

A Socio-pragmatic Investigation of Language of Insults in the Utterances of Yoruba Natives in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

An utterance is neither seen nor touched but capable of making or marring an individual, group or a nation depending on how it is used. Thus, positive utterances ensure peace and tranquility in a society while negative utterances usually tear a nation apart. Language of insult is a negative utterance that usually produces, hatred, war, or disunity in the society. This paper, therefore, investigated the language of tribal insult in the utterances of Yoruba language users. Adopting conversational Implicature and Referential Theory as a theoretical framework, the study examined the language of tribal insults in the utterances of Yoruba users of Yoruba language. Employing participatory observation and recorded utterances in informal settings with the native speakers of Yoruba, the researchers discovered that the use of language of tribal insults among the Yoruba speakers has presented some tribes less humans. Also, some words are carelessly used to insult a nation, abuser's insults are being transferred to ethnic groups with the use of simile and metaphor, and negative attitude of a particular person becomes an insult to an ethnic group. The insults range from "theft", "promiscuity", "stinginess", "privilege abuse", "dirtiness" to "inferiority complex". The implication of the insults is that some tribes are seen as being worthless. The study, therefore, recommends that government should put machinery in motion to check this menace in order to promote unity in diversity.

INTRODUCTION

It is so pathetic that the use of language sometimes threatens the unity of Nigeria. Of recent, Mohamadu Buhari led administration has frowned at what it is termed as "hates speech", thereby placing sanction on such derogatory expressions. This so-called "hate speech", got its off-shoot from tribal insult. However, tribal insult was relatively attended to, hence aggravated to what is now referred to as "hate speech". Therefore, the aim and the goal of this research are to examine how indirect tribal insults are deployed in a socio-pragmatic context to humiliate other tribes in Nigeria. By so doing, useful suggestions would be offered to correct the negative use of language in order to promote unity in diversity in Nigeria. Let us briefly examine what insult is via utterances.

An utterance is neither seen nor touched but capable of making or marring an individual, group or a nation depending on how it is used. Thus, an acceptable utterance ensures peace and tranquility in a society while unacceptable utterance usually causes hatred, war or disunity in a nation. A

good example of an unacceptable utterance is "insult". Advanced Learner's Dictionary simply defines the term "insult" as "an offensive remark or action". Insult could be either verbal or non-verbal. However, the focus of this study is on verbal insult as it beams its searchlight on how language is used in a socio-pragmatic context. Insult (verbal), therefore, can now be conveniently defined as an unpleasant expression that makes someone upset or offended. It is a type of linguistic taboo which exists in different forms across cultures and languages.

Babou-Sekkal (2012) describes "insult" as an intentional expression or speech that is degrading, offensive and reprehensive. According to this scholar, insult usually expresses the opposite of someone's value. Jay (1999) corroborates this by stating the purpose of insult – to harm, demean, or denigrate the listener. Thus, the main preoccupation of insulting is to infringe on one's psychological status or one's self-esteem since it is usually deployed particularly to criticize or humiliate the personal competence of the abuser. Summarizing the above positions of the scholars, insult could be

described as an intentional or unintentional expression used to humiliate the abusee. It intends to attack personality intentionally or unintentionally.

It is worthy of note to mention here that insult is easy to acquire. It could be cautiously or uncautiously acquired. Certain linguistic techniques are usually employed for insulting. These include name-calling, prejudices, the use of figure of speech, proverbs, idiomatic expression etc. Abusive expression as earlier pointed out, could be used to refer to either an individual, a group of people, tribe or a nation. Given this premise, this study, therefore, focuses on indirect tribal insults. Hence, it is pertinent to briefly discuss some definition of terms in this paper as they will serve as guide for data analysis and discussion.

Indirect Tribal Insults: This refers to a kind of verbal expression meant to degrade or humiliate a particular tribe intentionally, in which case, the cause of such insult comes from the direct referent.

Cautious Insult: This is a kind of insult that is intentional e.g. “Bola is a fool”.

Uncautious Insult: This is an intentional insult e.g. “Oh baba are you just coming to work by this time”?

Language of Insult: The use of words to humiliate abusee.

Tribal Insult

Some scholars see tribal insult as a derogatory expression emanating from language users. To corroborate this, Nairaland (2019) posits that Yoruba natives usually find it difficult to correct someone without adding insult as a suffix. For instance, expressions like “do it like this *ode* (fool), press the red button, *oponu* (idiot), hold it for me, *didirin* (fool), you can't greet person, *alaileko* (lack of home training) etc., are Yoruba insults with suffixes. It, therefore, goes beyond that in this context. This study, therefore, describes “Tribal insult” as a derogatory use of language emanating from language users to humiliate a particular tribe intentionally or unintentionally. Insult thus, becomes intentional when the abuser tends to insult the abusee directly or indirectly. Direct insult is when the insult is limited to the abusee while the indirect insult is the one that goes beyond the abusee. In the case of unintentional insult, the abuser makes use of derogatory expression(s) to attack the abusee uncautiously or untendedly. This kind of insult could also be direct or indirect, depending on how such an expression is used.

The derogatory use of language is common among Nigerians. Expression like *u vai igarra* (It should meet the people of Igarra) has crept into the proverbial statement of Okpameri language (one of the Nigerian languages in Akoko-Edo Local Government Area, Edo State) to indirectly wish its neighbouring community evil. It is a derogatory use of utterance to humiliate a tribal group in Akoko-Edo Local Government of Edo State, Nigeria.

Polite Insult

Polite insult is that type of insult that is mild, i.e. no blatant or coded. Coded in the sense that abusive words are figuratively used. Gentleman's journal refers to polite insult as “gentle-

man insult”. That is, insulting while remaining a gentleman. The scholar pointed out some of these insults thus:

- “I do not consider you a vulture,
I consider you something a vulture can eat”
- “People clap when they see you,
They clap their hands over their eyes”
- You are a proof that God has a sense of humour”
- If I throw a stick, will you leave?

(<https://www.thegentlemansjournal.com>)

On the other hand, impolite insult is usually seen as blatant insult, that is, uncoded insult. Some of the examples of this insult type are “stop making a noise”, “you must be a fool” your number six should make you realize that what you did is bad” etc.

Scope of Investigation

As earlier mentioned, this study limits its investigation to indirect tribal insult emanating from the Native speakers of Yoruba language to humiliate other tribes in Nigeria. Some of the aspects to investigate are utterances that border on “promiscuity”, “theft”, “stinginess”, “dirtiness”, “privilege abuse”, and “inferiority complex”. It is imperative to submit here that the above listed aspects have negative psychological effect on the abusee. Investigating the listed aspects of tribal insult will definitely reveal the right direction towards curbing the derogatory use of language.

Data Base of Study

Data were got from recorded conversations and participatory observation of the researchers. The researchers' participatory observation facilitated the linguistic exchanges. The data were harvested in different settings (family, electioneering, friend-to-friend etc.) in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State.

The level of participants' unconsciousness with respect to their utterances being recorded made the data standard. Hence, the participants were at their natural best. The recorded conversations or utterances were rendered in Yoruba language. The utterances were still retained in their original form for originality. Although, all are translated to English in the course of analyzing the data for communication purposes. Aspects of the indirect tribal insults recorded were ‘promiscuity’, ‘theft’, ‘dirtiness’, ‘stinginess’, ‘privilege abuse’, and ‘inferiority complex’. Over eight recordings were made out of which six were used for analysis.

Theoretical Framework

This study is predicated on conversational implicature and Referential theory. Conversational implicature was propounded by Grice (1981) to explain the principle behind implied meaning in a conversation or an utterance. According to this scholar, when utterances are made, there is tendency that the interlocutor may not wish to say everything in his utterances. However, the hearer is then expected to interpret the meaning of such an utterance, particularly the unspoken word(s). Thus, such meanings are not overt, they

are covertly implied. Ogunsiji and Farinde (2010) simply refer to such implied meaning as implicature. By implication, the term implicature could be referred to as an additional conveyed meaning. That is, an unfolded words that are needed to be understood. Lyons (1977) describes “implicature” as the extra information rested upon a distinction between what is actually said and what is implied in saying what is said. In the same spirit, Kempson (1975:143) defines conversational implicature as:

...assumption over and above the meaning of the sentence used which the speaker knows and intends that the hearer will make in the face of an apparently open violation of the cooperative principle in order to interpret the speaker's sentence in accordance with the cooperative principles.

From the above definition, conversational implicature could be simply described, therefore, as something which is implied in conversation; there is something left implicit in actual language use.

Referential Theory of meaning, which was later expanded by Ogden and Richards, (1923) simply explains the meaning of a word with regard to the relationship between the word and the objects to which it refers. This relationship is technically referred to as “reference”. The view that unveil the question of meaning to the notion of reference is called extensionalism. Ogden and Richard (1923) attempt to explicate this theory with their famous semiotic triangle (thought/reference). In Ogden and Richard's submission, the relationship between “thought” and “reference” on one hand and “symbol” and “thought” on the other hand are direct but “symbol” and “referent” are indirectly connected. Thus, the connection between “symbol” and “referent” in other words, is via “thought” or “reference” (Ogunsiji and Farinde 2010:48).

In view of this, meanings are principally depended on a word in which case, meanings are linguistic symbols that refer to some external realities. Linguistic symbols are, therefore, referred to as “referent”. De Saussure corroborates this when he distinguishes two parts within a word, namely, “signifie” and signifiant. According to this scholar, every word has these two parts (Signifie and Signifiant). He refers to signifiant (synonym) as acoustic image with regard to series of soundd-o-g. The meaning will not be ascertained until such a sound is associated with certain representation – the signifie. Thus, the acoustic image and the schematic necessitate the third element – an “extra linguistic phenomenon” which is regarded as “reality” itself.

The relevance of the theories to this present study lies in the fact that indirect verbal insults, and of course tribal insults, are linguistic symbols that refer to some external realities. Meanings of these external realities are usually implied or implicated in utterances. For instance, expression like “I know my friend; he is Ijebu” in the context of financial assistance is a direct representation of a friend being an Ijebu man. However, the underlying word “Ijebu”, and object indirectly represented – a tribe, hence a verbal tribal insult to Ijebu nation. The two theories (conversational implicature and Referential theory), therefore, become an effective tool in the investigation of implied meaning.

Data Analysis

In this study, the recorded conversations are subjected to Socio-Pragmatic Analysis. The selected recorded conversations are issues related to ‘stinginess’, ‘promiscuity’, ‘theft’, ‘dirtiness’, inferiority complex’ and ‘privilege abuse’. Each of these recorded conversations were got from different settings. The recorded conversations were further categorized for easy analysis and discussion.

A. Extract 1: Conversation Related to Stinginess

This is a friend-to-friend conversation with regard to financial assistance. Here is the conversation:

Speaker: sè òrẹ rẹ tí fún ọ ni owò tí o bèrè?

(Has your friend given you the money you requested from him?)

Hearer: ówò! ẹ mọpé Ijẹbú ni òrẹ mii?

(money! don't you know that my friend is Ijebu?)

Speaker: Kò fún ò abí? ó mà gaa o

(So, he did not give you? What a pity)

The above conversation has revealed discussion between two friends discussing the hearer's friend concerning financial assistance. The hearer requested financial assistance from his friend. However, the request was turned down. Hence, the hearer became disappointed the mood of the hearer necessitated the speaker to ask how far the hearer had gone with his friend concerning the financial assistance discussed with the speaker. Responding to the first question posed, the hearer metaphorically described his friend as a stingy person with rhetorical question using Ijebu (a Yoruba tribe in Ogun state) for direct comparison of the said friend's attitude – stinginess.

The hearer's response to the speaker's first question could be described as indirect tribal insult. The expression ... ẹ mọ pèjẹbú ni òrẹ mii? (...don't you know that my friend is Ijebu) implies that the Ijebus are known for stinginess, hence find it difficult to give away their possession on humanitarian grounds. The expression is mild insult to a friend refusing to render financial assistance to a friend. However, the insult has been unintentionally transferred to a tribe. The words “friend” and “Ijebu” have represented a tribe in Yoruba nation. Therefore, the extra linguistic phenomenon – the attitude of the Ijebus could be described as reality itself.

It must be mentioned here that the lexeme “Ijebu” is always used to describe a stingy person by a Yoruba speaker of Yoruba. The often use of the lexeme has a negative effect on the Ijebu nation.

B. Extract 2: Conversation Related to Promiscuity

This recorded conversation was got from family setting. It is all about a biological sister advising her brother not to marry Bukola because of her promiscuous activities. The conversation is presented thus:

Sister: ẹgbón mii, sẹ Bùkòlá ni e máa fẹ?

(My brother, is it Bukola that you will marry?)

Brother: Kí ló dé tí o fi bèrè?

(Why did you ask the question?)

Sister: Omobinrin naa se *asewọ ju Calabar loo*.

(The lady is more promiscuous than A kò fẹ ọmọ-alè nìdílẹ waa o

Calabar. We don't want bastard in our family)

Brother: Gbènu rẹ sòun, iwọ obirin tí ko

(Keep quiet, you this stupid lady) gbádùn yii.

The conversation above was on marriage. A younger sister has advised her elder brother not to marry Bukola because of her promiscuous activities known to the public. The reason for the advice is to avoid bastard being born to the family. The sister believes in “once promiscuous, ever promiscuous”, hence advised her brother not to have Bukola's hand in marriage. However, the brother declined the advice given and berated his sister for such advice. The pragmatic feature in the utterances above is the comparative clue employed by the sister to describe the level of promiscuous activities associated with Bukola, which implies that the Calabar tribe is noted for promiscuity. The word ‘Calabar’ has represented an ethnic nation in the South-Southern part of Nigeria noted for ugly activities. The lexeme *asawo* (promiscuity) was pragmatically used to represent Calabar, a notion of reference called “extensionalism”.

It is pertinent to also mention here that the intention of the sister is to describe Bukola in such away that her brother will not marry Bukola. However, the insult has been transferred from Bùkòlà to a tribe, hence becomes tribal insult.

C. Extract 3: Conversation Borders on “Theft”

This conversation was recorded in electioneering setting where Tunji admonished the electorate to vote wisely. The recorded conversation is presented below:

Tunji: *Se omo-Anini ni e dibò fun?*

(Are you voting for Anini boy?)

Electorate: *Kí lo mà sẹlẹ?*

(What is the implication?)

Tunji: *E o sọ pémo bèrè o*

(You will remember my question)

Electorate: *Ọmọ Nìgèrià ni gbògbò wa*

(We are Nigerian citizens)

This is voter-electorate discourse in socio-pragmatic context where Tunji, one of the voters, indirectly advised the electorate not to vote for a particular candidate. However, the electorate's responses negated Tunji's advice. Tunji metaphorically used the word *omo-Anini* which represented a candidate whose state of origin is Edo – one of the South-Southern states in Nigeria. The implication, therefore, is that if the electorate decide to vote for the so-called *Omo-Anini* (Edo origin), there is tendency that he will loot public treasury for his personal gain. The expressions by Tunji suggested that *Omo-Anini* will definitely loot public treasury, and by extension, the Edos are known for criminal activities.

The word *Omo-Anini* crept into the Yoruba expression, when Lawrence Anini was declared a notorious criminal by the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Anini was a Nigerian criminal who terrorized Nigerian citizens in the 1980's along with his sidekick “Monday Osunbor. He was eventually captured and executed for his crimes in 1986. Thus, Edo tribe is now seen as criminals. The implication of *Omo-Anini* is that, every Edo indigene is capable of displaying his criminal and corrupt activities if given exortic position. Anini, therefore, represents Edo tribe. His criminal activities imply that Edo people have criminal blood in their vein. It must

also be added that Tunji did not intent to insult the Edo tribe, however, his use of language has connoted tribal insult. This must be eliminated in utterances in order to guarantee peace and harmony in Nigeria as a nation.

D. Extract 4: Conversation Related on Dirtiness

Dirtiness is one of the things the Yoruba usually frown at. One of the popular songs *imo toto* (cleanliness), used in promoting health education has actually showcased the value the Yoruba attach to healthy living. The utterances of Bola's mother have revealed this in the conversation. Here is the conversation:

Mother: *Bólá, bá wo ni o se nse ọ̀bùn bi màlára?*

(Why are you as dirty as mala in this way?)

È pọ kelebe si egbe kanga

You spit out mucus beside the well)

Bola: *Máá búèrùpè si*

(I will cover it with sand)

Mother: *èrùpé kẹẹ! Wòò,ẹ kó kíakía báyii*

(Did I hear you say sand! Please clean the mess, now)

Bola: *Mo ti gbó*

(I have heard you)

This is mother – daughter interaction on the issue that borders on dirtiness. The mother condemned the dirty attitude of her daughter by indirectly comparing her attitude with a *malaa* – representing an Hausa person. The response of the daughter shows her being remorseful of what she did. The words *obun* and *malaa* imply that the Hausas are known for dirtiness. Comparing Bola's dirty attitude with a Hausa person has revealed tribal insult. As earlier mentioned, the signifiant (*malaa*) is a representation of Hausa tribe noted for dirtiness as evident in participant's utterance. The notion of the mother is to correct her daughter's dirty attitude. However, this linguistic correction has negatively affected an ethnic group, thereby indirectly threatening the unity of a nation with socio-cultural diversity. The often use of this derogatory expression has indirectly resorted to what is now called ‘hate speech’.

E. Extract 5: Conversation Related to Inferiority Complex

Merriam-Webster describe “inferiority complex” as a belief that a particular person is less worthy or important than other people. This has been revealed in the participants' utterances. One of which is presented thus:

Ireti: *Mo wá dúpé lówó yin fun o*

(I am here to thank you for allowing me fetch water mi tiẹ fun mi pon lánàá.

from your well yesterday).

Mummy: *Ah! Kò tó ọ̀pẹ. Igbo lásán*

(Ah! You don't need to thank me. Common Igbo naa pọn omi ninu kanga

also fetches water from this well, let alone

yii, lanbósibòsi awa tí a joo

we that speak the same language)

nso ede kan naa

Ireti: *È sẹ mummy* (Thank you mummy)

One of the cultural traits of Yoruba culture is “greetings/appreciation”. According to Ojo (1996), one of the parameters

used to measure the proper conduct of a person in the Yoruba culture is its ability to greet people because the Yoruba culture rates greeting so high. This is what Ireti demonstrated for allowing her fetch water from Mummy's well. The response of Mummy has pragmatic feature. The adjective *lasan* (common or ordinary) as used in that context implies that an Igbo person is inferior to a Yoruba person. Therefore, the word "Igbo" connotes a tribal entity, and of course the Igbo nation, considered less important as reflected in the utterance of Mummy as Yoruba people hold their language in high esteem. As a result, any person not Yoruba indigene is considered less important. For instance, one often hears expressions Like: *Igbira lasan-lasan*, *Gambari lasan-lasan*, *Calabar lasan-lasan* etc which all mean "ordinary people". *Lasan-lasan* is synonymously used as *eyankeyan*. In Ondo dialect of Yoruba, these derogatory lexemes – *kobokobo*, *kilekilegheeghee* etc are also used to insult ethnic groups in Nigeria. The use of the mentioned lexemes could result in tribal war if often used in the presence of people whose tribes are affected. Therefore, the use of words (language) be handled with care to enhance national cohesion in a multilingual and heterogeneous society like Nigeria.

F. Extract 6: Conversation Related to Privilege Abuse

This is brother – brother conversation on land issue. Mr. Alabi gave an empty land to pastor on personal relationship for temporary use. After some years, the pastor laid foundation on the land without Mr. Alabi's consent. This is what generated the conversation. Here, the conversation:

Mr. Alabi: Kayode (calling Kayode)

Mr. Alabi: égbon mi (my brother)

Mr. Alabi: Akiì gbéìgbirà gun kèkè o
(You don't put Igbira on a bicycle)

Kayode: Lóòtò ni (It is true)

Mr. Alabi: Sè o mòpé pastor ti še foundation
(Do you know that pastor had
si orí ilẹ yẹn
laid foundation on that land)

Kayode: O daju ni o
(So, he thought he is smart)

Mr. Alabi: Fí sílè, yóo kàn àbùkù láìpé yí
(Leave him alone. He shall be
disgraced very soon)

The conversation above has revealed some levels of presupposition between the interlocutors. Pragmatists describe presupposition as a pieces of information which the speaker assumes that the listener has already known. By implication, the speaker and the listener share a certain form of background information. So, whatever interpretation given to the speaker's utterance by the listener is based on the assumed shared background (see Yule, 1985, Osisanwo 2003, Ogun-siji and Farinde 2010 etc). This has actually reflected in the utterances of the participants.

The expression - *Akiì gbe ìgbirà gun kèkè o* (you don't put Igbira on a bicycle) has the element of "implicature" which could be interpreted to mean privilege abuse. The use of the word *Igbira* which represents an ethnic group in Kogi state of Nigeria has be figuratively used to humiliate a tribe.

The pastor mentioned in the conversation represents *Igbira* (a tribal entity). From the oral source, the Yoruba believe that the Igbiras are abusers of privileges, thus, equating the pastor's attitude with the Igbiras.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Investigation on how language is used unintentionally to insult an ethnic group in Nigeria has brought one thing to the fore-that language can be used to make and mar an individual, group or a nation depending on how it is being used. In our investigation, some words were carelessly used to insult a nation. For instance, the use of the word "*Igbo lasan*" (common Igbo) was carelessly used by "Mummy" to justify how generous she is to all human race. Even though the insult was not intentional, it is a fact that her utterance has described the Igbos as less important people. The manipulation of language to serve the speaker's intention sometimes resort to language abuse.

The study has revealed how the abuser's insults are being transferred to ethnic groups with the use of simile and metaphor. For instance, expression like ...*sé asèwo jú Calabar loo* (more promiscuous than the Calabar) and ... *sé obún bìi máláa* (as dirty as the malaa) have indirectly transferred the abuser's insultsto the Calabars and the Hausas respectively. Also, words like *Ijebu, omo Anini* are metaphorically used to represent the abusee in the conversation. However, the figurative use of these lexemes has enabled the abusees' insults be transferred to the Ijebus and the Edos. The implicature of the two words – Ijebu and omo-Anini connotes stinginess and criminality.

The analysis has also revealed how the negative attitude of a particular person becomes an insult to an ethnic group. This is evident in the utterance of Tunde, one of the voters who has indirectly insulted the Edos because of the criminal activities of Lawrence Anini. The criminal activities of Anini now justify the reason for describing the Edos as criminals. So, an average Edo man is seen as a criminal in the light of Yoruba presupposition as this has actually reflected in the participant's use of language. However, the presupposition may not be 100% correct as it lacks statistical proof.

On a general note, most of these tribal insults are usually implied in that, few words are used to connote a volume of meaning. For instance, expression like ...*Ijèbú ni òrẹ mí* (Ijebu is my friend) connotes speaker's friend's level of stinginess. These forms of insult are always mild in that, the abuser does not have the intention to abuse the abusee.

It is pertinent to mention here that the use of the word – *eyankeyan* [worthless person] in the utterances of the participants seems to regard other tribes as less humans. For instance, in the phrase *làbòsibòsiawa ti a joo nso ede kan naa* (let alone we that speak the same language) has revealed the less regard Yoruba natives have for other tribes, and of course, other languages. Hence, the implication of *eyankeyan* in the Yoruba context connotes non Yoruba indigene(s). It is, therefore, not surprising to hear expressions like, *Igbo Lasan-lasan*, *Calabar lasan-lasan* etc. to mean ordinary or worthless person(s) because the word *eyankeyan* is synonymous to *lasan-lasan*.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Word (language) is as fragile as egg and once spoken, it becomes difficult to swallow it back. Hence, word spoken is capable of enhancing or destroying personality depending on how it is used. The book of life (Bible) has established that the tongue, one of the smallest parts of human body, has the tendency for creation or destruction depending on how it is used. The careless use of language among inter-ethnic groups may not guarantee peace and tranquility in multilingual and heterogeneous society like Nigeria if not addressed. The main aim and goal of this research are to investigate how indirect insults are deployed to humiliate other tribes and suggest how the insults could be checked in order to promote unity in diversity in Nigeria.

The analysis has revealed the derogatory expression used by the Yoruba natives to indirectly insult some ethnic groups in Nigeria. For instance, words like *èyánkèyàn*, *làsàn-làsàn*, *ìjéjú*, *Igbira gún kéké*, *še àsáwó jú Calabarlò* etc. are in the utterances of participants to humiliate or condemn some tribes in Nigeria. Even though the insults are not intentional, the fact remains that the tribal insults have already been entrenched in the Yoruba language. So, it is no more a difficult task for the abuser to use such derogatory words or expressions to describe the abusee.

In the light of Yoruba adage; *Èru kan, ló'n múnì bugba èerú* (the negative act of just one slave calls for insulting thousands of slaves), conversation that borders on theft was used by the language users to describe the Edos as criminals just because of one of the Edo citizens, Lawrence Anini who was captured and killed for his criminal activities. By implication, an average Edo person is a criminal as this was evident in the utterance of Tunji advising the electorate not to vote for an Edo candidate jostling for the post of treasurer in Tailors Association. Some of these derogatory words, though accepted and taken as jokes in social comments, has negative effect on the affected tribes and if not checked could threaten

Nigeria unity. This study, therefore, recommends that tribal insult be eliminated in our utterances in order to avoid tribal war. It also recommends that every tribe should see other tribes in Nigeria as brothers and sisters. The Government should put mechanism in place to check the derogatory use of language. The recommendations above if implemented, will enhance unity in diversity.

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