

Language and the Nigerian Media

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ABSTRACT:As a means of establishing a good relationship among the communicators, language has the power to create understanding on one hand and a misunderstanding on the other hand if not use properly .So this paper tries to addresses how language is used negatively in the Nigerian media and the consequences emanated from that. The paper equally addresses the need for giving indigenous languages more media attention in order to prevent them from extinction. To achieve this the paper reviews some work on language, communication and many others. .Finally the paper recommends some ways in which the language of communications in the Nigerian media should be properly handle andy the ways in which our indigenous languages should be giving more media attention to save them from dying

KEYWORDS: Language, Media, Communication, Indigenous, Extinction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is vital in all human activities, for it takes place in all our everyday affairs. Man creation can be traced to communication. With this therefore, it is important to portray that communication is the genesis of human and animal creation and interaction. The paper examines the relationship between language and communication, how language can help and how misuse of it can affect the communication. Efficient communication needs concerted ability on the part of message receiving, the appropriate choice of words, correct contextual application and simplicity.

The term “communication” is traced to the Latin words ‘communis’ which simply mean to share and that it is the act of carrying message through the exchange of information, thought, visual, signals, writing or behaviour. Communication is also seen as the transmission of experience from one person to another person, from one person to a group of people. Communication is pervasive. It is an index of creation and is regarded as lively. Okunma [1996] views communication as a complex process of sharing information or a message that require certain basic components. It is good to conclude that it is fundamental and

pervasive way by which people interact via language and other symbolic means. Communication dominate, lubricate and sustain every aspect of our lives.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Communication in the correct [appropriate] language becomes worrisome to language experts in the media in both spoken and written language and this develop a source of concern not only to the people living in the country but for the government itself. The media is said to be the mirror of the society through which people have high right to pass their information. The fear is the misuse of the language in Nigeria and those expected to make correction are being used to promote violence and all form of criminalities. Again, the serious threat to indigenous languages due to wider acceptance of foreign languages is another challenge affecting our communication in this country.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

The paper aims in finding out the wrong usage of language in communication in the Nigerian media and to explore the need for giving the indigenous languages more media attention purposely to prevent them from dying.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

LANGUAGE

The term language is defined as a medium of communication which provide the ground for animal [both lower and high] to engage in transaction and share thought, ideas, experience, notion etc which are presumably known to both parties .As transaction takes place with human beings, so also in the animal kingdom as they use different languages common to them to communicate, some domestic animals understand and respond to human appropriately in the human languages which they have learnt over the years. Alao {2012} traces the genesis of language to Allah that inspired the first man Adam to give name to things He created and to communicate with all creatures including animals. Nancy Vonvillain {2000} notes that language is an

important part of human behaviour. It is the primary means of interaction between people. Speakers use language to pass their thoughts, feelings, intentions, desires and others. Obviously language is seen as the vehicle of conveying messages from the sender to the receiver and vice versa.

Language either spoken or written has a purpose to achieve, it is to create meaning and perfect communication. Daramola {2000} identifies four attributes of language: 1.to create unity in the community 2.to facilitate sense of belonging for speakers of that language 3 it is a tool of mass mobilisation 4 it can cause disharmony if not properly used. Equally, Adebayo and Ojo(2010) observe that language is a phenomenon that allow people to express their desires, aspirations, feelings and to communicate with one another as far as human society is concerned.

COMMUNICATION

Communication does not exist in vacuum, it has certain uses in the society, not only in getting human beings to share experience and idea but it also facilitate entertainment and promote social order. Communication process involve receiver, sender and channel and it does not necessarily read the awareness of the receiver on the intent of the sender. However, it is important to state that both the sender and receiver need to have shared some experience for the communication process to be complete. Wilson {2006} opines that human communication is unique for it is transactional, procession, intersectional as well as intellectual exercises. He believes that communication among human beings is boundless, intentional and timeless.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

This process takes place mostly between two people that is the sender and the receiver. It is otherwise known as face to face communication. Feedback is readily available. It is a conversation with sight and sound as channels. It is not structured and purely informal in nature.

INTRA-PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

This is a communication which take place within individuals. It is self- responsive, personally and experienced communication.

MEDIA COMMUNICATION

This is an interaction between interpersonal and mass communication. The use of telephone, walkie-talkie, letter etc. It can be rowdy and facilitate understanding. Feedback is available. This kind of interaction is mostly purposeful.

MASS COMMUNICATION

This type of communication is well structured and planned. The information is meant heterogeneous to the audiences with varying physiological, sociological and psychological traits. Feedback is delayed, for example, a message coming from radio programme would not be responded to instantly, even if there is an avenue to do so, only small proportion of listeners would be accommodated.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

This take place where there is a speaker {sender} and an audience {receiver}. This type of communication is planned and purposive. The audience has limited opportunity to feedback as compare to interpersonal and group communication.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

This involves the use of spoken words to share experience in communication. Verbal communication is the oldest and most common element of human communication .Verbal communication is using language is symbolic to create meaning in communication process.

NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Precisely speaking, words alone might not be sufficient to perfect communication, other means of bodily expressions are used to perfect communication either as complementary verbal or exclusive depending on the need. Nonverbal include body movement, signs, gesture, facial expression, posture and so on. They are used to convey message or information from one person to another person.

HOW CAN LANGUAGE BE USED TO ENHANCE OR AFFECT COMMUNICATION

There is no doubt that people use language to enhance or affect communication. Sometimes somebody would say something and people would interpreted it in different ways, whereas communication is considered as complete and whole when the respond provided by the receiver is equivalent to the intention of the sender. Scannel {1991} observes that 'the communicator must affiliate to the situation of their audience, and align their communicative behaviour with those circumstance. The burden of responsibility is thus on the broad caster to understand the condition of reception and to express that understanding in language intended to be recognised as oriented to those condition'.

Careful choice of words or symbols create understanding between a sender and receiver while noise create distraction and affect meaning. The under listed are identify areas of obstructions to language of communication as Pearson {2003} observes;

Language used in a specialised way may be an obstacle to communication And in still others, it may add beauty or depth of new understanding.

Alternate language includes grammatical errors and the use of colloquialism, metallic, Clinches, profanity, slangs, euphemisms, figures of speech, jargon, street language, racist Or heterosexist language.

CULTURAL NOISE

People are culturally oriented .They can be stereotypically based on their cultural belief. This often serve as a barrier to communication as it is a distorted view and do not represent the true situation.

SEMANTIC NOISE

It is common to find someone saying 'I did not mean what you think', meaning that the receiver read wrongly the meaning of the sender's message'. Feedback from the receiver which did not compliment the intention of the sender shown that the message has been misinterpreted. Psychological reasons like anger, sadness and other emotional problems can lead to the semantic noise.

SYNTACTICAL ERROR

This comes as a result of grammatical mistakes in the use of tenses. Misapplication of tenses often lead to wrong information. For example, where you expected to use present tense, you use past tense. This will definitely give wrong information which affect communication.

LANGUAGE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE NIGERIAN MEDIA

English language is said to be the official language in Nigeria. It becomes the official language through the colonialists who discovered it convenient to rule the country. Nigeri has over four hundred indigenous languages even though three languages are said to be major viz; Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo which are chosen by the successive government to transact national business together with pidgin language. It is obvious to know that Yoruba language is the first indigenous language of mass communication in Nigeria. This is so because the first newspaper 'Iwe iron fun egba was published in 1859. After that, there are other

publications in other indigenous languages which include; Gaskiya tafi kobo in Hausa by New Nigerian newspapers, Albishir and Alturare which was defunct later, Ogene circulated in Eastern part of Nigeria and so on and so forth. Both the print and electronic media in the Nigeria use verbal and no verbal means to reach their listeners. It is important to mention that some print media outfits try to define their readership through the choice of words use in their publications but some electronic media cannot do so. Radio listeners and television viewers are at the mercy of broadcasting stations programme to create meaning to whatever language of broadcast used , whereas the acronyms ' nepa, who, waec etc' give serious problems to the listeners in electronic media {e,g newspapers}. Many viewers are confuse on what they see on television except in some cases where the visual complement the audio.

THE PRINT MEDIA

The print media as the name imply are the media printed on papers. They consist of daily, weekly and monthly publications. They are; This Day, Guardian, Nigerian Tribune, Daily Trust, Leadership etc. Weekly include Tell magazine, the source and so on. Most of the bi-monthly magazines are soft sell like Celebrity, City people, Ovation and others. In print media, language of reportage and headlines call for serious attention as nearly all of them care less about rules guiding language of publication. Some of these newspapers and magazines have thrown cautions in to the wind as they over- sensationalised their stories with complementary wild headlines.

It is common to read a headline that is not related to the main story. The choice of words and the styles of writing are contrary to the rules of the language of publication. Newspapers and magazines by their natures use both verbal and nonverbal language to create understanding. Pornographic and obscene pictures are spread across pages of publications making one to wonder if such publication are suitable for children consumption. For example, the sun newspapers on weekend are compose of human photographs which the papers themselves had passed various comments on their lewdness and indecencies.

It is obvious that Nigerians are religious and many value their religion, however some writers and reporters take this in to consideration in their write up. This Day news reporter by named Isioma incurred the wrath of Nigerians Muslim through her report on beauty pageant organised in Abuja that if the Prophet was alive, He would relish the beauty of those ladies that participated in the

contest. This also led to mass protests by Muslims and attacked the “This Day office”. So this is a typical example of language abuse by the media.

LANGUAGE OF TRANSMISSION

According to National Broadcasting Commission, the electronic media shall be made accessible and affordable to all Nigerians to be used for the preservation and promotion of the nation's culture and values among others. The television and radio stations in Nigeria can be divided into federal, state and privately owned. Federal Radio and television has stations in all the states of the federation. Meanwhile, when broadcasting was deregulated in 1992 with Raypower Radio pioneered private broadcasting, some of the privately owned radio and television stations include Africa Independent Television (AIT), Channel TV, Silverbird, mitv, Galaxy, etc. emerged

Most radio and television stations in Nigeria transmit their programmes in English Language. The nation's official language is equally English language too. Even those owned by the public are dominated by this language. This equally hinders the understanding of the message. Communication experts have established that understanding of communicative content is enhanced through the use of indigenous languages or mother tongues. In some cases, appropriate choice of the words and bad contextual application of the language affect the audience in proper understanding of the message and lead to public rage. According to an online entertainment newspaper, three radio presenters on Wazobia Kano fm were arrested and charged to court for using negative language on the activities of immunization officials in the state which the prosecutor said must have incited Boko Haram sect members to kill immunization officers. Media workers generally shape the thinking of media consumers therefore it is important for practitioners to be careful of what they write or say. Scannel{1991} observes that ‘the communicator must affiliate to the situation of their audience and align their communicative experience with those circumstances. The burden of responsibility is thus on the broadcaster to understand the condition of reception and to express that understanding in language intended to be recognised as oriented to those conditions’.

Moreover, some important questions which need to be answered are: what is the language culture in the Nigerian media?, Do the Nigerian media have language culture? Who

control what is written or said in the media? What orientation do the Nigerian media have in using language to improve communication? History revealed that control is a paper tiger either in the print or electronic media especially in government owned media.

It is imperative to know that most radio and televisions in Lagos area have their contents mostly in Yoruba language which is widely spoken in the area. Raypower FM Lagos has one programme in Yoruba language, ‘Mini jojo’, Rhythm FM has none as well as Cool FM, Classic FM, Beat FM, Inspirational FM etc. The same can be said to major television stations in Lagos State e.g Silverbird television, Channel TV, Galaxy TV, AIT, ONTV etc. all these have minor or none programme in indigenous languages.

NIGERIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION {NBC}

Nigerian Broadcasting Commission as a regulator has actually not done enough to critically supervise the languages in the media. The organisation has concerned itself with license granting and frequencies allocation. Although, it has a code of conduct for organisations but the enforcement of the document is always been a suspect. Obscene and vulgar languages are freely used on Nigerian broadcast organisations as contrary to section 4.2.2 of the NBC code. Also, some broadcast freely subscribe to information on the internet without proper verification of the authenticity of the content which sometimes turn out to be false. Although, this is against the NBC code. The enforcement of abiding the rules and regulations has become difficult as some stations still breach these rules and regulations. Obviously speaking NBC has left much to be desired in this respect.

LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has for several reasons found guilty of language misuse as it is not exposed to any kind of control. Communicators on social media use language pleasing or appealing to them. Many indigenous languages suffered seriously in the hand of communicators who adulterate them in what they named as ‘free style’ with words. The art of texting which encourages a bridge of words worsened the understanding of language and how to write it appropriately. Some users are so eager in the text messaging art that they discovered it difficult to write correctly. United Kingdom's guardian newspaper cited 2010 English Spelling Society Survey traced misspelling and grammatical errors among UK children to web-based activities which indicated damages done to their language. People on social media are not mindful about the socio-

cultural and security implications of their choice of words covering under the guide of anonymity. Many social network users post messages without taking in to consideration their clarity and logic.

III. CONCLUSION

It is imperative for Nigerian media to employ people having good knowledge of communication combined with the ethics of journalism because both the print and broadcast organisations are guilty of misuse and misapplication of their languages of communication. Sufficient media education is also required for practitioners.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that local languages should be used widely by Nigerian media to facilitate easy understanding of the communicative contents rather than English especially on issues bordering on social integration and development. Meanwhile, the benefit of using local languages to disseminate information cannot be countable as recently confirmed in the acceptance rating of Faaji FM and captured through different feedbacks from the public. Various agencies designated for regulating media contents and messages including NBC, NPAN, Guild of editors etc. should discharge their duties as expected. It has been noticed that most programme presented do not take care of the correct use of such words and the environment – friendliness of such words. Broadcast media regulators should be up to their responsibility to ensure that no presentation comes on air without being properly check and edit.

Language can be effectively used if the sender of information takes in to consideration the peculiarities of the receiver. Wilson {2006} observes that information originators should consider characteristics of receivers {viewers, reader and listeners } which include their knowledge of the subject matter, their reasons for taken part in the communication and other demographic variables for effective and impactful communication. As it is difficult to control what is posted on social media, it is recommended that the etiquette of using social media should be taught in secondary schools and higher institutions as part of general studies so that the abuse and misuse of language would be reduced. A recent study of Reppler Service posted on the internet, point out that forty seven percent of a sample of 300000 of face book Users use profane word on their walls.

The government of Nigeria needs to come up with a National language policy that would promote indigenous languages especially the

broadcast media by making sure that substantial number of their programmes are produced in indigenous languages and vetted by experts in the language of transmission.

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