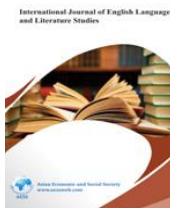




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THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE TEACHING AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The diverse multicultural backgrounds of English language learners make it imperative that the media plays paramount role in the teaching and development of English language in Nigeria. Bearing in mind that English, a better studied language, now co-exists with other indigenous languages, and the need of the native speakers of the local languages to learn English for diverse purposes. The media has been providing a level playing ground where speakers of diverse native tongues can learn the language effectively. This paper examines media roles in relation to national policy and global trends of teaching and information transformation. The policy places English language in a high position not considering the multicultural setting while the 21st century needs require the teacher and learner to be equipped in order to meet the demands of modern education. The media is thus identified as the medium through which a wider audience can be reached in the society and the means to achieve the educational needs. This paper deals with some key issues of using media in the classroom and some samples which will enhance teaching and development of the English language. It concludes by advocating for the use of media for instructional purposes in order to bring constructive change in English language teaching, learning and development in Nigeria.

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Contribution/ Originality

This study is one of very few which have investigated media roles in relation to national policies and global trends of teaching English language in Nigeria in the present millennium.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of language in any society is inexhaustible. Language stands at the center of human affairs, from the ordinary to the most profound. The language of any group of people is the major carrier of the group's traditional beliefs, customs and history. It is the medium through which the customs and traditions of society are transmitted to the future generation. This is essentially aimed at achieving a social situation.

Another important aspect of the mass media and language development is the nature of various types of mass media. [McLuhan \(1964/1999\)](#) claims that the "contents" of the mass media cannot be seen apart from the technology of the media themselves. How they say something and to whom they say it, affects what they have to say. For example, a statement made on television may be very different, in both its character and its effects, from a statement materially the same, made through the press. Accordingly, we need to know something of a medium's technical operation before we can examine its impact. The medium and the message are basically inseparable. (See McLuhan). However, due to social changes brought by the media, teaching and learning contexts in Nigeria have greatly changed. In this article, questions such as; how can students attain the needed mastery of English language for international communication using examples from the media? And how do I use the classroom media presentations to enhance the students' language use and development?

English over the years has become a language so powerful that the world heavily depends on it for effective and efficient communication. Several factors have however, contributed to the global spread of English. One important factor is the European alliance with America and Soviet Union; world super powers. The expanded technologies of these super nations, their economies, power and politics have pushed English to its present status. English however, does not only serve as an international language but has also acquired the status of the largely studied global language of wider communication. The onus of this paper thus, lies in examining media roles in relation to national policies and global trends of teaching English language in Nigeria in the present millennium.

2. MEDIA

Media is a significant force in modern culture particularly, in language studies. It refers to the way people receive information and entertainment. Media also mean the various mass media through which individuals are enlightened /educated entertained, mobilized, and persuaded. According to [Barbara \(2007\)](#) mass media could be written, broadcast or spoken and it is aimed at reaching a large audience. Media accommodates multitude of sources such as, television, newspapers, Cinema/films, radio, advertizing, movies, the internet, magazines and more. The media however manipulates the time axis ([Kramer, 2006](#)) and more generally notions of place and time. Media as technologies open the way for aspects of the world which cannot be seen or heard by natural perception ([Barbara, 2007](#)).

The advent of mass media which were not based on print culture opened up new worlds to even more people. Mass media operating with pictures and sound, most typically film and

television, gave really large parts of the population (like immigrants with insufficient mastery of the national language) access to media culture. Today electronic mass media provide access to information and entertainment to all those parts of the population which are less proficient in logocentric verbal argumentation. This effect has been welcomed as being democratizing, precisely because of the (low literacy barrier) mass media (Newhagen and Bucy, 2004) which provides egalitarian access to language studies and development.

Media has also portrayed a “mediated culture” which reflects and recreates the culture. . This has enhanced the rate of media saturation, and in turn enhanced the development of English language in Nigeria.

3. DEVELOPMENT

This is a concept that has varied definitions and interpretation. It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which encompasses the improvement and enhancement of all aspects of human life. Development denotes advancement, change and improvement in all aspects of human living standards. Development in this paper is examined in relation to the language situation in Nigeria. Thus, Nnoli (1980) describes it’s as “inter-human environments, transforming them to their own betterment by humans in order to improve and transform their environment”.

Development in Nigeria language according to Njemanze Nwulu (2012) thus, implies the advancement, improvement and transformations of the various indigenous languages in Nigeria by the policy makers because language is basically used by humans. Language development is generally referred to as the advent of human communication process which enhances the development goals of language learning, political and economic development of an individual (Njemanze, 2007). Language development embodies applied and practiced skills which generally improve education in a nation. It enhances the educational needs and status of a country and above all. It is central to the development of a functionally literate nation (Njemanze, 2007).

The educational needs and status of any nation are usually unique to that society, while the level of a nation’s mastery of a language is dependent upon the contexts of usage. A good language development plan aims at ensuring mastery and proficiency attainments by users.

4. ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

English language in Nigeria is a second language. The advent of English language in Nigeria was induced by such factors as trading, slavery, colonization and missionary activities. It came through a language contact situation between Portuguese, Europeans and more resulted in the development of a simpler version of the English language of communication; pidgin.

The English language served the many purposes of Nigeria’s

- Official language
- National language and language of governance
- Language of institutional communication
- Language of administration

- Language of literature
- Language of the Media
- Language of trade and commerce and
- Language of education.

As a language of education it is used in instruction delivery, as a language of all subjects except the indigenous languages and other foreign languages that do not require English language in their acquisition. It was also made the prerequisite for gaining admission into institutions in Nigeria. The co-existence of the English language with many Nigerian indigenous languages and pidgin intertwined has led to an eruption of more locally-based English language variety. This created discomfort in the nation mainly to policy makers. Largely because, the goals of the English language is not being attained as proposed. There were noticeable existences of some linguistic features such as, code-switching, code-mixing, blending interference, borrowing, transfers, transliteration and more (Njemanze Nwulu, 2012). The existence of these features in the English language usage of many learners created the need for more researches on the roles of the media in the teaching and development of English language in Nigeria.

5. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND POLICIES IN NIGERIA

Language development according to Njemanze (2007) the advancement, improvement and transformations of the various languages (especially in Nigeria) by policy makers. The author describes it as “the advent of human communication which enhances the developmental goals of language learning... and of an individual.” It embodies applied and practiced skills which generally improves education in a nation.

Developing a policy and language that will accommodate the needs of all ethnic groups in Nigeria is a task that confronts policy makers and language planners. Nigeria since independence has continued to battle with its ethnic-linguistic challenges which have been detrimental to its language development plan. Nigeria has large, medium and small languages littered all over the country which creates an upsurge in inter-ethnic, economic, education, political and religious competition. This upsurge has enhanced the maintenance of a single official language. There has been reduced attention given to the development of a national language in Nigeria. As long as English has continued to occupy its esteemed position in the nation, achieving a well developed language plan for other languages would continue to pose a difficult task. Various attempts to establish a composite national language (WAZOBIA) has not produced an encouraging result because of ethnic competition. No ethnic group wants to lose her language even if the users are very few. The major and minor ethnic languages are supposed to be projected in a way that their mastery will facilitate learning and as well foster national development. They should be projected to be used alongside the English language and not having more preference for English language alone. Although the practice in Nigerian is often that of visible disparity between policy and practice, language planners should be recruited to help in drawing-up an all embracing language plan. This is because the acquisition of language is a complex process.

Again the combination of people with different language, cultures religion and diversity of hopes and aspirations who are merged into one geo-political entity has contributed to the impediment in the realization of an adequately developed language in Nigeria. Furthermore, the task of language development in Nigeria has been impeded as a result of local ethnic loyalties. A Yoruba, Hausa or Igbo will advocate for the sole use of his language in policy making thereby inducing crisis which further hinders that process. Political change, crisis and insecurity are other factors that impede the development of an adequate language plan. These issues should be greatly controlled by appropriate bodies.

6. THEORIES AND PERSPECTIVES ON MEDIA ROLES

Varied opinions range on the roles of media in influencing teaching and learning situations. Three main opinions and perspectives from sociologists as discussed by [Houghton \(2013\)](#) on Cliffs note emerged. They include;

- The limited effects theory
- The class-dominant theory and
- The culturalist theory

6.1. Limited-Effects Theory

The limited-effect theory argues that because people generally choose what to watch or read based on what they already believe, media exerts a negligible influence. This theory originated and was tested in the 1940s and 1950s. Studies that examined the ability of media to influence situations found that well-informed people relied more on personal experience, prior knowledge, and their own reasoning. However, media “experts” more likely swayed those who were less informed and opined that this theory came into existence when the availability and dominance of media was far less widespread.

6.2. Class-Dominant Theory

The class-dominant theory argues that the media reflects and projects the view of minority elite, which controls it. Those people who own and control the corporations that produce media comprise these elite. Advocates of this view concern themselves particularly with massive corporate mergers of media organizations, which limit competition and put big business at the reins of media- especially news media. Their concern is that when ownership is restricted, a few people then have the ability to manipulate what people can see or hear. For example, owners can easily avoid or silence stories that expose unethical corporate behavior or hold corporations responsible for their actions. Although most people argue, that a corporate elite controls media, a variation on this approach argues that a politically “liberal” elite controls media. They point to the fact that journalist, being more highly educated than the general population, hold more liberal political views.

6.3. Culturalist Theory

The culturalist theory combines the other two theories and claims that people interact with media to create their own meanings out of the images and message they receive. This theory sees audience as playing an active rather than passive role in relation to mass media. One strand of research focuses on the audience and how they interact with media.

Theorists emphasize that the audience choose what to watch among a wide range of options. They choose how much to watch, and may choose the mute button or the DVR remote over the programming selected by the network or cable station. Studies of mass media done by sociologist's parallel text-reading and interpretation research completed by linguists (people who study language) have proved this idea to be true. Both groups of researchers found that when people approach material, whether written text or media images and messages, they interpret that material based on their own knowledge and experience. Thus, when researchers ask different groups to explain the meaning of a particular song or video, the groups produce widely divergent interpretations based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, and religious background. Therefore, culturalist theories claim that, while a few elite in large corporations may exert significant control over what information media produces and distributes personal perspective plays a more powerful role on how the audience interprets those messages.

The culturalist theory or perspective thus serves as the suitable theory for this article. They are active participants who create their own meanings from what they receive. Thus they have a right to choose what to assimilate, decode and what to resist. This attitude will enhance learning and language development. However, research findings in relation to the mass media and language development are by no means definitive. Apart from supplying data on viewing habits, they tend to consist of theories yet to be tested or suggest areas wanting in investigation. What follows, therefore, is an outline of the relevant roles of the mass media regarding language development.

7. RELEVANCE OF MEDIA IN TEACHING AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

In recent times, media communication has added new dimensions to the learning of the English language in Nigeria. It has promoted efficiency, flexibility and ability to complete in international communication. In the words of [Karlocarin \(2012\)](#), Media has been instrumental to the spread and development of the English language in Nigeria. It has served as a tool for improving the English language teaching situation and as such it has given a boost to its spread and utilization. Media roles in language development are enormous especially in the communication process; a process which requires proper understanding, encoding and decoding of the message from its sources. The message could be written or spoken through the use of a generally accepted and interpretable language, English. Since the media is a tool for communication (written/spoken) which helps in the cultivation of proper language skills and proficiency needed for effective functioning in the society, it enhance the development of English language in Nigeria through the following processes;

- Correspondence
- Integration
- Flexibility and
- Competition

The impact of correspondence in language learning has aided learning through e-mail and other digital medium. Such medium as e-mail, blogs, net-speaking etc, help learners to actualize their goals of English language learning. Integration creates the ability for learners to combine media types. Thus it is possible to combine phones with video or interactive sound with pictures (multimedia) in teaching and learning. Also data stored in digital formats remains intact and can be copied severally irrespective of the number of years it has stayed.

Flexibility and competition help the learners to communicate with a wider audience. The learners are able to convey information and opinions on current events with a wider audience. Media teaching helps the transmission of information. People were able to combine the transactional capability of computers and computer networks to carryout online learning. Media tools have therefore been designed to edit and produce cumbersome works in a short time.

8. MEDIA CHANNELS, ROLES AND METHODS USED IN CLASSROOM

Effective and efficient teaching and development of the English language can be achieved using the following media channels;

- Print media
- Television
- Radio broadcasting
- Digital media and
- Internet

8.1. Print Media

This include newspapers, magazines, books, letters, billboards and handwriting on walls and streets, newspapers are the potent source of information of any country. Its publication is issued periodically, to convey information and opinions on current events. More than half of the newspapers published in the world are printed in English. Almost all the big cities of the world have at least one English newspaper. The invention and spread of the printing press was the major factor in the early development of the newspaper invention of new technologies (for instance, satellite and telegraph) enormously facilitated the rapid learning of English. Much of the information available through the international networks in transmitted in English.

At this point the author intends to discuss exactly the ways Print, audio – visual media and other forms of media help the teacher to teach English language effectively in the classroom. Through this medium there is positive input in education.

8.2. The Newspaper

There are different ways of using newspapers in the language classroom. The student may read the articles therein written in English and this could transmit some form of culture into the student or reader. An example is reading a story with the headline;

“New Yam Festival of Owerri (a town that serves as the capital of a state in Nigeria popularly called ‘OruOwerri’) Turns into a Great Carnival”

Here the younger generation who do not know much about new yam festival in Nigeria, in Igbo-land or in Owerri; will acquire vital information about this culture.

Newspapers also help in reflecting changes in the language, morphological, semantic and even stylistic changes, and as well assist students, readers and even teachers, where necessary to keep themselves abreast with close changes. It will suffice to say that most newspapers are linguistically up to date and provide valuable linguistic data for the student, teacher and ordinary learner of the English language.

Again, it is important to note that most newspapers are veritable sources of many of the varieties of written English which many students find important and very valuable for language studies. These newspapers therefore, may be used for supplementary material and example in the text analysis, academic writing, stylistics, and semantics while analyzing different types of texts.

Newspapers have always served as very important resource material for reading comprehension. They are used to develop the language skills of students. The committed teachers can design exercises to develop reading comprehension skills, writing skills, critical thinking skills, grammar skills, vocabulary skills etc. Another example is seen on the headline of a newspaper captioned “Suicide Bombers Invade Bornu a State in Northern Nigeria”

Exercises:

- (1) Briefly summarize the activities of these terrorist ‘Boko Haram’ in Bornu State.
- (2) Give two reasons on how to curb these menaces.
- (3) Write the synonyms of the following words:
 - (i) Invade
 - (ii) Ill-Fated
 - (iii) Explosive
 - (iv) Improvised

(see Sun Newspaper 8th, march 2015 vol 10 No 620; p.1&5. www.sunnewsonline.com)

8.3. Television

Television may be the most powerful for many purposes; television can convey a great number of signs simultaneously, it can gain heavy impact from mutually reinforcing gestures, words, postures and sounds and a background of symbolically significant issue.

An example is watching movies, with English as the dominant language of communication is of utmost importance to the language student. The visual and critical awareness of the student is increased and thus enhances language learning and development. The student listens to the

authentic language as it is spoken by the native speaker in the movie aired by the Television Station, the student sees the action of the characters, listens to what they say (their words) and thus matches action with words and gets a better grasp of the language. Any student, teacher or learner of the English language who engages himself in watching movies, in the television, for the purpose of language learning would grasp the accent, voice, body language, correct and appropriate lexical items, correct phrases and syntactic structures of the language.

Again photographs and illustrations presented on a television program helps the learner to describe situations, objects or images in an apt manner. An instance is the description of a documentary on “The State of Nigerian, Colleges, Polytechnics and Universities 2005 till date” This documentary film was copied and featured to the students by the student union government and the next day in the class the researchers asked the students to; ‘Narrate in not more than two pages the state of Nigerian institutions three years ago’ the students’ essays were vivid and highly comparative, with suggestions on the way forward. Television is thus considered a useful information technology gadget which impacts on society in general and enhances amplified learning, marketing, commerce, education, leisure, and culture all across the world.

8.4. Radio Broadcasting

Radio broadcasting is a popular medium all over the world. The BBC is a major source of news and information; its world service is primarily in English Crystal has noted that, 45% of the world’s radio receivers were in those countries where English language has a special status; but what such figures say in real terms about exposure to English is anyone’s guess. Radio broadcasting enhances speech production and other mechanics of pronunciation. A similar function is being carried out by Nigerian Television Authority, NTA CNN, BBC and many other networks.

Another example is the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) program triggered “Learn Your Grammar”. This program teaches the English language using the four language skill of listening, reading, writing and speaking. Students pay attention to accent, choice of word, listening, sound patterns, favorite demonstrations and more. Thus, the wide range of TV programs enhances the language learning skill of participants. This has been possible with the introduction of satellite and cable television’s; individuals can now see programs direct from the country of origin. The “live” telecast of national or international events can leave a palpable effect on the minds of people. Communications revolution is shaping today’s generation and it is a world wide phenomenon. People are exposed to digital technology in virtually all facets of day to day existence and it is not difficult to see that this is having an impact on teaching and learning approaches.

It is also obvious that a lot of radio programs in the globe contribute to language learning; particularly the phonological aspect of the language which deals with pronunciation, stress intonation, etc. When they listen to the BBC news and other program, they learn among other things pronunciation of new words and develop greater confidence in their ability to speak English more than it is spoken in the classroom.

8.5. Digital Media

Digital media is another mode of learning which is easier to use because people with their fingertips can traverse the world. This makes the internet fundamentally different from previous communications, and innovations, such as development of the printing press or the introduction of radio and television broadcasting. They are hierarchical, inflexible and centralized. By contrast the new media is interactive, malleable and distributed via digital information processing machines. As such, it values much greater neutrality. Digital media represents a profound change from previous (analog) media. This has enhanced the learning of English language too.

8.6. The Internet

The internet has affected people across the world. Its penetration in schools, homes and offices has been spectacular in rich countries, but some developing countries like ours have also seized on it. In these countries the subscribers are increasingly dependent on basic browsing, E-mails, messaging for job hunting, trading and many of other practical application.

Teaching through the use of the digital media or the internet in particular help the teacher to attend to a wide range of audience at a given time. The teachers, thus does the following;

(i) Creates a website with the assignment to be carried out or installed films to be watched and analyzed.

(ii) Drafts plan of execution and instruction.

(iii) Informs the students to sign-up e-mail accounts.

(iv) Instructs the students to go to the website and carry out the instructions given.

The teacher finally evaluate the students given them feedback.

Remarkable aspect of these technologies is that their common link is English. This link has established a unique relationship between language and technology. Despite its uniqueness people feel uneasy to cope with the perverse technology and its powerful language.

The researchers strongly suggest that the English teacher should bring the media into the classroom. Media provides teacher and students with creative and practical ideas. They also provide students with a lot of language practice exercises through activity using newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, movies, internet etc and tasks which develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. They encourage reading in general both inside and outside the classroom.

In a similar manner, [Crystal \(1992\)](#) recommends; “There is only one way to do it; learn English which has more than ever become America’s greatest and most effective export”. However, to achieve these roles through these channels, certain methods and trends are adopted in the English language classroom.

9. MEDIA TEACHING TRENDS AND METHODS

Certain methods of teaching enhance the use of media in the learning environment. Some of these teaching methods include;

9.1. The Audio-Lingual Method

The audio-lingual method language teaching began to emerge out of the need for people which could understand and speak fluently English language. At this point, it was realized that the prevailing methods of language teaching were not very efficient. The grammar translation method which was widely used at that time prepared learners for reading and writing in foreign languages, but they were unable to interact with native speakers of that language. Therefore, the need for a method, which would develop speaking and listening skills in a short time arose. Since it was the spoken form of the language which was presented primarily, the learner felt more confident when the time came to use the real situations for communication. This method of language programme achieved great popularity because of its effectiveness in communication.

9.2. The Audio-Lingual Method Emphasized

- Separation of the skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing
- The use of dialogue as the major means of presenting language
- Emphasis on certain practice techniques, memory, memorization and pattern drills.
- Using language laboratory
- Establishing a linguistic and psychological theory as a basis for the teaching methods.

9.3. The Audio Visual Method

Represent a visual presented scenario which provides the major means of involving the learner in meaningful utterances and contexts. Language learning is visualized as following into several stages” in the first stage the learner becomes familiar with everyday language. In the second stage, the ability to talk more on general topics and to read non specialized fiction and newspapers is enhanced. A third stage which involves the more specialized discourse of professional interest is introduced.

The audio visual method is intended partially for the first stage of learners. This method consists of a carefully thought out order of events. The lessons begin with film strip and tape presentation. The sound recordings provide stylized dialogue and narrative commentary.

Grammar as well as phonology is practiced. Writing and reading as in audio lingual method are delayed, but in due course are nonetheless given emphasis. The visual presentation is intended to stimulate the social context in which language is used. They assumed learning proceeds from a total view of the situation to a particular segment of language. It has attempted to place language learning into simplified social context and to teach a language from the onset as full spoken communication.

9.4. The Intuitive Method

The term intuitive teaching methods, is used in equating the function of audio visual aids with ‘intuitive stage’. In the developmental schemes, a period before the operative thought is established and during which figurative aspects of knowledge predominates.

Some scholars such as Piaget opine that, intuitive methods merely provide students with speaking visual representations either of objectives or events or of the result of possible operations (Piaget, 1985). This method is a traditional method which is continuously reborn from their ashes. It constitutes advances in relation to purely verbal or formal techniques, but they are totally inadequate in developing the child's operative activities.

10. CONCLUSION

Acquiring a foreign language especially English which enjoys global spread is a complex exercises. It is obvious that the media uses exactly the same means of communication in the classroom, in the words of Willie (1979). A newspaper still use words, a television screen uses pictures, the spoken words for titles and subtitles". (58).

Ever since the establishment of audio lingual and audiovisual methods of teaching the media have influenced the process of education. TV, radio, books, newspapers, computer, internet etc have transformed the teaching methods and techniques. Among several aids, tape recorder or video tape are the most common aids used in a class room, especially in English language class. Media technologies have great promise and are changing learning.

It also increases the effectiveness of learning by helping the learners to assimilate the ideas presented to them in a more meaningful and intrusting manner. This paper thus, concludes by advocating for the adoption of the media channels in the teaching, learning and development of the English language in Nigeria

The Onus of the media lies on getting the attention of the listeners (learner) by providing information addressed to the ear and eyes or both. Similar activities are performed by the new media technologies which have variously contributed to the easy assimilation of information in language studies and development. However, media has the potential to attract students thereby making learning more feasible, entertaining and interactive. It has also broaden their access to education especially language learning, and improve the quality of education delivered.

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