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BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGH LANGUAGES**ABOUBACAR Nana Aichatou**

Abdou Moumouni University, Niamey, Niger Republic

Corresponding Author*

ABOUBACAR Nana Aichatou

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Abstract: Language is one, of the means by which human beings communicate through social interaction. Man uses his language as a means of communication in ordinary daily life among family, friends, associates, workmates, playmates, etc.

People, in general, come into contact to share commonness. As far as they have language in common, no difficulties arise. However, when people who do not have language in common attempt to communicate with each other, they face difficulties we may call barriers, which may occur everywhere and at any time. How to overcome these barriers is what this paper attempts to do.

Using the documentary research method, also qualitative content analysis, the study is a theoretical contribution which aim was first to highlight already attained findings and second suggested ways to unravel the issue.

Keywords: *Language Communication Impediment Breaking Barriers Context*

INTRODUCTION

To undertake any kind of social activity, people must communicate. They must come into contact either directly or indirectly to establish a commonness. This is possible only through communication and must lead to a transfer of meaning and some degree of mutual understanding. As stated by Hymes (Eds. 1964)

Whatever else people do when they come together whether they play, fight, make love, make automobiles, they talk. We live in a world of words. We talk to our friends, our associates, our wives, and our husbands (...). We talk to a total stranger, and to our adversaries, we talk face to face and over the telephone. And everyone responds to us with more talk. TV and radio further swell this torrent of words.

This is, because, there can be no social life or social organization without communication which is the backbone of everything that we do“(...).Our everyday routine consists of communication, whether verbal or non verbal, making things being either hard or easy depending on how the message has been sent, and subsequently received, Maya Pillal, (2013). It is only through communication that a social system is held together. That is, society exists in and through communication” (Duwey quoted by Onigu (P269).

Besides, all the complex interaction and co-operation between and among the members of human society is unthinkable without language. Man uses his language as a means of communication. Language is the greatest mediator that allows us to relate and understand each other. In fact, every language user has an intent message he wishes to communicate through the use of sociolinguistic items graphically or orally. Effective manipulation of language enhances the interpretation of materials communicated to a reader or listener. Aliyu (2002).

Language, therefore, roles as an agent that enables us to communicate with one another. Nevertheless, communication is not always easy. This gets to almost all aspects of our daily life: health, travel, commerce, migration, politics, education, busyness, information. A number of barriers (socio-psychological, physiological, physical, systematic, attitudinal, geographical, cultural, technological, linguistic, emotional, etc.) exist that cause meaning to be confused, prevent individuals from communicating effectively with each other, and generally damage the value of communication. (http://www.ehow.com/list_6727619_six-barriers-communication.htm)

On the other hand, as Das,V.(ed) stipulated ‘What is sociolinguistically the most important characteristic in the language in society is that it both ‘unites’ and ‘divides’.

It is in this context that this paper tries to find out the way(s) language can help break barriers experienced in the process of daily interaction when language self constitutes a barrier.

1. METHODOLOGY

To collect data for the present study, the documentary research method was adopted which involved gathering data or evidence from authors. This approach is adopted because the analytical technique used is mainly textual, based on the ‘writings’ to bring out the significant role language plays in smoothing communication, that is breaking barriers. As data were derived from various authors from various domains this study is also qualitative content analysis. The aim of this paper is primarily to highlight the already attained findings and then, suggest some solutions.

The paper is a theoretical contribution that looks at the present state of language as the way out with regards to language barriers in communication and connects it to current trends in the field that rely mostly on data from all domains of human activities.

2. NATURE/IMPEDIMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication in society is possible only through language. Common understanding and a common basis for collective actions maybe arrived at under the circumstances of the process of communication, through which it becomes possible to achieve the symbolic sharing of human experiences. Language is the main system of communication and that without communication individuals become socially isolated. Communication is very important for the effective functioning of socialization and role differentiation. But communication is so fragile that it can snap at any time leading to communication breakdown. Else, people face barriers that is, as to Merriam- Webster Dictionary Online (2015) “something that makes it difficult for people to understand each other.” Also, in communication, as a psycho-semantic process, the word barrier implies mainly something non-physical that keeps people apart or prevents activity, movement, interaction, consensus, etc.

Hence the barriers can be anything from a noisy environment, a distracted coworker, or a preoccupied mind, to total ignorance of the language. Our lives are full of communication deterrents. How we manage to pass on the message intact, without letting it undergo a sort of corruption is crucial.

There are a number of factors that impede mutual understanding, give rise to a communication breakdown that dramatically affected all sectors of participation of the individual: Politics and economics, dissemination of information and knowledge, formal and informal education, oral or written (tele) communication, even traveling, depends on the appropriate linguistic skills.

3. LANGUAGE AND BARRIERS OF COMMUNICATION

“A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates” (Bloch & Trager, 1942: P5). This definition emphasizes the role of language as communication for reaching a common goal.

Overall, previous studies suggest that language is more than just a communication tool (Imberti, 2007; Lauring, 2008). Sturtevant (1967) sees language as constituting the bond between the members of any social group, that language alone makes organized society possible.

According to Langacker (1968:3) “language permits our thoughts, mediates our relations with others (...)” Most human knowledge and culture, according to him, is stored in language, and without language, society as we know it would be impossible.

Language is a symbol, the whole being used for communication among the members of a community. As Brosnahan & Spencer (1962) asserted “the language which a community uses must be such as to enable the members of a community to talk about all or almost all the rest of their culture” (p 8). There is a general agreement today about the social nature of language. Finally, one can share Norman’s (1969: 149) view point that language is man’s prime means of communication. It is the chief instrument through which man thinks and with which he integrates himself, both internally and externally, and both as a functioning individual and as an active participant in a human group, member of human society.

Nonetheless, interpersonal communication may fail due to many reasons as speakers could select from a range of possible expressions to communicate through the verbal repertoire which provides the weapons of everyday life communication. Speakers choose among this arsenal in accordance with the meanings they wish to convey whereas “communication is fruitful if and only if the messages sent by the sender are interpreted with the same meaning by the receiver. If any kind of disturbance blocks any step of communication, the message will be destroyed.

In short, anything that interferes with a signal sent to a receiver is a barrier to communication. In fact, Communication is so fragile that it would snap anytime. People are potentially led to misunderstanding, misinterpretation.

As Brittni (2003) put it:

For communication to work, a message must be understood by the receiver. When two people cannot understand one another, they experience a language barrier. Language barriers occur when a breakdown in language and communication

happens at either the sender side or the receiver side of a message. A language barrier can occur within a language or between speakers of different languages. Language is the major barrier to all the aspects of our life: literacy, business, migration.

Amongst others, language and linguistic ability may act as a barrier to communication in terms of dialects, dyslexia, disabilities.

When communicating in the same language, therefore, the terminology used in a message may act as a barrier if it is not fully understood by the receiver(s). For example, a message that includes a lot of technical, specialized vocabulary, jargon, will not be understood by a receiver who is not familiar with the terminology.

Dialectal differences can also make communication between people difficult, or even impossible, as is the case with the Mauri and Damagaram dialects of Hausa in Niger. Nigeriens speakers of Zarma and those of Songhai. This type of language barrier exists worldwide: Chinese speakers of Cantonese and those of Mandarin; speakers of non-standard dialects (e.g. speakers of Ebonics) of English face breakdown in communication with speakers of Standard American English; in Switzerland, Flemish and Norman, for example, find communication between each other difficult and often impossible; People of Alsace find their messages lost on speakers of standard French..

4. COMMUNICATION AND CONTEXT

Language can be defined as a system of conceptual symbols that allows us to communicate. It also provides us with a significant frame of reference and a relational context that sustains our identities Imberti (2007).

A language is a useful tool for thinking with. Language is also a symbolic system human beings put together these symbols in different ways, manipulate them, put their meaning together and imagine in their minds things or features or situations that are not within the range of their senses. Brosnahan & Spencer, (1962:18)

However, language is, also a tool of limited use: we can use a language for thinking with, only within the particular culture in which we use it. This is because:

As long as you wish to think about things or ideas for which your language has words, and about relationships with which the syntax of your language can cope, for so long is your language perfectly satisfactory. But if for any reason, you try to think outside these limits, you will find it almost impossible: a language not only enables its users to think about the various aspects and relationships of their culture but also almost force them to think about these things Brosnahan & Spencer (1962, P.9).

Hence “The limits of our language mean the limits of our world” (Wittgenstein, 1982:149); on the other hand, language and culture being interrelated, “The degree to which we don’t understand the culture of others is the degree to which we’re culturally impoverished.” (Jonathan Kozol, (2005: 83)

These limits and impoverishment also mean communication breakdown, in other words, the barriers to communication whatever the context. On the other hand,

The language barrier is a term used to imply all the problems faced by an individual as he tries to communicate with a group of people who speaks a tongue other than his own. It is prevalent in settings which involve the conglomeration of people from different cultures, speaking different languages Garcia (2006).

The barriers to communication are varied: they may be psychological, physiological, systematic, attitudinal, geographical, cultural, technological, linguistic, emotional, etc., amongst which language and cultural barriers are the most common. This is due to the fact that language and culture will always remain different and diverse on one hand; on the other hand, language is used continuously in ordinary daily life to 'maintain relationships, exchange information, and complete and manage numerous tasks.

In fact, at this juncture, we maintain Bloch & Trager (1942: P5) stand when they emphasize the role of language as communication for reaching a common goal; they talk of language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates. Though this cooperation depends on how well people share commonness.

Whence, language barrier affects almost all aspects of everyday life. Nowadays the world is becoming more and more a global, planetary village. Increasing globalization in a multicultural international environment is forcing a growing number of people to communicate across cultural and linguistic boundaries; as a matter of fact, linguists and researchers are forcibly bound to focus on issues of communication barriers.

The phenomenon of language barriers have been amply characterized in the literature in all domains. As mentioned earlier, the documentary research method and qualitative content analysis were used to gather and elicit data from various authors from various domains.

On the academic domain, Pinnock, claims that children experience higher failure rates in school if the language they learn at school is different from the one spoken at home. As to him, in 2008, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conducted research across 26 countries showing that over 50 percent of students who dropped out of school did not speak the language in which they were being educated. This applies to the United States as well. A 2012 report by the American Psychological Association noted that Latino students who spoke one language at home and another at school were at increased risk of graduating late or dropping out of high school whereas

Emira R. I. et al. (2017) in their study show that the language barrier becomes the first biggest problem for international students worldwide.

The analysis has shown that students experience certain difficulties in their academic study due to serious language difficulties and that impact on their academic performance. As to them, the majority of international students have to struggle with plenty of challenging stressors: language barriers, adjustment problems, cultural differences (...)

Among the above-mentioned stressors, language barriers appear to be one of the most challenging issues for international students. Emira et al make the link with many other types of research to underline a close connection of language proficiency and academic performance in the sense that it has been found

out, in a number of studies that international students identify proficiency as the most problematic aspect of the academic performance.

Regarding the domain of International business, Garcia et al conducted a study which systematically investigated how language barriers influenced trust formation in multinational teams. (...) and found out “language barriers as an obstacle to effective communication which arises if interlocutors speak different mother tongue and lack a shared language in which they all have native proficiency.” It is a well-known fact that all international business activity involves communication. Companies deal with language issues every day. Hence, within the international and global business environment, activities such as exchanging information and ideas, decision making, motivating, and leading are all based on the ability of managers from one culture to communicate successfully with managers and employees from other cultures. In such an environment, Garcia et al found out that members’ cognitive and emotional reactions to language barriers influence their perceived trustworthiness and intention to trust, which in turn affect trust formation. While they were at it, they also stated that achieving effective communication is a challenge to managers worldwide even when the workforce is culturally homogeneous.

Sarah Bowen, (2015) in the *Final Report Prepared for the Société Santé en Français* stated “(...) language has been described as medicine’s most essential technology-the principal instrument for conducting its work.” As such, the language barrier is seen to impede on almost all aspects of health care: less use of health promotion and health education resources and lower participation in almost every form of preventive care; lower frequency of general check-up, fewer visits. In addition, access to almost every form of supplementary or alternate health service is affected by language barriers; moreover, those facing language barriers also face increased risk of medication errors, complications, and adverse events, increasing the likelihood of malpractice claims and complaints;

Seonae Yeo (2004) asserted that language is the means by which a patient accesses the health care system, learns about services, and makes decisions about her or his health behaviour. Language is also a means by which the health care provider accesses a patient’s beliefs about health and illness and thus creates an opportunity to address and reconcile different belief systems. In essence, communication between nurses and patients is the heart of nursing care.

Through these studies, the author examines how language barriers contribute to health disparities among ethnic and racial minorities in the United States. Overall, these studies indicate that language barriers are associated with longer visit time per clinic visit, less frequent clinic visits, less understanding of physician’s explanation (...).

According to the author, language barriers between patients and health care providers may affect all 3outcomes: e. g. disease incidence, health outcomes, or access to care. On the other side, various translation services have been used to facilitate communication in daily clinical settings. But, as they found out, differences in language between health care providers and patients increasingly impose barriers to health care. Hence the use of translators does not in itself decrease barriers to care. So Language is identified as the most difficult and obvious obstacle to access to health care in the US. The consequences of language barriers range from miscommunication to inefficient use of health care services.

Usman Bukar (2017:17) in his book titled *Language, Technology and Democratic Culture* underlined the importance of language and established the link between language as a thinking tool and technology and development on the one hand and language as a means of imparting information when he stated the following:

(...) Given the foregoing, the connection between language and technological development in general terms is self-evident. Technology is invention through thought. Thinking is done and articulated through language. Therefore, thought, language and technology are inextricably linked. It is through language that we express feelings, and conceive and impart information ---even scientific and technological information.

On the other hand, Usman posited language as a potential barrier in all aspects of human activity which impedes even the main means (Translator/interpreter's service among others) supposed to help overcome the issue. He asserted:

The primary function of language is communication, and this function drives education, effective management, and the provision of services. Language could either be a barrier or a facilitator of economic activities. It can be a barrier even in language-based functions, such as translation, interpretation, tourism, and teaching. In fact, there is no domain of economic activity in which language does not play a key role.

Translators without Borders Language barriers in the humanitarian response in north eastern Nigeria. Serial Assessment

TWB visited Maiduguri in Borno State in July 2017, to carry out an initial assessment of the language barriers hampering operational agencies' effort to communicate with affected people in north east Nigeria. All operational organizations interviewed reported serious difficulties communicating with the target population as a result of language barriers.

The difficulties described affect both operational effectiveness and accountability, from the inclusiveness of needs assessments and feedback mechanisms to the provision of services and the implementation of behaviour change campaigns. Confidentiality- conflict sensitivity is impaired when not everyone can speak for themselves. Organizations were also concerned that the language barriers are impeding their capacity to communicate effectively with conflict-affected groups.

Nana Aichatou (2021) conducted research on migration in its relation to the language where the core objective was to explore to what extent is language an impediment to immigrants' welfare and development. She found out that the inability to speak a language is the greatest barrier that prevents immigrants from experiencing successful integration and development in the host society. So to speak, language proves itself not only as a medium of communication but also as a source of stress that generates negative, emotional, and cognitive responses as shown through the research participants' responses. Therefore, language acts as an impediment and has negative effects on both immigrants and the host population due to the sort of tension between these actors. Her study also raises the issues of the negative attitude of the host population towards those immigrants considered as a threat.

‘Consequently, immigrants leave in a linguistic enclave where to cross-linguistic boundaries they develop certain bi/multilingualism in addition to a use of a lingua franca, in this case, Hausa language as a medium of communication. Thus, integration, hence development, and welfare become almost impossible because of the language issue. There is no communication by language what seriously impedes on their development. This is because the success of development depends on language and effective communication.

Nana Aichatou(2010). conducted another study on language (French) use within the judicial system in Niger where equality of all before judicial institutions namely equal access to and equal treatment of citizens before the tribunals is advocated. But, as she stated the principal can’t work as 78 percent of the population is the French language illiterate. She has gone on to argue that this situation concerns the problematic of “language, justice, human right, and democracy” rendering the linguistic factor an important stake in the tribunals of Niger if not elsewhere in colonized countries. This problematic includes traditional judicial systems, French as a working language creating numerous controversies, the urgent need for a skilful interpretation in the tribunals with the aim of granting effective equality for all on judicial matters.

As stated by Benjamin Lee Whorf (in Hayakawa 1974, p.5) “Whenever agreement or assent is arrived at in human affairs....this agreement is reached by linguistic process, or else it is not reached”.

5. Breaking Barriers Through Language: Discussion

Barriers have always been experienced when people communicate with each other, and accordingly, attempts have always been made to overcome the problem. The question is how to overcome these barriers and make communication become far more effective.

In order to cope with barriers according to whether they are socio-psychological, physiological, physical, systematic, attitudinal, geographical, cultural, technological, linguistic, emotional, etc. some scholars gave some suggestions, including:

- Avoiding using ambiguous or uncommon words, be they jargons, idioms, or technical, professional vocabulary
- Use of simple language;
- Active listening as there is a difference between to hear and to listen;
- Simple organizational structure;
- dealing with the problem with positive attitude

It is worth mentioning all type of barriers is an impediment, a barrier to communication let alone cultural and language ones.

In fact, language barriers are the most common as communication is the backbone of all what we do; a process in the center of which the language is.

So other scholars like Hausser (2002) for instance, pointed out that:

To overcome the limitations of natural languages, there have been numerous attempts at designing a universal language to serve an international auxiliary language, enabling

people with different native languages to communicate with each other: Zamenof's 1887 Esperanto, the programs of the Viennese circle, and Frege's 1879 Begriffsschrift, Ido, and Volapuk.

As language is what makes communication between any two individuals possible, one can imagine the motive, the idea behind this suggestion; this is two people who wanted to communicate with each other either through speaking or writing could learn an auxiliary language like Esperanto, Ido. Hence, clearly put what the author advocates as the solution is a kind of bilingualism through the acquisition of an auxiliary language.

Nonetheless, we should keep in mind that, learners of whatever language experience barriers as they acquire a new language due to the unfamiliar vocabulary as well as idioms, jargons, technical terms used which present language difficulties. Learners of these auxiliary languages are not an exemption. So the approach has limits amidst other limitations that people have to learn before communication takes place.

But attempts continue on so that in the first half of the twentieth century, a second approach to an auxiliary language called naturalistic languages emerged: as to this approach there is no need to construct an auxiliary language au contraire, it is to put the multitude of words of the most widely spoken languages such as French, English, Arabic, Portuguese, etc., already have in common to use. These words could be developed into a simple language say Interlingua, Occidental, and Latino Sine Flexione. It is true today, Interlingua and Esperanto are widely used.

As a matter of fact, Hausser (2002) on his own suggested overcoming Language Barriers by means of Computer. As he stated:

Language barriers arise between different natural languages, different media of language (speaking, writing, and signing); different agents: humans and machines; these language barriers have been approached with different methods: design of universal languages to serve as a scientific in, providing a simplified system of symbolism for the exact expressions of all actual and possible scientific knowledge, and as a logical calculus, providing a powerful instrument of the human mind for the demonstration of contradictions and the discovery of new truths. These desiderate should be fulfilled jointly by one and the same language.

So suggestions of how to cope with the communication deterrents which prevent communication to be effective go their own amongst which:

- The use of lingua franca, a language systematically used for communication, possibly among people who do not have a common language; or the combination of languages as schematic auxiliary languages, in order to have mediums of communication. It is used for crossing boundaries.
- Sensitizing: to, for instance, raise international awareness through implementing and celebrating day following the example of The Rosetta Foundation which, in 2012, declared April 19 the international 'No Language Barrier Day';

- Translation, considered by many others as in essence, basically a kind of communication, as the last stop way out. As a matter of fact, translation and translation theorists worldwide have realized the essence of translation as a kind of communication Fran Zhangying (1994:9).

In this way, for instance, in the domain of health studies reasonably demonstrate that translation services may improve access to care, satisfaction with health care, and possibly adherence (Brach and Fraser, 2000) and Seonae Yeo(2004: 67) to link up when there is the language barrier between patient and care provider, provision of various interpreter services is an obvious and frequently proposed solution. This is quite the same version of the story with concern to the judicial.

We can still take the opposite view to argue in the same line as Gelairzh (2012:85) that translation presumes the existence of boundaries between different cultures and languages Translation is not only a linguistic act; it is also a cultural one, an act of communication across cultures. And Translation always involves both languages and cultures simply because the two cannot really be separated; the translator is aware of these boundaries he or she must inevitably cross. But and most of the time translators are hindered by the languages and the inherent cultures they are dealing with: there are limits to translatability. That is where the shoe pinches

6. Conclusion

The role of language has become increasingly vital in our societies that are more and more shaped by communication. It is the language that bridges all aspects of our live together as well as it makes man fully human. It is one of the means by which human beings communicate through social interaction whereas barriers are a common human experience

Nonetheless, language constitutes a social bound as well as an obstacle, an impediment, the barrier between any two individuals; this even in the same language.

As the study has shown, language is also the one and only last stop as the solution to communication barriers. There is no definite, absolute solution. Barriers always exist between speakers of different languages

Seeing that it is undeniable that barriers cannot be entirely removed; they can nevertheless be alleviated through the use of lingua franca and making translation/interpretation service accessible to all and sundry.

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