

THE PLACE OF BROADCAST MEDIA IN SUSTAINING ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

by

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of broadcast media in promoting English language sustainability for human resources development in Nigeria. A questionnaire survey was administered to 200 respondents, and the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings reveal that English language proficiency is crucial for human resources development in Nigeria, and broadcast media, particularly radio, plays a significant role in promoting English language sustainability. However, the study also highlights challenges such as limited access to English language programmes, particularly in rural areas. The study however recommends that policymakers and stakeholders should invest in expanding access to English language programmes, develop targeted English language programmes, and establish English language training centers.

Keywords: English Language, Broadcast Media, Human Resources, Sustainability, Development.

Introduction

The English language has unparalleled importance in the national context since the decision-making and opinion forming elements of the nation use it to articulate their relations with one another. The English language is the complete tool for the economic, social, political and educational development of many nations (Ifensor, 2016). The phenomenon of languages is so much a part of our lives that it is difficult to step back and attempt to view it as just another natural phenomenon. The proficient and effective use of a language in the process of communication will create more room for deeper awareness and understanding of what is communicated. The English language is regarded as the language which can give access to the means of realizing this aspect of the Nigerian developmental aspiration.

Nigeria is a multi-lingual country with over 250 ethnic languages (Mba, 2013). English is the official language and the language of instruction in schools. However, the proficiency level of English among Nigerians is declining. This has implications for human resources development and the country's economic growth (Obi, 2022).

Crystal (2009), defines language as a systematic, conventional use of sounds, signs or written symbols in human society for communication and self-expression. A specially devised system of symbols for programming and interacting with computers. For Ike (2006), language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which people within a social

group interact. The broadcast media on the other hand, comprising print, electronic/broadcast and digital media have a significant role to play in promoting English language sustainability.

Going straight to a paper of this nature in a sociolinguistic - sensitive environment like Nigeria will generate from the outset, questions on why a "foreign language" should be the medium to literacy in Nigeria, so it is pertinent therefore to provide a conceptual framework from which this paper draw its strength. However, in doing this, it is not intended to orchestrate a departure from culturally- motivated and time-honoured linguistic search for an Indigenous lingua franca rather, it seeks to emphasize the advantages English language offers and the purposes it serves while it stands in for the eventual "take-over" of an Indigenous lingua franca. We have equally tried to draw attention to the fact that the language is not as arrogantly foreign and domineering as some commentators want us to believe, but that the language has been domesticated (without necessarily losing its standard) to accommodate our cultures, values, ethics, mores etc. And that the proficiency in such language is sine qua non for any form of literacy. That could generate awareness to literacy for any meaningful business of nation building. Language is a medium of communication; it is a patterned social activity of human beings. Language is a tool used by individuals or groups to interact or exchange ideas. It therefore binds people together and at other times separates individuals or groups. Consequently, language has many varieties, each of which is aimed at serving a specific function in the society or to the individuals that use it. Language is the bedrock of human civilization and awareness. The superiority humans have over other mammals is derived from the fact that they have languages that are intelligible and capable of transmitting forms of knowledge. Thus, the centrality of language in education (formal & informal) is a timeless philosophical construct. In terms of order that people can participate in business, agriculture, trade and the like, English is assumed to be a language that is better suited for modern use, for science, technology, global communication, and so forth. Language in sustainable development, needs to be understood both locally, contingent and puts it in her discussion of literacy and sustainable development.

Statement of problem

According to Ugorji, (2016) the proficiency level of English language among Nigerians is declining, which has implications for human resources development and the nation's economic growth. Despite the importance of English language in Nigeria, the country still struggles with low English language proficiency levels particularly among the youths. Lack of proficiency in English language hinders communication and limits access to information, education and economic opportunities. Again, decline in English language proficiency will affect Nigeria's competitiveness in the global market, thereby hindering economic growth. It is on this stand that the researcher will explore the potential of broadcast media in the sustainability of English language in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

- i. To investigate the impact of broadcast media in learning English language.
- ii. To identify the strategies for effective use of broadcast media in promoting and sustaining English language.
- iii. To explore the relationship between broadcast media usage and English language proficiency among Nigerian students.

Research questions

- i What are the impacts of broadcast media in promoting the learning of the English language in Nigeria?
- ii What are the challenges confronting the radio/television industry in Nigeria and their impact on sustainable development?
- iii What are the best sustainable development strategies to be adopted by radio/television in order to promote economic growth in Nigeria?

Clarification of Concepts

Characteristics of Language

Mgbodile (1999) cited in Brooks (1961) posits that Language is marked by some distinguishing characteristics which have been aptly described by Brooks (1961) thus: Language is learned, systematic, symbolic, vocal behaviour; a culturally acquired and universal mark of man.

Language is learned: Man learns to speak a language in much the same way as he learns to walk. To climb, to play football or paper to swim in other words, the power to speak a particular language is not innate or inborn in man.

Language is systematic: A close look at language would reveal that it operates within a systematic arrangement. It has a structured, orderly arrangement and recurring patterns that are predictable.

Language is symbolic: Language is expressed using a set of symbols in 'form of letters or pictures which represent its sound system (phonology) The English language has about twenty-six (26) letters that represent the sounds used in English.

Every language can be written and spoken: It can be used in any of the two ways.

Language is arbitrary: Language is said to be arbitrary, this is to say that there are some elements or characteristics of language which we cannot easily explain or find reasons for.

Language is cultural and universal: Language is the first cultural identity of a people thus, to understand the language of a people very well, one needs to know the culture of the people.

Language is dynamic: It has unparalleled importance in the national context since the decision-making and opinion-forming elements of the nation use it to articulate their relations with one another.

Functions of Language

Language plays several roles in human communication. Ugorji (2016) states that before one can comprehend the exact role of language in 18-day life, one must engage in extensive reflection. The reason is simply that language occupies a more enigmatic place than it is commonly realized. According to him, language performs three well known and several lesser functions in our daily lives.

Firstly, language is an indispensable means by which we express abstract concepts, keeping record writing laws, making contractual agreements and engaging in many other acts where

we state record ideals. It is therefore the basis upon which society functions. Without language we would have no modern civilization characterized by such complex developments as science and technology, legal procedures and literature because we would have no precise way to express and reward the ideals involved. Neither would we have any effective means of pooling our knowledge for future generations.

Secondly, language creates tools with which one thinks. The man considering the purchase of a house. For instance, uses language also as a symbol for the ideals upon which he thinks. Language plays an important part in shaping our thought process. This is true because the relationship of thought guides the use of language.

Thirdly, language supplies many of the tools with which man remembers as man cogitates, he recalls many facts through language. Also, language is used as a vehicle for social interaction. Man is the only animal that has evolved and perfected the use of language. Progress is personal and world affair is basically dependent upon language. Language is also used as a vehicle for learning. It is the most vital element for all forms of learning, The process of imparting knowledge, the transfer of values and attitudes, and acquisition of skills and competencies are essentially through the instrumentality of language.

English Language in Nigeria: An Overview

Nigeria is reputed to have over 400 indigenous languages, thus ordinarily, Nigeria is a multilingual country. For her to overcome the Tower of Babel experience (the confusion resulting from lack of understanding as a result of language diversity), she must cling to the use of one language. Fortunately, and unfortunately, since the colonial era, that language has been English. The fortune functions and characteristic features of the English language in Nigeria are the results of influence and pressures from social attitudes, administrative guidelines and the socio-linguistic realities in the Nigeria-speech community. Nigeria has consciously and, mostly, unconsciously built a linguistic social, political, economic, educational, industrial and technological development in an indigenous ultra-multilingual nation. This linguistic network is also needed to facilitate national cohesion and ensure smooth international interaction.

English language is considered politically a language of colonialism and consequently imperialism. A conservative Nigeria will sociologically regard the English language as a language which tends to alienate Nigerians from their roots and acculturate them into a counterfeit-free culture. In spite of the importance of the role of English as a lingua franca or as a language of communication, the need for a language of national culture to bring together into a unified whole various traditions of the different segments of the Nigerian community makes people insist development of a national language. As Ugorji (2016) tried to explain,

the cold fact is that every generation in every society or nation through its educational system tries to inculcate in the young generation its traditional values, its culture and its philosophy. One of the major problems of young multi-ethnic nations is the integration of their various groups. Language is a potent factor in achieving national integration. The indigenous language of internal communication should be linked to developing national goals, national symbols, national rituals and national identification that a nation needs to unify its people. A sound national language policy should make sure that there is available to every citizen a language that serves as an adequate vehicle for a national philosophy, a national culture and as a popular symbol of national unity

It is an open secret that in recent years the Voice of America and CNN Broadcasts in English have become sources of daily news of valuable information to thousands of Nigerians. The popularity of the English language in Nigeria, particularly among the elite can be clearly appreciated in Obi (2012) thus: “the English language acts mainly as the vehicle for that aspect of contemporary Nigerian Culture which is now reflected in our history, educational system, administrative set up, industrial and technological efforts, our political experiments, our international alignment preferences, pattern of dressing, and to a large extent, in the attitude of the Nigerian elite and most likely in the way these leaders of the Nigerian community structure reality. Equally significant is the fact that quite a substantial body of the intellectual endeavours of Nigerians are carried out and recorded in the English language”. In tertiary institutions, English is the language of lectures and tutorials. A high degree of proficiency in English is essential for success at this level.

English Language and Human Resources Development for Socio-economic Development in Nigeria: The place of broadcast media

Having earlier on x-rayed the meanings of language, characteristics of language functions of language, English language in Nigeria, the concept of development, it is perhaps appropriate at the juncture to take a look at the main focus of this paper which is English Language Sustainability for Human Resources Development in Nigeria: The Place of Broadcast Media. Put the other way round, the paper tries to look at some of the roles which English language could play in developing human resources in for socio-economic development in Nigeria with a focus on the role of the broadcast media. Basically, one of the roles of English language in socio-economic development in Nigerian society is that English language serves as the tool through which information (social, political and economic) are transmitted to the people. Having in mind the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria, especially in the era of language, the only way through which these multi-ethnic and linguistic groups could be reached is through the use of English language akin to the above role of information is that of unification. The use of English language as means of reaching the diverse tribes that make up Nigeria, for sure acts as the much needed tonic for the oneness and unification of the country. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Network news and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) news which are beamed to the entire multi-linguistic people of Nigeria in English language are typical examples. Since English language plays an important role in socio-economic development in Nigeria, it also plays an important role in human resources development. Rotimi (2016) states that of all the contributory factors to economic development, human resources stand out as a major force because people are the real wealth of any nation and because the basic objective of economic development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long health and creative lives. For human resources development to be sustainable the teachings of university and polytechnic education will give the national economy high level manpower who will not only act as doctors, engineers, teachers, and the like, but will also create a new class sufficiently large hence, sufficiently strong to establish its own value of justice, selection on merit flexibility, empiricism and efficiency Obi (2016). Apart from the above, English language has served as a veritable tool which the mass media use for social re-engineering and mobilization. Many a time, the government may have attractive policies and plans, which would go a long way in sustaining and even enhancing the well-being of the populace. Except where and when these brought to the doorsteps of the people in the language for appreciation, such well-designed policies and plans may not achieve the aims and purposes for which they were initiated Ifensor (2006)

remarks on the status of English in Nigeria and points out that English has come to have unparalleled importance in the national context, since the decision-making and opinion-forming elements of the nation use it to articulate their relations with one another. The missionary inspired practice of learning English as a subject in lower primary school and using it as a medium in upper primary school in Southern Nigeria, and was replaced by experimentation with English as a subject only in the six years primary project. Obi (2016) emphasizes the roles of English in Nigeria as indisputable. The English language is central to political, educational, and economic as well as the social life of the nation. It is the only language that is utilized for inter-ethnic communication among the four hundred indigenous languages spoken in the country. Eyisi (2001) quoting Chinua Achebe says: *“We can believe in the value of English to the very survival of the Nigerian nation without feeling like deserters. We can use our energies extending the frontiers of English to cover the whole areas of our Nigerian consciousness.”*

Broadcast media

Broadcast media industry connotes the collectivity of television and radio stations in Nigeria. These stations remain answerable to the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) as they remain guided by its stipulations. It is the NBC regulations that strive to maintain and sustain good official and professional conduct in the discharge of their duties. This is evident in political reporting, especially during elections when television and radio stations are expected to give equal opportunities to all parties. More so, product and service advertisers guard against religious sentiments in packaging their messages. (Okunna, 2002).

Broadcast stations are inclined to the policies and principles of professional bodies like the Advertising Practitioners' Council of Nigeria (APCON), Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) etc. The revenue they get enables them to carryout their duties and maintain the organization in order to render qualitative services to suit the public interest, especially as the world is technologically and consistently getting reduced to a global village.

However, broadcasting in a developing world reflects the prevailing political and social ideologies of each country. The degree to which broadcast messages influence public attitude for the purpose of development derives from the prevailing press theory. (Dunu, 2022). Press theory denotes the quality of the relationship between the status quo and the press as provided for in the Constitution.

Theoretical Framework

The paper will be anchored on three relevant theories namely: Communication theory, Language Acquisition theory and Sustainability theory. Communication theory explains how broadcast media can be used to communicate English language learning materials to a wide audience. Language acquisition theory describes how people learn language and how broadcast media support language learning. Sustainability theory explains how broadcast media can be used to promote sustainable development, including language sustainability. These theories therefore are appropriate for this study since they guide towards exploring the role of broadcast media in promoting English language sustainability for human resources development in Nigeria.

Methodology and Sources Of Data

The study employed a survey research method in generating data. Survey was used because it is a more natural way of studying any issue. Moreover, it is less expensive compared to the amount of data obtained from it. (Osuala, 2005). Even though the data obtained from secondary sources were used, the main source of data was a questionnaire. In addition, oral interview was conducted to complement the questionnaire.

A total of 200 respondents were sampled using a stratified random sampling technique to assess their English language proficiency and broadcast media usage in the affected areas. A sample size of twenty (20) respondents comprising: language experts, media practitioners, learners, broadcasters and policymakers, selected randomly were studied, bringing the population of the study to one hundred (100). Data collected was presented and analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentages.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1. Gender of respondents

Sex	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	45	45
Female	55	55
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Data on the table above shows that majority of the sampled respondents are females. This shows more involvement of females.

Table 2. Age of respondents

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
18-30	18	18
31-45	50	50
46-above	22	22
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 3. Respondents' educational background

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Primary school	12	12
Secondary school	38	38
Tertiary education	50	50
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 4. What is your occupation?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Student	30	30
Teacher/Educator	45	45
Media practitioner	25	25
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Information on the table above is an indication that the respondents constitute mainly teachers, students, and media practitioners.

Table 5. What role do you think English Language plays in Nigeria's economic development?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Crucial	50	50
Significant	45	45
Minimal	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 6. How often do you listen to English Language programmes on the radio?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Daily	10	10
Weekly/monthly	30	30
Rarely	60	60
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 7. How important is English Language proficiency for human resources development in Nigeria?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very important	70	70
Somewhat important	25	25
Not important	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 8. Have you ever participated in an English Language programme or event organized by a broadcast media organization?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	25
No	70	70
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 9. Have you noticed any improvements in English Language proficiency among Nigerians in the past five years?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	40	40
No	55	55
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 10. Have you noticed any positive impact of broadcast media on human resources development in Nigeria?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	60
No	35	35
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 11. Which broadcast media do you think is most effective for promoting English Language sustainability in Nigeria?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Radio	55	45
Television	25	50
Social media	10	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Discussion of Findings

From the information represented on the tables above, female respondents are more than the males. It is also captured that the respondents are mature in age. This is good as it shows that feedback from respondents are factual and somewhat credible. For the fact that 50% of the respondents are have attained the tertiary institution has proven that the response is worth working with. Similarly, out of the three classes of respondents: students, teachers and media practitioners, it is worth to note that 45% are teachers, 30% as students while 25% constitute media workers. This is also good. Despite the fact that majority (50%) believe that English language is indispensable in human resources development and sustaining Nigeria’s economy, however, 60% of the total respondents are of the opinion that they rarely create time to listen to radio. This may have a huge effect on learning as they may be missing out serious developmental programmes via radio or any other broadcast channel. Yet, they view English Language proficiency to be very crucial for human resources development in Nigeria. This is evident as 70% of the respondents affirm. Again, a good number of the respondents, ranging 60% agree to have noticed many positive impacts of broadcast media on human resources development in Nigeria. This therefore is an indication that the broadcast media are good mechanism in enhancing English language proficiency for human resources development. It is believed from the data generated above that broadcast media, radio in particular is most effective for promoting English Language sustainability in Nigeria. This is evident as 55% affirmed. Those who feel television is a better media compared to radio are 25 (25%), while 10% voted for social media.

Conclusion

It is important to know that the world is rapidly coming together thus, becoming a global village. Every facet of human endeavor reflects this globalization. A brief tap on wired computers can link us up with the entire world without shifting an inch from our chair. This is the reality of our contemporary experience. English language has become the language of the world; it is for now, the window through which we show our experience, culture and customs to the world because its scope of influence transcends ethnic, geographical, and socio-religious boundaries. The indication is that English still has a significant role to play in

Nigerian. As indicated above, English occupies a unique place in Nigerian education because of its significant role and status in national life. English is socio-linguistically important in Nigeria in spite of its colonial origin, both the language of official, business and a vital link language between the various ethnic groups in the country. It is also pedagogically significant as the language of instruction in virtually the entire school system, from upper primary to the highest tertiary levels. It thus enjoys a lot of prestige as a language over and above other Nigerian languages, big or small. Accordingly, a good pass in English has become mandatory for transition from primary to Junior Secondary School (JSS) to Senior Secondary School (SSS) and for admission to all levels of higher education in the country.

Lastly, the English language has also become a veritable tool for assessment and evaluation by the media. There is no gain-saying the fact that one of the ways through which the effectiveness of a programme or even a government could be known is through unimpeded assessment. The NTA programmes - The president speaks, Good morning Nigeria - and CHANNELS TV Sunrise Daily are such ways through which English is being used by the media to link the people with those they have voted in and it is through these kinds of programmes that current issues and policies of government are assessed.

Recommendation

Broadcast media organisations need to increase the frequency and duration of English language programmes, majorly in rural areas. Broadcast media development programmes should target specific groups such as: students, professionals, teachers, entrepreneurs, etc. There is a need for government and private sectors to establish English language training centres that provide affordable and accessible training programmes. Also, the government and private sectors should ensure that individuals and organisations that promote English language proficiency are provided with incentives by way of motivation. Educational institutions should prioritize learning of English language and provide opportunities for students to practice and improve their English language skills. Furthermore, broadcast media organisations have to invest in developing high-quality English language programmes aimed at shaping a diverse audience.

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