

A Chameleon in the Classroom! ... of Books that has Changed its Physique to Audio

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Abstract

I once looked around for a book that I read many years ago as a secondary school girl. Decades past, I stumble on it at a bookshop and jumped at it. When I got home and I opened the package, it was an audio book. It has changed in colour and even physique. I became disheartened, but while still contemplating, a friend collected it and never returned with it. Seems as if he knows the importance much than I do. I became curious and went in search of another copy. This time around I guided it jealously. This study equalled a book to a chameleon that is changing. It identifies some of the features of a chameleon in the reptile kingdom and compares these with features of a book in the class of media. It identifies some of the classroom advantages of audio books. It recommended the adoption of audio books in schools and institutions most especially for children and students that are physically challenged.

Keywords: audio, book, chameleon, podcast

1.0 Introduction

I can never forget the experiences I had with books as an undergraduate student. At the beginning of every semester, individual lecturer would hand over his or her course outline and at the end of each would be references of books to be used for the semester. On receiving the course outline, students will rush to the bookshops around and outside town to purchase the recommended texts. What a thing of joy to own a personal library? Individual and independent reading was encouraged. At the primary and secondary school too, books were and still must-read-materials to be possessed. They came in different colours and shades and individual authors use whatever is in their power to make the books attractive to readers.

Situations are different today. The use of internet has made available the virtual library but the experiences are not the same. Nevertheless, because many are used to reading, students especially still download textbooks on the internet, bind them, put different backpages and keep them in their libraries. Textbooks are distinctive in the class of media and many who cherish books find it difficult to depart from the culture - "culture of keeping books".

Books came in different forms-textbooks, workbooks, link books and year books to mention but a few. Another addition is audio book which is the focus of this paper. Audio books or books on tape as they are sometimes called refer to recordings of literary materials read out aloud. One of the great benefits of being able to record sound is to make the books available for listening. Unfortunately, audio books are not well celebrated in Nigeria. This study is of the believe that audio books are books in another form and therefore their use should be encouraged widely.

1.1 Chameleon on Comparism

Chameleons are very distinctive and well known species of lizard. They have large eyes, curled tails and tongues that can be as long as their bodies. They are famous for the ability to change the colour of their skin. Background study revealed that chameleons change the colour of their skin in order to be camouflaged into their surroundings. This also happen so that the chameleon can blend in more easily. They are of different types - the tiny pygmy leaf chameleons and the Malagasy giant chameleons. Their colour serves as a form of communication, a response to temperature, light and mood. They have exceptional eyes-sight for a reptile.

Their eyes can rotate and swivel independently enabling them to see almost a complete 360-degrees or observe two things simultaneously. The facts stated above about chameleons are true to books, and the way people hardly pay attention to chameleons today is the way students of nowadays has packed books aside and focus on the internet. Chameleons cannot go into extinction although they are scarce today, in the same manner, books are scarce but we would always preserve and talk about them in the class of media.

Oyewusi (2009) carried out a research on whether audio books should be adopted or not to be adopted in Nigerian higher educational system. The study revealed that some of the students knew what audio books are even though they might not have seen any. Many of them talk about podcast which is also made possible with the use of internet. Following are some of the advantages of audio books.

1.2 Pluses to be considered

- One of the many advantages is that it is downloadable. Purchasing an audio books online or downloading them from the internet is simpler and quicker than waiting for the titles to appear.
- They allow students to make notes while they listen. This is much quicker than the to-and-fro process needed when reading the printed word. Note taking while listening to an audio book supports the learning process, as both the visual and aural senses are engaged.
- You can select the exact track you want to listen to instead of flipping through several pages in the case of printed books. This saves a great deal of time and makes it comfortable for users.
- Audio books are less expensive to produce than print books. They are more cost effective than hard cover or paper backs. Listening to audio books is much more relaxing than watching the television. One can lie on one's back and close the eyes.
- Audio books are a great time saver for a busy lifestyle. One can listen to them while preparing food in the kitchen, while commuting to and from work or when using the conveniences.
- One can listen to audio books when it is dark most especially when they have taken light, but one may not be able to read a printed book when it is dark.
- Audio books are the perfect media for someone who is visually impaired.
- Audio books conserve space as against printed books.
- Those who love to conserve nature are of the opinion that if all books are audio instead of hard cover and paper backs, a lot of trees would have been saved and this has to do with the issue of conserving nature.

1.3 Multiple Reactions

There were two instances I came in direct contact with the chameleon – (i) as a primary school girl and (iii) as a secondary school student. The first one occurred when sweeping our classroom as school girls. It crept into our classroom. Pupils jumped, yell and clap their hands – to see a reptile changing into the colour of their uniforms, we would not let it go. A chameleon in our classroom! Freedom only came for the reptile with the intervention of an adult (a teacher) who met us yelling.

The second instance came during our manual labour day as secondary school students. Its another chameleon! We surrounded it, sang for it while some troublesome students among us threatened to kill it, throwing stones. But just as they were doing this, a matured student amongst us came with a big container and uses a stick to carry it inside. He wanted his mother to cage it for him. She's been doing that, he yelled. And the scenario today reminds me of 'Silas Marner' – a literature book I read many years ago, which stated that 'when a man turns away blessing from his own door, it goes to them that deserve it', the boy probably knew the importance, but we didn't.

1.4 Literary Implications for Audio Books

When something new comes into any educational system, both children and the youths have every tendency to welcome such warmly. In the midst of these receptions, there would be people who will want to resist the innovation by attacking it. These can be likened to predators, or opponents of the change. This however, should be expected. There will always be people who will appreciate the new thing under every circumstance. Such people will shield, protect and do all they could to understudy the innovation. With the above understanding, the study may want to view audio books in Nigeria as an innovation under review.

While many see its existence as a welcome thing, people believe that events have overtaken it. however, this study is of the opinion that 'books' in print or in audio form needs to be encouraged in our educational system, and as a result has made some recommendations in form of conclusions and suggested further research.

1.5 Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

Although literature indicates that there are audio books, not many research suggest their usage like other media like radio, film and television. The use of audio books at the elementary and secondary schools cannot be over emphasized. The small but growing body of research involving “audio” with audio books and podcasts reflect their minimal presence in Nigeria. This however appears to be an electronic and digital age. Found among some young people and old is the culture of book-keeping. The young however, in addition embrace the internet.

First, follow-up studies should be conducted to understand better the use of audio books and the differences between them and podcast. Additional research will help to spread its usage among nursery, primary schools, and literature students where they are most needed. Considering the fact that audio books are part of communication media, it is also reasonable to suggest its usage also in the business world where symposia, workshops and training are organized from time to time.

Future research on the use of audio books at the ‘special schools’ where we have those that are visually challenged should also be carried out.

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