



## The Inevitability of Language in Governance: A Veritable Tool for Security and National Rebranding in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** This article examines the inevitability of language in governance as a veritable tool for security and national rebranding in Nigeria. It argues that language is not merely a medium of official expression, but a strategic governance resource through which public authority is explained, security consciousness is strengthened, citizens are mobilised and national identity is reconstructed. The article adopts a conceptual and thematic review design, drawing on recent scholarly literature, policy documents and institutional reports on language, governance, public communication, security, multilingualism and national rebranding. The analysis is anchored on Speech Act Theory and Framing Theory, which explain how language performs social actions and shapes public interpretation of governance realities. The thematic analysis reveals that language functions as a medium of governance legitimacy, a tool for security awareness, a condition for inclusive communication and an instrument of national rebranding. The article further shows that weak, inaccessible or inconsistent governance language can deepen distrust, encourage misinformation and limit citizen participation, especially in a multilingual and security-sensitive society such as Nigeria. It concludes that effective governance, security management and national rebranding require clear, ethical, multilingual and citizen-centred communication. The article recommends the institutionalisation of language-sensitive governance communication, stronger strategic communication in security management, expanded multilingual public communication and the alignment of national rebranding messages with credible governance conduct.

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### INTRODUCTION

Language occupies a central position in governance because no government can formulate policy, mobilise citizens, manage crises, legitimise authority or project national identity outside the realm of communication. Governance is not sustained by institutions alone. It is also sustained by the words, symbols, narratives and communicative practices through which state authority is explained, justified and made meaningful to citizens. Fairclough (2015) maintains that language is deeply implicated in social power because public discourse shapes how institutions define reality, organise consent and reproduce authority. Similarly, Wodak and Meyer (2016) argue that discourse is not merely a linguistic activity but a social practice through which power relations, ideology and institutional meanings are constructed. This implies that language in governance should not be treated as a neutral channel of information. It is a strategic resource through which government frames problems, directs public attention, manages legitimacy and shapes citizens' understanding of national priorities.

The functional importance of language becomes clearer when governance is understood as a communicative process. Public policies do not become meaningful to citizens simply because they are written, gazetted or announced. They become socially effective when citizens understand the intention, relevance, obligations and expected outcomes attached to them. The OECD (2021) conceptualises public communication as a government function that informs, listens and responds to citizens in the service of the common good. The same report stresses that public communication should contribute to transparency, participation, trust and better policy outcomes rather than merely promoting government visibility. This evidence suggests that governance communication is not an administrative

afterthought. It is part of the policy process itself because it mediates the relationship between government intention and citizen response.

Globally, the relationship between language, governance and security has become more pronounced because contemporary security threats are increasingly shaped by information disorder, public mistrust, grievance narratives, digital propaganda and competing interpretations of state action. Security is no longer managed only through force, surveillance, policing or legislation. It is also managed through warnings, public reassurance, counter-narratives, peace messaging, civic education, crisis explanation and the framing of collective responsibility. Entman (1993) argues that framing influences how issues are selected, emphasised and interpreted in public discourse. This is relevant to security governance because the way government frames insecurity can either build public confidence or deepen fear, suspicion and resistance. The implication is that language becomes part of the security architecture of the state because it affects whether citizens understand threats, trust official information and cooperate with security institutions.

This position is reinforced by contemporary studies on public trust and institutional communication. The OECD (2024) reports that public trust is shaped by citizens' perceptions of government competence, openness, integrity, fairness and responsiveness. The report further shows that trust in public institutions depends partly on whether citizens believe that government listens, uses evidence and responds to public concerns. This becomes significant because security governance depends not only on the coercive capacity of the state but also on citizen cooperation, timely information sharing and confidence in official action. Where government communication is unclear, inaccessible, contradictory or politically defensive, citizens may rely on rumours, partisan interpretations or non-state narratives. This weakens the social foundation of security management.

The African context further strengthens the argument because linguistic diversity remains one of the continent's major governance realities. UNESCO (2025a) observes that Africa is home to an estimated 1,500 to 3,000 languages, making the continent one of the richest linguistic spaces in the world. UNESCO (2025b) also stresses that multilingual education and communication promote inclusion, participation and peaceful societies because people engage more meaningfully when information is available in languages they understand. This has direct governance relevance. In multilingual societies, the language of public communication can either widen or reduce the distance between the state and citizens. If official messages are restricted to elite or colonial languages, public communication may exclude citizens who do not have strong access to those languages. If communication is multilingual and culturally grounded, it can improve participation, comprehension and trust.

Nigeria represents a particularly important case because its linguistic diversity is both a cultural asset and a governance challenge. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2022) recognises the need for a National Language Policy that addresses the development, status and use of Nigerian languages across sectors of national life. Lawani (2025) observes that successful implementation of the National Language Policy requires sustained collaboration, adequate resourcing and stakeholder commitment, especially because the policy is tied to linguistic heritage, national unity, participatory governance, socio-economic growth and cultural identity. This indicates that language is not peripheral to Nigeria's development process. It is part of education, identity, citizenship, public communication and national integration. However, the existence of a language policy does not automatically guarantee language-sensitive governance. The practical challenge lies in whether government communication across security, civic education and national reorientation actually reaches citizens in accessible, inclusive and culturally resonant forms.

This challenge becomes more serious when Nigeria's security environment is considered. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2019) frames national security as a broad concern involving sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, public safety and citizen wellbeing. The country continues to confront terrorism, violent extremism, armed banditry, kidnapping, militancy, communal conflict, farmer-herder clashes, cybercrime and separatist agitation. The National Security Strategy therefore indicates that security is multidimensional and requires coordinated responses across political, economic, military, social and information domains. This pattern of evidence suggests that security in Nigeria cannot be addressed through military and policing strategies alone. It also requires public communication that can mobilise citizens, reduce panic, counter misinformation and build confidence in institutional responses.

Language is especially important because insecurity is partly sustained by narratives. Violent groups, extremist networks, criminal actors and separatist movements do not rely on violence alone. They also use language to frame grievances, recruit sympathisers, justify action, create fear and delegitimise the state. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1998) argue that security threats are partly constructed through speech and public framing because political actors define certain issues as urgent threats requiring special response. Although this theory predates the contemporary Nigerian context, its relevance remains evident in how insecurity is described, contested and politicised. In Nigeria, the language used by government, security agencies, traditional leaders, religious figures, media actors and community groups can either de-escalate tension or intensify suspicion. This implies that language is not only a medium for reporting insecurity. It is part of the struggle over how insecurity is understood and how citizens respond to it.

The connection between language and national rebranding is equally significant. National rebranding refers to deliberate efforts to reconstruct a country's identity, values, image and reputation before domestic and international audiences. Dinnie (2016) conceptualises nation branding as the strategic management of a country's identity and image, while Anholt (2010) argues that national reputation is shaped not only by promotional messages but also by policies, conduct and public credibility. This distinction

is important for Nigeria because national rebranding cannot be sustained by slogans alone. It requires language that communicates values, but it also requires governance actions that make those values believable. Where official language promises unity, integrity and security while citizens experience insecurity, corruption or exclusion, national rebranding becomes fragile.

Nigeria has repeatedly attempted to reconstruct its national image through reorientation campaigns, civic education and value-based public messaging. The National Orientation Agency (2022) presents public enlightenment, citizen mobilisation, peacebuilding, inclusive security, behavioural change and national development as part of its strategic programme priorities. The Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation (2023) also presents the National Values Charter as a national reorientation initiative built around reciprocal commitments between the state and citizens. This indicates that national rebranding in Nigeria is fundamentally linguistic and symbolic because it depends on the messages through which the nation defines its values and invites citizens to accept them. However, such efforts can only be effective where governance language is credible, inclusive and connected to citizens' lived experiences.

The Nigerian situation therefore reveals a major governance communication problem. The country does not lack official statements, policy announcements, security briefings or rebranding campaigns. The deeper issue is whether these communicative efforts are sufficiently clear, inclusive, ethical, multilingual and citizen-centred. Ohen (2023) argues that language can serve national cohesion and development in Nigeria when it is effectively deployed across socio-cultural, educational and political life. Jegede (2024) further demonstrates that Nigeria's multilingual character has implications for national unity, social relations and political cohesion. This line of evidence reinforces the concern that language in Nigerian governance must be studied not merely as expression but as a functional instrument of inclusion, security awareness and national identity construction.

Against this background, the present article argues that language is inevitable in governance because every major act of governing depends on communicative meaning. Security requires language for warning, persuasion, reassurance, counter-narrative work, intelligence appeal and citizen mobilisation. National rebranding requires language for value communication, identity reconstruction, civic orientation and public trust. In a multilingual and security-sensitive country such as Nigeria, language must therefore be treated as a strategic governance resource rather than a routine medium of official announcement. This article examines the inevitability of language in governance as a veritable tool for security and national rebranding in Nigeria, with attention to how inclusive, ethical and strategic public communication can strengthen national cohesion, security consciousness and civic confidence.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria continues to face serious governance, security and national image challenges despite repeated policy reforms, security interventions and civic reorientation campaigns. These challenges are reflected in persistent insecurity, weak citizen trust, misinformation, ethnic and religious suspicion, public anxiety and declining confidence in state institutions. Although government agencies regularly issue policy statements, security warnings, civic messages and rebranding campaigns, such communication does not always produce citizen understanding, cooperation, national cohesion or renewed confidence in the Nigerian state.

The central concern is that language is often treated as a routine medium of official communication rather than as a strategic instrument of governance. Many public messages are framed in bureaucratic, elite-centred, politically defensive or linguistically restricted forms that do not adequately reflect Nigeria's multilingual and culturally diverse realities. This creates a gap between what government intends to communicate and what citizens understand, accept or act upon. Where governance language is unclear, inaccessible or detached from citizens' lived experiences, public communication may fail to build trust, reduce fear or promote collective responsibility.

This problem is more critical in security communication and national rebranding. Insecurity is sustained not only by violence, but also by fear, rumours, grievance narratives, misinformation and distrust of official institutions. Similarly, national rebranding cannot be achieved through slogans or official declarations alone; it requires credible language that communicates shared values, institutional seriousness and civic responsibility. The problem, therefore, lies in the insufficient recognition of language as an inevitable and strategic tool for governance, security and national rebranding in Nigeria. This article addresses this gap by examining how language can be repositioned as a veritable governance instrument for strengthening security communication, public trust, national cohesion and rebranding in Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this article is to examine the inevitability of language in governance as a veritable tool for security and national rebranding in Nigeria.

Specifically, the article seeks to:

1. examine the role of language in governance and public communication in Nigeria;
2. analyse how language functions as a tool for security awareness, crisis communication, conflict management and citizen mobilisation;
3. investigate the relevance of multilingual, inclusive and culturally resonant communication to national cohesion and citizen participation;
4. examine how governance language contributes to national rebranding, public trust, civic value reconstruction and national identity formation;

## Research Questions

The article is guided by the following research questions:

1. What role does language play in governance and public communication in Nigeria?
2. How does language function as a tool for security awareness, crisis communication, conflict management and citizen mobilisation?
3. How does multilingual, inclusive and culturally resonant communication contribute to national cohesion and citizen participation?
4. In what ways does governance language influence national rebranding, public trust, civic value reconstruction and national identity formation?

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

### Language

Language refers to the system of spoken, written, symbolic and cultural signs through which individuals, groups and institutions create meaning, express identity and influence social behaviour. Labo-Popoola (2025) explains that contemporary sociolinguistic perspectives treat language not only as a communicative instrument but also as a carrier of identity, education and cultural preservation, while Ohen (2023) maintains that language plays a significant role in Nigeria's socio-cultural, educational and political life as a marker of identity and national cohesion. In governance and political contexts, language performs active functions because it can influence perception, legitimise authority and shape ideological positions. Abolarin-Egbebiola and Dada (2025) show that political actors use language to manipulate and direct public perception, while Nwoye (2024) reports that political language can persuade, mobilise and frame public opinion through rhetorical and symbolic strategies. In this article, language is therefore understood as a strategic communicative resource through which government explains policies, frames insecurity, promotes civic values and projects national identity.

### Governance

Governance refers to the processes, institutions and communicative practices through which public authority is exercised, explained and made responsive to citizens. Contemporary governance is not limited to political offices or policy formulation; it also requires communication, participation and institutional responsiveness. The OECD (2021) stresses that public communication is a core governance function because it enables governments to inform, listen and respond to citizens in ways that support trust and transparency, while UNDP (2025) frames governance as people-centred, inclusive, accountable and responsive. In this article, governance is understood as both institutional management and communicative engagement because citizens may misunderstand, resist or distrust public policies, security directives and rebranding messages where they are not clearly explained. Since OECD (2024) further shows that public trust is shaped by perceptions of government competence, openness, integrity, fairness and responsiveness, governance language must be clear, ethical and citizen-sensitive if it is to produce legitimacy.

### Security

Security refers to the protection of people, institutions, territory, public values and national interests from threats that may undermine peace, stability and wellbeing. In contemporary governance, security extends beyond military defence and policing to include information management, public trust, crisis response, social cohesion and citizen cooperation. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2019) presents national security as a broad framework involving sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, public safety and citizen welfare, which is useful for understanding Nigeria's multidimensional security challenges. Recent Nigerian literature strengthens the communicative dimension of security. Aziengbe (2025) argues that Nigeria's national security approach is weakened when strategic communication is not integrated into broadcast policy, crisis messaging and counter-disinformation work, while Ariwodola and Tijani (2026) found that delayed information, inconsistent messaging, limited transparency and weak inter-agency coordination undermine public trust during security crises. Thus, security in this article is understood as a governance condition that requires language for warning, reassurance, crisis explanation, counter-narrative work and citizen mobilisation.

### National Rebranding

National rebranding refers to the deliberate process of redefining, communicating and reconstructing a nation's identity, values, reputation and public image. Contemporary nation-branding scholarship treats a nation brand as a system of perceptions, values, symbolic meanings and stakeholder experiences rather than a mere promotional slogan. Kusraeva (2024) conceptualises nation brand management as a system involving existing perceptions, transformation processes and image outcomes, while Dineri (2024) shows that nation branding is connected to broader reputational and economic outcomes, including investment, exports and external perception. In Nigeria, national rebranding has often been pursued through official value campaigns, civic reorientation and image-repair efforts. The National Orientation Agency (2022) identifies public enlightenment, citizen mobilisation, peacebuilding, inclusive security and behavioural change as strategic priorities, while the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation (2023) presents the National Values Charter as a social contract between the Nigerian state and citizens. In this article, national rebranding is understood as a language-mediated process of rebuilding civic values, national confidence, institutional credibility and Nigeria's public image.

### **Language in Governance**

Language in governance refers to the purposeful use of words, symbols, narratives, official texts, speeches, security briefings, public warnings and civic messages in the exercise of public authority. It includes the language of policy documents, presidential addresses, media briefings, legislative debates, public service announcements and community engagement platforms. Nwoye (2024) observes that language in political contexts is used to shape public opinion, frame issues and create political identities, while Abolarin-Egbebiola and Dada (2025) demonstrate that official and political speeches can legitimise power, direct public attention and influence citizens' ideological and emotional responses. The relevance of language in governance lies in the fact that public authority must be understood before it can be accepted. If official language is vague, inflammatory, elitist or inaccessible, it can weaken trust; conversely, clear and inclusive governance language can promote understanding, cooperation and legitimacy. OECD (2021) reinforces this by stressing that government communication should support citizen engagement rather than operate as one-way publicity. Therefore, this article understands language in governance as the strategic deployment of linguistic and symbolic resources to explain public decisions, manage security consciousness, promote civic responsibility and strengthen national identity.

### **Multilingual Communication**

Multilingual communication refers to the use of more than one language to reach diverse linguistic communities within a society. This concept is important in Nigeria because public communication cannot be effective if it assumes that all citizens receive, understand and trust official English in the same way. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2022) recognises the importance of language planning through the National Language Policy, which seeks to promote the development, use and status of Nigerian languages. Labo-Popoola (2025) explains that the 2022 National Language Policy has implications for language planning, acquisition, cultural preservation and education, while Lawani (2025) argues that its successful implementation requires collaboration, resourcing and stakeholder commitment because language policy is tied to national unity, participatory governance and cultural identity. UNESCO (2025a) stresses that Africa's linguistic diversity is a cultural resource, while UNESCO (2025b) links multilingual communication with inclusion, participation and peaceful societies. In this article, multilingual communication is understood as the use of accessible, culturally resonant and context-appropriate languages to strengthen inclusive governance, security awareness and national cohesion.

### **Strategic Public Communication**

Strategic public communication refers to planned, purposeful and citizen-centred communication by public institutions to inform, engage, persuade, listen and build trust. It differs from routine publicity because it involves audience analysis, message clarity, credibility, transparency, ethical framing, feedback and responsiveness. OECD (2021) describes public communication as a government function that should support transparency, participation and trust, while OECD (2024) reports that citizens' trust in public institutions is shaped by perceptions of competence, openness, fairness, integrity and responsiveness. Strategic public communication is particularly important for security and national rebranding in Nigeria. Aziengbe (2025) contends that strategic communication can strengthen national security when linked to broadcast policy reform, counter-disinformation and public enlightenment, while Ariwodola and Tijani (2026) argue that crisis communication in Nigeria must become more coordinated, transparent and timely if it is to build public trust during security crises. In this article, strategic public communication is understood as the planned and ethical use of language by public institutions to build trust, promote security consciousness, support citizen cooperation and advance national image reconstruction.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This article is anchored on Speech Act Theory and Framing Theory. The two theories are appropriate because the article examines how language functions in governance, security communication and national rebranding. While Speech Act Theory explains how language performs actions, Framing Theory explains how language shapes public interpretation of issues, events and national realities.

### **Speech Act Theory**

Speech Act Theory was developed by Austin (1962) and further advanced by Searle (1969). The theory holds that language does not merely describe reality; it also performs actions. Through language, speakers can warn, command, promise, declare, persuade, reassure, condemn or mobilise. This makes the theory relevant to governance because official language is not neutral. A presidential address, security warning, public policy statement or national reorientation message performs a social and political function. In relation to this article, Speech Act Theory explains how governance language can be used to construct authority, direct public behaviour, strengthen security awareness and promote civic values. When government communicates security instructions, calls for national unity or promotes rebranding messages, it is not simply giving information. It is performing acts intended to influence citizen understanding and response.

### **Framing Theory**

Framing Theory is associated with Entman (1993). The theory explains how communication selects certain aspects of reality and makes them more noticeable in order to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements and suggest remedies. This theory is relevant because governance, security and national rebranding all depend on how public issues are framed.

In this article, Framing Theory explains how government language can shape public understanding of insecurity, citizenship, national identity and Nigeria's public image. The way government frames insecurity can either promote confidence and cooperation or deepen fear and distrust. Similarly, the way national rebranding is framed can determine whether citizens perceive it as credible civic renewal or as a mere slogan. Therefore, Framing Theory provides a useful basis for examining how language influences public perception, security consciousness and national image reconstruction.

### **Thematic Literature Review**

#### **Language, Governance and Public Trust**

Recent literature shows that language is central to governance because public authority depends on communication, interpretation and citizen response. The OECD (2021) maintains that public communication is a governance function through which governments inform, listen and respond to citizens. This position is important because governance messages do not become effective merely because they are officially issued. They become meaningful when citizens understand them, trust their intention and see them as relevant to their lived realities. Similarly, OECD (2024) reports that public trust is shaped by citizens' perceptions of government competence, openness, integrity, fairness and responsiveness. This suggests that governance language must be clear, credible and citizen-centred if it is to strengthen public trust.

#### **Language and Security Communication**

Security communication has become increasingly important in societies affected by misinformation, fear, violence and institutional distrust. Aziengbe (2025) argues that strategic communication can strengthen national security in Nigeria when it is linked to public enlightenment, broadcast policy reform and counter-disinformation efforts. Ariwodola and Tijani (2026) similarly observe that crisis communication in Nigeria is weakened by delayed information, inconsistent messaging, weak transparency and poor inter-agency coordination. These studies indicate that security is not managed by force alone. It also depends on how government and security agencies use language to warn citizens, reduce panic, counter rumours and mobilise public cooperation.

#### **Multilingual Communication and National Cohesion**

The literature also identifies multilingual communication as a major requirement for inclusive governance in linguistically diverse societies. Labo-Popoola (2025) explains that Nigeria's National Language Policy has implications for language planning, language acquisition and cultural preservation. Lawani (2025) further argues that effective implementation of the policy requires collaboration, adequate resourcing and stakeholder commitment because language policy is tied to national unity, cultural identity and participatory governance. This evidence suggests that public communication in Nigeria cannot rely only on English or elite bureaucratic registers. If security messages, civic campaigns and national rebranding efforts are to reach diverse citizens, they must be communicated through accessible and culturally resonant languages.

#### **Language, National Rebranding and Civic Value Reconstruction**

National rebranding depends heavily on language because national values, identity and reputation are communicated through public narratives. Kusraeva (2024) conceptualises nation brand management as a system involving existing perceptions, transformation processes and image outcomes. Dineri (2024) also shows that nation branding influences how countries are perceived in relation to reputation, investment and external image. In Nigeria, the National Orientation Agency (2022) identifies public enlightenment, citizen mobilisation, peacebuilding and behavioural change as priorities for national reorientation, while the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation (2023) presents the National Values Charter as a framework for civic value reconstruction. This pattern of evidence suggests that national rebranding cannot be reduced to slogans. It requires credible governance language that connects national values with institutional conduct and citizen experience.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This article adopted a conceptual and thematic review design. The design was considered appropriate because the article did not seek to collect primary data or test statistical relationships, but to examine how language operates as a governance tool for security communication and national rebranding in Nigeria. Snyder (2019) maintains that literature-based studies can function as rigorous research methodology when they are guided by a clear purpose, transparent selection logic and systematic interpretation of existing knowledge.

The review drew on scholarly literature, policy documents, institutional reports and recent studies on language, governance, public communication, security communication, multilingualism and national rebranding. Emphasis was placed on contemporary sources published mainly from 2019 onward, while foundational theory sources were retained only for the theoretical framework. Sources were selected based on relevance to the article's core concerns: language in governance, security awareness, crisis communication, national cohesion, public trust and national image reconstruction.

The materials were analysed thematically. Braun and Clarke (2021) explain that thematic analysis is useful for identifying, organising and interpreting recurring patterns of meaning across qualitative texts. In this article, the thematic analysis focused on recurring ideas in the reviewed literature, including language as a governance instrument, language as a tool for security consciousness, multilingual communication as a basis for inclusion, and language as a mechanism for national rebranding. The

approach was therefore interpretive and argument-driven, with the aim of developing a coherent academic explanation of how language can strengthen security communication and national rebranding in Nigeria.

### **Thematic Analysis of Literature**

The reviewed literature was analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns in the relationship between language, governance, security and national rebranding in Nigeria. Four major themes emerged: language as a medium of governance legitimacy, language as a tool for security consciousness, multilingual communication as a condition for inclusion, and language as an instrument of national rebranding.

#### **Theme One: Language as a Medium of Governance Legitimacy**

A major theme in the literature is that governance depends on language for legitimacy, trust and citizen engagement. OECD (2021) explains that public communication is not merely a publicity function but a governance function through which governments inform, listen and respond to citizens. This is reinforced by OECD (2024), which reports that trust in public institutions is shaped by citizens' perceptions of competence, openness, fairness, integrity and responsiveness. The implication is that citizens do not assess governance only through policy content, but also through how government communicates intentions, decisions and responsibilities. In the Nigerian context, vague, defensive, elitist or detached official language can widen the distance between the state and citizens, while clear, responsive and evidence-based communication can strengthen legitimacy and cooperation. Thus, language is not secondary to governance; it is one of the means through which governance becomes understandable and acceptable to the public.

#### **Theme Two: Language as a Tool for Security Consciousness**

The second theme is that language plays a central role in security communication. The literature shows that insecurity is sustained not only by violence, but also by fear, rumours, misinformation, grievance narratives and distrust of official institutions. Aziengbe (2025) argues that strategic communication can strengthen national security in Nigeria when connected to counter-disinformation, public enlightenment and broadcast policy reforms. Similarly, Ariwodola and Tijani (2026) observe that crisis communication in Nigeria is weakened by delayed information, inconsistent messaging, weak transparency and poor inter-agency coordination. This theme shows that security management requires more than military and policing responses. It also requires credible, timely and coordinated language that can warn citizens, reduce panic, counter false narratives and mobilise public cooperation. Therefore, language functions as a security tool when it helps citizens understand threats, trust official information and participate in collective safety efforts.

#### **Theme Three: Multilingual Communication as a Condition for Inclusion**

The third theme concerns multilingual communication as a requirement for inclusive governance in a linguistically diverse society. Labo-Popoola (2025) explains that Nigeria's National Language Policy has important implications for language planning, language acquisition, education and cultural preservation. Lawani (2025) similarly argues that the implementation of the National Language Policy requires collaboration, resourcing and stakeholder commitment because language policy is connected to national unity, cultural identity and participatory governance. This shows that language inclusion is not only a cultural issue, but also a governance issue. Although English remains Nigeria's official language of administration, many citizens engage more meaningfully with public messages when they are delivered in indigenous languages, Nigerian Pidgin or culturally familiar registers. UNESCO (2025a) identifies Africa's linguistic diversity as a major cultural resource, while UNESCO (2025b) links multilingual communication with inclusion, participation and peaceful societies. This suggests that security messages, civic campaigns and rebranding efforts are more effective when they are linguistically accessible to the people they intend to reach.

#### **Theme Four: Language as an Instrument of National Rebranding**

The fourth theme is that national rebranding depends heavily on language because national image, values and identity are constructed through public narratives. Kusraeva (2024) conceptualises nation brand management as a system involving perceptions, transformation processes and image outcomes. Dineri (2024) also shows that nation branding influences how a country is perceived in relation to reputation, investment and external image. These studies suggest that national rebranding cannot be reduced to slogans; it involves the deliberate reconstruction of national meaning and public perception. In Nigeria, national rebranding is closely tied to civic reorientation and value reconstruction. The National Orientation Agency (2022) identifies public enlightenment, citizen mobilisation, peacebuilding, inclusive security and behavioural change as major priorities, while the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation (2023) presents the National Values Charter as an attempt to redefine the obligations of the state and citizens. The thematic implication is that rebranding requires credible language that communicates shared values and national direction, but such language becomes weak when it is not supported by institutional credibility, public trust and citizens' lived experiences.

### **CONCLUSION**

This article has examined the inevitability of language in governance as a veritable tool for security and national rebranding in Nigeria. It established that language is not merely a medium of official expression, but a strategic governance resource through

which government communicates authority, builds trust, mobilises citizens, manages security consciousness and projects national identity. In a multilingual and security-sensitive country such as Nigeria, effective governance communication must be clear, inclusive, ethical and culturally responsive. The article further showed that security and national rebranding cannot be achieved through policy action, security intervention or official campaigns alone, but require credible language that warns, reassures, counters misinformation, promotes shared values and reflects citizens' lived realities. It therefore concludes that any serious attempt to strengthen governance, security and national identity in Nigeria must give deliberate attention to the language through which government speaks to, listens to and mobilises the people.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the thematic analysis, the article makes the following recommendations:

### 1. Institutionalisation of language-sensitive governance communication

Government ministries, departments and agencies should institutionalise language-sensitive public communication as a core governance function. Public policies, security directives, civic messages and national reorientation campaigns should be communicated in clear, accessible and citizen-centred language. This is necessary because governance messages that are highly technical, bureaucratic or politically defensive may weaken public understanding and reduce citizen trust.

### 2. Strengthening of strategic communication in security governance

Security agencies should develop coordinated strategic communication frameworks for crisis response, public reassurance and counter-misinformation. Such frameworks should ensure that security messages are timely, factual, consistent and carefully framed. This will help reduce panic, limit rumours and encourage citizens to cooperate with security institutions during periods of threat or uncertainty.

### 3. Expansion of multilingual public communication

Government communication should reflect Nigeria's multilingual reality by using English, major indigenous languages, Nigerian Pidgin and community-based registers where appropriate. This is particularly important for security alerts, emergency information, civic education and national orientation messages. A multilingual approach will make public communication more inclusive and increase the likelihood that citizens across different linguistic and educational backgrounds will understand and act on official messages.

### 4. Alignment of national rebranding language with governance conduct

National rebranding efforts should move beyond slogans and symbolic campaigns. Rebranding messages should be supported by visible governance performance, institutional accountability and public service improvement. This is important because citizens are more likely to accept national rebranding when official language corresponds with their lived experiences of justice, security, inclusion and responsible leadership.

### 5. Capacity building for public communication officers

Public officers, spokespersons and institutional communication personnel should be trained in ethical and conflict-sensitive communication. Such training should cover crisis messaging, audience-sensitive language, misinformation management, multilingual communication, civic persuasion and national values communication. This will reduce careless official statements that may inflame tension, deepen distrust or undermine national cohesion.

### 6. Repositioning of the National Orientation Agency for community-based civic communication

The National Orientation Agency and related institutions should intensify community-based civic communication programmes that promote unity, security consciousness, responsible citizenship and national values. These programmes should be participatory, multilingual and culturally responsive rather than limited to formal media announcements. This will help connect national reorientation with citizens' everyday realities.

### 7. Creation of feedback mechanisms in governance communication

Government institutions should create functional feedback channels through which citizens can ask questions, clarify official messages, report misinformation and express concerns about public policies or security issues. This will make governance communication more dialogic and responsive. It will also strengthen public trust by showing that government communication is not merely top-down but open to citizen participation.

### 8. Integration of language policy into governance and security practice

The National Language Policy should be linked more directly to governance, security communication and national rebranding. Its principles should inform public health messaging, emergency response, civic education, security alerts and national value campaigns. This will help reposition language as a practical instrument of inclusive governance, security management and national identity construction in Nigeria.

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