalities, groups and potential parties in a conflict situation. This implies that despite conflict situations, individuals or parties involved can still talk. Whenever it is possible to have a communication link between the two parties in conflict situations there is possibility of exchanging perceptions, assumptions, stereotypes, and attitudes, which have been built up by conflict groups vis-à-vis others. However, poor communication or the absence of communication can easily escalate conflicts between the parties or individuals in conflicts. The exchange and sharing of information can help in a great way to resolve crises and build confidence between the parties in conflicts and bring about peace.

“Most of the non-violent methods of conflict management, according to Shedrack (2004), “such as collaboration, negotiation and dialogue as well as third party interventions like mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication, are largely dependent on effective communication.” In a situation whereby the parties in conflict can talk together on issues tearing them apart with the genuine purpose of finding a solution to the conflicting situations, it is envisaged that the resolution of such conflicts is at sight. The same process can also prevent crises or conflicts. Therefore, communication is a powerful and

effective non-adversarial and cheap means of preventing and resolving conflicts if only the concerned parties realize it as an ingredient of peace. The following are some skills in communication:

### **2.5.2 Active Listening**

A good mediator displays effective listening skills. He inculcates the habit of wanting to listen to people more than engaging in talking nineteen to dozen i.e. talking too much. When a mediator becomes an active listener, they will be able to identify the fear, suspicion, lies, truths, interests, understanding, doubts, desires, feelings, distrust, misinterpretations, misinformation as well as other pretensions of the parties involved in the conflict situations. In this way, they can ask questions to clarify issues with the speaker and ensures that the other party is not in doubt or has heard the point. Mediators normally show their understanding on the matters of the two parties' perspective through comments and non- verbal reactions. In fact, mediator shows good communication skills such as listening and being able to paraphrase and summarise what they have heard without distorting the main facts or messages. We shall discuss industrial and general conflicts and applied communication in terms of dialogue and negotiation in resolving disputes or conflicts.

### **Industrial Conflict and Resolution**

Industrial conflicts are defined by Kornhauser and Rose (1954) as “the total range of behaviour and attitude that express opposition and divergent orientations between

industrial owners and managers on the one hand and the working people and their organization on the other.”(Arije, 2000) In most places, strike, cessation of work, and refusal to continue to work including “go slow” and “lock – out” are some types of industrial conflicts mostly common. The absence of these forms of industrial conflicts, however, does not mean that all is well or that it is indicative of a stable or peaceful industrial relations environment due to the fact that budding cleavages may be developing in the secret and if allowed to manifest, may be disruptive and destructive to any organization.

In conflict situations, collective bargaining is the most scientific and accepted approach in handling industrial relationship. This term ‘collective bargaining’ refers to all negotiations which take place between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers’ organization, on the one hand, and one or more workers’ organizations, on the other, concerning issues such as determining the terms and conditions of employment. The outcome of such negotiations which invariably helps to settle disputes between the parties is referred to as ‘collective agreement’ which must be signed and implemented by the parties involved. Information flow in the collective bargaining system, exchanging and sharing of information during conflict situations must happen before and during negotiations between the conflicting parties. Access to relevant information to the case or dispute is sinequanon. The parties involved in conflicts must be tactful and quick-witted in grasping and manipulating, utilizing effective and useful information and facts. Each party should have the correct facts and figures about the case before venturing to engage

in any negotiation or dialogue. The shrewd utilization of information will determine and enhance the bargaining power and the extent to which each party achieves its goal or interest. Any party which is not sufficiently equipped with relevant and accurate information is likely to be flawed and embarrassed by the stronger party with accurate facts and figures during collective bargaining. According to Arije (2000), the two parties should be:

- i. Well-versed and knowledgeable in the establishment's collective agreement and the existing grievance procedure.
- ii. Knowledgeable in the establishment's rules and regulations
- iii. Current with relevant news or actions or cases in other contemporary organizations and the society.

During the conflict process or conflict progression, communication is very essential. The relevant information must be communicated timely and at appropriate stages and places during the collective bargaining.

### **2.5.3 Negotiation**

Negotiation has to do with an organisation or form of carrying out a plan through some norms that are socially acceptable in achieving a predetermined goal or achieving a significant or high degree of purposeful steps taken or actions through dialogue. Negotiation is a back- and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement when you and the other side have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed. As

Akinnawonu (2006) has argued, dialogue must be constructively employed in disputes or conflicts situations in order to impact positively on the peaceful resolution of conflicts. He further buttresses this claim by saying that: “Since the rule of law ensures peace rather than violence in the country, and knowing that dialogue is a necessary path to peace, it inevitably means that dialogue is a fundamental factor in ensuring the rule of law. In cases where there is no very radical conflict of essential principles, ill-feeling may commonly be alleviated by face- to-face discussion.” Many people believe that lack of opportunity for explanation is responsible for misunderstandings and suspicions between parties in conflicts. Effective communication, therefore, is central in negotiation which is a direct process of dialogue and discussion taking place between at least two parties who are faced with a conflict situation or a dispute. The University for Peace sees negotiation as: “communication, usually governed by pre-established procedures, between representatives of parties involved in a conflict or dispute”. It is realised that parties in conflict situations have to come together, talk together, agree together in order to find a solution to their problem. The end result of negotiation, according to Jeong (2000), is “... to reach agreement through joint decision making between parties.”

Shedrack (2004) identifies two types of negotiation: positional and collaborative negotiations. The former is based on the aggressive pursuit of interest by parties, and it is typically adversarial and competitive and it breaks down easily while the latter is a process where the parties involved embark upon education and enlightenment about their needs and concerns in a manner to solve their problems amicably without further

conflicting of interests. The principle of non-violent method, using dialogue is employed to talk and negotiate the interests of the two parties in conflict situations. Normally, there are no third parties involved in this process of “open communication” or negotiation. Dialogue as a form of negotiation was judiciously used to resolve the xenophobia attacks on Nigerians and other foreign nationals in South Africa. The Vice-President of South Africa flew to Nigeria to dialogue with the Nigerian Government when the violence became terribly unleashed on the Nigerians leading to about 64 casualties. This development is seen from the international parlance as a means of promoting peace and understanding between the two countries in order to avert possible retaliation.

#### **2.5.4 Mediation**

Mediation is a process of managing negotiation by a third party, realizing that the two parties involved in a conflict have agreed to resolve their problem. According to Godongs (2006), “Mediation is a special form of negotiation in which a neutral third party has a role. Such a role is to help the parties in conflict achieve a naturally acceptable settlement”. To eradicate a kind of conceptual problem of interpretation, we shall regard conciliation, good offices and fact-finding approaches of non-adversarial method of management and resolution of conflicts as part of mediation. Conciliation involves the use of a trusted third party giving an informal communication between the two parties in a conflict. Also good offices are employed in mediation process to help identify problems and to lessen the tension being generated by such problems by direct negotiation.

Intermediaries are engaged as a go-between. Fact-finding is the goal of these intermediaries whereby the conflict situation are assessed and reports are given to the concerned parties in order to proffer solutions to the conflict issues. Beer and Stief (1997) define mediation as “... any process for resolving dispute in which another person helps the parties negotiate a settlement”. This Study agrees totally with the University for Peace Glossary of Terms which provides that:

“In a conflict situation, mediation can be a useful tool for facilitating communication and helping the parties involved to reach a resolution. This is sometimes referred to as "good offices", and it requires the consent of all the parties involved. Mediation can help to create a space for dialogue and understanding, even when the parties are unable to reach a resolution on their own.”

### **2.5.5 Arbitration**

Arbitration is one of the methods of non-violent approaches to conflict resolution. The use of a third party in settling disputes or conflicts through negotiating, dialogue, cooperation, communication, information flow and management is becoming more apparent in our societies. The arbiter hears the evidences from both parties involved in conflicts and may listen to witnesses, interview leaders or representatives of the parties, visit the areas in conflicts, assess or evaluate claims, documents, lands and properties in dispute. After collecting vital information and facilitating discussion, negotiation, dialogue, listening and hearing meetings, which are aimed at helping to make a critical

decision about who is right or wrong, the arbiter then takes a bold step to ensure fair play and justice in order to restore peace. The decision taken thereafter is called an award which is expected to be binding on the parties. The parties in conflicts however, have to agree and accept the arbiter who sits over their case. Arbitrators are usually people of respected characters, authorities, and peace in the society. Arbitration has similar properties of mediation and adjudication in the sense that negotiation, dialogue and communication are used in managing and settling disputes or conflicts. The achievement of arbitration as a means settling dispute or conflict depends on effective communication in the form of interaction, conversation, dialogue, negotiation in order to bring about an enhanced process of “controlled communication”. Competence in Communication is desirable for successful arbitration because listening and speaking skills, reading and writing skills are necessary for effective mediation, negotiation, dialogue and communication. Ability to listen, understand, summarise, ask question for clarification and investigation count in an arbitration process through a serious arbitration, lies will be detected, truth will emerge. Also, fear, suspicions, concerns interests and goals will be revealed during dialogue, negotiation and conversation to the arbitrators who will now take a decision to bring about an acceptable offer or award for resolving disputes or conflicts that will be binding to the parties involved in a conflict.

### **2.5.6 Adjudication**

Sometimes, parties involved in conflicts may decide to resolve their differences in law courts and use litigation mechanisms. The aggrieved party who chooses this non-violent method is ready to take the verdict or judgement of the presiding judge of competent jurisdiction either good or bad or either in its favour or against it. The judgement is binding and will be legally enforced through the state apparatus for resolving conflicts. This means of resolving conflicts is usually marked with winner and loser, bitterness and joy as the case may be.

Legal counsels are engaged in adjudication processes. Counsel to the parties involved in conflicts will present their cases through addresses, giving information, arguments, claims, evidences, cross-examinations, proofs, witnesses with the aim of winning after hearing and judgement delivered. Communication, information and logical presentation of facts, proofs, evidences and application of the legal procedures are some of the features of adjudication. However, when a particular court fails to interpret or apply certain laws in accordance with the public values underlying them, it is subject to corrections by higher level courts and by the legislature. As Shedrack (2004) explains:

“Litigation can be damaging to relationships, as it tends to increase suspicion and bitterness between the parties involved. The win-lose nature of litigation means that there are no real "winners", and the bitterness and resentment from the process can last for a long time. In addition, litigation is expensive and time-consuming, which adds to the negative effects.”

Apart from the bitterness that follows after judgement, in case of the loser, peace is also elusive between the two parties involved in the conflicts. Negotiations after conflicts cannot be possible since litigations end in win- loss outcomes. Parties cannot decide the duration and the nature of the outcomes of the judgements. A good example of adjudication is the conflict or dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon over the true ownership of Bakassi Peninsula. The Cameroonian Government claimed that Gowon, the Head of State of Nigeria in 1970s ceded the Peninsula to her under a legal agreement. When violent dispute engulfed the oil rich area, Cameroon headed for the World Court in Hague to seek for legal redress. The Court adjudicated that Cameroon is the legal owner. The ruling became binding on both parties in the conflict.

## **2.6 The Role of Language for Peace and Conflict Resolution**

According to Ani C. O (2015), Language plays a dominant role in human existence. It is a means of communication and the medium of instruction in schools. It is also a means of preserving people’s culture, enhancement of peace and conflict resolution in the society.

The role of language for peace and conflict resolution could only be appreciated when we recognize that language being an integral part of people's culture still stands out as a medium of interaction and ways of expressing thoughts and feelings in a society. Cohen (2010) gave more light on this assertion when he states that communal life is possible only because members of a community possess a set of shared meanings which enables them to make coherent sense of the world. He stated that this stock of meaning constitutes the common sense of the community and undermines all communication and organized activities. He stressed that mother tongue is the main repository of a community's common sense. He is also of the opinion that the other systems of symbolic meaning that characterize communities are religion, popular culture and non verbal behaviour. Since it is an indisputable fact that language is the key of all human activities, it is the main medium of explaining human socio-economic activities. It becomes imperative to accept that language is only instrument for peace and conflict resolution. Cohen (2001) threw more light on this when he stated that from the premise that language constitutes a community's shared stock of meaning, we can conclude that the study of language may provide an excellent entry point for investigating how members of a group understand and handle conflicts.

Seweje (2005) commenting on the role of language as peace, war and conflict resolution stated that language can cause war and breed peace. She remarked that having too many languages and diverse dialects within a nation can affect mutual co-existence and understanding and this may lead to conflict. Seweje's statement above in addition to

corruption seem to provide reasons for some ethnic crises and frequent social unrest in Nigeria. Kanola (2006) reiterated on this when he stated that today, rather than integrating into cohesive community, citizens of Nigeria are returning more and more to primordial affliction of forging a united front with a concerted effort to face the challenges of development in an increasing competitive and globalized world, Nigerians are busy waging ethnic and religious war. Similarly, Ekere (2013) identified some major security problems in Nigeria to include armed robbery, kidnapping, Boko Haram insurgency, Niger Delta militancy.

Jija (2012) also identified some places that had conflict to include Benue-Taraba crises, the Zongo and Kataf, Jos crises, the Aguleri and Umuleri crises.

Having seen some past and present waves of conflicts, how best could these conflicts be peacefully resolved or even further conflicts being prevented. The answer to the above question is the use of effective stylistic approach to address a contending issue. Cohen (2001) stressed on this when he stated that in interconnected chain of non-verbal and verbal messages, conciliation can advance only when there is synchronized and consecutive understanding at every stage of the process. He maintained that for information to be comprehensibly exchanged and the issues at stake to be discussed, the parties must be able to draw a shared store of meaning. The underlying meaning of Cohen's statement is that in some societies, functionally equivalent words may have variations in meaning and when these variations in meaning are not explained in an

understandable term to the audience, there may be conflict based on the wrong connotation on the meaning of the word.

Cohen (2001) further stressed that the greater the cultural gap between the ways of life of society, the greater the potential semantic gap between concepts and their labels across languages. He opined that since different languages convey different versions of reality, comprehensibility of one's utterance depends on the equivalent concept in his language. In other words, what one expects of reconciliation will be determined by the local knowledge that informs his understanding of the term. Since we acknowledge that the meaning of words are determined by the usage and connotation of the words, and languages do not exist in isolation as abstract systems of sign but within the culture of the people, words, therefore, should be used to conform with the acceptable behaviour of a group. JiJa (2012) stressed on this when he stated that language should be carefully, responsibly and politely used so as to advance individual and group co-operation in social affair. He maintained that effective communication capacity or skills are necessary prerequisite in suppressing conflicts. He opined that terms which are considered as being linguistically segregate and divisible should be substituted with the more accommodating and unity enhancing terms. He also stated that inflammatory language or wrong and misconceived words should be avoided when referring to our relationship. He was of the opinion that the best instrument for achieving peace and resolving conflict is the use of languages that honours and respects human dignity, tolerance, truth and national integration. Hayakawa in JiJa (2012) also maintained that people should avoid using

words, utterances or vocabulary items that are capable of creating tension, confrontation and conflict between a group of people. He cited as an example with the use of words such as irresponsible, unguarded, arrogant, vandals, inferior as words capable of creating tension and fuel conflict. Yusuf (2003) emphasizing the need for the use of polite words in communication especially in a heterogeneous society stated that languages in a multilingual society if not well handled could be as destructive as a nuclear arsenal. Gronching (2005) stressed on this when she stated that if a piece of information is wrongly encoded, receivers usually get confused. She opined that the confusion might lead to a breakdown in communication and could result to crises ranging from lawlessness, loss of lives and properties. Peace and development only anchor in an environment where people's right and freedom are respected. They rest solidly in an environment devoid of acrimony and hatred which are usually expressed with words.

Osam and Ekpo (2009) also remarked that culture of peace is built from values, attitude, behaviors and ways of life based on non-violence, respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for others. Language generally performs a lot of functions in any community. Its usage determines the co-existence of a group. Orjime in JiJa (2012) ex-rayed this assertion when he opined that misapplication of language brings about disharmony but when carefully and democratically used brings about cooperation. He asserted that language is symmetrical in nature and could be employed to induce hatred and frictional relationship between groups. On the other hand, language could equally be used to establish harmony. Also

commenting on the effect of language on human relationship. Akin in JiJa (2012) stated that misapplication of language especially the use of inflammatory utterances or words is one of the most common causes of conflict. She links the effect of a wrongly used word or misconceived message both at pre or post conflict time to gasoline or fire. Leech (1981) re-iterated that all kinds of conflicts and pressure between one individual and another arise mostly from the usage of language.

### **2.7 The Problem with Conflict is that we see Conflict as a Problem**

According to Danya Rumore, Even after many years of work in the field of conflict resolution and collaboration, I continue to be amazed by the extent to which productively working through conflict provides opportunities for positive change and growth. This can manifest as everything from diverse stakeholders working together across their differences to create innovative, out-of-the-box, highly effective solutions to complex public problems, to romantic partners gaining a deeper understanding of themselves and each other by working through their relationship difficulties. If conflict can and often does lead to mutually beneficial outcomes, it seems like it would make sense that we would welcome it, or at least not resist it. Yet I know well from my own personal experience and helping thousands of people work through conflict that this is not the case. To the contrary, we tend to react poorly to conflict or we try to entirely avoid it (which, for the record, usually doesn't work).

The fact that we see conflict as something bad, as a threat, sets off a vicious cycle that, in and of itself, leads to problems. The vicious cycle looks something like this:

- We perceive and therefore experience conflict as bad, as a threat. This is in large part because we tend to see the world through a scarcity lens, which leads us to feel that there is not enough to go around, and there must be winners and losers in a conflict.
- As soon as we perceive the threat and have a desire to “win,” we get “neurologically dysregulated,” meaning our neurological system takes over in an attempt to protect us. We effectively lose our ability to think calmly and rationally for a period of time, and we go into defend-and-protect mode. We engage in protective/defensive behaviors, such as attacking the other person, accommodating in an attempt to make the conflict go away, or disengaging (a.k.a., avoiding).
- This inevitably results in poor outcomes, leading to hard feelings, damaged relationships, and other negative impacts.
- This negative experience reinforces the perception that conflict is bad, that it is a threat and this contributes to the cycle being repeated the next time we are faced with a conflict. This vicious cycle is perpetuated by the fact that we do not talk about and accept conflict as a normal, healthy, and unavoidable part of life; to the contrary, we talk about conflict as a problem, and we often use the word conflict synonymously with fights or even war. Additionally, we have not prioritized

teaching ourselves and others how to skillfully navigate conflict; therefore, few people are well equipped to address these situations in a productive way. All to say: It is not surprising that we tend to see conflict as scary!

Observing and better understanding this vicious cycle has led me to conclude that one of the most, if not THE most, important steps we can take to help make conflict productive and not destructive is to accept that conflict just is. It is a normal, healthy part of life and to view conflict as an opportunity for positive change and growth. Doing so allows us to welcome conflict when it happens, and to stay neurologically regulated when working through it. Embracing the fact that “conflict just is” also encourages us to learn how to become more skillful in addressing it.

To make this shift in our thinking and in our practice, it helps to make clear that conflict is simply the intersection of different perspectives, ideas, wants, or needs that are in tension with each other and not easily reconciled. We will not always see eye to eye. We will not always want the same things. That is just a fact of life. And this is not what causes harm. What causes harm is when we do not deal with this tension productively, leading to arguing, fighting, destroying relationships, or outright war. It is important to be clear that these detrimental outcomes themselves are not conflict; they are results of failing to deal with conflict productively.

## **2.8 Present Study**

It has been my observation that prior authors have focused their attention on the linguistic features that contribute to conflict, but have paid inadequate attention to the role that language style plays in this process. I intend to analyze the potential of using positive language to resolve conflicts, as well as the value of "I" statements in diffusing tension.

Focusing on the use of positive and negative politeness strategies in language, the style of language can have an impact on the way people feel about a situation, which in turn can affect how they react and behave. So it is almost like the language style sets the tone for the conflict, and determines whether it will be resolved amicably or not.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.0 Theoretical Framework

There are two theories that are pertinent to this study. Brown and Levinson Politeness theory as well as Giles and Coupland's Communication and Accommodation Theory. Politeness theory, proposed by Brown and Levinson, centers on the notion of politeness, construed as efforts on redressing the affronts to a person's self-esteems or effectively claiming positive social values in social interactions. Such self-esteem is referred as the sociological concept of face (as in "save face" or "lose face") to discuss politeness as a response to mitigate or avoid face-threatening acts such as requests or insults. Notable components in the framework of the theory include positive and negative faces, face threatening act (FTA), strategies for doing FTAs and factors influencing the choices of strategies; each described below. Among the studies of politeness in a variety of cultures for many years, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has become very influential. Though Brown and Levinson proposed their model as universally applicable, their theory has been challenged by other scholars in varied aspects such as its cross-cultural applicability or ways to interpret and conceptualize politeness.

We also need to examine the Communication Accommodation Theory which is very relevant to this study. According to the Communication Accommodation Theory which was propounded by Giles and Coupland in 1991, his theory stresses that "individuals' use

of language is important to the creation and maintenance of the social dynamic between themselves and the other party.” Taylor stresses this further when he said that:

A speaker’s lexical, syntactic and semantic choices are part of their cognitive representation of the conflict. Their utterance leads to the activation of a matching representation in the other speaker, which has the behavioral consequences of shaping that person’s impose From the above, so much becomes apparent about the serious link between language and human relationship as well as the direct connection between utterances and responses. The Communication Accommodation Theory makes it clear that choice of language goes a long way in determining the quality of relationship between individuals and groups. The above theory also highlights that in the event of conflict, the choice of words by any party clearly shows the mental representation of the conflict by the party in question and that the utterance of such a party will in no small way determine and shape the response of the other party. Both Sapir-Whorf’s “linguistic determinism and relativity theory and Giles and Coupland’s Communication Accommodation Theory have clearly illustrated the linguistic implications of any conflict.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS**

### **4.0 Introduction**

We explore the key components of data analysis and presentation. This part provides readers with a thorough understanding of the presentation and analysis of data, acting as an introduction to the subject. Readers will obtain understanding of the numerous approaches and strategies utilized in data analysis by investigating these ideas. In general, this chapter lays the groundwork for later sections' more in-depth examination of data display and analysis.

### **4.1 Data Collection and Analysis**

To explore the role of language in conflict resolution, two studies were conducted. The first study focused on the impact of language style on interpersonal relationships, specifically the difference in responses between cooperative and competitive language. The second study examined the role of language as a tool in conflict resolution, considering issues such as tone, cultural understanding, and translation.

As we highlighted earlier, conflict is an unfortunate and all-too-common occurrence throughout the world. The influence of language is either inciting or exacerbating these conflicts cannot be overlooked. Let us analyze the following pairs of statements to understand how the language used may have influenced the relationships in the scenarios described.

In this study, 150 participants were recruited and divided into two groups (Group A: n = 75, Group B: n = 75). Group A was exposed to positive language and Group B was exposed to negative language. This scenario allowed for the examination of the impact of language on relationships and conflict resolution.

### Couples and Friends

#### Group A

#### Group B

You radiate elegance	You are very unattractive
I thank the heavens for blessing me with your presence.	The day I met you will be remembered as a black mark on my life.
The dress really suits you.	I am not a fan of your dress.
You are the most precious gift that I have ever received.	I wish I never met you.
You have brought so much light and Joy to my day.	Your actions have cast a shadow over my day
You radiate a light that warms my heart and fills my soul with peace.	You are pure evil.
Dearest, I love you beyond words	I despise you.

In the above examples, we are examining the relationship between friends and couples.

Group A: The use of positive, affirming language had a positive impact on the individuals in this group. They felt uplifted, more confident, and appreciated, potentially strengthening their relationships and fostering a more harmonious environment.

Group B: On the other hand, the use of negative, disparaging language had a detrimental effect on the individuals in this group. The negative statements made these individuals feel hurt, disrespected, and defensive, potentially causing strained or broken relationships and creating a more hostile environment. The words chosen, particularly "unattractive" and "despise," are powerful and emotionally charged, potentially having a significant emotional impact on the individuals receiving them. Moreover, the contrast between the positive language used in Group A and the negative language used in Group B highlights the importance of empathy and kindness in interpersonal interactions. It is obvious that the above positive statements in Group A will surely take the relationship to the next higher level while those in Group B indicate the existence of a very serious conflict. The pervasive use of negative and derogatory language in Group B, if left unaddressed, poses a significant threat to the health and longevity of their relationships. If no immediate steps are taken to resolve these issues, it is likely that these relationships will deteriorate and eventually collapse.

## Among Legislators

### Group A

### Group B

This person exhibits integrity and professionalism.	His actions betray his claim to integrity and respect.
This proposal will help to drive progress and innovation in Nigeria.	The idea is promising, but we have a policy of prioritizing members of our own zone.
I find his argument to be sound and well-reasoned.	I am having difficulty following this person's line of reasoning today.
Her Patriotism is a beacon of hope and inspiration to others.	From where does he even derive his opinions and beliefs?

While Group A statements portray a picture of domestic bliss, Group B messages are warning signs of turmoil within the household. It's concerning that in Nigeria, political leaders still use adversarial language in addressing the citizens who entrusted them with their positions of power. This is disastrous. It is disheartening to see Nigerian politicians fail to emulate their counterparts in more developed nations who have embraced a more collaborative and harmonious approach to communication. This counterproductive linguistic behavior sets a poor example for peaceful coexistence within the country. In America for example, during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in 2018, Senator

Mazie Hirono questioned the nominee for Attorney General, William Barr, using polite language: "Mr. Barr, in your opening statement, you expressed your reverence for the rule of law. I want to know what you mean by that. Does that include the rulings and decisions of federal judges?" A thorough analysis of Senator Hirono's statement indeed demonstrates humility. The words "I want to know" signal her openness to learning from the nominee, implying that she does not assume to have all the knowledge or understanding on the matter. She also chooses to phrase her question as "Does that include the rulings and decisions of federal judges?". Rather than make a bold assertion or accusation, which shows respect for the witness's expertise and authority. By engaging in polite dialogue and demonstrating an eagerness to learn, Senator Hirono exemplifies humility in her questioning. During this particular hearing, there were no reported instances of anyone reacting angrily or yelling at another person. The tone of the hearing remained civil and professional throughout.

The sight of civil discourse in a Congressional hearing was quite breathtaking, showcasing the power of positive and cooperative language to facilitate harmonious interactions. It was a pleasant reminder of how well a community can function when its members choose to communicate with respect and empathy.

**Specific Role of Language in Conflict Resolution:** In order to fully comprehend the function of language in conflict resolution, it is vital to recognize its dual role as both a conflict indicator and a conflict mediator. Language serves as an effective barometer for

identifying and exposing conflict, allowing for a deeper understanding of the parties involved. By facilitating insight into the emotions and motivations of the opposing side, language provides an opportunity to navigate towards a peaceful resolution.

Chambers 21st Century Dictionary (Revised Edition). Clearly captures this with the statement:

Through language and communication we can see the heart of a people. This implies that the effective utilization of language and communication allows us to delve into the inner workings of a person or group, revealing their thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and judgments.

The Bible's message in Matthew 12:34, "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh," echoes the aforementioned idea of language as a window into a person's thoughts and feelings. Additionally, the famous quote by Shakespeare, "there is no art to find the mind's construction in the face" emphasizes the difficulty of inferring a person's internal world solely from external factors, such as appearance or body language. While Shakespeare's insight highlighted the challenge of interpreting a person's thoughts and emotions solely through non-verbal cues, linguists and social psychologists have established that language can serve as a reliable indicator of internal conflict. Through careful observation and analysis of the language used, it is possible to identify the presence of conflict early on. This early detection provides a crucial window of opportunity for conflict resolution practitioners to intervene, preventing the conflict from

escalating into a more intractable situation. Conflicts can escalate when the messages conveyed through language are ignored or manipulated by individuals with ulterior motives. However, language can also serve as a powerful tool for resolving conflicts. (Opara, 2016) posits that a cooperative language promotes conflict resolution and fosters collaborative problem-solving. Moreover, The Bible (King James Version) emphasizes the importance of avoiding inflammatory or divisive language in resolving conflicts, highlighting the necessity for respect, honesty, and tolerance in our communications.

Some revelations In this study have a lot of implications for translation. Odo, A. C. (2015) asserts that:

The greater the cultural gap between the ways of life of society, the greater the potential semantic gap between concepts and their labels across languages. He opined that since different languages convey different versions of reality, comprehensibility of one's utterance depends on the equivalent concept in his language. In other words, what one expects of reconciliation will be determined by the local knowledge that informs his understanding of the term.

This is where translation proves indispensable, as a skilled translator can bridge the gap between cultures by identifying equivalent concepts that facilitate accurate interpretation and understanding. Translation is a specialized field that makes texts written in one language accessible to readers in another language. In doing so, translation serves as a cross-cultural communicator, allowing ideas, beliefs, and experiences to be shared and

understood across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Some translators, assert that translation is a tool for cultural exchange, facilitating the movement of ideas and concepts between different societies.

Given their professional training in cross-cultural communication, translators have the potential to act as intermediaries between conflicting parties with different linguistic backgrounds. They can leverage their knowledge of the languages and cultures in question to accurately interpret and mediate, thus facilitating a more harmonious reconciliation process. The translator's ability to identify equivalent concepts in each language and adapt them to fit the respective cultural contexts can lead to more effective communication and understanding between the parties involved.

#### **4.2 Research Study B**

Having explored the multifaceted role of language in conflict resolution in the context of Ekosodin Community, this research now turns its attention to the specific function of language as a tool for conflict resolution. Building on the previous findings, this study investigates the ways in which language can be leveraged to facilitate peaceful outcomes and prevent further escalation of conflict.

Due to the diverse nature of this research study, it features 100 people from various ethnic groups across Ekosodin Community. The study features speakers of many diverse and unique languages, including Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Edo, English, Esan, Urhobo, e.t.c.

## Corpus 1

<b>GENDER RESPONSES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO RESPONSE</b>
MALE	46	3	1
FEMALE	47	2	1

In response to the question “Do you believe the language to be an important tool for resolving conflict particularly language style (the use of positive vs negative language)?”. The first set of participants consisting of 93% of a hundred agrees that language is in fact important for conflict resolution and so is the style of language. They believe that not only is the actual content of what's being said important, but also the style or manner in which it's being said. A more aggressive or confrontational style might put the other person on the defensive and make them less likely to listen and engage in a productive conversation.

The second set making up 5% of the study argued that there had to be some sort of harmony to even take language into consideration to begin with. They feel language alone was not enough, and that there needed to be a certain level of understanding and connection between the people involved in the conflict. Whereas language might be a tool to help with this, it is not the only factor that matters.

## Corpus 2

<b>GENDER RESPONSES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO RESPONSE</b>
MALE	35	9	7
FEMALE	30	15	4

In response to the question “Do you believe the language spoken by a person can play a key role in resolving conflict (Are you more likely to forgive a person who speaks your own language)?”. The first set of participants consisting of about 68% of the study agrees that the language someone speaks can influence how likely they are to be forgiven for a mistake. And in this case, are more likely to forgive someone who speaks the same language as they do. This is a really interesting insight into how culture and identity can play a role in resolving conflict.

The second set of participants, making up 21% of the study disagreed with this idea. They believe the sincerity of the apology is more important than the language it is spoken in. So, even if the person does not speak the same language, as long as they are sincere and truly sorry, they can still be forgiven. It is almost like they are saying the intention behind the words is what really matters.

### Corpus 3

<b>GENDER RESPONSES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO RESPONSE</b>
MALE	41	7	1
FEMALE	42	7	2

In response to the question, "Have you had any experience where language has helped you resolve conflict?". The first set of participants consisting of 83% of the study claim language has helped them resolve conflict although in addition to language, actions and behaviors can also have a big impact in resolving conflict. So, it is not just about what we say, but also about what we do.

The second set of participants consisting of about 14% of the study argued other wise. According to them, compassion and empathy towards someone was key. They see compassion and empathy as more important than the actual language itself when it comes to resolving conflict.

### Corpus 4

<b>GENDER RESPONSES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO RESPONSE</b>
MALE	30	20	0
FEMALE	25	25	0

In response to the question "Do you believe language can be used to resolve all kinds of conflict?". The first set of participants consisting of about 50% of the study believe language can be used to resolve all kinds of conflict because they have never been in a situation where Language has not been enough to avoid or resolve conflict but they also place emphasis on tone being a critical instrument in resolving past conflict.

While the other half of the study argued otherwise. For these set of participants, Yes, language is an important tool for conflict resolution but it is not always effective. They suggest when a situation escalates into one where words simply cannot fix it, other actions have to be taken and in cases of physical oppression, violence can be used to defend oneself. They feel that in certain situations, where someone is being physically harmed or oppressed, violence may be necessary to defend oneself and resolve the conflict. That raises some ethical and philosophical questions about when violence is justified and what counts as "self-defense". It definitely seems like there is a lot of gray area and room for interpretation when it comes to this issue. The "line" might be different for each person, depending on their personal experiences, values, and beliefs. It is almost like the "eye of the beholder". What one person sees as acceptable, another person might see as unacceptable. It is a really complex and nuanced issue.

## Corpus 5

<b>GENDER RESPONSES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO RESPONSE</b>
MALE	41	7	2
FEMALE	42	6	2

In response to the question. "Do you believe tone to be a vital tool in resolving conflict?". The first set of participants consisting of about 83% of the study agree language is an important factor but tone is also important. Tone can make a big difference in how a message is received, even if the words themselves are positive or apologetic. They feel that a sincere apology requires not only the right words, but also the right tone and emotion behind them. It is almost like they need to come from the "heart" and not just the "head", It seems like there is a lot more to it than just using the "right" words. The emotional connection and understanding between the people involved is just as important. This is such an interesting insight into the role of language and emotion in conflict resolution.

The second set making up 13% of the study accept tone as useful but not vital. They argue that often times, a lot of the focus is often on what people say, rather than how they say it and what is behind their words. Moreover, we are not always around people when they use language to hear the tone in which it is conveyed in. Lastly, tone can be quite

confusing in some cases. So, we should always place emphasis on the words said and not the tone in which it is said.

## **Discussions on Findings**

### **Corpus 1**

The majority of participants recognized the significance of language style in conflict resolution, emphasizing the need for tactful, respectful, and positive communication to foster harmony. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the power of cooperative language in building peaceful relations. The minority who disagreed with the statement suggested that the conditions for productive communication must be established before language can effectively mediate conflict. This perspective underscores the importance of establishing a foundation of trust and understanding before engaging in dialogue.

### **Corpus 2**

The majority of participants recognized the potential influence of shared language on forgiveness, highlighting the role of shared cultural and linguistic experiences in fostering empathy and understanding. This finding emphasizes the importance of taking cultural context into account when navigating conflict resolution. The minority who disagreed with the statement focused on the sincerity of the apology rather than the linguistic medium, suggesting that authentic remorse can transcend cultural and linguistic barriers. This perspective highlights the critical role of empathy, understanding, and sincerity in resolving conflict, regardless of linguistic differences.

### **Corpus 3**

A significant majority of participants affirmed the role of language in resolving conflict, particularly when combined with conciliatory actions and behaviors. This suggests that a holistic approach to conflict resolution, one that considers both verbal and non-verbal communication, is more effective in fostering reconciliation. The minority who emphasized the importance of compassion and empathy over language represent a perspective that values the intangible aspects of human relationships. This perspective suggests that genuine care and understanding, expressed through language or not, can be powerful forces in resolving conflict and promoting healing.

### **Corpus 4**

The divide between the two groups of participants reveals a spectrum of perspectives on the role and limitations of language in conflict resolution. The first group, valuing the importance of language and tone, represents a more optimistic stance, while the second group introduces a more pragmatic or realistic perspective. This tension reflects the range of opinions in real-world conflict situations. The issues of violence and self-defense further highlight the complexity of ethical decision-making in conflict situations.

### **Corpus 5**

The majority opinion highlights the crucial role of tone in conveying emotion, sincerity, and empathy. This aligns with the idea that effective communication is not just about the message itself, but also about how it's delivered. The minority opinion raises some valid

points about the potential limitations of tone, particularly when we can't directly observe someone's tone or when tone can be ambiguous. This suggests that language, when used judiciously, can still be a powerful tool even in the absence of tone cues.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Summary

Language style, form, and function play critical roles in conflict resolution, whether by fostering cooperation, sincerity, or understanding. Language style, especially cooperative language, is a significant contributor to effective conflict resolution. Using non-threatening, empathetic language styles signals a willingness to listen, understand, and collaborate, which can deescalate tensions and open the door to resolution. The form of language, particularly the use of competitive vs. cooperative language, can either exacerbate or mitigate conflict. This implies the need for thoughtful, deliberate language use to establish common ground and avoid further antagonism. Language, while important, is not a panacea for conflict and must be used in conjunction with empathy, sincerity, and cultural sensitivity. Language function, particularly its role in detecting and mediating conflict, highlights the critical role of language in both identifying conflict early and facilitating peaceful outcomes. This emphasizes the importance of developing effective communication skills for effective conflict resolution. Cultural context, including language differences, can add complexity to conflict resolution, highlighting the importance of cross-cultural communication skills, such as translation and cultural understanding, to bridge these divides.

Translation has the potential to break down language barriers and promote reconciliation in diverse societies. Translation can serve as a powerful tool to remove linguistic barriers, allowing different parties to communicate and resolve conflict. However, translation is not always straightforward, and cultural differences may complicate the process, requiring sensitivity and awareness to ensure accurate and meaningful translation. Cultural understanding is essential for effective conflict resolution, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. Recognizing and respecting cultural differences, including variations in language use and non-verbal communication, can help to foster mutual understanding and empathy, which are critical components of effective conflict resolution. Self-defense may be considered in situations of physical oppression, complicating the ethical decision-making process in conflict situations. When language differences are a significant factor in conflict, cultural understanding becomes vital in ensuring successful conflict resolution. This may involve not only using translation as a tool but also engaging in cross-cultural dialogue, where different parties can share their perspectives and values to promote understanding and empathy. Effective conflict resolution in cross-cultural contexts also requires a recognition of the potential for miscommunication due to cultural differences. This underscores the importance of active listening, clarification, and patience when navigating cultural differences in conflict resolution.

## 5.2 Conclusion

First, language can definitely play a role in resolving conflict, but it is not the only factor. Other things like culture, identity, and sincerity can also be important. Second, people have different approaches to conflict resolution, and there is no one right way to do it. And third, it seems like forgiveness is a very important part of resolving conflict. I think that there are two key ingredients for resolving conflict successfully. The first is communication, which includes things like language, culture, and identity. And the second is empathy, which includes things like understanding, compassion, and forgiveness. So, when we are trying to resolve conflict, it is important to consider both of these ingredients.

Overall, the findings from both studies underscore the intricate relationship between language and conflict resolution. Language, whether through style, tone, or non-verbal cues, has the power to either impede or facilitate reconciliation. However, language is just one component of effective communication, and it must be used in combination with empathy, cultural sensitivity, and an understanding of the unique circumstances of each conflict. While language alone cannot guarantee a peaceful resolution, it is undoubtedly a vital tool for building bridges between individuals, communities, and societies." Furthermore, it emphasizes the vital role of language style, form, and function in facilitating or impeding the reconciliation process. The study suggest that language and translation are essential components in promoting peace and understanding, particularly

in situations where linguistic barriers exist. The need for greater attention to the use of language in conflict resolution and the potential of translation as a mediating force cannot be understated. The study has significant implications for the field of translation, highlighting the potential of translation as a tool to break down language barriers and facilitate conflict resolution. The study indicates that translation can play a crucial role in bridging linguistic gaps and ensuring effective communication, thereby promoting harmonious relations between conflicting parties. The study asserts that, while language may not necessarily be the primary cause of conflict, it is undeniably a powerful instrument for achieving successful conflict resolution."

### **5.3 Recommendation**

One recommendation for future research would be to explore the role of persuasion and questioning in resolving conflict. It is important to note that persuasion is not the same as manipulation. While both techniques can be used to influence someone, persuasion is based on rational arguments and evidence, while manipulation is based on deception and coercion. Persuasive language can be used in many different ways, but some common strategies include using logical arguments, appealing to emotions, and using repetition and rhythm. In the context of resolving conflict, asking questions can help people to understand each other's perspectives and find common ground. Questions can also help to defuse tension and create a more open and respectful environment. Some examples of effective questions include open-ended questions, probing questions, and hypothetical

questions. Considering the effectiveness of both persuasive language and asking questions in resolving conflict, it is recommended that future research explore the potential benefits of integrating these techniques into conflict resolution strategies. Combining persuasive language with thoughtful questioning could be a powerful way to resolve conflict in a respectful and effective manner.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix: Language as a tool for Conflict resolution Questionnaire Questions:

- What is your name?
- What is your gender or non-binary identity?
- What languages do you speak?
- Do you believe that language is an important tool for resolving conflict, particularly through the use of positive vs. negative language?
- Do you think that the language spoken by a person can play a key role in resolving conflict? (Are you more likely to forgive someone who speaks your language)?
- Do you believe language can be used to resolve all kinds of conflict?
- Do you think tone is a vital tool in resolving conflict?