SCHOOL AND HOME PARTNERSHIP AS MEANS OF PROMOTING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' SPOKEN ENGLISH LEARNING: A BASIS FOR SUSTAINABLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

MARY O. ANYABE (PhD)
Department of Arts Education,
Faculty of Education University of Jos, Nigeria

&

MILAHAM SARAH A.
Department of General Studies, Faculty of Humanities,
Management and Social sciences,
Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

&

ONAKPO-FURE CHRISTINE CHINYERE
GSE (English) Department,
Federal College of Education, Pankshin, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper discussed the poor spoken English language of secondary school students. It stressed the significance of promoting spoken English language through home and school partnership. This paper also educates teachers and parents on how to employ different practical strategies in enhancing English language to students at school and at home. Finally, the paper wrapped up by making some useful recommendations that could be used to adjust and promote meaningful and productive speeches in school and out of school.

Keywords: Home-school partnership, Students' spoken English, Promoting Learning, Sustainable English Development, Nigeria.

Introduction

In every human society, the need to communicate is paramount and language remains the most viable means through which human beings communicate with one another especially in this age of globalization. Bamigbose (2016) reiterated that English language has remained the most available means for easy communication in a pluralistic nation such as Nigeria which has five hundred and twenty-two (522) living indigenous languages. The need for greater emphasis on the teaching and learning of English as a second and official language is to equip the learners with the ability to communicate effectively; proficiency in oral expressions in English has become critical requirement for open door to many opportunities.

The teaching of spoken English should empower secondary school students with 21st century skills that will enable them speak fluently in order to became problem solvers, critical thinkers as well as collaborative learners. To acquire oral English skills, the teaching methodology has

to shift from teacher centered method in school to that of partnering. Partnership entails that both the teacher(s) and the parent(s) are individuals that have information, knowledge and expertise that must make meaningful progress in the lives of the students.

Experience and research have shown that where the home and school collaborates, partnership exists and this improves academic achievements, high quality education and safe learning environment. Blank, mellavile and Shah (2003) stated that the more parents are involved in their children's learning, the more positive the general life outcome of the children. The authors asserted that home-school partnership provides opportunities for both parents and teachers to have better perspective of the student at home and school.

Concept of Spoken Language

Spoken language is the dominant mode in human and Nigerian society, because most Nigerians use speech to communicate in variety of contexts, using different registers for a range of purposes. This communication has to be from one person to another by means of speech and hearing. It was observed that the source of production is speech is meaningful connected with almost every facet of human life. Sound therefore, is a fundamental feature of human language. Speaking consists of the use of human vocal organ as well as language and bodily action. Therefore, spoken language is an active and productive human innate capacity. Dahl (2000) defines spoken language as the child's ability to comprehend and decode speech with auditory perception. This implies that spoken language is a way of communication, especially one that uses sound or verbal expression in which a particular group will readily understand.

Theory of Spoken Language

Most of the studies carried out on learning generally have been carried out on animals such as dogs, rats' pigeons and monkeys. Piaget (1936) developed a principle known as Process Equilibration (PE) and related this principle to all cognitive development of the child with a view to knowing child acquires his language. Stimulus- Response view and language Acquisition,the psychologist, contributed immensely to the studies in language acquisition, but the findings of Chomsky (1968) introduced a new dimension to the study of child language acquisition. Chomsky argued that children are born with the knowledge of the universal formal principles, which determines the grammatical acquisition of the Language. Chomsky was of the view that every normal child is equipped with the Language Acquisition Device (LAD).

In the mid-1990s, the Dogme 95 manifesto also influenced English language teaching on real communication about practical subjects, where communication is the engine of learning. The idea behind Dogme's approach is that communication can lead to explanation which will invariably lead to further learning. Dell (2006), a linguist and anthropologist who introduced the idea of a wider communicative competence instead of Chomsky's narrow scope redefined what it meant to 'know' a language in addition to speakers having a mastery of the language in appropriately variety of speech.

The Role of the School (Teacher) In Promoting Spoken English Language

It is obvious that many secondary school students in Nigeria are not fluent in spoken English. They are poor in the oral production, which is characterized by faulty production, grammar and discourse pattern. Udomu (2004) asserted that some of the problems of poor performance

experienced by learners is as a result of poor technique employed by some English Language teachers in instructional process. The author however, lamented that the quality of the teachers available for teaching spoken English language are grossly inadequate and unqualified in   teaching most especially spoken English, which is a serious problem.

Some Strategies for Promoting Spoken English Language
The teaching of spoken English Language should be fundamentally different from teaching of other skills in English. It is pertinent that teachers of English as a second language use appropriate strategies to avoid possible language problems in teaching spoken English. Akinjobi (2011) observed that the spoken English (speech) is the area that is prompt to the challenge of incompetence as it is basically oral performance. To that effect, the Nigerian users of the language have to learn its appropriate use through some strategies or activities that should be employed by the teachers. These are:

Practice activity, Read aloud activity, Speed reading, Use of minimal pair, Reduce dialogue practices and Role play p.45. These will be discussed one after the other in this section:

1. **Practice Activity:** This activity is meant to give technical talk to students on the various subject areas including English. In this activity, the teacher groups the students at least ten (10) in number. One of the students is chosen to be the speaker and the remaining nine (9) members become listeners. The speaker is given (5) minutes to speak on a particular topic of his/her choice. After the talk, the listeners are given the opportunity to give immediate feedback to what the speaker has said. That is, in the area of organization and presentation of the topic, voice quality, pronunciation, sentence construction and general grammar were needed (Tam, 1997). In addition, the teacher makes more corrections. The speaker is expected to listen and note all the corrections and to mentally rework his speech as expected. This exercise is done in turn and it cuts across all the students in the group. Finally, the teacher has to present topic in any subject area sampled from the students' presentation. Students can note all their corrections and redo the exercise to be presented at another group time in the class.

2. **Read Aloud Activity:** This activity other than developing reading skills in students, also allow the students to develop competency in spoken English Language through generating awareness of pronunciation of words, production of correct rhythm in sentences and understanding appropriate register Field (2005) therefore, encouraged teachers to point out to learners stressed words in vocabulary and also emphasized on the teaching the learners, the reflective pronouns, the stress should be on 'self'.

On a general note, this is an important strategy because it helps every student to listen to what is being read through the readers' voice in terms of quality and mode of pronunciation. This strategy is achieved by grouping the students in tens or less than, depending on the class size. Each student is given the chance to read aloud to the hearing of the other students, who have access to the text. At the end of the reading period (five minutes), the members of the group are given the chance to give feedback on the comprehension of the text or mispronunciation of some of the words.

Teacher Reading Aloud: This is another activity used in the class, to teach spoken English. The teacher reads a particular piece or passage. The teacher will share the passage to the students with already marked position of the text; the chance is given to them to go through this passage again with their partners. A partner reads the text aloud, while the other partner marks the stressed words. Finally, the class discusses whether or not the marked stressed words are correct or not. This exercise helps learners recognize the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables (Field, 2005).

3. **Speed Reading:** For this strategy, the teacher reads aloud several paragraphs as fast as he can. Each paragraph he reads in turned and written on the white board. Later, the students are paired to read similar paragraphs. A pair quickly raises a hand to indicate completion (Crystal, 2001).

4. **Use of Minimal Pair:** The students are asked to bring to the class different words that are difficult to distinguish when paired or phrases which are difficult for them to read. These words or phrases are reviewed with the expected stress or by use of minimal pairs. After the review, the students are given time to read the word or phrases in pairs for more practice.

5. **Reduce Dialogue Practice:** The students are grouped in tens or less based on the class size. The teacher brings a tape recorder with recorded cassettes containing words. The recorded cassettes with words pronounced slow and fast. The two cassettes are played one after the other. The slow is played first and the fast one later. In each case, the students are given the opportunity to repeat the slow version then the fast version. The next stage, the tape is switched off by the teacher, and the students are regrouped in pairs to practice conversing, using full text of the cassette listened to. The speech of the fluent speaker of the language as heard previously is repeated with elision, assimilation, reduction and contraction of words. There are similar cases of omission of end-vowels, and consonants, substitution of elements within words as well as the appearance of sentences in elliptical form. Crystal, (2003, P.435). To support this strategy is intelligibility, Field (2005) asked trained listeners to transcribe recorded materials when the variables or word stress and vowels quality were manipulated. He maintained that when word stress in significantly less intelligible than when vowel quality is manipulated. He further reiterated that both native and non-native English-speaking listeners responded similarly when judging the intelligibility of words with misplaced word stress.

The strategy also helps the students to practice rhythm and stress related to the reduce forms of spoken speech as heard. To understand the difference between stressed and unstressed sound, the students are expected to decode the difference in each of the utterance made. Similarly, the students are at the same time required to stress the correct word to get the meaning of the message. This also provides practice in interpreting meanings in both stressed, mild stressed and unstressed forms (Tam, 2007). In this way, students learn how to avoid stressing every syllable of a given word as they may be tempted to. This is also as a result of some features in the first language which are transferred to the second language.

6. **Role Play:** This strategy is to make students develop self-confidence in the spoken language. In addition, role playing is of great significance as it develops students'

receptive and productive skills. Role play also models human interactions to provide chances for students to exercise, create effective and memorable experiences. It also involves interpretation of gaze, facial and body expressions, gestures, movement and others. For this activity, it is expected that appropriate registers in the area of specialist be used. The teacher assigns roles to the students and role-play is made up by them using teacher's instructions. (The teacher also gives the appropriate registers to be used).

Home partnership as means of promoting spoken English Language learning
A child's educational journey begins the moment he/she is born. Learning is constantly occurring in everyday life events, but as soon as a child steps as foot into the classroom, the journey really takes off in a more formal way. Therefore, parents should build interest in spoken language drills to reinforce what was taught by the teachers in class rather than sitting back and letting the teacher handles it all. As parents are instrumental positively and effectively in the teaching and learning process, they establish connections between the homes and schools.it was maintained that parents are students' first teachers. To further buttress on this point, parents should interact with their children freely and positively about school and teachers, provide a supportive mental, psychological or emotional environment at home to nurture their children's interest in spoken language by being role model.

Conclusion
The paper x-rays Spoken language as a vital component of the English Language which provides the base for growth in listening, reading and writing and applying the skills of spoken English are vital in the school and at home. Speech enables students to make connections between what they know and what they are learning. Listening equally helps them to acquire knowledge and explore ideas. Subsequently, the abilities to listen and to express one-self clearly and effectively contribute to students' success in school and later in life. Despite challenges in teaching and learning of spoken English, various strategies or activities that are highlighted in this paper shed light on how pronunciation features should be taught to students at school or at home to motivate them to speak fluently. This paper therefore, proposed that by incorporating current strategies, parents and teachers should help students gain the skills they need for effective spoken communication in English Language.

Recommendations
The following recommendations are made with the hope that the implementation would ease the difficulties experienced in acquiring good spoken English Language and to further boost students' performance in school and the country at large.

Parents should collaborate with the school to provide equipment and facilities as well as Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment that can help facilities spoken English teaching and learning and to make it more practical oriented.

Parent` education should be organized intermittently to remind them of their roles and to obtain skills and information which will facilitate working with their children (the students) at home.

Federal Government should enact a law that will address the needs of the students and ensure that families (parents) collaborate with teachers fully in training the children in spoken

English language. There is also the need to collaborate with parents in planning and execution of intervention programs for the students by forming advocacy groups to ensure that the rights, needs and interest of the students, most especially in improving spoken English are provided.

Parents should encourage their children to be communicating in English language, read aloud from newspapers, magazines, novels, journals, pamphlets and related materials to improve their oral skills.

References

Akinjobi, A.A. (2011). Academic competence and linguistic performance: A study of English Language Intonation Tune Assignment by some Nigerian English post graduate students. Paper presented at the seminar series of College of Humanities and Culture held at the University of Ibadan on 16th January, 2011

Atoye, R.O &Adejuwon, A. O. (2010). Improving English speech. ETO, Babalola (ed) in*Use of English for university students*, CHC: Uniosun, 218-230.

Bamgbose, A. (2016). English in the Nigerian Environment, in Bamgbose, A. Banjo & A. Thomas (eds.) *new English: A West African Perspective.*Ibadan: Mosuro Publishers, 9-26.

Blank, M.J. Melaville, A. &Slah, B. P. (2003). *Making the difference, research and practice in community schools Washington D.C. Coalition for community school,* Institute of Educational Leadership.

Brown, H.D. (2000). *Principle of language learning and teaching,* White Plains, NY: addition Wesley Logomaniac.

Chomsy, R.J.(1968). Home school collaboration. *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology (*2) 201-208.

Crystal. D. (2001). The Fluency workshops. *TESOL Newsletter,* 7(7) 29.

Dahl, H.A. (2000). *The use of English language development in Nigeria* Kano: Bayero Press

Dell, S. O*. (2006) Problem associated with reading skills in primary Schools*. Yenagoa: Nwachukwu Press

Field,S.O.(2005).Tips on reading skills in schools. Lagos: Timeline press.

Udomu,J.J. (2006).Essentials of English language in schools. London: University Press

Piaget.J. (1936). *Origins of intelligence in the child*. London: Rout Ledge &Kegan Paul.

Skinner, B.F (1957) *verbal behavior: A retrospective.*London: Jet press

Tam T.O. (2007). Factors affecting Nigerian language development. *Jos: Journal of lingustics* 7(1):45-57.