

Psychological statements and their impact on the individual, family and society

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Abstract

Statements and words have serious effects on family, society and individuals. They are most often overlooked without serious realization of their implications. They affect the psyche of those they are directed to and may dampen or uplift the spirit of those they are addressed. In other words, they usually have negative or positive effects on individuals and the society depending on how they are used or applied. The author investigated such words and statements to discover their impact on individuals and societal growth and vice versa. It was found that these statements can have deep positive or negative impacts on families, individuals, and the society depending on how they are applied and imbibed. Initially, such words or statements sound light, unintentional, and unsuspecting. However, with passage of time coupled with deeper thoughts by those concerned, unimaginable circumstances rear its heads. The impact and gravity of the consequences are felt by individuals, families, and the society. The author recommends that the negative psychological statements should be de-emphasized while the positive areas should be encouraged. The proper management of the aspects will go a long way in building family cohesion, individual uplift, and societal growth.

Keywords: *psychological, statements, victim, psyche, conflict*

Introduction

Statements or words are most times not as simple as they seem. Coupled with the above is the fact that the one who makes a statement may not realise the full implications of such statement or utterance. Sometimes, these statements hurt so deeply that certain ailments or health conditions are attributed to them. Sometimes, such sicknesses will become a consequence of a long term chain reaction. The most common advice given to someone having from high blood pressure (HBP), for instance, is to avoid or reduce conditions that lead to vain thoughts or thoughts about challenges of life, difficulties of life, and negative aspects of life. People who utter unguarded statements against their neighbours promote such sicknesses because they provide their victims with negative items of thought. Such statements may take place in the form of scolding, shouting, or chatting that may lead its victim to depression, psychosis, or other psychosomatic illnesses. These statements may also come in form of jokes, mimics, or other figures of speech. There are jokes that may be intended to caricature or if analysed, one would find elements of caricature. When this is discovered, the one who is the object of the joke may no longer be comfortable. Some victims of such jokes may feel insulted, while some may suffer a syndrome of an inferiority complex. Some other victims of the joke might suffer heightened emotional disorder and pick offence with the person that cracked the joke. The gravity or intensity of the quarrel will be dependent on the perception of the individual involved and his or her emotional control. On the other hand, certain jokes can push one into positive action that might lift the society and increase its image. A joke for instance that stresses that a particular town has not

produced a university graduate may push some youths to put up added effort in their educational pursuit in order to attend university, and wipe out the stigma embedded in the joke. A joke that reminds a growing child that his dad has not built a hut will stir him into determination to build a house whenever he has the opportunity.

These kinds of statement are said to be psycholinguistic because they are statements borne out of language that affects the psyche or one's emotion in an extraordinary manner. In a more positive sense, it can heighten one's happiness and make the individual's joy last for a very long time. Such words can boost performance and zeal in the actualisation of certain tasks. They affect emotions and self-perception. The decision on the status of the word or comment rests first on the individual, who receives the word or who feels that the statement or comment is directed to him or her. The intention of the one, who cracks a joke and the way he puts his joke may also affect the reaction of those that hear the joke. The inner analysis of such statements may be immediate or later. Some will take a considerable time for it to be fully analysed or meditated upon by the individual(s) affected by the comment or utterance.

The consequences of sociolinguistic statements vary according to situations and circumstances. Some of such statements provoke immediate reaction while some elicit a delayed or late reaction. Some may lead to immediate joy and embrace while some may prompt immediate fighting or quarrel. Some statements may evoke verbal attacks that may involve not only the individual addressed but others standing nearby. Imagine a scenario whereby one insults or talks harshly to a mother or father moving or walking with the grown up children. Of course, the atmosphere will be far from being calm. One will not be surprised if a physical fight ensues. The situation will even be more aggravated if the other party has sympathisers around.

Psycholinguistic statements or comments can lead to inter-tribal wars or even major wars between nations or countries. Psycholinguistic statements can sometimes be willfully made just to cause harm or wound the individual's mind. The user of such statements sometimes understands the full implications of such utterances and get ready to face the consequences. Families sometimes engage in serious quarrels with other families because of psycholinguistic utterances made against a member of the family or in reference to the entire family circle. A family can also act more positively because of comments praising the family. Psycholinguistic comments can be employed as a mode of indoctrination and propaganda to sow disaffection which may eventually lead to war. World War II was said to be majorly caused by Germany regarding itself as an Aryan Race under Adolph Hitler. They regarded themselves as superior to people of other races and made statements that supported such feelings and neglect. As a result of those well crafted psycholinguistic statements intended to indoctrinate, Germany became obsessed by a superiority complex and showed open hatred for the Jews. That, naturally, also attracted hatred for them among other nations. One can then imagine the catastrophes that followed when World War II broke out and an estimated six million Jews were killed. Such can be the consequence(s) of uncontrolled linguistic statements. Unguarded psycholinguistic comments trigger hatred and animosity and sometimes in an unprecedented scale.

Linguistic statements sometimes propel chain reactions. One who is affected by a psycholinguistic statement might react by informing a friend or a relative of the condition. The response from his friend or relation may go a long way in determining his own reactions because of human influence. Some people are more peaceful than others. If the insulted reported to a

peaceful fellow, the victim may likely receive advice that will make him or her react to the condition more calmly. If on the other hand, he reported the matter to a brute or a war monger, the reactive atmosphere may wear the hostility garment.

People have continued to wonder about the causes or sources of the incessant conflicts and upheaval that ravage the world. They marvel at the level of misunderstanding between individuals and groups. Some attribute the world's problems and strife to greed. Others attribute it to ignorance or lack of trust. Some individuals say those common disputes arise out of selfishness or self centeredness. For others, there is a spiritual force behind all that is happening in the world. Hunger and wars, for them are manifestations of such influence. Some others claim that it is man's inhumanity to man that is the cause of all the calamities bedeviling the world. In all the above assumptions, not much is said about the psycholinguistic aspect of human behaviour as one of the major causes of strife, conflicts, and problems menacing the earth. This lacuna calls for investigation to discover the role psycholinguistic statements play in the activities, problems, and conflicts going on in the world.

Data for this article were elicited through primary and secondary sources. The primary source came through direct observation and personal experiences of the author. The secondary sources were sourced from books, online materials, and the media. These materials were of value in buttressing the points made and elucidating the issues raised in the work. Analyses were based on events, antecedents, and common sense. Present circumstances were juxtaposed against past events to elicit desired results.

Positive psycholinguistic statements

Psycholinguistic statements can be positive or negative. It is positive when it produces beneficial or positive outcomes and becomes negative when the reverse is the case. Certain expressions made to individuals or groups elate them. Some of those statements boost their morale to the extent of increasing the behaviour or attitude that attracted commendation. Think of telling a child in the house, 'you swept the house very well'. The next time she will do the sweeping, one would notice a better outcome. In education, this psycholinguistic statement made to this child is tagged motivation. This motivation can appear in varied forms. The one above is called 'positive motivation'. Expectedly, it elicits positive response which is evident in a better sweeping outcome giving rise to a cleaner environment. Psycholinguistic statements or expressions can go beyond simple individual motivation, to complex and sophisticated level affecting national and international issues among committee of nations. Recently, the former Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida launched a book he titled, *A Journey in Service*. In that book, he exonerated the Igbo of the South East Nigeria of the 1966 coup, which has for long been tagged Igbo coup in Nigeria. According to him, the coup was merely given an ethnic coloration. He debunked the idea that it has ethnic sentiments. This statement brought relief in the minds of a good number of people especially in the South East who have consistently accused the government at the center of marginalisation based on misconception of the brain behind the 1966 coup. Some have since then called for national reconciliation, others for compensation, and some others for the unconditional release of the IPOB leader, Maazi Nnamdi Kanu, stating that his struggle for an independent state is based on the treatment of the Igbo based on the misconception of the events of the 1966 coup. The point raised by IBB in his book is a kind of positive psycholinguistic statement which may at long last engender greater understanding and lasting peace in Nigeria. In

an open letter to Ahmed Bukola Tinubu, the Nigeria President, by one Anichebe from Awka in Anambra state as reported by Phoenix Media, stated that the recent publication of *A Journey in Service* has shattered a long held falsehood, one that has been used for decades to justify the marginalisation and persecution of the Igbo nation (Izuorah, 2025). He said that General Babangida, an elder statesman, who lived through that era has set the record straight by stating that the coup was not an ethnic conspiracy but an ideological revolt against corruption and political decay. Anichebe used the opportunity to beg Mr. President for the release of Nnamdi Kanu stating that Maazi Nnamdi Kanu is not in detention because he is a criminal, but because Nigeria refused to confront its past. According to Anichebe, Nnamdi Kanu is the voice of a people who have, for too long, felt unheard, unseen, and unwanted. Anichebe in his letter advocated the declaration of May 31st, a national day of remembrance as the civil war remains a wound in our national psyche. According to him, it will be a day in which Nigeria bows its head in solemn remembrance, – not in blame, not in bitterness, but in truth. The above is just one of the many reactions arising from IBB’S positive psycholinguistic comments in his work, *A Journey in Service*.

Positive Psycholinguistic statements encourage individuals and families to better behaviour and performances.. Sports men and women put up better performances when they are encouraged with psycholinguistic words. Leaders and administrators put up more active administrative activities that will benefit the common man when they are sure people like it and appreciate their effort, as perceived in their utterances. Peace and harmony grow among families that use positive psycholinguistic statements in contradistinction to those that do not. Among the comity of nations, peace, understanding, and togetherness exist more, when positive linguistic statements are used in their interactions than otherwise. One can notice the face-off that erupted recently between the American President, Donald Trump and the Ukraine President, Volodymyr Zelensky in the Oval Office in Washington DC at their meeting to discuss the possibility of ending the Russia – Ukraine war.

There were emotional outbursts during the meeting with a media correspondent stating that the incident marked the first time in America’s history that a sitting president openly verbally attacked a visiting head of state. Some described the meeting as controversial; some others said it was contentious. The meeting ended abruptly without a clear resolution (wikipedia.org). Prior to the meeting, there was disaffection following negative psycholinguistic statements made by both parties. President Trump called Zelensky a dictator while President Zelensky said he is being sidelined in the peace negotiation involving his country. He emphasised he wanted a peace term that will deter the Russian President, Vladimir Putin from violating a ceasefire agreement as he did in the past. The statements from the two leaders evoked reactions from both parties that culminated in the Oval Office clash. Situation has changed since then with both parties employing a more positive linguistic approach. Normalcy is returning in the US – Ukraine relations. The magic lies within linguistic approach. There has been more polite and constructive comments and conversation between the two leaders and their representatives in government. Between President Trump and his Russian counterpart, President Putin, there has been careful use of words as not to escalate an already existing tension. There is much power in statements and the use of words can be sensitive and volatile.

As discussed above, the power and impact of linguistic statements cannot be over-emphasised as it can make or unmake. It can build up or destroy. Language is like a small rudder that stirs a ship. If not properly handled, the ship can capsize and cause a very serious havoc. The case of the Titanic accident and the casualties is still memorable in world history. Uncontrolled statements or comments can cause a lot of social damage that can lead to physical destruction. The situation if not properly handled can escalate to a full scale war. What started as mere verbal pugilism may end up as a gun duel. Negative psycholinguistic statements or comments can evoke emotions and sentiments at varying degrees. It is capable of pushing an individual into committing suicide or slipping into depression. When it is used against a group, a town or a country, the result may not be palatable. This is because it can be employed as propaganda to elicit emotions of hatred, disrespect, anger, and destruction of life and property. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda is an example of how unabated psycholinguistic comments can lead to catastrophe. Maron (2019) reports that what happened in Rwanda in 1994 seems almost incomprehensible when in just 100 days, government forces, militias and regular citizens carried out a genocide against the Tutsi social and ethnic minority population. He said that an estimated eight hundred thousand to one million Tutsi were killed. Narrating the cause of the genocide, Maron said it was the culmination of decades of division and incitement of animosity towards the Tutsi by extremists in the country's leadership, which was controlled by members of the Hutu majority group. There was a deliberate practice of positioning the Tutsi as a dangerous and inferior minority group, and even as less than human. All the above were executed mainly through word of mouth to arouse emotion, hatred, and sentiment set the stage for the genocide. Maron observed that the Hutu-Tutsi face-off soon developed into a civil war. The anti- Tutsi sentiment increased in intensity during the war as Hutu dominated media painted the Tutsi minority as a threat to Rwanda. The genocide that ensued was so horrible that it shook the world and the media to the vein. In his traumatic assessment of the situation, Maron advised that the process of what took place in Rwanda should remind humanity of the need to be vigilant against propaganda that seek to single out certain groups for persecution portraying them as less worthy of human rights than others.

A scenario similar to the Rwanda psycholinguistic induced crises also took place in Germany during the Second World War, when Adolph Hitler exterminated about six million Jews he labeled an inferior race. The Nazis, Hitler's party, started early under Hitler to indoctrinate the Germans to hate the Jews by tagging them everything inferior. Hitler claimed that the Germans were an Aryan race, that is, a superior race. This idea was thought the young ones even at school. This negative psycholinguistic indoctrination metamorphosed into deep hatred for the Jews that led to the holocaust. One of Hitler's slogans included the one following; "The Jews are our misfortune. He who knows the Jews knows the devil." According to South Africa History Online (2011), Adolph Hitler, the leader of the Nazi Party, argued that the Germans were superior to all the other races. Hitler became obsessed with racial purity and used the word Aryan to describe his idea of a pure German race or *Herrenvolk*. For Hitler, the Aryan race had a duty to control the world. It is the Nazi's belief that the Aryans had the most "pure blood" of all the people on earth. They described the ideal Aryan as having pale skin, blond hair and blue eyes. All the above made non-Aryans to be seen in Germany as impure and even devil. Hitler believed that Aryan superiority was being threatened particularly by the Jews. Hitler and the Nazis in line with

their thoughts created a hierarchy of races with the Aryans at the top, and with Jews, Gypsies and black people at the bottom. Hitler and his hit men saw those at the bottom of the ladder as inferior people that pose a threat to the purity and strength of the German nation (history.org.za).

To propagate this ulterior agenda, Hitler and his associates employed propaganda machinery. Goebbels, one of Hitler's most devoted associates was elected Minister of Propaganda from 1933 - 1945 to speed up and actualise this obnoxious Nazis agenda. In order to control every part of every German's life, the Nazi Party had to persuade people to believe that Hitler had the answers to all their problems. The Nazi Party used terror on the one hand and propaganda on the other (history.org.za). The propaganda was used by Nazi to influence German people's thoughts and opinions. This psycholinguistic strategy at the end achieved the aim for its set up as it culminated in the extermination of about six million Jews by Germans during the Second World War.

Conclusion

Psycholinguistic statements are powerful utterances, which at inception, may look simple and unproductive but with the progress of time become very powerful and influential as to cause big wars and unprecedented havoc. It can be deliberately employed as in the case of Hitler and the Nazis. The consequences might also be unintentional and unplanned as in the case of Rwanda. In all cases, there were irreparable losses and colossal infrastructural damages. When psycholinguistic comments are positive, they elicit joy, happiness, development, and progress. These statements become positive when they lead to genuine reconciliation at any level of human endeavour. For humanity to achieve lifelong peace and harmony, positive psycholinguistic statements should always take the centre stage at the expense of negative psycholinguistic comments.

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