

## Communication Skills in the 21st Century: An Insight into Adult Literacy Achievement in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria

**Kugbayi, L. I. & Akindele, R. S.**

### **Abstract**

*Years before now, the thought of literacy was limited to ability to read and write. This was later extended beyond identification and application of graphic symbols using pen and paper for communication purposes but with the addition of ability to express some built up knowledge that has been acquired within a period of time especially in a particular field of knowledge. Meanwhile, in the contemporary world, the evolution of technology has brought about advancement in communication outside the use of written or printed texts. The use of computer and some other related electronic devices has exposed the entire world to a form of communication that is interactive even though without a physical representation of interactants through the social media. Meanwhile, despite the efforts of world governments, and organisations like UNESCO and MDGs, a new challenge is posed to the achievement of literacy at this level especially among the adults who have, no doubt, acquired some level of formal education and by extension the traditional communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the light of this, this study, Communication Skills in the 21st Century: An Insight into Adult Literacy in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria, is embarked upon to find out relevant ways technological communication skills can help achieve adult literacy in the 21st century in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Technological Communication Skills, Adult Literacy, and Adult Literacy in the 21st Century.*

### **Introduction**

In the study of language, the central point is communication. It could be considered as the factor which other unique peculiarities of human language hinge upon. Apart from the fact that language through its communicative effects help humans to make their intentions, ideas, feelings and thoughts known to others in a given community, it serves as a channel through which users of it receive feedback from whosoever the intentions, feelings, ideas or thoughts are directed. Communication itself as a phenomenon cuts across every aspect of human life. This ranges from an informal linguistic interaction, such as colloquial talks, to an extensively sophisticated level of transferring messages. Whether language is used for formal or informal communication, it has been mentioned that it can be acquired or learnt through the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

World linguists like Chomsky, postulate that the first two skills - listening and speaking – can be naturally acquired by every normal child in respect to any form(s) of language such a child is exposed to before lateralisation takes place. Thus, acquisition of listening and speaking is, in most cases, a natural phenomenon. This does not overrule the fact that as an adolescent or adult, one can still acquire or learn listening and speaking skills of a new language(s) later in life. Meanwhile, from the perspective of reading and writing skills achievement, a considerable level of consciousness is involved. Through reading and writing a greater opportunity is opened to the literate. In short, ability to read and write has served for several years as a demarcating line between the literate and the illiterate. It is in view of bridging the gap, governments of the world and international organisations

like UNESCO and MDGs have made tremendous efforts toward achieving education for all. Part of the efforts is ensuring great increase in the children enrolment into primary schools all over the world. The adults too are not left out. Provisions have also been made for illiterate adults to become literate through series of adult literacy programmes.

However, it has been observed that in recent time, the challenge of achieving adult literacy has gone beyond adults' being able to read and write. The level of technological advancement in the 21st century is posing a problem to the adults - whether educated or not. This does not exclude many Nigerian adults especially those in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State. The reality then is that even though it could be possible for an adult to have acquired formal education with certificates of different degrees, such an individual could still be illiterate especially when he finds it difficult to access or process information through technological provisions like computer or through the internet or the social media. In Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State for example, there are many adults who could be considered as literate owing to their level of education and their ability to read and write meaningfully when it comes to the use of printed or ink materials. However, the ability of majority of this group of people to access and meaningfully interpret computer based information needs to be looked into.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **Literacy**

Literacy is seen as the aptitude of a person who can read and write. It is competence or knowledge in a specified area.

### **Adult Literacy**

This has to do with a person's literacy in reference to the extent of their oral and written language skills and knowledge and their ability to apply these to meet the varied demands of their personal study and work lives.

### **Adult Literacy in the 21st Century**

In the 21st century, the concept of literacy is referred to as “new Literacy Studies” which is construed as understanding effect of digital media and the internet. It is the form of literacy that helps people (i.e. adults) perform the tasks required by their occupation (or desired occupation), provides a foundation for learning other skills, and enhance people's ability to innovate and adapt to workplace change. These skills include reading, document use, writing numeracy, oral communication, working with others, computer use, and continuous learning.

### **Communication**

This is the verbal interchange of thought or idea. It is the process or act of transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver, through a channel.

### **Technological Communication Skills**

These are the general skills of communication process that links discontinuous parts of the living world to one another.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

It is considered necessary to carry out this work by finding out relevant ways technological communication skills can help achieve adult literacy in the 21st century in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State. In order to achieve the task, this work looks forward to finding answers to the following questions.

- RQ<sub>1</sub> What is the relationship between the traditional adult literacy level of the educated adults of Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State and modern day communication skills?
- RQ<sub>2</sub> How can technological communication skills be used in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State to access, analyse, evaluate, communicate and use information to solve problems through adult literacy?
- RQ<sub>3</sub> What are the ways acquisition of technological communication skills can foster adult literacy in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State?

### **Scope, Objectives and Significance of the Study**

The paper focuses on the place of communication skills in the 21st century with interest in finding out adult literacy achievement level of the educated in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. This is meant to ascertain the level at which these adults have acquired the ability to use technology in accessing and transferring of information either locally or internationally. The work centres on some educated individuals in the local government with at least an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) certificate. These are selected among secondary school teachers, lecturers of higher institutions, local government employees and civil servants. Specifically, the work is interested in finding out the level at which the involved individuals can use the computer to process and decode information independently. In the light of this, objectives of the study are to:

- xi) explain the relationship between the traditional adult literacy level of the educated adults of Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State and modern day communication skills.
- xii) ascertain how technological communication skills can be used in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State to access, analyse, evaluate, communicate and use information to solve problems through adult literacy.
- Xiii) identify ways acquisition of technological communication skills can foster adult literacy in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Today, the entire world has become a global village and one of the major ways to be communicatively efficient individuals on the globe is the ability to demonstrate a good knowledge of the 21st century information technological communication skills. This work is therefore considered to be significant as it focuses on how acquisition of the information technological communication skills can improve adult literacy in Nigeria generally and Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State specifically.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design and Instrument**

The study is a descriptive research design of a survey type. The instrument used is a questionnaire. Percentages were also used to analyse the data.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

An expert in Test and Measurement ascertained the face validity of the instrument.

### Sources of Data Collection

The sources of data collected for this work are fifty selected educated individuals with academic certificates that fall between Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and PhD in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.

### Population

The population covers some secondary school teachers, lecturers of higher institutions, local government employees and civil servants in the local government.

### Sampling Procedure

Random sampling was used in gathering the data. The data was therefore directly collected through the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire contained questions that deal with possessing computer (of any kind) including general abilities of using computer to process, access or evaluate data and communicate with the data via the internet. Fifty copies of the questionnaire were produced and randomly distributed to individuals who have possessed academic qualifications that fall between Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and PhD. Eventually, the data received were analysed on a percentage basis. Thus, the sampling procedure used was representative.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

The presentation is in two parts. The first part provides some personal data on sex and educational qualifications of the respondents while the second part forms a general representation of responses of the respondents all presented on a percentage basis.

### Section A

#### Sex

<i>SEX</i>	<i>RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE (%)</i>
MALE	20	40
FEMALE	30	60
TOTAL	50	100

The table above shows that 20 male respondents which translate to 40% were involved while 30 female respondents which translate to 60% of total number of 50 respondents in percentage.

#### Educational Qualification

<i>Educational Qualification</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
OND	-	-
NCE	8	16
HND	5	10
BA/BSC	30	60
PGD	3	6
MA/MSC	1	2
PHD	3	6
TOTAL	50	100

From the table above, it shows that 30 respondents had BA/BSC which is 60% of total respondent, 8 respondents had acquire NCE with 16%, 5 respondents had HND with 10%, 3

respondents had PgD which corresponds to 6%, 3 respondents had PhD which is 6%, 1 respondent had MA/MSc with 2%, while 0 had OND with 0%.

## Section B

### Do you own your desktop/laptop/handheld computer?

<i>Desktop/Laptop/Handled Computer</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
YES	27	54
NO	23	46
TOTAL	50	100

The table above shows that 27 respondents say (YES) which translate to 54% of total respondents while 23 respondents say (NO) with 46% of total respondents.

### Do you own any computer application certificate?

<i>Computer Application Certificate</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
YES	18	36
NO	36	64
TOTAL	50	100

The table above shows that 18 respondents say (YES) which translate to 36% of total respondents while 32 respondents say (NO) with 64% of total respondents.

### Did you undergo any college course(s) that exposed you to the use of the internet?

<i>College Course(S)</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
YES	21	42
NO	29	58
TOTAL	50	100

The table above shows that 21 respondents say (YES) which corresponds to 42% of total respondents while 29 respondents say (NO) with 58% of total respondents in percentage.

### In what computer applications are you proficient (Microsoft Word, Power Point, Excel, CorelDraw

<i>Computer Applications</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
4	13	26
3	7	14
2	3	6
1	17	34
0	10	20
TOTAL	50	100

The table above shows that 13 respondents indicates 4 applications which translate to 26% of total numbers of respondents in percentage 7 respondents indicate 3 applications with 14%, 3 respondents indicate 3 applications with 14%, 3 respondent indicate 2 applications with 14%, 3 respondents indicate 2 applications with 6%, 17 respondents indicate 1 application with 34% while 10 respondents indicate 0 application with 20% of total number of respondents in percentage.

### What is your typing speed on the computer

<i>Typing Speed</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
FAST	6	12
MODERATE	21	42
SLOW	18	36
ZERO	5	10
TOTAL	50	100

From the table above, 6 respondents indicate their typing speed as fast which translate to 12% of total number of respondents in percentage, 21 respondents indicate their typing speed as moderate with 42%, 18 respondents indicate their typing speed as slow with 36% while 5 respondents indicate their typing speed as zero with 10% of total numbers of respondents in percentage.

### How many times in a week do you access the internet for social media activities

<i>Internet Access</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
20+	8	16
16 - 19	4	8
11 - 15	8	16
6 - 10	11	22
1 - 5	12	24
0	7	14
TOTAL	50	100

The table above shows that 8 respondents indicate 20+ times in a week which translate to 16% of total number of respondents in percentage, 4 respondents indicate 16-19 times in a week with 8%, 8 respondents indicate 11-15 times in a week with 16%, 11 respondents indicate 6-10 times with 22%, 12 respondents indicate 1-5 times with 24% while 7 respondents indicate 0 time with 14% of total number of total respondents in percentage.

**How regularly do you use digital technology (email, the internet, cell phones, etc) to collaborate with other users on academic issues?**

<i>Digital Technology</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
VERY REGULARLY	6	12
REGULARLY	20	40
ONCE IN A WHILE	21	42
NOT AT ALL	3	6
TOTAL	50	100

The above table shows that 6 respondents used digital technology very regularly which translate to 12% of total number of respondent in percentage, 20 respondents used digital technology regularly which translate to 40%, 21 respondents used digital technology which translate to 42%, 3 respondents used digital technology which translate to 6% of respondents.

**How good are you in downloading and reading material on a desktop or laptop computer through the internet?**

<i>Downloading and Reading Material</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
VERY GOOD	11	22
GOOD AVERAGE	25	50
SOMEHOW	10	20
NOT GOOD AT ALL	4	8
TOTAL	50	100

From the above, 11 respondents are very good in downloading and reading material with 22%, 25 respondents are good in downloading and reading material with 50%, 10 respondents are somehow in downloading and reading material with 20% while 4 respondents are not good at all in downloading and reading material with 8% of total respondents.

**How often do you seek a help in using the internet?**

<i>Internet Help</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
ALWAYS	6	12
OCCASSIONALLY	36	72
NOT AT ALL	8	16
TOTAL	50	100

The table above shows that 6 respondents always seek internet help which 12% in percentage, 36 respondents occasionally seek internet help with 72%, while 8 respondents not at all seek internet help with 16% of total respondents.

## **FINDINGS**

This work examined communication skills in the 21st century with an insight into adult literacy achievement in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. It acknowledges the true existence of the traditional concept of literacy which has ability to read and write as its focus. It also recognises the emergence of new literacy studies which centres on modern day technological communication skills. It is based on the acknowledgment and recognition the work moves on to identify relevant ways technological communication skills can help achieve adult literacy in the 21st century in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. In the light of the above, the following findings were made.

1. The study finds that the knowledge of the traditional literacy alone of some educated adults of Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria is not sufficient to cope efficiently with the 21st century communication challenges. It thus reveals that this group of people will need to acquire the modern day technological communication skills to complement the knowledge of the traditional communicative literacy skills (of only reading from and writing in papers) they have already acquired or learnt.
2. It is found out in the study that through adult literacy, technological communication skills can be used in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State to access, analyse, evaluate, communicate and use information to solve problems by availing the adults, who have only been exposed to the form of education in which development of communication skills only focused on fundamentals of achieving good communication through speech writing and reading, with the form of education that is socially developed and patterned on ways of using technology and computer knowledge to achieve communicative tasks.
3. The study also identifies several ways acquisition of technological communicative skills can foster adult literacy in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State to include:
  - i transformation of learning through collective social media activities.
  - ii establishing self-reliant adults who will be able to interpret, judge, solve problems and more responsible citizens in the society through easy and prompt access to information.
  - iii enhancement of literacy skills to make the adults more functional and higher skilled individuals.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study is on Communication Skills in the 21st Century: An Insight into Adult Literacy Achievement in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the work confirms that in the study of literacy, new literacy studies have emerged and this has affected adult literacy globally and educated adults in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria specifically. It is also reflected in the study that in recent time, it is not enough to be educated and acquire certain academic certificates. Thus, for any literate or learned individual to cope maximally with the 21st century technological communicative skills, such an individual will need to be informed or trained. From the findings of the study therefore, it is gathered that many educated individuals in Abeokuta South Local Government are not fully literate with a good number

of them in the process of learning when it comes to technological communication skills achievement. The work then concludes that like other aspects of education, literacy (especially from the perspective of the modern day computer related communication skills) is a lifelong learning and individuals should be conscious of this so as to ensure that they are relevant in the contemporary society.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Through the study, it is recommended that

- \* educated individuals who are not competent in computer application skills should endeavour to upgrade themselves in the skills so as to be relevant in the contemporary world of electronic communication.
- \* employers should made it mandatory for their employees to undergo trainings through which they would be computer literate and thereby make them more efficient especially in the 21st century communication skills.
- \* curriculum planners should ensure that it is not only the theoretical aspect of computer skills that is taught in schools but should also ensure that the practical aspect of it is made possible to all learners.
- \* government and private individuals should assist in providing computer system at affordable prices.
- \* internet facilities should be provided at different schools, higher institutions of learning and offices so as to provide an avenue where social interactions, using technological skills, will be possible.

## REFERENCES

- Adelabu, M.A., Longe, R. & Ogundiran, S. O. (2010) Communication Strategy in Educational Planning. Lagos: National Open University of Nigeria.
- Andersen, M. (1959) "What Is Communication?" *Journal of Communication*, 9:5.
- Bensemman, J. (1998) "An Impact Assessment of Paulo Freire on New Zealand Adult Literacy: Some Observations. *Journal of Adult Learning*, 26, (1), 23-31.
- Berelson, B. & Steiner, G. A. 1964. *Human Behaviour*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World,.
- Bynner, J. (2004) Literacy, Numeracy, and Employability. Retrieved 8 December, from <http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/alnarc/onlineforum/AL-pap-bynner.htm>.
- Cavalier, W. (2002) The Three Voices of Freire: An Exploration of His Thought Over Time. *Religious Education*, 97, 3, 254-270.
- Coiro, J. Knobel, M. Lankshear, C. & Leu, D. J. (2009) "Central Issues in New Literacies and New Literacies Research." In Coiro, J. Knobel, M. Lankshear, C. & Leu, D. J. (Eds), *The handbook of Research in New Literacies*. Erlbaum: Mahwah, NJ, (pp.1-22).
- Culligan, N. (2005) Theoretical Understandings of Adult Literacy: A Literature Review. *Adult Literacy and Employment in Wanganui* 0504.
- Dance, F.E.X. (1970) "The 'Concept' of Communication." *The Journal of Communication* 20:201-10
- DeVito, J.A. *The Communication Handbook: A dictionary*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.
- Frank, F. (2003) "Learning to Accentuate the Positive." *Adult Learning*, 14, (18) 18-21.
- Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London. Sheed & Ward.
- Heath, S.B (1996) "Society and Literacy." In Barr, R., Kamil, M. Monsenthal, P. & Pearson, P.D. (Eds), *Handbook of Reading Research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Vol. II (pp. 3-25).
- Gee, J.P. (2004) "New Times and New Literacies: Themes for a Changing World." In Ball, A. & Freedman, S. W. (Eds.), *Bakhtinian Perspective on Language, Literacy, & Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gee, J.P. (1999) "Reading and the New Literacy Studies: Framing the National Academy of Sciences Report Reading." *Journal of Literacy Research*, 31 (3), 355.
- Hoben, J. B. (1954) "English Communication at Colgate Re-Examined." *Journal of Communication*, 4:77.

- (2007) International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, Human Resources Development Canada and Minister of Industry, Canada.
- Educational Testing Service. "Digital Transformation: A Framework for ICT Literacy. Princeton, NJ: ET.
- Keefe, E. B. & Copeland, S. R. (2011) "What is Literacy? The Power of a Definition." In *Research & Practice of Persons with Severe Disabilities*. TASH, Vol. 36, No 3-4, 92-92.
- Keyton, J. (2110) *Communication and Organizational Communication: Understanding Communication Processes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, W. (2009) *Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick*. New/Nouveau Brunswick.
- Littlejohn, S. (1999) *Theories of Human Communication (6th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- MacLachlan, K. & Cloonan, M. (2003) "Three Dimensional Changes? The Relationship Between Theory, Policy, and Adults' Understanding of Literacies" *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 8,(1), 123-136.
- Mezirow, J. (2010) "Toward a Learning Theory of Adult Literacy." *Adult Basic Education*, 1996,6 (3), 115-126.
- Pacific Policy Research Center. *Successful Bilingual and Immersion Education Models/Programs*. Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools, Research & Evaluation Division.
- Scribner, S. & Cole, M. (1981) *The Psychology of Literacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Street, B. (2003) "What's New' in New Literacy Studies? Critical Approaches to Literacy in Theory and Practice." *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 1523-1615; <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/cice>.
- Street, B. (1984) *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The New London Group. (1996) *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures*. *Harvard Educational Review*; 66(1), 60-92.
- UNESCO (2006) "Understandings of Literacy" in *Educational for all Global Monitoring Report*.
- Weekely, E. (1967) *An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English (Vol.1)*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Sapir, E. (1921) *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. New York: Harcourt and Brace Company.
- Trilling & Fadel. (2009) *21st Century Learning Skills*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Zeman, J. (1977) "Peirce's Theory of Signs." In Sebeok (Ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 22-39.