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CHALLENGES OF COACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOL

BY

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Abstract

Although the English language has become the principal language of government, business and commerce, education, mass media, literature, and both internal and external communication, several challenges continue to affect its teaching and learning as a second language in secondary schools. Many students perceive English as a difficult subject to master and consequently demonstrate limited interest and effort in learning it. Similarly, teachers encounter difficulties in meeting the considerable demands associated with the effective teaching and learning of the English language. This study was conducted in selected secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. The target population comprised 200 staff members. Questionnaires were employed as the primary instrument for data collection, while a descriptive survey research design was adopted. A total of 133 respondents, comprising principals, vice-principals (administration), senior staff, and junior staff, participated in the study. The data collected were presented in tables and analysed using simple percentages and frequency distributions.

Keywords: English as a Second Language (ESL), English Language Teaching, Secondary School Education, Teaching and Learning Challenges, Language Acquisition, Teacher Effectiveness, Language Proficiency, Language Education in Nigeria, Educational Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Origin of English language: The English language has developed in northwestern Europe and, following its history, is a Germanic language. Due to its wide geographical spread and the large number of people using it, Indo-European language family is one of the world's most widely spread language family and is the second largest language family. English was first used by various Germanic tribesmen living in parts of what is today Denmark and northern Germany. According to Uchechukwu (2008), the word English has been used originally in relation to the name of a people. English, in the post-Norman Conquest era of 1066, was used to refer to the people of England.

One of the legacies of British colonial administration in South-South Nigeria was the English language. It is now an important tool for communication in government, administration, business, commerce, education, mass media and in other facets of public life. English was first connected with the English people and then it became an important language for people in South South region Nigeria along with other local language like Igbo which was also studied by people in the area (Eneh, 2008). This observation is evidence of the significant role English has occupied in Nigerian society ever since independence from the British colonial rule. It is not only of domestic importance but also offers possibilities for involvement in international affairs. English is so adaptable that it is possible to use it for everyday conversations and communicate important matters (Paul, 2005). The language will help to facilitate the participation of Nigerians in deliberations and decision making in international organisations like the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the World Health Organisation.

English plays a number of functions crucial to national communication and administration in Nigeria. It is also the country's language of communication and official language since there are many ethnic groups in the country that speak different indigenous languages.

With regard to this linguistic diversity, there is a need for a common language to enable communication and lessen barriers between the different communities and states. This was done under the British rule by introducing English as the language. Uchechukwu (2008) noted that English is the language spoken by hundreds of millions of people and has continued to be popular as a second language in the case of people whose first languages are not English. Hence, it has significant status in Nigeria, as a second language. In the civil service, people of diverse linguistic backgrounds communicate in English in government institutions, the armed forces, public administration and judicial system. It is also quite common on social occasions and other methods of interaction with the other person.

Uchechukwu (2008) also pointed out the wide geographical spread and global importance of English. It has gained widespread use as a second language for non-native speakers, further enhancing its role as a global language. English is also flexible; it can be used for various communicative purpose. It can be used in conversations, business, scientific writing, and literary art. The language thus serves as a vehicle for the transmission of scientific information with precision and conveys imaginative and aesthetic ideas through literature.

Nigeria's literary productions have also helped to popularize the English-language literature. Wole Soyinka, Edith Eze, Chinua Achebe and Christopher Okigbo are among the noted Nigerian writers whose works have garnered significant attention off Nigerian shores. Their works show the value of English as a language by which Nigerian experiences, cultural values, and social realities can be shared with the international audience.

In education, English is used as a medium of instruction and as a subject of study and extends from primary to secondary school and on to university. Many institutions of learning in Nigeria offer Education in English with various subjects such as Biology, History, Government and Mathematics among others. Therefore, the learners rely heavily on their knowledge of English for the meanings of academic contents and their ability to gain scientific and other types of knowledge. Language is also present in informal settings, such as at home, where parents and other family members may engage in activities with children using the English language to promote their early language skills. Children acquire the understanding and communication skills in English through frequent exposures and practice.

English is the language that is used as lingua franca, as official language and also as second language (L2) for many Nigerian children, but there is uneven access to and effectiveness of English across the population. A small percentage of Nigerians are fluent and comfortable in using English in their day-to-day communication. In addition, relatively few of those who use the language may be classified as being proficient in Standard English, like the very well-educated native speakers. Anibueze (2000) noted that children with native language would typically develop some grammatical structures of English subconsciously before the age of school entry. Their initial speech may not be Standard English but typically they learn to master a fairly good command of their native language through natural exposure and interaction. However, formal learning places are the main medium of learning English for many Nigerians. Lack of effectiveness in the teaching and learning process, especially in secondary schools, can be a factor in not gaining good levels in the language. The examination experience reported in October 2009 at Community High School, Ekwegbe (C.H.S) showed that 95 per cent of the students that examined failed in English Language. The reason for this was the poor quality of the teaching methods used in the school and the poor quality of the learning methods.

Onyejeli (2008) listed the following 5 basic principles for effective teaching and learning of English as a second language: First, teachers need to be clear about the language skills/content they are going to be teaching in class. Second, teaching should start with listening and speaking skills and then move to reading and writing skills. Thirdly, teachers should motivate learners to understand the significance and purpose of teaching materials, especially when teaching English as a second language. Fourth, students should be encouraged to revise previously learned skills regularly in order to recognize and correct their

mistakes. Fifth, teachers should be patient and provide enough time in the lesson to meet the needs of SLLs.

In fact, the role and presence of English in Nigerian society and educational system have made problems of the use and learning of English in secondary schools an issue of necessity. Some English language teachers might employ approaches and strategies that pose challenges for learners, especially when the approaches are not adequately geared towards the language needs of learners. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the meaning and purpose of teaching as a process of facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and developing learners' abilities so that the teacher can carry out the teaching process well. Instructive practices used should provide opportunities for students to not only learn the concepts of language but also apply the knowledge and skills learned. Teachers may use various methods such as explanation or demonstration, instruction or training, guided learning, and lecturing to help build students' knowledge and skills. While these approaches vary in their focus and the impact on teacher–student relationships, the overall goal should be to help foster meaningful learning. Strategies that require the learner to be an active participant in the learning process can enhance student participation and retention of information. It is important for ELT teachers to learn how to select and use appropriate instructional materials and teaching techniques. Most importantly, good language learning in English depends on practice, engagement and support of the teacher.

Research design

The descriptive research survey design was adopted for the project work as it is a good choice due to its characteristics of finding out the characteristics from a small sample of individuals of the vast population. This design was found adequate for the study since the study was on challenges of coaching English as second language in South- South Nigeria Secondary School.

Sources of data collection

Data were collected from two main sources namely:

(i)Primary source and

(ii)Secondary source

Primary source:

These are the data acquired particularly for the statistical investigation of the study. They might be collected via survey, observation questionnaire or experiment; the questionnaire one has been used by the researcher for this research.

Secondary source:

These are data from textbook Journal handset etc. they arise as byproducts of the same other purposes. Example administration, various other unpublished works and write ups were also used.

Population of the study

The population of the study is the group of persons or cumulative items, things which the researcher is interested in obtaining information about in the study Challenges of Coaching English as a second language in South- South Nigeria Secondary School. The researcher randomly sampled 200 personnel of chosen secondary schools in Etche local government of Rivers State to have a glimpse of the population of the study.

Sample and sampling procedure

Sampling is the people/items that make up the population studied. Because the target population was huge, the researcher employed Taro Yamani method to determine the sample population of the study.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{200}{1+200(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{200}{1+200(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{200}{1+0.5} = \frac{200}{1.5} = 133.$$

Instrument for data collection

Questionnaires were utilised as the main study instrument. This was well regulated. Questionnaire should be filled by respective secretaries anonymously or otherwise. The questionnaire was created in such a way as to generate relevant and sufficient information from the respondents. The primary data was the questionnaires delivered to staff of the two organisations where the respondents ticked the proper

answer to a given question. The questionnaire included of questions in section A and B.

Validation of the research instrument

The questionnaire employed as the research instrument was subjected to face validation to establish its suitability for the study. The instrument was carefully examined and validated by the researcher's supervisor, whose observations, recommendations, and corrections were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire before it was administered to the respondents.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was not considered an end in itself but rather a means of achieving the research objectives. Its purpose was to provide relevant information for understanding the issues under investigation and developing appropriate conclusions, recommendations, and contributions. Accordingly, the collected data required systematic analysis to facilitate meaningful interpretation and generate findings relevant to the study. For this purpose, the analysis focused primarily on absolute numbers, frequencies of responses, and percentages. Answers to the research questions were obtained by comparing the percentage distributions of respondents' answers to the individual statements in the questionnaire relating to each research question.

In this study, frequency refers to the number of times a particular response occurred among the respondents, while percentage represents the proportion of respondents selecting a particular response relative to the total number of responses. The simple percentage method was adopted because it is straightforward, easy to interpret, and facilitates the clear presentation and understanding of the research findings.

The researcher therefore chooses the simple percentage as the method to use.

The formula for percentage is shown as.

% = f/N x 100/1

Where f = frequency of respondents response

N = Total Number of response of the sample

100 = Consistency in the percentage of respondents for each item

Contained in questions

TABLE I

Gender distribution of the respondents

Response		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	77	57.9	57.9	57.9
	Female	56	42.1	42.1	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

From the above table it shows that 57.9% of the respondents were male while 42.1% of the respondents were female.

Question 2

The positions held by respondents

TABLE II

The positions held by respondents

Response		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Principals	37	27.8	27.8	27.8
	Vice principals adm	50	37.6	37.6	65.4
	Senior staff	23	17.3	17.3	82.7
	Junior staff	23	17.3	17.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

The above tables shown that 37 respondents which represents27.8% of the respondents are principals 50 respondents which represents 37.6 % are vice principals administration23 respondents which represents 17.3% of the respondents are senior staff, while 23 respondents which represent 17.3% of the respondents are junior staff

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

There is no problem in the time allotted to the Coaching and learning of English language as a second language

Table III

there is no problem in the time allotted to the Coaching and learning of English language as a second language

Response	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Agreed	40	33.3	6.8
strongly agreed	50	33.3	16.8
Disagreed	26	33.3	-7.3
strongly disagreed	17	33.3	-16.3
Total	133		

Test Statistics

	there is no problem in the time allotted to the Coaching and learning of English language as a second language
Chi-Square	19.331[a]
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 33.3.

Decision rule:

There researcher therefore reject the null hypothesis there is no problem in the time allotted to the Coaching and learning of English language as a second language as the calculated value of 19.331 is greater than the critical value of 7.82

Therefore the alternate hypothesis is accepted there is problem in the time allotted to the Coaching and learning of English language as a second language

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS TWO

Lack of Coaching and learning material does not contribute to the Challenges in the Coaching and learning of English language

Table V

Lack of Coaching and learning material does not contribute to the Challenges in the Coaching and learning of English language

Response	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	73	44.3	28.7
No	33	44.3	-11.3
Undecided	27	44.3	-17.3
Total	133		

Test Statistics

	Lack of Coaching and learning material does not contribute to the Challenges in the Coaching and learning of English language
Chi-Square	28.211[a]
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 44.3.

Decision rule:

There researcher therefore reject the null hypothesis that stateLack of Coaching and learning material does not contribute to the Challenges in the Coaching and learning of English languageas the calculated value of 28.211 is greater than the critical value of 5.99

Therefore the alternate hypothesis is accepted that state Lack of Coaching and learning material contribute to the Challenges in the Coaching and learning of English language.

Conclusion

Public secondary schools in South-South Nigeria continue to face considerable challenges in providing diverse and effective approaches to the teaching and learning of English as a second language. Consequently, many secondary school students develop inadequate foundations in English language proficiency. This situation places students who progress from secondary school to university at an

academic disadvantage, largely because of their limited exposure to effective language instruction and insufficient preparation at the foundational level. Against this background, the primary objective of this study was to investigate the factors responsible for the challenges associated with the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools in South-South Nigeria.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that

a. English learners must be extensive readers.

b. Teachers must reward efforts of learners so as to motivate their struggle to acquire the language skills.

c. Government as a matter of priority should make available necessary facilities that will empower Coaching and learning of English.

d. Parents should arouse the interest of their wards by providing needed materials and conducive learning and studying environment at homes.

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