

**REPOSITIONING AND APPRECIATING VISUAL ART IN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION:
PROSPECTS IN NIGERIA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.**

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Abstract

The need to reposition and appreciate visual arts in language communication to be integrated in the prospects of education in Nigeria tertiary institutions is important. Tertiary institutions play crucial role in this regard. Visual art engage in recreations that are very crucial in communication and frequently act as option to other languages. Despite the fact that language communicates through words, visual art carries it out through forms, shapes lines and colours. Visual art language is apparent through forms, symbols, signs, designs, colours, textures and lines. The character and elements in visual art is subjected to different interpretations. It is viewed as a sort of personal therapy, as a vehicle of political awareness, expression and as a mechanism for social transformation. The purpose of this study is to illustrate the importance of visual art, as a means of communication and language device for awareness creation and mass mobilization. The same way spoken or written words are used as a means of communication, visual art likewise perform similar functions in communication. All these are varieties of communication and they consist of very similar truth as language. Presently, visual art teaching in Nigeria has been consequently narrowed down in the tertiary institutions' curriculum. This affects the relevance of visual art in the Nigerian and limits its appreciation as a tool for communication. This paper therefore highlights the value of visual art and language communication repositioning in Nigeria tertiary institutions. It recommends that both visual art and language communication be utilized and appreciated for the development of the nation's tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Visual arts, **language communication**, tertiary institution, prospects of education, development, social transformation

Introduction

Visual arts teaching in Nigerian tertiary institutions have taken care of series of aesthetic innovations. The performances in the arts industry have equally expanded in international attraction and global credence in the art scene. Iriwieri (2010) states that distinct artistic ideologies and individual styles have appeared under visual art connected with high-level of aesthetic and creative cognition among practicing artists and art ardent. Most recently, art has gone beyond mere aesthetics and advanced to high level materials in the course of modification, and verification to agree with the needs of the contemporary era and challenges in all areas of human endeavours.

The place of visual art in Nigerian tertiary institutions, particularly with regards to language and communication, cannot be given much emphasis. Visual art as a chanel of communication influences social structure at large. Dumbadze and Hudson (2013) speculate that artists, art historians, critics and theorists search for complication in the register of aesthetic judgment by relating its formal pronouncements to context, politics and history; yet form remains universal.

For the layman, visual art is just drawing but to an artist it refers to a medium of expression, which has both intrinsic and extrinsic value. As art, Visual art is appreciated through sight, that includes painting, sculpture, textile, ceramic, graphics. It is expressed through the forms, symbols, signs, designs, colours, textures, lines and shapes. It is an essential element in the process of living. The action of forming image of a man is art. Visual art covers and includes all the basic aspects of life, starting from the environment to the hair-do; from the dresses worn to the shoes on the foot. It represents the reality and expresses it. Visual art is a universal connection and language among all cultures. It is connects to human situations and reflects the cultural elements of the society.

The purpose of this study is to highlight the relevance of visual art in communication, language and information transmission. These can be seen in the various types of non-verbal communication which include facial expressions, positive gestures, signs and symbols. Hayakawa and Hayakawa (2012) opine that our visual experience of the world is so profoundly influential that it constitutes a nonverbal language all in its own. In a very similar way, words spoken or written words are employed as means of communication, similarly, visual art performs comparable functions in visual communication. Visual art as device easily transmits any propaganda or message and has significant role in communication, especially, among the literate and illiterate population. The graphic artists communicate and express messages through his/her work. Visual art plays a very critical and decisive role in communication and act as an unconventional form of spoken or written words. Communication is the art or process of using words, sounds, signs, symbols or behaviours to express or exchange information, express ideas, thought, feelings to someone else.

Concept of Visual Arts and Language Communication

In order to understand properly the issues addressed in this paper, it is pertinent to look at some concepts as propounded by some scholars in the field of visual arts and language communication.

Visual Arts

Art is described as a product of man's creativity; primordial to human culture over thousands of years. Visual art describes any form of arts which are principally visual in nature. to view something as an art does not only involves something which the eye can criticize in an atmosphere of artistic theory or the understanding of the history of art alone but the questions of beauty, intensity, appropriateness, brightness, clarity and sublimity along with the level of skill, self-expression, intelligence and lucidity alternatively are undeniable evidence for the art works. Kalilu (2013) therefore, asserts that art should be devoted to achieve social goals and essentially functional, useful, educational, instructive and easily understandable.

Visual art is a common and nonspecific singular noun which refers to the composite discipline and field of study that accommodates diverse area of specialization. Examples are: Fine art (Painting and Sculpture) with aesthetics and visual purpose and applied art (Textile Design, Graphic Design and Ceramics) with industrial approaches and practical context. The resplendencies of visual arts are ubiquitously magnificent globally

despite tradition. This is apparent and obvious in aesthetic designs, grotesque art, decoupage art, decalcomania art, decorative arts, and implement of utilities for realistic goal after transubstantiation into enduring objects. Arts are not unfamiliar to Nigeria. The development of arts from primeval to contemporary is noticeably and successively in global artistic arts.

Consequently, art has become the thrust for socio-cultural transformation. Nadachowski, Jonas and Ptak (2012) note that the technological revolution in art is understandable in highly advanced technology materials of enamel, cement, kaolin, glaze, plastic and glass. This modern approach has demonstrated visual arts as the vantage point for technological development. Today, art is a synergy of aesthetic with collection of art products. This conceptuality makes available progressive exploration and improvement in complementary relationships with tradition and which would consequently revolutionize artistic instructing and practices in Nigeria.

Visual Arts Training and language communication

Visual arts in Nigerian tertiary education according to (National Board for Technical Education, 1991; National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2012; National Open University of Nigeria, 2015) presents courses in Graphics, Painting, Ceramics, Sculpture, Textile, Drawing, and Art History. The curriculum is exclusively and explicitly structured towards the production of creative, generally skilled artists, designers for enterprises and practical talent and skill in aesthetic perceptions and cultural values. The aforementioned course units include:

✓ Drawing

Drawings represent forms or entities on a material layer through means of line for presentation of and on assured occasions to be published in a book and magazine. The training and instruction is to nurture artists in life and universal drawing skills. The study would represent life, nature and man-made objects using drawing media. Other practices in drawing include principles of perception and regulation of measurement in portraiture, scenic design, quick sketches and architectural plan.

✓ Painting

Painting expresses pleasant and agreed composition of artistic ideas coupled with application of paints for figures or pictures creation on a material layer. The teaching contents under this focuses on details, features and colour harmony of natural and man-made objects. National Commission for Colleges of Education (2012); National Open University of Nigeria (2015) reports that it includes in scope aerial and linear perspective; complimentary and splits colour; exploration of media and techniques; and experiments in assorted materials and techniques for mixed media and mural painting,

✓ Sculpture

Sculpture is an artistic production of three-dimensional work through stone, wood or any other hard material through whittling away at it. The teaching and guiding plans under covers and includes methods and materials in sculpture; modeling of uncomplicated naturalistic and abstract shapes; carving and casting; metal construction and assemblage of metal scraps and junks. National Commission for Colleges of Education (2012); National Open University of Nigeria (2015) reports that it includes casting with different media and techniques; work of art arrangement; technical skill and development of styles.

✓ Ceramics

Ceramics is the art of creating and decorating artifact made of hand brittle material produced from non-metallic minerals by means of firing at high temperatures. National Board for Technical Education, (1991); National Commission for Colleges of Education, (2012); National Open University of Nigeria, (2015) reports that it stresses on throwing technique, glaze application and firing; nature of glass and glaze preparation; local firing and glazing techniques; kiln construction; physical and chemical properties of clay; local pottery techniques and production; production of sculptural ceramics; and materials and techniques in ceramics,

✓ Textile design

Textile designs are artifact made by weaving, felting, and knitting, crocheting natural or synthetic fibers to form wool, light or semi-transparent fabrics. According to National Board for Technical Education, (1991); National Commission for Colleges of Education, (2012); National Open University of Nigeria, (2015) reports, the course description comprises introduction to simple weaving, fashion design and resist dyeing; basic textile pattern and uses of textile materials; motif placements in half drop, full drop, side by side counter changes in repeat patterns and in enlarge vision motif placement with stencils; and needle craft.

✓ **Graphic design**

Graphic designs refer to arts of drawing, painting or printmaking for visual communication of texts and pictures in advertisements, magazines and books. According to National Board for Technical Education, (1991); National Commission for Colleges of Education, (2012); National Open University of Nigeria, (2015) reports, the course contents stress on lettering construction and typefaces; lettering design and calligraphy exercises; greetings cards; film poster designs; calendar designs; reproduction of posters, package and illustration designs; security mint designs; package designs for various goods and products; and certificate and gift items using block, screen, lino, stencil, offset and etching.

✓ **Art History**

Art history refers to the discipline that studies the emerging and evolution of human creativity in arts. National Board for Technical Education, (1991); National Commission for Colleges of Education, (2012); National Open University of Nigeria, (2015) reports, that the course contents stress on survey of ancient art; media, style, location and form of ancient art; survey of major art culture; survey of Western art history; and history of contemporary art.

Communication and Language

Communication and Language Skills introduces the crucial and importance of mastering the utilization of English language for communicative reasons.

Communication takes various forms. Human beings communicate their feelings, views and desires through different means. Some means of communication are common to both humans and non-humans such as gestures and vocal symbols. Human beings have one mode of communication which is language. Language is an artificial and consciously organised method of control by the use of symbols.

Iyabode (2018) describe language as a communicative practice mediated by a linguistic system or systems. It is a highly arranged system of signs, or combinations of form and meaning. It is the vehicle for the exchanging of thoughts, concepts, knowledge, and information in addition to fixing and communication of experience and knowledge. As a system of communication, it combines sounds with meaning to create what people know and use as natural language. Therefore, language is a system of communication among humans which entails the utilization of conventional and arbitrary vocal symbols for communicating ideas and experiences.

Language strengthens and reinforces an existing relationship and mends broken relationships. It is from the instrumentality of language that peace is created. Language is an aspect of culture. The different languages symbolise various cultures. Language conveys a range of aspect of culture, and a vehicle for perpetuating culture. Language as communication tool is used by everyone as a means of conveying information. As a result, the language cannot be separated from culture since language represent and has close relationship to the attitude of groups of speakers of the language. language as a tool expresses culture in these forms:

- ✓ Language is part of culture,
- ✓ Even the language and the culture is in different, but have a very close relationship,
- ✓ Language is strongly influenced by culture, and
- ✓ Language significantly influences culture and way of thinking of people living within.

In the communication process, language is used to influence culture. Language as a tool transmits thoughts, ideas, concepts, and feeling. Language as a means of communication transmitted by form of symbols of sound created through the speech organ. The link between communication, language and culture, is a daily practice of interaction between individuals and groups.

Integrating Visual Art, Language and Communication in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Visual art refers to art forms that express their message, meaning, and emotion through visual means. It is categorized like decorative, commercial, or fine art, such as painting, photography, or sculpture. The unity of all visual art forms is to communicate visually.

Visual art have the following examples:

- Drawing starts with lines made from pens, pencils, or other drawing tools.
- Painting usually uses a canvas, brushes, and paints.
- Photography is artistic photos made with a camera.
- Sculpture is a form made from materials such as clay, wood, or metal.
- Fashion design uses cloth with the intent of display through being worn.
- Printmaking is when an image is taken from one form and transferred to another.
- Filmmaking is similar to photography but with a series of stills used to create motion or a story.

Functioning of Visual Art

Teachers at every level of language teaching according to Yenawine (2013) characteristically incorporate visual arts into their programmes as learning devices. Teaching with art objects assists in the development of students' ability to observe, interpret, and communicate ideas. It helps in fostering creativity and acts as window to understand different aspects of global cultures.

In the context of the English language classroom, Unsworth (2011) notes that visual art such as paintings, sculptures, installations, artifacts, and digital images are powerful tools with potential to transform traditional teaching approaches into a versatile pedagogy.

Visual art conveys and expands understanding. the use of art is like scaffold with fruitful avenue to foster literacy development and critical thinking such as analysis, evaluation and synthesis in the target language. Art provides students the opportunity and possibility to create connections between grammar, discourse, and meaning, between language and content, between language and culture, and between another culture and their own—in short. Seidel et al. (2009) note that the incorporation of visual art into language classroom creates difficult linguistic and cultural environment which amplifies the students' literacy levels in the English language through provision of foundation for descriptions, narrations, and interpretations at a more sophisticated level of comprehension and production in the target language.

Barnes-Karol and Broner(2010) state that in the English language classroom, images are effective points of entrance into a web of other texts and images whose analysis sensitize students and socialize them into the wider cultural narratives. Integrating visual art into English language classroom connects students in new aesthetic, historical, political, and cultural dimensions of understanding and appreciation. In a related development, art incites emotional reactions. Activities based on art objectives are meaningful devices which consent to teachers to direct students through a process of interpretation. Students' reactions to colors, forms, facial expressions, family, male/female roles, and community scenes produce a basis for respectful discussion and analysis.

Finally, working with art is predominantly relevant for developing symbolic competence. Kramersch (2016) describes this as the ability to manipulate the symbolic systems and forms. Art, contributes in important ways to the development of symbolic competence through actively engaging students in exercises of careful observation and detailed linguistic description, of historical and aesthetic critical analysis, and of collective dialogue around learners' emotional reactions to a certain work of art.

Visual art is helpful when integrated with object-based teaching methods to encourage and produce a creative exchange of ideas, evidence and expressions. The object-based teaching connects learners through drawing and building knowledge, understanding, and ideas in various ways, such as construction of meaningful interactions and suggestions. It stimulates intricacy of language, widens cultural narrative in the course of cross-disciplinary learning, and generates innovative symbolic competence concerning language and culture.

Projection of Language through Visual Arts

The purpose of the present study fosters students' symbolic competencies through:

- ✓ Provision of innovative methodological framework of integrating visual art in English language curriculum and making valuable use of visual art.
- ✓ Raising students' awareness to their native cultures.
- ✓ Developing students' cultural and symbolic ability through vigorous object-based learning skills with art.
- ✓ presenting students and teachers with integrated technique of collaboration and partnership between language and art;
- ✓ Highlighting less significant acquired resources that enriches students' and teachers' cognitive and affective creation and meaningful conduct.

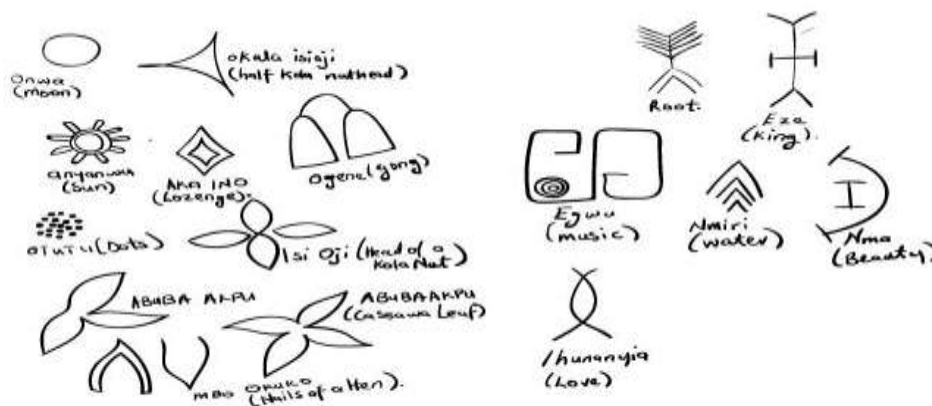
The Role of Visual Art in Language and Communication in Nigeria

Visual art is regarded as very valuable in widening the creative prospects required for social and cultural breakthrough. Visual art is a vehicle for social expression and political change. It is a form of communication which contains truth like in spoken or written languages. It is the vital language in imagery, form and shape. As images, it erases every linguistic barriers. It is understandable by everyone. It has the ability in creating something out of another through shifting of its function. It is the expression of thoughts and ideas through signs and symbols, shapes, form and texture. It has a widespread language and means of communication.

Visual art plays exceptionally vital role in communication and frequently act as substitute to spoken or written words. Communication is the art of utilising words, sounds, signs and symbols to express ideas, thought, feelings to another person. Visual art is used for representation and expression of idea, through which meaning is understood, which makes the aesthetics of art to be clearer. Visual art refers to spoken or written language which is to be understood through manner like in the scenery of painting. The relationship between work of visual art and its subject is captured in spoken or written word, which is representation and expression.

Visual art is the ultimate representation of language in imagery, form and shapes. Images represent universal language that erases every linguistic difficulty. Due to lack of understanding and positive perception of visual art teaching schools curriculums in Nigeria has been undermined in visual arts mostly. Hayakawa and Hayakawa (2012) stress that language of vision determines verbal language. The visual experience of the world is extremely influential than non-verbal language. Visual art has the capacity to create something out of another through shifting of function. This is the mental expression of thoughts and ideas via signs and symbols, shapes, form and texture. Words and visual art are universal language and initial channels of communication at nursery school level.

Symbols are commonly used to convey information in Nigeria. For instance Uli, is a traditional symbolic art form that is common in Igbo land. This is a flat linear decorative art that has both cosmetic and communicative relevance. These symbols refer to drawings on human body or walls in houses. These are usually practiced by the women folks. This art form has intents to convey meaning on a particular concept relating message to perception that results in abstract representation. Uli traditional symbols have different motifs which are linear in communication. Visual art entails the act of drawing, graphics, painting, sculpture, textile, product design and ceramics.



Digital sketch

Source: Aniakor, C. (1991). Uli traditional Igbo art.

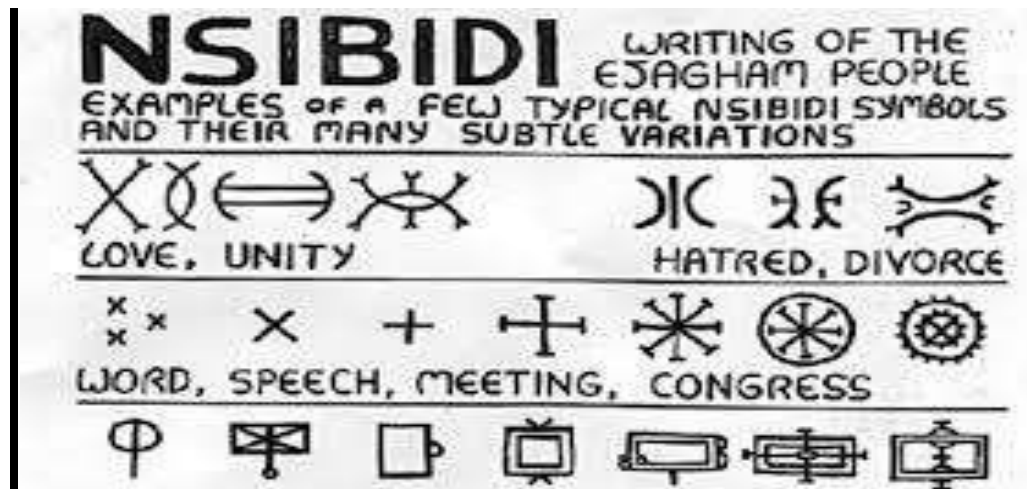
Every one of these makes visual art significant tool in communication. Duane and Sarah (2014) state that visual art language is a form that serves as channels of easy communication among peoples with cultural and linguistic differences. Visual art deals with quality expression of what is attractive, appealing and more than ordinary significance. It is aesthetic expression of idea formed with skill through the use of a medium. Duane and Sarah further assert that a visual art inspires, beautifies, informs, persuades, entertains, and transforms. That it can as well deceive, humiliate, anger and arouse our emotions, spark off imaginations, enchant the senses; and assist to develop personal sense of truth.

Visual art serves numerous functions. It is self-expression with visual thinking. Visualizing uses imagination and visual memory to intentionally preview events before they take place. The process of visualization creates a means through which ideas, images and goals are achieved. Visual art helps to reduce a seemingly lengthy written or spoken narrative. Art with its special language has vast collection of forms, concepts, terminologies and self-expression that are uniquely designed for understanding in variation of concepts.

Most often communication is verbal and one single medium of expression has its limitation. Certain feelings are communicated simply through visual form while other instincts are expressed only through music. Ocivirk and Wigg, (2011) state that visual art language is derived from elements of visual design that include line, shape/form, texture, and colour.



To approach visual art from the angle of expressing meaning and ideas, there is need to know something of the ingredients or components that make up a work of art. These components are the subject, the form and the content. Nsibidi is an idiographic symbol system that has been in use for centuries in South Eastern Nigeria. Its origin is traced back to 400 AD/CE and it is used by several indigenous peoples including the Igbo, Ibibio-Efik, and Ejagham.



Source: Aniakor, C. (1991). Uli traditional Igbo art.

Presently, the most renowned Nsibidi symbols relate to love, conflict, and family. These symbols are written in these forms: a public, practical one and a secret, spiritual one. The public symbols are more extensively recognized and are used in daily communication. The spiritual symbols are used for mystical purposes and are kept secret by initiates.

Before the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1966, Nsibidi was generally taught in schools and used as provisional tattoos. Its widespread use was allowed for communication between different ethnic groups in South Eastern Nigeria, regardless of language barriers. They are symbols written in a code of ideographs which communicate ideas moderately instead of sounds or words. This helped in sharing ideas by speakers of the different languages within South Eastern Nigeria. These symbols are understood to be collective, and their narrative is interpreted through observation of symbols in the context of one another. Nsibidi symbols are traditionally used for body decoration, clothing, and even household items.

Visual art, a non-verbal method of communication, plays a great role in communication through signs and symbols. Information can be transmitted through a work of art using icons, symbols, signs by employing element of design as shape, line, dot, texture, colour instead of using word.



Source: Aniakor, C. (1991). Uli traditional Igbo art.

For instance, through the art of symbols and signs, person along for the roads, travelers can understand the right direction and road to use without written word by this means making communication easy and fast. Facial expression and gesture are accountable for a great proportion of non-verbal communication.

Visual art plays important communication role through the use of colours. The quality of colour affects emotions directly. Walter (2017) suggests that colour is an element of visual art which arouses universal appreciation. It modifies thoughts, mood and actions. Colour is one of the main enthralling elements of art, which functions together with line, shape, form, value, texture, and space to create functional meaningful to art. Information is conveyed to the road users through colours, without written or spoken words. Traffic movements are controlled by the colours of the traffic light, for example. Red signifies danger, green signifies life or acceptance, while yellow means cheer up and get ready.

Conclusion

Signs and symbols in visual art are significant and are good alternative for words in announcement, entertainment, instructions and warnings. Visual art works are easier to notice, observe and understand more than words. Through this study, it clear that art plays role in communication. This shows that art is a valuable discipline that should be learnt and appreciated by everyone. Language as a system of symbols is used by human beings to express ideas and thoughts with others. Visual arts training contributes greatly to the growth of Nigeria education sector.

Recommendation

From the result of findings in this study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Visual art should be emphasized in the school curriculum.
2. There should be an awakened awareness of the potentials of art and design skills to achieve the desired goal through creation of a dynamic school curriculum..
3. Visual arts which include painting, sculpture, textiles, graphics, modeling, local material design and utilization, bead making, folk-art, craft, should be integrated in schools since they have the ability to make something out of another by shifting their function.
4. Visual art should be used for collaborative learning since it has a great impact on the mental development of learners through skillful expression of thoughts and ideas.
5. Visual arts, signs and symbols should be made to serve as a means of communication, and information dissemination.
6. As English language is used as means of communication similarly, visual art should perform the same function in communication with different forms, and should be encouraged in schools and colleges.

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