ADOPTING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN TEACHING COMMUNICATION AND ENGINEERING EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: LESSONS FROM SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the potential place of Afrikaans and IsiXhosa as indigenous languages to promote communication education in South African Universities. This study examined the approaches and curriculum development of the use of Afrikaans and IsiXhosa to teach journalism trainees in Rhodes and North-West Universities. For the purpose of this study, uses and gratification theory was employed to examine how communication and engineering instructors have adopted Afrikaans and IsiXhosa to teach and train students in the field of engineering and journalism. The method adopted for this study was a mixed method approach combining qualitative content analysis, observation and interviews. Furthermore, a review of previous studies on the adoption of Afrikaans and IsiXhosa for communication and engineering education was examined. The result showed that many of communication and engineering trainers believed that the use of Afrikaans for communication and engineering education aids socio-cultural development among white South Africans. From the findings, it was observed that the idea of integrating Afrikaans and IsiXhosa to teach journalism was premised on promoting local identities. Interestingly, the result

indicated that Rhodes School of Journalism has a course focused on IsiXhosa for Journalism, which is a compulsory course for first year undergraduate students to understand the application of IsiXhosa in journalism practice for creating community based solutions. The study, therefore, recommends that communication educators can adopt indigenous languages for teaching communication and engineering education in Nigeria and other African countries. The adoption of indigenous languages in teaching communication education would facilitate social integration and multicultural development

1. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, languages serve as means of communicating values, histories and tradition. Scholars such as Odegbenle (2013, p.162) reasoned that language is a major element of communication that promotes interactions, engagements, experiences and participations among and between parties. Language is a binding force that promotes human settlement and community harmony. In essence, languages promote the interaction and social integration of people in any modern society

In the Nigerian society, there are several indigenous languages that aid interaction and social integration among the people. Scholars agree that Nigeria is a multilingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society (Akpoveta, & Ogbemi, 2006; Oyero, 2006; Wilson, 2006; Salawu, 2009; Balogun, 2013; Okorie & Bigala, 2017; Okorie & Bwala, 2017; Oduaran & Okorie, 2018). It has been argued that Nigeria has more than 250 indigenous languages. Balogun (2013, p.69) reasoned that Nigeria is regarded as a multicultural and multilingual nation with more than 400 indigenous languages. Importantly, only four languages are officially recognized om Nigeria. These languages are: English, Igbo, and Hausa and Yoruba languages. Interestingly, the Igbo language is the predominant indigenous language in the South East; the Yoruba language is the predominant indigenous language in the South West and the Hausa language is is the predominant indigenous language in the North East and North-West

Interestingly, indigenous languages are seen as a potent cultural vehicle for expression. There serve as a crucial purveyor of information for developmental purposes. Oyero (2007) observed that "indigenous languages and relayed through the various media of mass communication-newspapers, radio, television, films etc.will to a very great extent help in creating persuasive awareness that will result in substantial change in people". From these interjections, the adoption and integration of indigenous languages in developmental messages has influenced social change and behavior among Nigerians

In the realm of communication studies, scholars have paid little or no attention to how the use of indigenous language can impact on communication education in Nigeria. This study examined the potential role of indigenous languages for teaching communication and engineering education in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study examined how South African universities have adopted indigenous languages to teach communication and engineering education, which could serve as a model for Nigerian universities

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Establish the teaching patterns in communication and engineering education in South African universities
2. Determine the key areas of curriculum development in South African Universities
3. Identify possible solutions for adopting indigenous languages in communication and engineering education

1.2. Research Questions

1. What are the teaching patterns in communication and engineering education in South African universities?
2. What are the key areas of curriculum development in South African Universities?
3. What are the possible solutions for adopting indigenous languages in communication and engineering education?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratification theory to understand how Communication and Engineering instructors adopt indigenous languages for training students. The Uses and gratification theory is a communication theory that stipulates that individuals use the media because of its potentials and the satisfactions they derive from them. In essence, several media structures and systems appeal to certain individuals, this is why some individuals use specific media systems and avoid other media systems. (Sobowale, Amodu, Aririguzoh, & Ekanem, 2015; Okorie & Salawu, 2016; Kayode-Adedeji, Ige, & Ekanem, 2017; Okorie & Salawu, 2017; Pindaye,2017).

Anaeto, Onabajo, Osifeso (2008) noted that the audience is perceived as active and it is more concerned with what people do with the media rather than what the media does with the people, thereby placing it in the indirect effect category. It is this type of thinking that made McQuail (2010) to reason that the core of the Uses of Gratification theory stipulates that specific needs of the audience are usually gratified when using certain media systems.

They also observed that the propounds of the theory (Katz, Blumer and Gurevtich, 1974) take a more humanistic approach to media usage in the sense that people are not just passive receivers of the messages they get, they also tend to act on the messages effect. This theory is related to this work in the sense that communication educator can adopt indigenous languages to teach the principles and practice of journalism in line with African values, norms and customs

3. METHOD

The method adopted for this study was a mixed method approach combining qualitative content analysis, observation and interviews. Qualitative content analysis was adopted because it served as a research approach that is based on measuring the amount of certain variables in a representative sample of some mass-mediated popular art form. Qualitative content analysis was used in this study as a tool to extract data on how indigenous languages have been adopted in communication and engineering education.

Also, this study was premised on a range of ethnographic observations combined with data drawn from two interviews. The key informants were selected using convenience sampling technique. The discussions of the key informants intertwined with the researchers' observations and experiences formed the basis for the qualitative analysis and data interpretation made.

4. RESULT

In South Africa, there are 25 universities that have several campuses across the country. The table below shows the use of indigenous languages to teach students in South African Universities

Table 1: Indigenous Languages in South African Universities

S/n	Name of University	Indigenous Language
1	University of Cape Town	Afrikaans
2	University of Free State	Afrikaans
3	University of Pretoria	Nil
4	University of Johannesburg	Afrikaans
5	University of Western Cape	Nil
6	Rhode University	IsiXhosa
7	University of South Africa	Nil
8	North West University	Afrikaans
9	University of Limpopo	Nil
10	University of Venda	Nil
11	Nelson Mandela metropolitan University	Nil
12	Cape Pennisula University of Technology	Nil
13	Fort Hare University	Nil
14	KwaZulu Natal University	Nil
15	University of Stellenbosch	Afrikaans
16	University of Zululand	Nil
17	Sol Plaaje University	Afrikaans
18	Tshwane University of Technology	Nil
19	Witwaterstrand University	Afrikaans
20	Walter Sisulu University	Nil
21	Central University of Technology	Nil
22	Durban University of Technology	Nil
23	Vaal University of Technology	Afrikaans
24	University of Mpumalanga	Nil
25	Mangosuthu University of Technology	Nil

From table 1, only nine public universities in South Africa make use of indigenous languages to teach in tertiary institutions. Table 1 shows that eight of the nine public universities teach students with the use of Afrikaans. Only Rhodes University teach students with IsiXhosa. Thus, it can be inferred that more than 35% of the South African universities make use of indigenous languages to teach students.

4.2. Research Question Analysis

RQ1 what are the teaching patterns in communication and engineering education in South African universities?

From the finding form this study, there are three recurring patterns for teaching communication education in South Africa. They are:

1. Books and Learning Materials: most of the books used to teach students in communication and engineering studies were published in Afrikaans. Lecturers in communication education were encouraged to publish learning materials in Afrikaans

2. Continuous Assessment and Examination: students in communication and engineering programmes were required to submit assignments and term papers in Afrikaans. Importantly,   all the students were expected to write their examination in Afrikaans

3. Partnership with Independent African language media: Most of the universities have partnership with Independent African language media in the area of faculty exchange, internship placement and employment opportunities. Some of these outlets are: Isolezwe is an indigenous newspaper in South Africa that publishes in Zulu language. This newspaper is McQuail (2010) circulated and distributed in major parts of South Africa.

RQ2: What are the key areas of curriculum development in South African Universities
From the findings, some of curriculum developments in South African Universities are;

1. IsiZulu is a course made compulsory for undergraduate students in the first years at University of Kwazulu – natal, South Africa. These students must learn how to read, write and speak with the language. The course is an intergral part for the development of the student to achieve future goals in the South African society

2. Rhodes School of Journalism has a course focused on IsiXhosa for Journalism, which is a compulsory course for first year undergraduate students to understand the application of IsiXhosa in journalism practice for creating community based solutions.

3. North-West University (NWU) use Afrikaans as an indigenous language for promoting engineering education. Most instructors use academic text books written in Afrikaans to teach students

RQ3: What are the possible solutions for adopting indigenous languages in communication and engineering education in Nigeria?
Some of the possible solutions for adopting indigenous languages in communication education are as follows

1. Curriculum in communication education should be reviewed to integrate courses such as Yoruba for Journalism, Yoruba for engineering, Hausa for journalism, Igbo for engineering, etc. this type of course will ingrate the values, norms and principles in Yoruba culture into journalism practice. For example, School of Communication in Lagos State University has suggested Yoruba for journalism to be taught.

2. Policy on Internship at Independent language media. Communication educators must adopt a policy to encourage students to produce and publish indigenous media at their home institutions. For example, the Department of Mass Communication at Covenat University had published several rural newspaper publications in Yoruba language. Also, communication educators should encourage students to have internship placements at indigenous media outlets

3. Training and Research Development: communication and engineering educators should be encouraged to be trained to read, write and teach in indigenous languages. Also, communication educators should be encouraged to conduct researches on issues in indigenous language media in Africa.

5. CONCLUSION

Nigeria, being a society thronged by different ethnic and cultural groups should have a common ground on which people can come together and interact. Shared opinion and ideas can lead to learning from one another. Communication education has been established as fertile ground for this to take place. Journalism trainees view the media as agents of socio-cultural development. Also, they come in handy as facilitators of social change, social mobilization and societal development.

The adoption of indigenous language education is paramount so people can interact better in communities. Nigerians are people of different cultural backgrounds and the adoption of an indigenous language for communication justifies the grass-root development and group solidarity. This way, people have a better understanding of one another and the fear of domination of minority groups as it were by majority groups is eliminated. This results from attaining mutual grounds on which people can effectively communicate and interact better.

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