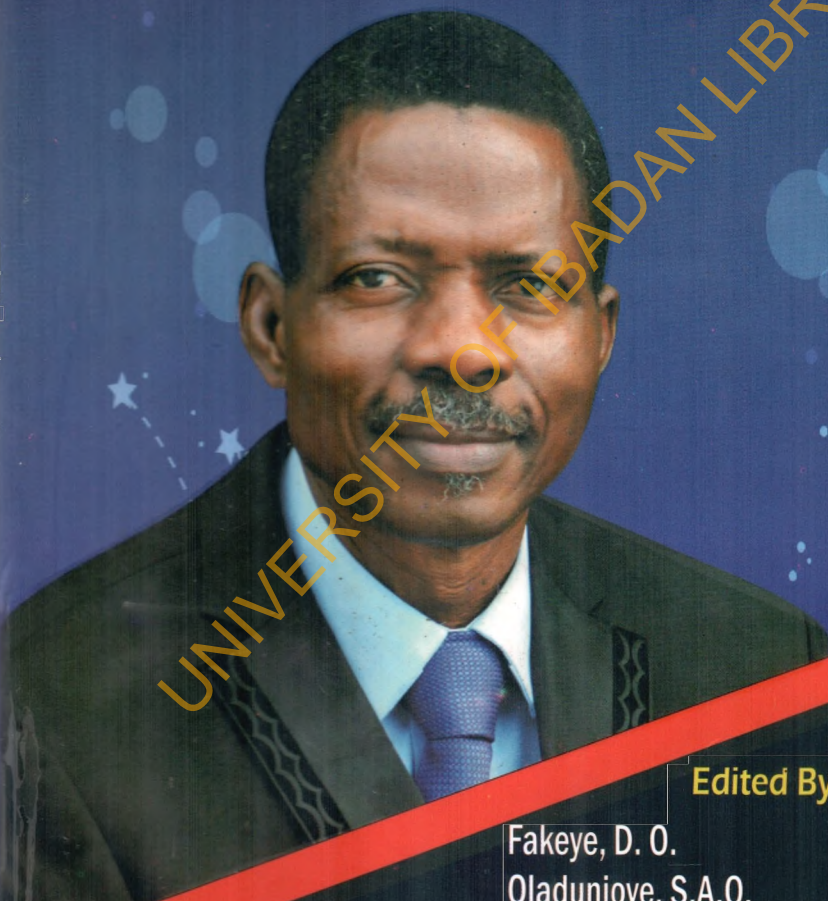


**FURTHER THOUGHTS ON LANGUAGE,
EDUCATION AND THE CURRICULUM NEXUS
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

A Festschrift in Honour of

Professor Clement Olusegun Olaniran Kolawole

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DICHOTOMIZING LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LANGUAGE LEARNING PRACTICES

*Ifeoluwa Theophilus, Akinsola,
Adenike Ibitola, Idumu,
Ayomiposi Folasade, Adegoke*

Introduction

Over the years, it has been a concern for language educators and scholars that despite all efforts put forward by language teachers, few students achieve what we call language learning, most students tend to resort to memorizing the language content and not internalizing the language itself. This is because individual language teachers and students do think that learners learn language automatically, when it is taught well. Some therefore use the term language teaching and language learning interchangeably, opining that the two concepts are not different. On this premise, this paper aims at juxtaposing language teaching and language learning. In doing this, it is important to firstly clarify the concept of language, teaching and learning, after which language teaching and language learning will be examined critically in order to draw out the difference(s) between them.

Language is not just a means of communication, which is a layman's view, but a means of communication shared among human beings of the same speech community. This shows that language is tied to humans and their societies. Hence, most scholars incorporate one of the two features or both in their definitions of language. Let us cite a few:

- i. Language is a purely *human* and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced vocal symbols (Sapir, 1921:8)
- ii. Language is the institution whereby *humans* communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory symbols. (Hall, 1968:158)

- iii. Language is a system of signals conforming to the rules which constitute its grammar or a set of culturally transmitted behavior patterns shared by a *group of individuals*. (Greenberg, 1957:1)
- iv. Language is a learned, shared and arbitrary system of vocal symbols through which *human beings* in the same speech *community* or subculture interact and hence communicate in terms of their common cultural experiences and expectations. (Henry, 1969:2)

Some other characteristics of language as could be deduced from the above definitions, apart from being human and societal, are that language is made up of sounds, is arbitrary and conventional, is a means by which societal culture is transmitted and is productive and creative.

Teaching is an important concept in education, as one cannot say that a formal education has taken place without teaching. Teaching is a deliberate process of imparting or eliciting knowledge, which is oftentimes from a more knowledgeable individual to a less knowledgeable individual. Teaching is both art and science. Teaching as an art because a teacher attempts to instruct, move the audience and transform the audience in terms of thinking and instilling new ideas while teaching as a science connotes that the pedagogy is predictable and can be observed and measured. In other words, teaching is the art and science of helping others to grow in their knowledge and understanding.

Learning is another important concept in education. It is until a learner has learned something valuable that we can say that education, either formal or informal, has taken place. Learning is a lifelong process because it begins from birth and ends at death. Burns (1995) regards learning as a relatively permanent change in behaviour, which includes both observable activity and internal processes such as thinking, attitudes and emotions. Holding to Burns' definition of learning, Alao and Adeniyi (2009) describe learning as the process by which an individual:

- i. acquires a novel idea or experience to a situation;
- ii. Retains and applies the idea, skills and knowledge in solving the confronting problems.
- iii. Modifies one's behaviour by the experience gained in the past and making the change permanent.

This shows that before one can refer to an activity as learning, it must bring about change in learner's behaviour and this change must be permanent, relative and dependent on previously acquired experiences.

Having clarified briefly the concepts of language, teaching and learning, we can conveniently delve into what language teaching and language learning is before juxtaposing the two.

Language Teaching

Language teaching is the process by which a language teacher imparts the knowledge of listening, reading, writing and speaking a language, usually second language, into a learner. Language teaching, in the view of Adamson (2004:604), "is a complex undertaking or exercise that is shaped by the views of the nature of language, of teaching and learning a language specifically and by the socio-cultural settings in which the enterprise takes place. According to Bárdos (2000), the basic model of language teaching methodologies consists of the following five parts: WHO teaches WHOM, WHAT and HOW, THROUGH WHAT TEACHING AIDS. The WHO connotes the teacher, the WHOM the learner, the WHAT the subject matter to be taught, the HOW is the teaching methodologies while the THROUGH WHAT refers to the teaching aids or the instructional materials to be adopted in teaching the language. As encompassing this model of Bárdos is about language teaching, it leaves out the setting of language teaching, which could be referred to as the WHERE of language teaching. Apparently, language is taught in the classroom. However, if language teaching will be effective, all these models must be involved. The language teacher must be knowledgeable enough in the content area and know how to communicate the knowledge to a particular set of learners using appropriate teaching methods and aids and the learning environment must be conducive enough.

Language teaching is applicable to both first language and second language but methods used in teaching L1 and L2 vary. The following methods are discussed by Sárosdy, Bencze, Poór and Vadney (2006) as methods used in teaching English as a second language:

Former methods:

- *The Grammar Translation Method:* This method was first called Classical Method because it was first used to teach Classical Languages like Latin and Greek. It was in the 19th century that the method was known as the Grammar Translation Method. According to Larsen-Freeman (1986), this method is characterized with activities like translation of a literary passage, reading comprehension, finding antonyms and synonyms, gap-filling exercises, memorization, using words in sentences and compositions. Deducing from the view of this scholar, this method belongs to the cognitive way of language teaching which aims at teaching the learners to read literature written in target language, memorize grammatical rules and examples and apply them to other examples.
- *The Direct Method:* This method emerged due to several calls for a more scientific way to language teaching. Olateju (2014) explains that this method is premised upon the belief that total immersion in the target language is conducive to rapid progress in communicating as with first language. To this approach, total immersion brings about quick language learning. For instance, a Hausa learner of Yoruba should be totally immersed into Yoruba L2 without any recourse to the mother tongue.
- *The Audio-Lingual Method:* This method focuses primarily on oral skills with the teacher modeling utterances. The goal of Audio-Lingual Method is to enable students to use the target language communicatively. In order to do this, students need to over-learn the target language, to learn to use it automatically without stopping to think. This aim can be

achieved by students' forming new habits in the target language and overcoming the old habits of their native language (Sárosdy *et al*, 2006). In this method, learners are drilled to produce correct responses as errors are not tolerated and special attention is on habit formation.

- *The Silent Way*: This method propounded by Caleb Gattegno relies on problem-solving by the learning. In this method, learners are made responsible for learning. As an induction method, the teacher uses charts and coloured blocks to establish the meaning of model utterance, but the learners have to apply inductive and self-monitoring techniques to build their own structural knowledge of the target language. Enabling learners to use language for self-expression to express their thought and feelings appears as the goal of this method.
- *Suggestopedia*: This method, as propounded in 1982 by the Bulgarian psychiatric-educator called Lozanov, aims at accelerating the way learners learn to use the target language in everyday communication. This can be achieved only by breaking down the psychological barriers learners bring with them to the language learning situation. In this method, the teacher is the authority in the class, native language translation is used to make the meaning of the dialogue clear, vocabulary is emphasized, grammar is dealt with explicitly but minimally, pronunciation is developed by reading out loud, speaking communicatively is emphasized and errors are not corrected immediately since the emphasis is on students communicating their intended meaning (Sárosdy *et al*, 2006). The method is characterized with peripheral learning, choosing a new identity and role play.
- *Community Language Learning*: The goals of teachers, while using this method, are to make their students learn how to use the target language communicatively. They want their students to learn about their own learning to take responsibility for it (Sárosdy *et al*, 2006). It develops its

principles from the general counseling learning approach developed by Charles A. Curran. Few of its principles are that the teacher is a counselor, student-teacher interaction changes within lesson and overtime, active vocabulary is very important, the focus shifts from grammar to sentence formation, pronunciation is developed by reading out loud, culture is integrated with language, the most important skills are the receptive ones and speaking the language, reading and writing are worked on, errors are corrected in a non-threatened way and the syllabus is designed primarily by the students (Sárosdy *et al*, 2006).

- **Total Physical Response:** The idea of TPR, according to Sárosdy *et al* (2006) originates from James Asher, who found that adults' second or foreign language learning could have similar developmental patterns to that of children's language acquisition. Sárosdy *et al* (2006), quoting Larsen-Freeman (1986), highlight the following as its principles: the teacher is the director of all the students' behavior, interaction is between teachers and the whole group of students and individual student, grammatical structures and vocabulary are emphasized over the language areas, pronunciation is developed through listening mostly, teacher should tolerate errors and only correct major errors, and the syllabus is multi-strand.
- **The Communicative Approach:** This approach has preserved quite a lot of characteristic features from both the cognitive and the natural approaches. The representatives of the Communicative Approach (CA) acknowledge that structures and vocabulary are important but they emphasize the acquisition of linguistic structures or vocabulary as well (Sárosdy *et al*, 2006). The approach is characteristically content-based, intercultural, holistic in nature, experiential and learner-centred.

To these methods of teaching language, Olateju (2014) adds Gouin's Method-Series. He explains that this method came into existence as a

result of dissatisfaction with the Grammar-Translation method. He posits that this method concentrated its interest on everyday language and on children's acquisition of mother tongue, which was believed came about initially through listening and speaking. There was emphasis on the four skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing. There was a focus on meaning and communication skills of learners (Olateju, 2014).

Language Learning

The goal of language learning is communication. In order to achieve this goal, students should learn to think in the target language. Learning a language involves learning the behaviour culture of the people living in the target country. According to cognitive psychologists and transformational generative linguists, language learning does not take place through mimicry since people can create utterances they have never heard before. That is the reason why language must not be considered a product of habit formation, but rather a rule formation. Language learning language is mostly applicable to second or foreign language as first language is usually said to be acquired and not learnt. For this reason, language learning could be seen as the process by which a second language learner internalises the target language. This process has been accounted for by various theorists of language learning. We will briefly examine the view of the Behaviorists, Mentalists, socio-cultural theory of language learning, acculturation model, and inter-group model.

Behaviorist: This theory sees language learning as the product of heredity and environment. To them, language can be learnt only through a form of operant conditioning. Skinner (1957) suggests that the successful use of a sign such as a word or lexical unit, given a certain stimulus reinforces its momentary or contextual probability. To this end, the behaviorists believe that language is best learnt through imitation and immersion, exposure to the environment, practice, reinforcement and exposure.

Mentalists: This theory is also called innate theory; this is because the major concern is on the internal process of language learning. They believe there is nothing we learn except through our brain.

Every individual, according to this theory, has the innate capacity to learn a language. This innate ability is what they called LAD- Language Acquisition Device, which naturally disposes an individual to unconsciously learn language. Among the theorists in this school of thought are Steven Krashen and Noam Chomsky.

Socio-cultural theory of language learning: This theory was proposed by Vygostky (1987). Spada and Lightbown (2002) state that the theorists working within a socio-cultural perspective of L2 learning operate from the assumption that there is a dialectical relationship between culture and mind, and that all learning is first social, then individual. Their argument is that through dialogue or communication, learners construct knowledge and this knowledge is later internalised. In this theory, emphasis is laid on the integration of the social, cultural, and biological elements (Olateju, 2014).

Acculturation model: The acculturation model as propounded by Schumann (1978) cited by Schumann (1997) sees learning a second language as a process in which the learner learns to adapt to a new culture. It was used to explain the acquisition of an additional language by immigrants in naturalistic majority language contexts. Barkhuizen (2006) notes that the theory emerged from a now famous case study of a 33year old Costa-Rican named Alberto who failed to acculturate to the target language community and thus developed only a pidginize form of English. Second language learning according to this model is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language (Olateju, 2014).

Inter-group model: This emphasizes ethnicity and the issues of social inequality as a social factor in L2 learning. According to Giles and Brye (1982), language learners tend to define themselves in ethnic terms and identify with their own groups. They tend to make insecure social comparison with the out-group (Olateju, 2014).

The Differences between language teaching and language learning

Having examined critically the concepts of language teaching and learning, we can differentiate between the two concepts in line with their meanings, performers, periods, efforts and motivations.

Meaning:

- Language teaching can be defined as the act of giving lessons on the use of a particular language to a class or pupil.
- Language learning is used in the sense of acquiring knowledge of a particular language.

Performer:

- The teacher is the main actor in the process of language teaching
- The learner is the main actor in the process of language learning. For language to be taught, the teacher must do something and for language to be learnt also, the learner must do something. Hence, we have what we refer to as teacher's activities and learner's activities in the curriculum of languages taught in Nigerian schools. When both roles are played, the teaching-learning process is successful.

Period:

- Language teaching does not take place throughout a person's life.
- Language learning is a process that takes place throughout the life span of an individual as the learner continues acquiring some language skills unconsciously outside the classroom.

Effort:

- In most occasions, language teaching is a conscious or a deliberate effort of the teacher aimed at achieving a set goal after each lesson.

- Language learning on the other side can be both a conscious and unconscious effort of a learner.

Motivation:

- To teach language, teachers must be motivated.
- To learn language, learners must be motivated. Motivation can come from within the individual or from external factors.

Drawn from the above, there may be language teaching without language learning but it is not possible that language learning (especially L2) happens without language teaching. This is because the learner has an active role to play in the process of learning anything. The teacher might have painstakingly taught the appropriate content of an L2 using suitable methods and aids, but the L2 Learner might not have learnt anything due to some factors. For instance, the learner may not be ready for the learning in terms of age and maturity or he/she is not intrinsically motivated to learn an additional language. If a learner who does not see any reason for the learning of an L2 is taught, such a learner may only memorize the content taught without internalising the L2 or attaining a required level of competence in the target language. As such, one cannot but say that learning has not taken place because there had not been changes in the learner's behavior.

Also, in teaching language, the teacher is not permitted to make errors as he/she is supposed to be knowledgeable enough to correct learner's errors. On the other hand, while language learning is happening, L2 learners should not be condemned for making errors because it is a proof that the learner is growing. Learner's errors also help the teacher to detect the areas of difficulty of each learner and to provide remedial teaching accordingly.

In addition, language teaching cannot occur without the learner, but language learning can occur without the teacher. For language teaching to happen there must be an interaction between the teacher and the learner because the teacher must teach somebody. In language learning however, the learner can learn language

(especially L1 and at times L2 when the learner is in the language environment) without contacts with the classroom instruction but with social contacts he/she has with the environment.

Language teaching is carried out during the specific period of schooling or instruction but language learning (especially L2) occurs throughout life time as the learner needs to continually and consciously learn the language in the social context, even when he/she has completed the process of schooling.

Conclusion

This paper has looked at the concepts of language teaching and language learning, drawing out the differences. The methods of teaching language and the theories of language learning were also discussed to see the distinction between the two practices. It therefore suffices to say that language teaching and learning are not the same, though they complement each other. They differ in the question of WHO and HOW. While the WHO and HOW of language teaching is the teacher and teaching method respectively, that of language learning is the learner and learning theory respectively. The task of language teaching therefore requires the teacher to be adequately knowledgeable in the subject matter, teaching methods and strategies and how to present the lesson in a logical way that will get learners motivated to learn the language. However, it has been posited in this paper that this effort of the teacher might be in futility, if the learners and their psychological make-ups are not considered. This phenomenon has overtime resulted in a lot of language teaching without language learning.

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