

## LANGUAGE PROBLEM ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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### ABSTRACT

Much of our resources that we dispense in foreign language learning and teaching at lower levels, learn into a loss when the skills acquired by the learners are not utilized because of lack of motivation and reinforcement to use such skills. With the exception of students who major in languages or area studies, or who study abroad, college graduates in Africa typically possess less non-English language proficiency than they had when they entered college while some of these students get to acquire some general skills and knowledge that will necessitate their professional development and career choices that will make them suit the requirements of the worldwide job market. Thus, African students lack multilingual language proficiency that is vital for their suitability across the various cultural boundaries.

Although language instruction is wide spread in Africa, it typically does not lead to high degree of proficiency or specialization. This paper aims at addressing the potential of learners in achieving advanced levels of proficiency, language use and meshing the students' language needs and interests in a wide array of curricula specialties. For this to happen students must have strong intra and inter personal skills, be good writers and be excellent public speakers, since most organizations now require that employees portray the correct image of their company. Even colleges and universities that define language requirements for pursue of various certificate courses, undergraduate degrees and graduate degrees by acquired proficiency rather than accumulated course credits fail to mandate continued use of those skills after students have demonstrated intermediate-level proficiency. Changes in perception on good language skills have impacted on changes of the language curriculum. Therefore, Language across the Curriculum appears to be the only way of sustaining multilingualism and other cross-cultural skills for pre and postsecondary students. Therefore, this paper proposes that students at all levels must have opportunities to employ their language skills by demonstrating that they can indeed communicate and interact acceptably in any circumstances for purposes of immediate and lifelong value.

**KEYWORDS:** Language Across the Curriculum (LAC), Foreign Language

### INTRODUCTION

Changes in perception on good language skills have impacted on the change of the language curriculum. Therefore, Language across the Curriculum (LAC) appears to be the only way of sustaining multilingualism and other cross-cultural skills.

According to Lambert (1991) a bigger percentage of national resources is spent on foreign language learning at lower levels of language learning, in high schools and tertiary colleges, however, the acquisition of such skills are rendered futile because they are not properly utilized or reinforced. Apart from the learners who specialize in languages or other disciplines or those who study in foreign countries, college graduates in African countries have inadequate or insufficient non- English language proficiency they reluctantly demonstrate bilingual and intercultural knowledge which will enable them meet their professional needs and worldwide job prescriptions by the time they terminate their college studies. Thus

the African continent lacks multilingual skills that are vital for it to function effectively across all cultures. (American Council on Education, 1989).

In as much as language teaching is made manifest in academic institutions in Africa, it does not enhance a high degree of proficiency. Although colleges and universities have definite requirements for certificate and diploma courses, both undergraduate and graduate language courses undertaken by students fail to show continued use of those skills. Therefore, to increase the opportunities for high levels of proficiency, language use must expand in variety and put into consideration the needs and interests of the learners in a wider perspective of curriculum requirements or specializations. (Grandin in Shoenberg & Turlington, 1998)

Students at all levels of language learning must create opportunities to exercise their language skills for various purposes in their careers. Thus, language Across the Curriculum serves as the solution to improve the cross cultural knowledge, multilingualism and intercultural skills for both pre and post secondary learners. This paper examines the history of the LAC programme, its variants, its challenges and recommendations.

### **THE ESSENCE OF LANGUAGE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

LAC picks from Writing across the Curriculum programme during the 80's that adopted writing as the pivotal learning tool in classes away from the learning of English language. Apart from WAC providing instructions in language, it also empowers students with writing skills that are required in different disciplines. LAC in the same breath liaises with different disciplines to examine the suitable diction and genres that learners need in order to be effective in other disciplines and languages. (Fichera & Straight, 1997).

According to Briton & Weschie (1989), Krueger & Ryan (1993) & Stryker & Leaver, (1997), students who learn a language for a specific purpose, learn it better. Thus, LAC provides language instructions that enhance communicative production, receptive and expressive skills, fluency and comprehension. The objective of LAC is to impart knowledge and skills that will enable learners to use language in different contexts effectively. It motivates learners and creates opportunities for exercising their multilingual skills as they undertake their studies at the university level. Such skills also prepare the learners for the worldwide job market, cross-cultural and multilingual demands.

### **FORMS OF LANGUAGE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAMME**

LAC assumes varied forms in order to cater for the learners, the curriculum, individuals and institutional needs. Adams (1996) indicates that any materials used in language instruction cut across both spoken and written forms of language. This makes learners use some materials to learn a wide range of concepts thus enabling them develop advanced analytical skills in mass-media issues which lead to unique facts in language learning in relation to LAC. With the introduction of LAC programme learners are not restricted to few reading materials that do not cooperate the four basic language skills but are submerged to materials with a wider view of language learning.

LAC programme plays the following roles: First, it has a single entity that is in charge of modifying courses in the LAC way. Second, it enables partnering of language and non-language faculties to derive common courses that have a LAC component in them. Third, it enables international graduate students to prepare for supplementary assignments in a number of languages known to LAC participants thus enabling learners to discuss the same outside the regular class time. These roles are sustained through by experienced staff in the LAC programme.

Assessment in the LAC programme ensures that all related courses have been examined to ascertain whether they focus on language use and the outcomes of instruction have been achieved. This is because some LAC courses are both language and non-language based; those that are non-language based come with some benefits to the learners engaged in these programmes. Still other courses in LAC are aimed at enriching the content whereby any interested student not necessarily language students can join so as to gain general language skills. On the other hand, LAC programme introduces some courses to the learners who have completed their college studies for purposes of grading thus it serves as an added advantage to one's career (Allen & Anderson in Straight, 1994).

### **The Challenges of LAC Include**

**Learning Materials-** because of its structure and mode of delivery, gathering of materials for the same becomes an uphill task due to the way course objectives are set. The other aspect that makes the acquisition of learning materials a challenge is the different language skills, the participating learners and the type of courses offered. Sometimes materials are solicited from the mass-media which are meant to sharpen the analytical skills of the learners. Therefore, because of the variations in terms of courses offered by LAC, there is need for special materials that are context-specific so that learners can comprehend and apply the content of particular courses.

According to Straight & Fichera in Shoenberg & Turlington, (1998) another challenge is, **roles of the staff or faculty-** because of its complexity, LAC has some extra-ordinary demands from the teaching staff and the various departments involved. The non-language staff faces a challenge in that they feel the content of the courses offered is in a quagmire because of the language element. The language faculty also shares the same sentiments with other faculties in that they feel that the language component will be affected since LAC has been in cooperated in other specializations outside the linguistic, cultural and literary studies.

**Learner's motivation-** on the same note, learners may also fail to comprehend how LAC fits into their various specialties. This challenge affects both the natives and non-natives since they are not confident in their ability to apply language skills for the intended academic purpose. The learners also presume that such a programme does not count much to their major requirement and to some it does not yield much fruit or even holds no connection with their career opportunities. Students generally have challenges of comprehending how they can fit in LAC programme as they pursue their college studies.

**Placement of curricular-** also poses another challenge whereby LAC is vital. The challenge is that students studying different disciplines abroad international or area studies with different majors and minors have to undertake LAC stipulated courses. The job market or future career may demand people with bilingual skills and this will open up employment opportunities. In other words LAC programme comes with other accrued benefits to those who choose to pursue their studies and integrating it.

Other factors are external in that the advancement of learners due to the technological world, play a role in the perusal of their studies and enhance multilingualism. This brings about intercultural, linguistic and diverse specialties and other skills which can be useful to the restructuring of the LAC in college and university education.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the arguments presented in this paper, the LAC posits that the language component is important in the

development of various language skills that are vital in career progression in diverse disciplines or areas of specialties.

Secondly, such a curriculum leads to a panorama of insights in the demand of job opportunities where language skills play a vital role in determining a person's competence.

Thirdly, it boosts the development and perfection of strong intra and interpersonal skills for interaction through writing and excellent public speaking.

## RECOMMENDATION

From the foregoing, this paper recommends that universities and colleges should come up with 'writing centers' to address the challenges of LAC. The aim of such centers is to come up with activities that are structured in a way that addresses the communication needs of the students in the global job market.

The issues raised in this paper also lead to the realization that stipulated classes on communication skills alone cannot adequately prepare individuals to be confident in their abilities as they step out into the job market or job opportunities. Therefore, it's recommended that such centers can hold tutorials on aspects of communication such as academic, scientific and business writing.

The other most important aspect is the development of bilingual and multilingual skills that come with the in cooperation of LAC in the various specialties in both the intermediate colleges and universities. This will serve as a lift for the graduates with various certificates and degrees in the world of job opportunities thus exposing them to people from different cultures whom they can mingle with to enhance cohesion and development.

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