
IMPLEMENTABILITY OF ENGLISH ACROSS THE CURRICULUM STRATEGY IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT: *English Language in Nigeria occupies an important position. Educationally, it is a subject and the medium of instruction at all levels, an official and National Language. As a multi-Lingual nation with over 270 Languages it is also a second language, a lingua-franca and language of almost all human endeavours. Yet, fluency in the language has continued to be illusive to majority of even educated Nigerians. This is despite all efforts and use of all known. English methods to promote the language. This paper tries to examine the possibility of implementing yet another strategy, the English Across the Curriculum (EAC), in the Education System. With a view to attaining reasonable fluency. Attempt is made at giving historical background of the strategy, what it is, and its aims. Its spread across the world is also examined and why many countries implemented it in their education system and the challenges faced, the role of each stake-holder in implementing the EAC has also been pointed out. An indepth discussion is also put in place on the possibility of adopting the system in the target country. Proceeding this, are realisable recommendations for implementing the system. The paper concludes that a country like Nigeria, adopting English as a second Language, a strategy like EAC could be an alternative for attaining fluency and a motivation to students and content area teachers to be positionally disposed to English as a learning tool.*

KEYWORDS: implementability, English, curriculum strategy, Nigeria, issues and prospects

INTRODUCTION

The official language used in Nigeria is English. It is the language for instruction from primary four to the university level. The Nigerian constitution and other related official documents are all written in English language. In fact, Nigeria itself got its name from the English phrase 'Niger Area'. (Banjo 1989). Being a country with over 270 indigenous languages, English serves many other functions; entertainment, corporate business, commercials, lingua-Franca unifying language etc. English serves as an interface in world communication. According to Ethnologue.com, (2019) English is used in over 101 countries as an official or semi-official position. In this regard, out of any five people in the world, one speaks English to some level of competence.

English is also the main language of books, newspapers, airports, international business, music, advertising, academic events, science, technology, sports etc. In Nigeria, English language, considering the function it performs as aforementioned, has come to stay as an unrivalled language of communication (Akintade 2017). It is in view of this that, more than any other language, English has continued to receive top priority. However, the reoccurring high failure rate in examinations that are used as a performance measuring instruments such as the Senior

School Certificate Examination (SSCE), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination indicate that a lot need yet to be done to justify the treatment the language enjoys. Various methods have been experimented with in the history of teaching English from period to another period. A teaching method is a plan for presenting language materials to be learnt, based on a selected approach. According to Olaofe (2013), method is simply translating an approach into an instructional system, based on the objectives, contents, types of tasks etc. What this means is that the teachers' knowledge of the various methods of teaching is an important weapon he could use to impact positively on his learners. Brown (1987) observes that methods improve teacher effectiveness and enhance learning. The debate on language teaching parallels to two main groups of methodologists. The first group proposes that emphasis in language teaching should be on practice and repetition. That is, to teach the language and not about the language. The second group stresses the importance of learning the tacit rules. This is an approach to language teaching based on the principle that language is a rule-governed behavior (Williams, 1990). Over the years all these methods to improve proficiency in English language in Nigeria have been tried out, but the desired result has not been attained (Olaofe, 2013)

The effort severally made by English students Associations, the British overseas Development Agencies (through British council) to support projects for the improvement of the quality of English teaching and learning in the education system have not yielded the desired results either (Olaofe 2013). Today there are evidences everywhere in the educational system that the standard of English expression is very poor leading to a general downturn in the standard of Education.

This paper aims at examining the implementability of yet another principle of English language teaching for the purpose of improving proficiency and better utilisation of the language. This approach is 'Language Across the Curriculum' (LAC) or in case where the focus is the English language, 'English Across the Curriculum' (EAC). The paper also raises issues related to the topic and prospects of implementation in Nigerian education system.

Concept of LAC/EAC

Language Across the Curriculum emanates from Krashen's idea that foreign language (FL) learners acquired the second language (L2) most effectively through sizeable input focusing on meaning rather than form (Eric Digest, 1998). Thus, LAC emphasises concentration on content of a subject rather than on the language as such. According to Physicscatalyst - 5 (2019) LAC or content and language integrated learning (CIL) as used in Europe, refers to the application of the target language (English) as a medium of instruction to teach other subjects on the school curriculum e.g Science, History, Civic Education etc, with a view to improving its use as well as to expand the learners' knowledge.

Vollmer (2006) sees LAC from two perspectives. In its narrow sense relates to linking different forms and aspects of language education within the school stressing the role of language in all subject matter learning. In the wider sense LAC demands a comprehensive language model in Education as a basis of whole school language policy. This suggests linking all languages (foreign, native, second etc) and the language dimension in all the school subjects. In this paper we shall focus attention on the narrow sense of the LAC principles, limiting our attention to

using each subject area on the school curriculum to improve learners understanding and use the of English language as a medium of instruction (MI).

Driving home better understanding of LAC Vollmer (2006) states that LAC is a modern approach to learning languages throughout, not just during the language classroom, but other subject classrooms as well. This way, the English L2 learner can extend his knowledge and use of the language to research and projects, giving more opportunity to manipulate the language.

LAC Movement and Aims

The language Across the Curriculum originated from Britain in the 1980s. It started as a movement following another movement interested in developing writing skills, the Writing Across the Curriculum Movement (WAC). WAC aimed at using writing as a central learning tool in classes outside the English Department. The movement shares similar aim with LAC. LAC, in addition, borrows from content-based language instruction movement of the 1990's Kress, G.R. (2003). In this kind of approach, emphasis is led on purposeful comprehension, higher listening and speaking accuracy. It also provides more skills to manipulate complex structures and strong fluency. In short, the approach makes learning the language with enough ideas cutting across all subjects on the curriculum.

A discourse on LAC may never been complete without the mention of the London Association of Teachers of English and the Bullock Report (1975, p 514:4) which recommended:

Each school should have an organised policy for language Across the Curriculum, establishing every teacher's enrolment in language and the teaching of reading.

Following this report, all kind of schools, teachers of all subjects, became fully enrolled in implementing the LAC policy (Eguare 2004).

LAC Across the World

Although the English Across the Curriculum was pioneered by British teachers, who believed that introduction of the idea was a 'most promising moment' implementation of the policy was never easy at conceptual stage (Eguare 2004). Some of the teachers comments after a long period of implementation do not sound very promising as earlier envisaged:

'I cringe at the easy way I accepted the long-term nature of the task of implementing a language policy. I still think that it is a long term'

None the less the policy in itself does not lose its value. Having been involved in the implementation, the exercise exposed teachers to understand that 'language is extricably bound with all the learning that goes in school' (Barnes, M and Marland, M 1971). Marland, (1977) also believes that the LAC policy is worth an undertaking when he says:

'.....Time devoted to assisting language development helps learning in all areas, and attention given to language in the content and skills subjects 'provides a powerful context for language development'. p 60

From the British experience we can understand that the LAC, although comes to fruition, only in a long term, the end result justifies its implementation. In Germany, First Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) study (2001) led to an awareness that poor reading

comprehension exhibited in the fifteen subjects in the study could only be overcome if language would be a concern in each and every subject in school. Similarly, non-linguistic educators identified communication as one of the four main dimensions of competence next to subject specific knowledge, procedural or method competence and ability to evaluate. Although no document was yet to be developed for LAC, this awareness brought about language, is becoming a major issue of concern within the content of teaching. In fact, later following a research on bilingual education, focus became on the integration of language and context within its frame of reference. Thus, in Germany, CLIL was endorsed in teaching L2.

In Indonesia LAC has been embraced by a number of academic institutions. It has been successfully instituted in College of New Jersey (TCNJ) yielding exiting projects and rewarding results (Vollumer, 2006) several other countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa have embraced the LAC based on its potential to enrich understanding of both language and knowledge in content areas. Many of them have developed manuals and hand books on LAC. In fact, a network for development and adoption of the LAC principles emerged in 1997 (Ewa Kolodziejska and Stuart Simpson, 1997). The network links a number of countries in Europe including Australia, Canada, Portugal, etc with a view to creating and utilising manuals uniformly across these countries.

Why LAC/EAC?

LAC is a modern approach to tackling language, especially FL or L2 proper learning problems. The principles of this approach demand that learning of language should not be restricted in terms of time and place; the language classroom as well as other subject classrooms. The approach aims to integrate L2 across the curriculum in a way the learner is lured to extend his knowledge of the L2 beyond the restricted language programme. The skills now learnt contextually through other subject areas can be applied to other endeavors.

The LAC approach has it that language is best learnt through listening and talking reading and writing all of which are richer in other content areas put together rather than in the language class alone characterised by discrete treatment of learning slots. So, as the learners increase their non-linguistic field, they enhance their linguistic skills as well. In short, LAC provides more opportunities for learners to learn communicatively and functionally. This is in addition to learning the content areas more. Teachers of content areas too, in this approach, stand to improve their language skills as they struggle to update their knowledge and skills in the language to accommodate the new strategy.

LAC is not only supported by findings in cognitive science, but also in linguistic and language pedagogy (physics, catalyst -5). It is believed that language is present in all areas of learning. Teachers in LAC therefore use the opportunity content areas offer, for contextually and really developing language skills.

It is also to be noted that, although the learner even before starting schooling, has learnt to communicate with members of his family through the MT, language used in school is formal which probably differs from what he has learnt at home. It is worth mentioning here that there need not to be mismatch between the learner's standard of learning and his linguistic ability. If this happens, then the effort by both the teachers and learners is frustrated.

From the fore-going, it could be deciphered that in LAC approach all teachers irrespective of their area must participate in developing language within their fields of responsibility and play some role in the school learning policy.

Challenges in Implimenting LAC/EAC

Although the LAC approach sounds lofty, and idea spread worldwide, it is only peripherally put into practice mostly in Asia. According to Vollmer (2006), the approach was never really fully put into practice neither in Britain nor Germany or North America. He concludes that although the approach was proposed for different contexts of education, genders, and social groups, since there is no documented report of implementations, LAC must have more or less failed.

Principles of LAC necessarily require the full cooperation, understanding and participation of the content teachers. Here then lies the first obstacle in implementing the LAC strategy. Curson (1990:76-77) reports that:

‘The difficulties in making LAC work in practice have to do with attitude of teachers, the objection or even resistance of many subject teachers to become language teachers.’

The second challenge in trying to put in place the LAC principle is structural. In places where this idea was given thought, there was no one centrally given the responsibility for such a co-curricular strategy. Perhaps this happens because no one possesses such a qualification yet to handle the issue professionally.

In countries where the language of instruction is L2, like Nigeria, the issue of proficiency of the content teachers themselves is another serious challenge not easily surmountable in implementing the LAC theory.

Introducing LAC, as it is, would require large scale and radical change in the attitude and mentality of both the formal and informal teachers involved including the ones in teacher education. According to Eric Digest (1998).

Every teacher has to be confronted with the issues of academic language use, oral and written, and be prepared and trained with fantasy for integrating language into the subject matter teaching in school. Every subject teacher has to learn how to define minimal goals in conceptual and discourse terms and what to do with the ones he misses or encounters in school.

The challenges inherent in the implementation of the LAC require long-term planning, preparation and discussion. According to Hutchcroft (1981):

‘coherent policy for language across the curriculum began to emerge there (British) only after three years.’

According to Eguare (2004) this is not unconnected with the fact that a large-scale curriculum development such as the LAC can be notoriously difficult to implement. The LAC approach, ambitious as it is, language skills and competence in the different non-linguistic subjects do not develop automatically by themselves simply through their usage in subject specified context alone. They ought to be systematically supported and developed in class connection with the content which requires language awareness, education, attitude and skills on the part

of each subject teacher (Vollmer, 2006). Unless there is this awareness and the demands outlined above met, learners expected outcomes will not be achieved.

Successful implementation of LAC could be very costly as it requires expert teachers, small class size and authentic materials in abundance. The LAC based on its scope would require much more time to succeed, may as a result make some subjects to suffer and of course stress teachers of the content areas with the demand of the curriculum.

In some cases, the inability of the learners to sustain usage in the learnt content from one stage to another, leads to loss of the proficiency gained. vollmer, (2006) reports that even in America where all the package required for Success in LAC is available, the fact that L2 learning is painstakingly slow, the learnt is quickly to disappear when not used. One uphill task, (Vollmer, 2006) in succeeding to teach English across the curriculum, in the issue of L2 is the question of proficiency of the content area teachers but who now have to teach English. Equally, disturbing is the students' proficiency themselves.

In addition to all of the above difficulties in realising LAC, Eaglewood (2002) reports that there seems to be a universal complaint regarding the strategy. Some teachers involved in the programme, complained of their own inability to explain some of the concepts in English, and students' lack of interest and poor English.

LAC as a principle seems more to succeed where the language of instruction is also the L1, as in the case of Britain, the U.S and some Asian countries such as Japan where the native languages are the languages of instruction. It is also to be noted that success in LAC/EAC in one country may be a failure in another owing to the diversified underlying factors. It is equally worthy of note that the principles of LAC/EAC may be more motivating in one country than another depending on the status of the language involved.

Stake Holders' Role in Implementing LAC/EAC

The stake holders actively involved in LAC/EAC can be identified as follows:

- Learners
- Teachers of English
- content area teachers
- The school
- Education authorities

Considering the heavy demand of successful LAC/EAC strategy, and fruition expected from its adoption, active stakeholders must have roles to play, and play them properly.

The learner

The first important stakeholder in every education system is the learner. He is central in the teaching -laerning stituation. In the LAC practice the laerner's role may include:

- Using listining, speaking, reading, viewing and writing skills to order and classify thoughts and imformation
- Learning the language appropriate to the subject (academic language)

Content subject teachers

Next on the list are the content teachers who are expected to:

- Address applicable language aspect in order to enhance learning.
- Model the language of their subjects
- Teach language skills or introduce related skills/concepts in their lesson, integrating language and content.

English language teachers

- Introduce in their lessons and teach the language skills, reinforcing them from time to time
- Teach grammatical structures, vocabulary builders to improve language proficiency and the acquisition of academic language
- Use texts from content subjects as much as possible to enhance acquisition of subject's content

Education authorities

- Ensure appropriate measures are taken to train existing teachers and programmes in current teacher training in institutions are aligned to the demand of LAC
- Manuals for teaching LAC should be developed
- Monitoring the implementation of the programme should be assigned to specially-trained personnel

The school

- The school structure should accommodate the new strategy and ensure its successful implementation
- English language teachers too should be re-oriented to integrate the programme into their teaching assignment. They should also amiably be gingered to look for the support of the content teachers and work together in the new approach

The Nigerian Situation

Round the world, from a review of implementation of the LAC/EAC the picture that emerges does not reveal an encouraging attempt. Even in England where the principle originated its full implementation virtually failed or produced an unsatisfactory impact. Banks, (1980: p8) depicts this when he laments that.....

having proceeded in the best way proper consultation and official communication with step produced a language policy which although satisfactory in itself has failed to make significant impact on language usage in the classroom.

In Asia, Germany and the US where the principle gained some impetus, implementation and results were not quite satisfactory either. The principle though promising, it appears, is a little complex to handle.

In Nigeria, and indeed in Africa, the LAC/EAC is not much heard about. It is seen only on pages of books. According to Eguare (2004).

.....few, if any school in Nigeria have created a virtuous circle across the curriculum where by thought and time devoted to assisting language development helps learning in all areas,

and attention given to language in the content and skill subject provide a powerful context for language development

In fact, according to Eguare, (2004), in Nigeria the policy has not been formally enacted. He concludes that, “No organisations such as the various language associations in Nigeria have written or pursued any language policy across the curriculum with the Federal Government. At present, a review of the national English curriculum at lower upper basic and senior secondary school does not reveal, nor mention anywhere the notion, ‘English Across the Curriculum’. Contrary to the principles of EAC, according to Olaofe (2013) what obtains in the ESL English curriculum at secondary school is characterised by:

- Heavy reliance on text books
- Reading aloud by the teacher followed by students
- Very little respect accorded to the primary oracy in language teaching and learning
- Undue rush to cover the text books/syllabus
- Devoting considerable time to practice examination skills

Implementability of EAC in Nigeria

Eguare (2004) admits that: ‘Across the Curriculum’ venture simply presents too many problems to have a chance of succeeding. This is according to him, ‘a tempting statement’. But, let us first of all establish the real need or otherwise of the theory of EAC in Nigeria. Nigeria’s linguistic situation gives a natural setting for EAC. The introductory part of this paper set the tone for this assertion. The role English plays in all human endeavours in Nigeria is no longer in contention, hence the conclusion – “English has come to stay in Nigeria as an unrivalled language of communication” (Akintade, 2107). Under this circumstance, success at least in education depends squarely on proficiency in English. Therefore, any policy that is potent at promoting communicative competence could and should be given a trial.

Language and Curriculum

In determining the need for EAC in Nigeria, let us first relate language or specifically English to Educational curriculum in the Nigerian setting. English in the case of Nigeria has necessarily become our tool for education and each area of learning has a special language demand. Therefore, in Nigeria English is an issue, it is an evaluating instrument.

Secondly, if English is as portrayed above, is focused on teaching, learning will become easier as language is the most important tool for learning. If therefore EAC strategy is implemented, at least at primary and secondary levels, the much-needed proficiency in English will be enhanced and in addition content areas better conceptualised.

The current methods and activities used in teaching English as L2 in Nigeria do not for all intent and purposes differ from the ones encountered in regular spontaneous interactions. They mainly focus on solving exercises rather than encouraging real-time conversations. Thus, one finds that majority of learners of English including those in university hardly can affectively participate in natural setting activities such as business, town hall political gatherings etc. As a result, the big question teachers of English as L2 cannot answer is whether they can make English flow in veins of L2 learners as a component of blood (Vollmer, 2006) in a such a way

that the learners burn the communication bridges on daily basis discourse. To succeed in this, the EAC approach may be a necessity.

The mother tongue influence may also be another factor that would force adopting the EAC approach. This is because most learners of English as a result of dominance of their L1, develop negative attitude towards learning the English language. If, however, learning is integrated with the general school curriculum, a motivation to learn it is now firmly established.

The EAC's potential to turn around learning English as L2 has never been in doubt, 'it is believed to be satisfactory in itself'. What the theory requires is as pointed out earlier, long term preparation, careful planning and strategic implementation and of course heavy financial investment as Eguare (2004) puts it: *The practice of language across the curriculum is viable, practicable and marketable to Nigerian schools and context.*

Recommendations for implementations

Earlier in this paper, the role each stake holder in the implementation of the EAC approach has to play has been outlined. This is part of the implementation strategy. What needs to be stressed here include:

Content- Teachers' Participations and Cooperation

The component that establishes the EAC approach is the incorporation of teachers of other subjects on the school curriculum. Without them, the EAC is hardly possible. In view of this, a lot has to be done for success in implementing the EAC. The following must be ensured regarding their participation.

Their proficiency: Except where a particular content teacher has natural flair for language, generally speaking, most of these teachers' proficiency in English language in Nigerian context, is questionable. (Olaofe, 2013). Thus, their ability to meet the demands of EAC can be shaky. In view of this, a strategic measure has to be taken. Eguare, (2004) is of the view that the context teachers are too busy with their own primary responsibility, and may therefore have no time on their own to want to raise their proficiency level. Two, for many of them, training for proficiency may only be a waste of time due to age and other psychological factors. However, as the saying goes 'it is better late than never'. For EAC to commence timely, such teachers could be offered some palatable motivation in form of special teaching allowance. In addition, a special training, backed by a manual for the programme should be put in place.

Co-operation Between English Language and Content Teachers.

The first obstacle in implementing the EAC programme predictably is the response or reaction of the content-area teachers. Experience from some of countries where the EAC was implemented revealed an initial resistance to the approach as they see it as a burden to become language teachers, on top. This is a serious problem which must be resolved for the success required. Bright and McGregor (1984: 6) had interestingly observed this decades ago.

Language teachers badly need the help and interest of other teachers of all other subjects in the curriculum. With their co-operation, an English course may be very successful, but without it, cannot be.

In this regard, teachers of English must spear-head getting the needed cooperation. Their role and that of the content teachers have already been pointed out. However, it should be the English teachers concern to monitor, and keep the content teachers informed of the language development that has taken place, and reinforcing it as need arises.

Rewarding Good Performance in English by the Content Teachers.

Content teacher's cooperation should seek to reward students who perform well in their language use in the content areas, and where blemishes occur are penalised. A certain number of marks, when marking assignment or test should be set aside for language.

Incorporating the EAC in Teachers Training Programmes.

As pointed earlier, existing content teachers may have difficulty in participating in the EAC programme due to lack of sufficient proficiency in the English Language as the trend is in Nigeria. This problem can be attacked by realigning the teacher training programmes at all levels to be in tandem with the EAC principles. This, if done properly and sustained can ensure brighter future for EAC.

National Conference for EAC

As the tradition is, EAC as a new concept, would require input from experts and professionals from the academic. The report of the conference can help in xraying the EAC with a view to formulating concrete objectives for implementation, ascertaining financial implication, governments and other agencies' roles and training for teachers and reorientation of students and other stake holders. From the conference, experts can also be drawn to come up with manuals for affective implimentation of the approach.

Text Books Writers.

Text books writers, especially content subjects, should also be encouraged to review and channel their contents, activities, etc to suit the new approach.

Reinvigroting Extra Curricular Activities

School authorities should reactivate and encourage clubs and societies-debates, quiz, current affairs, drama, young writers, scientists, clubs etc. These aspects of extra curricular activities are fast dying out in our schools.

CONCLUSION

English as language has progressively become a World language. Whether one likes it or not, one has to somewhere, somehow find oneself in a situation which requires the use of English. This is even more so in Nigeria where the search of an indiginous lingua franca is day-by-day distancing itself from us. In a country where all human endervours depend largely on English as a means of communication, it is only being realistic to device more and more means of promoting such a language. The ESL curriculum, almost at all levels of education, is shown to be defective; does not reflect the learners' real language requirements (Banjo, 1989, Aliyu 1995). A new approach such as EAC may be an alternative. Carson (1990) seem to be in favour of this when he said:

With respect to teaching methodology, instead of the present behavioral/structural emphasis, a pragmatically oriented language across the curriculum approach would be more appropriate to motivate students and other subject teachers to be positively disposed towards English as a learning tool.

EAC could be a failure in other English programmes such as TEFL, TESOL, ESP etc and in some other countries with no real need for English, but could succeed in ESL which offers more motivation for learners considering its indispensability in countries with complex linguistic structure as Nigeria.

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