
Regenerating English Language Teaching in Nigeria for Self Reliance and National Development

By

EMMANUEL MAURICE EKAH

*Department of English,
College of Education,
Afaha Nsit.*

Abstract

This paper is about the regenerating of the teaching of English Language in secondary schools in Nigeria using the integrated approach and information and communication technology to assist both the teachers and students in the teaching and learning processes respectively. It has been discovered through research that English Language learning in Nigerian secondary schools is ineffective because of lack of language laboratories for oral perfect pronunciation practice that is close to the received pronunciation of the native speakers of the language. Moreover, in terms of the grammatical structure lessons, the methods used are not appropriate because they do not meet with the current trends of the societal needs, so the teachers should adopt the computer based methods of behavioural call, communicative call and integrated call approaches in order to expose the students to practical communicative models, which enhance understanding, competence and effective usage of the language after lessons in the classroom. Emphasis of the regeneration of English Language is on the teaching of items and lexical trends needed in societal development and needs practically.

Nigeria is an English Language speaking country by virtue of having been colonised by England for many years. It is through this colonisation that English Language was introduced from the inception of western education system into the country. This language although a second language to all the tribes languages in Nigeria becomes the major language for the teaching of all the subjects in primary and secondary schools and all the tertiary institutions in the country. Although the National Policy on Education (2005) states clearly that at the primary level, the language of the immediate community should be used in teaching, many teachers and proprietors of public and private schools prefer to use English Language right from nursery one up to primary six.

Therefore, English Language becomes the only language given prominence by both the teachers and the pupils. In actual fact, speaking of English Language by primary school pupils is encouraged by both parents at home and teachings in schools, as it is seen as a symbol of knowledge of western education and indication of class and status of the pupils and parent. It is common to observe television programme displaying the pupils to express their views and knowledge of the societal views using English Language throughout. As it is, what we have to come to terms with is the fact that English Language has come to stay permanently with us, because it is the major language used during ceremonies, official duties, commerce, social interaction and every engagement, be it politics or economics. Of course the basic cause of the prominence given to English in Nigeria is because of the multi-tribal nature of Nigeria. It is on record that these ethnic tribes have about five hundred and thirty languages according to Urua, (2004:116-138). Without the use of English many Nigerians cannot speak with a person from another tribe officially or socially.

Problems of Language of Education in Nigeria

English Language which is used in the formal education system in Nigeria is not given adequate methodology of teaching at various levels of education because of political, economic, social and other reasons. In the first instance there is shortage of well qualified English Language teachers at various levels of education in the country. The worst hit of these levels of education in the dearth of English Language teachers are the primary and secondary schools. It is very common to see non-English Language specialists teaching English Language in primary and secondary schools. These teachers do not have specialist qualification, so they do not know how to teach the phonology and oral English. The first aspect of learning any second language is that of being proficient in the speaking of the language. This entails proper pronunciation of the sounds, words and reading of the sentences with proper stress, rhythm and intonation of the language. English language as we know is stress timed.

What constitutes the problem in pronunciation of English words is because of the effects of the mother tongue on English Language. Aboderin (1996:85) stated that an average Nigerian generally has problems with spoken English because of the differences in phonological systems of English and Nigerian languages. English Language is an intonal language while Nigerian languages are tonal, as such Nigerian speakers of English Language have problems in the realisation of supra-segmental features such as stress, rhythm and intonation. The essence of teaching proper pronunciation to learners entails effective communication, listening and comprehension. It is also a known fact that improper communication leads to misunderstanding of the listener as such no message is relayed. Therefore educational planners and executors of the policies should ensure that people who are qualified as

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English Language teachers should be recruited into the system so that effective teaching and learning of the language should take place.

On the other hand, the method of teaching the language is faulty from the primary and secondary levels. These two levels of education lay the foundation for higher education, vocational skills acquisition and the communicative competence of the learners. It is therefore proper for the teachers to adopt various teaching and learning methods and approaches that are suitable for the study and usage of the language. When observing how the learners speak and write English Language, one observes lack of communicative competence and dearth of appropriate vocabulary for discussion of the target issues, objects and situations by the learners. This actually affects their levels of understanding what is communicated to them equally. When English Language is properly taught using appropriate methods such as eclectic or integrated approaches the learners and users of the language engage in what Yule (1996:12) called discourse analysis. Discourse analysis according to Yule entails ability to understand what the speaker says and also respond effectively to the speakers understanding. In Yule's observation language users and learners are able to understand and interpret what other users or speakers say because they can make sense of what they say, so they are able to discuss the meanings of their expressions.

Approaches for Effective Language Teaching in Secondary Schools

There are various approaches and methods that are suitable for the teaching of English Language as a result of the dynamic nature of the society, learning processes and learners' interest. Every lesson is expected to be learners centred, so teachers of the English Language should assess the class level and ages of the learners in order to provide appropriate methods as may be suitable to the situation. The emphasis on the teaching of English Language to the secondary schools learners is effective practical participation in the lesson through demonstration, listening, speaking, reading and writing. This approach where the four language skills are applied during the lesson makes the learners to be functional in the use of the language. Although it is tagged functional approach, there is room for the application of role play and dramatization where necessary to enable the learners to be conversant and competence in the use of the language after class lesson.

Moreover, the use of eclectic and integrated approaches where all other methods are subsumed through the use of teaching aids that are suitable to each learning situation enables the learners to improve in their learning skills. English Language teaching using these approaches entails practical exercises being given to the learners. Teachers should de-emphasise on the learning of the rules of the language separate from the practical usages of the language in spoken situation. The contents of the lessons should place emphasis on the vocabulary of the language covering all parts

of speech, proper sentences combinatorial possibilities for practical demonstrations during the lesson by the teacher and learners. The learners should be given opportunities to generate their sentences no matter their levels of incompetence, since they can learn better through their mistakes and corrections by the teachers. The importance of this method lies in effective creation of situations for the learners to participate.

Every language is made up of words and words are pronounced and spelled according to the stress and rhythm of the language. For English Language emphasis in the teaching of the subject must be on how to make the learners know, understand and use the words appropriately during general conversations by learners. Using the practical participatory method, teachers should give the learners time to read the textbooks directly so as to be conversant with the words and the style used in the text. What they read should be further explained so as to bring out the semantic meanings as well as synonyms and antonyms of the words. Odo (2007:37) observed that without learning the words as vehicle, no communicative growth of intelligence could occur. This is the only way language can be used to serve the communication purpose it is meant for. Roach (2000:3) stated that English Language should not be adulterated with idiosyncratic, regional and dialectal variants, therefore English Language teachers should be competent and perform beyond regional or tribal variants.

Another major approach necessary for the teaching of English Language is integrated approach. Under this approach the teacher should devise methods suitable for the teaching of language or grammar lessons using literature textbooks. This method is quite effective when considering the fact that at the Junior Secondary level, English Language is taught as English Studies, where both language and literature are combined to form one subject. This entails that literature textbooks can be used in the teaching of vocabulary, sentences, comprehension and summary lessons effectively. It should be observed that all aspects of grammar lessons are incorporated in the writing of prose, drama and poetry literary texts. As it is while teaching the learners literature emphasis should also be made on the sentences, structures, phrases and clauses. Moreover, the teacher should also use the lesson to teach vocabulary so as to enable the learners to understand the meanings of the words and application denotatively and connotatively in sentence structures.

In support of the teaching of literature for communicative purposes Okolie (2007:13) stated that literature has contributed greatly to the education and development of Nigeria in the analysis of dreams, aspirations, vision and focus. The basic importance of integrating the teaching of grammar and literature is further supported by Nwoga (1979:26) and Ekah (2007:9) where they postulate that literary use of language connotes bilingualism as it enhances the transmission of ideas, the discovery of new expressiveness and new models of language applications.

Regenerating English Language for Self Reliance

Regeneration means to inject new and fresh ideas and growth into an already existing thing. To regenerate the teaching of English Language means to bring new models, innovations, approaches and methods into the teaching and learning of English Language for effective usage in communication.

English Language in Nigeria has over the years become an integral part of the Nigerian culture, because of its long standing usage and its importance to the economic development of the country, since it is the only language of education, official administration, business transaction, social interaction and for all general purposes, be it personal, private or official matter. In order to enhance the effective understanding and usage of the language, there is need for regeneration of the language through use of information and communication technology in its teaching. Ekah (2010:81) is of the opinion that the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is necessary for the teaching and learning of English Language. This is a major step towards the regeneration of English Language teaching for the main purpose of communication, self-reliance and poverty eradication. The fact is that using ICT for teaching the students automatically exposes the students to the most effective method of modern communication system which enhances self employment to the students after leaving school.

Since the purpose of any country's education system is to serve the economic, political, scientific and social needs of the society, there is need to put every lesson into practical demonstration using the available materials and learning aids necessary for the lessons. The use of integrated approach helps to dissolve the knowledge of English Language into literature and that of literature into English Language, using ICT. The use of ICT according to Emenanjo (2005:2-7) has brought about an intimidating revolution and explosion in the storage, speed, exchange and dissemination of information on practically all subjects in the education system. Moreover, the internet through the world wide web (www) maintains and distributes multimedia documents which include textbooks in all subjects, pictures of all kinds, audio visuals, graphics, video and advertisements all over the world. The use of this system exposes the learners easily and quickly to areas of needs and relevance to the societal needs, problems and solutions. It provides jobs quickly to those who can operate the systems effectively thereby eliminating poverty and encourages self-reliance economically.

Everywhere throughout Nigeria presently, there are cyber cafes and computer business centres for production of all sorts of documents for the public. All these documents are printed in English Language in most cases as such regeneration of the methods for the teaching of English Language is necessary in order to energise the teaching and learning of the language for self-reliance. The greatest importance and the

basic asset of the internet is in its capacity to allow the users to interact directly with the ICT. The internet is a vital library meant for the learning and acquisition of knowledge, provision of research material, introduction of a more solid base for educational materials, research facts and information through ICT system according to Ekah (2010:80). As can be observed, the internet is an indispensable modern source of research materials for the teaching and learning of English Language and literature. Therefore internet and computers are better used for regeneration of English Language studies in secondary schools. The knowledge so acquired will enable the learners to be self-employed and security against poverty.

Regeneration of English Language Teaching through the Application of ICT System

The application of information and communication technology system is a vital tool for the enhancement of any teaching and learning process, since it controls the major source of materials and information required by learners through out the world. ICT helps the learners to apply the basic education skills practically thereby making them to increase their knowledge, professional skills, self esteem and confidence. Again ICT greatly helps in the propagation and enthronement of English Language as the most widely spoken and written language all over the world. Also, the application of ICT to the teaching of English Language enriches the vocabulary of the learners with ICT related vocabulary such as email, text messaging, online chat, facebook, websites, audio and video conferencing, electronic discourse, twitter, surfing on the internet, browsing, phone hacking, booking and inter-connectivity involving different net works. All these terms and vocabulary enhance the learners of English Language competence in oral and written forms, since they are widely and regularly used in discourse.

Taiwo (2009:15) observed that all the ICT system vocabulary are necessary for present English Language learning by students. Definitely, ICT system usage enhances the acquisition of new vocabulary as well as facilitation of others previously learned by the students, so it helps the students to be proficient in English Language. This assertion is corroborated by Khon (1998:5) who observed that there can be no good learning of English Language without the use of information and communication technology systems. According to Khon the use of ICT facilitates the learners autonomy, communication embedded target language learning, tutoring and open pedagogic integration to language teaching and learning processes. Given the importance of English Language to Nigeria Ekah (2004) postulated that the only available choice towards English Language is to teach and learn the language within the acceptable international code and standard. This therefore implies that the use of ICT in secondary schools will enhance the regeneration of the study of English Language skills such as reading, speaking and writing.

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Another concept of regeneration of English Language in secondary schools is in the use of digital language laboratories for the practical teaching of aural and oral skills. Listening and speaking of English Language requires the use of mechanical devices that produce the language using the Received Pronunciation (RP) oral recorded video system. The system can take care of small and large class while providing the opportunity for each learner to practice effectively using the mechanical device. According to Emenanjo (2005), from practical demonstration experience on the teaching of the phonology of English Language involving the primary, secondary and double articulation, phonation, nasalisation, aspiration, breathy voice, rhyme, stresses, syllabation, tone, intonation, minimum pairs, syllable timing, stress timing, vowel and consonant features, assimilation and deletion length, down step, downdrift, updrift and other aspects are better processed, appreciated, experienced, taught and illustrated by ICT based system in language laboratory than in classrooms alone. The basic issue here is that the phonology, semantics, morphology and syntax of English Language can be better taught and learned practically and interestingly through the use of ICT systems.

Okwudishu (2005:20) stated that the goal of learning English Language as a second language is to help the learner to develop the ability to communicate effectively in the language. To achieve this goal the learner needs to use the language in a variety of real life situations, meaningfully, culturally and accurately in all ramifications, to promote communication relevance and indicate his competence. In order to regenerate the teaching and learning of English Language, the teachers and students should make use of information and communication systems in the language lessons in their schools, for effective understanding of the language. Butler-Pascoe (1997) observed that the use of information and communication technology in schools is increasing as the teachers of English Language become aware of its importance for the teaching and learning process. ICT as Butler-Pascoe postulated provide both independent and collaborative learning environment in which students can learn the new language in integrated manner.

As computers use multi-sensory collection of text, sound, pictures, video, animation and hyper media, it can be used to provide meaningful context to facilitate comprehension and effective communication. Butler-Pascoe further stated that ICT provides students with language experiences as they move through the various stages of language acquisition. It can also be used to demonstrate drills and practice designed to reinforce class instructions. ICT further provides limitless opportunities by online databases for students to have access to authentic facts that allow second language learners of English Language to compare the voice pattern of speech to that of the native speakers of the language. This use of computer based immersion method is very useful and important for the learning of English Language. The computer based

immersion method according to Butler-Pascoe (2005) is built on the theory that language is best mastered when the learners are surrounded by only the native speakers.

However, the immersion method stimulates a second language environment by elements such as placing the students in situation which they find interesting, providing linguistic commentaries, checking and testing students progress. These are the necessary approaches and methods that can aid the regeneration of English Language teaching and learning for self-reliance and development. Shobomehin (2005:56) observes that the development of language determines the effectiveness of communication which in turn determines the development of human and material resources of the society. This implies that the method and instructional materials used in the teaching of English Language definitely affect the understanding and usage of the language by the learners for the purpose of developing appropriate communication skills for societal progress. Warshauer and Healey (1998:57) identified three main stages in computer assisted language learning. These are behaviouristic call, communicative call and integrative call. Behaviouristic call according to Warshauer is characterised by repetitive language drills, referred to as drill and practice. In this model, the computer is viewed as a mechanical tutor which never grows tired and allows the students to work at an individual pace.

The communicative call proposes that computer based activities in language teaching and learning should focus more on using forms or application of the language components, words, phrases, clauses, vocabulary and lexical items rather than studying the forms as traditional grammar method of teaching does. This implicit communicative approach encourages the students to generate their sentences originally rather than inheriting the structural ones given in text books as examples. The integrated model approach to language teaching is characterised by task-based method, where the four language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing are integrated in order to generate communication competence in the language usage, through the use of ICT systems. Braid (1998) in support of the use of ICT for the teaching of English Language was of the opinion that the basic concept that should guide the use of ICT is the individuals right to information access, which is also confirmed by the UNESCO concept of freedom of expression and access to information using new information technologies.

Conclusion

There can be no meaningful progress and development in Nigeria without effective teaching and learning of English Language in the secondary schools. The secondary education system is the gate way to the different tertiary institutions such as the colleges of education, the polytechnics and the universities, as such, there is need to regenerate the teaching of English Language at this level, since it is the only language

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used in teaching all the subjects and courses offered at the tertiary level of education in Nigeria. Moreover, the major modern teaching aid that is recommended for the regeneration of the language teaching techniques is the ICT systems. Therefore, the educational administrators should equip the language class with ICT in order to enhance intensive and extensive study of the language effectively. Lastly, regenerating the teaching of English Language will guarantee the learners job opportunities, self reliance, creativity and contribution to national development, since they will use the skills for greater productivity wherever they work and in whatever they do. This is how the use of computer based teaching method is useful to the learners practically and effectively.

Recommendations

In order to regenerate the teaching and learning of English Language in secondary schools, the following issues must be addressed;

- (i) The teachers of English Language in secondary schools should be encouraged to study. Computer and become literate so as to be able to operate any ICT system in their schools.
- (ii) The government and educational practitioners should provide ICT systems in the schools for the students to practice with and become competent in its usage during the study of English Language.
- (iii) Workshops and seminars should be regularly organized by government for teachers of English Language in order to update their knowledge on the ICT system
- (iv) New approaches and methods of teaching that provided the learners with practical skills during the lessons should be adopted by the teachers as from now on. This can be done using the communicative call method, integrated approach and behavioural drill method
- (v) For the purpose of effective and communication competence, the schools should be provided with language laboratories for oral pronunciation practice.

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