
EDUCATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AS NEXUS FOR JOURNALISM IMPACT ON A MULTI –LINGUA AFRICAN SOCIETY: FOCUS ON NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is entitled: Education in English Language, Information and Communication Technology as Nexus for Journalism Impact on a Multi-Lingua African Society: Focus on Nigeria. The paper takes cognisance of the fact that the Nigerian society like others colonised by Britain in Africa, is faced with the problem of a common language to be adopted from the three major indigenous languages of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo as well as the other over 120 languages available in the country. Basically, struggles for supremacy politically and socially inclined among the diverse elements that make up Nigeria is responsible for this situation. This unhealthy development has provided a favourable ground for the introduction of English language as a national language. Incidentally, the paper notes that majority of the country's population are illiterates. This implies that they cannot even speak, read and write in this language which is foreign but has come to be recognised as official language, language of unity and integration, a language that is dominant in the Nigerian journalistic circle. This also implies that they cannot patronise journalistic products particularly in this era of Information and Communication Technology. Journalism suffers in the face of this unfortunate prevailing situation. Adopting the democratic participant theory, therefore, this paper recommends that education should be provided to Nigerians in English Language and Information and Communication Technology so as to enable them access Journalistic information influenced by the new technology and published in the Lingua franca, English Language.

Key Words: Education, Language, Information, Communication, Technology and Journalism.

Nigeria, like many other Anglophone and Francophone societies is a multi-lingua and multi-cultural society. There are more than 120 different languages spoken in Nigeria, a country whose population, according to a report by the Vanguard Newspaper of September 28, 2013, is about 168.8 million. These myriad languages are scattered in the three geographical zones, created in the days of colonisation particularly, by the Richard's constitution of 1946 as stated by Nwankwo (1992: 89). Three languages considered to be major have been identified with these regions. These are Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo referred to as Northern, Western and Eastern regional languages. Incidentally, in all the regions, there exist other languages that are spoken by others whose origin has nothing to do with the major ones. Some of such people cannot even understand or speak the major ones in their areas. One fundamental problem in particular, is disagreement due to political and social competitions among people of the three regions concerning which language can be adopted as official language of communication. It therefore, becomes difficult to decide on which one can be adopted nationally; a language that people in Northern, Western and Eastern regions can learn and communicate with among themselves as Nigerians.

Journalism, operating in this kind of multi-cultural society, particularly in this era of Information and Communication Technology is faced with the challenge of adopting a language that is officially approved as a medium of communication. It is also faced with the problem of operating in line with the prevailing technological demands of the time which in this case, is information and communication. These challenges are serious because Journalism exists for the people and it is not the people who exist for it. This means that Nigerians must be adequately educated, in English as well as in Information and Communication Technology which is the thrust of this paper. To be more holistic in this regard, the paper is presented under the following sub-themes:

- i. Education, English Language, Information and Communication Technology as well as Journalism in Perspective.
- ii. Theoretical Frame Work
- iii. English Language in Journalism in Nigeria
Information and Communication Technology in Journalism
- iv. Recommendation
- v. Conclusion

Education, English Language, Information and Communication Technology as well as Journalism in Perspective

It is not possible to come out with a definition of the concept Education that will be universally accepted and adopted. This is premised on the simple fact that the term means different things to different people consequent upon their perception of it. Education, in some instances can imply knowledge, enlightenment or wisdom. On this note, one with knowledge or who is enlightened about a particular subject or area of human activity can be referred to as an educated person. This submission is not far from what education really entails. The National Teachers Institute in Kaduna, Nigeria

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in its module on General Methods in Education (2006:1) in an attempt to define education, acknowledges the difficulty in coming out with a straight forward definition of the concept of education but submits finally thus:

Education in general terms is the process of transmitting societal lores, values and desirable attitudes from one generation to another. Education seeks to socialize individuals so as to equip them with the desired mode of behavior that is in conformity with the way of life of the society in which they live. Education is the process of teaching, training and learning in schools and colleges for the development of knowledge and skills so as to prepare individuals to live happily with themselves and others in the society where they live.

These definitions tend to summarise what education entails which is the transmission of knowledge, information, acceptable attitudes and behaviour from one generation to another. They also imply that education is the teaching, training and learning which take place in schools and colleges to impart useful knowledge and skills on individuals in the society.

English Language, according to Hornsby (2006:485) is “the language, originally of England, now spoken in many other countries and used as a language of international communication throughout the world.” It is the officially approved and recognized language of communication in Nigeria, the lingua franca. With this language, the various elements or tribes in Nigeria interact with one another more easily.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has no generally acceptable definition. Manajan (2002) in Uduk (2007:79) refers to ICT thus:

...a broad range of activities and equipment including all the tools, applications and information that are available and accessible via computer. ICT in its fully convergent sense encompasses various forms of information delivery systems such as television, radio, newspaper, books, computers, internet, etc. in one integrated environment.

This definition reveals the fact that Information and Communication Technology deals with the dissemination of information through radio, television, newspapers, books, computers, internet etc. Laudon, Trower, and Laudon (1994:67) defined information and communication technology to include all the different means, methods and tools that humans have used throughout history to help manage information, conduct business, and communicate with others and better understand the world. Information technology system include all that helps us to communicate with the world and with one another.

From these definitions, it can be inferred that Information and Communication Technology involves both the old and new electronic media. Essentially, the information obtained and communicated through the computers is what concerns

Information and Communication Technology. In this regard, the application of the internet and the social media for gathering and disseminating information is still the area of coverage; it also encompasses all that enables us to communicate with one another. It implies that Information and Communication Technology is essential to our everyday life as we interact with one another.

Like other concepts, there is no single definition for journalism, as different scholars look at it in varying ways. Wainwright (1978:1) defines it thus:

Journalism is information. It is communication. It is events of the day distilled into few words, sounds or pictures, processed by the mechanics of communication to satisfy the human curiosity of a world that is always eager to know what is new.

From the above definition, journalism is information and communication transmitted to the society through words, pictures or sounds. Kamath (1980:4) posits that:

It is fashionable to say that journalism is a profession like law or medicine or engineering. A profession it is, but at the same time, it is a craft to be learnt. And woe to the publisher journalist who is ignorant of the principles of business management.

Here, journalism is seen as a profession as well as a craft to be learnt and perfected to be able to deliver well.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the democratic participant theory which seeks to make the media accessible to all potential users and customers regardless of their financial status, educational background and so on. The media, under this theory whose operation is in developed liberal societies, are to be generous in their activities by ensuring that everybody's interest is taken care of. The stimulus for the democratic-participant theory, Okunna (1999) in Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014:109) declared, has been the reaction against commercialisation and monopolisation of media privately owned or monopoly of Journalism as well as centralisation and bureaucratisation of public broadcasting.

Mc Quial (1987) in Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014:109) provided the following as tenets of the democratic participant theory of the media:

- i. Individual citizens and mainly groups have rights of access to media (rights to communicate) and rights to be served by media according to their own determination of need.
- ii. The organisation and content of media should not be subject to centralised political or state bureaucratic control.
- iii. Media should exist primarily for their audience and not for media organisations, professionals or clients of the media.
- iv. Groups, organisations and local communities should have their own media.

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- v. Small scale, interactive and participative media forms are better than large-scale, one-way, professionalised media.
- vi. Certain social needs relating to mass media are not adequately expressed through individual consumer demands, nor through the state and its major institutions. This theory states clearly the need for the media to be accessible to all and sundry. When the populace is educated in English language which is the official language of communication, it will be easier for them to access the Information and Communication Technology available such as the computer, radio and television. Through these media, information will be related to them.

English Language and Journalism in Nigeria

There is a strong relationship which exists between English language and Journalism in Nigeria; a relationship that cannot be taken for granted; a relationship which requires educating Nigerians in English language and which also demands on Journalism adopting English language as a medium of transmission of ideas, information and so on. There are many factors that are responsible for this. Some of them, however, are the following:

English as a Language of Unity

It is already an established reality that English language is the only official language in Nigeria. This is as a result of the over 120 different languages existing in Nigeria, one of the most populated countries in Africa and the entire world. Since this is the case, it becomes imperative for Journalism to adopt this language in order to be understood and patronised by Nigerians regardless of their tribal differences. Tribal newspapers, for instance,

Iwe-Irohin in 1859, Gaskiya Tafi kwabo in the 20th century and others that existed and are still existing are considered to be meant only for those tribes which does not provide the basis for unifying the diverse tribes in Nigeria. Presenting a similar position, Tarhamba and Ogah (2008:64) stated that:

In a society like Nigeria with diversity and multiplicity of about 400 ethnic groups and the world's estimated 1500 mutually languages, mutual suspicion, distrust, disorderliness, disunity and tribalism abound. These do not augur well for the country's quest for development in particular and the world at large. To cater for the interests of these groups and thus pave way of accelerated development, English Language has to be used.

Adopting English language as the medium of transmitting information to Nigerians can go a long way in reducing tribalism, distrust, and suspicion among Nigerians. This can, in no small measure, serve as a unifying factor. This also shows that Nigerians need to be educated in this lingua franca.

Journalism Patronage

Journalism exists to serve the people. This is even more important in order to achieve national development. To achieve this purpose, information from newspapers, magazines, radio, and television has to be dominantly published in a language that is commonly understood in Nigeria. The language, in this regard is English. It is only when the profession adopts this medium that it can be patronised by majority of Nigerians. This can go a long way in making it to attain its aim of informing, educating and mobilizing Nigerians towards the successful implementation of government developmental policies and projects.

International Language

Like French, English language is spoken internationally. In fact, it is one of the languages that integrates countries of the world into a global village. This language is used to facilitate international relations and international trade. The mass media in Nigeria cannot neglect it; they have to adopt it as their medium of transmitting information about Nigeria to the world. They have to adopt it in order to provide a healthy ground for interaction between Nigeria and other countries in the world.

Source of Education to Nigerians

In Nigeria, English language is one of the core courses or subjects that is taught in schools and which must be passed. It is even the language of instruction. Much emphasis is placed on this language which attracts respects to those who understand it. Reiterating the importance attached to this language, Chiakaan (2014:6) posited thus:

....Incidentally, the English language is associated only with literate and educated people. When you claim to have gone to school, you can only be agreed with and respected if you understand and speak English language well. Of course, its equivalence called Broken or Ago or Pigin, is mostly spoken by market men and women as well as urban dwellers.

Basically, publishing information dominantly in English language can help in teaching Nigerians how to speak and write in it. This implies that the mass media can serve as schools teaching Nigerians English language that is so much cherished and respected.

Medium of Communication

Since English language is the only medium of interaction among the various elements or ethnic groups in Nigeria, the journalism profession should also simply adopt it to guarantee this interaction among them.

Educating Nigerians on ICT for Journalistic Impact

Whether we like or not, changes are bound to occur in society affecting people in it negatively or positively. The point however, is that the survival of individuals and institutions in the society is dependent on their ability to adapt to the changes,

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particularly those that can affect them positively. This explains why the current inventions and advancements in technology which has reduced the whole world to a global village has to be embraced by everybody in every society, developed or under developed.

It is said that the world have been reduced to a global village, it implies that with technological advancement in the communication industry, it is easier to know what has happened or is happening in any part of the world regardless of one's location. This implies that journalism is at the doorstep of people with the birth of Information and Communication Technology whose major products are computers, laptops, phones and so on. These have internet facilities which can link one to many other facilities such as the social media like You-tube, Twitter, Facebook and so on for information purposes.

People who are educated in the Information and Communication Technology can seat in their houses or villages and send or share information with friends and relatives. The internet makes it possible for people to have access to journalistic and other information for their interest and that of their society. The internet facility is also a good source of news or information to media houses. Basically, there is no piece of information that cannot be found on the net.

The implication of the foregoing discourse is that Nigerians and people in other developing nations must be educated in the Information and Communication Technology so that, they cannot be in the dark about what is happening in the world. Information, it is said, is power. The importance of information, can, in no way, be understated.

Conclusion

The diversified nature of the Nigerian society calls for the adoption of a lingua franca, which is English language. Of course, the world has changed drastically due to globalization which is a product of Information and Communication Technology. With this development which has reduced the whole world to a global village, information, mostly published in English language, can be easily obtained. But majority of Nigerians are illiterates; they do not understand the English language and the computer which is the major feature of *the ICT*. This is why it becomes necessary to educate them in English language and ICT.

Recommendations

Based on the discourse in this paper, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- i. The teaching and learning of English language in Nigeria should be encouraged so that all Nigerians will learn and understand the language. This has the advantage of making them to obtain information on current happenings in the world.

- ii. For the sake of unity and development of Nigeria, English language should be maintained as official language of communication in Nigeria.
- iii. Journalism should never hesitate to adopt English language and ICT if it must serve all Nigerians effectively for development purposes.
- iv. Nigerians should not only be trained in English language but they should also be trained in Information and Communication Technology so that they can be in position to obtain information on current events or happenings in the world through the internet.

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