The Factor of Attitude towards the Implementation of the Aural – Oral Skills Component of the 9 – Year English Studies Curriculum at JSS Level in Katsina State, Nigeria

GIDE, Umar Saleh¹, IBRAHIM, Mohammed²

¹ Ph.D, College of Education, Alqalam University, Katsina, Nigeria
² Ph.D, Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

Abstract:- This study assessed two variables related to the implementation of the English Aural – Oral Skills Component of the 9 – Year English Studies Curriculum at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level in Katsina state. The objective was to find out whether the attitude of both teachers and students is favourable to the teaching and learning of the two skills. Two research questions related to the variables were used to guide the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data for the research. Forty one public, twelve community and eleven private JSS were used as school samples for the study. The target population was made up of 456 teachers of English and 170, 368 JSS students in all the 318 public, community and private JSS in Katsina State. The sample was made up of 210 teachers and 384 students proportionately distributed across the 64 sampled schools to reflect types of schools and Educational Zones. Simple frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the questionnaires. The major findings from the study showed that the attitude of both teachers and students is not sufficiently favourable for the successful implementation of the English Studies curriculum. This is in consideration that the English aural – oral skills are the backbone of the English language. In the light of the findings the researcher recommended among others that education authority and school proprietors should organise sensitization programmes to reorient teachers on the need to give primacy and importance to the teaching of the aural – oral skills. The researcher also proposed integrated approach to teaching the language so that students would be made to see the relationship among the skills in order to bring to limelight that oral skills can be instrumental to learning other skills.

Key words: Curriculum JSS Language Oral Skill Aural Skill

I. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, English is recognised as the most important subject in the school curriculum (Clifford, 2011). This is so because it is both a subject and medium of instruction in the education system. It is also in effect the second language for Nigeria, essential for success in other areas of national life. In recognition of this, and the decision to introduce the 9 – Year Basic Education Programme, the National Council on Education (NCE) directed for the review of the then JSS curriculum. In view of this development, Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) organised and coordinated various activities which resulted in producing the 2007 curriculum tagged ‘English Studies Curriculum based on the 9 – year Basic Education programme. The concern of this study is the upper Basic (JSS) Curriculum for English Studies and particularly the spoken English component.

The objectives of the new Upper Basic Education (JSS) Curriculum are both remedial and developmental. It sets out to:

a. tackle the language deficiencies brought in from the lower basic (primary).
b. develop language proficiency for both lower and upper Basic (JSS and SSS).
c. develop the language proficiency necessary for performing well in other school subjects.

As earlier stated, the concern of the study is the skills of listening and speaking. The new curriculum recognises that these skills are closely interrelated as one reinforces the acquisition of the other. Further, the designers of the curriculum borrow from the structuralist theory of language learning, a theory that believes that language is primarily what is spoken and only secondarily what is written. According to this theory, listening and speaking skills are instrumental to the learning of the written skills (reading and writing). In view of this, the curriculum firmly believes that the skills of listening and speaking form the ‘bedrock of the language’. To promote efficiency in listening and speaking, the 9 – year English Studies Curriculum made ample provision for aural-oral exercises through the use of particularly recorded materials, the language laboratory, the radio etc. Listening, which in the old curriculum was not emphasised (Aina, 2001) was given a special place in the new curriculum. This has enriched the oral English component. The speaking sub-skill component on the other hand is maintained and improved upon. Both segmental and supra-segmental features are fully emphasised.
The study however was to find out whether or not the attitude of the two important participants in the implementation of any curriculum – teachers and students – favour the teaching and learning of the two skills. This is in recognition of the role each plays in curriculum implementation. Ali (2011) for example points out that it is the teacher that ultimately implements the curriculum. This means that for an effective implementation of the curriculum, teachers must have positive attitude toward the teaching of the aural – oral skills. Similarly, students who are the beneficiaries of the teaching must have positive attitude towards the learning of the language if success must be attained in the implementation of the curriculum.

Previous studies related to the current one and authoritative opinions revealed a lot of dissatisfaction with the attitude of both teachers and students towards the teaching and learning of oral English. Aina (2001) assessed the spoken English component for Junior Secondary Schools in Kwara State. One of her discoveries was that teachers deliberately skipped the oral English sub – component in favour of other skills. Similarly, Olaofe (2013) opined that many teachers withdraw themselves voluntarily from teaching oral skills.

The findings of Sani (2001) in relation to attitude during the same period in his evaluation of methods and materials for developing English aural – oral skills in Senior Secondary School in Katsina State are not in variance with that of Aina (2001). In addition, he found that the attitude of teachers of other subjects towards learning English seriously hampered the development of aural – oral skills. This coincides with the opinion of Enesi (2001) who points out that the skills of oral communication have been largely neglected.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The 9-year (JSS) Basic Education English Studies Curriculum (2007) recognizes speaking and listening skills as the bedrock of the English language course. However, it is a common knowledge that in Katsina State aural-oral skills (listening and speaking) are the most unpopular course and mostly avoided by teachers of English language and students (Sani 2001). Consequently, the required level of performance in oral expression expected of any student who undergoes junior secondary education in Katsina State is likely to be poor. This has been the general complaint of parents and other stakeholders in education in the State. This situation is capable of affecting the performance of students at the senior secondary level of education in since the junior secondary education is supposed to prepare the students for the challenges of education at the senior secondary school level (NERDC, 2007).

This problem of low attainment in oral expression and by extension in English language in Katsina State, generally could have emanated from various factors related to teaching and learning of English language. This study however is aimed at finding out whether or not the attitude of both teachers and students is favourable for effective implementation of the aural-oral skills component of the English language curriculum at the Junior Secondary Level in Katsina State.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives for the study were to:

1. Determine whether the attitude of teachers of English is favourable to the teaching of aural – oral skills at JSS level in Katsina State.
2. Determine whether the attitude of students is favourable to the learning of the English aural – oral skills at JSS level in Katsina State.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to meet the objectives of the study and to attend to the problem the following research questions were raised.

1. Is the attitude of teachers of English favourable to the teaching of the English aural-oral skills at JSS level in Katsina state?
2. Is the attitude of students favourable to the learning of English aural-oral skills at JSS level in Katsina State available?

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Findings from the study would furnish the Ministry of Education and similar agencies with the latest data-based information on the variables investigated. This would facilitate these authorities to give these all important skills in particular and English language in general the appropriate attention they deserve.

VI. METHODOLOGY

The research design for used for the study was descriptive survey. It set to explore the attitude factor of both teachers and students in the implementation of the English language aural-oral skills component of the 9 – year curriculum in Katsina State Junior Secondary Schools.

VII. POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study comprised of all the 456 teachers of English and 170,368 students of the 318 public, community and private Junior Secondary Schools in Katsina State. Some of the common characteristics of the population include that all the three types of schools were supervised by the State Universal Basic Education Board and the Ministry of Education. They have also, being in JS 3, reached the last phase of the junior secondary education after which they are presented for Basic Education Certificate Examination as a form of evaluation.

VIII. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES
Sixty four Junior Secondary Schools representing 20% of the population, as minimum recommended by Gay (1981) for descriptive research formed the school sample size. Proportionate sampling, in cognisance of the school types and zonal education areas, was used to select the schools. All the teachers of English found in the 64 sampled schools numbered 210 were used purposively to form teacher samples in cognisance of their small number. A total of 384 students based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table constituted the students sample. Purposive sampling was also used to select students whose class position during the last term’s examination fell between the first and tenth. This was with a view to ensuring efficient responses to the students’ questionnaire. They were also proportionately distributed to reflect school types and zonal education areas.

**IX. INSTRUMENTS FOR THE STUDY**

For the realisation of the objectives of the study teachers’ and students’ questionnaires (TQ and SQ) were used. The instruments were validated by specialists in language education and curriculum studies of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto to determine both face and content validity. Reliability of TQ and SQ were established by test and re-test method. The reliability indices were 0.76 and 0.77 respectively.

**X. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected were analysed quantitatively by the use of frequency counts and simple percentages.

**Data Analysis**

Research Question I: Is the attitude of English teachers at JSS level in Katsina favourable to the teaching of English aural oral skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Public Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Community Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Private Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>All schools Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I prefer to teach the aural-oral skills to teaching other aspects of English.</td>
<td>62 (48%)</td>
<td>68 (52%)</td>
<td>16 (44%)</td>
<td>20 (56%)</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>96 (49%)</td>
<td>100 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Teaching aural-oral skills is not a difficult task.</td>
<td>38 (29%)</td>
<td>92 (71%)</td>
<td>08 (22%)</td>
<td>28 (78%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>66 (34%)</td>
<td>130 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Aural-oral skills are more important to the English learner than reading and writing skills.</td>
<td>64 (49%)</td>
<td>66 (51%)</td>
<td>19 (53%)</td>
<td>17 (47%)</td>
<td>25 (83%)</td>
<td>05 (17%)</td>
<td>108 (55%)</td>
<td>88 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Correction of errors in aural-oral is more helpful to students than correcting reading and writing.</td>
<td>64 (49%)</td>
<td>66 (51%)</td>
<td>18 (50%)</td>
<td>18 (50%)</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>100 (51%)</td>
<td>96 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I enjoy teaching stress and intonation. Generally, teachers enjoy teaching the aural-oral skills.</td>
<td>54 (42%)</td>
<td>76 (58%)</td>
<td>12 (33%)</td>
<td>24 (67%)</td>
<td>17 (57%)</td>
<td>13 (43%)</td>
<td>83 (42%)</td>
<td>113 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 (38%)</td>
<td>80 (62%)</td>
<td>12 (33%)</td>
<td>24 (67%)</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>90 (46%)</td>
<td>106 (54%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The picture that emerges from Table 1 is that majority of the respondents have negative attitude towards the teaching of the aural-oral skills. This is evident from items 1, 2, 5 and 6, in the table. Across the schools, one hundred respondents (51%) disagree that they prefer to teach the aural-oral skills. Similarly, 130 (66%) consider teaching the two skills a difficult task. In the same vein, 113 respondents disagree that they enjoy teaching stress and intonation. Also, 106 (54%) disagree that the generality of teachers enjoy teaching the aural-oral skills. However, items 3 and 4 reveal that the attitude of the teachers notwithstanding, they realise the importance of the two skills in language learning. Across the schools, 108 (55%) teachers agree that the aural-oral skills are more important than reading and writing skills. Others, 100 (51%) opine that it is more important to correct errors in aural-oral skills than in reading and writing. It is worthy of note, however, that contrary to the general attitude displayed by respondents, majority of the teachers from private schools
display positive attitude towards the teaching of the two skills. The scores in respect of all the indices used to measure their attitude are all in the majority side. (60%, 67%, 83%, 60%, 57% and 60%).

Research Question 2: Is the attitude of students at JSS level in Katsina favourable to the learning of English aural oral skills?

Table 2-Responses of Students on Their Attitude Towards Learning of Aural-Oral skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>All Schools</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I Speak English often.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>151 (56%)</td>
<td>28 (65%)</td>
<td>127 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>178 (54%)</td>
<td>15 (35%)</td>
<td>36 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I avoid speaking English because it is not my language.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>115 (55%)</td>
<td>28 (65%)</td>
<td>142 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>214 (45%)</td>
<td>21 (35%)</td>
<td>78 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Oral English is easy to learn.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>118 (56%)</td>
<td>28 (65%)</td>
<td>157 (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>211 (44%)</td>
<td>21 (35%)</td>
<td>63 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Learning Oral English is more important than learning, reading, writing and grammar.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>141 (65%)</td>
<td>22 (42%)</td>
<td>125 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>183 (35%)</td>
<td>23 (48%)</td>
<td>95 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>It is not necessary to learn stress and intonation since they are not present in my language.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>91 (45%)</td>
<td>37 (86%)</td>
<td>159 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>238 (55%)</td>
<td>28 (34%)</td>
<td>61 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Generally, students enjoy learning oral English lessons.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>151 (56%)</td>
<td>25 (49%)</td>
<td>125 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>178 (54%)</td>
<td>22 (44%)</td>
<td>95 (43%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 reveals that the attitude of majority of students does not favour learning of the aural-oral skills. Item 1 shows that 178 (54%) respondents disagree that they speak English often. Item 3 reveals that 211 (64%) students disagree that oral English is easy to learn. Conversely, item 4 reveals that 183 (57%) respondents reject that learning oral English is more important than learning the other skills. Item 6 also indicates that 178 (54%) disagree that students generally enjoy learning oral English. However, the table also reveals that students are not biased against the language itself as indicated by items 2 and 5. Two hundred and fourteen (65%) students disagree that they do not speak English because it is not their language. But 238 (72%) reject that learning stress and intonation is unnecessary for not being a feature in their languages.

XI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Objective number 1 and the research question raised required to determine if the attitude of teachers of the aural-oral skills was favourable enough towards the teaching of the English aural-oral skills at JSS level. The data collected and analysed for this purpose indicated that the attitude of the majority of teachers especially from public and community schools was not favourable enough to the teaching of the English aural-oral skills.

The objective of research question 2 and its corresponding research question was to determine if students’ attitude towards learning the English aural-oral skills was sufficiently favourable. It was discovered based on the data collected and analysed that:

(i) The attitude of the majority of students was not favourable to the learning of the English aural – oral skills.

(ii) Private schools students exhibited more positive attitude towards learning the aural-oral skills.

XII. DISCUSSION

The attitude of both the teachers and students is conclusively, not sufficiently favourable to the effective teaching of the English aural – oral skills. More than half of the teachers indicated that they preferred teaching the written skills, to teaching the aural – oral skills. Similarly, more than half of the teachers considered the aural – oral skills less important, compared to the written skills. Majority of students on the other hand, though not biased against the language, agreed that they do not practice speaking it, consider oral English a difficult skill to learn, and generally do not enjoy learning it.

It could therefore be concluded that the aural – oral skills component of the English Studies curriculum suffers serious neglect in Katsina State. This supports the studies of both Aina and Sani (2001) and the opinions of Enesi (2001) and Olaofe (2013).

XIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

a. The Ministry of Education and school proprietors, should intensify effort in organizing special workshops periodically to reorient teachers on the need to give primacy and importance, to the teaching of the aural-oral skills.
b. Organizations such as the National Teachers’ Institute, should be approached to organize train-the-trainer workshops at least once in a session, for both more in-depth knowledge and teaching of the aural-oral skills.

c. Some form of encouragement should be given to teachers by government and school proprietors to improve their attitude towards the teaching and learning of the aural-oral skills.

d. Teachers should sensitize students to understand the importance of learning the aural-oral skills.

e. Efforts must be made to exploit the use of activities such as drama, poetry, drills, film and the radio etc. to make learning of the aural-oral skills more lively and worthwhile. This way, students are likely to change their attitude towards learning of the two skills.

f. Integrated approach (with other skills) in the teaching of aural-oral skills is also recommended. That way students would be made to see the relationship among the skills. This is capable of bringing to limelight that oral skills can be instrumental to learning the other skills.

REFERENCES


AUTHORS

Gide, Umar Saleh lectures at College of Education, Alqalam University, Katsina Nigeria. He teaches language curriculum and English language in the school. His areas of research interest include language education, curriculum of English language and curriculum implementation at Junior and Senior secondary education in Nigeria.

Mohammed Ibrahim (Ph D) is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria. He teaches and researches on Language Education, Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology. His current research interests include teaching language skills, teaching English with Technology and language teachers classroom behavior.