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English Language Teaching in the Polytechnic: DSPG Teachers Challenge

Asuzu Ifeyinwa Success
Lecturer, Department of Languages, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi uku, Nigeria

Abstract:
English is the only medium of communication through which all other courses are taught. The aim of English communication skills. However, the objective of teaching and learning of English language teaching in Nigerian Polytechnics is basically to help improve the students' oral and written in the Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-uku (DSPG) have not been achieved as a result of some challenging issues. Hence, this study examines challenges in English language teaching in the DSPG, with the aim to identify some of the challenges which the English lecturers' encounters. Also, the study proffer solutions to overcoming the challenges. The sample for the study is fifteen comprising all English lecturers in the department of languages in the Delta State Polytechnic. The study adopts both quantitative and qualitative research design for data collection. The challenges which the findings from the study reveals are;little time allocated to English language teaching; students' lackadaisical attitude towards English learning; students' poor written skill and inability of lecturers in other departments to encourage English learning. The study recommends that; more time should be given to the teaching of use of English in the polytechnic; lecturers in other fields should encourage their students to learn and use English.

Keywords: Teaching, polytechnic, lecturers, challenging, students, DSPG

1. Introduction

Over the years, efforts have been made to ensure the effective teaching and learning of English language right from foundation years to tertiary level. Unfortunately, these efforts have not yielded much result, as the situation is yet to improve. The teaching of English as a Second language has birthed tremendous challenges to English teaching in Delta state polytechnic, in particular, and teachers of English in general. Previous studies such as:Dahiru and Adakonye. (2016); Fatiloro, (2015);Abdullah and Abd-Majid, (2013); Abdullah (2012); Okpeodua (2009); and Udensi (2009) have at different levels examined these challenges.Teachers of English in their different capacities and studies have complained of the challenges and adducedstudents' linguistic incompetence to these challenges. However,such litanies about the abysmally low level of linguistic competence amongst students and graduates of the polytechnic in particular and tertiary institution in general,serve practically no purpose, if no concrete steps are taken to address the situation. Hence, the present study brings toquestion the challenges of teaching English in DSPG andproffer solutions to address the challenges with the desirability to cum the perennial complaints in English language teaching in the polytechnic.

1.1. Why English

English is the most widespread language in the world. Graddol (2000) asserts that in the year 2000 there were about a billion English learners' but in the year 2011 the number would have doubled. According to Graddol 80% of the information which is loaded on the internet is in English language. As a global language, English is very important to us, both for teaching/learning in tertiary institution and for administration in offices. This presupposes that the importance of English is not just, in how many people speak it, but in what it is used for. Moreover, in the workforce competency in English is required beside the very field of specialization. It is taught in all institutions of higher learning across the globe. It is taught to all polytechnic students irrespective of their area of specialization. The relevance of English to polytechnic students is summarized by NBTE as follows:

This course is designed to provide the student with the necessary language skill which will enable him to cope effectively with the challenges of his course; to use English language effectively in the practice of his chosen profession as well as interact with others in the society. The student is expected to know the various rules of grammar and be able to use them in everyday communication (4).

The decision to make English language teaching compulsory in the polytechnic may not be unconnected to the position in which English language occupies in Nigeria. Irrespective of the functional role of English language in Nigerian tertiary education, there still abounds what Azuike (qtd in okoh, 2004) refers to as 'English Language Deficiency Syndrome ELDS'.

1.2. The Polytechnic and English Language Learning

The polytechnic education is designed to produce technicians. The polytechnics syllabus is designed to meet students' communicative requirement. The majority of tasks performed by an engineer or technician are technical in nature, however, their success to a great extent, depends on the effectiveness in which they assimilate or disseminate technical or formal information. Hence, effective use of English is essential for all polytechnic students who wish to communicate properly in the industry. Use of English is taught as a subject to all students in the polytechnics, in first semester. In this semester, the year one students have to learn the essentials of English, the grammar of English, parts of speech and learn how to make correct sentences. In this semester, students are expected to possess reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Most students do not have much idea of these skills, they are unable to express themselves comfortably in written or oral form. In second semester, many technical words and terminology are introduced. These are often very long and strange. Technical communication is mostly formal hence, very often requires the use of set formats to get the required technical message across. As compared to general communication which is mostly oral, technical communication necessitates a lot of documentation. The other major feature of technical communication to be kept in mind is audience specificity. Unlike ordinary day-to-day communication, formal communication is prepared for specific target segments of the society. Hence, it is important for newly admitted polytechnic students to understand clearly the intricacies of listening, speaking, reading and writing in the chosen medium. In short, a diploma passes out should possess good communication skill in English language i.e. he must be able to read, write, speak and comprehend English so that he can communicate effectively for industrial purpose.

The Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi- Uku (DSPG)is one out of the three Polytechnic established in Delta State. It comprises twenty-seven(27) schools, amongst which is the school of General studies. The school of General studies has two departments: Department of Languages and department of Art and Humanities. Both departments are servicing departments to other departments in the Polytechnic. Again, the minimum degree of teachers who teach English in the department of languages is a Bachelor of Art. Those with this minimum degree serve as assistant lecturers to their experienced superior who holds either a master's degree or a doctorate degree in English. It is important to note that teaching Use of English in first semester and Communication in English in second semester began since lectures commenced in the various departments. However, English language teaching in the polytechnic has posed some challengers to lecturers in the department of languages. This is evident in the students' results and the numerous complaints from lecturers on students' poor performance in use of English. It is in light of the above observation that the present study beams it search.

1.3. Aim of the Study
- To examine the challenges in teaching English as a Second language in DSPG.
- To suggest ways of overcoming the challenges identified in teaching English.

1.4. Research Questions

In order to give an insight to the challenges of English language teaching in DSPG, the study postulate the following questions:
- Do you have a challenge teaching aspect of English outside your specialization?
- Do you oftentimes encourage your students to take the learning of English serious before they do?
- Would you prefer more time to the contact hours with your students to enable you for complete your scheme of work?
- Do lecturers in other departments underestimate the teaching/learning of English in your polytechnic?
- Do your students write better than they speak?

1.5. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory of Transformational Grammar (TGG), as it sought to adduce reasons for and provide solution to communicative incompetence in English language use. Chompsky, in his syntactic structures (1957) and Aspects of Theory of Syntax (1965), propounded a theory known as Transformational Grammar.This grammar is referred to as theory of competence- the grammar that generates all the grammatical sentences of a language. The nature of linguistics competence according to Chompsky is the innate knowledge possessed by ideal native speakers/listeners about their language which enables them to produce, create and recognize the grammatical sentences and rule out ungrammaticality in language use. Halliday (1961) opines that for a linguistic adult, competence is one thing and performance is another. Despite the fact that the speaker of a language has internalized the rules of the language (competence), he does not always exhibit such mastery in speech and in writing (performance). Halliday (ibid) submits that competence is mentalist while performance is sociological. The above submission by the psychological and sociological theories of language generated more controversies about language behaviours. To Searl (1968) speaking a language is engaging a rule-governed forms of behaviour but the rules governing language use should be seen not only incorporating the linguistic rules but also the sociolinguistic rules. The revolution brought about Hymes (1971). "Communicative competence". Bell (1976: 2007) reiterates that:

A specification of communicative competence can be recognized as an attempt to define not only how a user is able to judge grammaticality but also how he is able to recognize what is acceptable as a speech act in social context.

Communicative competence therefore, depends on the tacit knowledge of a language system (competence) as well as the ability to use language appropriately in an actual speech situation (performance).

The theory of Transformational Grammar is relevant to the present study as it aims to explain competence in Second language (L2) teaching/ learning and harness the resource for the improvement of the language teaching process.

2. Literature Review

Dahiru and Adakonye (2016) carried out a study entitled 'An Examination of Thorny Issues in Teaching and Learning of English Language in Nigeria Polytechnic'. This study aims to examine thorny issues that are easily noticed in the qualitative teaching and learning of English as a second language in the Nigerian polytechnic system. One of the thorny issues in the qualitative teaching and learning of English language is poor linguistic foundation of the students. A second problem is the great linguistic challenge of the school environment which is different from that at home.This study deviates so much from the present study. The present study focusses on English language teaching challenge and equally suggests remedial to the problems.

Fatiloro, (2015) carried out a study entitled "Tackling the Challenges of Teaching English Language as Second Language (ESL) In Nigeria". The study highlightedthe problems of Teaching English Language as Second Language (ESL) In Nigeria, both in government owned schools and in private institutions.Findings from the study shows thatoverpopulation, inadequate human power, government inconsistent policies, lack of essential teaching facilities, students' laissez –faire attitude;mother tongue interference are the challenges of teaching English as a Second language. The study observed also that the highlighted problems are not only common scenarios of the government owned schools but also exist in private institutions although, with little variance. The study suggests that English learners must be extensive readers; teachers must reward efforts of learners so as to motivate their struggle to acquire the language skills. Fatiloro's study is quite different from the present study. The present study shows steps undertaken to reveal information.

Abdullah, S and Majid, F (2013) carried out a study on English Language Teaching Challenges in Malaysia. This study was set out to investigate the challenges faced by the English lecturers, who served in polytechnics' setting. A case study inquiry strategy, via reflective journal writing and semi-structured informal interview, was employed in getting the insights of lecturers'. A Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) programme, Atlas.ti 7, was used in managing the data. Document analysis was inductively run to identify the emerging themes from the entries and transcripts. Results show that issues related to students appeared to be the main challenge to the lecturers. Some practical recommendations are offered based on the current scenario in Malaysian polytechnics' setting. This is quite different from the present study. The present study uses questionnaire as its instrument of data collection. Again, emphasis tend to be more on English teacher's challenge.

Ayoyinka, O. (2011) The Challenges of English Language Teachers of the Upper Primary Classes in the Face of Dwindling Standard of Usage. The aim of the study was to examine the deteriorating standard of English usage and the challenges of upper primary schools' teachers of English language in the face of decreasing standard. The data for the study are taken from public and private teachers of English language from five (5) educational district in Lagos. A questionnaire which consists both of structured and opened question is used to collect data which are analyzed using descriptive and statistical methods. Findings from the study show teachers incompetency, inadequate teaching aid and overcrowded classrooms as challenges. of English teaching. The present study examines English language teaching challenge in the polytechnic and not upper primary schools'.

Okpeodua (2009) examine the teaching of English in large classes. The study aims to examine the problems the teacher who teaches in alarge encounter. The study uses observation method. Findings from the study reveals that the teachers who teaches in a large class has to contend with the problem of lack of infrastructural facilities; the inability to have interpersonal contact with students, as well as give exercises regularly and mark them with a view to correcting the errors. To overcome these challenges, the paper suggests that large classes be split into manageable units and more teachers employ; necessary infrastructural facilities be provided. This study deviates so much from the present study. The present study uses a theoretical framework and do not focus on large classes.

From the examination of the existing literature on English language teaching challenge presented above, it is obvious that: no study above focusses on the Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi- uku; none of the studies above stated clearly any theoretical consideration. Hence, the present study is to further enrich the body of discourse available in Second language teaching/learning. These tend to justify the present work.

3. Methodology

The study adopts both the qualitative and quantitative method of research

3.1. Population of the Study

All English lecturers in the department of languages, of the Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi- Uku are the population of the study.

3.2. Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study is fifteen comprising all English lecturers in the department of languages, Delta state Polytechnic, Ogwashi uku

3.3. Research Design

The simple distribution percentage design is used.

3.4. Method of Data Collection

The research use questionnaires, to obtain first-hand information that provide the answers to the research questions. The questionnaire contained five (5) questions representing two options from which respondents made their choice of response for each question.The questions sought information which provided answers to the research questions. Fifteen (15) questionnaires were distributed to fifteen (15) lecturers in the department of languages. All English lecturers in the department of languages were engaged for the study. All questionnaires distributed were returned.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

The data collected are represented in tables and further analyzed using simple distribution percentage.

3.6. Data Collection and Analysis

The response of the respondents could be shown in the table below.

Q1 X (Yes)	Q1 Y (N0)	XY
4	11	15

Table 1

3.6.1. Analysis

From the response of the teachers of Englishlanguage it was observed that 27 percent of the respondents indicate that they do have a challenge teaching aspect of English outside their specialization while 73 percent say they do not. From the observation, it is clear that contrary to the belief that teachers prefer teaching their areas of interest, English lecturers in Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi- uku have embraced and adapted to their call to service, which is, teaching all aspects of English.

3.7. Research Question 2

Do you always encourage your students to take the learning of English serious before they do?
Below is a tabular representation of the response of the respondents:

Q1 X (Yes)	Q1 Y (N0)	XY
13	2	15

Table 2

3.7.1. Analysis

The table above shows that majority of the respondents always encourage their students to take the learning of English serious before the students do. 87 percent of the teachers agree they do while 13 percent do not. From the responses above, it is not totally correct to say that students have a negative attitude towards the learning of English language.

3.8. Research Question 3

Would you prefer more time to the contact hours with your students to enable you for complete your scheme of work?

3.8.1. Analysis

Below is a tabular representation of the response of the respondents:

Q1 X (Yes)	Q1 Y (N0)	XY
11	4	15

Table 3

From the table above it could be seen that majority of the teachers of English in DSPG would prefer more time to English language teaching. 73percent of teachers advocate for more time while 27 percent do not. The revelation from the above is quite significant. Students need exposure to all topics in the curriculum. Understanding and mastery of topics comes after this exposure. Thus, the time factor is to be looked into so that lecturers do not rush out of class without attending to all topics.

3.9. Research Question 4

Do lecturers in other departments underestimate the teaching/learning of English in your polytechnic?

3.9.1. Analysis

Below is a tabular representation of the response of the respondents:

Q1 X (Yes)	Q1 Y (N0)	XY
14	1	15

Table 4

From the table above, it could be seen that lecturers in other departments underestimate the teaching/learning of English in the polytechnic. 93 percent of English teachers in DSPG say that lecturers in other departments underestimate the teaching/learning of English in the polytechnic while 7 percent do not. This is a major source of conflict. English teachers are encouragingthe students, teachers in other departments are discouraging them.The teachers in other departments look down on the future promises that English holds for their students by discouraging the teaching of English.This is detrimental to the overall goal of ESL in the polytechnic. Note that in Nigeria, today, English is recognized as the official language (see). It is the medium of instruction in school,

3.10. Research Question 5

3.10.1. Analysis
Do your students write better than they speak?
Below is a tabular representation of the response of the respondents:

Q1 X (Yes)	Q1 Y (N0)	XY
2	13	15

Table 5

From the table above, it could be seen that students' have a very great challenge in writing. 13 percent of the population said that their students write better than they speak while 87 percent said that their students do not. The revelation from the above shows that teachers have more work to do in the aspect of writing.

4. Discussion on Finding

	% (Yes)	% (N0)
Q1	27	73
Q2.	87	13
Q3.	73	27
6Q4.	93	7
Q5.	13	87

Table 6

From the summary, in the table above, it seems thatteachers of English in DSPG do not have personal deficiency teaching English. They appear to have adapted to the teaching situations. That is, teaching aspects of English outside their specialization. This implies that they are capable of handling all aspects of the curriculum. This further indicates that DSPG students do not lack qualified English teachers. This tends to be a credit the School (DSPG) whose English language teachers have braced up to their function.

Again, it appears that the limited time allocated in semester time table for the teaching of English is not enough to cover the syllabi. This is detrimental to effective teaching and learning. English teachers have time constraints in teaching English (table 3).This is not unconnected to students' writing difficulty (see table 5). It is important to allocate more time to English language teaching. This will afford teachers the opportunity to read students' essays in class; discuss them and make correctionsto further enhance better writing. Hastily rushing out of class because of time constraints will not afford the teacher time for the correction needed for enhanced teaching. The teacher needs time to look into spellings, ungrammatical expressions in students written scripts and students handwriting.

Furthermore, finding from the study shows that DSPGstudent's needs greater encouragement on the learning of English. They need to take the learning of English language serious. Despite the efforts that English teachers put in to make them understand this (see table 2), it appears they still display a lukewarm attitude for English learning. Again, lecturers in other departments underestimate the teaching/learning of English in the polytechnic? This appears worrisome.It is diversionary to contemplate any competition between teachers in other fields and teachers in English. English teacher has an overriding objective to teach English, not cheat English (see Okoh 2007). To this end, he needs the cooperation of other colleagues to be able to boost his learners and indeed 'teach English'. It is instructive to note that the pivotal role of English language in the polytechnic curriculum is necessarily desirous of cooperating with teachers of other subjects to meet the students' academic goals, whether such colleagues are in Engineering, Math and Statistics, Computer, or Accountancy. Bright and Mc Gregor (1979, p.6) underlines "Language teachers badly needs the help and interest of other teachers in the curriculum" Conversely, other teachers need their language colleagues, and need to cooperate with them. It will be quite damaging to the student's efforts if teachers in other disciplines give the impression that linguistic skills are not important, or to be taken seriously. As Bright and Mc Gregor further points out:

With their (teachers of other subjects) cooperation an English course may be very successful, but without it, it cannot be. As soon as students spot that correctness and fluency in speech and writing matters only to the English teacher and that the Physic, Biology and Mathematics staff are happy to decipher the ungrammatical and interpret the inaudible, they will consciously practice correct language habit only in English lessons and the English teacher is only wasting his time and theirs.

Consequent upon the findings, it is obvious that teachers teaching English in DSPG have adapted to English language teaching/learning in DSPG and are tirelessly making their students to demonstrate commitment towards English learning. However, they still abound challenges of inadequate hours for teaching English, students' poor written skill and underestimation of English teaching in the polytechnic.

5. Conclusion

It is often said that the recognition of the fact that there is a problem is the beginning of a solution. The present study recognizes that English teachers in DSPG have challenges in teaching English. This is evident in the result of the finding, wherein it was revealed thatlecturers in other departments underestimate the teaching/learning of English in the polytechnic, despite the efforts made by; teachers in English; language bodies such as: English Teachers Association of Nigeria (ELTAN); English Scholars Association of Nigeria (ESAN);and so many others to uphold English language teaching/learning. It is retrogressive for any institution not to uphold English since English is, and remains the official language in Nigeria. To this end,the school management ought to put measures on ground to aid the situation. Competitions like elocution, essay writing, quiz, group discussion, seminar, report writing should be arranged frequently in polytechnics to apply the basic skills of language. Students should be encouraged to participate in such competitions. All teaching faculties should be compelled to encourage their students to use English language for conversation and take its learning serious. If the management succeeds in creating suitable atmosphere for English, the lecturers in other fields will no doubt embrace English and by this encourage their student to take English teaching and learning in Delta state polytechnic serious.

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