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Contributions should be submitted in two hard copies of approximately 8,000 - 10,000 words or 13-20 pages typed in 12 point Times New Roman, 1.5 spacing, with 0.5* margins, printed on one side of A4 paper. If, after due assessment, an article or book review is found publishable, the contributors will be required to undertake modifications suggested by the academic assessors, before submitting two hard copies in

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CLT AND THE NIGERIAN CLASSROOM PRACTICE: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

By:

Taofiq Adedayo ALABI, PhD

Department of English, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
E-mail: merrilab2004@yahoo.co.uk; alabi.ta@unilorin.edu.ng

&

Isa Muhammad Inuwa

Department of Linguistics & Foreign Languages,
Faculty of Arts & Islamic Studies, Bayero University, Kano
Email: ismi2000ng@yahoo.com

Abstract

The processes of second language teaching have changed considerably over the years and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a response to these changes. Earlier conceptions of language teaching in Nigeria primarily focused on the mastery of grammatical competence as well as a teacher-dominant class. The type of classroom activities proposed by CLT has implied new roles in the classroom for teachers and learners. However, in the Nigerian setting, the spirit and letter of CLT has not been vigorously pursued and applied as the classroom setting is still plagued by a lot of challenges, which are teacher-induced, learner-related and environmental and material-based. This paper discusses these challenges as well as recommends solutions that could be applied to save the untoward situation.

Keywords: *CLT, competence, language policy, language teaching and learning*

Introduction

Language is used chiefly for communication and communication is only possible through the instrumentation of a language. Depending on the medium that is employed, the sender (source) can be the writer or the speaker and the receiver can be the listener or the reader. For communication to exist, the skills of language must be involved based on the dictates and demands of the situation and context. These basic skills of language are speaking, writing, listening and reading. Speaking and writing operate at the productive level, while listening and reading exist at the receptive level.

It is pertinent also to understand the nature of communication models and the theoretical approaches to how communication works. Erlam (2008) presented three types of communication models: the linear, the interactive and the transactional. Also known as the active or transmission model, the linear model portrays communication as a one-way activity. In other words, the sender and the receiver are not the same as one of them sends the message and the other receives it. The interactive model views communication by employing feedback as an essential or element of communication. Unlike the linear model, the interactive model strikes a balance between the sender and the receiver. The transactional model draws attention to the process of active meaning creation between the participants in a communication process. The import of this model is that meaning generation involves some form of negotiation, processing, assessing as well as filtering. This model is a product of past experience, assumptions, perception and the like.

Language Teaching and Policy in Nigeria

In consonance with the relationship between language and communication that had been discussed earlier, language teaching and language learning are also non-detachable. To make allusion to language teaching is a veiled reference to language learning. Language teaching is viewed as the overall process, which aids the learners to plan and decode their linguistic experiences in a principled and coherent way (Goldenberg, 2005). It involves a process that provides for genuine pedagogy, which makes for effective impartation and successful learning experiences. It also entails the procedures that provide for eventual success in the development of L₂ competence (Ellis, 2005). He further stresses that language teaching presupposes acquisition – a pair contact with a first language. Therefore, language learning exploits the linguistic experiences from the standpoint of the first language in the teaching of a target language (Griffiths, 2011). For example, in Nigeria, most users of English the (target language) apply the experiences that they have in their various acquired languages the (first language) to English.

It is not contestable that Nigeria is a multilingual country and that English at present holds sway as a second language. English is a language that has wielded tremendous influence and enormous use in the Nigerian setting, regardless of the presence of numerous indigenous languages. Perhaps, this development could be attributed to the disposition of the Federal Government of Nigeria (Udofot, 2011).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

A discussion of this nature will be obviously injudicious without taking cognisance of what Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is all about, as it applies to the classroom practice in Nigeria. CLT as an approach to language teaching and learning cannot concretely be established as taking off at a particular period. It is purported to have emerged in the 1980s (Hiep, 2007). CLT refers to both processes and envisaged targets in classroom learning. It could also depict the totality of pragmatic application of pedagogical strategies, which are well packaged to bring about desirable and satisfying learning experiences in the learners. It also seeks to harness and harmonise the tenets of formalism and functionalism with a view to promoting competence and performance of the subjects for whom it is packaged (Orekan, 2010). He affirmed the goal of a communicative method as that which revolves around training learners to become competent 'knowers' and 'users' of language in all ramifications. He contended that such users are selective and context-compliant in their choice of words or structures, able to express themselves proficiently as well as have the capability to deploy their various skills in the language so as to obtain the best output from their various endeavours and careers.

Theoretical Frame of Discussion

It is imperative to situate competence properly in relation to language teaching. By implication, teaching presupposes learning and learning is all about acquisition of knowledge in a field or profession. It is instructive and salient to state that language policy has already set the tone and basis for the use of the English language in diverse spheres of the Nigerian

setting, including education. The use of English as both the language of instruction in all schools and school subject has vitiated the indigenous languages to some extent (Arohunmolase, 2006).

Generally speaking, teaching is aimed at making learners to attain a basic level of proficiency in a specific area of study and the teaching of English as a language (school subject) is no exception. Even at the tertiary level of education, English enjoys the status of medium of instruction and for those who are majoring in the subject; they are still required to offer General English in the Department of General Studies. Considering the scenario, it therefore follows that English is more employed in teaching in Nigerian schools compared to other indigenous languages.

The concept of CLT, as stated earlier in relation to classroom teaching, is geared towards 'communicative competence', a term that has occupied the front burner in language use and more applicable to second or foreign language learning. The concept is eclectic in that diverse shades of meanings and interpretations have been ascribed to it. Ogunsiji (2008) affirmed that Chomsky (1965) introduced the concept of linguistic competence to account for the intuitive linguistic knowledge, which an ideal native speaker/hearer possesses of his language. His idea of linguistic competence has however been faulted on many grounds. For instance, the notion of an ideal native speaker is an abstraction. As a reaction to Chomsky's linguistic competence, Hymes (1971 as cited by Ogunsiji 2008) introduced the notion of "communicative competence".

Communicative competence, unlike linguistic competence is concerned with the knowledge and ability which speakers need to possess in order to use language in communicative situations (Alo, 2008). Hymes' notion of communicative competence has been expanded by language educators who are practice-oriented, among them are Canale and Swain (1980), who argued that communicative competence involves grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. To Alo (2008), grammatical competence, which he tags linguistic competence, is the knowledge of linguistic forms (sounds, lexicon, grammar and usage) that enables the language user to produce and generate utterances, adding that it is the knowledge of what is socially acceptable in language use. In other words, it relates to the extent to which utterances are produced and understood according to socio-cultural contexts and conventions. Ogunsiji (2008) viewed discourse competence as the mastery of the principles of combining grammatical forms and meanings in order to realise cohesive and coherent spoken or written discourse. He also stressed that it relates to the mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be invoked to address communication breakdowns that arise through factors like failure to recall an idea or grammatical form, or inadequacies in one or more of the areas of communicative competence. As a result of these developments, communicative competence is perceived to be wider than linguistic competence. To realize communicative competence, the user of a language (learner or teacher) should be familiar with the linguistic rules governing his language as well as the non-linguistic factors that constrain the process of communication.

The Challenges of CLT in the Nigerian Environment

It is quite obvious that there are numerous challenges and problems confronting the teaching and learning of the English language in Nigerian schools. It is also pertinent to state that when mention is made of language teaching and language learning, English remains a focal point, as it is the medium of instruction in the teaching of virtually all subjects/courses in the school curriculum/syllabus, foreign languages like French and Arabic inclusive. Based on this development over the years, there has been growing concern over the incompetence of Nigerian users of English. The persistent high failure rates in both private and public examinations, especially in the English language have drawn ire and condemnation from the Nigerian public, particularly parents, language experts, scholars and government. The decline, non-performance and incompetence of learners (students) in English in secondary schools and even at the tertiary institutions could be traced to the foundation level which is the primary school (Sofowora, 2014).

One of the odds against CLT is weak policy implementation (Musa, 2012; Adebajo, 2012). It is not an issue of contention that Nigeria is a multilingual country going by the plurality of languages that exist in the country. Besides, at the primary school setting, some researchers, including Fafunwa, Macauley and Sokoya (1989) and Goldenberg (2005), have emphasised the importance and imperative of indigenous languages, especially the child's mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools. Further still, the position of the Federal Government is clearly stipulated in the 1977 National Policy on Education, which was geared toward

strengthening Nigerian languages alongside English. Although it is the government's view that indigenous languages in Nigeria should be used as the medium of instruction in lower primary education, this "patriotic" effort on the part of government and by extension, policymakers have helped directly or indirectly in the unofficial mutual use of English and indigenous languages by tutors in schools.

In addition to all these developments, the *National Policy on Education (NPE)* of 1998, as declared by the Federal Government of Nigeria, also stresses the importance of indigenous languages as being instrumental to the competence of the Nigerian child. According to its policy statement, the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the 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. This declaration is quite instructive that the mother tongue, possibly first language, or the language of the immediate community (LIC) should be the medium of communication in the pre-primary and junior primary levels, while English is to be taught as a subject. English is expected to be introduced as a medium of instruction to pupils in the higher primary level and at the same time to be taught as a subject. It is quite disheartening that the reverse is the case. Some schools at present do not conform to these policies (Ogunsiji, 2012). In some schools at present, particularly in private schools, English is introduced to pupils right from the kindergarten stage. Poor policy implementation is, therefore, a snag to an effective and efficient CLT.

Beside weak policy implementation is the multilingual challenge (Orekan, 2010). It has been observed that many of the Nigerian languages do not have standardised orthographies (Jowitt, 1991). A major obstacle in strengthening indigenous languages lies in their lack of adequate vocabulary. In disciplines such as mathematics, sciences and vocational education, content areas, words or expression in indigenous languages might be insufficient and incapable of assigning appropriate and equivalent meanings and descriptions to them (Musa, 2012). As it has been stressed earlier, most Nigerian learners/users of English had their mother tongue before they came into contact with the English language. It is simply reasonable and fair for pupils/learners to assimilate concept much easily in their 'accustomed' languages so as to have a sound footing in them. Based on Fafunwa, Macauley and Sokoya's (1989) submission, the best education a child can get at the fundamental stage is that which comes through or is taught in his indigenous language.

It has been averred by Musa (2012) that psychologically, the proper growth and development of a child will be smooth and effective if and when such a child is bound with uninterrupted use of the language in which he has acquired first experience in life. It is a code (language) in which he lives, dreams and thinks and in which he can without difficulty or stress express his inner being and emotion. He goes further to say that to ignore this familiar language and to begin to teach him a foreign and unfamiliar language (possibly English in the Nigerian setting) as soon as he arrives in school is tantamount to alienating him from home and putting him among strangers.

A significant area that is problematic in achieving the build-up to achieving an effective and result-oriented CLT is the acquisition of language skills. Egbe (1996) alluded to the four skills of language, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the same vein, Okesipe and Okolo (2013) affirmed Egbe's (1996) position and further classify them into two categories: productive and receptive skills. The former, which includes speaking and writing, are used in language to create something new as well as to combine sounds to create words and sentences to relate information, experience, etc. Receptive skills are used to receive information, feeling, etc. The importance of these language skills cannot be negotiated in the learning or acquisition of any language.

Listening is instrumental to learning, especially a language. It is said to be different from hearing. This probably explains the reason for the incompetence of some learners of English in schools, especially at the primary school setting. Some teachers assume that their learners/pupils are listening; and for effective listening to be realistic as far as CLT is concerned, attitudinal, informative, appreciative and critical analytic listening should be imbibed. It is, however, disheartening to know that pupils are not familiarized with audio and audio-visual aids that could enhance effective learning of a language. Still on listening as a howling challenge to the attainment of communicative language teaching, particularly the English language, there is absence of motivation that could stimulate the listening skill of language learners (pupils). For instance, story-telling, loud reading of comprehension passages, impromptu recitation of poems and allied tasks that could enhance teaching and learning are often relegated to the

background. This obviously is impeding the learning and mastery of the fundamental contents of the English language.

A prominent and significant aspect where the incompetence of Nigerian users of the English language is obvious is oral communication (Akande, 2009). The complaints in some quarters is that the spoken English of those perceived to be educated is a departure from the norm and that some "certified" educated Nigerians do not speak the language intelligibly enough. While it could be permissible to admit that the influence of Nigerian languages on the English language is inevitable, a major challenge which some Nigerian learners encounter in the process of learning the English has to do with the variety of English that is taught by the teacher (Akande, 2009; Ellis, 2005).

The Nigerian learner of English in some cases is often exposed to different varieties of English, such as the British English, American English and Nigerian English. For instance, the word "schedule" is pronounced as /ʃedju:l/ and /skedʒu:l/ in British English and American English, respectively. However, in Nigeria, the two varieties – British English and American English, are used interchangeably. Evidently, this is one of the grey areas and challenges, which the Nigerian learners of English face in the process of learning its spoken form. In an attempt to introduce the Nigerian learners of English to the spoken form, aspects that are significant, such as situational drills, practice and repetition as well as the use of minimal pairs are often ignored. These aspects are quite useful and advantageous in that they aid and boost the speaking skill of both the teacher and the learner.

As it has been highlighted earlier, reading is a receptive skill of language, as it enables the individual to accumulate knowledge. Ayodele (1987) affirmed that many English language learners do not perform creditably in the language because they find it difficult to read and understand passages, paragraphs and even questions successfully, at least with minimal comprehension. Reading evidently comprises two interdependent fundamental processes. These are the visual and the mental or intellectual (Mabekoje, 2011). A critical aspect of reading that has often been sidelined or jettisoned is the reading technique, popularly called the SQ3R. It is a reading comprehension technique introduced by Francis Robinson (Okesipe & Okolo, 2013). The acronym SQ3R, also known as SQRRR stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recall and Review. It is a method or technique that is useful because it assists in maximising the benefits accrued to the reading task, thereby creating avenue for extraction of relevant information that are contained in the material as well as retaining the information in mind. However, learners of the English language are not usually made to undergo the SQRRR.

The first step of the technique which is survey enables the learner to have a view of title, contents, chapters, headings, sub-headings, illustrations, chapter summaries, among others. Question, another component of the technique enables the learner to ask himself some preliminary questions about the text (passage). Thereafter, the learner proceeds to read the text consciously and in detail, paying attention to relevant sections. The second R, which stands for Recall enables the

learner (reader) to recall or remember what has been read, with a view to focusing on the essential aspects of the reading. The last R which is called Review avails the learner (reader) the opportunity of carrying out a re-examination of the text. At times, some texts require re-reading for full comprehension. Unfortunately, this reading technique is not adequately employed by learners in the process of learning the English language.

One of the challenges which the Nigerian learners of English have to grapple with is writing. Writing is said to be arduous and tasking as it is a conscious and demanding activity (Egbe, 1996). It requires the writer to transpose his ideas and thoughts into a coherent passage that could be read and understood. At the lower level of learning the English language, some pupils are poorly motivated. Ill-motivation often results in the production of incoherent and incomplete expressions or write-up. Also, learners at the lower level of education with respect to English language are not exposed to critical areas of writing such as spelling, direct copying, fill-in-the gap formats as well as the use of substitution tables through the stage of model imitation to a guided writing stage. In addition to this, the cloze passage technique is not often employed for learners to enable them to complete slots/gaps that demand the use of context-sensitive words or structure.

The Nigerian learner of English, at present, suffers a disadvantage in relation to the development in writing that has been characterised by technology. There is no gainsaying that the importance of Information Communication Technology (ICT) is quite evident from the educational perspective.

Although the chalkboard, textbooks, radio/television and film have been used over the years, none of them has quite impacted on the educational process like the computer (Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu, 2005). As commendable as this fact could be, it is equally true and worrisome that the influence of technology has worsened the performance of Nigerian learners/users of English. The advent and use of the social media, which comprises *Facebook, Twitter and Youtube*, among others, has engendered a distinct form of writing that is a clear departure from the conventional form. Teachers of English have to contend with the use of English by learners which possibly is the offshoot or resultant effect of the social media in the essays, letters and other types of composition from their learners (Orekan, 2010).

Another problem is that of curriculum materials (Musa, 2012). In view of the fact that there is a proliferation of publishers, such as *Macmillan, Evan Brothers, Longman* and others which operate in concert with the National Educational Research Development Council (NERDC), quality course materials and supplementary books are grossly inadequate in English and indigenous languages. A situation where learners and teachers alike do not have quality curriculum materials will automatically spell doom for language teaching and language learning. Similarly, learning environment (classroom setting) constitutes a tragic impediment to the learning and teaching of languages, especially English in the Nigerian setting. The educational system in Nigeria, particularly in public schools, is bedeviled by overcrowding. A situation where there are more students/learners than a teacher could cope with will surely not be result-oriented (Griffiths, 2011). Overpopulation

of learners in a class will actually erode quality control and output on the part of the instructor (teacher). The Federal Government of Nigeria, according to the *National Policy on Education* (2004), recommends a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20 for pre-primary and 1:30 for primary school. This is not actually implemented in some schools. In addition to this problem is the deplorable condition of the classrooms where learners learn (Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu, 2006).

The role of the teacher in the facilitation of learning is very vital. However, what is at stake is how a teacher handles a class in terms of teaching. Richards (2006) is of the view that both the teacher and the learner have their distinct roles in the classroom. Students (learners) are to participate in classroom activities that are based on a cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning. Students should be comfortable with listening to their peers in group work, rather than relying on the teacher for a model. The teacher is expected to perform the role of a facilitator and a monitor. With respect to the learner-centred classroom activity as emphasised by CLT, the reverse of the situation is what is obtainable in many Nigerian schools. The teacher, in most cases, has often been the dominant factor in what happens in the classroom, leaving the learner in a difficult position. Some teachers do not even allow learners to air their views on issues that are being discussed, thereby hindering the potentials of the learners and their quest to gain more knowledge.

In addition to this, the quality of teacher in most cases impact positively and negatively on their students (learners). It has been observed that teachers of languages, especially English,

are incompetent. The ability to speak a language does not necessarily confer on one the status of a teacher. Some teachers of language, especially English are said to be bereft of the basic skills of language. Blame has often been apportioned to teachers of languages, particularly English, on account of the dismal performance of their students/learners in both private and public examinations. Teachers that are not well versed in the basic concepts of the English language will not expectedly become magicians, who will turn out competent learners and users of the language overnight. Competence in the use of both English and indigenous languages at the upper level and lower level of education, respectively is the master key that will open doors of various fields of study to the Nigerian learners.

The Way Forward

Nigerian public schools are far behind time in offering multiple pathways to the teaching and learning of English as a second language. The classroom setting is still beset by numerous and varied challenges that are complex but surmountable. This can only be achieved if concerted effort is put in place by all major stakeholders in the education sector. It is an undeniable fact that teachers play crucial role in the dissemination of information and transmission of knowledge. It is therefore imperative that the quality of a teacher will have a commensurate effect on the learners. As it has been highlighted above, some language teachers are not competent in the delivery of the basics of the languages they teach. Since learners look up to the teacher as authority, they are at a high risk because they accept anything that comes their way as being authoritative and correct. One sure way of getting out of

this logjam is to restructure the recruitment process of teachers. Knowing full well that appointment and promotion of teachers is the exclusive duty of the government, quality and competent teachers should be absorbed to teach learners in languages. The quality of teachers on ground will go a long way in putting the learners on a sound footing.

It is also not sufficient having quality and competent teachers of language in place. One of the features of language is dynamism. Since language is not static, it is incumbent on government, corporate organisations, non-governmental organisations and well-meaning individuals to avail language teachers, especially English, the opportunity to attend conferences, workshops, seminars and the likes that will assist them (teachers) in updating their knowledge. It will equally enable them to share their experience in the classroom with their counterparts as well as ask questions on the challenges they encounter.

Furthermore, teachers generally are not well motivated and this often has a negative effect in the quality of what they teach the pupils. Some see and embrace teaching as the last resort. A situation where teachers are not regularly and well paid will birth poor delivery and engender absence of interest. It is therefore, imperative on the part of government and private school owners to ensure that teachers are well paid and regularly, in addition to other allowances/incentives. This will prompt them to be alive to their responsibilities. Teachers are also expected to ensure that learners participate in all the activities in the classroom. Since CLT is learner-based, teachers will do well not to dominate the class. They are to be

facilitator and monitor while the learners participate fully in all the activities required by the curriculum.

Another problematic area that has to be dealt with is language skills. These skills are very essential to the competence of learners of language. At the primary school setting, language teachers will do well to introduce recorded materials like audio and audio-visual aids (Sofowora, 2014). This is necessary and imperative because pupils are easily attracted to pictures. As a means of making them to be attentive (listening) effective, this method becomes inevitable and desirable. Additionally, learners' motivation and interest can be improved and sustained when they are subjected to storytelling, loud reading of comprehension passages, impromptu recitation of poems and allied tasks. When these have been eventually achieved, the teacher can proceed to introduce tasks on subjects that are not entirely simple. Listening as a skill is quite instrumental to learning as it affords the teacher to make on-the-spot assessment of the learner(s).

Speaking as a basic and productive skill in language cannot be sidelined in the scheme of things. To ensure that learners are well grounded in languages, particularly English, the teacher is expected to take the lead by imparting into the learners adequate mastery of pronunciation skills that are conventional. Situational drills, practice and repetition, as well as the use of minimal pairs are basic pragmatic strategies that could enhance teaching of speaking skills. Communicative exchanges are beneficial in teaching speaking skills as they afford the learners to study, rehearse and produce intelligible and meaningful utterances. In the same vein, teachers should

ensure that accent, stress and intonation that are in conformity with the conventional standard are adopted.

The dissatisfaction being expressed in some quarters has to do with the reading culture that is gradually dying in Nigeria. Reading is a receptive skill in the written mode and it broadens readers' horizon and is important for independent studies. The goal of reading is comprehension. It has been observed that language learners do not do well in their studies and examinations due to bad/poor comprehension. To overcome the problems that are associated with reading by language learners, Mabekoje (2011) proposed some strategies. These include: the synthetic approach, analytical approach, alphabetic method, phonic method, look-and-say method and language experience method.

The synthetic approach has to do with the starting of small units of writing and building them into larger units, such as words and sentences. The analytical approach is marked by starting with relatively large units such as words, phrases and sentences, which are broken into smaller units. In the alphabetic method, learners are to learn the letters of the English alphabet, both capital letter and small letter forms. The letters are later combined into syllables and words before sentences are introduced. The phonic method teaches sounds to be associated with letters and combination of letters. The look-and-say method is a whole-word method as the word is the unit of language used in teaching reading. This method is associated with the analytical approach, while alphabetic method has link with the synthetic approach. The language experience method places attention on the use of sentence in

the teaching of initial reading. It is a method that gives prominence to listening, speaking and writing.

Writing is a visible aspect of learners' incompetence when it comes to language use (Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu, 2006). Most learners/students perform badly in written and spoken aspects because of their inability to express themselves correctly in simple English. Some are ignorant of the approved orthography. Learners' answers in the English language are replete with faulty grammar and structural English. It is disheartening that having been taught English for quite a reasonable number of years, some learners and teachers alike still demonstrate errors in the fundamentals of the language. As a way of getting rid of this unwholesome development that is associated with writing, teaching of writing at the lower level should begin with spellings, direct copying, fill-in-the-blank frames, use of substitution table through the stage of model imitation should be taught and practised. In addition to these, cloze passage could be introduced where slots/gaps that require context-sensitive words or structure are left open for learners to complete. This will ensure that appropriateness of word choices in learners has been imbibed and achieved. In addition to this, learners of the English language should demonstrate a degree of consciousness by making the distinction between the formal and informal contexts of language use. In the social media such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Youtube*, among others, language, especially English, is used for personal and intentional effects. Therefore, the use of English that manifests in the social media should not be employed in the conventional/formal setting of education.

For CLT to be effective in the Nigerian setting, there is the urgent need to tackle the problem of poor policy implementation. A lot of policies have been formulated in the country, but there is always the absence of political will to ensure their implementation. Government and policy makers should ensure that the spirit and letter of all policies are implemented. A situation where, for instance, pupils/learners that are expected to be taught school subjects in the first two years in indigenous languages is not enforced makes a mockery of the system. Inspectors of education have critical roles of monitoring and enforcing policies in this regard. In addition to this, the curriculum of language teaching in schools should be reviewed in such a way that it will accommodate the multilingual nature of the Nigerian environment. The socio-cultural beliefs and practices in Nigeria, no doubt, have influence on the use and learning of English. This will assist learners to know how to use the English language for a range of different purposes and functions. Not left out is the choice of materials that are employed in language teaching. Materials, such as textbooks that are officially recognized and recommended for language teaching, should be strictly used. Bringing in or using materials that are not approved will erode the aim and objective of language learning that some Nigerian languages lack. It is also on record that some Nigerian languages lack orthography. Efforts should be geared towards their standardization. A language without orthography is definitely not a good candidate in the aspect of language teaching and learning. Therefore, efforts should be made by language experts and policy makers to ensure that such languages have orthographies.

The teaching and learning environment is of paramount importance. It has been observed that some schools, especially in urban centres, are sited in areas where there is noise, busy movements and distractive activities of people (Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu, 2006). Some schools also have dilapidated buildings with leaky roofs and cracked walls that are used for classroom activities. Overcrowding is equally affecting language learning in schools as teachers might not be able to cope with the teeming population of learners. Some language teachers work under stress as they have heavy workload. These are issues that should be practically addressed.

Some schools do not have functional libraries and where they exist, the bookshelves are nearly empty. In some cases, the available books on the shelves are musty and outdated. For language teaching and learning to be effective, there is the need to have state-of-the-art language laboratories. Most schools do not have language laboratories, let alone having one that is technologically up-to-date. This problem is largely traceable to poor funding. Consequently, it is recommended that the stakeholders in Nigeria education should see to adequate funding of the sector.

Conclusion

This paper has taken a look at CLT as being instrumental and pivotal to effective teaching and learning. It emphasized the role of the teacher as the facilitator and monitor while the learners engage in diverse activities in the classroom. CLT is, therefore, a marked departure from a teacher-dominant classroom setting (Richards, 2006).

Indeed, language is the vehicle of social interaction and we need effective language to function properly in all facets of life. However, the problems that are associated with language teaching and learning, especially the English language in Nigeria is multi-faceted. Some of these challenges such as lack of quality and competent teachers, inadequate or poor exposure of learners to the basic skills of language, poor policy implementation, teaching and learning environment, lack of and inadequate instructional materials, among others have been highlighted. The issues that have been raised could simply be categorized as teacher-induced, learner-related, material-related and environmental-based.

However, the problems can be surmounted if all the relevant actors and stakeholders dutifully and willingly join hands together to tackle the ills that plague the teaching and learning of languages, particularly English. A holistic and pragmatic approach will engender a system where the English language learners will achieve competence, not minding their status as English as a Second Language (ESL) users.

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