

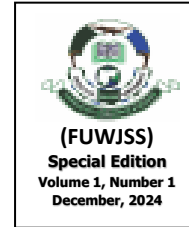
SOCIO-LINGUISTIC DYNAMICS OF PROTEST LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines socio-linguistic dynamics of language of protest on learners of English as a second language (ESL) in Nigeria. Specifically, the study interrogates how exposure to the informal, colloquial expressions common in protest movements like #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance affects students' ability to distinguish between formal and informal English. Through an analysis of various protest movements in Nigeria, including #EndSARS, Occupy Nigeria, and Niger Delta agitations, the study explores the linguistic dynamics of protest language and its implications for ESL learners. Findings of the study reveal that while protest language enriches learners' vocabulary and cultural awareness, it also creates challenges in formal academic settings, where students struggle to separate informal speech from the Standard English required for academic success. The study's conclusion highlights the need for educational institutions to adjust curricula to address teacher training programmes to help educators guide students in managing the blurred boundaries between informal protest language and formal English. The study advocates for media literacy programmes that raise awareness about the influence of protest language in online discourse, aiming to equip students with the skills to navigate different linguistic registers appropriately.

Keywords: Protest language, ESL learners, formal and informal English, language acquisition

Introduction

Protest language is an essential instrument for social and political movements, allowing people to voice their discontent, demand reforms, and mobilize others. Protest vocabulary in Nigeria has changed dramatically over time, from its early use in anti-colonial campaigns to more current movements against police brutality such as #EndSARS. Protest language is defined by its direct, forceful, and emotional tone, which is intended to stir up feelings, question authority, and give voice to those who are marginalized. This linguistic phenomenon is an effective medium for lobbying and public communication because it represents the protesters' goals and complaints (Falola, 2020).

Nigeria has a distinctive protest language that combines Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Pidgin English with English, the official language. Because of this synthesis, Nigeria's varied cultural and socioeconomic landscape is represented in a unique lexicon. The usage of several languages reflects the nation's multilingualism and the flexibility of protest language in various socio-political circumstances. Furthermore, the protest language's inventiveness highlights how language serves as a symbol of political opposition and cultural identity (Chiluwa, 2015).

Nigeria's post- and colonial histories are deeply ingrained in the country's protest language. Indigenous languages were part of the mass mobilization against colonial power during anti-colonial movements (Adesina, 2019). Protest rhetoric changed in the years following independence to speak to fresh political and economic concerns. Current campaigns, including #EndSARS, have employed hashtags, tweets, and viral posts in both local and English languages to spread complaints and foster unity. These digital channels have been essential in amplifying protest rhetoric (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2020).

But English as a second language (ESL) learners in Nigeria face difficulties because to the growing popularity of protest language. Protest language can expose students to novel terms and idioms, but it also frequently defies formal language conventions, which could lead to misunderstandings in official educational setting. Protest language's informal and sometimes confrontational style may blur the

distinction between formal and informal English, affecting learners' linguistic competence in academic and professional settings (Akindele, 2020; Adegbite, 2017).

This study aims to explore the linguistic features of the protest language in Nigeria and assess its implication for ESL learners. Specifically, it seeks to understand how protest language influences the language acquisition process, how it is perceived by learners, and the challenges it poses for educators and students in formal settings.

Since language is a vehicle for communication, mobilization, and identity building in Nigeria, it is important to understand how protest language affects ESL learners since it illuminates the country's larger sociolinguistic dynamics (Omoniyi, 2018). Considering the importance of English competence for both academic and professional achievement in Nigeria, the study provides educators and policymakers with useful insights to solve the problems caused by protest language in the classroom (Igboanusi, 2013). Furthermore, by providing an insight into how language affects political activism and language acquisition in multilingual societies, the research adds to the global conversations on language and social movements.

It is against this backdrop of increasing mix-up of formal and informal English that this study seeks to address the impact of protest language on ESL learners in Nigeria. It examines how exposure to this language enriches learners' vocabulary and also in contrast it also disrupts their understanding of formal English, leading to challenges in academic and professional language setting.

Historical Context of Language of Protest in Nigeria

According to Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2019) protest is a form of individual or collective action aimed at expressing ideas, views, or values of dissent, opposition, denunciation, or vindication it include the expression of political, social, or cultural opinions, views, or perspectives; the vocalization of support or criticism regarding a group, party, or the government itself; the reaction to a policy or the denunciation of a public problem; the affirmation of identity or raising awareness about a group's situation of discrimination and social exclusion. The right to freedom of expression is strongly interconnected with freedom of assembly and

the right to protest. Assemblies, defined as any intentional and temporary congregation of a group of people in a private or public space for a specific purpose play a vibrant role in mobilizing the population and in formulating grievances and aspirations, facilitating the celebration of events and, importantly, in influencing States' public policy. At the same time, the expression of individual and collective opinions is one of the objectives of any protest.

Amnesty International (2023) protest is an invaluable way to speak truth to power. Throughout history, protests have been the driving force behind some of the most powerful social movements, exposing injustice and abuse, demanding accountability and inspiring people to keep hoping for a better future. Unfortunately, these precious rights are under attack and must be protected from those who are afraid of change and want to keep us divided. Governments and others with power are constantly finding new ways to suppress protest and silence critical voices. Global trends towards the militarization of police, the increase in the misuse of force by police at protests and shrinking civic space mean that it is becoming more difficult to stay safe while making your voice heard.

Protest has played a vital role in making sure our human rights are acknowledged by institutions with power. From the Salt March against British colonial rule in India in 1930 to the decades of Pride marches that followed the Stonewall Riots in 1969, to the Black Lives Matter protests in recent years, people power is constantly shaping our world. There are countless examples when people came together and made history and delivered us the rights and liberties we enjoy today. Driven by creativity and a sense of shared humanity, protest takes a multitude of forms online and offline, from strikes, marches and vigils to sit-ins and acts of civil disobedience (Amnesty International, 2020).

Language of Protest

Open University (2022) a language of protest is a form of political communication. It's a form of political persuasion, where those without power or influence find ways to get their voices heard in order to express a message of dissent. Protest is a collective action in which a large group of people publicly express their disagreement to a specific concept, policy, or course of action in order to bring about

change. It frequently includes the expression of unhappiness through acts such as marches, rallies, and sit-ins.

While political protests, which oppose govert policies, are the most common, protests can also be social, religious, or professional, focusing on a wide range of topics affecting society as a whole (Eesuola, 2015). Social protests may address problems linked to human rights, economic inequalities, or environmental issues, while religious rallies frequently stress the defence of beliefs and practices believed to be under attack. Professional protests are usually related to labour conflicts, including strikes that try to raise salaries or improve working conditions.

AccordingEesuola (2015), protest demonstrations act as venues for open demonstrations or marches that give voice to opposing viewpoints. These are coordinated, group initiatives rather than just acts of resistance, to express satisfaction to decision-makers, the press, and the general public. The main objective of the majority of protests is to promote nonviolent change, stressing that using peaceful methods is the most efficient approach to accomplish their goals. According to academics like Sharp (2013), nonviolent protests are more likely to be sustained and to bring about long-lasting change than violent upheavals, which may result in repression and the movement's de-legitimation.

Protests can take on various forms depending on the context and the goals of the demonstrators. In some cases, they are organized as peaceful assemblies, while in others, civil disobedience or even strikes may be employed as forms of resistance. For instance, during the Nigerian #EndSARS protests in 2020, demonstrators peacefully assembled to call for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), which was accused of widespread human rights abuses (Okunlola, 2021). This protest, while largely peaceful, gained international attention and served as an example of how collective action can challenge unjust practices through public demonstrations.

While protest is most effective when conducted non-violently, it is important to note that peaceful protests can still face resistance or suppression from authorities. Governments sometimes react to protests with force or intimidation, which can escalate tensions. Nonetheless, protest remains a fundamental tool for individuals and

groups to advocate for social, political, and economic changes. In democratic societies, it serves as an essential mechanism for the expression of dissent, the protection of civil liberties, and the promotion of reforms that reflect the will of the people.

Nigeria has a long history of social and political movements that have shaped the language of protest. The use of language as a tool for resistance has been a defining characteristic of Nigerian activism, from the early 20th-century anti-colonial campaigns to the current #EndSARS protest. Protest language, which frequently combined English and native tongues to convey opposition across linguistic and ethnic divides, was crucial in energising the populace against British rule during the anti-colonial era. (Okoye, 2000). Protest language played a significant role in forming Nigeria's national identity during the 1950s and 60s independence movements, when leaders like Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo used persuasive speech and writing to instill a sense of purpose and unity among the people of Nigeria (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Protest language remained crucial in opposing authoritarian governments and promoting democracy in the post-colonial era. There was an upsurge in student protests, labour strikes, and pro-democracy activities in the 1980s and 1990s. During this time, protest language was used to oppose military authority and seek civil rights (Adeleke, 2009). During this period, Nigerian protest language was marked by its use of metaphor, satire, and symbolic expressions, reflecting the creativity and resilience of the protestors in the face of repression (Obadare, 2010).

The #EndSARS movement in October 2020, when young Nigerians took to the streets and social media to put an end to police brutality, was the most recent instance of protest language in Nigeria. The campaign was distinguished by the widespread use of memes, hashtags, and viral slogans that quickly went viral on digital media and brought protesters from all over Nigeria together (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2021; Mohammed, Lenshie & Madu, 2024). In addition to serving as a tool for mobilisation and organisation, the language of the #EndSARS protests served as a vehicle for expressing the annoyance of a generation that had become disenchanted with structural injustices in Nigeria.

Digital Communication Technologies and the Political Use of Disinformation

Many have questioned why the world has been increasingly shaken by protests in recent years. Some authors have pointed to the enabling role played by rising protests in the preservation of civic space (CIVICUS, 2020a, 2020b), the development of communication technologies (Carothers & Youngs, 2015; Qureshi, 2017) and the political use of disinformation (Brannen et al., 2020). These are all important factors, though not all carry the same weight. Structural factors like economic change and democratic regression are necessary to fully explain the surge in protests (Carothers & Youngs, 2015; Caren et al., 2017; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020). From Marx to Tocqueville, authors have written about unequal structural conditions and consciousness of injustice as crucial factors for protests and rebellion. Today, inequality is staggering, estimated to be the highest in history (United Nations, 2020; Oxfam, 2020, 2021). Four decades of neoliberal policies have generated more inequality and have eroded incomes and welfare for both lower and middle classes (della Porta, 2017; United Nations, 2020). Additionally, the world is experiencing the unrest effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Barrett & Chen, 2021; Sedik & Xu, 2020).

Our analysis shows that the number of demonstrations has increased steadily since 2006 and that protests have become more political due to disappointment with malfunctioning democracies, frustration with politicians, and a lack of trust in governments. By 2020, there were fewer protests about a specific issue (an education policy reform) and more “omnibus protests” in which demonstrators raised demands related to many issues. Not surprisingly, the most prevalent demand of protesters around the world in the period 2006–2020 was for “real democracy.” Since almost three thousand protests were reviewed in this study, they were classified into four main categories, by descending frequency of occurrence: (i) protests related to the failure of political representation/political systems, focused on a lack of real democracy, corruption and other grievances; (ii) against economic injustice and austerity reforms; (iii) for civil rights, from indigenous/racial rights to women’s rights and personal freedoms; and (iv) protests for global justice and a better international system for all,

instead of the few. An innovation of the book is in the statistics and graphs presented on these and other points of focus, and the numerous examples from all world regions.

Empirical Review of Studies on Protests

An important illustration of how protest language can impact English as a second language (ESL) learners was the 2020 #EndSARS movement, which originated in Nigeria in opposition to police brutality. Principally spearheaded by young people, the movement used Pidgin, English, and native languages on digital and physical media. Due to its ability to effectively communicate with a variety of audiences and broaden its appeal, its linguistic diversity was essential to its success (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2021).

Luhmann in his book, *Theory of Society* (2013) maintained that protest movements are a distinctive type of social system with unique traits. He stressed that they often depend on formal organizations—as resource-mobilization theories have pointed out—but, in contrast, social movements do not organize decisions but motives, commitments, ties. They seek to bring into the society what an organization presupposes and mostly has to pay for membership motivation (Luhmann, 2013: 155). Therefore, formal organizations must be clearly distinguished from social movements as a concept. The former are important to the latter only to the extent that they solve “residual problems” related, for example, to resource mobilization and strategic communication with outside actors. A further significant difference between these concepts is based on the fact that movements have no control over the process of their own change”. He also distinguished sharply between interaction systems (based on face-to-face communication and social movements (Luhman, 2013).

Moreover, Richard (2014) in his essay on the other hand seeks to differentiate ‘protest movement’ from what the overseas media has doubted the youth protest movement to ‘Umbrella Revolution’. He stated that the political aspiration of the youths and their supporters is not to overthrow the government, but to urge greater democracy in a society that is already extremely free. How can this be a revolutionary movement? It is a moral protest by idealists nurtured

by an open and pluralistic society. But the movement is at the risk of spinning out of control. He further stated the factors that cause the risk of spinning out the movement from peaceful to violent. By all accounts the youths on the streets are good natured and peaceful, they are not angry, anxious crowds that have come to get lost and burn. They happen to have just lost patience with quarrelling adult politicians and the moral high ground that has been vacated by their elders.

A notable example is the phrase "Soro Soke," meaning "Speak Up" in Yoruba, which became a powerful rallying cry. It was often combined with English words like "End Police Brutality," showing how bilingualism may broaden the movement's appeal and establish a special setting in which ESL students engage with both English and native languages in a way that is pertinent to politics and society.

Adegbeye (2021) found that many young people started mixing protest slogans and expressions into their everyday discussions after conducting a research on how the #EndSARS movement affected language use among Nigerian students. This change in language was especially noticeable in online forums, where terms like #EndSARS and #SoroSoke were used as shorthand for more in-depth conversations on social justice and governance. While this exposure broadened the students' vocabulary and increased their knowledge of culture, it also made it harder for them to tell the difference between formal and informal English, especially in academic settings. Many students struggled to maintain the appropriate register in their writing, often using informal protest language in formal essays, which posed challenges for both students and educators.

Another notable protest in Nigeria was the January 2012 Occupy Nigeria movement, which erupted in response to the government's elimination of fuel subsidies. Diverse groups of people participated in the protests, speaking in a variety of languages including English, Pidgin, and local languages. English served as the dominating language for communication with both national and international audiences. According to Opeibi (2015), the strategic use of English was designed to gather global support and put pressure on Nigeria's leadership. According to Opeibi's (2015) poll of Lagos secondary

school students, the language of the Occupy Nigeria movements influenced students' language preferences. Many reported an increased use of English in discussing political issues, reflecting how protest language shapes linguistic behavior. However, this exposure also led to challenges in academic writing, where students occasionally included colloquial expressions from protest language in their essays, indicating difficulties in differentiating between formal and informal language.

The Niger Delta protests, which have lasted several decades, offer a different viewpoint on the interaction between protest language and language acquisition. The protests, which are motivated by calls for environmental justice and resource control, frequently use a mix of English, Pidgin, and local languages. Orji (2010) observed that this protest vocabulary frequently blends official English demands with more emotionally charged statements in Pidgin and indigenous languages. Orji's research of university students from the Niger Delta found that exposure to protest language affected their English language acquisition, notably in terms of terminology connected to justice and environmental issues. Although this exposure aided students in explaining intricate political ideas, it occasionally led to the use of non-standard English in academic settings, underscoring the challenges associated with switching between formal and informal registers.

Protest language affects ESL learners, as seen by the resurgence of Igbo youth in southeast Nigeria's movement for Biafra's independence. English was frequently utilised in online forums associated with the Biafra movement to appeal to both local and foreign audiences, according to Chilwa's (2012) analysis of the language used in these forums. This politically charged and emotionally charged protest language was a common sight for young ESL learners in the area, especially those who were engaged on social media. Although it broadened their vocabulary and improved their comprehension of political debate, it also created difficulties in academic contexts because protest language's emotionally charged tone was frequently unsuitable. Teachers have to assist students in striking a balance between the requirements of formal English and the

informal protest language so that students can modify their language use for different situations.

The hypothesis that protest language has an impact on ESL students is supported by empirical data. In a study done in secondary schools around Nigeria, Okoye (2019) discovered that students who were exposed to protest language through social interactions and the media often used parts of that language in their English writing and oral presentations. Out of the 200 students who participated in the poll, 60% acknowledged incorporating words or idioms from protest contexts into their academic writing. However, the study also revealed that 45% of teachers reported that students struggled to distinguish between formal and informal registers, leading to issues with grammar, tone, and appropriateness. These findings suggest that while protest language can enrich students' linguistic experiences, it also requires educational interventions to help students understand when to use different registers of English.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis as a theoretical framework. An important idea in second language learning, Krashen's Input Hypothesis, states that learners pick up new languages most efficiently when they are exposed to understandable input that is just a little bit difficult for them to comprehend at the moment. According to Krashen (1985), this input, also known as "i+1," gives learners access to language structures they can comprehend but haven't yet fully mastered. This enables them to advance in their language growth organically. The theory highlights that conversing with people in natural settings is more beneficial for language acquisition than giving detailed grammatical lessons.

According to Krashen, the process of acquiring a second language resemble how toddlers acquire their first language - through exposure to language in real-life circumstances where meaning is the major focus. The concept also underlines the role of a "low affective filter," meaning learners should be motivated, confident, and free from fear to maximize language acquisition. Learners' capacity to process and assimilate new linguistic input is reduced when they experience stress or anxiety because these emotions raise their emotional filter.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis holds particular significance within the framework of this investigation. In Nigeria, protest language offers students genuine, contextually rich information that frequently exceeds their formal English competency levels. Learners are exposed to new vocabulary, phrases, and grammatical structures that reflect the socio-political realities of their surroundings through the vibrant and emotionally charged language used in movements like #EndSARS. According to Krashen's idea, this exposure can quicken language acquisition by providing relevant and mildly difficult real-world input.

The introduction of informal and non-standard language forms, however, may also increase learners' engagement and expand their linguistic expertise, which could make it more difficult for them to understand official English registers. Consequently, teachers need to strike a balance between helping students distinguish between formal and informal language use and utilising the advantages of protest language as input

Research Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is qualitative descriptive research, with data collected from secondary sources. The method used for collecting the secondary materials included e-books, journals, institutional publication, and online articles. The study analysed these data descriptively and interpretively. In view of this, the study relies on document analysis and content analysis. Both historical and comparative methods have been used in the analysis for protests in Nigeria and globally.

Characteristics of Protest Language in Nigeria

Nigerian protest language is known for its versatility, inventiveness, and adaptability. Among the most notable characteristics is the usage of pidgin English, a creole language that acts as a unifying language for all of the nation's ethnic groupings. Due to its widespread understanding and accessibility, pidgin English is frequently used in protest chants and slogans as a powerful tool for expressing disapproval (Bamgbose, 2014). For example, during the #EndSARS protests, expressions like "Soro Soke," which translates to "Speak Up" in Yoruba, became representative of the movement and

effectively captured the millions of people's need for accountability and transparency (Adegbeye, 2021).

The use of metaphor and symbolism in Nigerian protest vocabulary is another important feature. By using metaphorical language, protestors can effectively and subtly communicate complicated concepts through evocative, straightforward idioms as they criticise the government and voice their complaints. For example, the mocking moniker "The Giant of Africa" is frequently applied to Nigeria in order to draw attention to the seeming contradiction between the country's abundance of resources and its socioeconomic problems (Okeke, 2019).

Another characteristic of Nigerian protest language is code-switching, which is the act of switching between languages or dialects during a single discourse. Protestors frequently switch between English, Pidgin, and indigenous languages, reflecting the country's multilingual reality and enhancing the inclusivity of their messages (Igboanusi, 2006). This linguistic flexibility allows protest language to reach a broader audience, crossing ethnic and linguistic boundaries to unite people around common causes.

The Role of Social Media

The emergence of social media has brought about a dramatic transformation in Nigeria's protest linguistic environment. Digital channels like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter have emerged as vital resources for protest planning, information sharing, and amplifying demonstrators' voices (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018). In addition to extending the reach of protest vocabulary, social media has enabled the emergence of fresh modes of expression like memes, hashtags, and viral films, which have become essential components of contemporary protest movements.

One excellent illustration of how social media has changed Nigerian protest rhetoric is the #EndSARS movement. Protesters were able to unite their demands and create a cohesive story that could be readily shared and amplified online by using hashtags like #EndSARS, #SoroSoke, and #EndPoliceBrutality (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2021). Additionally, social media made it possible for protest words to quickly move outside of Nigeria, attracting support and

attention from around the world. The use of language in activism has changed as a result of the digital dimension of protest language, which combines conventional language forms with contemporary digital communication means to have a potent and wide-ranging effect.

Implications of Protest Language for Learners of English as a Second Language

Learners of English as a second language (ESL) in Nigeria would be significantly impacted by the popularity of protest language. The way that students view the English language is one significant effect. Protest language, frequently defined by its passionate and aggressive tone, can affect learners' attitudes toward English, particularly when it is used to express resistance against social injustices. Protest language can be one of the first ways that many students, particularly those who are younger, are exposed to the language outside of the classroom. This can have an impact on how they view the language—which they may use for activism and social change instead of merely formal communication—in this way (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008). Students who perceive the language as applicable to their own lives and contemporary situations may develop a more dynamic and engaged relationship with it as a result. But it might also make it more difficult for them to comprehend English as a universal language, thereby confusing formal and informal language registers (Bamgbose, 2001).

Influence on Language Acquisition

For ESL students in Nigeria, exposure to protest language can have both beneficial and detrimental consequences on their language learning process. On the one hand, learners' vocabulary can be expanded and new linguistic forms can be introduced through the inventive and creative use of English in protest language. Because protest language frequently contains many metaphors, idioms, and neologisms, it offers learners a chance to broaden their vocabulary (Pennycook, 2007). For instance, terms like "Soro Soke" from the #EndSARS demonstrations have permeated common speech, exposing students to modern, culturally relevant idioms that would not be included in textbooks (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2021).

However, learners may find it difficult to acquire conventional English due to the informal and occasionally subversive tone of protest language. Learners attempting to understand the formal rules of English may become confused by the usage of pidgin, code-switching, and non-standard grammatical structures frequent in protest language (Igboanusi, 2006). As a result, students may combine formal and informal registers improperly, which could have an impact on their ability to write and communicate in academic settings. Furthermore, students may link English with conflict and stress because of the emotional intensity of the protest language, which may deter them from learning the language in a more regular classroom context (Krashen, 1985).

Educational Challenges

For educators in Nigeria, the existence of protest language in the linguistic context poses additional difficulties. Incorporating protest language into the curriculum might be challenging, but teachers must do so while making sure students comprehend normal English. This is especially difficult in an environment where social media and digital communication are pervasive and are blurring the lines between formal and casual language use (Crystal, 2006). Teachers may find it difficult to teach academic English and traditional grammatical patterns while addressing the linguistic innovation and socio-political importance of protest language (Canagarajah, 2005).

Using protest language as a teaching tool to get students talking about language diversity, register, and context is one tactic that teachers might use. Teachers can assist students in comprehending the distinction between formal and informal language use, as well as the significance of context in selecting suitable language choices, by examining instances of protest language used in the classroom (Fairclough, 2001). This method not only improves pupils' comprehension of English but also encourages critical analysis of language and societal power structures.

Challenges in Distinguishing Formal and Informal English

The inability of ESL students to discriminate between formal and informal English is a significant problem brought on by protest language's impact. These lines are frequently blurred by protest language, which frequently merges more formal language with informal, colloquial terms in public conversation. In academic or professional situations where formal English is expected, this can lead to learners becoming confused about what constitutes appropriate language use in various circumstances (Gee, 2008).

This ambiguity can be especially problematic in written communication, as the influence of protest language may result in the inappropriate use of slang, idioms, or nonstandard grammar. For example, students may unintentionally transfer informal terms or structures from protest language into their essays or exams, producing in work that does not match academic standards (Hymes, 1974). Teachers, therefore, face the problem of assisting pupils manage these language borders, ensuring that they can effectively switch between registers when needed.

Educational Strategies and Pedagogical Implications

In light of these challenges, instructors need to develop tactics that help ESL students acquire Standard English while addressing the impact of protest language. One strategy is to include protest language conversations in the curriculum and use them as a basis for delving into more general language concepts like register, code-switching, and language shift. As a result, students may be better equipped to use the language in a variety of situations and gain a more complex grasp of English and its variations (Norton & Toohey, 2004).

Another tactic is to help children distinguish between the language they use in protest situations and the language they need for success in school and the workplace by establishing clear rules and formal English role models in the classroom. Teachers can also use contrastive analysis to highlight differences between protest language and Standard English, encouraging students to reflect on when and why different forms of language are used (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991).

Finally, educators need to foster a classroom environment that values linguistic diversity while also emphasizing the importance of

mastering Standard English. By recognizing and validating the linguistic resources that students bring from their experiences with protest language, teachers can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that encourages students to engage critically with language in all its forms (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Interaction between Protest Language and Language Learning

Examining the protest language in Nigeria and its consequences for English language learners indicates a complicated interaction between formal language acquisition and linguistic innovation. The case studies that are provided demonstrate that protest language poses important difficulties for language use in formal settings, even while it broadens learners' exposure to modern and culturally relevant phrases.

Protest language can be used to improve students' engagement with English, as seen by the #EndSARS movement, which employs creative ways to use both English and indigenous languages. The fact that expressions like "Soro Soke" are incorporated into common speech shows how dynamic protest language is and how it can increase vocabulary in learners. However, this linguistic blending highlights the possibility of miscommunication between formal and informal registers. Students who have been exposed to protest language may have difficulty distinguishing between colloquial terms used in activism and the standardised forms required for academic writing.

In a similar vein, the agitations in the Niger Delta and Occupy Nigeria demonstrate that protest language frequently functions at the nexus of local and international dialogue. Language in protest contexts is pragmatically adapted, as seen by the purposeful use of English in communication with global audiences. Students' comprehension of English as a tool for international communication will grow as a result, which will benefit them. The incorporation of protest-related expressions into academic writing, however, suggests that the informal and passionate character of protest vocabulary may make upholding formal language norms difficult.

Educational Implications

The effects on teaching ESL are wide-ranging. One way that educators might use protest language's linguistic innovation to improve the relevance and engagement of their teachings is by using it. Instructors can aid students in comprehending the dynamic nature of language and its significance in societal transformation by integrating talks on protest language into the curriculum. According to Norton and Toohey (2004), this method not only expands students' language proficiency but also encourages critical thinking around language use in a variety of contexts. For example, studying protest language can teach us important lessons about the influence and power of language choices while also illuminating how language serves as a tool for resistance and identity building.

However, the difficulties posed by protest language call for a cautious approach to traditional English instruction. Teachers need to handle the possibility of misunderstandings between formal and informal registers by offering precise instructions and instances of how to use standard language. This entails helping students distinguish between academic and colloquial language as well as making sure they can transition between different registers with ease when necessary (Canagarajah, 2005). Student navigation of these difficulties and effective application of language skills in academic and professional situations can be facilitated by strategies like contrastive analysis and specific instruction on register distinctions.

Harmonizing Linguistic Diversity with Formal Language Standards

Linguistic variety and the upholding of formal language standards must be balanced, as the case studies make clear. Pidgin, English, and native languages are among the many protest languages that represent Nigeria's linguistic diversity. Diverse backgrounds enhance language learners' experiences, but they also make it difficult to maintain the formal English norms needed in professional and educational contexts (Gee, 2008).

In order to ensure that kids become proficient in Standard English, educators need to discover strategies to welcome linguistic diversity. This could entail providing opportunity for pupils to investigate and value various linguistic expressions while

simultaneously highlighting the significance of sticking to formal norms when called for. Through this approach, instructors can assist students in gaining a sophisticated comprehension of language and its diverse purposes, equipping them to utilise English proficiently in a variety of settings

Table 1: Some Examples of Terms Used in Language of Protest

S/N	Protest Term	Protest Meaning	Implications/Usage
1	Area Man	Street protester	Pidgin-Street dweller
2	#EndBadGovernance	Slogan of Hunger protest 2024	Formal English
3	Enough is Enough #EndSARS	Expressing Frustration Slogan of #EndSARS protest 2020	Formal English Formal English
4	Fuel Price Must Fall	Demanding reduction of fuel price	Pidgin- Fuel price reduction
5	Nigeria Deserves Better	Demanding need for positive change	Formal English
6	No To Exploitation	Rejecting perceived government exploitation	Formal English
7	<i>Ogbaghara</i>	Protest/riot	Igbo Language
8	Reverse Subsidy Removal	Demanding reversal of fuel subsidy removal	Formal English
9	<i>Sore Soke</i>	Yoruba term Speak Up	Yoruba language-Speak up

10	Subsidy Na Our Birth Rights Ohh	Asserting subsidy as citizens' right	Pidgin- Subsidy is Our rights
11	Tinubu Listen	Calling President Tinubu's attention to protesters' demands	Formal English
12	Tinubu Resign	Calling for President Tinubu's resignation	Formal English
13	We No Go Tire	Vowing to continue protesting	Pidgin- Expressing doggedness
14	<i>Wahala Dey</i>	Pidgin-there is suffering	Pidgin- there is suffering
15	<i>Zanga-Zanga</i>	Hausa term protest	Hausa term protest

Source: Authors' compilation from field survey, 2024

Language of protest is not new but it is an evolving area of language development for effective communication particularly for learners of English as second language. From the findings of this study there are new terms from pidgin, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. It is imperative to note that in this study Fifteen (15) new terms were identified in Table 1 as they were used by protesters in communication, mobilization and persuasion. These terms have implications for English languages users who use the terms in their day to day communication and in schools without recourse their linguistic and standard applications.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examines the complicated relationship between protest language and English language learning in Nigeria. While protest language offers a dynamic and culturally relevant component to language teaching, it often interferes with formal language use. Recognising and resolving these challenges can help students navigate the complexities of protest language and build proficiency in both informal and formal English. Balancing linguistic diversity while maintaining formal standard is crucial for supporting ESL student in their academic and professional growth. The implication is that these terms have been used for communication, mobilization, and persuasion. The Pidgin and Nigerian local languages have been used in the various protests that took place in Nigeria especially of recent; #End SARS, #EndBadGovernance, and Niger Delta agitations.

The study suggests that educational institutions incorporate lessons on the differences between formal and informal language into their curricula. This would allow students to distinguish protest language from formal English, reducing confusion. Additionally, teacher training programs should be implemented to provide educators with the skills necessary to aid children in navigating these linguistic limits. Educators would provide clear guidelines for when to utilize informal versus formal phrases. Furthermore, tailored interventions, like as workshops, and should be designed to assist students in transitioning between protest language and Standard English in academic settings. Finally, media literacy programs should increase awareness of social media's impact on language use, encouraging students to critically examine casual language while adhering to formal writing norms. Collaboration between educators and linguists is crucial to monitor the evolving role of protest language in English learning.

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