

Challenges and Prospects of Implementation of Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Approaches in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks into the challenges and prospects of implementing teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) approaches in Nigeria against the background of the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) which legitimise the teaching of English as a the official language. The review paper is a shift from the usual approach of examining the teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) to teaching of English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL). The two approaches recognize previous knowledge of English language but TESOL has a wider conceptual view. However, challenges of TESOL are highlighted in order to call the attention of stakeholders. The challenges of TESOL require urgent attention as previous studies have dwelt much on prospects which are interrelated with functions of English and importance of teaching English as a Second Language.

Keywords: English as a second language (ESL), Education, Teaching of english to speakers of other languages (TESOL), English language.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English language is regarded as the most popular European language in the world. In Nigeria, the language is the most important exogenous language. Indeed, this assertion is premised on the fact that it is her official language. Okudo (2013) avers that:

Among the exogenous languages – English, French and Arabic – English is the official language. It has been in Nigeria since 1842 that is before the coming of the British missionaries to Nigeria. It has been discovered that English has increasingly replaced Nigerian languages and is widely used in business, academics, and everyday life activities especially in the cities. English language also became institutionalized because it is the language of Nigerian's colonial masters and was imposed on the people.

From the submission, it is crystal clear that Nigeria is at linguistic crossroads because there exist various indigenous languages aside English language. To Ayeomoni (2012), Nigeria has about over 400 languages and in more categorical term, Ogunsi (2012) indicates that there are approximately 400 to 500 distinct languages which make Nigeria a heterogeneous nation and there is a very strong linguistic diversity within the Nigerian polity. It is the linguistic feature of Nigeria that led to the adoption of an exogenous language as the official language.

No doubt, English language is regarded as the Second language in Nigeria. It is noteworthy that English has more roles than indigenous languages. In fact, only three languages (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa) were assigned official functions in 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) and Federal Ministry of Education (2004) National Policy on Education of the Federal Ministry of Education. This implies that the English language is the most important and significant language in Nigeria. No wonder, Akinkulere *et al.* (2016) thus:

In Nigeria, the English language has become a determining factor for most of the social, political and educational activities in the country. Therefore, the various functions that the English language performs in the nation are very important, hence, the continual attraction of scholars to studies that border on the language.

Ogunsi (2012) observes that English language occupies an important position in spite of the numerous local languages. He further argues that as a second language in Nigeria, English is being used to enhance our national unity and cultural integration. It is imperative to note that apart from the native speaker status, English is non-native in Nigeria. With this clarification, the issue of specificity becomes a linguistic discussion. In fact, Kumuyi (2016) states that:

Many language teachers in Nigeria might never find themselves in Native English setting, in fact, most of them do not teach the natives so it is pointless to pretend otherwise. The focus on those they teach is highly important since that will go a long way to determine so many things. One of the major aims of teaching English as a second language in Nigeria is to prepare the ESL learners to perform a set of roles in an international language which, to all intents and purpose is new language and new culture (Obi- Okoye, 2002).

Defining the various functions of English in Nigeria with utmost cognizance of other languages is an essential ingredient in the methodological approach of English. TESOL is an applied linguistic concept that dwells on English in this regard. Hence, the paper focuses on its challenges hindering the teaching of English from the approach of TESOL.

2. THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (TESOL)

Linguistics, before and now has laid premium teaching of language. Applied linguistics, as a subfield of linguistics, focuses on the application of theories and principles of language and communication to the teaching of language. TESOL is one of the options in applied linguistics. Also, it an indisputable fact that, more population of English users are non-natives, hence, the design of TESOL, as a course/ area of specialisation, in Applied Linguistics became a welcome development. No wonder, [Ferguson \(1983\)](#) argues that much of world's verbal communication takes place by means of languages which are not users' mother tongue, but their second, third etc, and they are being used appropriately. Although, it is highly vital to assert the fact that the native users are the resource of the language as they provide depended on by non-native users.

TESOL addresses all issues that affect teaching of English to speakers of other languages which include but not limited to teachers' needs, what teachers need to know, innovative and creative methods of teaching, and technologically compliant approaches. In response to these, the consciousness of other languages used by the students is indispensable and important for pedagogical purposes.

In Nigeria, many educated parents prefer to expose their children to English language at an early stage whereby English becomes the first language of such children. These children will still be better encapsulated in the semantics of 'speakers of other languages' because they are mostly bilingual /multilingual acquirers of English as well as other languages. Our argument still remains that those children have not acquired the native English but non-native. They have succeeded in making their children speakers of English and other languages. This is premised on the fact that some natives find it outlandish to describe a Nigeria child, who exhibits Nigerian English speech accent, vocabulary and discourse strategies, as native speaker ([Ayoola, 2001](#)).

Students and teachers of TESOL do not suffer linguistic, identity and cultural loss as long as they see themselves as learning and teaching a variety of English, which is like any other varieties of English. It is in consonance with this that [Kumuyi \(2016\)](#) argues that:

In essence, just as the native English speakers will at one time or the other need intercultural communication, so also, other Non Native speakers of English, hence, the support for English for international use and urgent de-emphasization for native English in the teaching of ESL in Nigeria.

3. CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF TESOL IN NIGERIA

The focus on challenges is not on English language but the teaching of English with emphasis on speakers of other languages. Indeed, [Ogunsiji \(2012\)](#) observes that 'both local and foreign, have lots of challenges as well as prospects in a multilingual setting like Nigeria.' The challenges hindering effective TESOL approach in schools are discussed under the following sub headings:

3.1. Culture and Identity of Speakers

Every language is an embodiment of its culture or cultural background of its speakers. [Obi- Okoye \(2002\)](#) acknowledges the fact that learning a new language, in all intents and purpose, implies new culture. Hence, a bilingual or multilingual person is bi-cultural or multicultural. The major challenge is loss of culture and identity of speakers. Since most children will not be competent in their local languages because they were taught to see them as inferior (whereas no language is inferior) to English language. At the same time, if the TESOL approach is engraved in the minds of children, they will retain their culture and identity in the course of learning English

language because language and culture are intertwined. In other developed countries, there are other indigenous languages aside English that play prominent roles in politics and technology.

3.2. Methods of Teaching English

The methods of teaching and learning English are either not appropriate or adequate. Also, the teaching methods are still restricted to basic methodological approach as stipulated in the field of Education. Another challenge is teachers' adherence to traditional pedagogies of teaching unlike TESOL approach that, in recent times, has become multidisciplinary. Though TESOL is mainly applied linguistics but it is not restricted to applied linguistics in theory and practice. In recent times TESOL has become activity – oriented and multidisciplinary in approaches. Activities such as role play, songs and games, music, humour, cultural principles and creative writing are part of methods adopted in TESOL. The approach focuses on how to enhance and increase linguistic and communicative competence of students and thereby, improve their performances.

3.3. Conception of TESOL Phenomenon

The issue of misconception is a major challenge to the proper implementation of TESOL approaches. It is quite disheartening that teachers of English language, especially, those with background in Education do not perceive multidisciplinary approach of TESOL as a welcome development. Also, TESL and TESOL are regarded as same concept in the teaching of English. This has hindered the proper implementation of TESOL approaches in Nigeria. Once teachers begin to adopt TESOL approaches, teaching of English will become more interactive, engaging, lively and participatory.

3.4. Exposure and Knowledge

Most teachers are unaware of TESOL approaches. It is highly unfortunate that there is no tertiary institution in Nigeria that runs TESOL as a course, while TESOL is available in many universities in native countries such as United States of America and United Kingdom. This is because many teachers in primary and secondary schools lack needed international exposure and awareness. Thereby, the requisite knowledge is missing. It is believed that with necessary exposure and knowledge, there will better teaching methods and performances of students. This will be attainable if teachers could subscribe to [Akinkurolere et al. \(2016\)](#) argument that:

Latest developments in the teaching of English Language, especially at the primary and secondary schools' levels are geared towards methods and techniques of improving the quality of teaching in order to ensure good performances of students. Also, scholars are willfully interested in multidisciplinary approaches that could enhance effective teaching of the language.

3.5. Information Technology(IT)

[Abuya \(2014\)](#) affirms that 'Technology has introduced a new dimension to various fields of human endeavour' and goes further to assert that the role of IT is highly pronounced in the field of education as students are the key beneficiaries. So also, [Ike-Elechi et al. \(2012\)](#) believe IT has permeated education many ways but [Akinkurolere and Kadiri \(2013\)](#) are apt to aver that:

A major challenge in the educational sector especially in the public schools is how to adequately apply the growing knowledge of computer technology to teaching as it is not

static thus stakeholders need to deploy means of meeting up with the technological advancement from time to time.

In essence, Information Technology relates to the application of computer as a tool for the advancement of knowledge and skills. Globalising the TESOL approach to teaching of English demands that teachers should be grounded in computer use and its application. This will enable teachers to update their skills in IT and effectively apply methods of teaching in TESOL because IT can only be useful in learning if it enhances students' skills in language (reading, writing, speaking and listening). In fact, [Monis and Kamble \(2013\)](#) argue that:

Using computers give way to their knowledge and promotes the nature of independence. The researchers are of the view that the computer education is a beneficial one for both the slow workers and the advanced students, as it encourages working at their own pace. Slower workers can catch up, and advanced students can do extra assignments. Presently, students are tired of traditional English classes and are interested in a new style of learning.

3.6. Membership of Appropriate International Organization

It is indisputable that all teachers of English in Nigeria are speakers of other language. Meanwhile, a mini survey among teachers of English language indicate that they belong to various professional organisations, which include, NATSREL- National Association of Teachers and Researchers of English as a Second Language, ESAN- English Studies Association of Nigeria, ANA- Association of Nigerian Authors, but none the teachers belong to an international association such as TESOL of language. Lack of Sponsors for conference attendance and professional programs. It is important to establish TESOL Nigeria as a branch of TESOL International. This will enable teachers in Nigeria to relate with TESOL members from native countries and understand the peculiarities of speakers of other languages in non-native countries.

Teachers that become members of TESOL have the opportunity to secure scholarship to specialize in the field. Other opportunities such as research grants and conference attendance/sponsorship will promote TESOL in Nigeria. Grants received from International organizations could be expended on research and curriculum development.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends that teachers of English need to be re-oriented to always acknowledge that they teach English in Nigeria to non-native speakers who are better referred to as speakers of other languages and methods of teaching should be consistently evaluated and improved to meet the needs of the students. Also, parents should be discouraged from making their children semi-linguals. Such children hardly attain native competence in English language or indigenous languages. The children should be taught to perceive themselves as speakers of English and other languages which will make them uphold and appreciate their cultural tenets and indigenous languages.

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