

EXAMINING THE CHALLENGES IN THE TEACHING OF USE OF ENGLISH IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

ONOJA E. U.

Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo
School of General Studies Education
Department of Language and Communication Education
Email: emmanuelonoja100@gmail.com
08137193792

Abstract

Teaching English as a foundation course in our tertiary institutions can be cumbersome and tasking. The use of English is a core course taught in almost all tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The use of English refers to the conventional English language programme taught to new entrants in tertiary institutions. However, the course is bedecked with many challenges. This paper therefore examined these challenges by looking at English and the concept of global language, challenges of globalization, problems faced in teaching the use of English and proffers appropriate solutions to the challenges.

Key words: Use of English, Challenges, Teaching, Globalizing and Inclusive Education.

Introduction

With the increasing status of English in this period of globalization, English has become an important tool without which it is impossible to open the door of many opportunities that are available to us. The dominant position of the English language, its features and lubricants as a globalization technology in the new world order and the domineering position of the English language speak of its global indispensability. To participate in the global world, nations, institutions, groups and individuals have to prove that they qualify. The competence in the English language, and other criteria like requisite training and Information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, are somewhat linked to English proficiency. It is important to be proficient in it in order to meet up with the demands it requires to achieve one's aims in life. English is an international language. It is widely used in all the countries of the world. In fact, to make the best use of globalization, one has to be able to speak English.

English is thus becoming the world's lingua franca, despite spirited fight by other international languages and efforts being made to preserve local languages, and there are local

languages that impede the mastery of English language. The most pressing issue in our education system is to correct the falling standard of the language by teaching it adequately in schools. This is because low – level English proficiency in Nigeria is depriving us access to knowledge in hard and digital forms, even as globalization poses challenges to the teaching of use of English. English proficiency is important in a knowledge – based world because English is the major language of science and technology, which drive development Yen (2008). Graddol (2000) opines that English is the language of trade and computer and is increasingly a necessity for job placements.

For some nations, English is their first and native language while some have it as their second and official language. In Nigeria, for example, it serves as a second and official language. As an official language, it is used as language of commerce, law, mass media, administration, medium of instruction in schools etc. The use of English programme has been established in our tertiary institutions so as to improve the status of the language in the country.

English is now the world’s most important language and it is estimated to be spoken by one in five of the world’s population. It is the language of international commerce, popular culture, and the internet and holds an unassailable position among the world’s major languages not in terms of the number of speakers but in terms of domain of use and international spread.

English is spoken not only as a first language in the United Kingdom, the United State of America, Australia and New Zealand, Canada, but also by over one million people in Trinidad and Tobago, over three million in the Irish Republic, over two million in Jamaica etc (Crystal, 1997; Adetugbo, 2000:4). Though, English is seen as a global language, the fact remains that some factors are responsible for this growth and spread of English. It is enumerated in the National Teachers’ Institute English language that some of the factors responsible for the growth of English include: Economic motivation, political motivation, the slave trade and Science and Technology (NTI, 2000).

English and the Concept of the Global Language

English now assumes the position of the global language. Globalization is the opening up of various parts of the world to external influence. It is the breaking down of natural boundaries to influence commerce, technology, culture, finance and language. The concept has to do with interdependence and increasing interaction among people of diverse background and languages. Globalization exposes one to new ideas and products and new ways of doing things in the

international scene. Globalization may also mean the transformation of the relationship among states and institutions, the universalization of certain practices, the global restructuring of the recent decade since the dissolution of the Soviet Union or indeed the structure of the liberal capitalist relations (Adetugbo, 2006). He further asserts that while one might be justified in claiming that the term “globalization” started with the establishment of the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations Organization, the word was late in coming to the English language.

The Challenges of Globalization

Globalization has penetrated even the remote parts of the world. Tierney (2004) defines it as ‘a social process where the nation - state as a unit of economic, political, and cultural analysis becomes less important, or even irrelevant, and in its place are borderless worldwide social relations’. He notes that new markets bypass national boundaries, technology frees data and information from being tied to geography or time and globalization engenders intermingling of cultures and “deterritorialisation becomes an effect and a stimulus of globalization” (Tierney, 2004).

In the union between English and globalization, globalization promotes the learning of English, and English proficiency increases the features of globalization e.g. Labour mobility. Yen (2008) observes that the effect of globalization such as access to better jobs has become the driving force for the increased and intensified learning of English, a situation engendering educational inequality – those who can afford the kind of language skills demanded look beyond the public education system for the English language teaching that is likely to meet desired level of proficiency (Tierney, 2004; Bruton, 2009). English is important in the growth and spread of business worldwide. Qualified workforce plus English – proficiency are favoured over those without English by some companies. Nigeria seems to be low on both English – proficiency and in attracting multinational corporations to the country interactions and operations in a networked world are knowledge – based and are facilitated by ICT and communication in English. Additionally, language is important to the acquisition of ICT skills since the technology is denominated in the English language. Communication on the internet is mainly in English, making English – proficiency relevant in accessing information and data personal development and advancement and for normal living. Thus, lack of language of communication disempowers the less privileged (Charles, 2006).

The English proficiency that can enable one to participate in a globalized world is learnt basically in formal settings and by implication, formal education provides the setting for the learning of English, which in many cases is also the medium for gaining knowledge for the enhancement of the quality of life. According to Lazero and Medalla (2004), “English in this era of globalization will increase the capacity of people to communicate and exchange ideas and goods across borders. The English language skill has become a necessity for establishing linkages with the rest of the world in international trade, economic development and even in the use of new technology”. With much attention paid to the teaching of English, Nigeria needs to get on top of language learning inadequacies in the education system and also look into expanding English programme to cater adequately for socio – cultural interaction across borders with and beyond Nigeria for language learners to become language users able to cope with the speed of development of events in the world.

The concept of Inclusive Education

The term inclusive education has become synonymous with Special Education but a review of the world situation suggests that the definition of inclusive education must be broadened to address not only the needs of those who fall within the different classifications of children with special educational needs but also those who are disenfranchised for any reason. Osuorji, (2011) defines Inclusive education as a system whereby children with special needs receive their education at a school in mainstream classes. Inclusive education is a child-focused approach to education that takes into account children’s abilities, potentials and diverse needs. Inclusive education programmes must be addressed to meet the special educational needs of children with disabilities in the regular classroom settings. This approach to education calls for all stakeholders to develop creative strategies that cater for the needs of children with special needs.

Who Then Are Special Needs Children?

The National Policy on Education (2004) refers to handicapped (people with special needs) as those who are unable to cope with normal school classroom organization and methods in the sense that such individuals have learning difficulties. The policy statement on education further attempts to identify various handicapping conditions such as, visually impaired, hearing impaired, mentally retarded, learning disabled, gifted and talented, emotionally disturbed, socially maladjusted, physically handicapped to mention a few. Again, children with special needs are categories of people that have problem of coping with learning in a normal class. They

are exceptional children who for a variety of reasons are not able to function at the level of majority in the society.

Inclusive education is holistic to teaching and learning. For inclusive education to be successful and sustainable, it must be addressed by all stakeholders. Garuba, (2010) listed stakeholders which includes: Federal Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education Commission, States Ministry of education, States Universal Basic Education Board, Special Educators, the Schools, the Universities, the Communities, the Parents, the children with special needs, The relevant NGOs, the professional bodies. He further stated that each of the stakeholders has specific roles to play in ensuring that inclusion becomes real and is implemented to success.

Problems of Teaching the Use of English in inclusive Education

In actual sense, English language as a course of study is faced with many challenges in its teaching and learning. Some of these problems are:

Problems Inherent in English Language Itself

This is a major challenge in the teaching and learning of English generally. In Nigeria, English is a second language (L2) and has its own features or characteristics which make its learning and teaching very difficult. Second language is a technical representation of the functional position of that language rather than its position in sequential order of acquisition (Onuigbo & Eyisi, 2009).

The problems include interference which comes as a result of language contact or Mother Tongue interference. This problem is obvious in phonology, vocabulary, syntax and semantics. This is one of the reasons why students who do not have English as the major course shy away from the use of English.

Lack of Experts in the Course

The use of English is becoming an aspect of English language and as such qualified teachers should be allowed to handle it. The issue of non – graduates of English teaching the use of English is a great problem. Experts should be trained in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to handle the course. There should be a reorganization of the course and the teachers. The learner's need for the English language should be the ultimate. The learners should be taught to the extent that they should be familiar with the registers of different fields and disciplines. The learners are not adequately trained and equipped to meet their job challenges and this has caused

a lot of problems in many organizations as some professionals cry over lack of communicative competence among our graduates.

Also some lecturers are not competent enough to handle the use of English. They need to be taught certain topics before they can go to teach students. Moreover, some are neither ready to invest in the purchase of books and journals nor in conference attendance. Rather, they prefer to cover up the deficiencies, they encourage fraudulent activities among students in the hope of presenting excellent performances where none exists.

Lack of Electronic Teachings

The problem of electronic teaching is one of the major challenges that the use of English in Nigerian tertiary institutions face. With the advent of computer, much emphasis is on the use of computer in educational institutions. With the importance of computer in teaching, the use of English is not left out, since the use of English has been learner – centered, it can lead to effective teaching and learning because teachers will be in a position to recognize and pay attention to differences in learners. Also students stand the chance of receiving accurate information, access information and obtain immediate feedback. The teacher can also monitor the student's progress. The use of computer though a teaching – learning facility is still a dream. Computers are still out of reach of many students in the use of English course.

Lack of textbooks

Lack of textbooks has compounded the problem of teaching and learning of use of English in all tertiary institutions. Where the textbooks are available they are out dated. Most students depend on lecture notes only because of lack of relevant textbooks. Many of them find it difficult to take lecture notes. Their lecture notes are full of spelling and grammatical errors which are indicative of the poor language background of the students (Ayodele, 2004).

Problem of Large Classes

The use of English class is generally overpopulated. It is common to have a class of about two to three hundred students. Some of these students may never get sitting space inside the classroom throughout the course duration let alone paying adequate attention to the lecturer. In such a situation, it is a near impossibility to attend individually to students while teaching or afterwards. Yet language teaching requires drills through both oral and written exercises. The situation does not give the teacher the opportunity to attend to the students individually. Also

when written work is given, it is always a difficult task to mark all and call each student to explain where they went wrong.

Lack of Facilities

Many of our tertiary institutions lack large halls that can accommodate the large number of students. In places where it exists, functional effective public address systems are lacking. Teaching them becomes an onerous and rather frustrating task to the lecturer who shouts himself hoarse in the bid to communicate. The result is that he will be limited to the action zone of the class. Meanwhile students at the bad region may get bored straining their ears. It is equally a futile exercise dictating or writing on the chalk board where there are no projectors or screens. Besides all these, it is a myth to hear of students of the use of English ever being exposed to language laboratories.

Time Factor

The non – communicative competence of our undergraduates necessitates the declaration of state of emergency in that regard. Sadly, the use of English is a mere one year course in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) has been more realistic about this in that its curriculum provides for the use of English and communication skills all through the duration of National Diploma and Higher Diploma programmes. However, in teaching the course, there are many loop – holes in the students’ response which takes a long time to fill up. Therefore, the two hour credit load allotted per semester is grossly inadequate, yet NBTE’s rigidity in enforcing compliance with the curriculum almost makes it impossible to create extra time. With all these problems, one can unequivocally conclude that lectures are neither student nor lecturer – friendly.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that teachers need to do a lot for themselves in any effort to improve the teaching of the use of English in Nigeria. Equally, individual efforts will yield little where the system has a tendency to frustrate honest efforts. It is imperative that the government makes its aims, objectives, goals and policies in line with world trends. In addition, teachers should be motivated to appreciate the extra effort they are being asked to make. The environment should be friendly and words should be backed up with actions that have taken all factors into consideration.

We know that globalization is an integrating process and English is a tool to accessing knowledge and job placements worldwide, and as such it will be a disadvantage if other countries learning English as a foreign language should overtake Nigeria in the world situation when English is not just a second language, an official language but also the unifying language and a language of integration as a result of the multi – lingual nature of the country.

Recommendations

The classroom is not adequate for learning English even though it is the only point most Nigeria and students have access to learning the language. The students should be encouraged to indulge in analyzing the English spoken in their environment in order to benefit from good models and avoid the mistakes in poor ones and also explore areas available outside the classrooms for studying English.

The students should be able to overcome prevalent unsavoury English usages within Nigeria. The teacher has to sieve through materials as well as be able to determine sources of errors in learners' production.

The students should be empowered to be responsible for their own learning and also the teachers should be empowered also to be able to reflect on practice, discover what learners need to be able to develop, try out innovative approaches to do things.

In addition, knowing the effects of electronic teaching especially the use of computer in the teaching – learning process, it is suggested that adequate facilities, computer inclusive be supplied to all tertiary institutions. This will help the teaching of all the use of English courses especially in an inclusive education. The teachers and the students should make use of web resources. Several teacher and learner resources are abound on the internet which can make tremendous impact on use of English if exploited. There is need for computer literacy and establishment of a lively website for Nigerian teachers. An ongoing radio programme for teachers is good initiatives that can help teachers improve professionally, especially if care is taken not to speak above the heads. Teachers should be encouraged to use computers and internet in ways conducive to our unique environment. It will expose and link them to materials and resources available on the web.

References

- Adetugbo, A. (2003). The language demands of globalization in Nigeria. A paper presented at Nigerian Millennium sociolinguistic conference, Lagos.
- Ayodele, B. O. (2004). National Language Policy in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects in Higher Education. *Journal of Educational Development*, 5, 85-91.
- Baumann, J. F; Hoffman, J.U; Duffy – Hester, A. M; & Moonro, J. (2000). The First R yesterday: U. S. Elementary Reading Practices Reported By Teachers And Administrators. RRQ 35 No.3, September.
- Bruton, A. & Halliday, A. (2009). ELT *Journal* /IATEFL debate: north, south, east or west, good language teaching is always the best. In B. Beaven, (ed.) IATEFL 2008 Exeter Conference Selections (pp. 103 – 105). Canterbury: IATEFL
- Charles, M. (2007). *Language matters in global communication*: article based on ORA lecture, October 2006. *The Journal of Business Communication*, 44 (3), 260 – 282.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Federal Ministry of Education (2000). English Language National Teachers Institute.
- Graddol, D. (2000). *The future of English?* London: British Council.
- Kelly, T. (2000). General globalization: Creating market opportunities for people worldwide [fill:/a://from%20lingua%20to%20.Global%20 English htm](http://www.from%20lingua%20to%20Global%20English.htm).
- Lazero, D. C. & Medalla, E. M (2004). English as the language of trade, finance and technology in APEC: An East Asia perspective, Philippine. *Journal of Development*, 31(2), 277 – 300.
- Leiper, J. (1998). English: A Global language? (Online article) Available: <http://www.writer's block/feature/1998/htm>.
- Leliot, P. (2000). Promise of access and inclusion: Online education in Africa. *Journal of Philosophy of education*.
- Onuigbo, S. M.; & Eyisi, J. (2009). *English Language in Nigeria: Issues and Developments*. Calabar: Paclen Publishers.
- Power, C. (2005). “Not the Queen’s English”, Newsweek International (Online) Available: <http://www.Newsweek internationaledition/MSNBC.Com/htm>.

Yen, C. (2008). Globalisation and English language teaching and learning: challenges and trends. A paper delivered at the International conference on English education held April 26 -27, 2008 at Shih Chien University Taipei, Taiwan R.O.C. Retrieved June 24, 2009 from <http://afl.usc.edu.tw/Conference%20files/14.%>