

## Language, Music, Education And National Development in Nigeria

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**Abstract.** The paper examines language, music and education as a necessity for human existence in all societies for human existence in all societies especially in Nigeria for growth, consciousness and National Development. It examines the role of language as possibly the most important and powerful of mankind's unique endowments, the means through which we regulate our social and interpersonal behavior and build up to stabilize our intellectual engagement with the world. This simply means that language is an important factor in the formation of concept and a *sin qua non* for effective communication. The trio of language, music and education refers to intimately related strands of a whole complex family of rules and regulations that cover all aspects of the life of a society.

### 1. Introduction

Music is discussed as a language, a form of communication, a highly affective language that conveys only the music itself and communicates only to those who are familiar with its social context that pervades every aspect of our daily life. This suggests the need for proper education of a spoken language that will be understood and a musical composition which will be well assimilated. It did not fail to point out the common relationship between language and music as a perfect duet for the day today activities of man.

Every human endeavour needs to be guided and protected for it to meet the desirable expectation by any society. Therefore, for the perfect diet of language and music to achieve its aim on man and the society, there is absolute need for guidance and counseling which only education can give. The duty of education here is to impart to the individual the norms and values of the society, while language and music exist as a means of communication.

When man is properly informed, the individual is reformed; his immediate community, the society at large and the nation in general will all be positively affected. When this is achieved then the consciousness of "this is my country, what will I do for my country", (patriotism) then comes in. This is a positive route to national development.

### 2. Definition of Concepts

**Language:** Hornby (2006) defines language as "the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area".

**Music:** Music is the art of combining sounds of different levels in a manner which is agreeable to

the ear. Music is both an art and a science; an art because it is learnt like every other art and characterized by the creative style of the arts; and a science because it is a systematic method of interpreting reality. Music is nearly always an expression of goodwill, a reaching out to others... a powerful expression of the interdependence of mankind... (Gaston, 1968:25). Music provides human beings “opportunities to interact in intimate yet ordered and socially described ways” (Radocy and Boyle 1979:169). Music deepens understanding, knows no barriers and is often said to be an international language and a universal one indeed.

**Education:** Education is a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skills. In a narrower sense, Michael (2006) opines:

Education is the process of transmitting knowledge from one generation to another through schooling in order to bring about improvement in the quality of life and to prepare the recipient to meet the challenges of his society at all, times” (p.9)

This narrow meaning of education is what is referred to as formal education.

**National Development:** This is a compound word formed from two different words – National and development. Taking the two words separately – they mean national-connected with a particular nation; shared by a whole nation, and development – the gradual growth of; so that it becomes more advance, stronger. Nevertheless, the coinage of the two words National and Development could possibly mean, developing a country/race to attain greater heights or become more advanced.

### 3. A Perfect Duet

**Language:** For effective communication to take place, there must be a medium; a language. Fowler (1974) in Ebizie (2009) assets that “language is possibly the most vital and powerful of mankind’s unique endowments, by means of it we regulate our social and interpersonal behaviour and build up and stabilize our intellectual engagement with the world”.

In the same vein, Amusiem (2006) opines that concepts are the vehicles that convey thoughts usually associated with images and languages. Language therefore according to him is an important factor in the formation of concepts. Consequently, language share common universal traits such as:

- (a) Language is for human beings
- (b) It is systematic in nature
- (c) It is first spoken and then written
- (d) Language is symbolic
- (e) It changes and varies with time
- (f) It is conventional and as well arbitrary

The National Policy of Education (2004) states that language is important because it helps in promoting social interaction and national cohesion, and preserving cultures.

The ability to communicate through language is a unique characteristic that separates man from other animals. What this implies in effect is that language by a community of individuals as their mother tongue is used for interaction. This feature has a universal application because there is no individual that does not belong to a linguistic group.

More interestingly, language is the means through which human communities are organized for the smooth retention of their culture from one generation to another. There can be no gainsaying therefore, that for all intent and purposes, language is a complex system used to express the totality of human ideologies, feelings and emotions.

Importance of Music in Education:

Responding to music is the most natural thing that can happen to anyone. Multitudes of people respond to such music by singing, dancing, humming, whistling, nodding or tapping. Randel (1980) explained it better when he said;

Music is the expression of feelings and ideas in organized sound, an art which in one way or another permeates the human society; a multi-dimensional art which tends itself to alliances with words (as in song) and physical movement (as in dance).

Philosophers of various ages have philosophized on music and each has rendered his impression. Aristotle, who saw music as a diverse and complicated network wondered why anyone would have knowledge of its nature. He however, thought that music had the power to mould human character. His pupil Aristoxenus, maintained that music was emotional and fulfilled a functioning role for which both the hearing and the intellect of the listener were essential.

Pythagoras, the first musical numerologist who laid the foundations of musical acoustics in which correspondence between the pitch of a note and the length of a string was established, insisted that music was a department of mathematics.

Confucius also assigned an important place to music in the service of a well ordered universe. He saw music and government as reflecting one another and believed that only the superior man who can understand music is equipped to govern. Music, he thought revealed character through the six emotions it can portray namely sorrow, satisfaction, joy, anger, piety and love. It is a true mirror of character that makes pretence or deception impossible. Plato on his part looked at music as a department of ethics. He discovered a similarity between the character of a man and the music that he presents. In fact, he recommended music and gymnastics in the correct balance as the desirable curriculum in education.

Music is an abstract language whose meaning is dependent upon the relationship between the creator and the listener. It is a highly affective language, the power that justifies things.

Just as poetry is the harmony of words, so is music made up of notes; and as poetry is a rise above prose and oratory, so is music the exaltation of poetry. Music in addition to expressing texts can also unveil a dimension of meaning and feeling, a communication of ideas and intuitions which words alone cannot yield.

Conclusively, Ekwueme (2001) expressed thus:

Music can be understood across linguistic barriers. Purely instrumental music, for example, can convey messages to all and sundry, irrespective of colour, race or creed/even if it is not necessarily the same message that gets conveyed to all at the same time by the same pieces of music (p.18).

#### **4. Relationship between Language and Music**

Music is a language, a form of communication. This simply means that there can't be music without a language. In direct relationship, language is man's most prized possession, an integral component and at the same time, a product of culture. Since culture determines the education of a people, then through language and music, the culture of a given people is transmitted from generation to generation. Language and music a human phenomenon have forms which can be described in terms of sounds – words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs.

Forms here refers to the means by which sounds (music) are connected with meanings in language. Music without a language lacks truth. The "art gives us universal truth, whereas history gives us particular truth". No wonder music is a universal language. If music is an educational discipline that is empowered to mold emotions and instill virtuous habits in the malleable soul of the child, then we can conclude that this must be done through a language that must be understood by every child in the educational environment (Blackings, 1976).

In summary language is for human beings as well as music. Music is systematic just as is

language. Both language and music are first spoken and conceived, and then written. Language is symbolic, while music is pictorial that results in the expression of sound. They are both conventional as well as highly affective.

## **5. How then can Language, Music and Education bring about?**

### **Development**

The National Policy on education (2004) stated that education is an instrument per excellence for effecting national development.

Development simply means a process which brings about a change. A change in behaviour, in the way we see, hear and walk. A change in the placement of priorities and values. Therefore the goal of education is not to increase the amount of knowledge but to create possibilities for a child to invent and discover, to create men who are capable of inventing new things.

Education develops saleable skills in the individual and helps to maintain good health and physical fitness. Education provides a proper understanding of the rights, duties and privileges of the citizen in a democratic society. It encourages the ability to purchase and use goods and services intelligently and to understand the influence of science on human life.

The relevance of music to national development is further underscored by the emergence of numerous music societies, recording industries, music broadcasting, night clubs, hotels and the consequent vocationalization of musical practices, thus promoting social integration and cultural tolerance (Idolor, 2002).

### **6. Conclusion**

The duet that has remained unbeatable in self reliance contributing immensely as well, in our dream for a better Nigeria through well constructed and harmonized jingles, is language and music. These appeal to us every day as we listen to our radios and view programmes on the television stations. Every message today from the broadcasting houses meant for the citizens of this country is musicalised.

### **7. Recommendations**

As a result of the role music plays in the overall development of the individual

- a. The government should help to create musical awareness in the society.
- b. Ex-ray the roles music plays in the teaching of other subjects.
- c. Help to sustain the interest and appreciation of the subject in both the private and public schools in Nigeria.

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