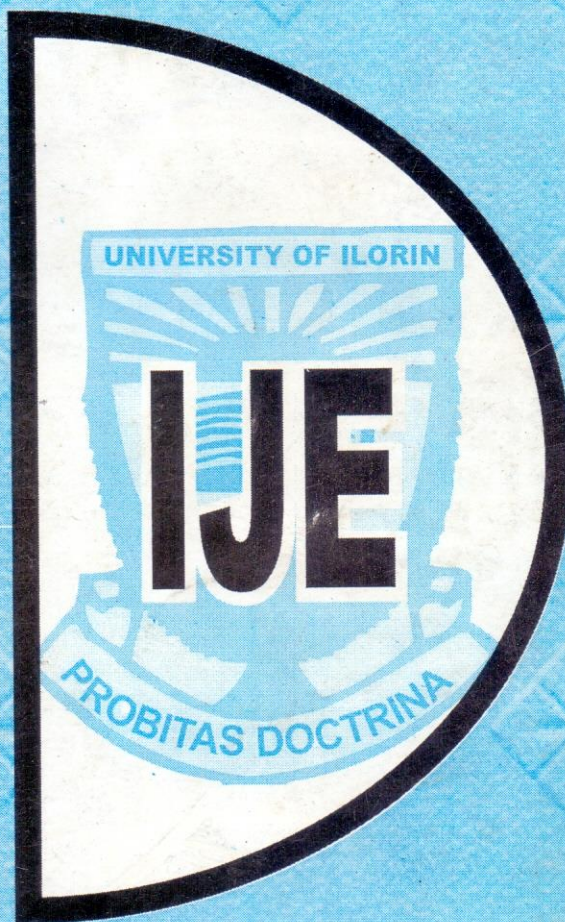


Ilorin¹ Journal Of Education



ISSN: 0189 - 6636

**Volume 24, July 2004
Volume 25, August 2005**

the country.

Millstein, W. D. (1990). The effects of pacing and sequence control in an interactive video lesson.

Educational and Psychological Measurement, 29(1), 17-27.

Omoniyi, O. T. (2004). Effects of tele-video instruction on distance learners' performance in educational

technology at Oyo State University, Oyo. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

with him.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Useful, M. O. (1995). The effect of computer-aided instruction on student achievement in

distance education. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

ILORIN JOURNAL

OF

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA.

VOLUME 24, July, 2005

© IJE 2005

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the permission of the copyright owners.

ISSN: 0189 - 6636

VOLUME 23, August, 2005

IMPLICATIONS OF LINGUISTIC, PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL THEORIES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND TESTING

Taofiq A. Alabi,

Department of English,

University of Ilorin.

Abstract

It is saddening to recount that over the years, testing has not been a true and perfect consequence of teaching. These fields, which are supposed to be the wings of reinforcing learning via their symbiotic relationship, have been somewhat severed. This is not implicating that learners are not being examined. The contention here is: how effective and commensurate are the concepts of teaching and testing as intertwined phenomena? Motivation and learning, which are primarily the essence of teaching, are reinforced by an expectation of indices of measurement. The teacher, the taught, the materials and even the methodology (for effective language learning in this case) can only be appraised to determine their effectiveness by testing. It is against this backdrop that this essay seeks to examine ways in which certain established and selected linguistic, psychological, sociological and pedagogical tenets may cohere to boost the pragmatic processes and products of language teaching and testing.

Introduction

The concepts of language teaching and language testing have been found to be vital issues which need to be properly attended to if 'ideal' language learning, most especially in a second language (L2) situation is to be enhanced. It is also understood that various principles and tenets apply to these language teaching and testing situations. Hence, the need to assess the implications of the theories to language teaching and testing is imperative.

According to Bruner (1966), a theory of instruction has four major features which can be considered under the following headings:

- Predisposition to learning
- The structure and form of knowledge sequence and
- Reinforcement.

A theory of teaching is expected to specify these early experiences which would enhance predisposition to learning. The teacher should be able to arouse the pupils' curiosity to learn. Also, it is expected to specify the ways in which the carefully structured knowledge should be disseminated and evaluated. A theory of instruction

should specify the most effective sequence for imbibing a specific kind of knowledge; and it should also specify the nature and pacing of reward and punishment.

On this issue, Olorundare and Medahunsi (2004) add that three basic assumptions are usually made about the concept of instruction. These are:

- Its association of behavioural change with learning;
- Its functional essence of instigating acquisition of concepts and development of independent thinking; and
- Its definition of goals with the necessary guidance and facilitation from the teacher.

With the foregoing, it becomes crystal clear that for a given language instruction to be effective, especially in a second language situation, a harmonization of the relevant variables in the right context is a necessary pre-requisite.

Meanwhile, the approach to the evaluation of linguistic, psychological, sociological and pedagogical theories in the discussion of language teaching and testing shall be made through three dimensions. These are the concepts, the theories and the implications of the theoretical frame of reference to language teaching and testing.

Concepts

i. **Language Teaching:** This is seen as the overall process which helps the learners to plan and interpret their linguistic experiences in a principled and coherent way. This process provides for genuine pedagogy which makes for effective impartation and successful learning experiences. The procedures provide for eventual success in the development of L² competence.

Language is a complex process as it involves human beings with varying motivations, interests, attitudes and aptitudes. Therefore, in an attempt to evolve a successful teaching of a language, different teaching strategies have been put in place. Language teaching also pre-supposes acquisition - a prior contact with a first language. So, language learning utilizes the linguistic experiences from the standpoint of the first language in the teaching of a target language.

ii. **Language Testing:** Language testing is a natural consequence of language teaching. There is the need to measure the progress and standard of achievement of language learners. Language testing remains a vital instrument used in evaluating the four variables of language teaching (i.e. the learner, the teacher, the programme/content, and the materials). In language testing, two modes of assessment stand out. These are formative language testing and summative language testing.

Formative language testing evaluates the various modules of language teaching syllabus, the procedural stages in its administration for diagnostic reasons, so that

the "ineffective" and "inefficient" variables could be amended or removed. Summative language testing on the other hand seeks to assess the end product, the overall result of a language teaching programme on the learners' competence. The assumption here is that the end justifies the means. This view is also shared by Fajemidagba (2004, p. 100) in his explication of the functional essence of continuous assessment test as a form of evaluation for determining the "progress being made by students during lectures" (formative in this case); and at the same time "used to determine the level of performance of students in the content of the courses they registered for" (which is summative in this regard).

Overall, language testing is an indispensable phenomenon in the ELT programme as it is the valid medium through which the efficiency of the language teachers, the appropriateness of content and materials, for language teaching and successful attainment (of the set goals) by the learners can be assessed.

The Theoretical Frameworks

Linguistic Theory: This holds that the degree of disparity or relationship between the existing languages provides the background for the justification of what a language is and what a dialect is. Similarities or differences between systems account for 'distinct languages' in preference to 'dialects of a language'. The assumption here is that a functional L₁ is instrumental in the learning of other languages. Linguists like Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky and Dell Hymes, among others, view competence as a primary and indispensable phenomenon which determines the level of one's communicative performance in a given language. In other words, adequate attainment of linguistic competence and performance is a resultant effect of the innate tendency which has been sharpened by the first language. Although, the early exposure of a child to ideal language stimuli is important, the pre-existence of sensori-motor intelligence (which exist prior to acquisition) is a functional, elementary and practical co-coordinating factor.

Psychological Theory: This is a scientific assumption which appreciates the distinguishing traits in the behavioural pattern of individuals. This theory emphasizes a 'practice' oriented kind of behavioural changes which is based on instrumental learning. It presents a situation where the object of learning is seen as a phenomenon which is learnt through the association of object with the concept. It further employs transfer and reinforcement in establishing a permanent relationship between stimulus and response. Pavlov's Classical Conditioning and Skinner's Operant Learning are examples of learning theories which emphasize learning through association and reinforcement (Berliner, 2004).

Sociological Theory: The society is a conglomeration of social systems. It entails other features as social classes and statuses. Gender issue, age distribution, mood, and the likes, are other social variables which affect and determine an individual

'role' or 'role play' in her relationship with other members of the society. By implication, this maintains that linguistic variations and change, as supported by Labov (1969) and Bailey (1973), constitute a framework on which sociolinguistic investigations are based. This is probably why linguists describe the general process of acculturation as involving modifications of linguistic attitudes and behaviours.

These modifications were not seen as requiring only the elimination of certain elements (whether phonological, morphological, syntactic or semantic) but the addition and re-organization of new ones as conditioned by the social context. Language usage is seen as being relative to social circumstance/context of use. And also, social status in relation to 'need' plays a leading role in the appropriation of language teaching programme.

Pedagogical Theory: This is a general teaching theory which emphasizes the principle of realism. It advocates for didactic methodology in teaching and learning situations. This suggests the immersive technique as a potent strategy for language teaching and learning. Pedagogical theory aims at evolving a great deal of learning by doing. Practice, repetition and rote-learning are sub-strategies which emanate there from.

Since language forms the basis of man's total knowledge (Tinuoye, 2003), the vital roles played by language in the area of education cannot be over-emphasized. Thus, the pedagogical instances of language should be logical, procedural and systematic. The sequence of learning experience should move from known to unknown, simple to complex, concrete to abstract and familiar to unfamiliar concepts. So, in a general sense, a judicious application of all other theories is subsumed under pedagogical theory. This is true because they all seek to provide conceptual frameworks and recommend practical methods to the solution of general language teaching and testing problems.

Implications of the Various Theories For Language Teaching and Testing

Linguistic: One potent implication of linguistic theory is that language teaching should recognize the fact that experiences in L_1 should be related to the teaching of the target language. The first language acquired has a tremendous impact in the learning of the second language. Therefore, care must be taken to ensure that a conducive environment is created for language acquisition of a growing infant. This will facilitate his development of Language Acquisition Device; the innate potentiality which pre-conditions the ultimate acquisition and learning of languages.

Language tests should be designed in such a way that the areas of disparities between L_1 and the target language are identified through contrastive language testing. This would provide an excellent frontier where error analysis model assists

in diagnosing the inhibitions to learning, thereby providing clues for facilitation of language learning.

More so, the teaching of rules should be seen as a pre-requisite before a teacher proceeds to the functional use of the language in the classroom situation. The linguistic performance of every learner should be seen as a necessity which must be accomplished. Hence, the methodology should allow for active participation of students in the teaching process. The testing procedures should utilize the receptive skills of the learners in perfecting their productive skills. For instance, the use of descriptive language testing stands out as a prominent tool of measurement which enhances the learners' communicative competence in a given language.

Psychological: Herman (1961) cited in Finocchiaro (1969) identifies five steps through which the speakers of other languages proceed in learning a new language. These steps include anticipation, initial conformity, discouragement, crisis and adjustment and integration. The teacher needs to be extremely skillful in tackling problems of psychology. The students learning potential will also play a leading role in determining the content of each lesson, if a pupil finds himself in a group where all the pupils need help in building the basic experiential concepts, the problem is generally not one of great magnitude. If on the other hand, he finds himself in a group where other pupils possess experiential concepts in the language, the problem assumes a tremendous proportion.

So, by implication, the language teacher is expected to vary his methodology in order to cater for the psychological disparities (individual differences) in the learners. Since the theory emphasizes learning by association, the teaching of language should entail both the diachronic and synchronic study of the L_2 from the standpoint of the L_1 . The theory posits that the more a stimulus is presented, the better perception a learner has. This appropriates the audio-lingual strategies of language teaching by memorization, rote learning, practice and repetition. However, the problem with the approach is that the points of language deficiency in individual learner might be difficult to identify and analyze. Simultaneous practice facilitates learning when L_1 and L_2 are studied together. The testing in language skill should be objective in order to sustain students' interest in learning. Motivation is a basic necessity in language teaching and testing situations. Therefore, adequate reinforcements (e.g. applauding correct responses) and enough impetus (e.g. availability of instructional resources) must be put in place to enhance performance.

Another vital implication of the psychological theory is that it advocates for a clearly suitable strategy which imposes on the learning experiences which are in line with their innate potentialities. The learners' language ego feel reinforced when they are confronted with learning experiences at the crucial points of 'needs' in target language. This means that giving a test which has no functional essence in relation to learners' use of the target language could be annoying and frustrating.

Sociological: The cultural context in which the language is being taught and tested is of fundamental importance for full understanding and evaluation. The cultural and social situations should be clarified and taught concomitantly with the features of language. This is done by simulating real life situations in the classroom. Learners should be allowed to practice language use in its cultural context. The community in which the school is located should not be ignored as well. The implication here is that cultural norms should be taken into consideration in the development of language curriculum, evaluation, administration and testing.

Language teachers and students should see language as a social instrument of communication which is relative to role play and context. What this theory advocates is that pragmatics should be given more attention in the teaching and testing of any language. If truly the essence of language is communication, then, the 'communicative competence' or 'linguistic performance' should be the striking goal of any language teaching curriculum. Learners should be made to understand the variant complexity into which functional use of a language may be put.

By inference, for a judicious manipulation of the variables of language teaching methodology, the idea of 'natural situation' or immersion method should be put to play here; most especially in the areas of phonology and pragmatics. The implication that this has for testing is that the assessment (or mode of assessment) should neither be rigid of mono-directional. Tests should be designed in such a way that the actual use of language (performance) in certain contexts by learners is measured rather than the knowledge (competence) of a language which may not necessarily guarantee the use (communicative competence). It is also important to know that when students err the faulty responses should be corrected almost immediately within the framework of the context.

The notion of communicative competence is vital in sociolinguistic purviews. The idea stemmed from the premise that language is a functional instrument of socio-cultural expression. So, if the use of a language is hinged on the sociological realities, then, the use of pragmatic, true-to-life modules of imparting linguistic knowledge should be intensified. Consequently, this approach requires a testing module which can adequately appraise not only the linguistic knowledge but the appropriate use of codes that fit different circumstances. This is why communicative language testing which, in addition, examines the extent to which the learners are able to demonstrate their linguistic knowledge in meaningful communicative situation seems imperative. This view is also shared by Morrow (1979) and Canale (1984). To Weir (1988, p.9).

The performance tasks candidates are faced with in communicative tests should be representative of the type of task they might encounter in their own real-life situation and should correspond to normal language use where an integration of communicative skills is required with little time to perfect on, or monitor language input and output.

Sociological theory has a far-reaching implication for language teaching and testing. This is because it emphasizes ESP teaching and testing considering their provisions which seek to meet the diverging needs of learners in different situations.

Pedagogical: This indicates that the teaching of language should be practical if truly the rationale behind competence is performance. Learners should be put at the centre of the learning experience. Also in the centre are the teacher and the school. It has often been said "there are no good or bad methods, there are only good or bad teachers". According to Finocchiaro (1969), the personality of the teacher coupled with his attitude towards the pupils and his works will determine the extent to which a programme will be carried out. The general teaching skills of a teacher coupled with his linguistic ability facilitate or inhibit learning depending on his quality. A teacher who is proficient in language usage finds it easy to emphasize similar or contrasting elements in the target language, prepare appropriate approaches and materials and appreciate the difficulties faced by learners.

The objective, the curriculum and the evaluative procedure should be a joint thinking and planning of the school supervisor and the teacher. This co-operation will be reflected in the classroom instructional programme. The teacher who feels secured in the cooperation and understanding of the supervisor will experiment with new practices, modify the curriculum and develop the facets of a topic more thoroughly. The teacher may find it necessary to determine or change the size of his class in order to prepare materials for varying ability levels and modify the teaching activities to suit him and the class.

Immersion method, didactic strategy and situational dialogues which are student-centred enhance learning. The language learning experience must be organized in such a way that it easily correspond with learners experiences in the assimilation of rules. Also, direct use of referencing should be adopted in the teaching of literary aspects of language.

In the area of testing, the pedagogical theory assumes that an ideal language test must not be fuzzy or abstract. Learners should be able to identify the relevance of test items in their communicative use into which a language is put. This underscores the use of communicative language testing over other descriptive ones which are largely grammar-governed but context-insensitive. Tinuoye (1991) identifies four phases of language testing. These are the traditional approach, the psychometric-structuralist model, integrative testing and communicative language testing. Of all these, communicative language testing seems to be the best because it is applicable to all the theories of language teaching discussed in this paper.

Conclusion

In recent times, the eclectic approach to language teaching is considered to be obsolete as an optimal solution to pedagogy-related problems as it continually fails

to meet the criterion of efficiency. Consequently, the idea of approaching language teaching and testing, from the standpoints of theoretical frameworks of sociology and psychology of language offers the language pedagogy uncompromising opportunity of evolving an intensive, but highly productive methodology.

This paper is not in any way a wholly encompassing exposition. What has been done was just to exploit the possibilities of adapting the various theories to better the lot of language teaching and testing processes. In the final analysis, the presentation therefore is a summary of the synthesis of the implications of linguistic, psychological, sociological and pedagogical theories to language teaching and testing.

References

- Bailey, C. J. (1973). *Variation and linguistic theory*. Arlington: Centre for Applied Linguistics.
- Berliner, D. C. (2004). Educational psychology: In *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia Standard*.
- Bruner, J. (1966). *Towards a theory of instruction*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Canale, M. (1984). Testing in a communicative approach. In G. A. Jarvis, (Ed.), *Northeast conference report* (pp. 79 - 92). Middlebury: Northeast Conference.
- Fajemidagba, M. O. (2004). Invigilation of examinations and computation of grades/results" In E. A. Ogunsakin, (Ed.), *Teaching in tertiary institutions* (pp. 100 - 108). Ilorin: Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin.
- Finocchiaro, M. (1969). *Teaching English as a second language*. Forbes Duncan: Harper and Row.
- Finocchiaro, M. (1988). *Teaching English as a second language*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Labov, W. (1969) *The study of non-standard English*. Washington DC: Centre for Applied Linguistics.
- Morrow, K. E. (1979). Communicative language testing: Revolution or evolution. In C. J. Brumfit, & K. Johnson, (Eds.), *The communicative approach to language teaching* (pp. 143 - 158). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Olorundare, A. S. & Medahunsi, S. O. (2004) principles and practice of instruction in tertiary institutions. In E. A. Ogunsakin, (Ed.) *Teaching in tertiary institutions* (pp. 31 - 46). Ilorin: Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin.
- Tinuoye, M. O. (1991) Communicative language testing. In Adegbija, E. E. (Ed.), *Effective communication skills in reading and learning: Basic principles*. Ilorin: University of Ilorin: GST Division.
- Tinuoye, M. O. (2003). What is language: In O. Obafemi, & S. T. Babatunde, (Eds.), *Studies and discourse in english language* (pp. 1 -27). Ilorin: Haytee Publishing Company.
- Weir, C. (1988) *Cumulative language testing*. Britain: University of Exeter.