WORLD PEACE AND EFFECTIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:
A FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS APPROACH

By

Abiodun AKINTAYO Ph.D

Lagos State University of Science and Technology, Ikorodu, Lagos.

&

Adeyemi DARAMOLA   Ph.D

Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper contains an examination of the concept of peace in Nigeria. This limitation to Nigeria is necessary to provide a fairly in-depth examination of the issues involved in peace in Nigeria instead of a broad examination across the entire world. Specifically, the paper examined the basic religious hindrances to peace, provides a brief analysis of these hindrances, and illustrates a linguistics grammatical model that can be related with theoretical models in religious education towards the attainment of world peace from the perspective of Nigeria. The study is therefore anchored on the linguistic grammatical model of Systemic Functional Theory (SFT) because of the theory's universality and interdisciplinary applicability. The concept is explored both paradigmatically (vertically) and syntagmatically (horizontally). The study suggests that one or more religious theories should be integrated with a new education curriculum (EC) to develop an excellent model for achieving world peace. Additionally, educators, political leaders, religious leaders, and their adherents should demonstrate appreciative understanding of one another's faith. The paper concludes that ideologically inspired enmity and mistrust among adherents of different religions would dissipate if there were empathy, direct communication and effective religious education.

Keywords: World peace, religious education, functional linguistics theory, Nigeria

Introduction

The concept of World Peace (WP), presupposes a situation in which people live comfortably anywhere in the world. In such conditions, people engage in their daily activities without molestation, fear and in particular warfare. War is the greatest threat to peace, and perhaps, the most potent opposite of peace. Two World Wars (1914–1918 and 1939–1945) were fought in the first half of the twentieth century and their negative effects are still evident in the world today. Their negative effects include the destruction of property and the deaths of millions of people. To counter these negative effects and establish peace, alliances were formed, particularly among developed countries in order to forestall recurrence.

The United Nations (UNO), as an example, was founded in 1945 after the Second World War by fifty-one countries in order to maintain international peace and security in the world. It

has also as its goal the maintenance of friendly relations among nations, and to promote social progress, better living standards and human rights among the people of the world. One of the six principal organs of UNO was the International Court at Hague established in June 1945 by the Charter of UNO but began to function in April 1946. Today, there is no potent peace as we have wars in many parts of the world. One very old and one very new wars are provided here. On October 7, 2023, the Hamas in Palestine attacked Israel and approximately 1,400 people died and 200 Israelis and Americans were taken hostage. Israel has sent scores of rockets and missiles to the Hamas and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel promised to use ground soldiers to destroy Gaza Strip. This is an old conflict that has made world peace a mirage since 1948 that has caused the formation of alliances of Western and the Arab Nations. On 20th February 2014, Russia launched an armed aggression against Ukraine and seized a part of the Ukrainian territory – Crimean Peninsula. On February 24, 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine in an international conflict that is currently on and which has caused untold misery to the entire world.

This paper contains, therefore, an examination of World Peace from the perspective of the Nigerian situation, a significant country in Africa and the world at large. It is undeniable that world peace exists when there is peace in each country of the world that there is World Peace. The linguistic theoretical model is introduced because of its inherent meaning, potential and interdisciplinary relevance. A model of linguistics is often referred to as Critical Linguistics (CL) and interdisciplinary analysis thus: Daramola (2010 a:20):

> Beyond the contributions of anthropology, grammatical theories, Sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, CL is functional in its approach to the investigation of language and especially the institutions that give shape and meaning to language. These include the ideological and power structures and meaning potential associated or underpinning the entire essence of language. There is, therefore, a corollary between what language means and the various institutions such as religion, politics, science, literature, culture and all of the various dimensions of human essence and life. Most importantly, it emphasizes the fact that textual meaning is not an idealized or an abstract world but is inherent in the social fabric of the society.

The above quotation is used to stress the importance of the interactive essence in interdisciplinary power of linguistics with other disciplines as listed above. The quote goes further concerning various institutions such as religion which is the focus in this paper. If the theory is examined and applied with other innovative religious learning curriculum, peace can be restored to Nigeria and by extension, there will be WP. This approach to Nigerian peace can be extended to the rest of the world and a lasting peace may be attained globally. It is crystal clear that religion holds the key to world peace because all religions point to the Creator, God, Supreme Being/God etc. Moreover, most religious practitioners believe that it is God's plan that all human beings live in peace. WP is, therefore, attainable. It is important to contextualize the attainment of WP into a time frame such as:

a. The Beginning, The Middle and The End
b. Short, Medium and Long Terms
c. Immediate Term, Short Term and Long Term

This three-dimensional time scheme is at tandem with the Aristotelian compartmentalization of time and events as occurring at the beginning, the middle and the end. Today, by the extension of the time-frame, all governments and organizations have always fixed the attainment of programmes in short, medium and long terms. The researchers are inclined to choose the number [c] above – Immediate, Short and Long Terms for the attainment of WP. In other words, the vision of WP in this paper can be attained on a short-term basis. It means, therefore, that all the efforts that all governments and organizations of the world are taking to bring about and maintaining WP are relevant immediately and on short term bases.

Defining World Peace

In the preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO, it is succinctly stated: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

A common definition of the word 'peace' is the absence or cessation of conflict. It is generally referred to as a state of tranquility. That is, it is a situation of an absence of agitation and it can be described as a relationship among any people who demonstrate respect, goodwill and justice one for another.

The concepts, 'world' and 'peace' are loaded and phenomenal. A cursory look at some of its meaning potential becomes necessary. It is defined in Wikipedia thus: "World Peace is the concept of an ideal state of peace within and among all people and nations on Planet Earth." Different cultures, religions, philosophies and organizations have varying concepts on how such a state would come about. All over the world, people, organizations and governments seek to attain that lofty and ideal goal of establishing world peace. Below are, nevertheless, three basic fundamental hindrances to world peace.

Three Basic Religious Hindrances

There are several basic hindrances to peace among practitioners of religions, particularly State and World Religions. This paper addresses three of them. Perhaps the most significant hindrance to peace is the multiplicity of religions. There are lists of numerous religions in many religious literatures. In Nigeria, three religions are commonly mentioned; these are: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR). Both Christianity and Islam have foreign ancestral roots, which are well established in religious literatures. In both of these religions, there are scores of different denominations, sects and doctrines. These three factors often cause divisions and conflicts not only among the various denominations and sects but also between the two religions. In other words, there are intra-religious and inter-religious conflicts in both Christianity and Islam despite a great similarity of their contents of histories, theologies, doctrines and teaching processes. There are also basic elements of divergences in their histories, theologies, doctrines and teaching processes. Throughout history, these two religions have rarely agreed with each other especially because of their different conceptions of God.

Both Christianity and Islam have various sects or groups. It is very important to mention the Pentecostal groups who have set themselves apart from the Orthodox Christians. Just as the Protestants have 'protested' and set themselves apart from the Roman Catholic Church so the Pentecostals have done. That is, they have set themselves apart from the Orthodox Christian Churches. The beginning of Pentecostal Churches marked the great departure of the doctrine of poverty-stricken pastors to powerful-prosperity pastors or ministers. To the Pentecostal

practitioners, the Christian ministers and adherents of these denominations have no reason to be poor. They developed the nature of growth in numbers that had never been witnessed in the history of the Church in Nigeria. African Traditional Religions (ATR) are almost relegated to the background because only few people practice them. It is falsely believed by many Nigerians that ATR is practiced only by uneducated people. In some places, certain ATR worshippers have been reduced to the family or household adherents and they have their small shrines behind their buildings. These small buildings are unlike the cathedrals of the Orthodox Churches and very huge mosques.

African Traditional Religion (ATR), in a similar way to both Christianity and Islam, has many histories, theologies, doctrines and teaching processes. ATR, very indigenous to Africa, predated both Christianity and Islam. One fundamental practice in the religion is the presence of several gods representing the Almighty God because the adherents believe that Almighty God is too sublime to be called upon by human beings. For example, the Yoruba believe that the Supreme Being is "Olodumare". Their belief system is very complex because of the Ifa Divination and several deities such as "Orisha" (Idowu, 1962; Mbiti, 1975). These gods are believed to be so powerful that if one swears falsely before some of them, one gets instant judgement in forms of severe punishments or death. The Hausa, even before the introduction of Islam, believed in only one God, "Mugazanci". The Igbo believe in "Chukwu". For ATR, there are no sacred or canonical texts such as the Christians and Muslims have. If there are, many people don't see them as both the Qu'ran and the Bible are seen everywhere.

The second hindrance to peace is the different exegetical meanings associated with the interpretations of their Holy Books and practices. As already indicated, both Islam and Christianity originated from the same Middle East, yet they approach their teachings differently. The Christians have the Holy Bible, doctrinal and songs books. The Muslims have the Holy Qu'ran and the Hadith (the sayings, practices and the teachings of the Holy Prophet, Mohammed (SAW). In their practices, adherents interpret the holy books and their doctrines according to their faith in God. In Islam, fasting is very important and it lasts thirty days. In Christianity, fasting is very important and it lasts forty days. Some of the Pentecostal ministers have introduced new dimensions to fasting – fifty days, seventy days – as they have interpreted some passages from the Bible.

The third hindrance is the adoption of these religions as state religions. Some nations have citizens who predominantly belong to one of the world's religions. The Western nations such as the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, Germany, France etc. are regarded as Christian nations. Nations such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, Palestine etc. are said to practice mainly Islam. There is, nevertheless, a third group such as China, India, Japan, Russia whose religions are neither Christianity nor Islam. In China, for instance, there are many adherents of Confucianism which is the main religion while Buddhism is an Indian religion or philosophical tradition. Both Russia and China have other minor religions aside Confucianism and Buddhism.

A Brief Analysis of the Hindrances

The multiplicity and proliferation of religions have led to divergent intra-religious and inter-religious views and, at times, conflicts, in the country. Children raised in families practicing any of the three main religions in Nigeria, for instance, must embrace the religion of their parents

as long as they are under their roof. When children grow up and wish to choose another religion, the parent-family may disown them.

There is also the issue of the different conceptions of God. While both Muslims and Christians believe in one God, the processes of belief and teaching differ. Islam preaches that there is only one God and that God does not have a child. Christians believe that even though they believe in one God, that God has three branches – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the concept of Jesus Christ manifesting as the Son of God is unacceptable in Islam. Yet, the Christians believe that it takes a great faith to believe that the Triune God is true and must be worshipped. Moreover, their modes of evangelism differ from each other. Conversions from one faith to another are done differently. The bases of the differences are not just the Holy Books but also doctrinal beliefs and practices. Whereas Christians believe the way to God is through Jesus Christ, in Islam, it is by the recognition of the God (Allah) directly.

Any scholar of religion must have seen that there are great similarities between the Qu'ran and the Old Testament part of the Bible. So, the New Testament marks a great difference between Christians and Muslims.

Fasting has been so diversified and mismanaged especially by the Pentecostal churches. Unlike the example of Christ who fasted for forty days, some Pentecostal Churches fast for seventy days. Although this practice may be justified willy nilly from the Bible, many of their members cannot understand the basis of such a practice. This is because many leaders of the Christian Faith did not undergo the rigorous trainings of the Orthodox Churches ministers. The Muslims maintain, nevertheless, the original thirty days fasting following the example of Prophet Mohammed (SAW).

## Theoretical Models towards Its Attainment

The centrality of the Systemic Functional Theory (SFT) is firstly, the word 'systemic'. Secondly, it is functional in essence. These two concepts demonstrate the universality and applicability of the theory interdisciplinary-wise. As a system, it is inherently ordered, logical, and scientific. Its functionality is embedded in its metafunctions, which cover the content of the message, the inter-relatedness of messages among language users and its nature of occurrences. These Metafunctional conceptual frameworks are Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual (Halliday 1971, 2004; Daramola 2008, 2010b, 2012a; Akintayo 2021, 2024).

The Ideational Metafunction (IM) deals with the construction of experience through language; through it, a speaker expresses his experience of the external world and his own world of consciousness. This component is divided into experiential and logical. The experience deals more directly with the representation of experience. The logical expresses the abstract logical relations which deals indirectly with experience. The logical subgroup is normally expressed through the recursive patterns of a language. The Interpersonal Metafunction (INT.M) concerns the participants in discourse thereby presenting language as doing something by, and to, the people. It deals with role relationships among the participants in a universe of discourse. Each speaker directly or indirectly adopts and assigns roles, and thus the Interpersonal Metafunction is used to express the role relationships of the participants in a linguistic situation. The Textual Metafunction (TM) complements both Ideational and the Interpersonal by creating what is commonly referred to as relevance; relevance to the environment, both situational and cultural. Through the TM, language acquires the potential not just to create text, but to relate itself both to the Context of Situation (COS) and to the preceding and the succeeding texts.

The grammatical systems of Transitivity (T), Mood (M) and Modality (MT) and Theme (TH) correspond respectively to the three main metafunctional categories. The components of COS are Field (F), Tenor (TR) and Mode (MO) and these assist in focusing attention on the particular characteristics of the text. Field refers to the on-going activity and the particular purpose that language is serving within the context of the activity. That is, what is 'going on' has some meaning in the social system; and this meaning has a well-ordered configuration. Field is particularly relevant for making predictions about longer stretches of texts or about the most typical kinds of processes that will occur. Tenor refers to the interaction among participants (status and role-relationships). These relationships are situation-specific. More importantly, these concern aspects of the exchange of meanings among interlocutors. Mode encompasses the channel of communication. This is the symbolic organisation with particular reference to the form of the text concerning its channel or medium. The two modes commonly referred to are the spoken and the written modes. Halliday and Hasan (1985; Hasan 1987; Martin 1987) have developed the concepts more elaborately than Halliday's introduction of the terms in 1964. That is, the Contextual Configuration (CC) of meaning has an inbuilt scientific mechanism or application to integrate the theories of Metafunctions with contextual variables. The configuration of situational and linguistic features of a text realises its register. That is, the semiotic features of the linguistic situation in which the text is functioning, and the relevant corresponding patterns or semantic system are used to predict the type of text (Halliday 1978).

The notion of a language as a system in SFT is, however, incomplete without the notion of its formal construct the System Network (SN) (Halliday (1976: 101, 2004:23-24, Berry 1975:188; Fawcett et al. (1984:135-177). Being the formal representation of the linguistic theory, the construction of a system network shows a set of features of the language from which the paradigmatic options can be drawn (Joia de Alex et al. 1984:135-177). The SN is a main theoretical component of SFT because it takes language into the realm of science. Two major kinds of SN are often identified: simultaneity and dependence. Systems are simultaneous if choices must be made independently of the systems concerned; and dependence occurs where terms are hierarchically ordered. Apart from evolving a paradigmatic but not always symmetrical patterning of language, the organisation of systems into networks becomes possible as the concept of delicacy (a scale of depth of differentiation in grammatical analysis) is extended from structural to systemic relations. Paired symbols are organised, therefore, from left to right of the network to the more delicate level of analysis. Network may be drawn at all levels of linguistic description analysis. The SN is, therefore, an illustration of possibilities of ordering and constitutes a set of hypotheses about what is, and what is not possible in the language being described. It gives a concise account of the structural descriptions and analyses of texts.

**Fig. 1: Religion; Systemic Network**
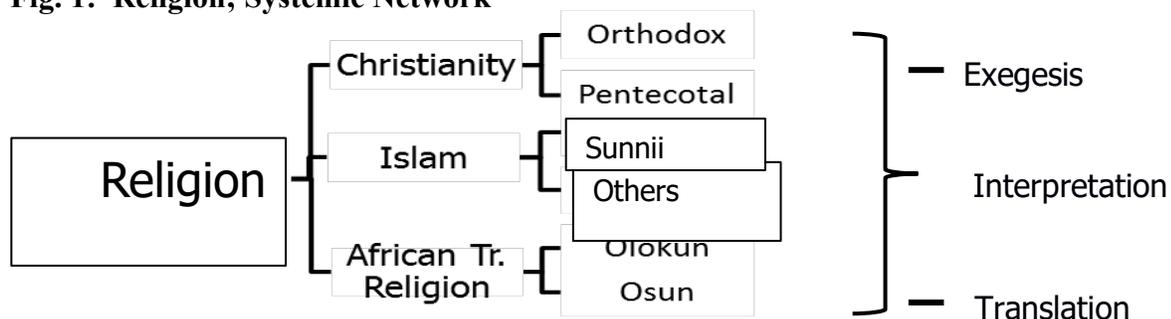
The Religious Model

As this work serves as a prolegomenon to the theory and practice of WP, the proposition is an interdisciplinary perspective. That is, SFT as a robust linguistic theory can be integrated with one or more religious theories toward the development of a theory that can bring the ideal WP. In other words, SFT and one or more religious theories can be integrated with a new Education Curriculum (EC) to develop an excellent model for achieving WP.

The suggested steps are as follow:

1: a national committee or a committee of world organizations such as the United Nations Organization (UNO), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), or a completely new one may be formed.

2: an ideological, theoretical and interdisciplinary education and religious policy is formed.

3: experts mainly teachers and religious leaders are selected and trained.

4: a curriculum that will integrate religion with education and individual contexts of positive and dynamic culture is designed.

5: a group of first-year primary school children would enjoy the new integrated education system along with free and compulsory education, free feeding at lunch hour, free uniform, textbooks and equipment etc. The same group will be treated the same way in secondary school. After secondary education, they can pursue whatever mode of education that they want in tertiary institutions full or part-time.

Fig. 2: Peace. A System Network
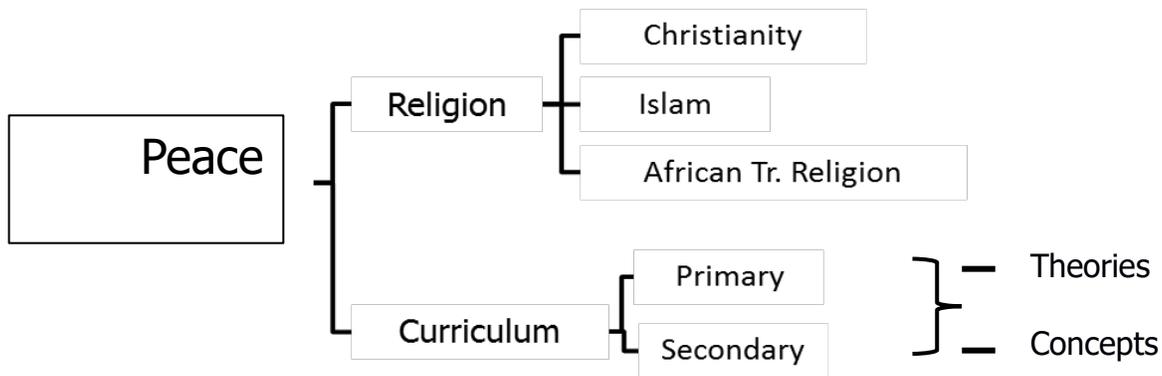
Conclusion

This model of religious education would lead to a complete transformation of the teenagers who would be patriotic, truly educated, without any ethnic bias and be ready to work to pay back to the State. Almost all religious practitioners preach that God is loving, long-suffering, and caring, and who desires that we have peace. Since WP is primarily threatened by religious extremism, religious educators, political leaders, religious leaders and their adherents should show appreciative understanding of one another's faith. Ideologically inspired enmity and mistrust among adherents of different religions would dissipate if there is empathy, direct communication and effective religious education.

It is imperative that religious leaders of all faiths avoid aggressive evangelism and nurture their followers to eschew extremism, which typically breeds violence. Adherents of different religions should be tolerant, show appreciative understanding of one another's religion and practice the fundamental ethos of their religious persuasions which are rooted in peace and love for humanity.

References

Akintayo, A. (2021). Information and thematic structures in English and Nigerian Pidgin English. Papers in English and Linguistics (PEL), 22(3–4), 144–160.

Akintayo, A. (2024). Cohesive features in the Nigerian national anthem. Journal of English and Communication in Africa (JECA), 7(1–2), 99–108.

Akintayo, A., & Daramola, A. (2024). A study of formal and informal uses of English in Nigeria. International Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJARSSH), 8(2), 108–120.

Akintayo, A., & Olosu, O. (2024). Discourse strategies in the United Nations' appeasement engagement in the Israel-Palestine conflict. International Journal of Political Science (IJPSC), 1(2), 25–44.

Amaireh, H. A. (2024). A critical discourse analysis of Al Jazeera's reporting of the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis. International Journal of Arabic-English Studies, 24(1), 21–41. https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes.v24i1.559

Assaiqeli, A. (2020). Palestine in UN discourse: A critical discourse analysis. Journal for the Study of English Linguistics, 8(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.5296/ijsel.v8i1.15596

Berry, M. (1975). An introduction to systemic linguistics: Vol. 1. Structures and systems. St. Martin's Press.

Daramola, A. (2008). A child of necessity: An analysis of political discourse. Pragmatics, 18(3), 355–388.

Daramola, A. (2010a). Literary or/and linguistic stylistic techniques and discourse analysis. In J. K. S. Makokha, R. S. Barasa, & A. Daramola (Eds.), Tales, tellers and tale-making: Critical studies on literary stylistics and narrative styles in contemporary African literature (pp. 15–42). VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.

Daramola, A. (2010b). The choice of processes in Psalm One. Cape Coast Journal of Humanities (CCJH), 2(1), 45–68.

Daramola, A. (2012a). The English language as a vehicle of discourse for development in Nigeria. The Journal of International Social Research, 5(23), 112–128.

Daramola, A. (2012b). A stylistic study of metaphors in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart. In J. K. S. Makokha, O. J. Obiero, & R. West-Pavlov (Eds.), Style in African literature: Essays on literary stylistics and narrative styles (pp. 89–112). Rodopi.

Daramola, A. (2019). The English language in Nigeria as discourses of life and death [Inaugural lecture]. University of Lagos Press and Bookshop.

Daramola, A. (2022). My experiential reality of the English language and linguistics studies in Nigeria [Valedictory lecture]. Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos.

Fawcett, R. P. (1984). System networks, codes and knowledge of the universe. In R. P. Fawcett, M. A. K. Halliday, S. M. Lamb, & A. Makkai (Eds.), The semiotics of culture and language: Vol. 2 (pp. 135–177). Frances Pinter Publishers.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1971). Language function and literary style: An inquiry into the language of William Golding's The Inheritors. In S. Chatman (Ed.), Literary style: A symposium (pp. 330–368). Oxford University Press.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1976). Halliday: System and function in language (G. Kress, Ed.). Oxford University Press.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning. Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K. (2004). An introduction to functional grammar (3rd ed., rev. by C. M. I. M. Matthiessen). Hodder Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1985). Language, context and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective. Deakin University Press.

Halliday, M. A. K., McIntosh, A., & Strevens, P. (1964). The linguistic sciences and language teaching. Longman.

Hasan, R. (1987). The grammarian's dream: Lexis as the most delicate grammar. In M. A. K. Halliday & R. P. Fawcett (Eds.), New developments in systemic linguistics: Vol. 1 (pp. 184–211). Frances Pinter Publishers.

Henne, P. S., Saiya, N., & Hand, A. W. (2020). Weapon of the strong? Government support for religion and majoritarian terrorism. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 64(10), 1941–1967. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002720930811

Idowu, E. B. (1962). Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba belief. Longmans.

Joia, A. de, & Stenton, A. (1980). Terms in systemic linguistics: A guide to Halliday. Batsford Academic and Educational.

Koehler-Derrick, G., & Milton, D. J. (2019). Choose your weapon: The impact of strategic considerations and resource constraints on terrorist group weapon selection. Terrorism and Political Violence, 31(5), 909–928. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1293533

Mbiti, J. S. (1975). Introduction to African religion. Heinemann.

UNESCO. (1980). Many voices, one world: Towards a new, more just, and more efficient world information and communication order (MacBride Report). UNESCO.