

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATION IN JOURNALISM PRACTICE: INVESTIGATING THE MERITS

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Abstract

This study examined the role of English communication in journalism practice, investigating its merits. The study highlighted that English communication plays a pivotal role in the field of journalism, serving as the primary medium for news dissemination in many parts of the world, including Nigeria. Several concepts were reviewed in the context of the work, including the English language, communication, and journalism, among others. Furthermore, the study pinpointed the roles of sound English communication in journalism to include clarity, precision, professionalism, accessibility, ethical reporting, etc., and mentioned enhanced travel experiences, academic advantage, confidence builder, cognitive boost, and career catalyst as the merits of sound English. The study concluded that English communication is vital in Nigerian journalism, offering accessibility and inclusivity in a multilingual society. One of the recommendations was that journalists should continually enhance their proficiency in English through regular training and professional development, and that mastery of English will enable journalists to articulate complex issues clearly and effectively, improving the quality of their reporting and ensuring they can engage a broader audience.

Keywords: English, Communication, Journalism, Practice, Investigating and Merits

Introduction

English communication plays a pivotal role in the field of journalism, serving as the primary medium for news dissemination in many parts of the world, including Nigeria. The use of English in journalism facilitates not only the reach and impact of news stories but also ensures a standardised mode of communication across diverse linguistic groups. This study explores the significance of English communication in journalism, highlighting its merits and the implications for journalistic practice in Nigeria.

The global predominance of English, coupled with its status as Nigeria's official language, underscores its importance in the media landscape. English is used extensively in Nigerian print, broadcast, and digital media, enabling journalists to connect with a broad audience both locally and internationally. According to Oyediran (2015), English serves as a bridge among Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups, providing a common linguistic ground for news consumption and public discourse. This universality enhances the accessibility of information and promotes inclusivity in media communication.

Moreover, the proficiency in English among Nigerian journalists is crucial for the accurate and effective reporting of news. Effective communication skills in English enable journalists to articulate their thoughts clearly, conduct interviews competently, and present their findings in a compelling manner. Okeke (2017) emphasises that strong English communication skills are essential for investigative journalism, where precision and clarity are paramount. Journalists must be able to convey complex issues succinctly to inform and engage their audience, thus contributing to the overall quality of journalism.

In the context of investigative journalism, the merits of English communication are particularly pronounced. Investigative journalists rely on their command of English to uncover and report on issues of public interest, often navigating legal and technical language. The ability to comprehend and communicate complex information in English is indispensable for investigative reporting, as noted by Adegbite (2018). This skill set allows journalists to produce in-depth reports that hold power to account and promote transparency.

Furthermore, English communication facilitates international collaboration and the exchange of ideas among journalists. In an era of globalisation, Nigerian journalists frequently interact with their counterparts from other countries, share information, and participate in international forums. Proficiency in English thus enhances the capacity for cross-border investigative projects and fosters professional growth through exposure to global best practices. As Akande (2019) points out, the international dimension of journalism necessitates a strong foundation in English to effectively engage in global discourse.

The role of English communication in journalism is not without challenges, especially in a multilingual nation like Nigeria. While English provides a common platform, it may also marginalise indigenous languages and limit the representation of local perspectives. However, the merits of English communication in promoting clarity, inclusivity, and professionalism in journalism are undeniable. This paper seeks to investigate these merits in detail, drawing on the experiences of Nigerian journalists and the broader implications for journalistic practice.

Concept of English Language

Because to the former British Empire's worldwide significance, English is the most widely spoken language in the world, followed by that of the United States and the Commonwealth of Nations (Okono, 2019). With more people learning it as a second language than native speakers, it is also the most extensively studied second language worldwide. For historical reasons that aren't made clear, it is the only or dominant language in certain other nations. Nordquist (2020) mentioned that one of the three Germanic tribes that invaded England in the fifth century was the Angles, whose language is the source of English. The United States, the United Kingdom, and many of its former colonies, as well as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, all speak English as their first language. A multitude of multilingual nations also speak English as their second language.

The spoken and written versions of the English language are referred to as the English language. It includes all of the different vocabulary, grammar, accents, dialects, and norms that people who speak English as a second language and native speakers use to communicate with each other around the globe. English is both the name of a people group in Europe and the language spoken by those people in that country (and maybe several other countries, depending on how other concepts like speaker and language are defined). These are only a few of the multiple aspects that the notion of English encompasses. For example, English is also a language that has been codified in dictionaries, grammars, and numerous other situations, especially those pertaining to education. What constitutes English varies depending on the context in which it is used (Rindal, 2024).

One of the Indo-European languages of the West Germanic language family is English. A common belief is that modern English is the global language. Johnson (2024) explained that the Indo-European language of the West Germanic linguistic family is English. In many different sectors, modern English is the standard language and is regarded as the global language. Although it is spoken all over the world, English is an official language in a number of African nations as well, including Nigeria, South Africa, and Liberia. Children learn it as a foreign language in schools all across the world, and when people of different nationalities meet when travelling, conducting business, or in other situations, it frequently becomes a point of commonality.

Concept of Communication

The practical transfer of information via writing, speaking, or utilising a medium that facilitates understanding from one person, group, or location to another is known as communication. Kumar (2024) defined Communication is the process of arranging, picking, and sending symbols in a way that makes it possible for the recipient to understand and conjure up the sender's intended meaning in his or her own mind. The sender, the recipient, the message, the language, the channel, the medium, the noise, the setting, and the feedback

are all components of communication (Natta, 2023). Information transfer, the initiation of meaning in the listener, and millions of potential triggers are all involved in communication.

'To share' or 'make common' is the Latin verb *communicare*, from whence the English word communication originates. Information transmission is the common understanding of communication. A sender and a recipient communicate through a medium, which could be sound, written signs, physical gestures, or electricity. To communicate is to have the same ideas as someone else. Stated differently, communication is the exchange and combination of information on facts, concepts, viewpoints, emotions, and attitudes.

Furthermore, Talathi (2024) defined communication is defined as the exchange of facts, information, concepts, recommendations, directives, requests, complaints, etc. between individuals with the goal of giving the recipient a thorough understanding of the communication's subject matter and getting the intended response. Sharing our thoughts, feelings, and opinions with others is communication. This could be written, oral, or intellectual in form. In order to make an interaction meaningful and oneself understood, communication inspires, informs, advises, warns, commands, alters conduct, and builds stronger relationships. When a communicator can communicate effectively, they may do it in a simple, clear, truthful, energetic, and competent manner.

Furthermore, Munodawafa (2024) explained that Sending and receiving messages through speech and nonverbal cues is called communication. It is made up of a sender, a recipient, and a communication channel. The clarity of a message can be affected or corrupted during transmission by things that are commonly called barriers. The culmination of all the actions one takes to instill understanding in the mind of another is communication. It acts as a link to significance. Telling, listening, and understanding are done in a methodical and ongoing manner.

Concept of Journalism

Journalism is the creation and dissemination of reporting on the relationships between people, ideas, events, and facts that are current events and, to the best of the journalistic ability, inform society. The prose style known as journalism is employed in newspapers, radio, and television to report stories. When writing in a journalistic style, one must consider the ABCs of news writing: accuracy, brevity, and clarity, in addition to the audience and the tone in which the piece is given. Michelle (2024) defined Journalism is defined as the process of finding, gathering, evaluating, and editing news or information that may be presented or published in a particular media outlet, such as a newspaper, magazine, book, radio, television, or online. Okono (2023) highlighted that communicating especially in journalism requires the use of "language which will maintain the original message and communication"

The wonderful career of journalism demands a great deal of reading, in-depth information, curiosity, writing style, and dedication to the work. The process of obtaining, evaluating, producing, and presenting news and information is known as journalism. It is also the end result of these endeavours. The profession of journalism involves gathering, composing, and disseminating news items and stories via radio, television, and newspapers. Journalism, according to Robert Niles (2024), is a kind of literature that informs readers about events that actually transpired but that they may not already be aware of.

Furthermore, Carter (2023) holds that the art and science of obtaining, assembling, and presenting news through a variety of mass media platforms is known as journalism. In essence, it is a way to disseminate data and facts with a dedication to accuracy and education, frequently from an unbiased standpoint. The process of compiling and presenting news for general public consumption is referred to as journalism. It has been an integral part of contemporary society as a business, a governmental institution, and a popular culture. The term "journalism" mainly describes the process of obtaining, composing, editing, publishing, or otherwise contributing to journals, such as daily newspapers, other publications, radio and television news programmes, and the Internet, primarily by intellectual means.

Furthermore, Adepoju (2024) explained that Investigating and reporting events, problems, and trends for a wide audience is what journalism is all about. In addition, it is a public activity that involves the collection, management, and transmission of news via mass media like radio, television, and film; it is also one of the ways that agitation and mass propaganda are carried out. Writing about news-related topics for print and non-print media is known as journalism. It also involves the challenging task of gathering data, sorting through it, modifying it, and providing context.

A journalist is someone who acquires information—text, audio, or image—turns it into a form that the public finds interesting, and then distributes it. We call this journalism. The process of obtaining, confirming, evaluating, and disseminating news and information to the public is known as journalism. "The activity or profession of writing for newspapers, magazines, or news websites or preparing news to be broadcast" is the definition of journalism. The act of reporting current events and disseminating reports based on data acquired from sources, firsthand accounts, and research is known as journalism. Reports can be distributed via radio, television, web media, or printed newspapers or magazines.

Roles of Sound English Communication in Journalism

In journalism, "sound English communication" refers to the deft use of the language to convey news and stories in a clear, accurate, succinct, and interesting manner. The roles of clear English communication in journalism are as follows:

Clarity: Sound clarity in journalism, the use of English communication is essential since it ensures that viewers will understand the material clearly and precisely. As mentioned by Okono (2020) clarity in writing is critical and enhances understanding, especially in journalism field. It also facilitates the clear communication of ideas and news, upholds journalistic ethics, and fosters public confidence in the journalist. Nonetheless, authors make an effort to ensure that their writing is easily understood by readers and reviewers so that everyone can understand the intended meaning.

Similarly, reviewers offer comments in a clear and concise manner so that authors are aware of exactly what needs to be clarified or altered (Whang, 2020).

Precision: By eliminating ambiguity and lowering the possibility of misinterpretation, precision aids journalists in providing accurate information. In journalism, accuracy in good English communication is essential since it guarantees accurate and exact conveyance of information. Additionally, it upholds journalistic integrity standards, fosters audience trust, and guarantees the accuracy of the news.

Professionalism: This is the capacity to produce written (essays, business correspondence) and oral (reports, meetings, presentations) texts; to conduct spot interviews in accordance with professional and communicative ethics; to regulate behaviour and resolve communication conflicts; and to identify other communicative norms and values both in the mother tongue and in a foreign language (Chernii, 2020).

Accessibility: Using inclusive techniques and plain, uncomplicated language, accessibility in good English communication means making information understandable to audiences with varying literacy, background, and ability levels. It is crucial to journalism since it guarantees that stories and news are comprehensible and accessible to a wide range of readers. Additionally, inclusiveness, audience growth, and ensuring that everyone has equal access to crucial information are all aided by accessible communication.

Ethical reporting: Since it preserves integrity and the confidence of the public or audience, ethical reporting is the foundational process in journalism. The use of sound English communication in journalism is greatly aided by ethnic reporting, which ensures that information is genuine and devoid of bias by requiring accuracy, impartiality, and objectivity. Furthermore, responsible reporting by journalists that uphold the rights and dignity of people while giving viewers secure and trustworthy information is made possible by their ethical and transparent communication.

Interviewing skills: Sounds the ability to communicate in English is crucial for interviewing skills since it demonstrates the capacity to assess a candidate's competence, attractiveness, and reliability (Chapman, 2005, cited in Hudak and Kile, 2019). In journalism, the ability to conduct effective interviews and communicate clearly in English are essential for gathering

precise and insightful information from sources. However, clear and succinct questions, active listening, and interaction with interview subjects allow journalists to get in-depth and truthful answers. Proficiency in conducting interviews guarantees the acquisition of pertinent and dependable data, which in turn promotes accurate and impartial reporting.

Investigative journalism: Clear and accurate communication in English is essential for investigative journalism in order to uncover and provide in-depth stories and news. Investigative journalism entails thorough reporting with the goal of exposing corruption, wrongdoing, or other social issues (Deuze, Citation 2005, cited in Musa and Antwi-Boateng, 2023). Nonetheless, this upholds journalistic responsibility and integrity by enabling reporters to reveal obscure facts and give the public thorough, trustworthy reporting on important topics.

Merits of Sound English

Some of the merits of sound English include:

Enhanced travel experiences: Since English is a language that is widely spoken in many nations, being able to communicate with locals and navigate new areas is made easier by understanding the language. The majority of travel-related activities are carried out in English, including making reservations for hotels, airlines, and tours as well as looking for travel-related information online. As a result, being fluent in English can greatly ease these responsibilities and simplify the process of coordinating and planning trips.

Academic advantage: Worldwide, the majority of IT courses and educational resources use English as their primary language of instruction. When individuals become proficient in the language, they have access to a multitude of tools and resources, like tutorials and online courses, which will enhance their education and broaden their knowledge (Murphy, 2024).

Confidence builder: Being able to speak English well gives one greater self-assurance and makes them appear more remarkable (Nutspace, 2021). Many people find learning challenging and shy away from speaking because they are constantly worried that they will make a mistake. We may converse and interact with a wide range of people, though, if we take part in English classes on a regular basis or converse with others as we study. People become more courageous in their conversation as a result.

Cognitive Boost: Acquiring proficiency in a new language can enhance cognitive abilities and potentially postpone the onset of dementia in later life. According to studies, acquiring a second language causes changes in the brain's electrical activity as well as its size and structure. Knowing how to speak a second language will assist keep the brain active and healthy at any age. In particular, one of the finest methods to keep the brain engaged and

challenged is to learn English. You'll need to commit new words to memory together with their definitions, use patterns, sentence structures, etc.

Career catalyst: English literacy is widely sought after in the global workplace since it is the major language of communication worldwide. Gaining proficiency in English also greatly increases ones' employment prospects (LABM, 2022). An individual possessing strong English language skills will always have many advantages and be valued more highly than someone with only specialist talents (Hoa, 2023).

Conclusion

English communication is vital in Nigerian journalism, offering accessibility and inclusivity in a multilingual society. Its use facilitates accurate reporting, particularly in investigative journalism, where clarity and precision are crucial. English enhances international collaboration, allowing Nigerian journalists to engage in global discourse and cross-border projects. Despite challenges related to marginalizing indigenous languages, the benefits of English in promoting professionalism and effective communication are significant.

Recommendations

1. Journalists should continually enhance their proficiency in English through regular training and professional development. Mastery of English will enable them to articulate complex issues clearly and effectively, improving the quality of their reporting and ensuring they can engage a broader audience.
2. Media houses should invest in ongoing language training programs for their staff to maintain high standards of English communication. This includes workshops, seminars, and access to language resources.
3. Journalism educators should integrate advanced English communication skills into their curricula, emphasizing the importance of clear and precise language in reporting.

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