DEVELOPING THE ENGLISH TEACHER'S EXPERTISE TO IMPLEMENT THE NEW NIGERIAN NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Oladunjoye Oluwayomi Sefiu Ayanfe, PhD
Associate Professor, English Language Education
Olabisi Onabanjo University
Ago Iwoye,
Ogun State,
Nigeria.

ABSTRACT: *This paper is written to assist the English Language teacher trainers in Nigeria universities and the Secondary school English teachers to come to term with the reality on ground with reference to the New Senior Secondary School English Language Curriculum. It is a position paper resulting from the experience of the writer as a resource person in the nation – wide curriculum sensitization workshop of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), the makers of the Curriculum. For five years (2011-2015) the writer handled the "Humanities" aspect of the teachers' workshop in the Western Zone of the nation (Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Ekiti and Oshun). While this is not another workshop paper, nor a summary of the three years' workshop, it certainly contains the major highlights of the new curriculum presented from the point of view of a researcher with clear emphasis on what the roles of the English teacher should be as against what it used to be.*

KEYWORDS: English language, Curriculum Teachers, Development, Professionalism

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum is a world concept. It provides the totality of blueprint with which teaching is transmitted at different levels of education in all cultures and nations. Educational objectives; broad and specific are based on the ever changing society. Curriculum planners, therefore have the responsibility of planning a policy that will reflect societal needs. Like in any other part of the world, development in the teaching industry in Nigeria today is fast changing the teachers' roles. We have witnessed a shift in paradigm time and again, with a regular call on teachers to seek to improve on learners' centered and collaborative strategy as against the old teacher-centered approach. The call to abandon traditional roles and act more as guides and mentors have come to teachers through the likes of: (Adams1990, Staggina 1997, Fitzpatrick and Davies 2003, 4). Because Language is central to interactive process, in a nation like Nigeria where the official language is English, due consideration must be given to the central principles of language learning, namely interaction and collaboration and the accompanying skills; the importance of which has been recognized as a crucial element of new literacy (Richardson 2006).

Effective teachers are, more often than not, evaluated by the language they teach and the language they use to make learning happen. Of necessity it is assumed that they are skilled communicators.

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In the words of Meskill (2009), "Indeed, good use of language for instruction is essentially instruction in second and foreign language education." So much goes on in the language classroom as the language teacher issues instructions, takes responses, organize groups to talk, 'brainstorm' while providing enabling environment that takes care of the diverse backgrounds of learners.

Objective of the paper:
Experience has shown that teachers sometimes find it difficult to demystify conventions when it comes to analyzing or/and synthesizing the Curriculum in any school subject. The Curriculum planners do their work and produce the booklet. The school teacher receives the booklet with mixed feelings: how to break it down to suit his purpose and how to eventually apply it in the classroom to cover all the stated topics, follow the procedures, activate the recommended resources including trying the appropriate evaluation, request feedbacks and get the desired results.

What we do in the Faculty of Education of any university is to provide the pedagogical application of the content areas of the school subject. More often, than not, the teacher in training and his counterpart in the field (the classroom teacher) has to combine his content experience from the Faculty of Arts or Science with this pedagogy to be able to do the correct justice to breaking the Curriculum into meaningful bits. Unfortunately, our experience on the field (during the workshops) shows how inadequate most teachers are in accepting their roles as curriculum implementers. Among other things, this paper aims at:

(a)   Allowing the English teachers to see *what is new* in the New Curriculum
(b)   Providing a mid-point between the English Language Content and Pedagogy in transmitting the Senior Secondary school English Curriculum.
(c)   Presenting a short Literature on the expected roles of the Language teacher in this jet age of digital education. The purpose of this is to make the teacher see how much easy his/her job could become if he/she is familiar with the abundant resources available on the net that could facilitate his/her use of the Curriculum.
(d)   To give a typical breakdown of an aspect of the Curriculum as a sample for the teacher
(e)   To recommend strategies and approaches to helping the teacher trainees get equipped to handle the challenge of interpreting any curriculum in the future.
(f)   To recommend the application of the principles included in the new Nigerian curriculum for international use.

Curriculum, Language, Communication: Theory and Practice
Reporting on a meeting held in Ibadan in December 2005, Obioma in 2007 reiterates the Federal Government's intention to review and reform the Nigeria Educational Curriculum to attain the millennium Development Goals (MDGS). He also emphasized the need to align with critical targets of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) which include: value orientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and strategic empowerment through literacy and formal education. He summarizes further as follows:

"It became imperative that the existing curricular for Junior and senior Secondary Schools be reviewed and re-aligned to fit into the reform programme of the government. The National Council

on Education (NCE) directed the Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) to restructure the curriculum"

Now we have the fallout from the above to include the emergence of the new approved curriculum for Junior and senior secondary schools with focus on Science and Mathematics, Humanities, Business and Technology with relevant subjects for each stream listed. With various seminars held between January 2007 and September 2008, no one (stake holders) was left in doubt about what a true national curriculum should indeed reflect: the true ideals of a burdened nation bedeviled with myriads of unresolved riddles crippling her growth. Today we have, indeed, a national curriculum that provides a template for national growth through practical education. In the curriculum is: the depth, appropriateness and interrelatedness of curricular contents.

Curriculum is of no use where the language educators jettison the important role of theory, research and practice. In developing the trainees, it is assumed that educators will be guided to develop their own instructional strategies informed through observation, analysis, direct practice, and reflection. The observed pattern in the New English Language Curriculum is the recommendation of avalanche of discourse and dialogues in virtually all aspects the language.

Empirical studies, borrowing heavily from existing curriculum and learning theories, reveal that text-based discourse help a lot to promote students' reading comprehension. Examples of theories in question include cognitive, socio-cognitive, socio-cultural, group-re-group and dialogue. Cognitive theorists are of the opinion that students can experience active engagement in making meaning from text (Mckeown et al, 2009). From socio-cognitive perspective, discussion enables students to make public their views on issues arising from the text, consider alternative ideas from others, and champion a position fusing these diverse points of view. The socio-cultural theorists are of the opinion that discussion enables students to "co-construct knowledge and understanding about the text and internalize the ways of thinking that foster the knowledge of skills and dispositions needed to transfer to the reading of new texts" (Wells, 2007). Nystrand 2006, is of the School of thought of the Dialogue theorists who submit that it is easy to annex *competing voices in discussion* about text to get a proper shape for intelligent discourse and students' comprehension.

What is New in the New Curriculum?

Unlike in the previous ones, what is done in the new curriculum is that the four language skills: Listening and Speaking (Oracy) and Speaking and Writing (Literacy); put in the other - way: listening and reading (receptive skills) and speaking and writing (expressive skills) constitute the main streams or focal points of curriculum design. What I do here is to provide an extract of the relevant part of the New Senior Secondary English Language Curriculum. The purpose of this approach is to:

- Bring this important part to the readers directly without the burden of searching for the bulk. You will know, however, that it is not a total replacement of the complete curriculum.
- To awake the reader to the need to accept the New English Language Curriculum *hook, line and sinker* and get familiar with it with little or no reservation
- To join the teacher in implementing the various recommendations of the curriculum by providing a sample scheme and lesson guide.

Extract from the New Senior Secondary School English Language Curriculum

Introduction

The Senior Secondary English Curriculum is an extension of the Junior Secondary Curriculum. It builds on the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing already introduced significantly at the JSS level.

In the Nigerian society, no student can proceed to the tertiary level without a credit pass in English language.

In addition, the subject is the medium of instruction at all levels of education as well as the language of government and wider communication. Consequently, the English language is *primus interperes* among the core subjects in the Senior Secondary School Curriculum.

The revised Curriculum strives to equip the student with an adequate range of words, sentences and sentences types, to enable the student communicate effectively in school and outside it. The way the curriculum is designed ill ensure that the students can listen effectively to any speech or lecture, speak fluently and intelligibly, read materials of varying lengths and difficulty at all levels effectively, and rite logically with grammatically correct sentences

Objectives

The Objectives of this Senior Secondary (SS) English language curriculum include

(a)   Building upon the English language skills developed at the Upper Basic Education Classes,
(B) Developing the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing to enable the students undertake
     higher education without problems,
(a)   Equipping secondary school leavers with a satisfactory level of proficiency in the language for use in their work places,
(b)   Stimulating in them the love for reading as a pleasurable activity,
(c)   Promoting and enhancing the various language skills and competences for effective national and international communication.

Vocabulary developments components

Any student or person for that matter that needs to communicate effectively with English language is expected to possess adequate vocabulary, without which ability to communicate will be hampered. Vocabulary items that cover any areas of need and interest have been highlighted. These include:

1.   Words associated with home and family, agriculture, health, sports, religion, the professions, building etc.,
2.   Antonyms and synonyms,

3.   Word formation through prefixes and suffixes,
4.   Idioms and idiomatic expressions,
5.   Foreign words in common English usage,
6.   American and English spellings of common words,
7.   Spelling of commonly misspell words,
8.   Word modifiers

Oracy skills: listening comprehension

There is a deviation from the previous English language curriculum in the area of skills of oracy. In the past, the listening comprehension aspect is treated fleetingly and is being held responsible for failure in English language in our schools. For example, products are unable to listen efficiently to lectures, speeches etc. They rely heavily on teacher's notes, suggesting that the time used for teaching may have been wasted. Consequently, the listening skill to be taught has been extended to include:

1.   Listening to grasp main points or ideas in:
a.   Speech
b.   Conversation
c.   Lecture
d.   Poem
e.   Recorded material
f.   Radio/TV broadcast
g.   Short debate etc.
2.   Listening to identify the speaker's mood, tone and purpose
3.   Listening to identify details through signaling words like because, as a result, for example, in other words etc.
4.   Listening for summary note taking
5.   Listening to follow directions
6.   Listening to tell the meaning of words in context
7.   Listening to identify a speaker's style.

Oracy skills: spoken English

This is the reverse of the listening skill. Without a speaker, there can be no listener. The objective of thus component is to ensure that students speak the language intelligibly and communicate effectively, face to face, in the English language. To achieve this, the following areas were covered:

1.   Selected consonants that create pronunciation difficulty for many Nigerian students,
2.   Selected syllabic consonants
3.   Consonants sounds followed by /j/, /u/
4.   Words of three syllables stressed on the first, or second, or third syllable,
5.   Words of four syllabic consonants stressed on the first, second, or third syllables,

6.   Stress timing in English sentences; correct phrasing and, voice modulation in prose reading,
7.   Oral composition skills,
8.   Speaking to persuade and convince.

Literacy skills: reading comprehension

Reading is a very important literacy skill. At the Senior Secondary level, it involves recognition and accurate interpretations of words in context; understanding of sentences no matter how complex as well as ability to grasp the main ideas and import of what is read. To achieve these, attention was paid to the following:

1.   Reading silently for main ideas and details,
2.   Reading to grasp the meaning of words in context,
3.   Reading to follow directions,
4.   Reading to answer questions at all levels of comprehension;
•   recall level
•   translation level
•   interpretation level
•   extrapolation level,
5.   Reading for summary,
6.   Reading to identify theme,
7.   Reading to identify key words and sentences,
8.   Reading to make notes.

Materials suggested for reading practice and exercise are topical issues of current and national concern like

a.   National values honesty, hard work etc.
b.   Topic on corruption, fraud etc as espoused by ICPC, EFCC, National Orientation Agency, NAFDAC.

Literacy skills: writing for effective communication

Writing is an accurate representation of ideas on paper so as to communicate such thoughts and ideas to an audience. It is very important literacy skill, both for higher education and external communication. Aspects covered at this level serve as revision as well as extension of the ideas to more complex usages.
Areas covered include:

1.   Narrative writing
2.   Descriptive writing
3.   Expository writing
4.   Argumentative writing/debates
5.   Letter-writing formal, semi formal or informal

6.   Speech-writing for different occasions and purposes.
7.   Technical and scientific writing
8.   Report writing
9.   Creative writing etc.

These have been presented in very simple manner but the teacher is free to treat them in varying ways using dialogues, substitution tables, extensive practice exercises and extensive reading.

S/NO.	CONTENT OF CURRICULUM THEME 1	TOPICS (SSS ONE)	PAGE
1.	Vocabulary Development	Vocabulary Associated with Home and Family	1
2.	Vocabulary Development	Vocabulary Associated with Agriculture	2
3a.	Vocabulary Development	Vocabulary Associated with Fishing and Animal Husbandry – Fishing	4
3b.	Vocabulary Development	Vocabulary Associated with Animal Husbandry	4
4a.	Vocabulary Development	Words Associated with Religion – Traditional Religion	5
4b.	Vocabulary Development	Words Associated with Religion – Christian Religion	6
4c.	Vocabulary Development	Words Associated with Religion – Islamic Religion	7
4d.	Vocabulary Development	Other Expressions Associated with Religion	8
5	Vocabulary Development	Antonyms As words (i) Exactly Opposite in Meaning (ii) Nearly Opposite in Meaning	9
6.	Vocabulary Development	Synonyms as words (i) With the same	10

		meaning (ii) nearly the same in meaning	
7a.	Vocabulary Development	Words Associated with Profession – Advertising	11
7b.	Vocabulary Development	Words Associated with Profession – Stock Exchange	12
B.	Vocabulary Development	Spelling of Commonly Missplet words and the use of the Dictionary	13
	THEME 2	TOPICS	
1.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Selected consonants (j,z,……….etc)	15
2.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Consonants followed by /w/	15
3.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Consonants followed by /j/	16
4.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Syllabic consonants /I/	16
5.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Words of two syllables, stressed on the second syllable	17
6.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Consonants sound followed by K+W	17
7.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Consonants followed by /J/ and /U/ sounds	18
8.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Words of three syllables stressed on first, second or third syllables	18
9.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Words of four syllables , stressed on first, second and third syllables	19
10.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Stress timing in English Sentences; correct phrasing and voice modulation in continuous prose reading	19

11.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Oral composition skills 1; Narrative & Descriptive	20
12.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Oral composition Skills II; Expository & Argumentative	20
13.	Oracy Skills – Spoken English	Speaking to persuade/convince	21
	THEME 2	TOPICS	
1.	Oracy Skills – Listening Comprehension	Listening to grasp main points or ideas (in a speech, conversation, lecture, poem, recorded material, radio broadcast and short debates)	22
2.	Oracy Skills – Listening Comprehension	Listening to identify a speaker's mood, tone and purpose	
3.	Oracy Skills – Listening Comprehension	Listening to identify details	23-24
4.	Oracy Skills – Listening Comprehension	Listening for summary through identifying key words	24
5.	Oracy Skills – Listening Comprehension	Listening attentively to follow directions effectively	25
6.	Oracy Skills – Listening Comprehension	Listening to tell the meanings of words in context	26
7.	Oracy Skills – Listening Comprehension	Listening to identify a speakers' style	27
	THEME 3	TOPICS	
1.	Literacy Skills – Reading Comprehension	Reading to comprehend main ideas or story line	28
2.	Literacy Skills – Reading Comprehension	Reading to comprehend supporting details	29

3.	Literacy Skills – Reading Comprehension	Reading to comprehend word-meanings through context	30
4.	Literacy Skills – Reading Comprehension	Reading to identify the writer's mood, tone and purpose and the relationship between purpose and tone	31
5.	Literacy Skills – Reading Comprehension	Reading for summary	32
6.	Literacy Skills – Reading Comprehension	Reading to make notes	32
	THEME 3	TOPICS	
1.	Literacy Skills – Writing for Communication	Continuous writing-Narrative	34
2.	Literacy Skills – Writing for Communication	Continuous writing - descriptive	35
3a.	Literacy Skills – Writing for Communication	Letter Writing – Informal letter	36
3b.	Literacy Skills – Writing for Communication	Semi – Formal Letters	37
4.	Literacy Skills – Writing for Communication	Record Keeping	38
5.	Literacy Skills – Writing for Communication	Speech Writing	39
6.	Literacy Skills – Writing for Communication	Popular Articles for Various Reading Audiences	
	THEME 4	TOPICS	
1.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Nouns and Noun Phrases with the Definite Articles	41
2.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Countable and Uncountable Nouns	42

3.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Introducing Nominalisation of adjectives and verbs	43
4.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Irregular Verbs	44
5.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Complex Tense form	45
6.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Pharasal Verbs 1	46
7.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Pharasal Verbs II	47
8.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Adjuncts (Adverbs)	48
9.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Complex Sentences	49
10.	English Grammar – Structural Patterns	Compound Sentences	50

(culled from *"Federal Ministry of Education Senior Secondary Education Curriculum ENGLISH LANGUAGE for SS1-3 by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council")*

ACHIEVING BEST PRACTICE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

We will recall that a major component of the Basic Education-Programme is to ensure quality in teaching and learning process. One way of achieving this is through systematic capacity building for teachers as well as provision of seasoned articles that will be practical and down to earth such that each teacher would be empowered with confidence and competence.

Since one major goal of this paper is to demystify conventions while setting out to give the best to language learners via the new curriculum, the writer presents in this section samples of broken curriculum with easy-to-follow steps that will guide their usage in the class.

A.   The meeting point between Content and Pedagogy in the new Curriculum

TOPIC	PERRFORMANCE OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	TEACHER'S ACTIVITTIES	STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES	TEACHING & LEARNING MATERIALS	EVALUATION GUIDE
Reading To make notes	Students should be able to: Read and comprehend the message of the passage by following the story lines (plot) Identify the supporting/secondary points. Identify key words and sentences	Students' text and other simplified story books that discuss issues such as: Honesty as a guiding principle, examination malpractice, dignity of labour, injustice, why corruption must stop, the menace of insecurity etc.,	Teaches the need for note making from listening and reading sessions. Explains the stages toward effective note taking/making. This involves: attentive listening, reading with concentration, identifying key words and sentences etc.,	Students should be attentive in order to: Grasp the explanation Apply the skills discussed during the illustration /demonstration exercise Follow the teacher's instructions	Clippings from news papers, magazines. Internet video/audio downloads or taped materials	**You might try some or all of the following:** Present two Short passages to students to: Identify the main/supporting secondary points. Assign title other than the one given (if any) Identify or suggest themes Do character sketch of main characters etc.,

B.   SAMPLE LESSON PLAN ON DETERMINERS SUGGESTING QUANTITIES.
 CLASS: SS2
DATE: 10/02/2014
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
- To distinguish between and among classes of quantifying determiners/articles.
- To match selected articles/determiners with appropriate nouns to form noun phrases.
- To form short sentences with specific phrases.

This work is based on The Free Dictionary Language Forum by Farlex

RESOURCES REQUIRED: Prepared Worksheet by the presenter and flashcards that further illustrates the concepts – Determiners expressing quantities

LESSON OUTLINE: Structure Groupings
Activities: The practicality of this lesson is best realized with proper timing and graded programmes in episodes as follows: Introduction (10 mins.), Episode 2 (20 minutes.), Episode 3 (20 minutes), Lesson end/plenary (10 minutes). These activities could be approached in Groups first, then Individuals, followed by group discussion and again Groups and whole class, and finally Whole class.

FLASHCARDS SORTS: Students are given flashcards of words generally believed to be determiners like: a, an, the, any, both, some, each, that, those   etc., which they are asked to divide into definite, indefinite, quantitative, distributive piles. Students work on this in groups. Feedback will be required on why they placed flashcards in the piles that they did. (Learning: Matching determiners along the divides of appropriate nouns, reasons for them)

SKILL PRACTICE: Students are given worksheets (attached as a separate file) where the selected quantifiers: 'many', 'every' and 'much' are put in separate boxes with over 50 words outside the boxes. Spend a few minutes reading out the instructions while students concentrate on their worksheets. Then ask the students to individually attempt their skill practice. Give the students 15 minutes to do this and then reveal the correct grouping. Group discussion about why they chose their perceived answers. Bring them finally to why the correct answers are correct indeed and why a few of the words appeared in two boxes.

MORE SKILL PRACTICE: FORMING SENTENCES WITH NOUN PHRASES – Give groups the opportunity to re-group i.e, changing their partners and appointing new group coordinators. Give each group the time to form sentences with selected phrases from any box. You must provide the necessary logistics that will ensure no box is jettisoned and none is overused. One way of doing this is to ensure that a group must not use more than three phrases from each box to form the expected ten sentences per group.   Feedback to the class and identify common sentences across groups and possible errors for general corrections)

LINKING EXERCISE: Students are asked to suggest words not listed that could match correctly with any of the three determiners in the treated boxes. Let the entire class react to specific noun phrases and possible sentence formation. Reinforce the idea that the use of each determiner is

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restrictive by grammatical rule e.g: 'many' is only to go with plural countable nouns, 'much' with uncountable nouns and 'every' with singular countable nouns.

CONCLUSION

A lot of things pertaining to the curriculum of any nation are expected to be as diverse as life and human challenges, hence the content of the curriculum and the methods employed to present it is the prerogative of the society, the nature of the learners and the type of subject , Badmus, (2002). The changes in the society and problems of our time are one of the reasons for curriculum review. This is what makes curriculum issue universal.The multiple tensions and struggles that the teacher educator and teachers faced and created when confronted with implementing new curriculum is the thrust of this paper.

According to Alsubaie (2015), Myles,(2011) hidden expectations, skill sets, knowledge, and social process can help or hinder student's achievement and belief systems. This explains the reason for any curriculum to be inclusive. This is, what, for instance, hidden curriculum is all about.The task of teaching for effective output is a continuous activity that requires a great level of discipline, on the job training and willingness to try new tasks. There is always a big gap between intention and action and translating intention to action will require deliberate efforts on the part of the teacher.

To drive the wheel of curriculum implementation teachers are advised through this paper to be culturally aware and sensitive practitioners able to promote pedagogies for autonomy that are 'context-sensitive and location specific' as recommended by (Jimenez Raya, Lamb, and Vieira 2007}. The teacher has the liberty to bring innovations into his/her teaching that will help learners to have a sense of belonging. In teaching English to second language learners the teacher has all activities laid out in the new national curriculum such that he/she could choose and pick. There are resources unlimited and the teacher has the autonomy to be original in his/her practice mush as he/she has the liberty to learn from the avalanche of resources available to him/her. He/she must however have the curriculum has the focus knowing that evaluation is based on curriculum set goals.

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