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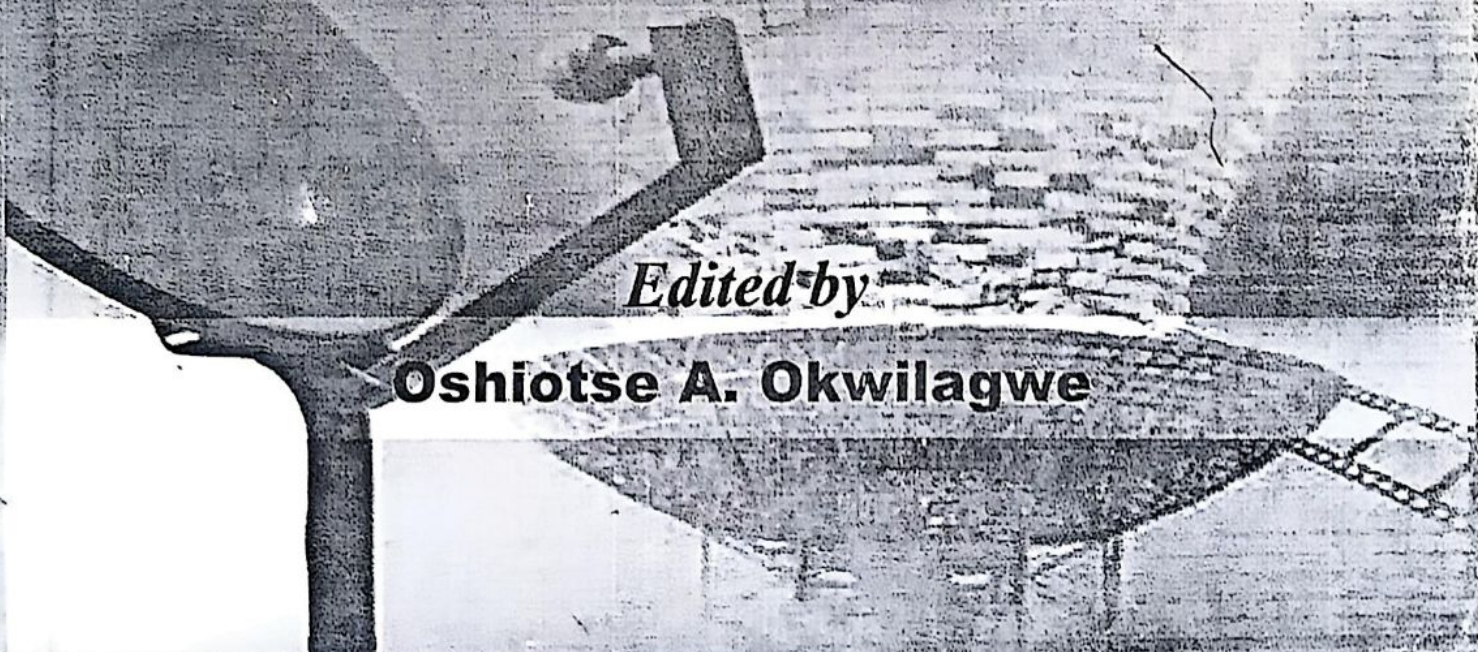
Communication

Principles and Practice

Volume 2

Edited by

Oshiotse A. Okwilagwe



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Encyclopaedia of Mass
Media and Communication

Principles and Practices

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Preface

Mass Media and Communication practices in Nigeria have immensely contributed to national integration and development in the face of serious national, economic, social and politically inhibiting problems. The practitioners in the Nigerian Mass Media and communication spheres have attained a great deal of professional competence and efficiency in their various domains of activities such as the radio, television, print and other media of communication. They would seem to have successfully created a Nigerian mass media and communication practice phenomenon, peculiar to Nigeria and worthy of emulation by other nations of the world.

While the Mass Media practitioners have more than enough evidence to showcase their direct contributions to national development and integration in terms of output and effects, the scholars in the academia often point to the fact and pride themselves with the satisfaction that the Mass Media practitioners are the direct products of their scholarship. However, the consensus seem to be that the mass media practitioners were bred by mass communication teachers mainly on foreign mass media instructional materials when they were students at various levels. The problem of lack or shortage of indigenous relevant instructional materials have always been with us in Nigeria. This situation has grown more precarious because of the recent developments in teaching and learning in the Mass Media and Communication disciplines in Nigeria.

The issues of rising number of mass communication departments and a corresponding rise in the number of mass communication students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels have made the writing and publishing of indigenous instructional materials imperative. This is the situation that necessitated and guided the perspectives that initiated and executed the Mass Media and Communication Instructional Materials Writing and Publishing National Conference that resulted in the publishing of these volumes of encyclopaedia.

The present published set of four volumes of *Stirling-Horden Encyclopaedia of Mass Media and Communication* was meant to

bridge the gap between indigenous curriculum, instructional materials needs, teaching and learning outcomes in the various sub-units that make up the Mass Media and Communication disciplines. The publications contain intrinsic Nigerian and global generic issues in mass media and communication disciplines.

Nigeria boasts of indigenous scholars in almost all disciplines of human endeavour and the mass media and communication realms are no exceptions; this is apparent. The authors of the articles in the first four volumes of the proposed set of twelve volume Encyclopaedia of Mass Media and Communication are teachers and practitioners who are in the various academic departments and media houses of the universities that run such programmes in Nigeria. The publishing of these books is a marked demonstration of the greatness of our nation in this discipline. The depth, contents, style and insightful treatment given by the authors to the contents of the publications, in part, reveal the reason for the dynamism of the Nigerian journalists both in print and electronic media.

With these publications, these authors and teachers of journalism have further strengthened the foundation and framework for academic research and professional practice of journalism in Nigeria. They must be commended for their professional ethos, determination and the innovation that resulted in the publishing of these very relevant instructional materials. These publications would be found relevant for teaching, learning and research internationally.

The first four volumes that make up the first set of the encyclopaedia cover four basic themes:

- Volume 1: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives of Mass Media and Communication in Nigeria.
- Volume 2: Principles and Practices of Mass Media and Communication in Nigeria.
- Volume 3: Social and Entrepreneurial Imperatives of Mass Media and Communication in Nigeria
- Volume 4: Technology Imperatives of Mass Media and Communication in Nigeria

We are convinced that readers; students, teachers, researchers and the practitioners would find these publications relevant to their various needs. We wish to thank all the contributors and those who attended the First National Conference on Communication with the theme: *Development of Instructional Materials (Textbooks in Mass Communication and Communication Studies in Nigeria in the 21st Century* and the members of the editorial board. The authors are responsible for the contents of their articles and the observance of the copyright law.

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Developing Communication Skills: A Theatrical Approach

Introduction

Communication is a central and fundamental aspect of all human interactions. It is not just to communicate, but to communicate effectively. Communication takes place irrespective of who, where and when. Even a deliberate refusal to communicate is still termed communication because communication can also take place in silence. The word 'communication' is derived from the Latin words *communicare/communis*. It involves a direct or indirect sharing of information between two or more people. Communication takes place when information is generated from a source, through a medium to a receiver. This is achieved through the transmission of the common understanding between individuals or groups *via* the use of a common system of symbols. To lend credence to this, Ayodele & Adeniyi (1999:146) describe communication as requiring a well-developed means, which would not only be known to the communicator but also to the communicatee, who should share a common understanding of such media. It is, therefore, very important that the media of communication be well-developed to achieve effective communication.

Types of Communication

For better understanding of the medium of communication, it is imperative to examine types of communication. Most scholars have identified two major classifications of communication: verbal and non-verbal.

1. Verbal Communication

Verbal communication in a simple sentence is communication with a spoken language. This is also referred to as oral communication. This involves direct speech (using organs) between two persons or a group of people. Verbal communication is a very common form of communication which is usually employed in giving orders, information, requests, instructions and so on. It allows for the contextual understanding of situations in determining the level of input and probable style of delivery. Language therefore plays a vital role in verbal/oral communication. Verbal communication can also be in written form, which has to do with putting down specific information in a documented form, such as notes, letters, articles, questionnaires, books, journals, magazines, posters, newspapers; and others. It is a medium of expressing innate ideas and thoughts in a coded form using words. For effective oral communication, the language of the communicator and the communicatee should necessarily be understood by both for easy communication flow. This enhances spontaneity and appropriate contributions to issues. Most importantly, it gives room for adequate clarification and it is capable of generating appropriate feedback, which is a major element of communication.

2. Non-Verbal Communication

This communication is an alternative means of sending and receiving information without necessarily producing sounds. It incorporates intentional and unintentional behaviour in the communication event, which makes meaning to other people.

Non-verbal communication comprises the following:

- i. *Body behaviour (kinetics)*: this includes dress code, posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, smell and paralanguage.
- ii. *Space and Distance (proxemics)*: these include personal space, seating and furniture arrangement.
- iii. *Time (chronemics)*: this involves the use of informal time, seasons (past, present and future), monochronic and polychronic time.
- iv. *Signs*: this is often adopted in situations where verbal expression might be inappropriate. It is relevant in punctuating, reinforcing and initiating verbal interactions.
- v. *Objects*: this is the use of objects to convey meanings.
- vi. *Floral*: this is the use of flower and garden plants to communicate information.
- vii. *Colours (chronic)*: the use of colours to represent messages such as traffic lights of red, yellow and green.
- viii. *Artefact*: these are personal objects possessed by individuals that provide meanings to others, about social and personal attributes of the individual.
- ix. *Dance (choreography)*: this is the use of body movement, rhythm, patterns, notations, levels and so on to convey information.

Theatre

The word 'theatre' brings two concepts to mind: a building and an experience. A building connotes an architectural piece where performances take place, such as; drama, music or dance. This building is made up of the stage (for the actor's performance) and an auditorium (where the audience sits to watch a performance). Subsequently as an experience, theatre takes place when an audience

sits to watch a performance. Malomo (1986) identifies four ingredients of a theatre:

- i. the creative raw materials;
- ii. the artist to refine the raw materials;
- iii. the place for presentation of refined materials; and
- iv. the audience.

Theatre reflects nature and human behaviour in many ways and this has prompted new revolutionary philosophies, economic theories and social reforms. Functions of the theatre are to:

- i. entertain;
- ii. inform;
- iii. educate; and
- iv. enlighten.

The ultimate aim of the aforementioned is to communicate certain aspects of human behaviour, like moral degeneration, hypocrisy, injustice, oppression; and others, in order to effect a positive change which will result in equality, love, appreciation, fairness, justice and others. Theatre extols values and attacks vices. To communicate effectively, theatre makes use of all other relevant arts such as music, choreography, acting, playwriting, directing, design (scenic, costume, make-up and props), sounds, management (human and financial); and others. Theatre is the machinery through which all other arts gain expression. Irrespective of the type of performance, whether drama, dance or opera, the sole aim is to convey a meaning to the audience and ultimately influence their way of life. Therefore, theatre may not be said to have taken place if the actor/dancer/singer does not communicate properly and effectively with the audience.

1. How to Develop Communication Skills through Theatre

Communication skills aid our ability to analyse the purpose and intention of an encoded message. There are five basic communication

skills. They are: thought, writing, reading, listening and speaking. Their impact shall be discussed based on how they aid theatrical performances.

a. Thought

This is the beginning of the communication process. It is the ability to reason and decide on the message before encoding it. In this light, a message is decided on, and formulated by a sender and transmitted after conversion into information to the receiver. The receiver decodes and interprets, making use of meanings stored in memory. These skills particularly require mental activities involving the brain in formulating, selecting and deciding on the message. The extent to which one is able to reason affects the logicity and coherence of information.

This is the very first stage of the communication process which can also be regarded as the foundation of any theatrical performance. The three stages involved in this first phase are as follows:

- i. *Conception of Idea*: this stage includes formulation of the main idea, otherwise known as the theme. Though there could be sub-themes there is usually a major or central theme that will give
es.
- ii. *Shaping/Organisation*: this is the mental creation of a skeletal framework. The artist here is seen as the seer or visionary, based on experiences garnered from his environment as well as his relationships with people.
- iii. *Deciding on the Medium*: this is the stage at which the artist decides on the channel through which he will project his ideas. He must consider the most appropriate art that will best execute his thought pattern. At times, this might involve a combination of two or more arts for effectiveness. For instance, a dance performance will automatically involve music/sound arts.

The three stages are very crucial to the evolution of the idea, because it is the planning stage which certainly determines the level of success of the creative endeavour, particularly when thought is seen as entailing the encoding and decoding process in communication.

b. Writing Skills

Writing is an expressive skill that involves a conscious and deliberate effort of the mind and the hand. Effective writing is developed and perfected only through persistent and consistent writing. Written communication is very essential to everyday life, it is more time-consuming and demands more effort and attention than speaking. It can be in the form of letters, reports, circulars, essays, notices; and others, and it is used for all forms of private and public communication.

Writing also involves the ability of the writer to have a good grasp and mastery of the language of communication which is the medium for transfer of information. Writing is a very popular communication tool adopted in the theatre. In the final analysis, almost all theatrically inclined works end up in writing even when they are an improvisational piece. However, emphasis shall be laid on the art of playwriting in this chapter.

Playwriting is the art of putting down, in writing, one's idea in a chronological manner, giving actions and dialogue to characters in a play. A playwright provides a working manual for the director, actor, designer, choreographer; and others. A playwright must tackle the play from three angles based on the three factors that influence writing, which are:

- i. theme of the play;
- ii. purpose of the play; and
- iii. audience.

The theme in question must be well understood, so as to know the expected scope of coverage. This will guide what is to be included or left out in the writing. Also, the purpose of writing must be clearly defined. The purpose could be to entertain, inform, persuade, evaluate, convince; and others. Finally, the question, 'for whom am I writing?' is pertinent. The target audience informs the style of writing and, particularly, the language of expression.