

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE FOR COMMUNICATION IN HUMAN SOCIETIES

Papers in Honour of Late Dr Elisabeth Amagah De Campos

Edited by

- Prof. Taofiki Koumakpai,
- Dr. Taofiq A. Alabi,
- Dr. Théophile G. Kodjo Sonou,
- Dr. Samson O. Olatunji,
- Dr. Comfort Ojonkpot,



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Dr Elisabeth Amega De Campos

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CONTENTS

DEDICATION	xi
FOREWORD	xii
PREFACE	xiv
1. EDITORIAL BOARD	xvi
2. NOTES ON THE EDITORS.....	xviii
3. CONSULTANTS.....	xx
4. DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE BOOK	xxii
5. ARTICLE CONTRIBUTORS	xxvii
PART I : LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE IN EDUCATION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: EXPLOITING THE NEXUS BETWEEN LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR NIGERIAN STUDENTS' IMPROVED PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE.....	2

CHAPTER 2: A COMPARATIVE FEMINIST READING OF LOLA SHONEYIN'S "SO ALL THE TIME I WAS SITTING ON AN EGG" AND HALIMA USMAN'S "SPELLBOUND"	15
CHAPTER 3 : YORÚBÁ PHOTOPLAY MAGAZINE AS A THREE-MODAL ARTS – THE ATÓKA EXAMPLE	34
CHAPTER 4 : CHILDREN, LITERATURE AND THE NIGERIAN PUBLISHING CONTEXT	57
CHAPTER 5 : STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENT MOHAMMADU BUHARI'S MAIDEN SPEECH OF APRIL 1, 2015	78
PART II : LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATION	91
CHAPTER 6 : LANGUAGE USE FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING	92
CHAPTER 7: PERSPECTIVES IN NEWSPAPER REPORTS ON THE COURT JUDGMENT OF 2007 ELECTION PETITION IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA	102
CHAPTER 8 : THE ROLE OF ELOCUTION IN IMPROVING LEARNERS' COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE	117
CHAPTER 9 : THE ESSENCE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE AUTHOR-PUBLISHER RELATIONSHIP: THE NIGERIAN BOOK PUBLISHING EXPERIENCE	123

CHAPTER 10 : DIMENSIONS OF VENUE-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETY	132
CHAPTER 11 : ENGLISH GRAMMAR FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	143
CHAPTER 12: TOWARDS A THEORY-BASED APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF URBAN YOUTH LANGUAGE USE IN SOCIAL MEDIA: THE CASE OF CAMFRANGLAIS IN CAMEROON	170
CHAPTER 13: PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE: COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	191
CHAPTER 14: THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN SECURITY PROMOTION IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	210
PART III: LANGUAGE EDUCATION	222
CHAPTER 15 : USE OF MEDIA IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION	223
CHAPTER 16: OUR SIGNS MATTER: PROTECTING SIGN LANGUAGE IN ADAMOROBE (GHANA)	241
CHAPTER 17 : IDENTIFYING STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES TO REMEDIATE POOR COMPOSITION WRITING IN THE JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS	253

CHAPTER 18 : WAZOBIA LANGUAGE: AGENT OF ACHIEVING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, UNITY AND INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA	271
CHAPTER 19 : ANALYSIS OF PHONOLOGY OF INTERLANGUAGE DATA OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNER USING IGBO LANGUAGE.....	284
CHAPTER 20 : THE FUTURE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS.....	296
CHAPTER 21 : FURTHER THREAT ON NIGERIAN LANGUAGES WITH A FOCUS ON THE YORUBA LANGUAGE.....	308
CHAPTER 22 : DEVELOPING ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS FOR SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS AND SUCCESSFUL WORK AND SOCIAL LIFE.....	325
CHAPTER 23 : LANGUAGE IMMERSION AND THE DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION.....	343
PART IV : RELIGIONS EDUCATION.....	355
CHAPTER 24 : AN APOLOGIA TO CATHOLIC CANONIZATION OF SAINTS: DOCTRINE AND FAITH IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES	356
CHAPTER 25 : EXPLORING RELIGION AND RELIGIOSITY IN SELECTED PLAYS OF OTUN RASHEED FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	361

PART V : TEACHING	381
CHAPTER 26 : RELEVANCE OF LITERARY TECHNIQUE IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH STUDIES IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS	382
CHAPTER 27: TEACHER COMPETENCE AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL FOR OPTIMAL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES	394
CHAPTER 28 : EFFECTIVENESS OF PHONEME-BOARD INSTRUCTIONAL PACKAGE IN TEACHING ORAL ENGLISH IN SELECTED NIGERIAN SCHOOLS	409
CHAPTER 29 : METHODS OF TEACHING POETRY AT THE JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL	431
CHAPTER 30 : L'INTERFERENCE DE LA LANGUE MATERNELLE DANS LA PRONONCIATION DES MOTS FRANÇAIS	443

5. ARTICLE CONTRIBUTORS

5.1. PART I : LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE IN EDUCATION

N ^o	Full Name	Article contributed and Page	Adresses
1	Dr. Olatunji, Samson Olusola and Prof. Kolawole, Clement Olusegun Olaniran	Exploiting the Nexus between Literature-in-English and Language Proficiency for Nigerian Students' Improved Performance in English Language	Linguistic Immersion Centre, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. olatunji.so@unilorin.edu.ng, samsholat@gmail.com Department of Arts and Social Science, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria kocycool57@yahoo.com
2	Bartholomew, Akpah Chizoba, Ph.D.	A comparative feminist reading of lola shoneyin's <i>so all the Time i was sitting on an egg</i> and halima usman's <i>spellbound</i>	Department of English, University of Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria

3	Dr. Akangbe, Clement Adeniyi	Yorùbá Photoplay Magazine as a three-modal Arts – The Atóka Example	Department of Library, Archival and Information studies University of Ibadan akangbeclem@gmail.com
4	Igudia, Osarobu Emmanuel	Children, literature and the Nigerian publishing context	Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria osaroigudia@gmail.com
5	Omojuyigbe, Dele PhD	Stylistic Analysis of President Mohammadu Buhari's Maiden Speech of April 1, 2015	Department of General Studies Nigerian Institute of Journalism 8-14, Lateef Jakande House, Ogba - Lagos, Nigeria E-mail: ndeocom@yahoo.com

5.2. PART II: LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATION

<i>N^o</i>	<i>Full Name</i>	<i>Article contributed and Page</i>	<i>Adresses</i>
6	Oginni, Yemi	Language use for effective public speaking	Department of Mass Communication Lead City University, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria
7	Omojuyigbe, Dele Ph.D.	Perspectives in newspaper reports on the court judgment of 2007 election petition in Ekiti state, Nigeria	Department of General Studies, Nigerian Institute of Journalism 8-14, Lateef Jakande House, Ogba - Lagos, Nigeria ndeocom@yahoo.com
8	Gilbert, Lydia Ruguru	The role of elocution in improving learners' Communication competence	Kenyatta University lydguru@yahoo.com
9	Ihebuzor, Lambert A., Ph.D.	The essence of communication in the author-publisher relationship: the Nigerian book publishing experience	Department of Mass Communication Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria

10	Jaycoba, Olatoyese Samson	Dimensions of venue-oriented communication in traditional African society	Department of General Studies, The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Nigeria
11	Olutayo, Grace Ph.D.	English grammar for effective communication	Bowen University Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria
12	Ojongnkpot, Comfort Beyang Oben, Ph.D.	Towards a theory-based approach to the study of urban youth language use in social media: the case of camfranglais in Cameroon	University of Buea, Cameroon Email: comjohnson@yahoo.com
13	Dr Opayemi, A.S., Oyeleke, J.T., Popoola, A.B., & Oguntayo, R.,	Psychology of language: communication and social behavior	Department of Psychology, University of Ilorin.

14	Okoji, Onweazu Olufemi, Ph.D.	The role of mass media in security promotion in Nigeria: implications for sustainable development	Department of Adult and Primary Education Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin Nigeria. femiokoji2008@yahoo.com
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5.3. PART III: LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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16	Edward, Mary	Our signs matter: protecting sign language in adamorobe (Ghana)	University of Brighton, Doctoral College m.edward@brighton.ac.uk
17	Olaolorun, Moradeyo O. Ikonta, Nonye R.	Identifying students' language learning strategies to remediate poor composition writing in the	Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, 1,2,3 Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria. (olaolorunmoradeyo@yahoo.)

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18	Afolayan, Victoria Kehinde (Mrs)	Wazobia language: agent of achieving national development, unity and integration in Nigeria	Dept. of Office Technology and Management (Bilingual Unit) The Federal Polytechnic, Offa Kwara State, Nigeria kafolayan68@gmail.com
19	Enu, Evelyn N., Ph.D.	Analysis of phonology of inter language data of second language learner using Igbo language	Department of General Studies Education Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo Oyo State, Nigeria
20	Dr Faniran, Abel O.	The future of the English language in Nigerian schools	Department of English and Literary Studies Lead City University, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria

21	Lawore, Mary Yemisi, Ph.D.	Further threat on Nigerian languages with a focus on the Yoruba language	Department of Teacher Education University of Ibadán Oyò State, Nigeria
22	Olatunji, Samson Olusola, Ph.D.	Developing English writing skills for school examinations and successful work and social life	Linguistic Immersion Centre for Foreign Students Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria olatunji.so@unilorin.edu.ng , samsholat@gmail.com
23	Dr Adedimeji, Mahfouz A.	Language immersion and the dynamics of international education	Department of English/ Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

5.4. PART IV: RELIGIONS EDUCATION

Nº	Full Name	Article contributed and Page	Adresses
24	Balogun, O. O. E. Ph.D.	An apologia to catholic canonization of saints: doctrine and faith in religious studies	Department of Religious Studies, College of Humanities (Cohum) Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, P.M.B. 2118 Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria olaniranbalogun56@gmail.com
25	Arinde, Tayo Simeon, Ph.D. and Adebanjo Abraham	Exploring religion and religiosity in selected plays of Otun Rasheed for sustainable development	Department of the Performing Arts University of Ilorin <u>startee11@yahoo.com</u> and Department of the Performing Arts University of Ilorin <u>adebanjoabraham11@gmail.co</u> <u>m</u>

5.5. PART V : TEACHING

Nº	Full Name	Article contributed and Page	Adresses
26	Adetuyi, Christopher Ajibade, Ph.D.	Relevance of literary technique in the teaching of English studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions	Lead City University, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria
27	Olufunmilola, Akanbi Omobolaji, Ph.D.	Teacher competence and the implementation of English language curriculum at the secondary school level for optimal student learning outcomes	Department of Arts And Social Sciences Education University of Ibadan Funmilolabj@Gmail.Com
28	Alabi, Taofiq Adedayo Ph.D. & Alabi, Mariam Olayinka M.Ed.	Effectiveness of phoneme-board instructional package in teaching oral English in selected Nigerian schools	Department of English, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria E-mail: merrilab2004@yahoo.co.uk & Government Day Secondary School Fate, Ilorin, Nigeria
29	Akinyemi, Abodunde Oluwaseyi	Methods of teaching poetry at the junior secondary school level	Department of Teacher Education, Faculty of Education University of Ibadan oluwaseyiabodunde@gmail.co

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30	John Kossitse ATSOU, PhD	L'interférence de la langue maternelle dans la prononciation des mots français	Centre d'Immersion Linguistique, Université d'Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State

CHAPTER 1

EXPLOITING THE NEXUS BETWEEN LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR NIGERIAN STUDENTS' IMPROVED PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The mass failure recorded annually by Nigerian students in English Language in major examinations has been a serious focus of many studies. Quite a number of reasons adduced to the problem are being addressed through research and government efforts. But there seems to be an important factor that has often been overlooked: the reduction of Literature-in-English into a small portion of English Language at the junior secondary school level and the inadequate importance attached to it in the curriculum. This paper, using critical appraisal of extant literature, discusses the relationship between literature and the various language skills. It compares the English language proficiency of those that graduated in the era of full-fledged status of Literature-in-English in the curriculum with the performance of the current dispensation of neglect of Literature-in-English. It then advocates reinstatement of Literature-in-English in the curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

The mass failure of Nigerian students in English Language in various examinations at different levels has assumed so worrisome a dimension that several scholars have either conducted investigations into its causes (Kolawole, 2005) or carried out experiments aimed at eradicating the problem (Kolawole, 1998; Olagbaju, 2014). The problem has, however, persisted over the years. The best performance recorded in the last ten years in the senior secondary certificate examination organised by the West African Examinations Council was in the June edition of 2015. That one was much less than 50% pass (38.68% of the candidates). Nigerian students have been reported to be poor readers (Adeniji and Omale, 2010; Ogwu, 2010; Igwe, 2011), poor listeners, non-proficient speakers and writers in English (Gowon, 2009). This is despite the fact that the English language is the medium of school instruction from the end of the fourth year of primary education, without mastery in which other school subjects cannot but be adversely affected.

In addition to being the medium of instruction that must be well commanded by students in order to pass other subjects, it is perhaps the most obvious cord that links members of the various ethno-linguistic groups that constitute Nigeria as a result of the non-existence of any national indigenous language to take up the all-important role (Fakeye and Ogunsiji, 2009). So, without this language, which cannot be rightly regarded as foreign in Nigeria in the strict linguistic sense, mutual intelligibility among the various ethnic groups would have been absolutely impossible. This is one of the reasons the language cannot be rivaled by any other, not even French that was elevated to the status of second official language by the government of the Late General Sanni Abacha in 1996 (Olatunji, 2000).

The English corpus is the most visible on the Internet and other electronic devices throughout the world (Chapelle, 2003) and well over 80 percent of the world's electronically stored information is in English. About 36 percent of estimated 200 million people using the Internet employ the English language as a means of communication (Kolawole and Olatunji, 2006). English is attested to enjoy the most intimidating dominance over other languages in international political, cultural and academic communities (Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). English is the "hypercentral" language that towers above the "supercentral" (e.g. Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Malay,

Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swahili), the “central” and the “peripheral” languages respectively in descending order of prestige, numerical and geographical coverage (De Swaan, 2001:171). The English language is thus a vital means of international functionality for Nigerians as well as other nationalities.

With the great level of prestige and unequaled geographical scope of use of the English language, it is not too surprising that most Nigerians proudly and gladly flaunt self-imposed Anglicisation. They exhibit inordinate preference for the English language even when their indigenous languages are most contextually appropriate (Adegbiya, 1994; Owolabi, 2006). Nigerian families would not do such a condescending thing as speak their indigenous languages during informal family discussions, except in cases in which no member understands the English language at all.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the usual poor performance of Nigerian students in English Language as a subject does not reflect their love and adoration for English as a world language. Among the identified causes of mass failure of Nigerian candidates in English Language examinations are many and they include teachers’ negative attitudes to work caused by insufficiency of incentives (Ehusani, 2002; Faniran and Olatunji, 2011), inadequacy of textbooks and other essential language learning facilities like the computer (Christopher, 2007), government’s non-commitment to education policy implementation (Okediran & Olatunji, 2010), inadequate training of teachers (Omorie, 2006), teachers’ and students’ general computers and other information and communication technology illiteracy (Nwokeoma, 2010), a general decay in social values, linguistic interference, dearth of instructional resources, poor teaching methods, large language classes, students’ poor language and overloaded curriculum content (Offorma, 2010). All the afore-mentioned investigators into the causes of mass failure in English Language have proffered appropriate solutions in accordance with their findings.

But the current study examines the contribution of the relegation of the subject known as Literature-in-English in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum to the students’ poor achievement in English Language. It employs a combination of historical and comparative analyses to examine the general performance of students in English Language in the dispensation in which Literature-in-English was an independent subject throughout the curriculum of Nigerian secondary schools. This is then compared with the trend of performance in the current era in which what used to constitute Literature-

in-English in the old days are now significantly shrunk to become a very small portion of the general English Language at the junior secondary school level.

1. THE NEXUS BETWEEN LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH AND STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Literature is language in social action. The literature of any language is a demonstration of various forms of language use in the community in which the language is spoken. It portrays the culture of the speakers. It takes from the language and serves as a means of enriching and perpetuating the language. English literature refers to all literary texts produced by and about the English people. Literature-in-English is the totality of all literary works by and about people all over the world but disseminated through the medium of the English language. Both English literature and Literature-in-English serve as means of enriching students' vocabulary as well developing their overall proficiency in the pragmatic use of the language.

Literature-in-English, which includes English Literature, is one of the subjects that prepare students for communicative competence in the language. It involves, among other activities, the reading of works of local and foreign authors in the three genres of drama, poetry and prose. Through the subject, students have the opportunity of getting exposed to various linguistic styles by reading ample texts. A creditable performance in Literature-in-English is evidence of being an ardent reader. In fact, good Literature-in-English students are most likely to be voracious readers.

Reading is a means by which people tap bodies of knowledge which superior minds have preserved in written or printed formats (Fabunmi and Folorunso, 2010). So, lovers of literature can be expected to be well versed in matters of the linguistic properties of lexical items. They are exposed to various stylistic manifestations of people of different creeds, colours and chronological ages who are practised in the manipulation of English expressions. It is interesting to note that there is none of the genres of literature that fails to present students with ample opportunities for practice in language development.

Hişmanoğlu (2005:61) highlights the benefits of using poetry in English as a Second Language or English as a Foreign Language class as:

- The appreciation of the writer's composition process, which students gain by studying poems by components
- Developing sensitivity for words and discoveries that may later grow into a deeper interest and greater analytical ability

Saraç (2003:17-20) also explains the educational benefits of poetry as follows:

- provides readers with a different viewpoint towards language use by going beyond the known usages and rules of grammar, syntax and vocabulary,
- triggers unmotivated readers owing to being so open to explorations and different interpretations,
- evokes feelings and thoughts in heart and in mind,
- makes students familiar with figures of speech (i.e. simile, metaphor, irony, personification, imagery, etc.) due to their being a part of daily language use.

It is common knowledge that poetry is the genre of Literature that students dread most and perceive as somehow esoteric in nature (Meehan, 2014; Foster, 2015; Maxwell, 2015; Westover, 2017). It is the genre for which, to borrow Leopold Sedar Senghor's expression in his popular poem "I will Pronounce Your Name", one may need to "become a sorcerer" in order to comprehend and savour. Gasparro and Falletta (1994) assert that creating drama from poetic pieces in a second language classroom has the advantages of an exciting language learning experience in the form of exploration of the linguistic and conceptual aspects of the written text, intonation, rhythm, stress, slang, and idiomatic expressions as the poems are being interpreted. One of the most important advantages of this is that students are spared concentration on the mechanics of language, which they often find boring and sometimes frustrating, while enjoying the privilege of authentic language learning contents in what Adegbija (1989) refers to as "pragma-sociolinguistic contexts". If such a seemingly dry genre of Literature offers the variety of benefits identified by Hişmanoğlu (2005), then those that removed Literature-in-English from the curriculum of the junior secondary schools in Nigeria have done more terrible disservice to the students than can be adequately fathomed.

Hişmanoğlu (2005) highlights twelve linguistic advantages of using short stories in language teaching on pages 61 and 62, sixteen advantages of drama on pages 62 and 63, and fourteen benefits of

novels in a language class on pages 63 and 64. This shows that there is no genre of literature that does not provide a language classroom with potential ingredients for successful teaching and learning.

It is also noteworthy that literary texts are useful in facilitating students' mastery of any language learning content imaginable. The use of literary texts in explicit grammar instruction enhances meaningful acquisition of grammatical forms for meaningful real life communication with the acquired forms (Paesani, 2005). Literature is a technique that is being popularly and successfully employed in teaching basic language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) and language areas (i.e. vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) in advanced countries (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). Liaw (2001) concludes from an experiment that the use of literary books, especially if the Reader-Response Strategy is employed, enhances both linguistic and cultural understanding of students' reading in a foreign language.

Since literary skills are transferable from one language to the other (Proctor, August, Carlo and Snow, 2006), it is reasonable to infer that literary skills are transferrable to non-literary endeavours in the same language. Skills learnt in Literature-in-English class are bound to have positive interference on the beneficiaries' proficiency in the English language. This spill-over effect on other school subjects can also be expected to go far. The range of educational problems that will be significantly reduced through the promotion of literature may be surprising.

One pervasive but erroneous opinion is that literature has nothing to offer students in the sciences. But the College of Medicine at the University of California has proved the usefulness of literature to all-round preparation of medical practitioners. The curriculum of the university's Programme in Medical Humanities and Arts includes the use of poetry and prose, especially about and often written by doctors and patients; narrative ethics, performing arts, readers' theater, plays, musical performance and dance. This was introduced as an intervention strategy when it was discovered that the contents of humanism, empathy, altruism, and self-reflection in the medical curriculum were not being actualized as desired. But since the introduction of this programme, significant positive changes have been recorded (Shapiro and Rucker, 2003). This shows that even the students that are planning to opt for the scientific fields still need the impact of literature for language mastery as well as other areas of needed knowledge development.

Paradoxically, it is nowadays that effective reading skills are much more crucially needed that Nigerian students read much less (Fabunmi and Folorunso, 2010). To worsen the matter, the Nigerian government has terribly reduced the scope of Literature-in-English, a subject that could help sustain the need to read wide, in the secondary schools, especially at the junior secondary school level. Unfortunately, Nigerians are not known to be fond of patronizing libraries or buying interesting books from bookshops to read for pleasure.

Fabunmi and Folorunso (2010) attribute the fact that the Nigerian secondary school leavers of the missionary times demonstrated super fluency in English language and their reading and writing dexterity was really noticeable while those of the present age cannot favourably compare with the former due to a wide difference in reading cultures which results from different types and degrees of exposure to reading at school. This conclusion from the comparison of the two dispensations in Nigerian history cannot be faulted. Though there are additional variables responsible for the wide disparity in language proficiency, judicious reading of copious literary texts could have gone a long way in bridging the gap, if not make the comparison in favour of the present generation. This cannot be an overstatement considering the fact that literary texts have didactic qualities in addition to the linguistic and aesthetic properties (Nodelman, 2000; Nord, 2005).

Some scholars, Zughouli (1986) for example, are of the opinion that Literature does not deserve much space in the language curriculum because the use of language in Literature sometimes deviates from the normal or common (Obeidat, 1997). This, viewed from a positive angle, however, is strength rather than a weakness of literature because it is a means of giving students exposure to a variety of actual and authentic language uses and usages. It is just the responsibility of the teacher to call special attention to such deviations and instruct the students concerning the limitations as well as the beauty of such deviations.

Paran (2008) acknowledges a resurgence of the use of literature in language teaching and an attendant widespread research other climes. These should serve as a strong indication of the immense benefits inherent in employing literature to teach various aspects of language topics. Literature is a strategy for language teaching and learning with great fun. The aesthetic properties of literary texts help students learn new language learning contents in manners somehow comparable to watching movies.

It can be reasonably pointed out that even if Literature-in-English is now re-emphasised in the curriculum, the terrible deed in the form of irredeemably poor reading culture it has done may not be reversible. Literature requires extensive reading while an average Nigerian would rather surf the Internet or watch movies (Gowon, 2009; Olatunji, 2011). In a study by Edem and Ofre (2010), 61.5% of the respondents confessed their preference for internet browsing to reading of books in print.

The advent and growth of the electronic media can, however, be harnessed to promote literature and reading. According to Christopher (2006), the Internet has become a formidable marketing medium for both the physical book as well as its virtual version in the original format to previously inaccessible places. In the same vein, the media of radio and television and even handsets should be seen as potential instruments for the promotion of literature-in-English and reading for pleasure (Salau, 2006; Oyewusi and Ayanlola, 2014). Akudolu's (2002) advocacy for ICT-driven curriculum is, therefore, appropriate for a successful promotion of Literature-in-English in the Nigerian system so that all the attendant benefits may follow. The media can be employed firstly to propagate the message of the benefits of taking literature either as a formal subject of study or a leisure time activity. Secondly, virtual Literature-in-English classes can be held through the media. Recommended texts for the various public examinations can be extensively discussed in such programmes. Authors of the recommended texts can be interviewed, and the phone-in features that have been incorporated into such outfits' productions can also be employed.

2. NIGERIA, CURRICULUM CHANGE AND LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH AS A VICTIM

Curriculum change is both unavoidable and desirable because the society it is designed to serve is not static (Nakpodia, 2010; Oyeleke and Akinyeye, 2013). As both the perceived as well as the felt needs of the society change, the curriculum that is tailored towards taking care of such needs, too, undergo either modification or total overhaul as the case may be. Nigeria is not an exception to this noble rule. Various relevant associations and government establishments (for example, the National Educational Research Development Centre), in response to research based recommendations, revise the curricula at various levels of education in Nigeria periodically.

Oyeleke and Akinyeye (2013) identify such epochs in the historical trends of curriculum innovation in Nigeria as the informal traditional curriculum era, the missionary era, colonial intervention era and the post-colonial era. Each of these has its distinct features as responses to the unique needs and goals of the age though some features necessarily cut across. But the current dispensation is that in which reading has been most badly hit.

The curriculum changes are meant to improve the quality of education and as well as its functionality. But since there are bound to be various perspectives to every issue and different, even conflicting, interests, situations in which counter-productive items are introduced into a curriculum are not always easy to prevent. The frequency of policy and curriculum changes in the Nigerian education sector has been variously observed (Kotirde and Yunos, 2014; Akpan, 2017). Such changes have, however, resulted from aggressive agitations from some pressure group or the other. It is, however, quite reasonable and safe to conclude that the most crucial stakeholders were not involved in the decision to reduce the literature content in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum. A situation in which, like in the survey conducted by Oloruntegbe (2011), most teachers are not involved in the pre-implementation stages of a new curriculum and the few that claimed to have been involved (38% of secondary school teachers drawn from the six southwestern states of Nigeria) merely had the privilege of being earlier informed in seminars about a curriculum that had been concluded for introduction cannot be expected to have included the benefits of inputs from a wide range of practitioners.

The fact, as testified to by Fabunmi and Folorunso (2010), is that the graduates from the curriculum that placed premium on the study of Literature-in-English and extensive reading excelled the graduates from the current non-Literature-curriculum at the junior secondary school level in activities requiring English language proficiency. This is a clear pointer to the wrongness of relegating the reading of literary texts to the level of a minute component of the English Language syllabus at the junior secondary level. To bring back the English language proficiency of the old days in Nigeria, therefore, the culture of extensive reading of literary texts should be encouraged.

Poor listening, reading, speaking and writing skills can be eradicated through proper teaching of Literature-in-English (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). This is because well written literary texts engage the totality of the human personality. Aina (2011) observes that reading stimulates curiosity and imagination, encourages quick learning, and expands horizons. It is undeniable that these are achieved much more

easily through the reading of literary texts than the traditional subject -based texts that students often find dry and cumbersome.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Literature-in-English should be reinstated to its former status of a full-fledged subject in the curriculum of the junior secondary schools in Nigeria;
- Incentives in forms of enviable prizes should be instituted for students that excel in Literature-in-English at all levels of the Nigerian education;
- Literary and debating activities should be integral components of the school curriculum in which students from all discipline sections are to be encouraged to participate;
- School libraries are to be stocked by the government with the latest books in various reading interests and news materials;
- Government should encourage research into students' reading interests as well as innovative pedagogic strategies that can boost students' interest in books;
- Supply of electronic forms of books (and even animated where possible) to school libraries should be considered a top priority;
- As has been done to generate huge sums for the Education Trust Fund, the various national and multinational companies that waste huge sums on promotion of profanity should be encouraged to donate books in large quantities to school libraries instead;
- Government should reduce import tariffs on printing materials while encouraging local production of such materials as much as possible in order to make books affordable to even the poorest of Nigerians; and
- Curriculum change should not be based on the recommendations of "experts" who have lost touch with the realities on ground at the different levels of the Nigerian education. All sectors of

the stakeholders, especially the concerned students and their teachers who have first-hand experience of the classroom realities must be adequately consulted.

CONCLUSION

Critical interrogation of extant literature shows that the decline in the English language proficiency of Nigerian graduates has been largely aggravated by the lackluster attention given to Literature-in-English and extensive reading for pleasure in the current secondary school curriculum. Literature is language in various dimensions of actions and manifestations. Interestingly, there is no genre or sub-genre of Literature-in-English that is not useful for language teaching and learning. There is also no language learning content that literary texts cannot be used to teach. Well crafted literary texts make language topics come alive. Therefore, a Bring-Back-Literature-in-English Campaign should not be seen as an exercise meant for the idlers. It is a campaign that deserves urgency and tenacity of purpose.

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