

**THE PLACE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN POVERTY  
REDUCTION IN THE MIDST OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA****REBECCA SUNDAY MWANTI**General Studies Education Department,  
Federal College of Education, Pankshin.Email: [mwantirebecca@gmail.com](mailto:mwantirebecca@gmail.com)

Phone No: 08036101168

**Abstract**

*The paper examines the place or the role that the English Language plays in Nigeria especially in education of the populace which invariably leads to national economic growth and development. The paper also explains that English Language plays a very significant role in the nation economic development thereby reducing poverty rate in Nigeria. The paper further identifies some challenges that affect effective teaching and learning of English Language in Nigeria which include insecurity, natural disasters, industrial strikes and many others that impact negatively on teaching and learning of English Language in Nigeria. The paper therefore recommends that government should use law enforcement agents to not only secure the communities but also engage the various ethnic communities more often in peace building dialogue as well as improve learning infrastructures especially in the rural areas to motivate both teachers and learners to enroll and also sustain enrollment in schools among others.*

**Keywords:** English Language, Teaching, Learning, Poverty and Insecurity**Introduction**

Nigeria is today faced with a serious challenge of insecurity; a problem which has dominated the daily news on both the print and electronic media. Insecurity is an issue which has been on the mind of a majority of the citizens the reason being that insecurity has become a clog in the wheel of progress of the whole country. Insecurity has caused untold hardship on the people such that millions of people have become impoverished since insecurity has robbed most people of their lively-hood. Many people have been displaced from their homes and are reduced to destitute because of insecurity. The situation has become so persistent for almost two decades since the emergence of Boko-Haram in 2013.

Insecurity is the absence of security and the inability to defend or protect oneself from a common danger. Beland (2005), in David etal (2022) states that insecurity is the state of fear or

anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. The Business insider (2020) lists the ten biggest problems in the world to include climate change, large scale conflicts and wars, religious conflicts; poverty, government accountability; transparency and corruption, safety, security and wellbeing.

This paper pays particular attention to insecurity as a cause of poverty and how English Language teaching and learning can bring about poverty reduction in this crisis situation.

### **Insecurity and Nigeria Education System**

Statistics have shown that since the emergence of Boko haram, the educational system in Nigeria has been in the forefront of attacks over the past decade. The Daily Trust News Paper of Jun, 2022 amply describes this situation as it states that insecurity is a threat to education in Nigeria. It further explains that insecurity is crippling Nigeria's education system. In most parts of the country, schooling comes with its fair share of challenges, but when students risk losing their freedom or lives at school, our tomorrow is under attack. It is on record that 800 secondary and university students have been kidnapped in coordinated attack by terrorists and bandits in the last two years they have become more frequent than in 2014 when 276 girls were abducted from Government Girls' Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State. This situation is drastically eating up the educational sector to the extent that students, teachers and government are being frustrated leading to educational decay.

Similarly, the Business day of July 29, 2022 also reports that as Nigeria's security situation has taken a turn for the worse, a growing number of schools especially in parts of Northern Nigeria are being forced to shut down and many citizens are moving from one place to another and out of the country. A new dimension is setting in as government at both state and Federal levels are ordering school closures due to security concern. Some schools in Abuja the Federal Capital and seat of government and Nassarawa State were directed to close schools (both public and private) over threats of attack by terrorists. The implication of these threats is that school closure makes it easy for the children to drop out of school or be withdrawn by their parents for the safety of their children. Research puts the number of out of school children at about 20 million (UNICEF/UNESCO2022). The report explains that one in every five children in Nigeria is out of school even though primary education is officially free and compulsory and that Nigeria accounts for the highest rate of out of school children.

The insecurity situation has become like a dreaded disease that has ravaged the whole of Nigeria such that over 2.9 million people in Nigeria's Northeast and hundreds too in other parts of Nigeria have been displaced from their homes over the twelve years since the arm conflict of Boko Haram began in Nigeria (Demographics 2021 21 Dec.) Nigeria is said to have the third highest number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in 2020. The implication of this is that schools have been closed in these areas thereby negatively affecting the education of the children and without education, the development of the country will be retarded. Ojo (2019) supports this as he states that advanced countries such as America, Japan, China and other countries around the world provide sound and proper education for their citizens and that contributes to the development of their economies which in turn made them self-reliant. A relevant and meaningful education can raise the productivity of the Nigerian population in rural and urban agricultural work. It can create new employment opportunities if during the schooling students are trained in some useful vocations. Their living standards will rise thereby improving their general economic growth, development as well as bring about improvement in their health and nutrition which in turn will bring about poverty reduction.

Education is also described as an instrument used for empowering people with knowledge and skills which provide them with access to productive empowerment for development (Planning Commission, 2013). It is the engine room for development of any nation from the etymological point to contraction point; Education plays a key role as an agent of social change as it equips all its beneficiaries with the necessary tools such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, cultural values, language and desires and demand of their society (Buseri in Mba, 2022).

Insecurity is a great hindrance to education and poverty reduction. The Daily Time Newspaper of 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 in a bold caption echoes the fact that security and education are key to poverty reduction as all the presidential candidates of the three key political parties; LP, PDP and NNPP have unanimously agreed at the town hall meeting that through quality education, Nigeria's poverty level can be reduced while on the other hand the leadership of 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 observes that Nigeria risks losing out on literate skilled work force as the scourge of out of school children worsens. This claim is supported by the following statistical figures;

- 6-11 is the age range of out of school children in Nigeria
- Nigeria Pakistan India have the highest number of out of school children

- Almost 60% of girls in the core northern states are out of school
- 85% of jobs that will exist in 2030 have not yet been.
- An estimated 35% of children who attend primary school in Nigeria do not attend secondary school. 10% of Nigeria's 216 million people are headed for a life time of illiteracy and Factors responsible for these alarming figures include - the neglect of public schools at all levels by government; they are mostly in deplorable state and private schools are way out of the reach of average Nigeria's. They cannot afford it. Again a simple walk to school can be extremely unsafe or intimidating for some children. Many parents are reluctant to send their children particularly the girls to school for the fear of their being harassed, exploited or sexually abused. Many children in remote communities have to make unimaginable and dangerous journeys every day to access education. Some trek into the mountains or across broken bridges to be at school on time. For children living in rural poverty stricken areas there is no quick solution and often it is easier to quit school. Again with insecurity and kidnaping of school children, most parents especially in the north of Nigeria are not disposed to sending their children to school.

The implication of the discussion above is that there is no way that these children can effectively contribute to national development because they have not had the opportunity to develop their innate capacity to the extent that they can be useful to themselves, their families or communities and the nation.

### **English Language and Education in Nigeria**

The English Language plays a very significant role in the educational development of Nigeria as well as the economic development. English language is the language of instruction at all levels of education in Nigeria. The fact that it is the language that is widely used in the propagation of education in Nigeria makes it the most important function of English in Nigeria. The National policy on Education (2004) states that the medium instruction is the language of the immediate environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall be progressively used as a medium of instruction and the language of the immediate environment and French shall be taught as a subject. This has been the status of English Language in the Nigerian educational system before and after independence. English is also used for educational evaluation. This means that all subjects apart from the Nigerian and foreign languages are examined in the English. It is an undeniable fact

that no nation can rise above its education. This is because without education, a nation cannot get the needed manpower for material advancement and enlightenment of the citizenry.

The trained engineers, teachers, medical doctors, lawyers etc. are all the products of education, this explains why scholars argue also that the quality of a nation's education determines the level of its national development and Nigeria's education is a product of the English Language. Supporting this assertion, Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) in Garridau and Jindem (2012) comment that there is a close relation between language competence and educational attainment. This means that language success is generally educational success and by implication the quality of education of a nation is a key factor in national development. English, therefore, becomes indispensable in educational attainment because it is taught as a subject in the curriculum in all levels of education and it is also available as the language of instruction. Furthermore, English is compulsory for all students at the United Tertiary Matriculation Examination conducted by JAMB. In addition, a credit in English is a prerequisite for admission into Nigeria universities and other tertiary institutions

### **The English Language, National Development and Poverty Reduction**

Nigeria cannot achieve her developmental goals without giving priority to English language. Language is the central point for disseminating information that can bring about development in any society. It serves as a repository of people's culture, industry and exploits. Nwadike, in Olaoye (2012), states that language is the key to the heart of the people. If we lose the key, we lose the people. If we treasure the key and keep it safe it will unlock the door to wealth or affluence thus bringing about national development. Hence for any nation to make progress, the science and technology must be well developed and without English language, science and technological concepts will be difficult to be expressed. English Language is the key to development because every invention and discovery, work of art, culture etc., are mostly expressed in English language.

Technology has made possible the emergence of media of mass communication which have improved communication systems within and among communities. These media of mass communication basically fall into two broad categories. The first category is print, which includes newspaper and magazines. The second category is the electronic media, made up of radio, television, film and the new media of internet. What is however, of importance is that these media disseminate messages through the use of language. For example, in Nigeria, most

states use English and other local languages to disseminate information to the populace. The radio is the most widely used medium of communication in Nigeria among the electronic media. This is because it is accessible and cheaper to afford and operate. The educated, uneducated, young and old listen to the radio even in areas where there is no electricity. People at the grass roots like farmers, petty traders and cattle rears that may not have access to other forms of electronic media get information through the radio on how to boost their business and how to be useful to themselves and the society at large. Regular programmes like 'Noma Tushin Arziki', 'Duniya Tumbin Giwa', 'Good Morning Plateau', 'Water for Life', 'Dankali Rumbun Arziki', etc. on the Radio Arm of Plateau Radio Television Corporation (PRTVC) are very educative. People are taught how to improve their farming, health, business, peaceful co-existence; socialization etc. and they are enlightened on issues of governance and politics. All these programmes bring about political, social and economic development to the people as their lives get transformed in one way or the other.

It has been observed in Language and development (2016) that International trade is an important mechanism for increase of GNP in any country. In a pluri-cultural world of many languages, English which has become a global lingua franca is an asset for international trade and commerce. Under these circumstances, the ability to communicate in the English language is a valuable resource. As in the case of international trade, so is the case with internal trade. One has a better chance of commerce if one can speak in English.

Discussing the role of English in cultulizing Vision 20-20-20, Nwoke (2012) states that the quality of language is a barometer of intellectual health of the people and the quality and quantity are dependent on certain skills that must be imbibed and effectively utilized. These skills are variously categorized and defined by educators. Afzal (2007) as cited in Mwanti and Garridau (2011) identified two skills each having its own specific role to play in the society. They are Basic Interpersonal Skills (BICS) which are concerned with human emotions and social issues and the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which is the language of science and technology. The writer further states that the growth of society economically, scientifically, educationally, culturally etc., depends on the importance given to each of the two skills. It therefore means that for any meaningful scientific and technological advancement, developed entrepreneurial spirit and culture to enable the country to achieve her goal of becoming one of the top largest economy in the world, cognitive Academic Language

Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal skills (BICS) should be taught in primary schools, secondary and colleges and university.

### **Challenges of Teaching and Learning English in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a linguistically diverse region with different ethnic groups. Different scholars put the number of indigenous languages in Nigeria at between 450-500, Ekpe (2010), Nwoke (2012). Most of these languages are not mutually intelligible. This is even worst in the south-south where every kilometer is a different language; that is why pidgin English is more dominant in parts of Nigeria than other parts of Nigeria like the Yoruba the Hausa and the Igbo blocks. With these diverse languages, the only language that is understood by all is the English which is also spoken in different variants like the broken English, Pidgin English and the standard variant. Hence English Language is taught and learned in Nigeria schools as a second language. The implication of this is that there are usually challenges encountered as a result of the habits formed from the first language which have already taken root in the learners thus the acquisition of the second language must take determined and deliberate efforts to overcome the challenges of learning the second language by both the teachers and the learners.

Some of the challenges of the second language learning as outlined by some scholars like Bamgbose (2011) who observes that much difficulty in learning the language is due to “the complexity inherent in the Language itself”, such as irregular patterns of tenses. This tends to breed interferences forms in the first language of learners. Also poor quality teachers, poor teachers welfare , lack of educational infrastructures, poor educational policy, unstable curriculum, unequal access to education opportunities and poor academic achievement as a result of constant closure of schools have affected the academic performance of student at all the three levels of education in Nigeria (Mba, 2002). Many teachers have difficulty in the use of English and since English is the medium of instruction in school, other subjects taught in schools are also leading to a negative impact on employability. The teaching and learning of English language must be taken seriously to enable students develop the literacy skills required for skilled and component manpower that will bring about national development.

### **The Role of the Teacher in the English Language Classroom**

The teacher plays a central role in the English language classroom by guiding and providing activities that would encourage learners to engage meaningfully in the lesson; Hipsher (2011) observes that ESL and other English teachers working in developing economies have an

important role in creating the condition which facilitates international trade and connectivity which has an indirect impact on economic growth which is the most important factor in reducing poverty. Since English has become the lingua franca of international commerce, for economic growth, it is important for a country to have human bridges who can work across cultural and linguistic borders, and ESL thus other English teachers have an important role in developing these human bridges

He explains that an individual teaching English in a developing economy can have a profound and direct impact on the lives of the students that the individual is teaching but this teacher can also have some impact on reducing global poverty providing the skills a nation needs to integrate internationally. There are many jobs a person can have which can make the individual feel good about his/her contribution to our global society: Teaching English in a developing country is one of those. Similarly, Robert (2023).in a British council English connects Webinar meeting presentation: Teaching English in a resource scarce environment explains that the lack of resources for teaching English affects students in different ways. It means that students do not get the most out of their education. They learn parts of topics and lessons but they do not get the full picture. He practically shows some useful and appropriate materials/ resources to be created to fit the various language skills that would make learning engaging, captivity and participatory.

Materials/ resources the teacher can create include:

- Using authentic material from the community.
- Doing a dictogloss.
- Reusing materials in different ways to teach different skills.
- Peer support.
- Contextualizing the lesson content to the environment.
- Teaching the comprehension passage in section.

The teachers create these resources to provide an engaging environment for students to learn the language meaningfully.

### **Conclusion**

English plays a key role in the entrepreneurial, scientific technology and economic growth of the country. All the scientific and technological concepts, agricultural and entrepreneurial skills that can improve and change the nation's economy as well as improve the



lively hood of the citizens are taught in English. It is the language that is used to enlighten the citizens on the dangers of the problem facing the economy and the need to diversify the economy and also eschew bad behaviors .Indeed ending poverty may be closely linked to teaching and learning English Language in the sense that English language being the language of Education in Nigeria holds the key to unlocking the learning that guarantees wealth creation be it in agriculture, commerce and industries or professions like medicine ,engineering and the likes as education performs specific roles in economic advancement in the country and these can only be achieved through English.

### **Way forward**

Based on the discussion above, the following are suggested way forward;

- The Government must as a matter of urgency set in place workable policies that can get the out of school children back to school by making the school environment secured and conducive for learning to take place through upgrading and providing educational infrastructures where such are required.
- The Government must invest more in education by increasing the budgetary allocation on education
- Concerted efforts must be garnered by the educational sector, i.e. the administrators, teachers and relevant authorities towards producing skilled and competent graduates. What is taught in school must bear relevance with what is needed in the workplace.
- The Government must prioritize the welfare of teachers especially as many states are owing several months of teachers' remuneration as well as provide teacher continuous professional development in order to enhance productivity and growth in Nigeria economy taking into consideration our technology dependent world, the levels of education of the work place of the country is one of the key components (World Economic Forum 2022).Priority must be placed on continuous professional learning of the best practices of learning methods. Government must invest in the human resources, encourage growth and social transformation.
- The private sector should collaborate with government to improve education by giving contribution in terms of funding and personnel to the education sector

- Concerted efforts must be made to create peaceful and secured communities that will allow children access to education because no meaningful achievement can be attained without security of lives and properties.

## Reference

- Bamgbose, A.(2011). The relationship of Vernacular and English. *Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association*, 3, (1), 18-24.
- Bussiness Insider (2022). 10 biggest Problems in the word downloaded from [www.businessinsider. In/slidelist/53832628.cms](http://www.businessinsider.com/slidelist/53832628.cms)
- Daily Trust (19<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2022). Insecurity is a threat to Education in Nigeria.
- David,L,A. Maigari, and Maigari,A (2022). The Quest for Science Education and Challenges of insecurity in Nigeria in the wise women journal of Education.PP73-83.Jos;Ais Pub. Concepts.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education. Lagos : Federal Government press.
- Garridau,A.C and Jindem,S.C.(2012). The effects of political dispensation on language policy and implementation realities in Nigeria. *Journal of Women in Colleges of Education*, 16 (1), 23-29.
- Hipsher,S.(2011). ESL Teachers and Global Poverty reduction. [www.agam](http://www.agam.com) com. Blogs: up dated September 2011.
- Language and National Development: The Case of India .(2016). Retrieved 31/10/2016 from [Nigeria/shttp/WWW.ciil-ebooks.nelthtml/educulture/i-ind.htm](http://Nigeria/shttp/WWW.ciil-ebooks.nelthtml/educulture/i-ind.htm).
- Mfonobong,D. (2021). Top 10 Major Economic Problems Facing Nigeria. Retrieved from- Economic-problems-facing-nihttps://nigeriannfopedia.com.ng/major
- Mba, P.E (2022) Keynote Address Presented at the WICE conference Held on the 10<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at FCE (T) Akoka Lagos.
- National Bureau for statistics (2022). Statistics of Poverty in Nigeria 25<sup>th</sup> Noverber, 2022 report.
- Ojo,A.A. (2019). The role of Education in Nigeria : Implication to Economic Development. European Center for research Treaning and Development UK ([www.eajournals.org](http://www.eajournals.org))1 print ISSN: 2059-1209. Online ISSN: 2059. From [https:// www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/the-role-of Educatio-in-Nigeria-Implicatio-to-Economic-Development..pdf](https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/the-role-of-Educatio-in-Nigeria-Implicatio-to-Economic-Development..pdf)

Olaoye,A.A.(2012). The Role of Indigenous Language and Literature in National Development  
*Pankshin Journal of Language Education, 2 (3),23-29*

Plateau State Television Corporation (PRTVC). Weekly Programmes. *Pankshin Journal of  
Language Education, 2(1), 12-19*

Robert,K.(2023). Teaching English in a resource scarce environment. British Council English  
connects Webinar meaning; 25-1-2023.

UNICEF (2022). [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2022.

IJOGSE 2023