

# RE-ENGINEERING LANGUAGE EDUCATION THROUGH THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS.

By

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## **Abstract**

*The increasing rate of globalization has created a need for people in the workforce who can communicate in multiple languages. Communicating in multiple languages gives an edge in a multi-lingual world and creates varied opportunities for development. For this reason, it seems necessary to re-engineer language education through second language study to achieve the set goals and objectives. This paper therefore examines the problems inherent in the study of second language and details the methodology of language teaching which could serve as an indispensable tool for re-engineering language education. The paper also explores the concepts of re-engineering and language education as the main content of the work. It suggests and explicates as well, possible ways through which language education could be re-engineered for the purpose of attainment of the fallen standard.*

Language is the communication of thoughts and feelings through a system of arbitrary signals such as voice sounds, gestures or written symbols. Umera-okeke(2009) defined language as a group of symbols used by a particular race to communicate themselves both verbally and in written forms. Language is obviously a vital tool. Not only is it a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but it forges friendships, cultural ties and economic relationships. To communicate effectively, message is sent with words, gestures or actions which somebody else receives. Communication is therefore a two-way process i.e. with the sender and receiver. So both listening and speaking are important for communication to take place.

Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2010) defined language as a means which human beings have devised for communicating ideas, feelings, emotions, desires etc. through complex vocal or written symbols.

In educational context, language is important for comprehension and making use of knowledge. Therefore, language could be modified to suit a particular situation. It is an extremely important way of interacting with the people around us and it is used to let others know how we feel, what we need and to ask questions. Whether spoken or written, language consists of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.

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A second language or L2 is any language learned after the first language or mother tongue. Some languages often called auxiliary languages are used primarily as second languages or Lingua Franca. In Nigerian context, the second language is English. Second language can provide a base or a foundation for the language requirements in schools, colleges and universities and can equally increase globalization and peoples' chances in the global job markets. However, a second language is a nice sounding development but without the opportunity for utilization, it amounts to a waste, hence a very high demanding need to re-engineer language education through second language learning. A number of studies have shown that when students learn a second language, they have a tendency of outscoring those who are proficient in only a single language on test of non verbal and verbal intelligence.

The importance of learning second language is not merely limited to the ability of communicating with people who speak different languages. Learning a second language results in students' achievement of greater divergent thinking, creativity and cognitive development compared to monolingual students, so language education needs re-engineering for optimum performance.

English as a second language refers to the use or study of English by speakers with different native languages. English is a language which has great reach and influence, it is taught all over the world under different circumstances. Acquiring a second language can be a lifelong process for many. Despite persistent efforts, most learners of a second language will never become fully native-like in it although with practice, considerable fluency can be achieved.

### **The Concept of Re-Engineering**

The word, 're-engineering' obviously makes one think of the existence of problem and possible solution for remedy. Re-engineering is the process of changing strategy and/ or design of a faulty or non working system so as to enable it to improve efficiency.

Offorma (2011) was of the view that the re-engineering concept is one which is aimed at taking education out of the catch-up mode and placing it at the edge of the development process. In a nut shell, re-engineering implies changes of various types in a system from a slight renovation to a total overhaul. The purpose of re-engineering is to improve the system's functionality, usability, security, stability, performance, etc.

### **Language Education**

Anyadiegwu (2008) had it that language education has to do with learning a second language or a foreign language; it is concerned with the factors that affect success or failure in language learning. According to her, language education looks at the teacher's methods, attitudes and motivation of the learners, how individual differences among learners can influence the teaching outcome. Language education reinforces the work of the organization in favour of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingual education. Language education is one of the fundamental aspects of personal development and languages are the main vehicle for educational and teaching activities.

Language education is based on the notion that language is the key vehicle for inculcating knowledge, skills and competence. Because of this, there is the need for teachers to understand the knowledge and mechanism of language. It aims at supporting the action of member states in preparing and implementing language policies designed to promote language teaching. For this, science cannot advance if specialized vocabularies are not developed. It helps to develop a learner's linguistic skills thereby promoting educational growth inside the school as well as social and personal development outside the school. Language education develops learners' communicative competence and guides them in the study of the rules of pronunciation and grammar of a language so as to enable a practical command of that language. (Anyadiegwu, 2008).

### **Overview of the Problems in the Study of Second Language**

- Most of the difficulties that learners face in the study of a second language are a consequence of the degree of interference or difference in the native language and the second language. English syllabic structure for instance, allows for consonant clusters eg street, sprite, English, language etc. but Igbo broadly alternates consonant and vowel sounds therefore Igbo learners often try to force vowels in between consonants.
- Uzoezie (1992) opined that many of the English teachers studied only language related courses as drama, mass communication, language arts and literature in English and therefore cannot handle the English Language well which is a second language in Nigeria. Okobi (1995) noticed that the majority of teachers of English in primary schools in Nigeria have not had sufficient exposure to spoken language. They have defective pronunciation and they have hardly a satisfactory command over English so in order to re-engineer language education, there is need to tackle these pedagogical problems by continuously organizing workshops and seminars for English language teachers in order to get them acquainted with new and modern trends in language teaching.
- The teaching method employed by teachers has a lot to do on the effectiveness of learning English as a second language. Using a teaching method monotonously will hamper learning and hinder creativity among second language learners. The skillful teacher uses as many methods and techniques as possible because there is no single method which could be regarded as best for every teaching situation (Maduewesi, Ezeani and Maduewesi 1991).
- Lack of instructional materials: Since second language is not the learner's mother tongue where the instructional material can be provided locally, instructional materials in a second language context may not be readily available because of financial constraints. In the area of spoken language, language laboratory and electronic rooms are not available for spoken English hence non-proficiency in second language speaking.
- The departure of native speakers who taught the English language in Nigerian schools and the white missionary youth corpsers who came after 1970 in the name of voluntary service led to the L2 problems today. Lambo (1992) remarked that

with the departure of most native speakers, the interest in the English Language learning waned and standard of spoken and written English nose-dived again.

- Second language learners commit errors of syntax and pronunciation resulting from mother tongue interference such as reshaping the grammatical structures inappropriately. This is obviously the result of language interference or transfer. In the area of pronunciation, there is difficulty in articulating and differentiating inter-dental sounds like /θ/ and /ð/. The second language learner being so much used to the phonological and grammatical systems of the native language tends to transfer them to the target language unknowingly. This transfer creates the phenomena of interference.

### **Methods of Language Teaching**

Language teaching has for long been influenced by linguistics. The current trend in language classes is the learner-centered approach. In describing the language teaching methods, emphasis will be on the major among them. These include:

**1. Grammar Translation Method:** This method emphasizes the teaching of second or foreign language grammar through the primary technique of translation from the native language into the target language and vice versa. Features of this method include role memorization, reading aloud, translation of sentence from L2 to L1 and vice versa, etc. This method concentrates on teaching explicit rules which are linked to problem solving situations. The principle underlying this method is that language learning is a process of developing mental discipline.

**2. The Direct Method** In this method, teaching is done entirely in the target language. It is based on the theory that language learning is a natural process. Learning is promoted through straight association of words and structures with objects and actions. Oral activity is promoted and assisted by the use of actions, gestures and pictures. Grammar is taught inductively.

**3. The Audio-Lingual Method** This method is based on aural-oral skill, emphasizing listening and speaking as the primary skills to language learning. This method fosters dependence on mimicry and memorization. Grammatical structures are sequenced and taught inductively. There is abundant use of language laboratories, tapes and visual aids. Dialogues are used as the chief means of presenting the languages.

**4. The Cognitive Code-Learning Method** This method emerged as a reaction against the audio-lingual method that language learning is rule-formation and not habit formation. In this method, book work and individualized instruction are given more attention than cultural work. Thus language learning is characterized by rule governed creativity in which children not only learn linguistic rules but sometimes create them.

### **Possible Ways of Re-Engineering Language Education**

**1. Developing Programs For Language Learning** There is need for flexible language programs in order to accommodate diverse species of learners. The teacher can include programs like “native speakers’ day” where he will employ native speakers who are successful and could be considered role models to come into the school and give presentations on their work, life and culture. Another program for language learning is

organizing “second language speech competition” where celebrity judges from the local community who speak the target language can be brought to judge the competition. Through these programs waned interest in language education could be retrieved and language education is re-engineered.

**2. Involving Technology in Language Teaching** ICT and other aids such as audio and visual materials can speed up the language learning process by offering opportunity for practices outside the classroom. Technology provides for the language teachers a relatively safe environment but also a strongly realistic use of language. The use of technology in language teaching will help facilitate the intercommunication of teachers and students. Communication technologies can facilitate global interactions between language users, providing opportunities for language use and participation in the second language communities.

**3. Changing Pedagogies** Pedagogical approaches to language teaching are constantly changing and evolving. Therefore teachers need to be abreast with recent trends innovation and development which could be either social or technological. This could promote purposeful interaction and extend students’ learning and requires them to use language in ways that move beyond the superficial.

#### **Other Ways of Re-Engineering Language Education Include**

- Communicating the importance of language with passion.
- Organizing language contest.
- Refining the instructional materials.

#### **Conclusion**

The world is becoming a smaller place with so much common global interest that learning a second language has become almost a necessity. Language education as it aims at publicizing periodically a report on our linguistic heritage could be re-engineered with points discussed above in order to meet the millennium set developmental goals. Re-engineering language education through second language learning gives insight or crew to L2 importance as it fosters global interaction. What is left for educators and teachers is to challenge the problems of learning languages and apply workable solution to language problems for optimum performance.

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