

APPLIED SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LANGUAGE USE AND TEACHING IN WEST AFRICA

**FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR TUNDE AJIBOYE**

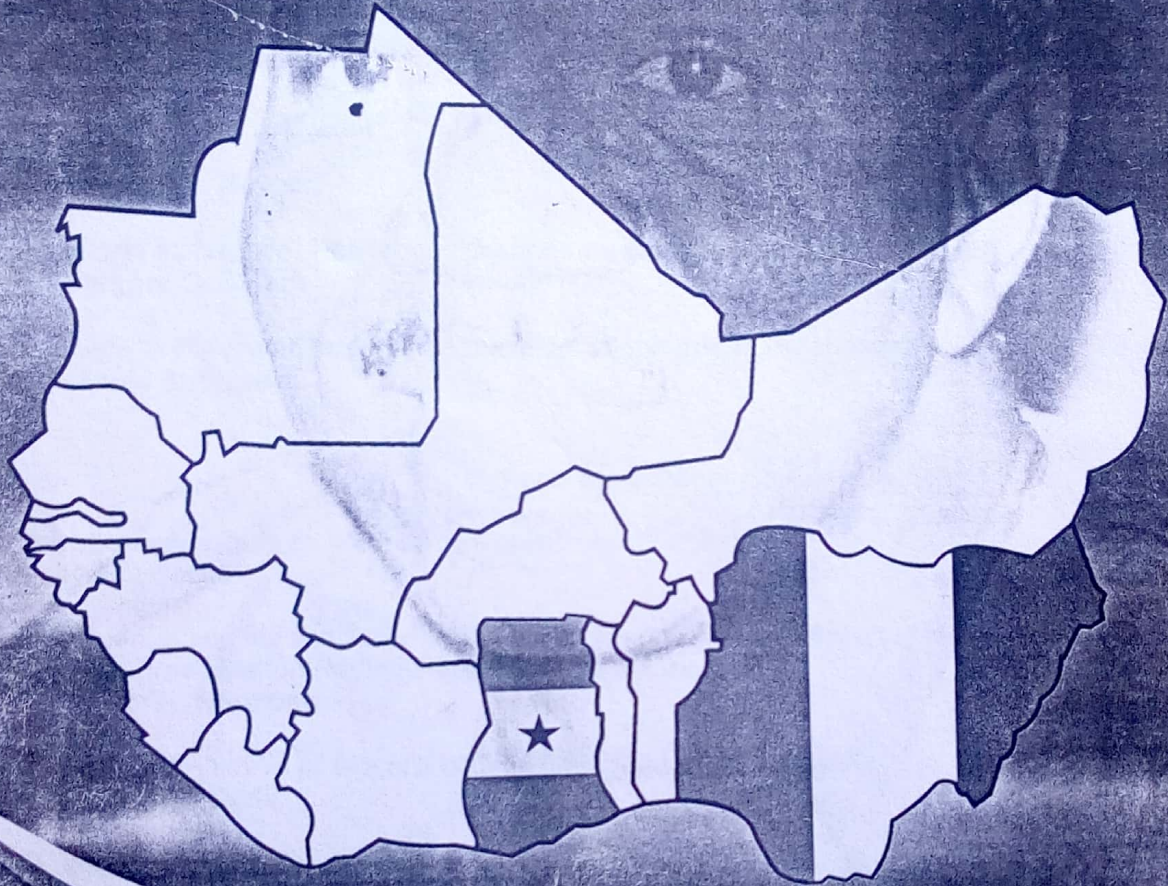


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RESOURCES AND MATERIALS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Folakemi O. Adeniyi
Department of English
School of Languages
Kwara State College of Education
Ilorin – Nigeria

Introduction

In any typical ESL class, teachers are faced with a huge problem of making students use the target language. This is because learning a second language (L2) is a long and complex undertaking. The learner's whole person is affected as he struggles to read beyond the confines of his first language and integrates himself into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting. It involves total commitment and total involvement to enable the learner to successfully send and receive messages in a second language. Very few people achieve fluency in L2 within the confines of the classroom. Some intricate webs of variables that are spun together determine why one learns or fails to learn a second language. These include teachers' understanding of the principles of language learning and teaching, and knowing current issues in L2 learning. Some of the current issues revolve around answers to pertinent questions on who, how, when, where and why:

Who does the teaching and learning? i.e. what background do teachers and students have?

How? i.e. how does the teacher ensure success in L2 classroom? In other words, what are the methods and strategies employed?

When (i.e. at what age) does one learn L2 easily and for how long?

Where is the learning taking place? The "where" of the learning is important because the socio-political condition of a particular country can affect the outcome of learning, (i.e. mastery of the language).

Why does the learner attempt to learn L2? Put more explicitly, what are the affective, emotional, personal or intellectual reasons behind learning L2?

Providing answers to these fundamental questions will help language teachers to have a total and integrated understanding of the many areas of the process of L2 learning. This, in turn, will help in making L2 classroom successful.

Teaching and learning activities

The choice of learning activities and creative use of teaching and learning materials depend largely on the teaching methods adopted, which are also dependent on the selected approach. Richards and Rodgers (1986) describe method to include

- (1) **Approach:** - This is a theory of the nature of language, i.e., an account of the nature of language proficiency and basic units of language structure. It relates to the nature of language learning which involves an account of the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning and an account of the conditions that allow for successful use of these processes.
- (2) **Design:** This can be seen from six perspectives: (a) the general and specific objectives of the method, (b) a syllabus model (i.e. criteria for the selection and organisation of linguistic and/or subject matter content, (c) types of learning and teaching activities (i.e. kinds of tasks and practice activities to be employed in the classroom and in materials. (d) Learners' roles, i.e. types of learning tasks set for learners, degree of control learners have over the content of learning, patterns of learner groupings that are recommended, the view of the learner as a processor, performer, initiator, problem solver, etc. (e) teacher's roles i.e. types of functions teachers fulfill, degree of teacher's influence over learning, degree to which the teacher determines the content of learning, types of interaction between teachers and learners (f) the role of instructional materials, primary function of instructional materials, the form materials

take (e.g. audiovisual, textbook etc), relation of materials to other input, assumptions made about teachers and learners.

- (3) **Procedure** involves classroom techniques, practices and behaviours observed when the method is used, resources in terms of time, space, and equipment used by the teacher, interactional patterns observed in lessons and tactics and strategies used by teachers and learners when any method is being used.

In a typical classroom where English is a second language, it is a known fact that children learn best when the teacher enables them to take part in an activity using the target language. Pupils should, however, not be debarred from the natural use of L1 during classroom activities. It is very difficult indeed for primary school age language learners to think about abstract situations in the language classroom and they need immediate and visible activities to support their learning with the guidance and mentoring of their teacher.

There should be pupil communication exposure to the target language and interaction in the language lesson, and a balance between teacher telling time and students talking time. Oracy and literacy in the target language are emphasized at the primary and secondary school levels as they are important aspects of mother tongue development.

It is also imperative to establish a clear link between the pupil's life and his interest, so that he can see how relevant the target language could be. Teachers have to take care of language class environment and strive to take account of students' needs. As noticed by Finney (2002), learner and learning-centered approach to teaching languages to young learners is the most sensible way. The implications of this is selecting the appropriate instructional materials and adapting these materials to suit the age and background of the learner and to suit the methodology.

Instructional materials/resources, concept and meaning

Instructional materials refer to materials used by a teacher in enhancing the process of teaching and helping the learners to grasp what he (the teacher) intends to communicate to them clearly. Akanbi (1989) agrees that materials introduce pupils to ideas and information about a subject in a meaningful and realistic manner. They also enhance the pupils' experiences through such devices as motion pictures, and lead them to discover significant issues, values and concepts.

Adeniyi (2006) views materials as both human and non-human materials employed by teachers to help learners integrate the classroom experience with the real world experience so as to concretize learning. Abolade (2002) also describes instructional materials as different forms of information carriers, which are used to record, store, preserve, transmit or retrieve information for the purpose of teaching and learning.

Azikwe (1998) asserts that instructional materials cover whatever the teacher uses to involve all the six senses of sight, hear, touch, smell, movement and taste while presenting his lessons. Instructional materials are very important in language teaching, especially the second language, because they facilitate the ultimate association between sound and their symbols and also words and the objects they represent. The use of instructional materials reduces the problems of interferences and translation. Hoban (1949) as cited in Azikwe (1998) outlined the values of instructional aids as follow: They

1. supply a concrete basis for conceptual thinking and reduce meaningless word responses from pupils.
2. make learning more permanent
3. provide a high degree of interest for pupils
4. offer a reality of experience which stimulates self activity on the part of pupils.
5. develop a continuity of thought (especially motion pictures).
6. contribute to growth of meaning and hence to vocabulary development.
7. provide experiences not easily obtained through other materials and contribute to the efficiency, in-depth and variety of learning.

Bamishaye (2008), identified five main purposes of instructional materials, which apply to any subject field. These are:

- to teach skill and present fact with appropriate materials
- to organize knowledge into concept through the use of instructional materials.
- to stimulate their imagination and
- to develop attitudes or to change existing ones.

The above listed purposes cover the three major domains of instructional objectives - cognitive, affective and psychomotor. In as much as a teacher would want to deliver his level of effectiveness along these domains, it is equally important that the teacher plans on what would enhance his professional effectiveness before going to class. He does this by carefully choosing the means and the channel for his communication together with possible activities that students will be engaged upon.

The teaching profession is daily facing new challenges because of the new trend of development in the society; thus, there is need to move ahead of the old method of teaching. It is also essential to embrace the use of instructional materials to achieve the stated objectives. This implies that a thorough reorientation is sine qua non for the teaching profession. A combination of instructional materials that appeal to all senses is likely to make a deeper impression on the learners than the conventional method of chalk board and verbal dissemination.

Instructional materials can be grouped under three broad types namely - visual, audio, and audio-visual.

Visual Aids: These are instructional materials and devices that appeal to the sense of sight and touch as well as taste, movement and sense of smell. They consist of non-projected aids, the chart board and adhesives, pictorial aids like charts, pictures, mobile, three dimensional aids, projected aids, laboratory equipment, chemical apparatus and radio. Gain and Redman (1986) assert that these teaching aids can be used to group items into concrete vocabulary lessons and for presentation, practice, revision and testing. The essence of any communication activity is the transmission of visuals intended to evoke meaning in the mind of the recipient, thereby increasing communication accurately. Hence, the device is to serve as a more concrete experience to meaning than the spoken or written words, which could inhibit meaning through language and cultural differences that exist between the learners and speakers (Heinch, Molendas & Russel 2000). Words are arbitrary symbols, which do not look or sound like what they represent. Students need to be taught the skills of visual literacy to enable them elicit messages correctly and use them to their educational advantage. It is assumed that when a concrete representation is present, the likelihood of a successful communication is increased.

Duyer (1978) has presented a research evidence which revealed that showed that representation could actually interfere with the communication and learning process. He states that the ability to sort out the relevant from the irrelevant in a technical representation grows with age and experience. Therefore, instead of enhancing the deficiency in communication, the wealth of detail sound in a realistic visual may increase the likelihood of the learners (between the age bracket of 13-15) being distracted by irrelevant elements of the visuals. The students need to be taken through the decoding guidance towards correct use of the visual which involves differentiation, identifying, analyzing and integrating, drawing inferences and creating new conceptualization from what have been learned.

Azikwe (1998), stressing the importance of visual aids in English language, asserts that language teaching is made very effective when the language teacher complements verbal explanation with visual aids. Visual aids attract and arrest the attention of students, especially those who have difficulty in learning L2. A lesson is made more interesting when appropriate visual aids are used. Also, the use of visual aids enhances retention of information on the part of the learner because it is easy to forget what is heard, but not when learning by hearing is further reinforced by the use of additional

sensory experience of seeing. The use of visual aids enables the learner to form correct images. Without the additional experience through the sight, it is possible for members of a class to form differing ideas and images about something they learn through verbal description only.

Audio - aids – Audio- aids cover all recorded materials in vinyl tapes that can be played back, using the recorder or radio during a lesson. These types of aids appeal to the sense of hearing alone. They are very useful to the language teacher for the teaching of listening skills. Audio aids in general are needed by all teachers of English. Since the L2 is better learned through imitating the native speakers, the tapes and records prepared by native speakers will enhance the teacher's efforts in the second language context. Azikwe (1998) also asserts that audio aids are provided to help make the teacher's work less cumbersome and also to make teaching/ learning situation a fun. They are very effective in teaching the language skills, e.g., grammar, pronunciation and dictation. The students' activities could be recorded after listening to the tapes as their performances could be played back for them to hear, identify their weak points and make corrections. Audio aids are easy to operate since they do not require electricity and are portable and fairly light to carry about. The teacher has control over the audio aids because the playing could be stopped when and where necessary to give room for explanation and clarification of points to the class. Audio instructional devices have limitations. Without some monitoring over their students, some students do not pay attention to the presentation of audio materials. Storage and retrieval of audio tapes phonograph records can also cause problems.

Audio - visual aids - The instructional aids grouped as audio-visual are films, transparencies, slides and filmstrips and television/video tapes. All these aids with the exception of television/video tapes make use of projectors, hence they are known as projector aids as against visual aids, which make up the non-projected aids. The projected aids require the use of electricity and they appeal to both the senses of sight and hearing. The audio-visual aids are made up of soft and hard-wares. The soft-wares are such materials as transparencies films, slides and film strips, while the hardware are the equipment or the over-head projectors useful in showing the materials on the screen. Audio visuals could be made locally to develop writing and speaking skills. Teachers could also have recourse to audio visual aids in teaching grammar and vocabulary.

In teaching meaning from the context, Sarka (1978) asserts that the use of visual and audio-visual aids is very important. In his study to find out the effect of visual aids on students' understanding of a passage, he divided a group of students into two. One was given a bare outline of a story and no pictures. The other group was given a set of pictures and real object with some explanations. It was found that the group with picture and real object performed better. These materials spark off latent ideas - ideas that were already there in the students' minds but needed an incentive to start the flow of thought. Selected multisensory materials could encourage students to put their feelings and thoughts into words in a more vivid and lucid manner, which is after all what vocabulary acquisition and good writing is all about.

Singleton (1999) observes that as far as meaning is concerned, the availability of a mental image emerges as a possible aid in the fixing of words in meaning. Teachers can put knowledge of this finding to good effect by encouraging the use of visual aids that brings real concept to the students.

To what extent do audio-visual aids enable learners to grasp the meaning of new vocabulary? Dove and Pai (2006) compared the learning and retention of L2 vocabulary through listening to scripted dialogue in two conditions: audio and video, with each condition having its control group. Students were studying French as L2 at university and were at high-elementary level. There were vocabulary gains for both groups, especially the video-group. Strategies differed according to the presence or otherwise of visual accompaniment. With video, less attention seemed to be paid to purely linguistic cues, but with visual element helped with inference. With video, some use was made of internal linguistic cues, e.g., cognates, which facilitated the inference of words that may or may not have been central to the meaning of the passage. Support was found for the view that media-use helps develop lexical competency where L1 & L2 words are related, where the subject of a text is not unfamiliar and where the visual content and the text correspond.

In conclusion, instructional materials are essential to the achievement of learning objectives. They provide the basic information required and considered important but which is not contained in the prescribed textbooks. They also encourage and produce self-instruction learning and adequate presentation of lessons.

Realias: The term "realias" stands for real objects, such as coins, nuts, artifacts, plant, animals etc. They are not always thought of as visuals, since the term visual implies representation of categories including some of the most accessible in highlighting and involving materials in educational use. Bullough (1990) observes that realias are instrumental in stimulating the imagination and have direct purposeful experience, and as such, they are real media for introducing learners to a new subject. Used as part of concept learning, they supply flesh-and-blood mental images. In a nut shell, it can be observed that realias facilitate teaching for the teacher just as it enhances understanding of vocabulary items, ideas or relationship, even in the teaching of the mother tongue and L2.

Finally, it is pertinent to add here that the combination of all the instructional materials discussed above (i.e. visual and audio-visual aids, and realias } are what is packaged in this work to be Multisensory Instructional Approaches. In other words, this approach involves the use of video-tape, tape recorder and real objects (realias) which appeal to different senses, like sight, hearing, gustatory, touch and smell to teach vocabulary items to the underachievers. In Multisensory Approach, more than two senses are elicited at the same time in the process of learning a new language. The senses are those of seeing, hearing, and feeling. Thus, Stone (2008) concluded that it seems reasonable to suppose that learning which involves several senses may well be more effective than an appeal to the ear only in language learning.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS THAT CAN BE CREATIVELY USED IN THE LANGUAGE CLASS FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEARNERS

Below is a list of materials and a resumé of their possible positive uses

Blackboard

Can be used for a number of activities:

- Lists of vocabulary items
- Writing new language
- Brainstorming words for new topic/recycled topic
- Games in two teams with board split into halves
- For keeping score
- For drawing pictures (e.g. group/individual picture dictation)
- Drawing pictures to illustrate a story
- For putting flashcards on
 - in lexical groups
 - in colour groups
 - in spelling groups
 - as part of a game
 - as illustration for activity

Games

- Clothes designer's dictation
- Describe the suspect dictation

Pencils

- Puppets
- Counters

Flashcards (with words, pictures or both)

Can be used for a huge variety of activities:

Games

- snap
- find one of these
- what's missing?

Language focus:

- Introducing/remembers vocabulary
- Introducing verbs – verb games
- Word order in sentences
- Punctuation revision
- Introducing/remembers adjectives
- Introducing/remembers prepositions
- Lexical sets – town/school/classroom/farm/vehicles/the market/hospital/furniture/food/hobbies/jobs
- Topic sets – the environment/shopping/buildings and design/farming and agriculture/the seas and oceans

Cue cards (words, pictures or both)

Can be used for:

- Cue cards role play
- Creating stories

Stories (oral, cue cards, books)

Can be used to

- Set the scene before an activity, such as role play
- Contextualize the language
- To ask what happens next...
- To join in with...
- Story board writing stages of the story: the beginning; the problem; the solution and the end

Cardboard Box/es

Can be used for:

- TV screen for interviews/story presentation/how to/etc.

Maps

Can be used for:

- Information gap games and activities
- Role play 'Could you tell where.....is, please?'

Friezes

Can be used for:

- 'I spy' games
- Answering questions such as 'What colours can you see?'
- 'Find a' Find an example of a.....'

Posters

Can be used for:

- Games like 'I spy'
- What colours/words beginning with 'x' can you see?
- What professions/what vehicles/what buildings can you find?
- What's the weather like?
- Can you see....?

Magazine and newspaper pictures/text/cuttings/adverts

Can be used for:

- Jigsaw readings
- Group work
- Describing....
- Half headlines...
- How does the article finish...
- Interview models

Labels

Can be used:

- Around the classroom
- For any diagrams/pictures on the wall
- To accompany illustrations on the wall

Food packets

Can be used for:

- For display
- Linked to particular topics e.g. countries, colours, weight, healthy/
- Unhealthy eating, environment, etc.

Media e.g. computers, radios, television e.t.c.

Can be used as model to create:

- role-play for radio
- Games such as 'Twenty questions' 'What do I do?' 'Call my bluff'
- Story-telling
- Sound effects
- Interviews with imaginary famous sports people/artists/musicians

Culture e.g. games, art and crafts, dance, music and songs, drama role play and puppet.

Can be used to teach Vocabulary and the four language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing skills,

Props

Can be used for:

- hats – for different people in a story
- bags - what's in the bag? Game/shopping in the market role-play
- food packets – shopping
- menus – in the restaurant role play

Mobile phones and technology links

Can be used for:

- creating texts
- sending messages
- sending music
- using it for calculations/diary/alarm

People in the community as a resource

Can be used for:

- Stories for history, language and geographical knowledge

Conclusion

Language learning involves learning about a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting. There is, therefore, need for total commitment, total involvement, and total physical, intellectual and emotional response. Language teaching materials design can affect the teaching process and the teacher in the language classroom in Nigeria. If the materials are not designed in conformity with the age, interest, level and needs of the learners, they may not be effective. Children generally (both in primary and secondary schools) learn best when the teacher uses materials that enable them to take part in an activity using the target language. Besides, they need to be more "scaffolded" by the teacher. There should be an even balance between fluency and accuracy in each lesson and teachers are enjoined to take account of students' learning needs. Finally, teachers should make their own materials and adapt them to suit the individual needs of the learners.

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