

## Status of English as a Universal and a Second Language: A Review

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### Abstract:

*The roles of English language as a universal language across the globe and Nigeria in particular cannot be ignored more specifically in areas of education, governance, and integration of diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria that spread across length and width of the country. Similarly, English language is use as a channel of communications and interaction between interlocutors through the means of written or spoken discourse. This article paper reviewed the roles of English as a universal language and also it discussed the status of English as a second language in Nigeria. The study recommends that special attention should be given to professional people and institutions such as National institute for Nigerian languages, National teachers institute, education policy designers, and syllabus designers towards enhancing and promoting the use of English language in Nigeria.*

**Key words:** English as universal language, Second language, Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION

English language as a medium of communication like other sister languages across the globe is been consider as one of the universal languages apart from French and Arabic languages respectively. Similarly, in Nigeria like other most Anglophone countries that were colonized by the British. English language

is regarded as second or foreign language in those countries including Nigeria. Presently, in Nigeria today one cannot do function effectively in areas of business, academics, politics, employment, and governance without having certain skills of spoken or written English language because it is a medium that is use as an official language at all levels of government including public and private organizations. This means one must have to communicate either in a form of spoken or written text in English language. Likewise, in an academic environment the only language recommended by the National Policy of Education to be use as a language of instructions for subjects and disciplines in Nigerian educational institutions of learning is English language. As a result of this the teachers and the students are expected to know how to read and write in English in order to achieve the sole aim of teaching which is impacting knowledge and also to enable the students to excel in their carrier choice be it medicine, teaching, law, engineering, and banking. In another hand, for one to be able to secure admission in Nigeria tertiary institutions of learning comprises of universities, colleges, and polytechnics one must past English language at credit level with other four subjects including mathematics as a requirement for gaining admission into any of the Nigerian tertiary institutions of learning to pursue degree in any discipline be it humanities, sciences, or social sciences.

It is important to note that, the speakers of English language today including native and non-native speakers are spread across the world that is the reason why English is referred to as a universal language because it use to integrate different cultures, traditions, and faith which contributes tremendously in making the world a global village. In a nutshell, having the ability to read and write in English language in Nigeria is an opportunity for one to be regarded as literate person. In this regards, this paper is divided into four main sections. First, section one gives the general overview as

the introduction of the paper. Secondly, section two discusses the available and accessible literature on the issues related to English as a universal language and the status of English as a second language in Nigeria. Section three of the paper discusses policy implications as how to improve the teaching and learning of English language in Nigeria through the improvement of the use of design policies at all of levels of governments. Section four provides a conclusion with workable recommendations to all stakeholders in the use of English as second language in Nigerian context.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

This segment of the paper presents the review of related literatures particularly on English as a universal language and English as a second language in Nigeria as an Anglophone country.

## **ENGLISH AS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE**

In fact, there are indeed a series of studies conducted across the globe on issues related to importance of English language, roles of English education, attitudes of students of learners towards the learning of English, English as an academic language, the use of English in the promotion of tourism, and challenges of teaching and learning English in particular to non-native speakers. For instance, Gavran (2013) investigated the impact of English language learning in South Korea. The study employed the use diary entries as an instrument in collecting the data in a qualitative study. The finding reveals three themes that include rote learning, significance of exams, types of motivation to learn English language. Chang (2010) explored the history of English language and its roles in promoting education in Asian countries. The researcher used survey method in collecting data for the study. The study shows that

English language education helps in cultivating the users of English in Asian context to enhance and promote capabilities in their various disciplines. In another development, Estliden (2017) examined the upper secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English language. Quantitative approach was used with sixty students participated in answering the prepared questionnaires. The results found that the participants admit that English is a world language and it plays a significant role as a medium of communication among diverse ethnic groups across the world. Yoneda (2008) explored the understanding of professionals working in Singapore on the essentials of having the communicative skills using English in conducting business with the host community. The research use in-depth interviews as tool of collecting data from twelve business people as participants. The results demonstrated that all the participants believe that English is important as a way of promoting and sustaining ones business in a multi-ethnic society. Similarly, Genc and Bada (2010) discussed the issues affecting the use English as a first, second or foreign language across the globe with special consideration to academic writing. It reveals that most countries spread across the world presently are aware of the fact that English is the most dominant language in publication more especially in an academic setting. Res (2015) examined the importance of English language towards the development and promotion of tourism industry. The study understands how importance English in the development and promotion of tourism activities in the world. It encourages practitioners in the area of tourism to give more attention on the ability of possessing the skills of communicating effectively in English more specifically with tourist through the medium of English as a universal language.

In another hand, similar studies are found in Nigerian context that related to this study. First and foremost, Nneoma and Uwadiogwu (2014) discussed the use of English language as the official and national language in Nigeria. The study

found that the continued use of English language can help in promoting mutual understanding between diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. It reveals that a favorable atmosphere for teaching and learning English should be provided or improved in order to help in fostering national and integration through effective communication. Similarly, it should also be maintained as the official and national language. Obiegbu (2015) explored how English language contributes in the development of Nigeria. The study demonstrates how English helps in our educational system as a language of instruction and in promoting social relations among the citizenry. Muhammad et al (2018) examined the importance and challenges associated to the teaching and learning of English language in Nigerian schools. The paper reveals the strategies to be use in enhancing the teaching and learning of English in Nigeria schools. Danladi (2013) explored the roles of English in Nigeria as a medium of communication. The study suggest that English language should continue to be regarded as official and national language because the diversity of the country in terms of ethnicity, and religious issues. Udofot (2010) investigated the current role of English as a consequence of the national language policy as embedded in the national policy on education. The research shows that English language remains the only language that integrates the various ethnic affiliations in Nigeria through the means of communication.

## **ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

Numerous studies have showed that the status of English language in most of the Anglophone countries remain and continue to remain the second language and Nigeria is inclusive because of its nature in terms of religious and ethnic diversity. In this regard, the only unifying medium to enable the people from these countries to understand each other is English language. First and foremost, Poppi and Mansfield (2012)

examined the function of English as a lingua franca in a classroom environment. Qualitative method was employed using observation in collecting the data in Italian university context. The result indicates how English is taught by non-native teachers to second language learners. Al-Jadadi (2009) explored the teaching pedagogy of English as a foreign language in Oman educational institutions of learning. The research employed qualitative approach by the use of observations and interviews in gathering the data. It found various challenges that influence the teaching of English as a foreign language in Oman classroom situations. Shrestha (1983) investigated the status of English as a second and foreign language in Nepalese context. The finding demonstrates that there are huge distinctions between English as a second and foreign language in Nepalese with other sister countries.

However, in Africa more specifically in Nigeria there are available literature on the roles of English language and its teaching challenges to second language learners. Fatiloro (2015) identified the challenges of teaching English language in Nigeria as a second language in Nigeria. The study demonstrates that there are numerous challenges that are bedeviling the teaching and learning of English language in public and private schools in Nigeria which comprises overpopulation, insufficient qualified teaching staff, and inadequate teaching materials. Nwanyanwu (2017) explored a number of issues related to effective teaching in multicultural second language classrooms. It shows that improving the teaching and learning of English language demands training and re-training of English teachers who are mostly non-native speakers and also to provide the needed teaching materials in the classroom situation in order to enhance teaching English in a diverse ethnic society. Ogenyi (2015) examined the strategies use by the second language learners of English in Nigeria and their performance in an academic environment. The study employed descriptive survey research design through the use of

questionnaires distributed among secondary schools students who are randomly selected. The result found that there are significant differences in the performance of English language between the users and non-users of the identified language learning strategies. Babikkoi and Abdulrazak (2014) investigated the relationship between language learning strategy use by secondary school students in Nigeria. Questionnaires were distributed among five hundred and fifty nine participants. The study found that the participants use language learning strategy during learning English as a second language in Nigeria. Also, it helps the English teachers and curriculum developers in understanding the English language learning patterns of secondary school students in the country. Ochieng (2016) discussed the influence of mother tongue on English performance in Kenya certificate of primary education. Qualitative method was employed in collecting and analyzing the data. The result demonstrates how mother tongue influences the learning of English and its performance among non-native speakers of English in Kenyan schools.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The policy implications suggest that the Nigerian students at all level need to be exposed on the uses and importance of English language towards recording success in their own academic undertakings with regards to spoken and written communication. Similarly, based on the review of the previous related studies it is instructive to note that the ability to speak and write in English language is paramount especially to second language users of English across the globe and Nigeria in particular which can help in promoting communication in terms of integration of diverse cultures and tradition. It is against this background that the policy makers should make sure that favorable policies are design in order to promote the teaching and learning of English language in Nigeria and the

other sister countries for the purpose of achieving peaceful coexistence among diverse people

In conclusion, it is evident to state that the status of English language in Nigeria today in area of education, business, governmental activities, media, and science and technology is useful because of the peculiarity of the country with diverse ethnic and religious group. English remain the only medium that can bring the people together for the sake understanding each other. In essence, the study recommend that special attention should be given by the National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba (NINLAN), Nigerian ministries of education, education policy makers, syllabus designers, National teachers institute (NTI), and English teachers towards enhancing and promoting the teaching and learning of English language considering that it still remain the only language that brings the diverse people together irrespective of their ethnic and religious affiliation.

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