

# COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS ACQUISITION FOR EFFECTIVE ENTREPRENUERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## **Abstract**

This paper highlights the centrality of language and communication skills to all forms of human activities and interactions. It seeks to argue that the display of major entrepreneurial skills that would culminate in sustainable development is near impossible without the deployment of appropriate language skills. The communicative language skills and entrepreneurship development are examined in the light of their connectivity, essence and indispensability vis-à-vis sustainable development. To advance its purpose, the paper employs the Systemic Functional Approach to language analysis developed by Michael Halliday, which focuses on the communicative function of language. Observation and secondary data sources are the main sources of data collection. Data were subjected to descriptive and critical analyses. The paper concludes that the acquisition of appropriate knowledge and skills of communication necessary for effective operation of the entrepreneur would better equip them to achieve the goals of entrepreneurship development. It therefore recommends, among other things, that communicative language skills acquisition should be given pride of place in entrepreneurship development.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, communicative language skills, development

## **Introduction**

Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed changing phases and paces of economic development. And, for several years, her economy has leaned heavily on government spending with little private initiative resulting in over-dependence on government for labour employment. The currently emerging socio-economic problems in the country make it imperative for there to be a change of this state of affair. This change is highly dependent on entrepreneurship development which is the development of human capital equipped with the right skills, knowledge and competences that would enable an individual to be self-reliant and to successfully run their own enterprise. Entrepreneurship has been variously defined. Shonekan (2003) sees entrepreneurship as a process that fundamentally involves a team of people who combine their skills and resources in productive ventures. Kanu and Onwukwe (2008) corroborating, express that entrepreneurship is the willingness, skill, ability, capability and drive to identify and harness an investment opportunity. They further state that it includes the skill and drive to harness all the available resources in order to achieve a given objective, that is, with a view to establishing a business. An entrepreneur therefore is one who creates, founds, originates and manages a business venture building on specific skills already acquired either through formal education or in a certain occupation or industry, Odo (2012) avers. Aboho, Aboho and Nguuma (2012) clearly define an entrepreneur to be a person who organizes and manages a business and undertakes and assumes risks for the sake of profit. They further state that the specific skills which the entrepreneur builds on are called entrepreneurial skills. Ada (2012) identifies two conditions that prevail

for the acquisition of skills. One, according to him, is the environment which promotes the acquisition and the other, the innovation which is involved once the skills have been acquired. He went further to observe that the rate at which skills are acquired is a function of knowledge of result; that is, feedback. The feedback can be intrinsic or artificial with the artificial being either concurrent or terminal. The concurrent and terminal feedback can be immediate or delayed with each being either verbal or non-verbal, Ada observes.

So, the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities of an individual to live and contribute to the development of his society depend greatly on the skill he acquires. Adeyemo in Esu (2012:2) thinks of skills as “quality of performance which does not depend solely upon a person’s fundamental innate capabilities, but must be developed through training, practice and experience.” Thus, entrepreneurial skills are acquired through training and emphasize the acquisition and development of appropriate knowledge and skills that enable an individual to maximize the resources around them within the limit of their capabilities Aboho, et al (2012) enumerate the skills to include: creative thinking, planning and research, decision-making, organization, communication, team building, marketing, goal setting, record keeping, and so on. It should be quickly pointed out that none of the skills enumerated can be expressed without language abilities. Language, therefore, is at the centre of the acquisition and expression of these skills. This paper will reveal the vital role of communicative language skills in the effectiveness of the entrepreneurial skills and communicative skills in sustainable national development. Built around the theoretical framework of the Communicative/Functional Grammar which suggests that language is use and that users should communicate using appropriate social language or expression, the paper uses the analytical method to advance its thesis.

### **The Place of Language and Communication in Effective Entrepreneurship Development**

Language is an important aspect of every society, a human specific phenomenon and the necessary communication tool of every group. Language is an integral part of life and a person’s language is seen in normal daily interactions with other persons, events and situations in his environment (Ndeche, 2012). In furtherance of this argument, Denga in Ndeche (2012) maintains that language is generally involved in other higher mental processes such as thinking, reasoning, problem-solving among others. Okafor and Ugwu (2007) maintain that when used appropriately, language enables people to meditate on a common ground of understanding and people are consequently able to react accordingly to issues and in ways that are bound to facilitate decisions geared towards the realisation of the agreed national objectives. Thus, language is the tool with which any form of collaborative activity will be made possible. Okafor and Ugwu further state that as language is the vehicle that conveys communication, it can either give direction to the growth of societies or create place as it aids communication which in turn creates immediate and ultimate development. Multon in Obu and Omenogo (2012) defines language as a wonderful and rich vehicle of communication, that is, expression of ideas, wishes, command, conveyance of truth and lies. It should be noted that language and communication are intricately intertwined.

Communication for Burgeon in Ndeche (2012) is a symbolic behaviour that co-occurs between two or more participating individuals. At the level of human relationship, it maintains and animates life. It is the tool for social activity and civilization. Communication creates a common pull of ideas and strengthens the feeling of togetherness through exchange of messages and ideas translated into action. So, language is the primary means of communication, knowledge and the bedrock of civilization. Otagburuagu (2004) concludes that communication sustains the rhythm of the world. Armed with the foregoing knowledge of the importance

of language and communication, the entrepreneur should appreciate how inseparable the entrepreneurial skills are from the skills of language and communication. For example, entrepreneurship involves a team of people who combine their skills and resources in productive ventures (Ugwu and Egwu, 2012). Language and communication, on the other hand, are the tools for social activity and civilization. Furthermore, entrepreneurial skills include creative thinking, planning and research, decision-making, organisation, communication, goal-setting, record-keeping and so on. Language in its own operation is generally involved in all higher mental processes such as thinking, reasoning, problem-solving. Thinking and idea development are done through the vehicle of language, for, as put forth by Elugbe in Okafor (2015:29), “thought engenders speech and language determines and expresses thought.” Furthermore, Iwuchukwu in Okafor declares that language is the chief instrument through which man thinks and with which he integrates himself both internally and externally and through which he induces his peers to share his culture.

Entrepreneurship development therefore will be flawed without proper language and communication skills acquisition. For, how well one manages his environment depends on how well one communicates (Obasikene, 2001). Obasikene summarily expresses areas of language use which suit and cover the scope of the entrepreneur’s operation. For example, the language user (entrepreneur) needs language to express personal feelings, persuade people for social interaction and maintenance, to regulate human behavior, to think creatively, to facilitate various business interactions, to negotiate and manage cordial relationships, to manipulate people and the environment by commanding or causing people to perform certain actions that may affect some/all of them and/or alter their physical environment.

An entrepreneur is unavoidably a part of a complex social process called communication which is a social transaction aimed at getting one’s idea across to others. In agreement, Agwu (2002) explains that communication is a social process by which a community of human beings share ideas, information sent is received and understood and acted upon in the manner intended by the sender. The entrepreneur, as chief coordinator, controller and organiser of the production process who combines and organizes the other factors of production for wealth creation, needs communication skills in order to be effective. Obasikene reveals that communicative skills in the language environment refer to both oral language skills, for example, techniques of conversation, good pronunciation/accent, appropriate diction, correct syntax and decent mannerism, and written language skill which include method of writing essays, letters, memos, and so on. Obasikene agrees that there is an overlap between communication skills and language skills. This implies that the communicator in any language must be acquainted with these skills, especially in the exploitation of the spoken and written usage.

### **Strategies for Communicative Language Skills Acquisition**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is based on the concept of communicative competence by which learners are expected to possess the ability to understand a language and be able to use it for the purpose of effective communication. As posited by Ugwu and Egwu (2012), communicative language teaching provides specifications on the mode of communicative or practical exercises to be carried out in the target language. Its aim is to create avenues for effective exchange of meaningful ideas among language learners. In consideration of the fact that language occurs in socio-cultural and interpersonal contexts, Ejindu and Ehinze (2011) posit that communicative competence means what people need to know about how to use

appropriate language. He further identifies the three usages with which language should be concerned, namely, conventional, usage, transactional usage, and interactional usage.

Sekiziyivu and Mugimu (2017) state that communicative language and teaching environment entail the choice of teaching strategy that would engage learners in active language production. Teaching strategies may include tasks that encourage learners' exchange of ideas through free interactions. They further stress that communicative language classroom have to involve interactive activities that reflect natural language use, frequent interactions among learners or other interlocutors or exchange of information or problem solving. It should also include use of authentic (non-pedagogic) texts and communication activities linked to real world contexts often emphasizing links across written and spoken modes and channels. The specific techniques employed by the teacher to develop communicative competence in the learner are identified by William in Ugwu and Egwu (2012) to include group activity, use of questionnaire format as prompts for dialogue in communicative practice, maps, diagrams, and pictures used to serve as visual stimuli, role playing used to bring outside world into the classroom. Learners are encouraged to play different roles and are given sufficient stimulus for verbal interaction. Sekiziyivu and Mugimu (2017) agreeing with Ugwu and Egwu state that teaching communicative competence requires setting up communicative situations that motivate learners to participate in such activities as role plays, simulations and social interactions in a near natural linguistic and social environment. Other activities include interviews, done in pairs whose main goal is to develop interpersonal skills, group work, and so on. Communicative language teaching generally will entail the choice of teaching strategies that would engage learners in active language production. The foregoing clearly reveals the strategies by which an entrepreneur can acquire the skills to aid them in becoming effective in his job.

### **Communicative Language Skills and Entrepreneurship Development for Sustainable National Development**

Development in general, is a multi-dimensional process involving positive changes in the social structure and improvement in the quality of life resulting in the reduction of inequalities. Coetzee (2001) in Okafor and Noah (2014:273) sees development as 'a form of social change that will lead to progress, the purpose of enlarging people's choices, acquiring knowledge and having access to resources for a decent standard of living, and a condition for moving from worse to better" This implies changes that bring about a transformation in a positive sense. Okafor and Noah also express that sustainable development depends on the shared vision communicated in different languages ultimately and leading to the creation of liveable environment for the present and future generations across the globe. The indispensability of language to national development cannot be over emphasized. Hence, Essien (2010: 124) asserts thus:

In so far as man is inseparably homo sapiens and homo loquens; in so far as education, a vital development is inconceivable without language; and in so far as all notions, concepts, theories, arguments, analyses and, practice in all academic disciplines that enhance national development or national building, find expression in language.... the role of language in national development enterprise cannot be over-emphasized.

In other words, development as a process of social interaction is inconceivable without language. Corroborating Essien, Trudgel in Okafor and Noah (2014:275) unequivocally states

that:

No matter how one defines development, it cannot be achieved without reference to language as an important factor, and real development is not possible in Africa without the integration of all her human factors. The critical aspects of development are affected by language choice... for such critical thinking to take place, maximal comprehension of the issues is necessary and this has direct implication for language choice.

The above further establishes that project geared toward development such as entrepreneurship development, will be seriously affected negatively if language were not considered a major component of such programmes. Language plays important roles in social change, information dissemination, communication of values, attitudes, feelings, ideologies and expression of power and dominion. However, these roles of language in the field of development are often ignored. Entrepreneurial skills which involve the selling of ideas that are aimed at influencing other people's way of life so that they can change to a better life of dignity, largely rely on appropriate language usage which form the building block for any meaningful interaction and cannot be given expression without language. In other words, development as a process of social interaction brings people together into a communicative event with the aim of making and exchanging meanings through signs in order to achieve a purpose-- sustainable development. Ostensibly, a nation's development enterprise thrives when the right values, aspirations and desires are communicated in the most unambiguous way and executed using the right skills for, in the words of Essien (2010:124)

If we want great thinkers, we must give those gifted in thinking adequate language. If we want great artists - poets, playwrights, novelists, musicians, etc, we must make it possible for such talented people to acquire such facility in language as will enable them to express their imagination, feelings and insight freely. If we want great scientists and inventors, language must not inhibit those who have the innate abilities. If we want great politicians, economists, historians, linguists, etc, language should not stifle those who are gifted.

The above quotation goes to confirm that training in communication skills of an entrepreneur is of essence in effective entrepreneurship development and national sustainable development.

## **Conclusion**

Success in the achievement of any venture, be it personal, group, government, national or socio-economic, cultural, religious political and educational, depends on the appropriateness of the communication of its values and goals. Entrepreneurship development, which is at the heart of human capital development and translates to both individual and societal/national development, will be near impossible without a calculated move by the entrepreneur to acquire the necessary skills especially the communicative language skills. So, to achieve their language skills, the entrepreneur needs the communicative language ability which can be acquired using certain strategies. Among the techniques of communicative language skills acquisition are: role plays, interviews, group works, simulations, and others. The Communicative language teaching method basically emphasizes interactive activities that reflect natural language use which creates a near real world experience. Language and communication therefore, have been identified as major resources for sustainable national development.

## Recommendations

1. Substantive and prospective entrepreneurs should be made to appreciate the vital role communicative language skills will play in aiding them in their enterprise.
2. The curriculum for entrepreneurship development should include communicative language teaching.
3. Teachers to handle this aspect of entrepreneurship development should be properly trained and equipped.
4. Entrepreneurs should be made to appreciate how the acquisition of the right skills, especially the communicative language skill, would culminate in sustainable national development.

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