

A PRELIMINARY NOTE ON THE USE OF LANGUAGE LABORATORY FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING /LEARNING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE (ENGLISH) IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper argues that teaching and learning of language whether local or foreign such as English, may be effective only with the use of good language laboratory. This is because it is in language laboratory that production and point of production of the spoken aspect of language are observed and noted. Thus, the paper examines the relevance of language laboratory in this regard. Also, it notes the place of the written aspect of language and how it is handled in the laboratory. The beneficiaries of the language laboratory have also been identified and mentioned. The paper concludes that the two forms of language (spoken and written) can effectively be learned only when the use of language laboratory is taken seriously; of course with the support of the authorities concerned.

KEYWORDS: A Preliminary Note on the Use of Language Laboratory, Local or Foreign, (Spoken and Written)

INTRODUCTION

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, (1995) language laboratory is a room in a school or college where you can learn to speak a foreign language by listening to TAPES or recording your own voice. However, both spoken and written kinds of language are different in their way of production and point of production.

In the spoken form, the speaker has the advantage of voice quality effect, facial expressions and gestures. A person that speaks with smiling and welcoming voice quality is likely to get a better attention than one with an unwelcoming face (as well as a roaring voice quality). The speaker should be able to match what has been said to the way it has been said.

The speakers should also examine their intentions while speaking (this is why we shall have a glance at the Nigerian English usage). Note that there is yet the term known as Nigerian French; let alone its usage.

Again, the speakers can observe their listeners and modify their speech. They can also have immediate feedback from their listeners.

On the other hand, the writer has the chance of looking over what they have written, pause, reconstruct, record their word choice or change their minds completely on what they have planned to say earlier. Again, they do not have the access to immediate feedback. There is always to image the reader's reaction. Both forms of language (spoken and written) are relevant in discussing the use of language laboratory.

Language laboratory is a workshop with both teacher's console and learner's booth where the production and repair of spoken language take place. The languages here may be local like Hausa or foreign such as English or French. Thus to teach/learn spoken language, there must be the teacher and the learner and of course, the means/equipment.

THE USE OF LABORATORY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING/LEARNING

The main motive behind the construction of any language laboratory is to ease the teaching and learning of spoken language. Since the learners are taught different ways of words production, they are usually and more commonly exposed to homonym and homophones. They are also taught the tone, intonation and stress patterns of the language to be learned.

- **Homonym:** This refers to word that is spelt the same and sound the same as another, but is different in meaning or origin. The noun 'bear' and verb 'bear' are homonyms, box, box, and ball.
- **Homophone:** This is a word that sounds the same as another, but different in spelling, meaning or origin. For example 'knew' and 'new', there and their, fair and face

Additionally, the learners are exposed to different listening tests in the laboratory. To do this, the teacher reads one word from a line of words for the learners to identify the one he reads. For example, the test may go thus:

LISTENING TEST

Listen carefully. In this section there are three words to a line. I am going to read one word from each line. Beside the word I read there is a letter. Write this letter on your answer sheet.

- | | | |
|--------------|----------|-----------|
| 1. A. fair | B. fear | C. fur |
| 2. A. curl | B. cool | C. coil |
| 3. A. fate | B. fit | C. feet |
| 4. A. rot | B. rat | C. rut |
| 5. A. dirt | B. debt | C. dart |
| 6. A. lone | B. lawn | C. line |
| 7. A. sup | B. sop | C. sap |
| 8. A. neat | B. nit | C. night |
| 9. A. will | B. wool | C. whirl |
| 10. A. cot | B. coat | C. caught |
| 11. A. sin | B. seen | C. sign |
| 12. A. cap | B. cup | C. cop |
| 13. A. mire | B. mere | C. mare |
| 14. A. fern | B. fen | C. fin |
| 15. A. heart | B. art | C. cart |
| 16. A. miner | B. mire | C. mile |
| 17. A. fist | B. fits | C. fists |
| 18. A. tough | B. tup | C. tut |
| 19. A. thug | B. fug | C. pug |
| 20. A. slot | B. spot | C. scot |
| 21. A. chip | B. ship | C. slip |
| 22. A. lisp | B. lisps | C. lips |
| 23. A. pride | B. tried | C. fried |

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|--------------|----------|-----------|
| 24. A. half | B. harp | C. hearth |
| 25. A. sheep | B. cheap | C. ship |
| 26. A. cart | B. carp | C. calf |
| 27. A. asks | B. axe | C. ask |
| 28. A. frill | B. trill | C. thrill |
| 29. A. lope | B. ope | C. hope |

It is important to, at this juncture; explain certain salient terms which have direct bearing with our discussion. They are:

Tone: This is a musical or vocal sound with reference to its quality and pitch .a quality or character of the voice expressing a particular feeling or mood etc. the general character or style of spoken or written expression.

Intonation: This refers to the rise and fall of the pitch of the voice in speech.

Stress: This means to pronounce a sound, word etc with emphasis,

The language laboratory is primarily used to teach all the above aspects of spoken language. Thus, to attain accuracy in teaching any of the aspects, the language laboratory must be used. But, how then do we achieve the aim? For the teacher to achieve his/her goal, he/she must engage the learners in many and different activities and drills. This is when and where the teacher's console and the learners' booth will be extensively used.

Thus, we have to take into consideration, the teacher, the learner and the equipment to be used. This is because the function of the language laboratory can only be fully provided when the three are available.

Consider the following Words:

Noun	Verb
! Import	Im!port
! Export	Ex!port
! Impact	Im!pact
! Escort	Es!cort
! Refuse	Re!fuse
! Conduct	Con!duct

THE BENEFICIARIES OF LANGUAGE LABORATORY

Who then benefits from the language laboratory! The answer is simple and direct. Of course the teacher, the learners and even the authority.

This is explained by the fact that, the teacher achieves his aim of imparting knowledge, the learners learn the spoken aspect of the language in question and the authority goes with the credit. Therefore, using the language laboratory effectively will result in producing students that can use the language effectively.

THE USE OF ENGLISH WITHOUT THE LABORATORY

Since we are all living witnesses to the fact that most of our schools and colleges do not have language laboratory, then we can as well argue that most of the speakers/ users of foreign languages do not speak the languages the way they are supposed to be spoken. Thus, the need for the laboratory in our schools. We should remember that, in our own case (in

Nigeria) English language is the official and national language. Therefore, whether we like it or not, it becomes a responsibility on us to learn the language the way it should be learnt, write it the way it should be written and speak it the way it should be spoken.

Thus, both the spoken and written forms of English should be well learned and especially in the laboratory. This is because it is only in the language laboratory that a thorough and detailed treatment of the spoken aspects of the language can take place.

We also believe that similar way should be followed in dealing with the local languages (for example Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) in the country.

WRITTEN ASPECT OF THE LANGUAGE

Oluike in Jowitt (2000) says, "This June, all universities will produce as usual, thousands of graduates who assume that the nation is theirs merely by the fact of obtaining university education...University lecturers have had one litany of complaints: namely, The Poor Quality of Writing of Their Graduates (emphasis mine)

As has been mentioned earlier, written form of language (in this case English) is equally relevant in discussing the use of the language laboratory. Therefore, there is the need for us to discuss some writing (spelling) rules in English language; with examples.

SPELLING: (English Language)

It is important to know that, wrong spelling leads to wrong pronunciation. Thus, incorrect spelling creates a poor impression, and it can cause one to lose readers' confidence in one. English is a language with many rules in its spellings. The most reliable way to become proficient in spelling is to read widely and to use a good dictionary for spelling, meaning and pronunciation.

Sometimes errors are caused by confusion between words that sound same or spelt same way.

SOME RULES TO FOLLOW

- When ei or ie has the sound ee (as in fell), the I comes before the e except when it follows C
- Adding a suffix beginning with a vowel (-ing, er, ed). If the word consists of one syllable ending in a vowel and a consonant, the consonant is usually doubled. Examples: -beg-begger, stop-stopping, rag-ragged.
- Words ending in a consonant followed by e
- Usually the e is dropped when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added. Examples: come-coming, move-moving, dine-dining.
- The e is usually kept after g or c to show that the pronunciation of these consonant is soft. Examples: manage-manageable, advantage-advantageous, notice-noticeable.
- The prefix dis follows a logical pattern. If the first letter of the word to which the prefix is added is s then a double s will occur. In other cases there will be a single s. examples: disappear, dissatisfy, dissimilar, disable.

- The u is kept in adjective ending in able, but not in adjectives ending in ous where the noun ending is our: honour-honourable, favour-favourable, glamour-glamorous, humour-humorous, odour-odorous, rigour-rigorous.
- Plural of words ending in y, if the letter before y is a vowel add s: examples: valley-valleys, monkey-monkeys. If the letter y is a consonant, change the y to i and es: baby-babies, remedy-remedies, lorry-lorries.

NON-VERBAL FORM OF LANGUAGE

Non verbal codes are codes of communication consisting of symbols that are not words, including nonword vocalizations. These refer to bodily movement, facial expression, bodily appearance, gesture and other artifacts which all fall under non verbal codes.

SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VERBAL AND NON VERBAL FORMS OF LANGUAGE/COMMUNICATION

As we may all know language has a multifaceted and multilayered structure. Thus, non-verbal language may be more difficult to comprehend and/or interpret than its counterpart, the verbal form.

The differences that exist include:

1. NUMBER OF CHANNELS AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

While the verbal language has one channel which is the stream of utterances we offer, we have multiple communication channels in the non verbal form. Again, these channels, in addition to being multiple, are simultaneous. Messages are received from others' eyes, face, body etc.

The second difference between the two channels of communication is the content for which they are best suited. This means, for example, that verbal language can be used to comfortably explain, argue or tell a story. Again, while the verbal language can differentiate tense and contrast the past, present and future, the nonverbal cannot. Additionally, there is a difference which centers on the rule structure. In general, verbal language has far more rules than does nonverbal language.

ENGLISH ENGLISH AND NIGERIAN ENGLISH

Perhaps it is important to know that, English is not the only non-indigenous language used and learnt by Nigerians. There is also the Arabic language which is even the mother tongue of a small group in Yobe state. There is again, the French language which features in school curriculum.

However, Nigerians mostly describe English as the language of Nigeria. It is the language used in official correspondence. However, section 53 of the 1979 constitution stipulates that, 'the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English,' though also 'in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefore'.

Thus, as English continues to perform the functions of a national language, there emerges, in general, the Nigerian English variety which has some phonological, syntactic and lexical etc differences with English English.

SYNTAX

Here we discuss the syntactic element of the English and the misplacement of some classes of words by Nigerian users. For example:

Word	Standard British English	Popular Nigerian English
Horn	Noun	Horn before overtaking
Off	Adverb/Preposition	Off the light
Naked	Adjective	He naked himself

LEXIS

Nigerian users of English bring about the use of loan-words into English which leads to continuous use of the words as if they are English. For example:

Akara	Yoruba
Eba	Yoruba
Gari	Hausa
Suya	Hausa
Obi	Igbo
Eze	Igbo

CONCLUSIONS

From the above discussions, it has become clear that, 'for Nigerian users (both teachers and learners) of English (and other languages), the knowledge of the written and spoken forms of the language is important. The two forms (especially the spoken aspects) can be learned effectively only when the use of the language laboratory is taken seriously. Therefore, for us to turn to the use of language laboratory in our universities, schools and colleges, the government must come in to provide them (language laboratories) in all academic institutions and train the teachers who are charged with the responsibility of training the learners.

Additionally, we have discussed also, briefly, many other aspects of language use outside the laboratory and their challenges. Our hope is, the authorities at various levels will come in to salvage this all important means of communication.

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