

CHALLENGES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: DIMENSION IN ERROR AND CONTRASTIVE ANALYSES.

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the explosive growth in the global use of English, researchers in the field have failed to establish a synergistic channel that can propel its teaching cum learning forward well into the 21 st century. The use of English in Nigeria cut across all fronts. It is in fact the pivot of the educational field given that the means of interaction (instruction and communication) in this field is English. Language teaching and learning is faced with myriads of challenges. This paper is of the view that though the challenges in the teaching of English as a second language are multifaceted; the teacher is faced with challenges arising from the actual teaching process. It is suggested that effective teaching strategies cum methods which encompasses modern approaches to learning, error and contrastive analysis be employed to help remedy weaknesses in the learning process.

Keywords-Challenges, Teaching, Learning, Second Language, Century, Dimension, Error, Contrastive Analysis.

Introduction:

English language has become the lingua franca in many countries of the world. English language teaching is a means of propagating not only the English language, but also the globalization that the language symbolizes (Igawa, 2010). Its use as a second language is pervasive. English as the lingua franca is the dominant international language in communication, science, business, aviation, entertainment, radio and diplomacy, David (2004). Its knowledge is a requirement in a number of fields, occupations, and professions. It is the language of instruction in schools at all levels in Nigeria and importantly in computer and medicine. English language as a world language has reach

Unprecedented heights of global importance (Trudgill 2002; Seidlhofer 2011; Jenkins 2014) **Challenges of English language teaching/learning in Nigeria**

In his work, (Soukhanov, 1994, in Ntshangase, 2011, p.12) contends that "language is a lens turned towards the culture of those who speak it." It is, therefore, not surprising for both English second language teachers cum learners to display forms, which on the surface look like English, but underlying, they have intrinsic meanings of their own which reflect the import of their culture and values to their different content subjects when instructed in English. If English second language teachers and learners have to retain their vitality and their capabilities, there have to be continual adjustments regarding the methods and medium of instruction,

To mitigating the perceived challenges of teaching and learning English language in the 21st century, the 21st-century classroom, teachers' have multiple roles and responsibilities as facilitators of students learning and creators of a productive classroom environment in which students can develop the skills they will need for the 21st-century workforce. There is urgent need to embrace changing roles and increasing responsibilities of teachers. Teaching need to integrate content-based, project-based approaches, and changes in classrooms such as co teaching, team-teaching, and collaboration with other teachers have shown advantages. These innovative approaches are providing educators with excellent resources and opportunities. Teachers need to embrace new ideas to effectively teach in our ever-changing societies. This also prepares teachers to be reflective practitioners and constructive social agents in the world of globalizing the English language (Sun, 2014).

Also, language teachers need to apply the teach and learn in a 21st-Century Context. There are rapid changes in the skill set needed to compete in today's workforce-technology, globalization, workplace demographics, personal competence, risk, and responsibility headline these changes. Individual performance is evaluated on leadership ability, working collaboratively with others, and problem-solving skills.

Integration of information technology into English language teaching is another strategy to mitigate challenges of teaching / learning English language, Sun,(2014). In his view, rapid developments in technology and the use of cell phones and multimedia devices have opened endless possibilities for English teachers to access information. The Internet, YouTube, Web.2.0, and e-books

have helped teachers prepare lessons and classroom activities. With ready-made materials and with the stroke of a key, it is possible to bring real life into the classroom. Appropriate integration of technology in the classroom encourages students to use language in different ways and brings real-world issues into the classroom.

Research in the recent past indicates the need to expand the dimension of communicative competence. By expanding framework of communicative competence, scholars have introduced new ways of looking at second language learning as “multi-competence” (Cook, 2012). Other researchers (Byram, 1997, 2009; Corbett, 2003; Kohn, 2013) focused on the importance of intercultural communicative competence. The implication here is that when teaching intercultural communicative competence, teachers need to teach both local and international cultures. The goal is to produce effective language users to use English as a global Lingua Franca, not just learners who mimic the “inner-circle” countries’ language and culture.

Embracing changes in the goals of teaching and learning the language is one of the ways to mitigate the perceived challenges of English language teaching. With the changing perspectives on English language teaching, the goals will not just focus on importance of developing English speakers as fully competent language users, but make them critical thinkers, constructive social change agents and to foster a sense of social responsibility in students.

Implementation of standards-based assessment programs by applying macro strategies to enhance assessment is yet another mitigating measure that ensures success based on student learning rather than on compliance with rules. (Darling-Hammond, Hightower, Husbands, LaFors, and Young, 2002) in their research advocated that the reform of assessment of student learning needs “top-down support for bottom-up reform.” Once this happens, educators will be empowered to apply macro strategies to enhance assessment. The assessment tools should be designed to engage students in active learning and demonstrate their skills in real-world performance-based projects.

Trilling and Fadel (2009) in their work, the 21st Century Skills, places at the centre of teaching / learning of English language the 7C skills of critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, innovation, collaboration, teamwork and learning self reliance.

Outside the 21st century the skills, another focus of teaching cum learning English language is eclecticism (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006; Brown, 2007;

Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Mellow, 2002). This is the type of teaching that involves the use of a variety of language learning activities as Common Core, “glocal” needs, standards, pathways, flipped classes, project-based learning, and integration of digital literacy in language teaching and learning.

Dimensions in Error and Contrastive Analyses (data analyses)

Error analysis is used to identify, classify, and systematically interpret the unacceptable forms produced by some learners of a foreign language (L2A) in language teaching and learning. Akinbode (2006) have classified errors in second language learning into two. They are global and local. According to him, the former impairs intelligibility of a message, while the latter does not significantly affect the reception of the intended message. A caution by (Richard 1974, in Igbinnasa and Leo-Aisosa 2010) suggests that error should not be viewed as problems to be overcome but an evitable feature of L2A learning process that should be used to advantage by the teachers. Error analysis is a necessary assessment tool that could be employed to determine the level of competence achieved by learners. It is a teacher’s tool. It is contrasted with mistakes which are performance limitations that all learners including L1 (mother tongue or native speakers) could make. They suggested that strategies, principles and procedures provided by it help to show teachers the flaws in the students’ learning strategy. This is the strategic import of error analysis and contrastive analysis in meditating a more effective teaching-learning process.

Opara (1999) asserts that errors have a peculiar, sneaky, behaviour, such that no matter the number of times a piece of work is read through, one cannot rule out the possibility of mistakes stealthily surviving the revision and proof of reading sessions. This suggests that we cannot but willingly or unwillingly make errors. Mistakes are recognized, they are lapses and slips which the learners themselves could correct. While it becomes an error when it could not be corrected by the learners and therefore exposes the true state of the learners’ knowledge. This is why it can help mitigate the challenges in second language learning. A process known as error treatment in language teaching or from teaching methodology can then be employed. This requires that a teacher provides drills to correct the learners until the learners have a mastery of it. Even when the error (deviation) is phonological, semantic and grammatical or skill based. Applying error analysis requires that a teacher’s competence in determining what kind of error a learner is making relates to learner production (speaking and writing). Contrastive

analysis according to Brown, (2000) is a systematic study of two languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities. As a result, the teacher can understand that while some features of target languages are more difficult to acquire than others. This is a comparison between the first and second language in order to see where they are like or differ. It takes cognizance of how a learner acquires a second language and assumes that the L2 learners would tend to transfer to their L2, utterances of the formal features of their L1. It is on the other hand, like a method of error analysis. It concerns itself with the role of first language in a second language teaching.

Contrastive analysis as a means of mitigating the challenges of classroom learning teaching processes comes with some features that make it differ from error analysis. Contrastive analysis viewed learners' errors from background of super imposition of structures of first language on the other L2. (inter lingua). While error analysis viewed learners errors from within the second language acquired (intra lingua). Contrastive analysis could thus be used to predict learners errors (prognostic) though proper knowledge of the two language structures (L1 and L2) while error analysis is used to discover areas of errors (diagnostic) in the acquired language through knowledge of the types of errors.

Conclusion and recommendation

The challenges in the teaching of English as a second are multifaceted especially in the developing English speaking countries. The major threat comes from lack of professionalism in ESL teaching using the Nigerian situation by way of illustration. No facet should be undermined considering the role of English as a communication tool in education, business, and governance and therefore, its contribution to our national development. A holistic approach to mitigating these challenges involve:

- Use of modern teaching methods and approaches in classroom teaching and learning processes to enhance the academic achievement of learners.
- Employing techniques in data analysis and contrastive analysis becomes an added impetus to the teaching process as this help to improve students' language skills of reading, listening, and speaking.
- Provision of adequate ICT based facilities for all levels of education and
- Utilization of skilled and motivated English teachers.

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