

## LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION AND EFFICACIOUS PERFORMING ARTS PRACTICE IN NIGERIA: THEATRE AND FILM EXPERIENCE

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the imperatives of audio-visual mode and efficacious communication in performing arts practices in Nigeria. The audio-visual element forms the bedrock and essential ingredient of performing arts because the lines and the actions of the performers must be heard clearly to ensure that the performance is impactful and successful. English Language has for obvious historical reasons, remained the “lingua-franca” in Nigeria, being the official language of communication in virtually every facets of life in the country; and this is why communication in English by performing arts practitioners has to scale up to acceptable standards. The thrust of this paper is that since theatre and film practices aim at entertainment and serve as social watchdog, it becomes required that certain neglected language delivery components and rules of communication should be paramount among performing artistes, teachers and students. To realize the set objectives of this paper, qualitative research design was adopted in which both primary and secondary sources of data were described and interrogated in the analysis. The end result of this research is that effective communication in English Language has a significant role to play in performing arts practice. The paper concludes that if the basic components and rules of the language are adhered to, it would add up to enhance the quality and objectives of theatre performance for the overall good of practitioners, students and the general public.*

**Keywords:** Audio-visual mode, Efficacious Communication, English Language, Performing arts practice, Storytelling.

### Introduction

In every society of the world, there are some percentage of performative activities which take place in form of music, dance, drama, festival, storytelling and many more. These performative activities have been in existence using different languages spoken by the inhabitants of given societies since time. Buttressing this point, Phyllis Hartnoll explains that, the origins of theatre go back far into the past, to the religious rites of the earliest communities. Throughout history there have always been traces of songs and dances in honour of a god, performed by priests and worshippers (7). It is from the knowledge of these performative elements that are available in every community of the world that made Oscar G. Brockett to assert that “performative elements (including dramatic and theatrical) are present in very society, no matter how complex or how unsophisticated the culture may be” (1). The present digital regime demands that quality must be factored into every endeavor since the global eyes watches the ‘global village; of the postmodern universe, especially in the explosive dispensation of the 21st century (Akpan and Udoette, 68).

As David Ekanem Udoinwang and Ikpe Justice Akpan aver, “digitization incursions into social life and culture continue to evolve ... and exerting unprecedented influence on cultural landscapes” (1). The salient elements of performance need to be consciously adhered to at all time, in the light of contemporary realities. Brockett further expounds that, “these elements are evident in our political campaigns, holiday celebrations; sports events, religious ceremonies, and children’s make-believe, just as they are in the dances and rituals of primitive peoples (1). This informs why literature has always been the rallying point and a convenient platform through which societal issues are projected (Akpan and Okon, 3).

However, it is imperative to acknowledge that there exists distinction between drama and theatre in the real sense of it, and a mere presence of performative elements within a society. Hartnoll expatiates further by saying that, “... for the theatre as we understand it today, three things are necessary: actors speaking or singing independently of the original unison chorus, an elements of conflict conveyed in dialogue; and an audience emotionally involved in the action but not taking part in it. Without these essential elements, there maybe religious or social ceremonies, but not theatre (7). Therefore, it can be categorically stated that in spite of the presence of performative elements in all societies of the world, a true drama and theatre can only be said to exist when there is “an imitation of an action, and not the action itself” (Hartnoll7).

Based on this assertion, various theories abound with regard to the origin of drama and theatre which include the theory of ritual origin; the theory of storytelling and the theory of evolution. In spite of the theories linked to the origin of theatre being the cradle of performing arts practice, “the first theatrical age in the history of western civilization is that of Greek in the fifth century B.C (Hartnoll(7). According to Hartnoll, “it was there that tragedies and comedies, some of which still exist, were first performed by actors and not by priest, in special buildings or precincts which, though hallowed, were not temples (7). It is from this version that the development of African drama in general and Nigerian drama and theatre in particular revolve around because there are complex influence of western drama, theatre and culture on African performing arts practice, especially in the face of contemporary socio-cultural hysteria in African society of which David Ekanem Udoinwang and Kufre Akpan refer to as the artistic “propositions towards arresting the prevalent situation and healing society of its falling ethical foundation” (185). According to Kufre Akpan, “this development has continued to inspire writers in every genre...” (28) and there is no doubting the point that the artist must bring the work of art to bear on the realities of contemporary society. This affirms Okpiliya and Akpan’s argument that “...no writer has ever written in isolation. His inspiration is always sharpened by the drive to expose and bring to the fore all the contradictions and apprehensions that engulf his society” (52).

### **Performing Arts Practice in Nigeria**

Performing arts practice in Nigeria can be traced down to the traditional performative activities inherent in the culture of virtually every community because most societies in Africa have story-telling traditions with some accompaniment of songs and music. Some communities also have the traditional puppet performance. David Udoinwang asserts “...although the influx of modernity has revolutionised global cultural space, African cultural material retains its relevance for engaging the order of postmodernity” (19). The different communities in Africa including Nigeria existed and practiced their different forms of artistic

activities according to their cultures and traditions. Yet the African cultural societies like any other continue to evolve, despite the wind of globalisation that has blown across all facets of African life (Akpan and Akpan, 30). And to buttress this, David Ekanem Udoinwang and Chinenye Amonyeze posit that in the global cultural evolution, "...there was the era of primitive/subsistence production with its exchange model; the age of machinery with industrial revolution and mass production/consumption; and then came postmodern age with modernisation of cultural taste in service and consumption patterns" (164). This affirms Uwem Affiah, Offiong Amaku and Kufre Akpan's position that: "From its humble beginnings in village squares, to church concerts/travelling theatres and onto national and international theatres, Nigerian drama has metamorphosed into a colourful canvas of indigenous and foreign aesthetics geared towards inspiring societal change" (64). This wheel of change leads to the practice of different traditional performances in the north, south, east and western parts of Nigeria as well. It is based on the above premise that Brockett posits that:

Because Africa had little performance that resembled the theatrical forms they knew, Europeans, when they began to colonise Africa, were convinced that it was devoid of theatre. Nevertheless, the continent was teeming with performance activities—ceremonies, festivals, religious rites, storytelling, and various kinds of celebrations, all interwoven into the daily life of the various African cultures. The Europeans brought with them their own form of theatre and sought to naturalize it throughout much of the continent. The tension between this colonialist heritage and indigenous forms has created a vigorous and dynamic spectrum of performance in contemporary Africa (631).

It can therefore be said that the European colonisation of Africa was the beginning of the western drama approach in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

At the inception of western dramatic form of performances in Nigeria, two major problems were imminent and these were language problem and colonialist influence. Brockett records that "more than 800 local languages are spoken on the continent, and while this clearly makes for immediacy of communication and performance on the local level, it can limit cross-communication and accurate perception of performance and theatre beyond its own language-specific area" (631). When colonialism had firm grip of Africa the Europeans decided to divide African continents amongst themselves except Ethiopia and Liberia, but they were faced with the problem of multiple language and ethnic groups, a situation that warranted the visitors to make their language the official language of communication within the territories of their administration. This explains how English language became the *lingua franca* in Nigeria and also the surge in literary creativity addressing the issue. Kufre Akpan avers that: "African writers, using various approaches and in all genres, have continued to explore, in their critical enterprises, these travesties of change and its socio-political and religious consequences in contemporary African society" (1).

### **Historical Overview of the English Language**

In Nigeria, the English language is a second language popularly referred to as L2. David Jowitt states that, "for a large part of its history, the English language was confined to the British Isles', a group of islands lying off the north-west coast of the continent of Europe in

the northern temperate zone of the world” (1). On the brief history of the English language, Jowitt further avers:

About 2,000 years ago – the time when Jesus Christ lived in Palestine – the language that evolved into the English of today was spoken in the north-western parts of Germany. It is natural to ask who brought the language to England, and in what circumstances they did so. Answering this question in turn invites taking some account of the story of all the peoples who successively invaded and settled in the British Isles in the course of this period – the Celts, the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Danes (2).

A comprehensive history of the English language clearly shows that the above mentioned peoples’ invasion and settlement in the British Isles left remarkable impact and has influenced the nature of the English language spoken today the world over. To expatriate this assertion, Jowitt conclusively posits that:

The political outline has shown that, geographically, the English language has its origin in north-western Germany, and was brought from there to England by the Anglo-Saxons. At the time this happened, approximately 1,500-1,600 years ago, English was very different from what it is today, in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The difference is signaled by the use of the expression ‘old English’ (or, sometimes, ‘Anglo-Saxon’) to refer to the earlier form of the language. Since that time, old English has evolved into the language of today. This evolution is generally regarded as falling into three main stages or periods, as follows: Old English: 500 to about 1100 ad; Middle English: about 1100-1500 ad; modern English: 1500-present day (12).

The above is a brief survey of evolution of the English language ever before it found its way into Nigeria.

### **The English Language as *lingua franca* in Nigeria**

The concept of English language has attracted global attention but the summary of it is, as pointed at above, the origin of English language could be traced to the people of England and the activities of explorers and global European mercantilism. In Africa, the spread and prominence of the English language like other European languages, is tied to the history of European incursion into the continent and of colonial imposition in the subjugated territories through what David Udoinwang and James Tsaior refer to as the “imbalance” (39) that defined European relationship with the nation states.

Though the language is traceable to England, it has drawn attention and wider verities and versions because the people that travelled from other places to settle there and those that travelled continually, intermingling and as a result, different forms and varieties of English language emerged. In Nigeria English language came to the country as a result of the merchant and the missionaries. For the missionaries to get the natives to understand the imported gospel preaching and to assist in colonial public administration, the people were trained on the use of language of the European settlers. Few Nigerians came to understand the language and also the slaves that were sold out and later on returned to the country were also of immense contributions as far as the propagation of the language in Nigeria is concerned.

As a result of the fact that the merchants and the missionaries were able to impose their language on Nigerians for the purpose of commercial activities and missionary works, the language continued to gain popularity and became the language of communication in the country which is otherwise known as “lingua franca”. In Nigeria in particular, English language is referred to as the second language (L2). The first language (Li) therefore is our mother tongue generally referred to as vernacular or the native language. Language is indeed, generally so vital to performance, for without language how could performance make sense in the first place. Uwem Affiah, Offiong Amaku and David Udoinwang thus aver that “Language forms an important part of African drama, for it reveals certain aspects of African cultural experiences that are couched in indigenous language resources” (48). The English language as discussed in this paper is categorized into different levels or components as examined below:

### **The Basic Components of the English**

In both spoken and written forms of the English language, we are specifically concerned with four major levels or components and these levels are carefully structured to give us different understanding of how the language is utilized. The four levels deal specifically with different aspects that help us immensely in the understanding of basic communication whether on stage, for the film or our daily interaction. These four levels are briefly examined below:

1. **Morphology:** in this context, morphologies is recognized as the first level or component of the English language and it is derived from the word morpheme. A morpheme is the smallest unit of a word that sometimes makes meaning or it makes the meaning of a word clearer. Morphology being a word derived from a morpheme actually has to do with the process of intentionally selecting from the different letters of the alphabet and arranging the letters to form meaningful words. Therefore, morphology as a word refers to that level of the English language that deals with word formation.
2. **Semantics:** semantics in this case reminds us of the fact that a word in isolation may be defined in different ways depending on the intention of the uses of the word. Therefore, semantics has to do with the meaning of words as used by different individuals. The usage of a word and the meaning derived from it due to the intention of the users of that word is generally referred to as operational definition.
3. **Syntax:** words in English language are used by different individuals to mean different thing. As communicators, we are expected to select the letters of alphabet to form words. After the formation of words, we seek for the meaning of that word before we differentiate the relationship between two or more words to ensure effective communication this falls under the level or component of the English language referred to as syntax. It is our understanding of the accurate relationship of words in an expression that enhances comprehension of the passage because through this we ascertain the grammatical concord being the agreement between noun and verb in expression.
4. **Phonology:** as a level of English language, phonology has to do with the pronunciation of words in conformity with the transcription but not the spelling. This simply means that some words in English language are spelt differently from the way they are pronounced. For example, the word, phonology is pronounced from the transcription /fəʊnələdʒi!/. Correct pronunciations of words are done with specific speech organs of the body as examined below:

## Language Skills

In English language, we have four identifiable language skills. By language skills in this context we are referring to the attribute and the tactic an individual develops and utilises in the process of acquiring the knowledge in communication. It should be noted that in the process of learning a language such as the English language, four skills have been identified and Onukaogu, Egbuta, Kalu and Onyerionwo explain that, “language skills include those key and fundamental activities we can perform through language. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing” (88). These skills are briefly examined below:

1. **Listening skill:** by listening skill in the process of learning a language, we are referring to an art of paying attention to, and receiving the existing signal, utilizing and interpreting it towards a meaningful communication exercise. Onukaogu and others say that, “among the language skills and activities, listening is the one that one is most involved” (88). By listening, it means our aural organs must be sensitive and effective because listening has a lot to do with hearing that is done with the ear. Generally, these activities are referred to as aural /'ɔ:rəl/activities.
2. **Speaking skill:** speaking skill in performing arts practice is all about generation of reasonable signal that can lead to effective communication in the theatre or for the film. By this, it becomes quiet clear that for a character to learn a language, he or she must first of all develop the language skill of listening before attempting to speak. It should be noted as a warning that in performing arts practice speaking has to do with generation of signal for the audience member to understand and therefore, it is very wrong for two or more characters to speak at the same time as such exercise usually constitute a noise, except it is intentionally done as a requirement for the performance.
3. **Writing skill:** writing as a language skill is derived from the word “write” and the act of writing is all about the ability of an individual to put down either a symbol or letter on a surface in such a way that another person can derive meaning from it towards effective communication. In the process of learning a new language, one should be able to follow these identified language skills in order of importance, that is, from listening to speaking before attempting writing and finally reading.
4. **Reading skill:** reading as a language skill in most cases is regarded as the last skill which must be acquired in the process of learning a new language. By reading, we are simply referring to the abiliabale of an individual to look at the available letters or symbols and make meaning from it. Therefore, reading skill in English language is mostly concerned with sight which is the primary function of our eyes. The knowledge of the four language skills discussed here are very important in realizing efficacious performing arts activities in Nigeria.

A performing artiste is expected to be conversant with the language skills as discussed above and be able to use them appropriately while acting either on stage or for the film.

## The role of speech and other forms of communication in performing arts practice

In performing arts practice, we rely on actual human speech as the data for our description (Eka2). Human speech in this context constitutes an integral part of communication that takes the form of interaction, transmission, transfer, reception and reaction (Onukaogu and others 272).communication is the centre point of concern. This is so because in performing arts, the practitioners are interested in informing, educating, before entertaining the audience and

communication of one form or the other constitute the major points in actualizing these basic objectives. It should be noted that communication exist either verbally or non-verbally and speech arts constitute a greater percentage of the verbal aspect of communication. In the same purview, Affiah, Udoinwang and Amaku state succinctly that literary performance recreates “memorable platform for instruction and amusement for all humankind” (12). Also, according to Onukaogu and others:

Communication is a process of sharing information, ideas, feelings, emotions, etc. Communication can be seen as a social transaction which involves getting one’s idea across; it means making oneself to be understood by the person or persons to whom the message is addressed. Communication has also been described as the activity of conveying meaningful information (271).

In this context therefore, communication involves exchange as well as sharing of information, knowledge, data, experiences, skills, ideas, feelings and emotions, opinions, attitudes as well as worldviews. Performing arts communication requires the sender, the message and the receiver. The sender is referred to as the encoder while the receiver is referred to as the decoder. Hence the role of speech arts and its components in performing arts practice. The following tips in furtherance of speaking with confidence:

#### **Efficacious Performing Arts Practice in Nigeria: Theatre and Film Experience:**

Performing arts practice in Nigeria is a microcosm of African performances. By microcosm in this context, we are referring to “a small group, society, or place that has the same qualities as a much larger one” (Adam Gatsby 1037). Speaking about Nigerian and indeed African performing arts practice, Austin Asagba expatiates thus:

In fact, in Nigeria, and indeed Africa as a whole, the performing arts from time immemorial have always embodied the totality of the cultural life of the people. In a performance situation, the history, religious, social and cultural lives of a typical community are celebrated with pomp and pageantry. It is in this sense that one can define a typical African performance as a total theatre.... Also, when one writes about a typical African performance, the active ingredient that makes such a performance memorable, artistically and spiritually rewarding is the ability of the presentation or celebration to vicariously and spontaneously entertain, educate and appeal to the social and cultural life of the people. In traditional Nigerian society, the above artistic and cultural values are realised in the various festival celebrations which take place in every nook and corner of any typical village or community in the country (215).

Before colonialism, almost all performing arts activities in Nigeria were presented in the various Nigerian dialects peculiar to the community in which such performance took place. However, Asagba explain that:

As a result of colonialism and the resultant acculturation and acculturation process that followed, there has emerged what one may conveniently describe as the ‘new’ theatrical experience (comprising concerts, travelling theatres, literary drama, musical presentations etcetera) while doggedly retaining some aspects of the old traditional culture, it emphasises literary contents as well as

a well-structured form fashioned after their theatrical and cultural traditions of western european countries (215).

This can be seen as the era in which the English language found its way into the contents of performing arts practice in Nigeria with its various versions. Speaking farther on this issue, Juliana Akindele asserts that:

The spread of the english language across the world has brought about various versions being used by its non-native speakers in their various domains. The term “new Englishes” is an offshoot of this phenomenon. It reflects the existence of observable variation in the use of the language by its non-native users as a result of its contact with various indigenous languages (28).

In the course of this investigation, it has been revealed that the existence of these variations in the use of the English language in Nigeria has made it impossible to determine the version of the English spoken in Nigeria. Chidi Ikonne posits that “it is doubtful whether we have any single language which can justifiably be described as standard Nigerian English(30). James Okpiliya and Kufre Akpan see the above development as “part of the inglorious and continuous domination of values by the West” (1). Okon Essien quoted by Ikonne in his contribution rightly explained that, “since every Nigerian has a first language and it is common knowledge that one’s language affects the acquisition of another – what in fact exist are Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Ibibio, Edo, etc. Standards rather than a single verified Nigerian standards” (30).As a result fo the above, Ikonne further observes that, “all we have at present are transitional dialects or idiolects-attempts by individual speakers to attain the British standard” (31).

The above presentation brings us to the issue of the relationship between language and the mind which is within the scope of psycholinguistics. According to Folorunso Emmanuel Awoniyi, “in psycholinguistics, we study the relationship between language and mind. That is, we are concerned with the mental mechanisms that make it possible for humans to use and understand language (224). On this our mother tongue is the first language (l1) while the English language is the second language (l2). The interference of l1 with the l2 is a matter of the mental mechanisms that produce various versions and this is why Ikonne comprehensively explains that:

An acceptable definition of Nigerian English, therefore, can only be one which recognises the impact of the numerous Nigerian languages and their dialects on the English language, without denying the Nigerianess of the speaker. Positively put, Nigerian English is a multiplicity of idiolects spoken by native-born Nigerians, and understood by Nigerians who are literate in English as well as such English speaking foreigners who are not easily put off by intonations and accents extraneous to their own dialects and /or idiolects (31).

The above situation has caused more harm than good to the performing arts industry in Nigeria, mostly theatre and film in which dialogues monologues, soliloquies and asides are the major vehicles that drive the actions.

No matter how interesting the storyline of a theatre or film production is, if the characters deliver their lines with the version of Nigerian English heavily influenced by the first language of the character, there is bound to be confusion and misunderstanding, making such theatre or film experience to be uninteresting, disgusting and boring. Furthermore, a situation where characters mix tenses and ignore the rules of concord, oblivious of long and short vowel sounds as well as special consonant sounds and clusters, neglect special words in English language that do not accept plurals to maintain a few of them, can lead to decline in audience patronage, thereby dealing fatal blow to the performing arts industry in Nigeria.

This has deterred the growth and development of performing arts industry from attaining the expected height or status. On this negative development, Nduka Otione quoted in Allwell Abalogu Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu expresses disappointment that, “it is a ‘contradiction’ that is ‘completely exasperating’ that a drama tradition that has also produced Nollywood has found it difficult to sustain the illustrious heritage of the Nigerian dramatic institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (170). Onukaogu and Onyerionwu buttress this feeling by saying that:

It is hardly believable that an era that parades very gifted practitioners in the persons of the likes of Ahmed Yerima, Rasaki Ojo Bakare, Gbemisola Adeoti, Emeka Nwabueze, Julie Okoh and a hoard of others could be incapable of asserting itself on the national literary scene, let alone impress the international literary community (171).

The above unfortunate situation is as a result of the fact that majority of the actors both for the stage and film just believe that acting can be done by anybody without any form of formal training most especially in basic speech arts. This leads to every tom and dick wanting to become stars in performing arts industry.

Furthermore, even those that pass through formal training in performing arts from universities and other allied institutions fail to recognize the role of the English language in performing arts activities in Nigeria with language interference. During training they ignore the very important course on basic speech arts with the erroneous impression that anybody can speak the English language thereby ending up delivering lines with mixed tenses, poor pronunciations, poor voice quality and projection, wrong stress, intonation and rhythmic patterns, poor registers and language varieties, inadequate preparations and rehearsals, lack of confidence and low self-esteem. The resultant effects are low or poor standard of performances as witnessed today in both private, commercial films in Nigeria today. The result is that the result is that audience and viewers’ interests have deviated from Nigerian films and theatre performances thereby leading to dwindling theatre patronage and lack of interest.

On this salient issue, Sunday Peter Umanah, Uwemedimo Atakpo and Okon Udofot Jacob opine that, “the challenges of recouping the audience for theatre production have led to the numerous experimentations on aesthetics and human behaviour, the influence of local of an event on the convenience of the audience, and the possibility of sustaining the audience’s fidelity on the activities of the stage” (267). Therefore, to recoup or reinvigorate theatre and film experience in Nigeria towards efficacious performing arts practice in furtherance of

effervescent patronage, the following steps and issues should be treated with all amount of seriousness.

### **The Processes of Speaking with Confidence**

In performing arts practice, the audience member get into the auditorium with great expectation and it is the responsibility of the performing artists on stage or screen not to disappoint the audience. The expectation of the audience members in this context revolves around different aspects such as learning different cultures, behaviours and languages and even learning art of public speaking from the artist, and many more. Therefore, as professional communicators we are expected to adhere to certain rules of communication in the process of speaking with confidence either on stage or in film as explained below:

**The artist must be courageous:** as a performing arties; it is expected that characters on stage or set should be watched by different categories of persons professionally referred to as heterogeneous audience. Therefore, performers are expected to be courageous at all times.

**Think before speaking:** this aspect of communication ethics should remind the artist that there is need forconsciousness towards what comes out of the mouth. The speaker must be intentional in utterances. With these, we will be able to control whatever we deliver to our audience members.

**Attention to the rules of grammatical concord and tenses** are sacrosanct at the moment of performance. Concord in speech arts has to do with agreement between the subject of the sentence and the verb; that is noun/verb/agreement. The rule of concords requires:

Singular noun that is subject of a sentence must agree with a singular verb such as “the rules say and not says”. Plural noun should agree with plural verb, example, the students go to school every morning.

Students should ensure that they are familiar with the utilization of present tense, past tense, past continues and past participle. This knowledge helps the performing artist to speak with confidence. The performer should be mindful of pronunciation: in performing arts practice, pronunciations matter in communication if the production is to receive ovation and applause. This assertion is a truism because the audiences are specifically interested in how fluent and competent an artist appears on stage or set. All the things and issues learnt in the use of English in respects of correct and poor pronunciations must be taken into consideration to enhance our quest of speaking with confidence in furtherance of efficacious performing arts practice in Nigeria.

Take note of confused words and words without plurals. Confused words that are spelt in different ways from their pronunciations should be closely observed such as: climbing /klaɪmɪŋ/ plumber /'plʌmə(r) / and many others.

Care needs be taken of the similarities and differences between American and British English/spellings and sounds or pronunciation as the case may be. Always be mindful of the difference between American and British English as this goes a long way to enhance

speaking with confidence. In the same vein, words that do not accept plural should be given attention such as Furniture, Stationery, Information, Equipment, Property and many others.

### **Vocabulary development**

Always strive to develop your vocabulary frequently as a performing artist so that you can be acquainted with new words so as to be able to use them confidently either on stage or for the film. Constant use of dictionary is one of the approaches of vocabulary development. This is quite necessary in furtherance of speaking with confidence either on stage or film because this gives a performing artiste a wider choice in the use of words while delivering their lines.

As a good performing artiste, make sure that your lines are properly enunciated. That is to say that you must speak clearly and not mumble. Observe people's reaction and adjust to suit the mood.

**Projection level matters in the process of speaking** with confidence in performing arts practice. Onukaogu and others say that artistes should "use appropriate volume. Use a volume that is appropriate for the setting. Speak more softly when you are alone and close. Speak louder when you are speaking to larger groups or across larger spaces" (92).

**Speaking with confidence requires constant practice** because it is certain that artistes get used to acceptable delivery if they practice or rehearse their lines regularly.

The intentional utilization of proper or appropriate tenses, cases or genders are quite recommendable in the process of speaking with confidence. Always be coherent while delivering your lines either on stage or set for film. Coherence means to make your lines easy for understanding by making your presentation as clear and reasonable as possible. Registers or what is generally referred to as language variety should be appropriate and relevant to the situation or setting and profession of discussion. Stress, rhythmic and intonation patterns should be clearly and properly utilized so that the members of the audience gain clear understanding of the plot of the performance.

The distinct sounds of the English Language, which is the tonal distinction, should be clearly observed.

### **Summary**

The performing arts industry in Nigeria is adjudged in this 21st century to be one of the fastest growing industries that is contributing immensely to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country and by extension provides employment opportunities to our teeming population, thereby reducing the rate of unemployment. Performing arts must be done professionally because it is a tool-box full of social utility, including that of encouraging the citizenry in our type of society, as David Udo-inwang, Uwem Affiah and Monica Udoette state, unto the "...resolve and determination to bring the leadership to accountability" (The artists at all times must bring performance to bear on the state of the dire condition of the continent. David Udo-inwang and Kufre Akpan in a similar purview thus state the obvious: Africa remains the 'blind bowel-bearing' beggar sitting on the broad path of penury, ignorant of the gold under her armpit...' (348). The tempo of performing arts must be sustained on this consciousness through mobilisation and continuous sensitisation and public education. For this to be

sustained and encouraged, there is need to do everything humanly possible to dismantle the identified impediments in successfully attaining this feat in which one of them is the 'Nigerianisation' of the English language, a situation where there is more than one version of English spoken in the country with the resultant effect of confusion and misunderstanding. To curb this ugly trend, the teaching and learning of the English language by those concerned must be intentionally done in furthermore of efficacious practice of the noble profession. The rules and the different components of the language must be studied, imbibed and frequently practiced so as to meet up with level that enhances comprehension in furtherance of the fulfillment of the primary functions of arts being information, education and entertainment and at the same time contribute to the growth and development of the country.

### **Conclusion**

The study has analyzed the point that performing arts practice in Nigeria has been a longstanding heritage and therefore requires some measure of efficiency and skillfulness in the performative activities especially when the contribution of the sector to the socio-economic development of society is closely considered. However, the emergence of the English language in Nigeria and subsequent adoption of the language as the lingual franca amidst the multiple dialects together with some linguistic and sociocultural variations (variables) make it pertinent that the English language be spoken in such a way that the heterogeneous audience in which performing arts activities are aimed at should be able to benefit from the three primary functions of arts such as: information, education and entertainment. For this to come to materialization, the study basic components, rules and other issues related to the English language as treated in this research endeavor are to be intentionally assimilated.

### **Recommendations**

This research has revealed that most performing arts activities in Nigeria are done in the English language that is used as the *linqua franca* in the country. Therefore, the practicing as well as the budding performing artistes should be intentional in learning the nitty-gritty of the language so that they can inform, educate and entertain the target audience in line with the production objectives.

Furthermore, this study has also revealed that the linguistic problems faced by most performing artistes in Nigeria are more of phonetic than syntactic or semantic, therefore, frantic efforts should be channeled towards the teaching and learning of phonetics right from the pre-nursery through primary to the secondary up to the university levels.

To further enhance the teaching and learning of the English language amongst the performing arts practitioners, scholars and the students, the use of the audio-visual technique in teaching and learning of the language is strongly recommended. For this purpose, standard language laboratory for effective learning and teaching of English language is also recommended. For result oriented English class, smaller classes are recommended against larger ones.

To improve their teaching skills, basic speech arts teachers in performing arts practice should be properly motivated and encouraged to frequently embark on and attend conferences, workshops and foreign trainings to constantly update their teaching of English language skills. Finally, the seemingly difficult and complicated issues in English language should be taught with more emphases than the less complicated ones.

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