



THE 2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING
“COUNSELING RESONANCES ON
MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES AND AWARENESS”

**NAVIGATING ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) USAGE FOR
COUNSELLING COMMUNICATION IN NIGERIA**

AWOPETU Emmanuel Olajide¹, Nur Amanah Billa², Muhamad Afifuddin Ghozali³

¹Obafemi Awololo University, Ile Ife, Nigeria, eawopetu@oauife.edu.ng

²Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Jl. Lidah Wetan Kec. Lakarsantri Kota Surabaya, Indonesia,
nur.22025@mhs.unesa.ac.id

³Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Jl. Lidah Wetan Kec. Lakarsantri Kota Surabaya, Indonesia,
muhamadghozali@unesa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Communication via Language is the wheel that drives effective counselling session all over the world. In Nigeria, the language of national, social cohesion, education and counselling is English which is not indigenous to all users but has rather been co-existing with over 450 indigenous languages. Users therefore have to struggle with proper usage of English in communication in general and counselling in particular. Meanwhile for counselling to be effective, the communication between the counsellor and the client should be such that the client must understand what the counsellor is trying to pass across the way the counsellor intends and be able to provide feedback. This paper presents approaches that the counsellor can adopt to navigate the English language nuances to achieve the goal of the counselling relationship. It specifically presented a conceptual clarification of counselling communication and its importance to counselling effectiveness, and the role of language in communication with special reference to English language usage by non-indigenous speakers. It also provided a step-by-step guide on how users can navigate the correct usage of the language for effective counselling relationship. It concluded with a brief synopsis of possible limitations that may be confronted in the course of navigating the usage of the language for counselling communication

Keywords: Communication, Counselling, English language, Navigate, second language

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the main activities that takes place between the counsellor and the client during counselling sessions. That is, during counselling sessions, the clients communicate their emotional difficulties, fears, anxiety, prospects, and anxieties to the counsellor, intentionally and sometimes deductively. In return, the clients receive information from counsellors about their competences, counselling abilities, guidance and resources intended to help them shore up their emotional repertoire, improve on their coping strategies and decision-making skills (Eli, Adebowale & Omotehinse, 2021).

Usually, such communication takes place in either of two forms - verbal and/or nonverbal communication are/is used for this. In the course of the clients sharing their experiences, dreams, frustrations, fears, and even their mental condition, counsellors pay attention to what they say. Although the non-verbal communication is equally important, the first and overt information is provided commonly by verbal communication (Scheming & Mason, 2013).

The importance of effective communication as the foundation of the therapeutic relationship between a counselor and a client cannot be overemphasized. For instance, it helps in building trust, understanding, and rapport between them, and enable them to agree on the goals of therapy, also ensuring that both parties are working towards the same objectives. Research suggests that through active listening and empathetic responses, counsellors can better understand their clients' concerns and demonstrate that they are valued and understood (Sutton, 2022). It should be noted that the goal of counseling is to facilitate positive change. Effective communication is the only tool through which insights are shared, strategies are developed, and progress is made.

For counselling communication to be effective, the client must receive the information being passed from the counsellor the way the counsellor intends, promptly and demonstrates an understanding which will be communicated back to the counsellor either in terms of feedback, certain actions or even mere non-verbal cues. If this fails to come up, the counsellor will have to find other means of passing the information to elicit the required responses, refer the client to a more competent colleague or in the extreme terminate the counselling relationship (Eli, Adebowale & Omotehinse, 2021). Counselors make efforts to ensure counselling communication is effective by taking into cognizance the elements of communication, that is, the crucial components that work together to ensure that a message is effectively transmitted from a sender to a receiver.

Some of these components include the sender, the initiator of the communication and message to be conveyed, which may be the counsellor or the client at one time or the other, encoding, that is, translating the thoughts or ideas into a communicable form; the message – the actual contents of the communication; the channel, that is, the medium through which the message is transmitted; the receiver, the individual or group that the message is intended; decoding, that is receiver interpreting and understanding the message and the feedback, that is the response given by the receiver that indicates that the message has been received and understood (Kapur, 2020; Usun, 2003).

Language plays a fundamental role in communication as it is the primary tool commonly used to convey and exchange information, ideas, and emotions (Rabiah, 2018). Each language, with its unique vocabulary and grammar, offers a different perspective and way of thinking, influencing how its speakers

perceive and interact with the world. Language allows individuals to express their thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively; It facilitates social interaction by enabling people to build relationships and collaborate with others (Buarqoub, 2019). It is also used to share information, giving instructions, and asking questions to gain understanding. It should however be noted that language carries cultural values and collective knowledge, passing it from one generation to the next.

Although, clients will often communicate far more non-verbally than verbally (Dash, 2022), this paper focusses on verbal communication in counselling interaction. In the real sense of it, it is difficult, if not impossible, for counselling to thrive without effective communication. Effective communication between the counsellor and the client is needed through the use of language which is appropriate to the educational situation so that the implementation of guidance and counseling services can run well.

Therefore, the use of language according to Kustyarini (2021) cannot be trivialized. It is a tool to achieving counselling goals, Sieger (2019). As a tool for expressing oneself, the counselee uses it to talk to the counsellor while the counsellor also listens and responds using the same language. It is of note that both the counsellor and the client speak the same language well enough to avoid misconception and misrepresentation of ideas. Language is also a tool to achieve social integration (Kustyarini, 2021).

METHOD

This paper of a position aor adopting expert discourse approach in idneitifying laguage challenges in the counselling interactions and providing workable suggestions on what can e done and how it could be done to achieve effective counselling and therapeutic alliance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The English Language in Nigeria

The adoption of English language as a national language/Lingua Franca is a child of circumstances which was borne out of our experience of colonization by the British. Since, the English language has been enjoying the privilege of being the nation's official/national language occasioned by the issue of multi-ethnicity and multi-lingualism which made it difficult but not impossible to have a common language among the over 400 indigenous languages in the country, Journal of the International Association of Language Educators (JIALE), 2020.

In the same vein, the English language is used for many purposes apart from the above. It is the language of administration, business, politics, social interaction and cohesion, religion and education. It is the medium of instruction in schools ranging from Primary 4 to the tertiary institutions, National Policy on Education (NPE), 2014. Therefore, the English language has been performing instructional and interactional functions both within and outside the classrooms in the country, Fakeye & Bateye, (2020).

This therefore puts English language at a very enviable status it is enjoying till today; as it is a medium through which communication is being carried out, either verbally or in written form. In this paper, the presenter is interested in the verbal/spoken form of the English language.

However, navigating the English language requires that the counsellor and the counselee must be versatile in the use of the English language. What favours the use of English language, as given earlier, is

because Nigeria is a multilingual nation; and because of that, since English has been adopted as the lingua franca, the onus lies on both the counsellor and the client to be well proficient in the use of the language for effective counselling session. According to Sieger (2018), though he expressed the importance of language in general, the presenter would want to adapt his seven points to English language; and as such, his seven points will be discussed as follows:

- a. Language is a tool. This presupposes that, the English language must be effectively used by both the counsellor and the client for effective communication in counselling session.
- b. Language is also for the purpose of self-identification. The ‘English language is a marker of distance’, according to Lee, 1992, p. 13 in Fakeye et al (2020). Though the English language is a signal for upward mobility in Nigeria, it cannot make Nigerians belonging to the original owners of the language. This is because the fact still remains that it is not one of the indigenous languages. Cultural identity is sacrosanct and the client tends to discuss freely with the counsellor who really understands his language. This shows that both the counsellor and the counselee must mutually rely on the language they are proficient in. Therefore, the need to understand English language becomes imperative in Nigeria.
- c. Language to disconnect.
- d. Language in counselling or therapy to compartmentalize
- e. Language and depth of emotional awareness
- f. Language in counselling or therapy to heal.

Going by the above, if the counsellor and the client both employ the use of English language during counselling session, negativities brought about by language barriers, in multi-ethnic nations like Nigeria, will be checked while the purpose for counselling is achieved without any form of mutual suspicion.

Different approaches can be adopted by second language users to navigate English language usage for counseling communication. This may include:

- a. Use simple language. This depicts the fact that both the counsellor and the client should employ straightforward and concise language to ensure clarity while in counselling session.
- b. Speak slowly and clearly. Both the counsellor and the client are to enunciate words carefully and maintain a moderate pace to aid understanding; thus facilitating effective session.
- c. Active listening. The counsellor should practice attentive listening and ask clarifying questions to ensure comprehension of what the client is saying.
- d. The counsellor should seek clarification from the client. He must not hesitate to request for clarification or a repeat of what is said if unsure about something heard.
- e. In very crucial linguistic condition, the counsellor can employ professional interpreters or translation tools like Google Translate for accuracy in communication.
- f. The counsellor should try as much as possible to pull down language barriers, if there are any. This will enable mutual trust between the counsellor and the counselee.
- g. Maintain eye contact during conversation to convey attentiveness and sincerity. This is germane in communication and must be encouraged in counselling session.

Navigating English language usage as a second language user in counselling communication can be challenging, but here are seven strategies that can help:

- a. **Start with Basic Phrases and Vocabulary:** Begin by learning and using basic English phrases and vocabulary relevant to counseling in order to build confidence and ease communication.
- b. **Utilize Non-Verbal Communication:** Pay attention to body language, facial expressions, and gestures, which can convey meaning and support verbal communication.
- c. **Active Listening and Observing:** Focus on actively listening to the client and observing non-verbal cues to fully understand the context and emotions behind their words.
- d. **Seek Assistance from Bilingual Individuals:** If possible, involve bilingual individuals or interpreters in sessions to facilitate clearer communication.
- e. **Use Visual Aids:** Incorporate visual aids like pictures, diagrams, or written words to support understanding and retention of information.
- f. **Simplify Language:** Use clear, concise language and avoid complex vocabulary or idioms that may be difficult for non-native speakers to understand.
- g. **Practice Regularly:** Engage in regular practice, both in and out of counseling sessions, to improve proficiency and comfort with the English language

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the cultural setting in Nigeria favours the use of English language for many activities including education and counselling. Multi-ethnicity gave rise to multilingualism which made it very difficult to have a unifying indigenous language. Mutual suspicion and poor political will have been the cog in the wheel of developing an indigenous language. Therefore, since English language is “foreign” in the country, it is more convenient to accept it as the national language. Hence, it becomes imperative that everybody becomes literate in the language. At the same time, the Federal Government’s NPE (2014) states that English language should be taught to students for the purpose of social cohesion.

REFERENCES

- Buarqoub, I. A. S. (2019). Language barriers to effective communication. *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana*, 24(6), 64-77
- Dash, B. B. (2022). Significance of Nonverbal Communication and Paralinguistic Features in Communication: A Critical Analysis. *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field*, 8(4), 172 – 179.
- Eli, S. G., Adebowale, O. F. and Omotehinse, S. O. (2021). Emotional Intelligence, Social Networking Skills and Online Counselling Communication Effectiveness Among Students of OAU, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. *African Journal of Teacher Education (AJOTE)*, 10 (2), 37 – 52.
- Fakeye, D. O. & Bateye, R. O. (2020). The English language, ideology, culture and the Nigerian classroom: Strategies for sustainable development. *Journal of International Association of Language Educators* (Special Edition)

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/counselling.html> retrieved 11/4/24

- <https://sg.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/what-is-counselling> Retrieved 11/4/24
- Kanchan, Pal (2019). ASTHA HOSPITAL R-11 SEC 12, VAKEEL COLONY PRATAP VIHAR G.Z.B
[Indira Gandhi National Open University \(IGNOU\)
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334049460_counselling](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334049460_counselling)
- Kapur, R. (2020). The Elements of Communication. Retrieved April 6, 2024 from
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344215245_The_Elements_of_Communication
- Merriam-Webster (2024). Dictionary Merriam-Webster.com <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/counseling>. Accessed 10 Apr. 2024
- Rabiah, S. (2018). Language as a Tool for Communication and Cultural Reality Discloser. Retrieved April 6, 2024 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329043287_Language_as_a_Tool_for_Communication_and_Cultural_Reality_Discloser
- Scheming, O. & Mason, R. B., (2013). Communication channels and interpersonal communication between South African and German Business Partners. *Corporate Ownership and Control*, 10(4), 409-419.
- Sutton, J. (2022). Communication Skills in Counseling & Therapy: 17 Techniques, Retrieved April 13 , 2024 from [Communication Skills in Counseling & Therapy: 17 Techniques \(positivepsychology.com\)](https://www.positivepsychology.com/communication-skills-in-counseling-therapy-17-techniques)
- Usun, S. (2003). A Review of Communication Elements and Learner Support Services in Turkish Distance Education System. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 2(3), 3 – 12.
- Whitton E. <https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/what-is-counselling.html> Retrieved 11/4/24