

EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

¹Abotsi, Felicia Ugi & ²Eyam, Emmanuel Ntun

¹Early Childhood Care Development Education,
felabotsi.2000@gmail.com

²Department of English,
emmaeyam75@gmail.com, 08035309529
Federal College of Education, Obudu. Cross River State

Abstract

English language occupies a prestigious position in the educational sector in Nigeria. It is the language of instruction from upper primary, secondary and tertiary education. Despite the unique and significant roles the English language plays, its teaching in Nigerian schools is a daunting task. Teachers in Nigerian schools are still faced with many challenges that militate against teacher's education. This paper discussed the challenges which English language teachers face in the teaching of English language that militate against teacher education. Furthermore, the factors which make teaching of English language a serious challenge are also discussed. Recommendations to make language teaching less burdensome were also made.

Keywords: Teaching, Teacher Education, English Language, Nigerian Schools

Introduction

It is common to describe the action of teaching as the art of imparting information or skills to another. Teaching can also be referred to as the profession of those who give instructions, especially in an elementary school or a secondary school or a higher institution. (Britannica, 2023) teaching can be referred to as both an art or science, as an art it lays importance on the imaginative and artistic qualities of a teacher in creating a worthwhile learning environment. As a science, it stresses on the logical, mechanical or procedural steps to follow that would lead to achievement of goals.

There are different educationalist who hold different ideas on the concept of teaching Nwankwo (2019) asserts that teaching is an intimate contact between a more mature personality and a less mature one which is designed to further the education of the latter. On the other hand, Oforjebe (2018) opined that teaching is an arrangement and manipulation of a situation in which there are gaps and obstructions which an individual will seek to overcome and form which he will learn the course of doing so. The main aim of teaching is to produce learning.

Teaching is the world's largest profession as measured in terms of its members, there were about 80 million teachers estimated throughout the world in the 21st century. The roles and functions of teachers do vary from country to country and the nature of the activities that constitute teaching depends more on the age of the persons being taught. Primary or elementary school teachers happen to be the most numerous all over the world while teachers at the higher institutions make the smallest group.

This would lead us to the question who is a teacher'? In modern usage, the words "teaching and teacher" are interwoven with schooling and schools. A simple way to approach the question "what is teaching?" is to look at what those that are called "teachers" do and then draw out key qualities that set them apart from others. Offorma (2017) asserts that a teacher is a professionally trained person who is knowledgeable in theory and practice of education. Lassa in Iji and Uka (2012) buttresses this point that if we do not have well trained, qualified and motivated teachers, we may not achieve the desired goals in implementing the curriculum.

Nigerian schools system comprises basic/elementary education, senior secondary school and higher institutions. In Nigeria, the English Language has risen to the prestigious status of a lingua-franca due to the multi-ethnic groups that speak different languages, English is the prescribed language of communication among the various ethnic groups. In social gatherings, English is used among people for social interaction. In education, English language is used as means of instruction in Nigerian schools and it is also introduced as a school subject. English language is the language of education in Nigeria, it is the medium of instruction in all subjects from upper primary education, secondary and tertiary education.

A credit pass in it is also a requisite for admission to higher institutions. Given its communicative, academic and professional value, it is important that, in all stages of learning English Language is adequately taught by teachers. This is because, as a second language, proficiency in English among Nigerians is greatly tied to the quality of its teaching. Teachers of English in Nigeria must therefore as a matter of fact possess linguistic knowledge and communicative competence.

The standard of the English language is rapidly falling in our schools, it is observed that despite the prestigious position the English language holds, many school students are unable to communicate in the language. They neither speak in simple correct English nor write well in essays without making a lot of grammatical blunders. The present inadequate knowledge of English language by the Nigerian students present an impediment to national development and educational goals. Zimmerman, (2007) states that English language is a set of words that are the basic building blocks used difficulty of the English language, lack of textbooks government policies. In the generation and understanding of sentences. This makes it pertinent that English language teachers should teach this very important language efficiently and effectively to arrive at bringing a positive change on the learners. English language teachers have been faced with several challenges such as our English teachers are not well trained, a situation where a teacher of language has no mastery of its grammatical categories does not mean well for the system. Other challenges are methods of instruction. difficulty of the English language, lack of textbooks, government policies. This paper therefore attempt to examine the challenges faced by English language teachers in the effective teaching of English language in Nigerian schools.

Concept of English language and objectives of teaching English language

The English language originated from the North Western Europe. The language was first spoken by the greatest number of people, tribes in Denmark and Northern German, Eneh (2008) observed English language was the name for all the inhabitants of England, Since Nigeria gained independence from the British people, English has been enjoying a high status within the Nigeria society. English language was the heritage left behind in Nigeria society. English language was the heritage left behind in Nigeria by the British at the end of their stay. English language is used as a means of instruction in schools and introduced as a school subject. Incidentally, English language become a second language, official language, language of commerce and Western education. It is therefore impossible to relegate it to the background.

English language has four basic skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing, these skills have to be well developed in learners for them to be termed competent in the language.

Listening: the teacher can develop the listening ability of learners by involving them in activities such as storytelling, conversations drills, dictation etc. Teacher should teach learners how to take down notes while listening Adejumola and Omolape (2013) opined that through enriching activities and exercises in the classroom, mostly in the form of repetition, good pronunciation, habits can be formed.

Speaking: Speaking is another important skill that teachers of English should develop in learners Oyinloye (2012) defined speaking as a production of meaningful utterances in an attempt to communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings. Speaking entails pronunciation, social variation with language, grammar etc. A good English language teacher must pay attention to the Supra segmental features such as stress, rhythm and intonation as well as vowels and consonants.

Reading: Reading is a matter of searching for the thought that was in the mind of the author and which now lies in the meaning of the words which are before the “reader” (Laedy, 2014). Teachers of English should encourage learners to read extensively as it facilitates learners interest in developing their reading skills to increase their vocabulary.

Writing: This skill comprises all the other three skills, and incidentally, the listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills all manifest their ways into the writing skill.

The objectives of Teaching English in schools the study of English language has been documented in the National Policy on Education (NPE) the 9 year Basic Education curriculum English studies for JSS 1-3 and WAEC and NECO Senior Secondary School syllabuses. The main objectives of the English Language at the senior secondary school level and beyond are to:

- Help students develop mastery in the four language skill of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing
- Help students become confident and competent in the use of spoken and written English
- Develop the language proficiency necessary for performing well in other school subjects
- Equip students with an adequate range of words and sentences that would enable students function effectively in everyday situation.

Teaching and the goals of Teachers Education in Nigeria

A teacher is a professionally trained person who is knowledgeable in theory and practice of education. Such a person must be dedicated and committed to the course of effective, efficient and competent learning of individuals (learners) under his care. Edegbo and Edegbo (2009) opines that any successful teachers is one who understands the learners and cares about them Osuji (2009) regards teachers educations as the professional education of teachers to equip them with right attitudes, skills, knowledge which would make them to embark on their responsibility efficiently and effectively.

The Goal of Teachers Education

The National Policy on Education (2004) states that the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE). The goals of teachers education are as follows:

- Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- Encourage further, the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers
- Help teachers fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals
- Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.
- Enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

Importance of English language in National Development

Education is a major tool in human development and it's of importance to note the language through which education is acquired. English language is the language of education in Nigeria. English language is the language of education in Nigeria, it is a medium of instruction and every form of education is expressed and acquired through English language. English language is a vital factor for national development and there are many benefits that are acquired through English language, such as:

- Allowing Nigerians to live peacefully together even in multi-ethnic and diversified nature, considering the multilingual nature of the country, communication crises that would have occurred among people from different linguistic background is bridged by the use of English. This peaceful co-existence engenders development either on individual or national basis.
- Advancing Nigerians economically, Locally, People engage in international businesses facilitated by the use of English such trading and other business activities to increase in their economic power and improve their standard of living.
- The states of English language as a secondary language in Nigeria has attracted foreign investment (FDI), inflows from English speaking countries such as UK and USA. These investments in turn create more Jobs and Career opportunities for Nigeria.
- Access to better health facility
- Higher productivity

Some Selected Methods of Teaching English Language in Nigeria Schools

Teaching methods are essential tools in the English classroom and they are an indispensable part of the teaching-learning process. There are many methods from which teachers can choose from when preparing a lesson.

A method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language materials and is based on the selected approach. Therefore the language teachers have to evaluate the methods he wants to use before making use of them. Some of the methods of teaching English language are as follows:

- Grammar-translation /(traditional method)
- Direct method
- Audio-Lingual Method
- Communicative language teaching (CLT)

Grammar-translation method (GTM)

The grammar translation method was first used in the teaching of classical language, Latin and Greek during the 19th century and later for the purpose of helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature. The idea of GTM arose from the fact that the L2 is logically and systematically explained followed by rules, copious examples, words to be learned by heart and translation exercises based on the portion of the grammar taught. In GTM, students are made to break down sentences and define parts of speech, this method is teacher-centered in that the teacher does the talking and deny students the active participation that is necessary in second language learning.

Direct method

A new method of teaching a foreign language was advocated for because of the ineffectiveness of the grammar-translation method. This method was known as the direct method (DM). This method means the creating of the environment similar to that in which the child learns his

mother tongue in the learning of L2 and that language learning is a natural process. It lays emphasis that language has to be learnt from the order of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The direct method discourages writing at early stage but makes use of gestures and miming.

Audio-lingual Method (ALM)

The audio-lingual method was developed in the United States of America to help people learn foreign language. The need for the choice of ALM was because of the exciting new ideas about language and learning from the descriptive linguist and the behavioral psychologist. The ALM which is based on structural linguistics emphasizes overt patterns of behavior of the learner to stimuli. The audio-lingual method lays emphasis on spoken language and the teaching of language as it is spoken by the native speakers. The ALM is learner centered and very effective in teaching listening and speaking skills.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) CLT views language as a form of social behavior and language teaching as training learners to communicate fluently, appropriately and spontaneously in the cultural context of target language English.

Challenges Faced by English Language Teachers To Effective Teaching Of English Language

English language teachers in Nigerian schools encounter many challenges in their attempt to improve the teaching of English language. Such challenges include: lack of textbooks, teachers inadequacy, overcrowded classrooms government policies, methods of instruction.

- **Method of Instruction**

The choice of methods of teaching English Language in Nigerian schools has been made worse by the diversification in teaching methods. Teachers in multilingual setting as Nigeria are faced with the challenges of adopting the appropriate method(s). Though there is none of them that can be regarded as the best for every teaching situation. Many teachers base their teaching methods on assumptions because they are not conversant with the latest ways and appropriate trends of teaching English language. English teachers do not seem to realize that the teaching learning situation underwent a paradigm shift after communicative language teaching (CLT) came into existence in the late 1970s (Joy 2011)

- **Decline in the Quality of Teachers**

Teachers determine to a large extent what happens in the classroom. They need to have a solid understanding of the subject, the right skills and abilities of how to present instruction in the right way to make students successful. However, there is a huge decline in the quality of teachers, are not only well trained but also non-professionals. Onu Kaogu (2007) states that the government does not make provisions for the training of professional who are trained to teach it but English Language teaching has become an all comers affair.

- **Teachers Inadequacy to Teach Effectively**

There are so many areas of difficulties facing English language teachers teaching of English Language in Nigerian schools. In the teaching of concord-Agreement of subject and verb, most

teachers hardly teach this area and poses difficulties for students to understand this vital aspect of English grammar. Another challenge to teachers is on teaching comprehension passages to students. Agwu (2005) states that many students who fail the English language in public examinations admit their poor performance in the comprehension section. Teachers only read the passages and then answer the questions that follow.

- **Difficulty of the English Language**

English language is a second language (12) in Nigeria and is surrounded by its own features which makes its learning and teaching very cumbersome. Omigbo & Eyisi (2009) opines that second language is a technical representation of the functional position of that language rather than its position in sequential order of acquisition. The problems which is prominent in phonology, vocabulary, syntax and semantics are mainly as a result of language contact or Mother Tongue Interference.

- **Lack of Textbooks**

Most teachers face the problem of not having enough or current textbooks to teach English Language. This has rendered many teachers to teach outdated language, a child acquires the Mother Tongue, such that it becomes difficult for him to learn and speak a very good English with the interference of the mother tongue.

- **Absence of Modern Instructional Technologies**

The absence of modern instructional technologies such as computers, audio and videotapes in the classrooms has led students to only listen to their teacher's rhetoric and left to conceptualize the message of the lesson according to the capacity of their poor brains. With the application of modern instructional technologies in the classroom, instruction can be more student centered, stress-free and individualized.

- **Government Policies**

Government Policies have equally impeded English language teacher's effective teaching of English in classes. The frequent changes in prescribed textbooks, teaching methodology are always interrupted, altered and complicated.

Way forward

In order to solve these challenges encountered by English language teachers, the paper suggested: Establishment of language laboratories, adequate supply of educational facilities, improved conditions of service, employment of professional teachers, teachers exposure to ICT gadgets.

Establishment of Language laboratories

The establishment of language laboratories will help teacher improve their spoken English by developing proper pronunciation and intonation and invariably reduce fatigue or irritation that teacher face in their jobs.

Training and Retraining of English Language Teachers

Government should establish teacher training institutions with programmes and incentives to encourage would be teachers. There should be regular capacity-building workshops and professional development programmes for English teachers to help teachers to be updated with the ever-changing nature and structure of the English Language.

Provision of Educational Facilities

Federal government in collaboration with other stake holders in the education sector should ensure adequate supply of educational facilities, this facilities help prepare the teacher for skill acquisition for effective performance of their duties.

Employment of Professional Teachers

The government should employ highly professional and efficient teaches in the nation's schools. Those who are qualified to teach English language should be employed.

Conclusion

English language is the language of education in Nigeria, it is used as the medium of instruction from upper primary, secondary and tertiary education. However, the teaching of the English language in Nigeria schools has been suffering challenges and government neglect the choice of teaching methods, teacher's inadequacy to teach effectively, difficulty of the English language, lack of textbooks, government policies are all setbacks to effective teaching of English language. The paper suggested establishment of language laboratories, training and retraining of English language teachers, provision of educational facilities, as the way out of such challenges.

References

- Agwu, sin (2005) Effect of accuracy level and text type on senior secondary student:
- Audu, A.C, Ominike, F and Ogunode N.J (2021) Teaching and Learning of English Language programed in Public Primary Schools in Nigeria: Problems and way forward. *International Journal on Integrated Education*.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education, Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Nwankwo, I (2019) Extent of Teachers classroom Management. Practices for Qualify Teaching and Learning in Secondary School in Ebonyi State Modern European languages and literature (JMEL) Vo.5.
- Obiagbu, I (2016). The challenges of Teaching English Language in Nigeria Journal of
- Obiakor, M.I and malu,s (2020). Problem of teaching and learning of English language as a second language in secondary schools in Anka Local Government Area of Kogi State. *African Journal of education management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship studies-VOII, NOI*
- Odoeye.I.E and Chiteru A-E. (2020). Problems of Teaching and learning English language in Onitsha North LGA, Anabra State. *Cooou Journal of Arts and Humanities*.
- Offorjebe, C (2018), A behavioral viewpoint of childhood trauma and attachment issues: Toward alternative treatment approaches for children with a history of abuse. *Peaceland Journal of Behavioral and consultation Therapy*, 5:56-74
- Onuigbo, S-M and Eyisi,J (2009) English language in Nigeria: Issues and Developments, Calabar Paclen publishers.
- Onukaogu, C.E (2007). Let's appropriate the Pearts in reads that we many live and not barely exist. A lead paper presented at the first mod-term conference of reads association of Nigeria, held 13-18 October at the conference center, University Of Ibadan.
- Rajagopalan, I (2019) concept of Teaching. *Shan lax International, Journal of Education*, VO17, NO2
- Use of syntactic and semantic cues in reading comprehension, EBSU, Journal of society, Ebonyi State University.