Assessing Communication Apprehension And Implication For Employability Among Mass Communication Students

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Abstract:- Communication Apprehension is the feeling of anxiety concerning speaking with others. Communication Apprehension (CA) prevents individuals' ability to communicate effectively in communication contexts. Employers of labour prefer graduates who can effectively communicate in the workplace without apprehension. CA has been established as a barrier to communication and therefore has implication for employability. This study assessed the communication apprehension of mass communication final year undergraduates in Nigeria. A total of 405 respondents were surveyed from four tertiary institutions, namely: Lagos State University (LASU), University of Lagos (UNILAG) Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH) and Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH) in Nigeria. The data was analysed based on Personal Report Communication Apprehension instrument (PRCA-24) by McCroskey (1984). The mean and SD result of the four CA contexts assessed respectively show Group Discussion (M= 21.16, SD = 4.26), Interview (M=19.60, SD=4.05), Conversation (M=21.51 SD=4.30), Presentation (M= 19.59, SD =4.53), while the overall (M= 81.35 and the SD = 13.34)indicating that most of the respondents were of moderate level of CA. This study gives an insight into communication apprehension level of mass communication undergraduate students.

Keywords:- *Communication Apprehension, Group discussion, Interview, Conversation, Presentation, Employability*

I. INTRODUCTION

Lack of employability of graduates has remained an on-going issue in academic discourse and has not seized for decades among scholars and employers alike. According to Jackling and De Lange (2009) the setting and dynamics of the worldwide business environment has become so different that changes in skills needed by employers from graduate applicants have become very apparent. Some of the basic skills that are considered important include; communication competence, critical thinking, problem solving, team-work, leadership and so on (OECD, 2011; Precision Consultancy, 2007; UKCES, 2009). But the most crucial according to Employers is communication competence, perhaps the problem with this is communication apprehension (CA). Communication Apprehension has been identified as a barrier to communication and therefore has implication for graduate employment (Arquero & Tejero, 2009; Arquero & Tejero, 2011; Yazici, 2005; Zhang, 2002). And quite a number of studies have established connection between the two variables (i.e Communication Apprehension and Communication Competence) (Blood, Blood, Tellis & Gabel, 2001; Gałajda, n.d.; Devi & Feroz, 2008; Rubin, Rubin & Jordan, 1997; Rosenfeld, Grant & McCroskey, 1995; Sallinen-Kuparinen & McCroskey, 1991 ; Croucher, Rahmani, Sakkinen & Hample, 2016). In view of this, it was found necessary to respond to the complaint, because it has been apparently established that employers prefer graduates who are less apprehensive (Azevedo, Apfelthaler & Hurst, 2012 ; Bonk & Smith, 1998; Gammie & Joyce, 2009). And as it appears there are few or no studies done in this area, particularly concerning the mass communication graduates. Therefore, this paper assesses the communication apprehension of the 2015/16 final year mass communication undergraduates with implication for their employability being the next workforce.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension by definition is "the fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others" according to McCroskey (1977, p. 78). Also, McCroskey, Daly and Sorensen (1976, p. 376) define it as "a broad-based fear or anxiety related to the act of communication held by a large number of individuals". Communication apprehension is a kind of disorder which affects majority of individuals (Butler, 2004). The levels of anxiety or fear people experience in form of CA differs. It is associated with anticipated or real communication with other individuals. Studies have shown that communication apprehension influences communicative behaviors in terms of communication avoidance (Ahadzadeh, Sharif, Wei & Emami, 2015). People who are highly communication apprehensive are those whose apprehension about taking part in discussions surpasses the anticipated benefits they feel they would derive in certain circumstances (McCroskey, 1970;Hassall, et al., 2013). Such persons usually, have negative perception of the resultant consequences of communication, and as such prefer to avoid communication than getting involved, if they could do so, or undergo pain multiple type of anxieties if they must communicate as a matter of compulsion. Researches have shown that there is a barrier in communication that is referred to as communication apprehension (CA) which is obvious in most individuals (Hassal et al. 2013; Ilias, Razak & Yunus, 2013; McCroskey, 1966; Miller & Nadler, 2009). This of course includes graduates of all professions with no exception. Although, McCroskey and Anderson (1976) examined the phenomena by employing various intelligence and personality measures to establish an evidential relationship between intelligence and communication apprehension, but they found no evidence with CA. But they are of the opinion that, even, though, both variables did not indicate any correlation, yet, high level of CA could make individuals develop avoidance attitude, and this was explained with students who would rather usually wish to sit at the back of the classroom than sitting in front during classroom lectures, preferring modules that would prevent them from classroom participation and interaction, and avoiding to seek tutors assistance. Definitely, this character limits relationship and prevents individuals communication problems and challenges from being addressed, and invariably affect their communication skill development (Fordham & Gabbin, 1996; Hassall, Arquero, Joyce, & Gonzalez, 2013). Verderber, Verderber and Sellnow (2010) stated that although, many people often reason along anxiety of public speaking whenever the construct of communication apprehension is being referred to, but in real sense there are four different forms of communication apprehension (CA). Originally, CA was primarily thought to be trait-based. Anxiety related to trait-like communication is considered as a predilection for communication anxiety which is relatively stable across varying context, situations and audiences. Further current research has widened the construct to comprise of certain state-like characteristics. State anxiety is peculiar to particular circumstances, contexts, and audiences (Daly & Friedrich, 1981; Wernicke, 2005). Nevertheless, there is the prevalence of the belief that those states are indicators of trait-like CA and other particular ones about individuals (McCroskey & Beatty, 1998, p.217). CA manifests both in oral and written form.

2.4 Group Discussion

Conceptually, group discussion refers to informal discussion that involves a number of discussants normally in group. It is a discussion that lasts for a period of time and mostly consists of few individuals who relate with one another face to face, whereby each influences the other (Homans, 1950; Shaw, 1981; Cartwright & Zander, 1968). Group discussion is a context of communication that is largely dependent on conducive atmosphere that allows individuals in the group to register their feelings and experiences, regardless of how other participants react (Hennink, 2007). In this study, it is operationalised as the ability of the communication undergraduates selected for this study to participate in Group discussion context without communication apprehension.

2.5 Interview

Interview is an evaluation method used in measuring individual applicant's perception, Knowledge or capabilities whether structured, conventional, behaviourial or situational. Interview is meant to evaluate applicants' attributes or traits. The procedure could be interpersonal (face-to-face) or by telephone (Bauer, Truxillo, Paronto, Weekley & Campion, 2004; Blackman, 2002; Schmidt & Rader, 1999; Silvester & Anderson, 2003). It could also be via video conference (Straus, Miles, & Levesque, 2001; Chapman, Uggerslev, & Webster, 2003), as well as interactive voice response methods (Bauer et al., 2004), or written (Macan, 2009; Whetzel, Baranowski, Petro, Curtin, & Fisher, 2003). Specifically in this study, it is operationalised as the self-perception of the ability of the mass communication undergraduates selected for this study to communicate in an interview context without apprehension.

2.6 Conversation

This is a talk between two or more individuals during which ideas, feelings, and thoughts are shared. It involves questions and answers as well as exchange of information(Dubberly& Pangaro, 2009; Katie & Slinn, 2008; The Pfeiffer Library, 1998).Conversation is an interactive process which requires constant listening, sharing, and asking questions and negotiations (Stone, Patton & Heen, 1999). Conversation is a collective engagement whereby two or more people employ linguistic terms and nonverbal signs to relaxation through interaction. Dialogue for instance is a form of conversations among two parties. Face -to-face conversation is a global practice in all cultures, and it provides an context for interactivity through which languages are explored. Conversation may be mediated, through technology for speech making or sending text messages electronically. Conversation is not just arrangement of messages spoken or written in turns. Rather, it is structurely arranged in pairs contiguously (Brennan, 2010).

2.7 Presentation

Presentation is a formal delivery of information, ideas and thoughts usually in form of lecture to a group of audience (Pearson, n.d.). It is a process that typically involves demonstration, persuasion and communication.The importance of presentation skills for undergraduate has been acknowledged, as a result of the need to interact through oral presentations, and display the capability to employ multimedia technology. A very good awareness of the essence of presentation skills would motivate them and get them prepared properly for communication challenges in the workplace. In this study, the presentation is considered as a context of communication apprehension (CA), therefore, it is operationalised as the ability of the mass communication undergraduates selected to make communicate through oral presentations with less or zero communication apprehension.

2.8 Employability

Employability is defined as the ability to obtain, sustsain and change employment (Rae, 2007; NCIHE, 1997)."It is the ability of individuals to find and remain employed"(Sumanasiri, Yajid & Khatibi, 2015).employability skills development is suppose to be not only the responsibility of individual graduates, but including the tertiary institutions and employers. However, individual graduates perception, time investment in developing employability is very crucial (Nilsson, 2010). Nilson (2010) found that that hard, technical and vocational skills are acknoeledged but they have less effect when compared to soft-skills and personality qualities. Employability does not rely only on individual attributes, context, work environment, and other variables determine individual's employability. For this reason it is the collective responsibility of all stake holders to contribute towards its development (Clarke, 2008). Modern worklife requires employability due to its complexities and lack of job security (Nilsson, 2010). The lack of university degree to prepare graduates for future professional work life intricacies, as made it incumbent on graduates themselves to rise to the occasion in terms of employability skills development which what employers demand aside technical or hard skills (Nilsson, 2010). Since university degrees have less value nowadays and cannot solely guarantee employability then it becomes questionable (Wellman, (2010).

3 Method and Findings

This study adopts quantitative and descriptive research method with survey research approach. The data was obtained through questionnaire administered on final year mass communication undergraduates of four tertiary institutions, which includes: Lagos State University (LASU), University of Lagos (UNILAG) Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH) and Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH) in Nigeria. The study population size was 510 and based on Kretche and Morgan (1970) the appropriate sample size is 226. Nevertheless, in order to have a more reliable result, and make up for lost and invalid questionnaires, the sample size was doubled (Gregg, 2008) so that the total number of questionnaires administered amount to 452. Out of this a total 429 (94%) were obtained, 23 (5%) not returned and 16 (4%) invalid. Therefore, the total questionnaires became 413. But after treating cases of outlier the balance left for this analysis is 405. Thus, the total rate of response for this study is 91%. Out of this 8 (2%) cases were found to be outliers and this treated, leaving a balance of 405 (89%) on which this study is based. The items of the Personal Report Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) measurement instrument developed by McCroskey (1984) was used in calculating the level of CA, while Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed in calculating the Mean and SD of the CA contexts. The measurement scale is a five point Likert scales that ranged from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree". The findings of this study demonstrate that majority of the respondents' falls within average communication apprehension (CA) and this has implication for employability, Although their level is not high, however, there is the need to address the problem. Through application ofcertain treatmentsin order to make them overcome their CA challenge. This could be addressed via the following ways:

a. Creation of a group support environment
b. Employment of systematic desensitization and relaxation techniques
c. Usage of cognitive rearrangement to enhance confidence
d. Use of exercises which involves public oral presentation assignments.

III.   RESULT
4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Respondents Personal Report Communication Apprehension

Table 4.1 shows the categorizations of CA level score range according to McCroskey (1984).

Table 4.1*CA Levels Categorization by Score range According to McCroskey (1984)*

CA	Range	Level
Scores from	24 - 55	Low
Scores from	55 - 83	Average
Scores from	83 - 120	High

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Respondents Personal Report Communication Apprehension According to Contexts

Table 4.2 reveals the mean and SD of respondents Communication Apprehension according to contexts in terms of Group Discussion, Meeting, Interpersonal Conversation and Public Speaking. The Group Discussion M = 21.16 and the SD = 4.26. The Meeting Mean= 19.60 and SD= 4.05. Interpersonal Conversation M = 21.51 and SD= 4.30 and Public Speaking M = 19.59 and SD= 4.53.

Table 4.2*Statistics of Respondents PRCA Result according to Contexts*

Contexts	N	Mean	SD
Group Discussion context	405	21.16	4.26
Interview context	405	19.60	4.05
Conversation context	405	21.51	4.30
Presentation context	405	19.59	4.53

IV.   OVERALL PRCA RESULT
4.3 Summary of Statistics of Respondents Personal Report Communication Apprehension

Table 4.3 shows the descriptive statistics of respondents Communication Apprehension, Mean, Standard deviation, Minimum and Maximum respectively. The Mean value for this study is 81.85 and the Standard Deviation = 13.34, while the minimum score = 48 and maximum score = 119. This shows that most of the respondents have high communication apprehension.

Table 4.3*Statistics of Respondents Personal Report Communication Apprehension*

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
405	81.85	13.34	48.00	119.00

V.   DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Since,communication apprehension is a common phenomenon with all individuals.Indicating that,there are no graduates without CA,and because, studies have shown that those with high CA are quick at changing jobs due to inability to cope and perform in the workplace,reason why employersprefer employees with lowlevelof CA among graduates (Petry, 2016). In view of this, the need to reduce undergraduates/graduates CA level is very crucial, in order to facilitate their employability. Undergraduates CA level should be reduced to the bearest minimum,so that they could be able to communicate effectively in various communication contexts, such as; group discussion, interview, conversation and presentation after graduation. Undergraduates should be taught the four stages of anxiety and how to overcome them. The anxiety stages include:Anticipation, confrontation, adaptation and release.According to Witt et al. (2006), anxiety often get to its zenith at the anticipatory stage. In view of this, anxiety managementtecniques should be inculcated in the undergraduates andthey should be groomed in positive thinking,bymaking them see such situations as an opportunity for expression, rather than avoidance. Other ways of reducing anxiety that should be imparted on them,include: Speech building or planning (Metcalfe, 2012), desensitisation therapy; which requires designing an anxiety

hierarchy, andrelaxation training (Stevens, 2014). As established by findings,communication apprehension begins in the mind as a psychological response, therefore,undergraduates psychological attitude towards speaking should be addressed through cognitive restructuring strategy. Cognitive restructuring strategy, simply changes how one labels the physiological responses that is being experienced at a moment (Beebe & Beebe, 2000). Furthermore, systematic desensitization can also be of helpin CAreduction. This empowersthe individualin tackling frivolous fearsand develop ability to endure such situations. In conclusion, educational policy makers should include these strategies in the schools' curriculum,in order to reduce CA from beinga barrier to effective communication among undergraduates/graduatesandconsequentlymakethem employable. For the purpose of future research, researchers should consider investigating CA accross cultures and gender. Andsince, this research is purely quantitive, future studies may adopta mixed modeapproach;combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to get an indepth information and data.

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