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TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR THROUGH A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH FOR SUSTENANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

JESSICA ATONG PINTA, Ph.D
Department of General Studies (Technical)
Plateau State Polytechnic Barkinladi

And

JAMES PHILIP NYAM
Government Secondary School Tudun-Wada,
Jos

ABSTRACT

English language is a language that seeks to promote globalization. In addition to being the world's most widely spoken language, it is the offIcial language in Nigeria. In spite of its role in diverse human endeavours, attempts made at sustaining language development in Nigeria mostly center around just language policy documents. This paper was necessitated by the need to propose a way of developing in English language learners, the ability to maintain the language they have learnt over a long period of time considering its importance in globalization. It proposed an approach to language teaching that would ensure as well as sustain life-long English language learning. The study hinged on the Multiple Intelligence Theorv (MIT) where teaching through various disciplines is emphasized in order to enable students interact in the target language based on their different learning styles. SpecifIcally, the paper examined language development and some attempts made so far in this direction: how multidisciplinary approach can enhance language development, and also presented hints on how the multidisciplinary approach can be employed in teaching some grammar Items

KEYWORDS: Language development, Grammar, Multidisciplinary approach, Learning, Globalization

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has swept through different areas of human endeavour together with its setup values. Human diversities which include trade and commerce, the military, international relations, education, science and technology have increased the need

for English language use. English language is the third largest language in the world. St George (n.d) confirmed this when he stated that it is spoken by 400 million speakers as native language, another 400 million as second language and between 600 – 700 million as foreign language and unlike Mandarin which is spoken in just a region, English is spoken in 112 countries around the world. This makes it a world language.

The role of English language in globalization is enormous. Bodapati (2016) explained that today, due to globalization, English language has become the most prized possession of communication. Since the language has become all encompassing, and real world situations have become complex such that knowledge is required from different sources, it is only proper that a multidisciplinary approach is used in teaching it so that it is encountered in different guises. The choice of this approach is borne out of the fact that it has been found to be effective in developing language skills (Pinta, 2016).

The importance of English language makes it imperative for learners to be exposed to the language not just for examination purpose but for life long benefit. Sustaining a language means maintaining what has been learnt over a period of time. This can only be achieved when the language moves from being just a subject to a medium of interaction in different settings. These settings range from social to academic and from one field of endeavour to another.

Nigerian learners find English language of great value because it is the country's official language. In addition to this, it is the primary or secondary language of many former British colonies and these countries control world business and cultural spheres like movies, international banking, education, internet and press, travel and so on. The language has grown over the years to become an international common tongue. Bodapati (2016) summed up the role of English language in today's world by saying that in this global village, English language acts as the repository of wisdom and wit

Having identified the role of English language in world. affairs and its importance to the Nigerian learner, it is important that ways of sustaining the development of the language are sought in order to ensure lifelong benefits to the learners/users. The position of this paper is that the multidisciplinary approach should be employed in the teaching of grammar items as a way of sustaining language items that have been learnt. This practice is in consonance with Multiple Intelligence Theory (MIT) where teaching is based on individual preferences and learning styles and various disciplines are employed in teaching (Molaie, 2016). In the case of this paper, focus is on the teaching of grammar,

Language Development

Language development is building learners' ability to use both natural and artificial language skills competently. It is a process that starts early in life, by which children come to understand and distinguish speech sounds and communicate language. Child Encyclopedia (n.d) explained that language development comprises a number ofcomponents that include:

i. Ability to communicate through a combination of several cognitively learnt behaviours and skills;
ii. Ability to produce sounds for specific words and
iii. Correct use ofwords to express specific thoughts.

These however, are not all that language development comprises. Phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, reading fluency and comprehension strategies also form components of language development.

On their part, Simons and Charles (2018) see language development as the result of the series of on-going planned actions that language communities take to ensure that they can effectively use their language to achieve their social, cultural, political, economic and spiritual goals. This demonstrates the ability to bring together, components pointed out by Child Encyclopedia (n.d) for the attainment of societal gains. The link between language development and societal needs is in the planned actions meant to develop writing systems, standardize norms, and elaborate terminologies towards expanding the functions of a language in a society. Behaviourists like B.F Skinner are of the view that language acquisition and development are learnt behaviours where learners learn by associating events (classical conditioning) and also through reward and punishment (operant conditioning). Language learning using a multidisciplinary approach will further reinforce learning theories in the behaviourist thinking because learners will associate the various language items learnt with their school subjects.

Chomsky's dimension to language acquisition and development where children are seen to learn rules of language by applying them in their own way, also has a place **in** the multidisciplinary approach to teaching. This is because Chomsky's view sees children as having an innate ability to learn language naturally as such, exposing them to language learning through events or everyday areas of study they are exposed to, thus, helping them acquire language with ease.

Language development to psycholinguists is the various stages an infant goes through before finally developing ability to communicate using language. Psycholinguists estimate that humans learn around 3,500 words a year between **their**

first birthdays and before they are 30 years (McKay, n.d). Humans grow from infancy, without language to eventually become chatterboxes. It begins with seemingly random and spontaneous sounds, cooing, squealing and gurgling.

Around the age of 10 months, babbling starts to sound more like the language the child is learning. The child then moves from the one word stage around the age of one year and begins to utter sounds like 'ma' for mom, and 'da' for dad.

When language is developed, there is the need to sustain what has been developed. This is very important in order to ensure lasting benefit to the user. Language sustenance is ability to sustain the language an individual has learnt such that the person remembers what has been learnt even after leaving the language learning environment or even after the purpose for which the language was learnt has been achieved. This applies to all language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Some Attempts Made at Language Sustenance

Sustaining English language skills learnt is of benefit to the learner. This is because the various school courses are taught in English language. Also, users of English language are daily bombarded with the language because it is the most commonly spoken language in the world. In addition, it is the language of the internet and the official language in the country. Moreover, global competitiveness has made the
language indispensable and various researches in language learning have explained that constant exposure and deliberate attempts at mapping associations can enhance language sustainability.

Researches have been conducted in the field of language teaching and learning. These are aimed at enhancing classroom pedagogy. Stapleton (2014) commented that advances made through these research findings have had a relatively small impact on actual language learning. This, he explained is because like in most school subjects, the recipients of language pedagogy arrive with either predetermined advantages or impediments that have a mitigating influence on the effectiveness of teaching.

The small impact made by research carried out as pointed out by Stapleton, calls for incorporation of sufficient details in language teaching in order to accommodate some of the impediments that may exist. Teaching using the multidisciplinary approach is a form of incorporating more detailed information in explaining language items .

Several efforts have been made by some countries to ensure both the development and sustenance of English language. In Nigeria, the effort made in this direction is in the various language policies drawn up. This is to show the importance of sustaining the language. Adeyemi (2010) reported that in Boswana, to ensure effective language teaching and learning, the government went as far as adopting the communicative language teaching approach for all levels of education. In the case of Sudan, Elhassan (2012) explained that, at some point, stake holders in the education sector questioned the efficiency of teaching subjects in isolation. Questioning the efficiency of teaching subjects in isolation resulted in studies on the use of multiple disciplines in teaching all subjects including English language. Rowan (2013) also confirmed attempts made at ensuring the development and sustenance of English language by pointing out that research in multidisciplinary teaching has been on going and has shown that it increases motivation for learning.

Increase motivation is known to improve learning outcomes; as such, employing the multidisciplinary approach in the teaching of grammar will improve understanding of the items as students combine ideas from multiple disciplines. In addition, the students will recognize the value of the language item learnt because they will see the language item in use in other disciplines as well.

Teaching Grammar Using a Multidisciplinary Approach

Teaching through a multidisciplinary approach involves using different subjects of study in one activity. In teaching grammar using a multidisciplinary approach, the teacher should in addition to teaching grammar, lead students to see that school subjects are tied together. For example, in teaching the noun, the teacher can begin by supplying or generating information from students from subjects like geography, chemistry, government, agriculture, etc. Here is an example :

Input from geography

- The world is divided into seven continents: Africa, Asia, North America. South America, Australia, Antarctica and Europe.
- There are 195 countries in the world including Nigeria, Kenya, United Arab Emirate and Denmark.
- Also, a number of rivers and mountains exist like Mt Everest and Mt Kilimanjaro and there are over 7,442 billion people in the world like Abdul, Micheal and Stephanie.

Language item from the information

- The teacher should introduce the noun and explain that a noun is a word that names things.

- The teacher should ask the students to identify the things being named in the input given (places, rivers, mountains and people)
- The teacher should explain that these things named are referred to as proper nouns .

Input from chemistry

- There are 118 elements on the periodic table. They include, among others9 hydrogen, helium, nitrogen, magnesium, etc. An atom is the smallest indivisible part of an element and it is made of protons, neurons and electrons.

Language item from the information

- The teacher should ask the students to identify the things being named here (things, both visible and invisible)
- All the things being named are nouns.

Input from government

- Government talks of democracy, election, monarchy, peace, conflict, corruption and treaties.

Language item from the information

- The teacher should ask the students to mention the things being named here.
- Examine the things being named and explain and identify their category.
- They are referred to as abstract nouns.

Input from agriculture

- Agriculture introduces us to cattle and sheep rearing, crop production and soil conservation. Implements used on farms include hoe, cutlass and sickle, among others.

Language item from the information

- The teacher should ask the students to mention the things being named here

  (animals, plants, objects)
- These are common nouns.

These various subjects used to generate information only serve as examples ofwhere the language items being taught can be found; it is not a geography, chemistry, government or agriculture lesson. Similarly, to introduce and teach adjectives of comparison, a lesson can take this form:

The teacher brings a map to class and together with the students, points out the location and climate of some places, and then gives a comparison, for example, information from geography can be used to give direction or make comparison:

Input from geography

- Ghana is 933km (580 miles) from Abuja Nigeria.
- Ouagadougou is 1053km (645 miles) from Abuja Nigeria.
- Guinea is 2301 km (1430 miles) from Abuja Nigeria.
- The temperature in Mongolia today is 20 degrees centigrade.
- Greenlandhas atemperature of 10 degrees centigrade.
- China is 3 degrees centigrade

Language item from the information

Ghana is far away from Nigeria, Ouagadougou is farther and Guinea is the farthest

Guinea is closer to Ouagadougou than it is to Nigeria. Ghana is the closest to Nigeria than Ouagadougou and Guinea (Adjectives qualify nouns by giving additional information about them e.g. far, farther, farthest)

China is cold, Greenland is colder and Mongolia is the coldest.

TIle temperature is bad in China, that of Greenland is worse and Mongolia has the worst.

At every point, the teacher should bring out clearly, the language item being taught so as not to confuse the students as to which subject is being taught

Again, to teach items like prefixes and suffixes, any subject can be used to draw out examples. For example:

Input from mathematics

The teacher should get students to draw a straight line from point A to point B. From point A, they should draw another straight line that goes up from point C, then another line that goes down from point C to join B. This forms a triangle.

- AngleAto B is the base ofthetriangle
- Angle AtoCisastem
- AngleBtoCisastem

Language item from the information

- Some words are bases for others to stem from for example, from point A to **B** is a base where we can have words that are bases or foundation for others, **fu** example the word FAITH

- From B to C, we can have FUL and from A to C we can have UN. This gives the new word UNFAITHFUL. Note that apart from the base A to B, the others are not words. They are called affixes. Affixes that fall on lines A to C are referred to as prefixes while those that fall on lines B to C are suffixes. Prefixes come before the base and suffixes come after.
- The triangle can equally be used to teach the basic tenses: present, past and future where angle at point A is the past, this moves to B to form the present and goes up to C to form the future.

To teach a language item like phrases, clauses or even sentences, chemistry, physics or any other subject can be used depending on the interests of the learners and ingenuity of the teacher. For examples, using laws or principles to teach phrases, clauses and sentences:

Input from chemistry

- The rate of diffusion of gases is inversely proportional to the square root of its density.

Language item from the information

The teacher leads the students to identify the various components that combine to form the expression and point out what is being talked about: the rate of diffusion of gases (this is the subject of the sentence and it is not a single word but a collection ofwords)

In the collection ofwords, there is no verb.

The verb should be pointed out from the entire information given (is)

What happened to the subject should be pointed out (inversely proportional to the square root of its density); this too does not have a verb and is a collection ofwords. This is referred to as a phrase.

Input from physics

- When an object is partially or totally immersed, there is an upward thrust and it's equal to the weight of fluid displayed.

Language item from the information

- When an object is partially or totally immersed
- There is anupwardthrust
- it is equaltothe weight offluiddisplayed

The expressions above are dependent on each other to complete their meaning. On their own they do not make complete sense but they have verbs in them. These expressions are known as clauses.

Implications of Multidisciplinary Approach to Language Development / Sustenance

English language is the language with which other subjects are taught. Since this is the case, teaching English language using other subjects is a possibility. The multidisciplinary approach is an approach that borrows from other subjects in order to throw more light on language elements. Mastro (2014) says it is a "whole" or "comprehensive" method that covers an idea, topic or text by integrating multiple knowledge domains. Mastro testified that this approach is a powerful method of teaching which crosses boundaries in order to enhance the scope and depth of learning. This approach has a lot to accomplish in sustaining language development.

Language development is sustained through the promotion of active engagement in language learning. This can be achieved through: listening to the language through stories, music, and instructions; talking in the target language and carrying out various tasks using the language. What one engages oneself in always, eventually forms a great part of one's thought process. As such, encountering a language item in different guises ensures the sustenance ofthe language item in the learners' memory.

Elhassan (2012) reported that language teaching in Sudan is carried out through the single discipline approach and stakeholders in language education are beginning **to** frown at the approach because of its counterproductive nature. Elhassan explained that clarification of a problem or discussing topics need to relate different aspects together; this way, learners think critically, have the ability to use proper analogy **and** analysis of a concept and what is learnt, sticks to memory. Rowan (2013) equally upheld the need for a multidisciplinary approach in the language class. **Rowan** pointed out that in the approach, students are able to see and make connections and create linkages among several subjects and disciplines. This way, they are able to explore between fields and have a more unified sense of content and process. **TN** result is learning that lasts a life time because the learners have had **tha**
understanding advanced by combining ideas from multiple disciplines.

CONCLUSION

The importance of sustaining the development of language cannot **b:** overemphasized. This is because of its lifelong benefits to learners/users. **N** approach is adjudged the best in language teaching because research is still on **gotH** in that direction. However, employing a multidisciplinary approach in **sustainiql** language has been proposed in this paper. This practice is in consonance with **d** Multiple Intelligence Theory (MIT). This approach involves incorporating **otU** approaches and depends on the ingenuity of the language teacher. Relying **solelyd**

other subjects to teach English grammar is not what is being suggested here but borrowing from other subjects to establish connection and present items from different perspectives. This equally agrees with behaviourists' theory of association. An examination of language development and sustenance were carried out to clearly establish the paper's interest. The importance of sustaining what has been learnt was also spelt out and some guide was given on how the multidisciplinary approach can be used to teach some grammar items. All these are attempts at sustaining what has been learnt over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of all that has been discussed, this paper recommends the following:

i. Teachers should help students apply knowledge in the learning of new ideas or skills. This they should do by linking what students know from other disciplines to the learning of new language items. In addition, lessons should be properly planned in a dynamic and orderly manner.
ii. Teachers should ensure that content of lessons are made clear so that students understand how they relate.

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