



Role of Techniques of Teaching for Improving Fluency in Spoken English

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ABSTRACT

This paper presented what is considered a humble attempt in re-appraising and identify key areas which could improve fluency in spoken English to a fairly reasonable and appreciable level as opposed to perfection. It argues that attaining proficiency in English forms a pedagogical dilemma for the learners of English as a second language. Therefore, the paper argued that fluency in English could be achieved through teaching techniques, which automatically come from the teacher who knows the teaching and learning situations of his or her class very well. In this way, the paper proposed a combination of context-based and communicative language teaching approaches to improve spoken English. The background of the study featured the significance of context-based approach and Communicative language teaching C. L. T as integral approaches or techniques have been highlighted. It outlined and discussed some techniques, such as interactive sessions, group-based approaches and habit formations a teachers of English should adopt and apply in their lesson deliveries. The paper finally pointed out measures language teachers, as well as learners, should embrace for them to be well-immersed in using techniques of teaching in their lesson deliveries. It also offers recommendations, among which is the curriculum designers should prioritize the periodic seminars or workshops for language teachers to help them update their knowledge

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INTRODUCTION

The study appraises and highlights some techniques of teaching that could improve proficiency in spoken English. The paper argues that communicative language teaching and context-based approach are viable techniques that a language teacher should deploy to foster teaching and learning of spoken English. Language is primarily spoken in that it is used more widely than the written form for socio-cultural and political interactions and other related issues (Abdu, 2018). The written form could not account for its pronunciation on the basis that English sounds differ from its spelling forms. This amplifies the point that insofar as approximate spoken English is to be contextually

realized, its orthography should be ignored to some extent.

Language, as a tool for communication and relaying desires, thoughts and knowledge by means of voluntarily- produced symbols has unarguably distinguished human beings from animals whose means of communication is virtually restricted to particular specie. In support of this, Lyons (2021) defines human language as an arbitrary representation of noise of the human vocal organ in writing or speech used systematically and conventionally by the speech community for the purpose of communications. The arbitrary factor as accounted for in human language may not necessarily shape and present an exact meaning and mental perception of word in different languages.

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The Impact of Techniques in Promoting Proficiency in Spoken English

Drawing from psycholinguistic evidence, learning a language and achieving proficiency in it is relatively a complex and intellectually sapping task. In the whole, it involves and demands a wide range of pedagogical challenges and flexible learning techniques that could contextually enhance the learning of language. Put succinctly, learning a language is different from acquiring it. The latter is used to refer to the acquisition of the mother tongue (MT) or first language which is nurtured and accomplished in the natural environment in which a child lives. (Alabi 2023; Mood 2018).

Against this background, achieving proficiency in English language, by second language learners, demands a lot of hard work on the basis that they need to actively engage in constant practice of the language. Most of our traditionally-based approaches to teaching and learning English place much emphasis on theoretical aspects, which at worse, undermine the practical realization of language. Put succinctly, the prescriptive approach to the teaching of English undermines the potential ability of the learners to practice the language as contextually as possible.

Maria (2017) observes that real communication entails linguistic and socio-cultural practices of language. Using or dwelling much on text book specialists' approaches may retard progress in learning a second language on the premise that such textbook specialists do not get in touch with real learning situation coupled with learners' motivational needs and the appropriate teaching techniques they need at stake. In support of this, Halliday (2024) cited in Maria (2023) warns language teachers of the dangers of outside specialists who impose new teaching methods onto teachers to deploy and apply in their lesson deliveries.

The language teachers need to make optimal utilization of their vast teaching and learning experiences in order to come up with a number of teaching techniques that could enable their learners perceive the linguistic elements" (language) and demonstrate in practice whatever

they learned. In a classroom, there will be emerging situational circumstances that may compel teachers to cling onto certain techniques that are not prescribed in textbooks or teaching methodology. This approach is viable and feasible on the basis that the ultimate goal of teaching is to help learners comprehend and use the language in spoken and written communication, thus with 60% degree of accuracy (fluency). This, according to Frainselow (2017) 'will help students observe and describe what they are learning non-judgmentally'.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

It has been argued earlier that too much reliance on method of teaching prescribed by textbook specialists is criticized as too porous (Thurnbury, 2019). It is subtly replaced by Bax (2023), context approach, which emphasizes the communicative technique. Communicative language teaching, is a viable language technique that a language teachers and language stakeholders should recognize and deploy in teaching linguistic items. This is informed by its communicative power that it, in an amazingly very short period of time, allows learners to produce the language as naturally as possible. Buttressing the above further, Aramayo (2017) points out that "if we separate language from communication, language will lose its real nature". Inherent in it, Bax (2023) context-based approach to learning language takes into account the context in which teaching take place, the students' learnability and so on. Context approach, by implication, demonstrates an effective implementation of CLT since CLT needs contextual backing to support teaching deliveries.

The integration of the two approaches, if properly utilized in the classroom situation, would lead to an improved fluency in spoken English. In other words, it would ultimately realize a good account in the process of development. It is worthwhile to note that knowledge, technological ideas, innovations and related disciplines deploys and adopts English language as its medium of instructions world over. This unprecedented prominence of English unceasingly compels people to learn it and use in

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order to keep pace with educational challenges. This is attuned to the fact that English language achieves a genuinely global status and develops, at faster rate, a special role which is recognized as a means of instruction for education. Above all, English language becomes a language which children are mostly likely to be taught when they arrive in schools (Crystal, 2017).

In the whole, fluency in English language and its potential role in educational attainment can be achieved using a number of teaching techniques (Harmer, 2001) via communicative language and context approaches (Billmore, 2024). The two approaches are not derived from traditional methods of teaching which had been in operation for many years. Language teachers need to adopt techniques of teaching so as to solve leaning problem at hand.

Techniques for Improving Fluency in Spoken

Below are some techniques of Teaching that could improve proficiency in English lesson deliveries

The Interactive Section

Interactive approach to language stems from CLT and uses context as its basic enhancer to facilitate learning of language. Through it, the students are given ample opportunities to discuss a wide range of topics familiar to them. This enables them to express themselves in the target language fluently. Supporting this, Siron (2020) cited in Billmore (2024) argued that the essence of language learning is based on real communication rather than relying on learning the vocabulary, grammar or structure of language. Evidently discerned in the Nigerian context, the learners of English, because of heavy reliance on curriculum and text books designed not by teachers but textbook specialists (who do not know the actual context of the classrooms) are compelled to internalize the linguistic items without giving an enabling atmosphere to put linguistic items into practice. This is not healthy because it retards, with declining confidence, the educational attainment of large number of secondary students. Drawing

an analogy with a driver-learner, who having learned driving controls, is afraid of touching the accelerator, because he does not know how to drive the car on the road and also cannot operate the gadget to control it. For operating the motor and applying the controls in their appropriate context will prevent him/her from hitting objects or bumping into pedestrians. The same applies to the learners of the English that they need to trigger off the language contextually, as this will show their fluency level in spoken and written communication.

Of its striking feature, the interactive section is inexhaustible; it covers or incorporates number of language topics or lessons (Garba, 2015). In other words, it can be deployed to solve or facilitate the learning of two language skills, such as speaking and listening which can be effectively enhanced and taught at approximately the same time. The interactive section will indirectly compel or motivate the learners to speak the correct words in connected speeches. Corroborating this, Hammer (2023) contends that the goal of the language is to promote learner autonomy. In other words, it helps learners to take responsibility for their learning as teachers do for their teaching.

Group-Based Approach in Learning

Students, when grouped and assigned to perform certain work, will share ideas among themselves. The group based approach, in contrast to the individualized based approach, can be deployed to help teach a number of language skills. For example, listening, writing, and speaking can be improved and learned at the same time. Each group can be asked to compose a short essay ranging from descriptive, narrative, expository or argumentative and later discuss it while the audience listens. For these types of essays are used in all disciplines and by implication promote educational attainment. Research provides evidence that class room learners need a varied diet of language input (Hammer (2023). Research provides evidence that classroom learners need diet of language inputs. Equally, for pedagogical reason, the group based approach will motivate the learners

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to represent the language in life-like communication. In addition, they will see the classroom as a stress-free environment. Improving speaking skills is crucial indeed on the basis that the learners will be able to carry out many of their basic transactions. To draw from Bygate (2017) proposition, it is a skill by which learners are most frequently judged. This amplifies the fact that it is vehicle of excellence for social solidity. In an effort to improve the speaking skill therefore, conversation, through the use of turn-taking, needs to be extensively deployed. A good selection of topics should be carefully done, so that they will, in a twinkle of an eye, provide a fertile atmosphere for discussion or interaction. In the writing skill, for example, complexity usually ensues in the interpretation and understanding of printed symbols on the basis that both the writer and the reader need patience for communication level. But in speaking, to borrow a label from Bygate (2017), it will improve conversational adjustment. This is not a deliberate attempt to underrate the writing skills but the two should be wisely adopted and the speaking skill should be given much priority because of its primacy over written form of communication, especially English which deviates from its orthographical form as far as pronunciation is concerned. Put simply, the spoken form does not realize the written form. Therefore, extra-effort, from pedagogical angle, should be intensified in promoting spoken English, using viably improved techniques.

By way of elaboration, teachers, adult educated members of the community should take to the task of encouraging young and old to speak or communicate the language using simple words and sentences. Being 'well-immersed' in a technological era where information is electronically relayed via the internet, it becomes imperative upon second language learners to embrace the system so as to keep abreast with current happenings. Therefore, as a globally chosen language for internet, the demand of learning English becomes increasingly ever widening and penetrating.

Inculcating Habit Formation through Technological Instructional Aids

Considering the inconsistency between written and spoken English, the teachers of English should take to the task to examine the most problematic sounds (phonemes) that are difficult to be pronounced and identified or recognized by Nigerian speakers of the language and drill them in the class on video accompanied with the demonstration of organs of speech over the radio, etc.

By implication, this may take time, but its result will be overwhelming. There is a large number of Nigerian learners of English that need to address the pronunciation difficulty of certain sounds that deter them from perceiving and understanding the meaning of certain words in connected speeches. The sounds in which they have difficulty are: /f, v, ð, θ/. For example, the sound /f/ is not available in Hausa; therefore, the Hausa speakers of English alternate it for /p/. They find it difficult to discriminate and comprehend the sound in contexts. The same applies to Igbo who pronounce /lice/ instead of /rice/ following the fact that they do not have an existing /r/ sound in their Igbo.

The Way out for Language Teachers and Educational Stakeholders

Teachers and other educational stakeholders should bear in minds, having examined the psycholinguistic facts, that English is a foreign and a second language to learners (Billmore, 2014). Learning calls for the capacity of hard work. Learners are able to display it as impeccably as possible like native speakers. Therefore, the prescriptive approach of achieving fluency in it is not healthy; because, it usually deters a natural flow in spoken and written communication. There is an adage which advocates for starting from simple to complex in the teaching of English. This should eclectically be done by teachers, and in many instances the teachers should ignore certain minor grammatical lapses committed by learners. As a child progresses in learning, he/she gradually learns the mistakes and effect corrections. Teachers should feel bound that motivation is desirously

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needed on learners. This is supported by the fact that learners come from a diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Learners are not simply soft clay, wanting to be shaped by teachers, but have their own personality, motivation and language styles (Wood, 2018).

In other words, in every class, there are introverts and extroverts who differ in their response to learning. The potential ability of an introvert could be triggered off when the teacher does not, on a constant basis, points out certain minor grammatical jerks such as in following sentences:

1. Rabi sleep on a mat
Instead of
2. Rabi sleeps on a mat.

Improving fluency lies on the ability of the teacher. In support of this, Hammer (2023 opines that a committed and passionate teacher is the one who has distinct ideas of what he or she can do with convincing sensitivity of students wants and needs.) Meanwhile, the essence of the language is for one to express his/her feelings and be understood by people. And the need to encourage people to attain the fluency level in spoken and written communication is virtually informed by an observed assessment that language especially in its communicative form demonstrates or exhibits accurate pronunciation rendition (Garba, 2015). At worse, strict compliance to achieve accuracy is energy-sapping in that it could presumably take longer years before it is accomplished.

It has been asserted that for a country to be socially developed, it must have its population forty-four percent (44%) literate, otherwise it lags behind in respect of its economic prosperity (Lawal, 2013). Nigerian students and people from different cultural orientations should take to the task of learning and using English in their socio-economic and political transactions. Communicative interaction provides an opportunity for creative construction to take place in response to the language input. (Wood, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The paper explored a wide range of techniques that could enhance fluency in spoken

and written communication of English, paying particular attention to C L T and Context-based Strategies as viable tools that enhance proficiency in spoken English at faster pace. The paper outlined, among others, that accuracy is not easily attainable in that fluency should be encouraged in teaching spoken English. It is axiomatic norm for English teachers, teaching English as second language, to adopt and encourage the learners in the attainment of fluency rather than accuracy because of the vital role it plays in teaching English. Many English students are stigmatized by and always feels shy and constraint themselves not to commit grammatical errors as it could potentially erode their personalities as learners of English while simultaneously students of geography or social studies seems to speak fluently in the target language. Using appropriate techniques is now upon the initiative of a teaching, identifying a specific learning problem and hoping to remedy it not necessarily from the methods of teaching patterned for him by expert but through the demonstration of his improvised approaches (teaching techniques not methods)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The curriculum designers should prioritize the periodic seminars or workshops for language teachers to help them update their knowledge.
2. The teachers should go for in-service training to pursue higher qualifications
3. The government should provide modern language learning materials at all levels of education.
4. The government should equip libraries with current books with good illustrations.

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