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Designing English Teaching Material for a Specific Purpose

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined important factors that guide the designing of English Language teaching materials in an English Second Language classroom. These factors include the needs of the language learners, the level of the learners and the background of the learners. It is also imperative to consider the prospective challenges of using the material as well as the strengths and weaknesses, all these shall be considered in this material. The data were drawn mainly from secondary sources, which include books and journals.

Keywords: Designing, Teaching, Material and Specific purpose

INTRODUCTION

The selection of a teaching material is important in an English Language Teaching classroom, it entails matching the content of the material with the learners' needs and age. Accordingly, [1] stated that a well designed material is the one which is able to meet the students' needs. It is worthy of note that material design is an important part of the curriculum, it also reveals the methodology employed by the teacher [2].

Context

The material which can be seen below is an authentic material adopted to be used as a first lesson material on English language to teach students from Igbo land who are learning English language as a second language in Yoruba land. The students are between twelve and fourteen years old and are twenty five in the class. They already have some knowledge of grammar. However, they need some improvements in their speaking skills. Since they are from a different background and culture, there is need to teach the students about greeting system in Yoruba land, using the communicative approach. This will enable them to socialise with the Yoruba people which will in turn enhance their speaking skills since language is seen by [3] as a tool for transmitting culture. To this end, this material is going to be used for a specific purpose.

The Rationale

Since the material is intended to be used to teach 'Greeting System in Yoruba land' and to enhance learners' speaking skills, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and CLT method will be employed drawing from "notional-functional syllabus" to concentrate on language in use, fluency and meaning, instead of the "structural syllabus" which focuses on grammar [4]. The students will be involved in activities which will enable them communicate within the content of the lesson instead of focusing on a particular linguistic form.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of communicative approach claims that communication is the main function of language in real life situations. According to [5] CLT is a broad approach to teaching that resulted from a focus on communication as the organising principle for teaching, rather than focusing on the mastery of the grammatical system of the language. The focus of CLT is to help learners to achieve communicative competence. According to [6] the notion of CLT suggests that "if students are involved in meaning focused communicative task, then language learning will take care of itself and that plentiful

exposure to language in use and plenty of opportunity to use it are vitally important for students' development of knowledge and skills". What this suggests is that CLT approach enables learners to learn the language while they use it.

However [7] do not seem to agree with the above claim because it is not clear how language learning takes place. He therefore noted that CLT has two forms which include the strong version. The strong version claims that learners learn language by using it. This necessitated the inclusion of activities on fluency to encourage meaningful interactions among the learners. The other form is the weak version which states that learners first of all learn the language before using it. This is why there are activities on accuracy to help the mastery of vocabulary items while using language. The application of the CLT theory and the strong and weak version will benefit diverse personalities of learners in a second language classroom.

Nevertheless, CLT has been criticised by some researchers. According to [8], the concept of CLT seems to over-emphasize fluency, neglecting accuracy. [9] claims that "CLT approach to language learning is *laissez-faire*" because it seems to suggest that every activity in language classroom is correct once learners communicate in the process. Furthermore, CLT has been criticised for not being relevant in all contexts and cultures especially in educational contexts where "pair-work", "group work" and "learner autonomy" are not part of their educational tradition" [10]. In addition, [11] argues that communicative activities seem artificial because once language goes beyond natural setting to a classroom environment, it becomes artificial. However, CLT approach will be useful in this setting because it will facilitate the achievement of the aim of the lesson.

Furthermore, Audio-lingual method is also employed, which involves drilling (for example in activity 5). A tape recorder is used with the recorded sounds by a British native speaker. This will be played for the students to hear and repeat the sounds which do not exist in their L1. The reason for choosing a British model raises the question "what English might teachers teach?" [12]. In answer to this question, the choice of a British Model is because the Nigerian system of education seems to draw from the British system, probably because of being formerly a British colony-

Also, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method is incorporated in the activities.-[13] sees task as "an activity or action which is carried out as a result of processing or understanding language". Nunan notes that a pedagogic task involves a learner listening to a text and thereafter, answering some questions using True or False responses(for example activity 3).Pedagogic tasks are concerned with the ability to express meaning using the knowledge of grammar [14].

[15] also notes that TBL seem to encourage autonomy, group work and sociability among learners. Though an aspect of TBL seems not to be concerned with language, nevertheless accuracy, fluency and the notion of language learning while engaging in task are still maintained in TBL. In the same manner, [16] agrees that there is a relationship between CLT and TBL. Consequently, controlled and freer practices are integrated in the activities to show that accuracy and fluency are part of pedagogical task (for example activities 5, 4, 6 and 7).

Generally, this material draws from direct method of classroom discourse as well, using interaction which is seen as "the social behaviour, which occurs when one person communicates with another" [17].

It is worthy of note that while the material and activities focuses on speaking skills, reading and listening skills are consequently integrated (for instance activities 2 and 5). According to [18] listening and speaking go ~~hand~~-in-hand. This is because a speaker does not speak to himself but to another person who is the listener.

Pictures are also employed to make the material interesting and attractive.

Potential Problems

It is important to think about the potential problems of a language classroom and also make provisions to prevent them. Consequently, one of the problems second language teachers encounter is learners' individual differences. [19] pointed out that learners "...are complex human beings who bring with them to the classroom their own individual personalities as it is, at a given point in time, and this influences how they interact with what we do as teachers". This suggests that the abilities and characters of students vary, and invariably affect how they learn. To take care of this challenge, different activities have been drawn from the material in order to meet different learning preferences.

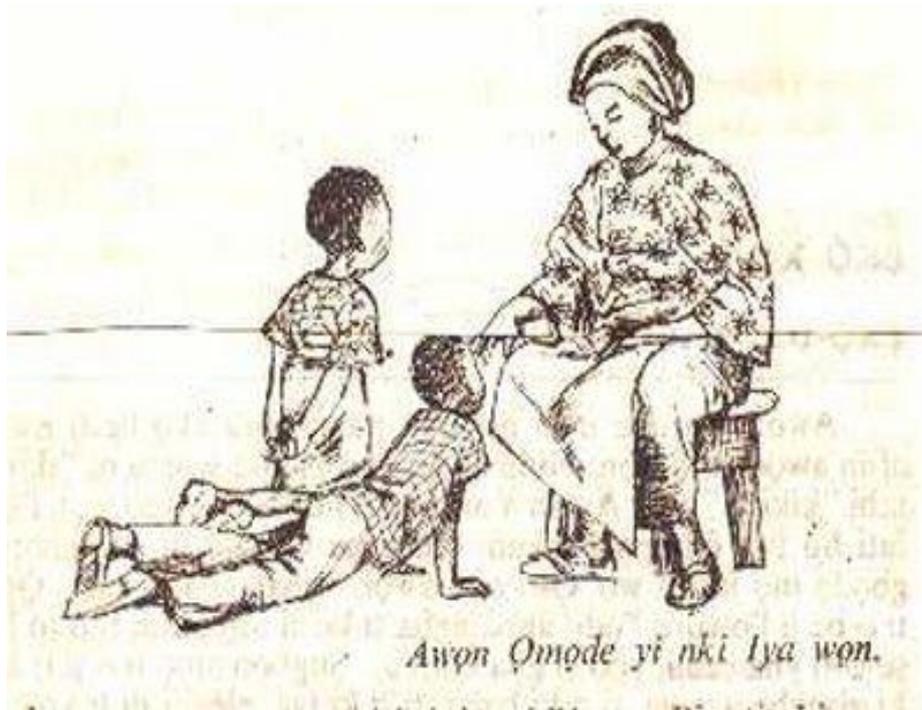
Another potential challenge in a second language classroom is the influence of first language (L1) and one of the striking areas this occurs is in the pronunciation of English sounds, especially those sounds which are not found in the learners' L1 [20]. This seems to be obvious in the pronunciation of English sounds by Igbo learners. Hence, activities on pronunciation were included to enable the students to learn the correct pronunciation of selected English sounds which are absent in the learners' L1.

However, during speaking activities, it is vital to get every learner to speak in the class.

This is because some may not be free to speak publicly, hence pair and group work activities are employed in order to create opportunities for everyone to speak and interact, using English language. Again, group work and pair work have been considered as a basic approach of C LT method which enhances language competence among learners [5]. Pair work also creates opportunities to improve the quality of learner's talk and interaction [9]. Similarly, [15] avers that pair and group work encourages learner autonomy and responsibility and hinders anxiety among learners while using language.

English Material for a Specific Purpose GREETING SYSTEM IN YORUBALAND





Activities;
Aim; Fluency

1. Look at these pictures, in pairs discuss what you think the people are doing?

Aim; Accuracy
Pre-teach vocabulary

- A. Tradition; a pattern of people's behaviour which is passed on from one generation to the other.
- B. Ingrained; something that is fixed in people's mind.
- C. Culture: people's beliefs, practices and custom.
- D. Nuisance: something that is irritating or annoying.
- E. Disrespectful: to show lack of respect for someone.

Aim: Accuracy

2. Read the following passage and the questions that follows

Deeply ingrained within the tradition of the Yoruba people of West Africa is the unique way of greeting elders and the Oba (King) by the males, commonly known as prostration "doba'le". This is a posture that involves falling flat on the face as a sign of respect and worship. It has been a peculiar part of the culture that any male that does not practise it when considered necessary is seen as being very disrespectful with shameful character and morals. The origin and reason may have been forgotten with time or perhaps one has to look at the root of the word "doba'le" and/or search deep within the "Ifa" literary corpus to shed more light on it. However, the practice is being watered down as a result of the introduction of the handshake that was introduced by European colonialists. Nonetheless, prostration is still observed by some Yoruba Christians during prayer and worship which they consider as normal during special occasions and in reverence to an Oba. Handshakes can, however, be considered as public health nuisance. For females the greeting also known as "ikun'le", is done by bowing on one or both knees [20].

Aim; Accuracy

- 3. A. Yoruba people prostrate to greet their kings and elders. True/ false?
- B. Any male child who does not prostrate to greet the king and elders is seen as being disrespectful True /false?
- C. Females bow on their knees to greet. True/false

Aim; Fluency

4. In groups, compare your own greeting system with that of "Yoruba" people and discuss what you like or dislike about their greeting system.

Aim; Accuracy

5. Listen to the tape recorder and repeat the following words.
- A. Tradition [trədɪʃən]
 - B. Prostration [prəstreʃən]
 - C. Introduction [ɪntrədækʃən]
 - D. Health [helθ]
 - E. This [ðɪs]
 - F. The [ðə]

Aim; Accuracy

6. Role play; (A boy greeting an elder)
- Boy: (prostrating) good morning sir!
- Elder: Morning, how are you?
- Boy: I am fine, thank you.
- Elder: May you live long and may young people respect you when you grow old.
- Boy: Thank you sir.

Aim; Fluency

7. In groups, make up a short story about greeting in your community. Include information about your king/ chief, greeting an elderly person, and greeting someone of the same age.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this essay has drawn from the principles of designing a course material and different methods of language teaching to design activities to give the learners different opportunities to learn English language and enhance their speaking skills within the educational context. Unlike materials designed for commercial use, the authors most times do not seem to consider the learners' backgrounds, cultures and educational contexts. Atltan(1995) criticized commercial -designed materials because the writers include such activities and functions which foreign or second language learners may never come across. Nevertheless the material may not be suitable for universal use. However, some activities in the material can be adopted in an ELT classroom (for example, activities 2,5,7) with another supplementary material.

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