THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION FOR SPORTS DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Sport is one of the factors which bring people together or rivals establish contacts between themselves and stay together relishing various opportunities offered by sports. Human relations are organic characteristic feature of sport to such an extent that it seems queer if someone practices sports alone. Imagine what would be left of sports if it were deprived of the characteristic of community and friendship. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is the adoption of French language into sports for communication to facilitate the area of cooperation among sports men and women for sports development since sports is a vehicle for unity and Nation building. In order to achieve this, all barriers which are lingering in sports development should be removed. This paper advocates that the Anglophone sports men and women should learn French language as their francophone counterparts regional and global sports development. In addition, the article focuses on effective communication and its relevance in sports development in a rapid changing word, where increased globalization and competition is the order of the day. The methodological approach employed in this article is descriptive. The findings are that French language as a means of communication will be very useful in sports. One of the ingredients taking sports to greater height is the use of a common language, because it brings about friendship, unity, publicity and commercialization which is what sports is all about instead of coaches, athletes and administrators depending on interpreters.

Introduction

Communication is the act of establishing an interactive session between two or more people. It is the binding force that stimulates interpersonal relationship and helps to distinguish human beings from all other creatures. However, it can be explained as an act of transmitting information/messages from one end to the other.

Communication is not peculiar to human beings alone, because evidences have clearly shown that creatures too does engage in communication among themselves. According to Ajiboye (2002), language in relation to sports is a system of communication. This act of interaction can be done verbally or non-

verbally, when carried out verbally among non-human beings, it is about blabbing and, this cuts across both human beings and other creatures.

However, it is pertinent at this juncture to clearly say that human beings have been positioned higher than any other creatures as a result of the development of language. What is implied is that language helps to facilitate easy communication between one individual and another,or groups.

Sports is about the coming together of different sports men and women of a country or from different countries. New opportunities arise only when human beings communicate with one another. For any meaningful and sustainable development to take place, information is crucial. Since the main channel of information flow is communication, the later therefore becomes a preeminent factor in development efforts.

If effective communication is the taproot of sports development, then language related issues should not be toyed with because language is an indispensable part of our lives. On this note, it has become expedient to take an objective look at the status and relevance of the French language to sports development.

Relevance of French language to sports development

The United Nation's definition of West Africa includes 15 countries of which 9 are French speaking with Mauritania. According to http://wikipedia.org, Africa is the continent with the greatest number of French- speaking people in the world. The Francophone states are Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Conakry, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Chad, Togo and Senegal while the Anglophone states are: Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Guinea Bissau is a Lusophone where Portuguese is the official language.

One objective of sports is fostering unity and the spirit of working together in order to achieve the set goals. All language barriers should be removed for sports development. French language as a means

of communication is important as it will enable sports men and women from all over the world to interact with themselves without the help of an interpreter and this will encourage more sporting activities being organized between the Anglophone countries and their Francophone counterparts. The francophone can speak English to an acceptable level because of the French education system.

Consequent upon this Obinaju (2004), states that, for the francophone, it will appear from practical experience that more serious efforts have been made to get men and women attached to services to speak and write English well enough to be at ease with English speaking travelers that they may come across. The opposite situation is obtainable with the Anglophone because in those countries, there is no law that strongly enforces the teaching of French at all levels of schooling except for those who wish to make the French language a career. Such is the level of illiteracy vis-à-vis French in Anglophone countries that in Nigeria for example it is not uncommon to find highly educated people who are not able to identify a text written in French even just from the characters. The Anglophone countries who are in the minority in ECOWAS may due to language deficiency, not experience maximally the overriding benefits of integration through competitions for sports development especially in sub regional competitions since Nigeria is surrounded by French speaking countries and the globe. Language is an aspect of the culture of the people. In order for language not to serve as a barrier to sports development, athletes and officials need to be linguistically efficient.

According to the Prospectus (2000), of National Institute for Sports Nigeria, the teaching and learning of French language is mandatory for all the coaches to enable them communicate with the Francophone counterparts during and after competitions. This has given a lot of opportunities to Nigerian coaches as their outstanding performances attract attention in global sports markets. Tighe (2011), stated that the essence of sporting events is meeting other athletes and socializing. Asobele quoted by Okunade (2007), states that relating language homogeneity has engendered integration and closer cooperation.

Communication network is another area in which French language will play a great role in sports development. According to Ukah (2010), the only way is the removal of all language barriers. If this is done learners will become professionals in their fields of study especially, in French and English. This will make the athletes and coaches not just bilingual in two international languages but also make them relevant socially and economically in the Francophone countries in terms of employment, like the case of Coach Stephen Keshi, a Nigerian who was employed to coach the Malian team. It enables athletes and coaches to transfer their knowledge and share the culture of their homelands with others, thus integration is enhanced. With globalization becoming the order of the day, coaches are increasingly exposed to more realities expressed in languages and cultures of other people in the world.

Weatherford, (1986) states that a person with experiences in two cultures has advantages of job opportunities over the person who is a monolingual. According to him, two language systems seem to have left him with a mental flexibility, a superworthy in concept formation, a moral diversified set of mental abilities. In contrast, the monolingual appears to have a more unitary structure of intelligence which he must use for all types of intellectual tasks.

According to Gregory (2012), communication helps to further the strategic objectives of an organization because it seeks to enlist the support of all the various groups or ensuring the vision and values of the chief executive and organization are clearly communication. Communication fosters relationship with key publics. According to Ukah (2011), there must be a feedback for communication to be completed. Communication brings about promotion, peace harmony among athletes who play together. Asobele quoted by Okunade (2007), suggested that relative language homogeneity has engendered integration and closer cooperation among member states.

According to Ajiboye (2002), language in relation to sports is a system of communication either written or spoken words which are used by people in an area. French as a means of communication will be very useful in sports. One of the ingredient taking sports to greater height is the use of common

language, because it brings about friendship, unity, publicity and commercialization which is what sports is all about instead of coaches athletes and administrator depending on interpreters. One might wish to argue by making a case for interpretation and translation, but these would not help in the cases of emergencies because work is delayed due to the time translators take to render texts and messages understood. Translators might not also be able to give exact meaning of the documents translated or messages interpreted where the linguists in charge are not conversant with the sports terminologies in French. It is instructive to note that when there is a misunderstanding as a result of language barrier, involving for example, an athlete, a coach or a sport administrator in a francophone restaurant, because he cannot express himself to demand for what he wants someone ,who can effectively communicate in French language will feel at home in similar foreign interactions.

What is Communication?

Mcferland (1979), defines communication as the process of meaning interaction among human beings.Koontz, O'Donnell and Weihrish (1984), states that communication is the transfer of information from one person to another with the information being understood by both the sender and the receiver.

Akanni (1991), views communication as an activity concerning the transmission of information between people which can include face to face discussion , memos and reports.

Agbato (1990), opines that communication is the process whereby the ideas, images, feelings, emotions, perceptions and opinion of one person are transmitted to another. It is a rational process where two people or parties are involved; that is the message, the medium and the receiving for messages to convey clear and direct meaning, the sender, the message, must aaccurately create the message and put it in appropriate media forum when the receivers encounter a message, it must be decoded and interpreted.

According to Pitts and Stottler (2007), the interpretation of the message is influenced by the receiver's emotional status perceptions of the sender and cultural disposition among other factors. The

need to communicate with our fellow human beings is as fundamental as the physical requirements of food and shelter. The need for communication is a primary one and, in our contemporary civilization, a necessity for survival. Communication is an act of establishing interactive session between two or more people. It is the binding force that stimulates interpersonal relationship, and helps to distinguish human beings from all other creatures.

There is no definite definition in defining communication. However, it can be explained that communication is an act of transmitting information/messages from one end to the other, because evidences have shown that communication is not peculiar to human being alone, because evidences have clearly shown that other creatures too do engage in communication among themselves. This act of interaction can be done verbally or non-verbally. When carried out verbally among non human beings, it is about blabbing and this cut across both human beings and other creatures.

According to Ukah (2011), communication is a binding wire, it is the unifying factor that helps to cement relationship, and encourages human beings to live together and function as a social group. It is in line with this expression, that sports' men and women as an organization require effective communication. Sport involves a large pool of human beings of different historical and cultural background coming together to engage in competitions. To establish understanding and enhance cordial relationship among different people, there is need to put in place, an effective communication system that is capable of arousing and stimulating a good working relationship.

Communication must be precise, simple, and expressed on direct and clear terms for it to achieve its stated objectives. There must be a free flow of information that is clearly stated and should be disseminated using the right channels, so as to guard against distortion. Information that is being circulated must be carried out without using any ambiguous language that may destroy the purposes of sending out the information.

It is often said that communication is not complete if the information sent out does not give room for feedback mechanism. The feedback helps to establish the effectiveness of the information that has been passed out. Information going out is to achieve a purpose, and this can only be ascertained if only there is an avenue to get a feedback on the messages sent out. This feedback mechanism is an essential system for our competition venues and should be accorded utmost priority.

Communication in sports must take into cognizance the cultural heritage of the host community where the competition is taking place. According to Sowale and Onoja (2003), culture is the total way of life of the people that is commonly shared among them and passed from one generation to another. To be able to maximize the benefits of the host community, the communication system that operates within the sports arena must be the one that accorded utmost respect to the cultural heritage of the people in terms of use of language.

Human beings generally are sensitive to information circulating around their environment. Such information, when it is of benefit to the people, helps to encourage them and serves as a great motivational factor that drives them to greater challenges and willingness to do better. The reverse is the case, when the information going out/being circulated among the people is not understood due to some linguistic barriers and this is where having knowledge of French language is indispensable to an Anglophone athlete.

Human beings generally value and cherish honour and respect, irrespective of their status and position in the society. Respect is appreciated, when it is reciprocal, hence it makes or mars the level of communication and have effects on productivity. Good communication arouses the emotional feelings of athletes and their coaches, and serves as a propelling force that drives them to increase their level of performances, which on the long run, will be of benefit to sports development.

Communication is adjudged to be a strong socialization mechanism that helps in the process of internalizing the norms and good values of the society. Every human being is born as an empty vessel,

without any cultural values. However, through communication, the process of socialization commences, and gradually the empty vessel develops a personality that is largely influenced by the biological and sociological factors. This remarkable personality development remains the forces that influence various happenings in sports.

Communication serves as an instrument of building attitude. Action begets reaction. The method of communication process available ot a system helps in building the attitude of the people operating within the system to become more flexible and accommodating, showing care and affection in the overall interest of the people working within the system, by triggering off positive, emotional reaction and helping to modify the attitude and behavioural pattern of the sender and receiver of the messages.

Organizing competitions with an acceptable communication method between the host countries and the players brings about development and encourages other people to participate and be partakers of the success recorded. Communication in sports development is the force that binds both players and organizers together, which ensures harmonious working relationship needed to trigger off unprecedented success, which is a catalyst for improving the standard of living of the people.

Communication methods and operation in sports help to encourage networking among players and organizers, and thus stabilizes the system by ensuring that information flows without prejudice and that the feedback mechanism is highly encouraged. This brings about cordial relationship among the various interests operating within sports and this stabilizes the society at large and encourages other countries to show interest in participation.

Conclusion

In conclusion .this paper would like re-emphasize Obinaju ideas (2004),that a good knowledge of French language in Anglophone countries will help to foster unity and understanding with their Francophone counterparts.A knowledge of French language and its proper application can further improve prospects for sports development in Nigeria.

In sports, one of the lingering barriers is that of language where by the four basic communication fundamentals which is sender- channels- message- receiver are effected and no effective communication is realised. It is often argued that, when ever any of these fundamentals is faulted, communication is affected. Communication is not just passing on of information about the vision, but is designed to influence one's behaviour.

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