

The Efficacy of English Communication in Nigeria's Business Environment

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ABSTRACT

*The essence of English Language for occupational purposes is justified by analyzing the role of language in various disciplines. The aim of this review is to assess the efficacy of English language as a tool of communication in Nigeria's business environment. The study further advocates the concentration of teaching business communication for the purpose of equipping Nigerian students with the requisite business communication knowhow that will enable them become seasoned businessmen and women in the country. The study unveils that the adoption of English language in Nigeria as *lingua franca* is not unconnected with the fact that Nigeria's colonial masters were English speaking people and this has made the language to become vital official tool of communication both in business relations and otherwise, nationally and internationally. Consequently, business communication should be taught in every level of the Nigerian education system.*

Keywords: *English language, communication, Nigerian business environment*

INTRODUCTION

Language generally, is an indispensable tool of communication in all aspects of the issues of life. English language has become an indispensable component of business communication in Nigeria and in the international sphere. The adoption of English language in Nigeria as *lingua franca* is not unconnected with the fact that Nigeria's colonial masters were English speaking people. This has made the language to become vital official tool of communication both in business relations and otherwise, nationally and internationally. In the academic environment, nearly all the subjects in the school curriculum are taught in the English language except the mother tongue or a major Nigerian language like Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Ibibio among others.

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), the National Examinations Council (NECO) and many other bodies national, regional or international have found English language as a medium of expression. It is imperative to note that one of the things that keeps a nation going and vibrant is business. Therefore, by all standards, for it to be effective in any nation, a good language of communication must be adopted. For this reason, Olowoyeye (2004) posits that language is seen as a very important and vital factor that enhances man's meaningful

coexistence and information. Among various bodies that cut across tribal 'boundaries, the unifying language in Nigeria is English. Science and Technology cannot progress in Nigeria without the language. However, this review is not out to examine language in general, the aim is to assess the efficacy of English language as a tool of communication in the Nigerian business environment.

English Language as a Tool of Business Communication in Nigeria

According to Claremont (1995), language is the means by which human being communicate using words. The National Teachers' Institute (1990) defines language as a meaningful medium of sending a message to a receiver. These two definitions appear to limit language to human beings. Obviously, language is essentially used by human beings for the purpose of communication. Todd (1993) defines it as a set of signals by which we communicate while Afe (1994) defines it as the arbitrary graphic representation of human vocal noise (sound) used by a speech community. One definition that is very close to that of Afe is the one given by Lawani (2000) that language is the system of communication in a speech community.

When language is taught in the primary school, it is to give the pupils the foundational knowledge they need to understand some concepts. The English language for example is the language of instruction beginning from the primary school education and throughout the secondary school. There is no primary school where English is not used as a medium of instruction. In private nursery/primary schools, English language is taught and used to address pupils' right from the kindergarten, preparatory and nursery classes before primary education classes. All these people, who are nurtured with English language from the grassroots, subsequently turn out to be big entrepreneurs, captains and chief executive officers of companies. In effect, in this modern age, they will transact their businesses (any legal venture that a person does to earn a living and income) in the language they have mastered which will enhance the growth of their businesses locally and internationally.

As identified by Afe (1998), English language is the official language used in all governmental agencies/parastatals, official letters written in firms and organizations are written in English. This implies that all government transactions are communicated in English. The English language is a language of unity in a heterogeneous community like Nigeria with diverse local languages that are difficult to understand and speak by non-indigenes. This fact is further buttressed by Lar and Iheanacho (2007) who describe the language as a tool for national unity asserting that "Multilingualism breeds ethnocentrism which encourages antagonism". They claim that the language creates unanimity of purpose through western education. According to them, English language is used in official circles. The language is used for Commerce or business in Nigeria. Pidgin English (diluted or doctored english) is used for transaction by literate and non-literate traders who engage in business. It cuts across tribal and cultural barriers in Nigeria. English language links Nigeria

with the outside world of business because it is the language of communication in international or regional organizations such as the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), World Health Organization (WHO) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is not out of place to say that without English language, Nigeria would not have been where it is in the business circle. It is indispensable in Nigeria as Adekunle (1995) asserts:

“To get rid of English you have to renounce the essential contents and outstanding features of contemporary Nigerian life. It will amount to throwing away the baby with the bath water. To get Nigerian language to take over the internal communication role of English effectively will be a twenty-first century miracle”.

Ariyo (2004) discusses the teaching of English for specific purposes in Nigeria by identifying learning theories like the behavioural theory, the cognitive theory, social interaction theory, socio-linguistic theory and others. According to him, the language is taught for interpersonal interactions, to adjust comfortably to bicoastal standards to be gainfully employed, to transact business, to keep in stock with technological and global development. He identifies education, science and technology, international relations, administration, politics, the mass media, religion, business and commerce as areas/disciplines in which English is taught or effectively utilized. In Commerce, marketing and business management, such words as bank deposit, withdrawal, loss, profit, remittance are often used as registers.

The Methods of Teaching Selected Aspects of English in Secondary Schools

The major aspects of English taught in a secondary school are designed by the government with the examining bodies at the final level, namely: The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO). This is to equip the candidates with the basic knowledge of handling social, economic, political and other aspects of issues confronting society.

Oyinloye (2002) in Unoh (1988) identifies the three methods of teaching reading as analytic-synthetic and analytic, synthetic methods. He also talks about the alphabetic methods as advocated by Bloomfield (1961) whereby learners are to learn serially and recognize all the letters of the alphabet before being able to read. Other methods of teaching reading identified by him include: the phonic method, the whole word method, the sentence method and the story or paragraph method.

In teaching Oral English, Oluikpe, Anasiudu, Otagburuagu, Onuigbo and Ogbonna (2005) expose students to practice exercises and vowel contrast to prepare them for the final examinations and other life challenges which will require the use of English language. One of such life challenges is business. This is imperative especially in this age when business is carried out in a small corridor called the internet nationally and internationally. The application of this subject, English language in business is done both in the written and oral forms. Consequently, Oluikpe, Anasiudu, Otagburuagu, Onuigbo and Ogbonna (2005) identify the

following components of oral English:

- i Phonetic symbols
- ii Word stress
- iii Syllable stress
- iv Word Rhymes
- v Sound recognition and
- vi Emphatic stress

Afe and Olowoyeye (2007) emphasize the teaching of phonetics and phonology in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria through the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT). They assert that oral English can be taught through the use of the internet, telephone, newspaper, video/audio conference among others. with the instructor or teacher giving a correct model of pronunciation of the segmental and supra - segmental. They recommend that every school should have a computer room or language laboratory where teachers and students will teach/learn English phonology. If pupils have the right foundation in English communication, they will find it easy to apply the skills in business communication for a more vibrant business society.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is appropriate to note that this review has elucidated clearly the concept of English language, the importance or role of the English in Nigeria business environment. Examinations cannot be conducted without the use of English at any level. In the light of the above discussions, business communication should be taught in every school. Students of Science and Technology should take a course in English every session or semester to improve their communication ability. The teaching of English for specific purpose will acquaint the science and technology students with the appropriate register for their various disciplines. ICT should be utilized to teach English in schools in Nigeria. This appeals to student's visual and auditory senses and engenders better comprehension. This done will, prepare the students who are bound to engage in one way or the other in the world of business.

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