

The Role of Language and Communication in Conflict Management: How Mali was Saved?



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Abstract

Language is considered an indispensable human endowment which is conceptualized as having a certain unique role in capturing the breadth of human thought and endeavours. We often express ourselves through language in different ways: verbal (spoken) and non-verbal (written and gestural). Most times, other people tend to misunderstand our intention; it could also be that we deliberately use language in a way that offends, thereby compelling the other person to respond defensively. When this occurs, conflict usually sets in. Using the Malian coup as a case study, this research aims to establish the most effective ways language and communication may be utilized to manage and resolve conflicts. A purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data which comprises of utterances made by leaders of different countries and international organisations on the parley. The findings indicate that conflict is a neutral term that can only be labelled as negative or positive depending on how the causality is interpreted. The study also found that the choice of language used by leaders of many countries and organizations played a key role in restoring peace and curbing the excesses of the Malian coup leader.

Keywords: *Communication, Conflict, Language use, Resolution, Settlement*

Introduction

Since the origin of man, all cases of wars have always been traced to language use. Hence, when language is used such that the other parties feel threatened, they tend to retaliate using yet another form of language to express their disgust towards the sender. To resolve this conflict, both the sender and the receiver have to reach a compromise which is often achieved via language. Although the positive role of language and communication in the management and resolution of conflict seems so obvious, it deserves serious attention. Human language is inseparable from human communication. This inseparability of language and communication does not make them synonymous. Both of them may exist independently. The import of this statement is that language is neutral until it becomes communication. "Language, though a product of the need for communication, facilitates communication." Alexander (2016). Communication is language in motion from the sender to the receiver. But conflict arises where the

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intended message of the sender is not received by the receiver. Impliedly, language on its own would not generate conflict until it becomes communication. This paper examines language, communication and conflict management/resolution to ascertain the interconnectivity and effects on productivity. The paper seeks to determine the effective way through which language and communication can be used to manage and resolve conflicts as they occur. In essence, this paper emphasizes conflict management and resolution through the effective use of language and communication.

The conflict has become an inevitable reality in our co-existence as humans. It is almost impossible for people to interact without disagreeing in any way. From existing literature, it appears that the relationship which exists between language, communication and conflict and its resolution is double-edged. This relationship is described as “double-edged” in the sense that language as a viable means of communication, most of the time, misinforms, especially when it is not effectively used. Hence, conflict arises. This situation (conflict) cannot be resolved without the effective application of language in the process of communication. Therefore, the role of language and communication in the management and resolution of conflict is the reduction of the destructive aspects of conflict and the multiplication of the benefits (fruits) of the “functional aspect in the transactional sharing of meaning between the parties involved in a given conflict” (Njoku, 2017). The import of the above statement is that improper handling of conflict can lead to loss of life, property and can contribute to low productivity. On the other hand, effective and proper handling of it can lead to freedom, reduced tension and minimal stress. Naturally, people must differ in their opinion and actions.

The world today is experiencing a serious amount of tension and anxious moments simply because so many people believe (perhaps ignorantly) that it is better to suppress conflict instead of managing and resolving it. Unfortunately, this belief has led to a lot of scheming from the leaders and political elites to either deny or ignore any opposing view. This kind of attitude produces explosive bottled-up frustrations and anger which further causes damage/destruction. The main goal of conflict management and resolution, therefore, is to create and maintain peace and order in society. This is achieved by the use of non-violent methods. Thus, the effective application of language and communication in managing and resolving conflict happens to be one of the non-violent methods of dispute resolution. Language itself is nothing without the substance of the communication. In what follows, therefore, this paper shall look at the concepts of language, communication, conflict and conflict resolution/management and how these were effectively employed to avert war in Mali.

Language: A short overview

Language is conceived as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, desires, and emotions through a system of voluntarily produced symbols. Sapir (1963) posits that “language is the key to the heart of a people”. Language is a system of signs and symbols through which a speech community communicates. It is equally the tool used for the dissemination of information within a particular group of persons. Dada (2007) defines language as ‘an arbitrary vocal system of communication used among members of a speech community. It is essentially a set of contextual codes that are only intelligible and meaningful to those who share the codes. This functional knowledge of language symbols that human experience has achieved in dealing with

various situations is "communicated through language" (Adejimola, 2009). The implication of this assertion is that language does not operate independently of culture. Sapir's (1963) definition of language captures its communicative function and cultural experience/expression.

Adejimola (2009) argues that language may be used to address burning issues, to declare war, to incite, provoke, oppose ideas, intentions, and actions, to influence personalities, to scatter, condemn, blackmail, insult, destroy, falsify, despise, abuse and to generate violence. He further added that language can function to produce positive results or purposes especially "to entertain, appeal, inspire, comfort, amuse, appreciate, build, enlighten, educate, settle disputes, establish a cordial relationship and make peace with people." Other functions include resolving conflict within and among various groups in society. Arising from the illustrative explanation (definitions) one appreciates the function of language as the catalyst which speeds up certain reactions in the person who receives the content of the encoders' message through certain communicative signals. In the same vein, Moulton (1974) defines language as a wonderful and rich vehicle of communication; that is, the expression of ideas, wishes, and commands that conveys truths and/or lies, etc. This implied that only human beings can use language in this complex form; it is species-specific.

Language can be verbal or non-verbal. By verbal, it refers to its manifestation in speech, while the non-verbal feature may be gestural and semiotic. Gestural language simply refers to the use of gestures, facial expressions, posture, voice modulation, pitch, stress, and intonation to decode the intent of the messenger. For example, while the word *yes* is literally used to show that one has given his consent or agrees on a particular thing, the same word could be used to mean 'doubt' when the intonation of the utterer is used in a way that assigns a question mark to the word. Semiotic language on the other hand involves the use of iconic (specialized) symbols or signs to convey messages. Semiotics is more evident in religious, scientific, and social symbols and traffic signs.

There are different levels of language, and each of these levels could determine the communicative function that language plays. Generally, for example, language could be used literally or metaphorically meaning. Literal meaning refers to the surface meaning that is not characterized by connotations and undertones, while metaphoric language is imbued with connotations, allusions, referents, nuances, and underlying sub-terranean meanings. Unlike in the literal use of language, knowledge of context and extra-linguistic factors are instrumental to understanding the metaphoric use of language. In other words, while literal language focuses on *what* you say, metaphoric usage focuses on *how* you say it. When a speaker uses a word literally and the hearer understands it metaphorically, misunderstanding is bound to happen. Although not every act of misunderstanding leads to conflict, almost every act of conflict is caused by some sort of misunderstanding. Thus, the use and interpretation or otherwise of any of the levels of language will determine the successful management/resolution of conflict.

Communication: the essence of language

Communication is simply an interaction between two or more persons. It is defined by Shannon and Weaver (1977) as "all the procedures by which one mind may affect another". This definition implies that communication takes place not only through speech and writing but also through all other human behaviour - music, pictorial arts, theatre, etc. Communication is a term that is so commonly used in human society and

has become the centre for human existence and survival, both as organised individuals and society. Literature is replete with different views of what constitutes communication by various scholars. Devito (1988) defines it as “the act by one or more persons of sending and receiving messages that are distorted by noise, occur within a context, have some effect and provide some opportunities for feedback”. This definition brings to fore, the fact that communication may be distortable and capable of being misunderstood by the receivers. According to Krause and Morsella (2001), human communication is “the process by which ideas contained within one mind are conveyed to other minds”. This definition seems to provide a one-sided view of communication without the benefit of feedback (the signal that shows the message has been received). Adejimiola’s view of communication captures the vital component of feedback. He presents communication as “the process that involves the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver and which has the goal of eliciting a reaction or reactions and feedback (2009).

In the context of conflict resolution/management, communication refers to the process of sharing and (or) exchanging pieces of information between persons, parties, or groups in a conflict situation. The point here is that even in conflict, people still talk and the feedback is essential in ascertaining their level of understanding of what is communicated and possibly guiding/directing the interlocutors on the subsequent message to pass across. George Bernard Shaw was right when he said that ‘The single biggest problem of communication is the illusion that it has taken place. How we use language to communicate can determine the escalation or de-escalation of conflict among individuals or nations. Thus, most of the non-violent methods of conflict management like collaboration, negotiation and dialogue are largely dependent on effective communication (Shedrack, 2004).

Conflict: evident of communication flaw

Conflict occurs when there is an apparent misunderstanding or misinterpretation of one’s message which results in the opposition of the intentions of the sender. Even the refusal to communicate is already a communication. Huntington (1996) defines conflict as ‘contentions involving real or apparent fears, interests, and values in which goals of the opposing group must be opposed or at least neutralized to protect one’s own interest—prestige, employment, and political power’. It is also seen as “the process in which one party perceives that its interest is being opposed or negatively affected by another” (Alexander, 2016). All three definitions above agree that conflict is the dissonance between the encoder’s intention in a message and the decoder’s interpretations of the same message. It entails the presence of an object of contention that brings about a division— from the offender (on the one hand) to the offended/defender (on the other hand). Conflicts, unfortunately, are inevitable in all human relationship— individually or corporately. In most cases, our unwillingness to accede to the desires and wants of others is what instigates conflict. This was supported and captured more aptly by Devito when he noted that interpersonal conflict occurs when there is ‘a disagreement between connected individuals who each want something that is incompatible with what the other wants’ (2008: 67).

There are various forms and classifications of conflicts. These include gender conflict, civil conflict, industrial; international, ethnic conflict, power, etc. This paper, however, focused on how language was used to resolve the civil conflict in Mali, following the August 18 2020 coup. In as much as it is true that not every major conflict which

confronts humans is caused by a breakdown in communication as occasioned by improper and ineffective language usage, this paper posits that inadequate (ineffective) communication frequently contributes to a large extent to the failures of both personal and social relationships which often eventually result in conflict. The cause of conflict may include misinformation, disinformation, greed and overzealousness, complex or psychological abnormality, and so on. This study argues that when any or a combination of these traits are manifested in any social group, a collision of interest and conflict are bound to occur. When this conflict occurs, concerted efforts must be made to stop it otherwise the continued existence of the group would be at risk. It is this stage or the process of trying to stop and settle issues that arise as a result of the collision of interests that we refer to as 'conflict resolution or management.

Deutsch (1973), for example, a well-known German scholar, gave a perspective on the conflict that has remained relevant to this day. He claimed that the negative or positive nature of conflict really is determined by people's behaviours; it is not itself an intrinsic quality. While some behaviour produces dysfunctional, destructive, and unproductive responses; other behaviours produce functional, constructive and productive responses. Deutsch further categorized conflicts into destructive and constructive. On the one hand, destructive conflict, reveals behaviour that intensifies a conflict until it seems to have a life of its own. No one is satisfied with the outcome of this type of conflict. Possible gains are not realized, and the negative taste leftover at the end of one conflict eclipsed the next one; thus, creating a degenerating or negative spiral. On the other hand, the constructive conflict shows behaviours that are adaptive to a situation, person, and problem of the moment. In constructive conflicts,

the interests of both parties are balanced to maximize the opportunities for mutual gains. Constructive conflicts contain an element of creative adaptation born from a realization that one must know both one's own and the other's interests and goals to be able to find a road both parties are willing to walk to discover a mutually acceptable outcome. (Deutsch, 1973: 79)

Conflict Resolution versus Conflict Management

A popular conflict scholar Lulofs (1994) once said that "the way we think about conflict has important implications for the way we act in situations where conflict exists" (p. 4). Conflict resolution stems from an obligation to fulfill human psychological needs. Theorists in conflict resolution claim that conflict mediation alone does not fulfill the underlying psychological needs required for sustainable well-being. Conflict resolution works to achieve an agreement and resolve the present problem generating the crisis by using devices, such as a third-party intervention, to end the crisis (Lederach, 2003). In a given case or situation, it could mean reducing and completely eliminating conflict (Lulof, 1994).

The word 'resolution' may be interpreted in this context to mean dissolve, solve, and settlement of disputes/differences, etc. The implication of this is that all the parties involved in this process must be seen to possess, the will, zeal and commitment in ending such disagreement. According to Njoku (2017), resolution can be brought about in two ways: by force (i.e. forcing the parties to fall into line) and by persuasion (wherein all the parties involved are brought on board the negotiating table). It should be noted

however that despite the effectiveness that brute force resolution offers, it does not seem to solve any problem rather it leads to some sort of bottled-up anger/frustration which will erupt like a volcano someday. Hence, the second part of Njoku's suggestions where all parties to the conflict are brought on board the negotiating table seems the most effective and long-lasting. This is because the parties will see the result as their project in the resolution process and are obligated to protect it and make it work. In a partnership where conflict appears, conflict resolution is usually more short-term, content-centered, and is based on solving immediate problems.

Conflict management, on the other hand, is "the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence" (Bloomfield and Reilly, 1998) by implementing strategies that limit the occurrence of the negative aspects of disputes and emphasize the positive ones. Conflict management does not attempt to remove all conflict from a situation: it focuses on minimizing the "negative" conflict and accentuating the "positive" ones. In other words, it adopts a pragmatic approach to conflict by developing agreements and practices that allow people to collaborate effectively despite their differences and disagreements at all levels: interpersonal, intergroup, or systemic. The term 'conflict management' was deliberately chosen by communication scholars because the term evokes a perception of the mechanism of the decisions and actions that occur during conflicts. Since some conflicts are lasting, the best we can do is to control their degree of manifestation such that we are still able to maintain a good working relationship with other parties. Thus, communication scholars generally agree that conflict is: (1) part of life, (2) a process, (3) neither good nor bad. Considering the inevitability of conflict and its continuous nature in all interpersonal and systemic relationships (in-person or virtual), this study (for clarity of term) focused on *conflict management* (the paper title indicates).

Previous Studies

Many works have examined the role language plays in conflict management. Adegbite (2017) for example affirms that the existence of a conflict in every society is made possible via varied variables: class, gender, and culture. Each of these variables is only expressed through language, further pointing to its contributory role in conflict resolution and management. The study also argues that the culture of a people determines their language, gender, views, and approach to conflict resolution. This argument could suggest that both conflict initiation and resolution/management may be culturally specific. In other words, certain cultures may tend to always express conflict while others may not. Similarly, Amuseghan (2009), examines how effective communication can promote the peaceful resolution of conflict. He argues that all forms of conflicts can be resolved via negotiation, dialogue, and mediation adjudication if the parties focus on the root causes of the conflict. Although Adegbite, for instance, discussed the concepts of language, culture, gender, and conflicts in literature very elaborately, his work seems to pay less attention to the details of the conflict and the exact roles these concepts play in the resolution and management of conflict. This study will, however, show with examples, the roles language played in managing the conflict in Mali, and how its initial use almost jeopardized the peace bargain.

In another study, Opara (2016) posits that the English Language must accommodate the diversity of culture and language usage (within Nigeria) before it can be effectively used as a tool for conflict resolution in an L2 environment. He further argued that since

the English language may not fully capture the heartfelt mores of the Nigerian people, it may be difficult to achieve meaningful resolution with such a medium. Opara believes that using the Nigerian indigenous language to negotiate during conflict can produce better results. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of scholarship that affirms this notion. One major criticism against this belief is that it only focuses on internal conflict management or resolution cases (i.e. conflicts that occur within the same speech community). English has become a global language, and when inter-ethnic conflicts occur, both groups may resort to a language that appears neutral and understood by both parties which in most international conflicts is the English language.

Njoku (2017) explores how communication can be used to resolve conflicts, however, and wherever they occur. He argues that in so much as language and communication are very important in the lives of people and nations, the functionality or otherwise of conflict depends on communication skills and its applicability by parties involved. Having dwelt extensively on the definition of some concepts as communication, the elements and forms of communicative conflict and conflict resolution, and of course the connection models of conflict resolution, the paper, therefore, maintained that efficient application of communication in resolving conflict depends on the proper understanding of the dynamics of conflict and its communication in the application. From a different perspective, Nwagbara and Brown (2014) examined the tempestuous nature of corporate-community relations in Nigeria's oil sector and contends that integrative and distributed communication can be a platform for the management of conflict in the conflict-ridden oil and gas industry in Nigeria. Their paper gives a historical background to the discovery of oil in commercial quantity and its attendant conflict occasioned by a lot of factors and considerations. The paper proposes a shift from this dilemma through deliberation and mutual understanding "grounded on the anvil of participation" and shared leadership to bring about frustrations. It succeeded in illuminating ideas on conflict as an inevitable phenomenon that stares organizations in the face. However, they posit that the effective management of the same (conflict) could facilitate a better relationship between the oil and gas companies and the host communities.

Since the advent of technology, language use has transcended physical boundaries; in other words, technology has been able to neutralize space and time differences and has allowed humans to even develop new language forms that otherwise may not have been created. It is in this view that Chebii (2015) investigates the role the media played in managing electoral conflict in Kenya: The double role of the media includes conflict escalation and de-escalation. Adopting the conceptualized framework developed from the libertarian theory and social responsibility theory of media reporting, the study affirmed that the conflict escalation role is more prevalent with vernacular (local) media stations while the de-escalation role is predominant with nationwide mainstream stations. The paper also reveals that people's response to conflict coverage is persuaded by their age, gender, and social status as human variables. It, therefore, recommends designing and adhering to a common approach to conflict reporting to mitigate the misrepresentation of conflict reporting, especially in weak democratic states. This approach according to the paper includes among other things, the enforcement of stringent regulations and control of vernacular (local) stations which are prone to manipulation by the political elite, the training of journalists on conflict reporting, and the development of a standard conflict reporting procedure.

The role of language and communication in conflict resolution

Irrespective of the effective use or otherwise of language, a conflict that emanates from communication seems unavoidable. This is why Dada (2007) believes that “language is not neutral”. The import of the statement is that language always takes a position, has a perspective and a perception. It also bears a hint, clue, suggestion, etc. Thus, it is not out of place to say that language has certain elements/factors that engender communication conflict. According to Mojaye (2014), “language does not always precipitate conflicts, but its use or misuse does because language is not an end in itself but a means to an end”. He compares language to the chicken that lays the golden egg in the resolution of all forms of conflict especially the domestic conflict. This, he maintains, occurs usually when the language used during intimate or casual communication is not good enough. Based on this premise, we shall list some of the possible factors in language that triggers conflict in communication. These factors include but are not entirely limited to cultural miseducation, decoding error, encoding ambiguity, lack of shared background, literary level, etc. The effective handling of these factors leads to a peaceful co-existence of parties in a given social-cultural setting.

The role of communication via language is very powerful as one of the positive methods that aim at containing or resolving conflict. Conflict resolution as a concept according to Miller (2003) in “a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving problems distinct from management transformation of conflicts”. On their part, Miall *et al* (1999) indicate that “it is expected that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved, and behaviour is no longer violent, nor attitude hostile any longer, while the structure of the conflict has been changed”. The overall development is an indication that peace is secured. The lack of communication or ineffective communication, most often, aggravates already strained relationships between the parties involved in conflict situations. Obviously, communication is adjudged very vital in the resolution of conflict. Communication, as mentioned earlier (in this context) is the process of sharing and exchanging a piece of information between individuals or groups who are involved in a conflict situation. It is the interaction and relationships with people or parties involved in a conflict situation as well as those engaged in conflict. The requirement of communication through the use of linguistic and other paralinguistic channels is very essential in the effective resolution of conflict. Hence the presence or absence (or near absence) of conflict in a given context.

According to Adejimola (2009), “effective communication is therefore central in negotiation which is a different process of dialogue or discussion taking place between at least two parties who are faced with a conflict situation or a dispute. He further provided some of the non-violent methods of conflict management/resolution which are directly connected with the use of language and communication. These methods of conflict resolution include but are not limited to negotiation and dialogue. Others include what he calls “third party interventions” and they are mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and adjudication. These methods are commonly related to one another, in that, they are all non-violent forms (methods) of resolving conflicts, the only distinct one is arbitration and this is so because it is done in the courts and court judgments are binding and state apparition is used in the enforcement of such decisions. This position tallies with Shedrack (2004) position on these methods as he notes that “there is no exclusivity in these methods of conflict management”. Most of them have properties that are common to other methods, for instance, negotiation, mediation, and arbitration all depend on

communication, dialogue, and negotiation. Arbitration has several properties of mediation and adjudication. It is to be noted here that whatever methods are adopted to suit any resolution efforts, language plays a very crucial role. Usually, the common language of the parties in conflict is automatically the language of the conflict resolution but interpreters are also engaged in situations where they are necessary to make for a conducive atmosphere where everybody freely shares and exchanges information.

It is a fact that communication plays both a causal and remedial role in conflict resolution. It is imperative to appreciate certain strategies that lead to an effective resolution of conflict. One of the strategies according to Njoku (2017) is the use of supportive communication. This strategy helps the parties feel safe and increases the likelihood of opening up which leads to positive communication and results. Another strategy is the "interest-based approach". This has been adjudged one of the most successful means of resolving conflict through communication. This strategy is deemed effective and successful in the sense that it is used in identifying the issues at stake as well as defining the various interests. It further involves a brainstorming option. In this case, the parties involved are allowed to offer ideas/suggestions aimed at meeting the identified issues. Another aspect of the interest-based strategy is the application of criteria and the arrival/reaching of consequences. Reaching a consensus is akin to arriving at a workable solution which the parties can live with. It should be noted that consensus in this way deals with what the parties can agree on. This is the end or result of mediation, dialogue, arbitration, adjudication conciliation, and/or negotiation as non-violent/adversarial methods of conflict resolution. It is a known fact that language and communication on their own do not necessarily bring about the settlement of disputes/conflicts, they are instruments that are employed in the processes that lead to successful facilitation and settlement of conflicts/disputes in every society/context.

Methods and theoretical foundation

The study adopted a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Qualitative research involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data such as texts or videos with the view to understanding concepts, opinions, or experiences (Bhandari, 2020). Specifically, the data for this study was collected via a purposive sampling technique. This method was preferred since only utterances that either condemn the coup and/or appeal to the coup leaders to relinquish power to a democratic government were considered relevant for the study. These utterances were further collected from different sources online and analyzed using pragmatic presupposition theory. Stalnaker (1974) proposes a pragmatic notion of presupposition, in which the proper focus of the philosophical inquiry is what individuals presume when they speak, rather than what words or sentences presuppose. When a statement is said, a pragmatic presupposition linked with it is a condition that a speaker would typically expect to hold in the common ground between conversation participants.

What happened in Mali: Empirical Evidence?

Mali has always been a flashpoint for political instability and crisis with rumours of wars consistently lingering. The country's political crisis gained global attention in 2012 when a coup was carried and the government ousted her inability to address the growing separatist insurgency by the Tuareg rebels in the northern part of the country. Malians were given some hope by the election of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in 2013, who

vowed to hold a peace talk and resolve all crises and insurgencies in the region. In line with the peace talks, an agreement was signed with some rebel groups in 2015, granting greater autonomy to the sparsely populated north. However, the deal was criticized by political observers for failing to involve other armed groups. Some of these factions include Islamist militant groups, some linked to al-Qaeda and the self-proclaimed Islamic State, who seized on the instability of the Tuareg rebellion to launch their own attacks, as well as local militias that have formed to protect themselves in the worsening security vacuum. Further escalating the situation and growing political tension was the absence of these parties.

In a move to bring a lasting solution to the crisis, ECOWAS and other local and international bodies and countries expressed their disappointment with the lingering crisis and coup and called for peace to be restored. The following table presents the exact language used by these bodies and countries and how they were used to restore peace in Mali. One common thing among all the speakers is that they used different words to appeal to the people of Mali. It was these appeals that eventually led to the relative restoration of peace in the country's polity.

Table 1: Data presentation and Analysis

Country/Organisation	What they said	What language reveals
The African Union	"Whenever you have a crisis and the military people have a coup and say 'we are responding to the will of the people, this way of responding is not acceptable at all. His Excellency President Ramaphosa demands that the Malian military release from detention the President, the Prime Minister, Ministers, and other government executives.	The first word (<i>whenever</i>) in the clause <i>whenever you have a crisis</i> affirms to Malians that crises are inevitable. However, the organization went on to appeal to their emotions informatively that the world disdain military disruption of democratically elected governments. While it is not clear on the intention of the military concerning their political abductors, it is obvious that the quick response of leaders and organisations voicing the pertinent of the safety of the captures may have been the reason for the bloodless coup.
Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.	The country is going to be paralyzed by political jockeying over the future, and our ability to work with the government and security services is going to be undercut and restrained. This intermediary period is really dangerous for the region's security.	Here, the speaker focused on the implication of the crisis to the country's economy: <i>The country is going to be paralyzed</i> . This statement affects both the coup plotters and those ousted in the sense that any refusal to reach a compromise from both parties will mean their implied approval of the economic decadent that has continued to befall the country. The last sentence implied that the country would be seen as a threat to neighboring countries, thus prompting such countries to possibly sever economic and military ties with her.

Algeria	The ballot box is the only means to power and legitimacy	Like the previous speakers, this speaker [DA1] condemned the coup and further stated, rather authoritatively, that any legitimate claim to power must be done via election. The view of this speaker implied that only through ballot would peace be restored in Mali.
EU Council	We believe that the stability of the region and of Mali, and the fight against terrorism should be an absolute priority.	For this speaker, the crisis in Mali can impact stability and even terrorism in West African states. The speaker implores other regional governments to intervene in restoring peace and stability in Mali. This speaker views the resolution of Mali's conflict as a regional responsibility.
The United States of America	The US calls on all political and military actors to work towards the restoration of constitutional government, engage in dialogue and reject violence.	The US language use focused on restoring peace in the polity via dialogue which is the only way to stop the country from experiencing any form of political and religious triggered violence. Unlike other countries, the US condemnation and call informs Malians that the restoration of peace in their country is fully in their hands, a responsibility they should take very seriously.
Nigeria	The Nigerian Government unequivocally condemns the coup d'état that took place in Mali yesterday and demands the immediate and unconditional restoration of constitutional order. We welcome the urgent activation of the ECOWAS Standby force."	The statement by the Nigerian government was in contrast with that of the United States. For Nigeria, negotiation should never be done with the coup plotters; only <i>the immediate unconditional restoration</i> of the ousted president would suffice. Her further use of a seemingly threatening utterance in the last sentence further affirms her view against engaging in any dialogue.
Ghana	The events in Mali are taking place at a time when the country is experiencing socio-economic and political difficulties, complicated by security threats posed by jihadists and extremists which have been worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic	The view presented by Ghana is different from virtually all the other views. For her, the Jihadists and extremists are one of the major reasons why Mali has remained in economic difficulty. In other words, she is calling for a concerted effort to ending the activities in the duo.
Angola	Regardless of the reasons on which the President-elect was ousted, we repudiate and discourage this way of forcing the alternation of power.	Angola, like Nigeria, saw no justification for a coup. However, apart from condemning the coup (which the coup plotters saw as a direct attack), she was mute on what

		the country should do to restore peace. By implication, she suggests that the ousted president be restored.
Turkey	Turkey calls immediate release of detained Mali president and senior officials. We are deeply concerned about the military coup. We hope brotherly Mali people unity, stability, and speedy return to normal democratic political order.	This speaker used some words of affinity like <i>brotherly</i> while passing her message condemning the coup. The speaker further implied that a return to <i>democratic political order</i> would guarantee the nation's unity and stability.
China	We oppose the attempt to seek a change of power through force and other unusual means, and we support the pertinent regional and international organizations, especially the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, in working for a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Mali."	To China, the military coup was a mere attempt to take over power; however, this was not so. They eventually succeeded in changing the government and installing two military leaders as president and vice. While the US called on the Malians to take the restoration of peace in Mali into their hands, China considers the activities of international bodies to be very relevant, especially African organisations.

Conclusion

Many works in conflict resolution in Africa seem to focus on the causes, operational modalities and effects of disputes or conflicts as well as the forms of conflict settlement or resolution. However, it appears that none has dwelt on the significant role that language and communication play in the realization of the much-needed resolution among parties involved in conflicts. This paper examines language, communication and conflict management/resolution to ascertain the interconnectivity and effects on productivity. The paper seeks to determine the effective way through which language and communication can be used to manage and resolve conflicts as they occur. In essence, this paper emphasizes conflict management and resolution through the effective use of language and communication, particularly showing how this may have informed the willing decision of the Malian coup leaders to relinquish power. Although some scholars argue that it is the willingness of the two parties involved in the dispute to restore peace and the level of agreement reached, rather than the language or communication forms, this study reveals that sincere unbiased pressure from external parties could help in conflict management.

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