

MUSIC IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

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Introduction

The discussion on music education and the learning of language skills will be grossly inadequate without having concise look at the meaning of 'music' and 'music education. Music in its simplest term has been defined as an organized sound which the ears interpret as being pleasant. Music is a phenomenon which is found in every culture, be it traditional or civilized. As a matter of fact, music has been properly diagnosed, scrutinized and critically looked at from divergent perspectives by erudite scholars and music educators who are adepts in the field of music; each coming out with his/her own opinion which cannot be presented in this write up.

Music is the language of the soul. According to Nwaneri (1997), 'music is a universal language which all and sundry understand amidst ethnic, linguistic and dialectical differences. The implication of this assertion is that music is written, making use of the peoples' language and when taught, employing the appropriate language skills are understood by them because music makes memorization easier and anything written in music or set to music is easily understood.

Music contributes immensely in the teaching and learning of school subjects like English language, poetry, drama, geography, mathematics and the like. It helps in number counting for example; one, two, three, four, five catching fishes all alive. Through pronouncing and singing, new words are learnt and these help in the improvement of spoken English among children (Nwaneri 1996). This is in concordance with Ude (1989) who remarks that "through the use of musical

activities, children's concept of terms like jump, shake, run, creep, sad and many other words are expanded, thus, becoming part of language development.

Music education on its own has been described in many ways. According to Anufrom (1984) and Nwaneri (2000), music education is that which trains individuals in the acquisition of music knowledge and skills as well as vocational training that could enable one to develop healthy attitude towards honest labour. Music education plays significant roles in the educational enhancement and advancement of children from birth because it has been said that an African by/from birth is a musician. Researches has shown that the study and practice of music is beneficial to the central nervous system including the brain, thus enhancing learning. Hence, Scarantino (1987) and Hester and Cowen (1999) upholds that a person who remains mentally active through music study reaps benefits in increased mental acuity, even till date. It is also believed that listening to, enjoying and creating music is primarily a right brain function, and that learning is a process of the left brain. Music links the two together, and when there is more linking, there is more learning.

Again, Scarantino (1987) opines that "a child who studies music and performs moderately well can do better in high school and college years than if he only performed academic studies. Through music lessons, he/she learns to be goal-oriented and work in a structured format towards achievement. Suffice it to say, therefore, that music and music education for all intents and purposes, and in all ramifications within their confines can be effectively utilized in the teaching/learning of language and language skills both foreign and indigenious.

Language is an instructive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. It affects the way we think and/or perceive our reality. Language is a vehicle that drives out in built/unused thoughts and ideas dwelling in an individual. Every individual has thoughts, ideas, feelings, conscience, opinions and perceptions lying fallow within the inner self, but through the use of language, all these will be communicated from person to person(s), community and the world at large. To support this, Ugwoke and Nwaneri (2019) opines that "language is both verbal and non-verbal through which ideas are shared. They went further to explained that, the ideas, thoughts, feelings and the like are best communicated through verbal means (spoken words). Ezema (2012) is of the same view that language is universal and is only spoken by humans. Language is

also an instrument of thought and expression for normal human beings. According to Felix and Akeem (2005), it is the only channel by which human beings attract reality. This implies that language unveils what has been conceived in the mind.

In fairness and honesty, language is a mirror in the sense that peoples thought, minds, emotions, ideas, desires and even overt and covert behaviours are seen through it. Buttressing this point, Mba, Eme and Anagbogu (2010) posit that language is very important to man because it can indeed be said to be the only thing that makes man distinct from other animals for he is the only animal that uses language systematically as a means of communication. Echezona (2014) remarks that culture cannot exist without language because language gives expressions to what people do, names to what people have and expressions to what people think and inclusion, it becomes an indispensable vehicle used in the transmission of culture from one generation to another. Summarily, the introduction of English language by the colonial masters as facilitating agent of colonialism expressed the powerful effect of language in human development.

In learning language, there are various methods to be adopted. One of the methods is the use of music. Music aids both the second language learners and beginners to learn fast. The researchers, through their research findings have discovered that language is best and easily learnt through songs. For instance, learning in all spoken languages are being learnt from Pre-Nursery to Nursery and even to primary level as planned in the curriculum. But this same alphabet can be learnt in just a period in a class when set to music. The singing aspect of it will make the children to be excited, motivated and ready to learn.

EXAMPLE 1: In English Language, It Is Sung as: (For Staff Notation See Appendix)

a		b		c		d
d	:	m	:	s	:	s
e		f		g		h
l	:	l	:	s	:	s
i		j		k		l
d	:	m	:	s	:	m

m		n		o		p
f	:	s.f	:	m	:	m
q		r		s		t
d	:	m	:	s	:	s
u		v		w		
l	:	l	:	s.s:-s		
x		y		z		
<u>l</u>	:	<u>l</u>	:	s	:	---
m	:	m	:	s	:	d
l		can		say		my
r	:	r	:	d	:	d
a		b		c		d

While Igbo version of it is

a	b	ch	d
e	f	g	gb
gh	gw	h	i
i	j	k	kp
Kw	l	m	n
n̄ nw	ny	o	
o	p	r	s
sh	t	u	u
v	w	y	z

Relationship between Music and Language

Music and language are closely interwoven. Both of them are important in helping humans form large social groups, and one can argue that they co-evolved on the back of this function. As said ab initio in this write-up, there is evidence that the same brain structures are involved in music and language processing; and that a rare disorder suggests a genetic link between social skills, language skills and

musical skills. The above connections between music and language processing backup recent evidence that music training can greatly improve children's language skills. In fact, one of the obvious connections between music and language is that music as earlier mentioned in this write-up can help us to remember words. It has been convincingly shown beyond reasonable doubts that words are better and easily recalled when they are learned as song rather than speech in particular conditions. No wonder Mbanugo (2009) remarks that the level of effect of and achievement recorded by music in any sphere of life depends on the weight and musical meaning (essence) embedded in the lyrics (texts/language). He continued by saying that;

"When words are merely spoken, heavens naturally understand and capture the meaning. But when the same words are put in to melody line and interpreted as song, the music acts as a leverage for understanding and internalizing the meaning".

The relationship between music and language cannot be overemphasized. They are inextricably tied together even within the African music context. There is great affinity between speech-tone (language) and melody (music). This is in concordance with Ibekwe (2010) who opines that "the closeness or relationship that exists between music and language lies in their ability to communicate. In Africa, especially, Nigeria, and Igbo land in particular, music is not composed for its own sake; rather, any music being composed and rendered to the public has an essence (meaning) and message to convey. This is vividly demonstrated and made manifest in the melodic contour. Hence for African melody to be meaningful, the melodic line according to Nwaneri (2012) has to be in conformity with the language of the people.

It is on this note that Ibekwe (2010) remarks that "among different cultures, the ways their music flow depends on their word usage (texts). The implication of this according to Nwaneri (2012) is that the composer of African melody for example has to take in to cognizance, the way the people pronounce their words because one word in African context may mean different things based on the pronunciation. Hence, any melody that fails to take the language of the people and its pronunciation in to consideration will have the meaning the music is conveying distorted. It is on this note that Ibekwe (2010) remarks that the melodic movement of music follows the 'tonal inflexion' of the spoken word otherwise the meaning of the word would be

distorted and misunderstood. This is because most African cultures with special reference to Nigeria operate on 'tonal languages', and each syllable of a word carries with it, a musical pitch which is as important to its sound pattern as its phonetic elements. Many researches by some bright scholars in music have proven that speech-tone has considerable influence on African melody. Using the Igbos of the Eastern part of Nigeria as example, Agu (2005) reaffirms the fact that the Igbo speech-tone not only has considerable influence on the melodic line but makes the melody more authentic and acceptable.

The Igbo language is tonal and as a result, influences the patterns of melody in most cases. Igbo songs as a matter of fact, conform to the principles guiding the relationship between speech, tone and melody. There are three (3) main tonal levels in Igbo—, the 'high, the 'low' and the 'mid' among which the 'high' and the 'low' are more prominent than, the 'mid' which stands as a bridge between the high and low tones. These apply to other languages and dialects. In Igbo language, as said earlier on, one word may mean different things based on the pronunciation and this makes your melody meaningful or meaningless. Example, the word "Akwa" has up to four meanings based on pronunciation and tone-marking. Example (ákwá) means 'cry', (àkwà) bed, (ákwa) cloth, (àkwá) egg. As it is in Igbo language, so it is with Yoruba, Hausa and the like.

For the sake of paper requirement, all these examples cannot be given in different languages. From all that have been said so far, it has become crystally, evidently and abundantly clear that there is great affinity between melody (music) and speech tone (language). When properly used together in producing music which people learn correctly, they can sing effectively and perfectly.

The Role of Music/Songs in Language Learning Skills

In language learning, there are four language skills namely, listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills. Music plays a very vital role in each of these language learning skills:

Listening skill: At this stage, which ranges from 0-9 months, the child at this stage can neither speak, read nor write but can actively listen and hear sounds because listening is giving attention to sound or action. That the child is not talking does not mean that the child is not communicating. As a matter of fact, listening is

of two types: verbal and non-verbal listening. Non-verbal listening includes nodding, smiling, maintaining eye contact and the like. When a child is crying, no amount of shouting 'keep quiet' or 'stop crying' can make the child to stop but when music like lullaby songs are sung, the child will be calm and focus his/her attention completely on the singer and this defines active listening which is focusing completely on the speaker to understand the language, comprehend the information and respond thoughtfully. 'Responding' as said earlier could be in form of smiling, nodding, or maintaining eye contact. Music at this stage (listening stage) plays a significant role in teaching the child the language of the community. In as much as there is a change in behavior, it means that learning of language has taken place. Learning according to Umeano (2005), is a process whereby an organism changes its behavior as a result of experience. It is clearly known that the ultimate aim of education is to change the behavioral patterns of the learner. Therefore, listening skill which the first stage in language learning develops faster through the use of music education that fits in at that child's age at that particular period. The same applies to the child's attitude, aptitude, emotions, aspirations and interests to his/her language which equally develops faster through music education.

Example 2: Onye Mere Nwa N' Ebe Akwa (For Staff Notation See Appendix)

Lullaby:

4 s:d'	s. s: -	l: s: f	m: x: d' : d'
4 o-nye	me-re	nwa na-ebea	kwa, E - gbe

s. s: - l: s: f	m: x s: d'	d': d: s: l
me-re nwa na-ebea	kwa, we- tu	zi za we to

r: x s: d'	s: s: l: l	s: x: d' :s_t
se, we - ta'	ma-ra nku'o	fe u- mun

s: s: l: l	s: x s: l	m: s: l: l. s	s: x
nu- nuara cha ya	o-nye	o - nye e-gwuo	zo

On the other hand, music (songs) help those learning L₂. They include both L₂ students choir people, new migrated settlers and the like. L₂ learners are second

language learners. A good example is an Igbo speaker learning to speak Hausa or Yoruba, automatically Hausa and Yoruba has become his second language (L₂).

Speaking skills: Speaking skill is the second stage in language skills development. It is a skill that gives the ability to communicate effectively. It is the ability to speak confidently and fluently. It is the skill that makes human beings different from, and superior to other species of living things. It is also a complex cognitive and linguistic skill. A child learns to speak through interaction with the people around him/her in their native languages. It is at this stage that music plays its role. Obviously, it is difficult trying to pick and digest words in a sentence; but when those words/sentences are organized in a musical form, both the rhythm and the harmony will attract and increase the interest of the perceiver. Once interest is heightened, the listener will draw more attention because interest is one of the key points that is considered when learning. Learning of the song goes along with speaking the words found in the music. This leads to what we call 'production' in speaking skills. It cuts across all languages and involve both first language speaker (L₁) and second language speaker (L₂). Through this music education, the learner, the first language speaker (L₁) and the second language speaker (L₂) will start speaking the language from unconscious attempt to full consciousness. This is prominent in church choirs that engage in teaching and learning of religious songs.

Some of the songs that teach speaking skills include:

Example 3: Onye Nkuzi Lela Aka M (For Staff Notation See Appendix)

4 d : d : d : m		s.m :- d:-	
0 - nye nku- zi	le-la	kam	
r. r:- r :-	le-la' kam	d:l, :-	s, :-
d : d : d : m	o-nye nku-zi	s.m :-	d:-
k'iü	mara m'o	dip-	cha

Reading skills: Reading skills is an essential skill for language learning. It is both a physical and mental activity that requires attention and thoughts. Reading according to Wikipedia is the process of taking in the sense or meaning of letters, symbols and the like, especially by sight or touch. Reading skills are also abilities that pertain to a person's capacity to read, comprehend, interpret and decode written language. In a nutshell, it is the ability to read meaning in to what is written down with full comprehension. Reading skill is another language skill that is higher than listening and speaking. It is done in the four walls of the classroom which classify it as a formal education. Hence, in music, teaching and learning of songs in any language become more effective and easier to understand when the lyrics (words) are first read to the hearing of the singers before actual teaching. This will enhance correct pronunciation (diction) which will make the music meaningful.

Reading starts with the alphabets in all language learning classes. Singing which is an aspect of music makes reading easy. To buttress this more, Nwaneri (2012) opines that singing helps in language development as singers learn the correct pronunciation of words (diction) in singing. When the correct pronunciation is learnt through music, it will certainly be recognized easily too when written down especially in Igbo language where words are pronounced as written.

Example:

b	+	u-	= bu
e	+	gbe	= egbe
u	+	lo	= ulo
o	+	che	= oche

This implies that once the learners are able to sing fluently and correctly, thereby pronouncing the words (diction) well, reading is already made easy. Singing music actually helps in language development as these singers (language learners) are offered the opportunity of learning languages other than theirs, thereby, encouraging language/cultural appreciation. Learning language through songs by learners will expose them to different languages outside theirs unconsciously and this will expose them in learning to pronounce, produce, and read language other than theirs. With these, they will develop interest in finding the meaning of what they are reading. This at the same time brings them closer to the culture and tradition of different language speakers. These learners, in their research work, might decide

to carry out some research work on any of these languages outside theirs while some might accept marriage proposals outside their culture just for the fact that they can read and understand the language which was developed through mere learning the songs outside theirs. This at the same time, fosters unity in diversity as inter-marriages, proposals, and mingling up in other areas of life are encouraged. This implies that music makes reading easier and equally leads a person to interact and gain meaning from written language.

Example 4: Akwukwo Na-Ato Uto (For Staff Notation See Appendix)

4 s : s : s : m	l:-: s: x	s: s: s: m:
4 A-kwu-kwo na	tu to,	a- kwu-kwo na
l: - : s: x	s: s: l: s:	f: m: f: x
tu to	m'o na - ra - hu	na mmu ta
s: s: r: f	m: r: d: x	s: m: d: m
o-nye nwe re n-	ta sio' bi	o- g'a mu ta
s: s: s: x	d': d': d' s:	l: s: f: m
a-kwu - kwo o	bu - ru na nne	ya na nna
f: -: s -	m: - :- :-	
ya nwee'	go.	

Writing skill: Writing is another higher skill in language learning skill. It is the last and most difficult skills for learners. It is the ability to put into writing what is pronounced. Writing is the act of expressing one's views, ideas and thought in black and white. Music has helped many scholars to learn how to write both their language and other languages. Composed songs must be written down for others to learn and appreciate. For instance, an Igbo native singer might decide to compose music in Yoruba language, this cannot be done without putting it down in writing first. He might be speaking Yoruba fluently but for him to go into composition of music in Yoruba language, learning to write it must be compulsory. This will lead him into enrolling himself in school to enable him learn the language. Learning language outside his/her own language thereby becomes a credit to him/her as Nwaneri

(2012), said that learning language outside one's language through music popularizes the individuals who take it as a profession example 'Ekwueme' written by an Igala lady Prosper Ochimana and Jude Nnan who has composed and written many songs in different languages like Abinchi in Hausa, Enye nyeron in Efik, Ojima in Igala and the like. Likewise, other musicians like 2 face Idibia in 'Amaka disappoint me', Davido in 'Osinachi moo', Phyno and Olamide in 'Fada fada' and so on. Finally, music has helped many, both musicians, non-musicians, first language learners (L_1) and second language learners (L_2) to learn language even to the extent of writing the language where the song is being composed. Music being a universal language, plays a highly significant role towards language learning skills thereby exposing the learner to be versatile in learning how to speak, read and write many languages.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been clearly stated that music education/songs help first language learners (L_1) and second language learners (L_2) to learn and acquire language faster. That through songs, the four language skills will be imparted into language learners without stress. Even music has helped many musicians to hear, speak, read, and write many languages outside their own language. It, in the same vein help language learners to learn languages with ease. It is therefore being suggested that:

1. Music should be made compulsory in any language learning class.
2. All language learners should be advised to consider studying music and vice versa.
3. Music is to be incorporated into language textbooks, especially for beginners.
4. Curriculum planners should plan the curriculum in such a way that every language topic should be accompanied with songs especially at the primary level.
5. All language teachers should be advised to acquire some level of music training
6. There should be regular in-service training, workshops seminars, conferences and the like organized to help teachers improve in their teaching methodology especially in the use of music to teach language.

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Appendix

Example 1 - A B C D

Example 2 - ONYE MASE NWA N'EBE AKWA

Example 3 - ONYE NKUZI LE-LA KAM

Example 4 - AKWA UKWO NA ATO UTO