



English Studies in Nigeria: Front-burner Perspectives

*Morohunkade Adejoke Ajiola

Department of Theatre Arts, Federal College of Education, Zaria.

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*Corresponding author: **Morohunkade Adejoke Ajiola, PhD**

Department of Theatre Arts, Federal College of Education, Zaria.

Abstract

This study examines critical perspectives on English studies in Nigeria. In this regard, front-burner arguments and submissions revolving around legislation, approaches, prospects and constraints of English studies in the country, are brought to the fore. Given the potency of language in regional and cross-regional communication, policy frameworks are necessary for proper direction on English studies in Nigeria. The challenges faced by the education sector have lingered on due to lack of commitment to the objectives of English studies in the country. The literature of sociolinguistics is replete with language-based issues in society. English is the Official Language in multi-ethnic and multicultural Nigeria. Its position makes it the medium of instruction at the three levels of formal education: primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Through policy frameworks and efforts of linguists, the dynamics for effective teaching and learning of English in Nigeria were evolved. Unfortunately, it cannot be concluded that the objectives of English studies in the country have been achieved as expected. Different factors are responsible for inability to achieve the objectives of English studies in Nigeria: failure on the part of governments, weak education sector and student-parent attitudinal problems. Hinging on Morgan's Theory of Speech Community, this study concludes that: English studies in Nigeria has not significantly achieved its objectives; barriers to effective teaching and learning of English in Nigeria are mainly caused by governments and teachers; indigenous languages in Nigeria should be productively explored for efficiency in English studies in Nigeria; and in Nigeria, effective English studies can facilitate national growth and development.

Keywords: English studies, language, multilingualism, Nigeria, perspectives, Morgan's Theory of Speech Community.

1. Introduction

English is Nigeria's National Language. Legislation on the roles of English in Nigeria is therefore not incidental. Fasold (1984:77) reports that a National Language is: "(a) the emblem of national oneness and identity; (b) widely used for some everyday purposes; (c) widely and fluently spoken within the country; (d) the major candidate for such a role, since there is no equally qualified alternative language within the country; (e) acceptable as a symbol of authenticity; and (f) having a link with the glorious past." The instrumentality of language in nation-building is implied in its definition. Scholars align with the developmental potentials of language, which is human means of communication. Dada (2010:417) submits that "language is a unique property that belongs to the human race. It is a means of communication between two or more people and to a very large extent, the development of man politically, socially, economically, etc., depends on the use of language. Indeed, language permeates all aspects of human endeavor. Language is an integral part of culture, a reflection of many features of a given culture thus, like culture itself, it is a leader of behavior, which can be enhanced through direct or indirect contact ..." Language policy in Nigeria was partly aimed at assigning roles to the major languages (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa) so as to curb the dominance of English over them in particular as significant attention was not given to the numerous minority languages in the country. In this study, Nigeria's ethnography is discussed with focus on English studies in the country. Language fails to fulfill its developmental function in a country, when its use in critical domains of nationhood is not properly articulated and managed. In this regard, a major objective of English studies in Nigeria is to "process" the co-existence of English with Nigerian languages for the growth and development of the country. This study presents historical trajectory of Nigeria's Official Language/National Language (English) in terms of its entrenchment, policy documents, objectives of English studies and prevailing challenges.

2. Multilingual Nigeria

In multilingual Nigeria, there are major and minor languages. Igboanusi (2001:13) notes that Nigerian languages are classified into major and minor ones based on: population of speakers, educational consideration, geographical expanse of speaking territories and publications in different disciplines. David Esizimeton and Francis Egbokhare (2019) reports that “Nigeria has a population of more than 162 million people (July 2011 United Nations estimate) scattered across its 923,768 square kilometers of swamps, forests and savannahs. The country is an amalgamation of ethnically diverse groups of people speaking well over 500 different languages.” In a similar vein, Dada (2010:418) provides statistical insights on Nigeria’s ethnology. According to Dada (ibid.), “the recent 2005 Ethnologic Data listed 521 languages for Nigeria. Of these, 510 are living languages, 2 are second languages without mother tongue speakers, and 9 are extinct. Research submits that Nigerian languages are grouped as major languages, state languages and local languages based on their status as dominant languages, their territorial spread and the population that speak them.” The above submissions on Nigeria’s multi-ethnic and multi-cultural milieu imply that policy-documents on English studies in the country have to be sensitive to the pragmatics of a multilingual context. This submission is crucial, considering the fact that language attitudes impinge on the success of language studies in any country.

3. Language Planning in Nigeria

Language planning in Nigeria has a long history. It is a post-independence conscious effort by government to explore language for the good of the country, through documentation on how the country’s Official Language (English) could co-exist with indigenous languages in critical domains of nationhood. Weinstein (ibid.) defines languages planning as “a government authorized long term sustained and conscious efforts to alter a language.” For Koul (2006:27), language planning “denotes a deliberate attempt in resolving language-related problems necessary for the development of a particular language.” Indeed, language planning inevitably involves the formulation of language-related policies. Defining language policy, Akindele and Adegbite (1999:59, cited in Egwuogu, 2017:51) submit that it is “a set of deliberate activities systematically designed to select from, organize and develop the language resources of a community in order to enhance the utilization of such resources for development. Language planning is necessitated by the multilingual states... to integrate the region or country and promote encompassing development.” The 1991 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria formulated language policies which were criticized on account of vagueness. Sections Fifty One and Ninety One of the policy reads:

The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made.

The business of a House of Assembly shall be conducted in English but the House may in addition to English conduct the business of the House in one or more other languages spoken in the state as the House may by resolution approve.

Morakinyo (2015:157-158) presents different perspectives on language policy framework in Nigeria:

The Nationalist Orientation

Proponents of the Nationalist Orientation argue that engaging Nigerian language as a National Language to replace English is a nationalist move – an expression of national pride in Nigeria’s sovereignty and cultural values.

The Internationalist Perspective

Within the purview of the Internationalist perspective, English is considered neutral and satisfactorily developed to perform two roles: unite the people of Nigeria and cope with the challenges of globalization. The critics of this view believe that the dominance of English in Nigeria is inimical to the future of indigenous languages in the country.

The Neutralist Position

The Neutralists believe that the neutrality of Nigerian Pidgin makes it suitable for the status of a National Language. They contend that Nigerian Pidgin is very effective in casual communication and can foster national cohesion. However, there are scholars who hold the view that Nigerian Pidgin is too stigmatized to be Nigeria’s National Language; they view it as a substandard language.

Egwogu (ibid.) cites Farinde and Ojo (2005, p. 47) who examine language policies that have been proposed for Nigeria:

The African Option

Swahili was proposed by Wole Soyinka in 1977 at the International Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC). Unfortunately, critics of this proposal hinged their criticism on the fact that Swahili is not a Nigerian language.

The Artificial Option

There is the belief that an artificial language is ethnically neutral, and can therefore perform a unifying role in multilingual Nigeria. Unfortunately, an artificial language cannot cope terminologically – given its limited lexicon – with the challenges of globalization.

The Endoglossic Option

A well-developed Nigerian language – in terms of lexicon, grammar and literary publications – is believed to be suitable as a National Language. However, there are those who contend that all Nigerian languages have divisive potential.

Pidgin Option

Proponents of Nigerian Pidgin as a National Language strongly hold the view that Pidgin is neutral and are widely spoken across social class. Many scholars agree that it plays vital roles in national cohesion and nation-building.

The Exoglossic Option

Scholars who contend for an exoglossic option as a language policy for Nigeria, want English to be entrenched as Nigeria's National Language because apart from being void of ethnic sentiments, its vocabulary and grammar are developed. But critics think English remains a colonial heritage, and a danger to Nigerian languages.

The Indexop Option

Another language policy proposed for Nigeria is the Indexop Policy. Egwogu (2017, p. 56) contends that this policy gives equal opportunities to endoglossic languages in status and corpus planning. See Egwuogu (ibid.) for insights on this policy.

The National Policy on Education (1977) which was revised in 1981 and 2004 legislated that the three major Nigerian languages should be used alongside English as medium of instruction in schools. However, the policy was criticized for certain reasons which Dada (ibid.) reports:

- i) Don't the statements on language constitute just a statement of intent rather than a serious programme for implementation?
- ii) If the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate community is considered so important at the pre-primary level as an integral part of the child's culture and the link between the home and the school, why should it be "principal" and not "solely" used at this level?
- iii) How do people identify the language(s) of the immediate community in pluralistic settings like urban centres or international communities like universities?
- iv) Aren't the pronouncements on the three major languages vague and effeminate?
- v) Further on the choice of language, by whom and at what level is the choice of one of the three languages to be made? By the Federal, State or Local Government? By the parents, the school, or the pupils?
- vi) If the government is serious about implementing the policy, shouldn't there be a definite chrogram for all states to follow in the implementation of the language provisions couched in cautious escape phraseology: 'subject to the availability of teachers'?
- vii) If the government considers the learning of the three crucial for national integration, where are the legal and other sanctions for defaulting Federal, State and Local Governments or their agencies?
- viii) Practically, all Nigerian languages can be used as mother tongues or language(s) of immediate communities. Is it pedagogically feasible to organize initial literacy in 400 odd languages?
- ix) How do just three or the major languages serve the need of the educational process and become the media for preserving the people's cultures?
- x) The total number of teachers required in 1988 for the three major Nigerian languages was 55, 237. Only 6, 383 or 11.6 % of these were available. How and where are the remaining 48, 854 teachers to be produced? Is the recruitment or training of these teachers to be by chance or to a coordinated programme involving all agencies concerned?

Dada (ibid.) presents the following as the strategies employed by the Federal Government for the implementation of the National Policy on Education:

- L1 Primary School Curricula (NERC, 1982-3);
- L2 and L1 JSS Curricula (NERC, 1982-4);
- L1 SSS Curricula (NERC, 1975-6);
- L1 TTC Curricula (NTI 1986);
- Primary Science Terminology (NLC, 1980-3);

- Legislative Terminology (NLC, 1980-88);
- Metalanguage for the three major Nigerian languages (NERC, 1981);
- Braille Orthography (NERC, 1981-4);
- Orthography Manuals and Pan-Nigerian typographic resources (NLC, on-going);
- L1 Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba SSC Exam Syllabus (WAEC, 1985-6).

In all human endeavours, planning is goal-driven; language planning in multilingual Nigeria is not an exception. Commenting on goals of language planning, James Andokari Zaki cited in Ayodabo et al. (2016:75) submits:

Linguists like Nahir (2003), Gibson (2006), Dona (1998) and Fishman (1977) recognized eleven language planning goals namely:

1. Language Purification – Prescription of usage in order to preserve the linguistic purity of language, protect language from foreign influence and guard against language deviation from within.
2. Language Revival – The attempt to turn a language back into normal means of communication especially one with few or no surviving native speakers.
3. Language Standardization – The attempt to gather prestige for a regional language or dialect, transforming it into one that is accepted as a major language or standard language of a region.
4. Language Reform – Deliberate change in specific aspects of language like orthography, spelling or grammar
5. Language Reform – Aims to increase the numbers of speakers of one language at the expense of another.
6. Lexical Modernization – Word creation and adaptation.
7. Terminology Unification – Development of unified terminologies, primarily in technical domains.
8. Stylistic Simplification – Simplification of language usage in lexicon, grammar and style.
9. Interlingua Communication – Facilitation of linguistic communication between members of distinct speech communities.
10. Language maintenance – Preservation of the use of groups' native language as a first or second language where pressure threatens or causes a decline in the status of the language.
11. Auxiliary Code Standardization – Standardization of marginal, auxiliary aspects of language such as signs for the deaf, rules of transliteration and transcription.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored by Morgan's Speech Community Theory which is presented below, as cited in Sola Timothy Babatunde and Moses Adebayo Aremu (2017:99-100):

Morgan's (2003) view is that a speech community does not simply focus on groups that speak the same language but rather that the concept takes as facts the notion that language represents, embodies, constraints and constitutes meaningful participation in society and culture. Morgan sees the study of the speech community as being central to the understanding of human language and meaning-making because it is the product of prolonged interaction among those who operate within shared beliefs and value system regarding their own culture, society and history as well as their communication with others. In his view, these interactions constitute the fundamental nature of human contact and the importance of language, discourse and verbal styles in the representation and negotiation of the relationships that ensue ... Similarly, to Morgan, a homogenous community presupposes the existence of a mutually intelligible, symbolic and ideological communicative system among members.

Within the framework of Morgan's Theory of Speech Community, the vast population of Nigerians who speak the same language (English) guarantees national cohesion. It also necessitates the entrenchment of English as Official Language and medium of instruction in schools. English is a product of language contact as captured in Morgan's theory. The language is global, and its well-developed orthography facilitates meaningful communication at regional and cross-regional levels. These factors accentuate the developmental potential of English studies in Nigeria.

5. Perspectives on English Studies in Nigeria

This section of the paper examines different perspectives that underpin English studies in multilingual Nigeria.

5.1 English-MT Engagement

Scholars contend that the aspects of convergence or divergence in the linguistic features of English and Nigerian languages are of pedagogical relevance, and should therefore be explored in teaching discrete skills in English. For long, mother tongues are incorporated into English studies in the country. The difficulties encountered by Nigerian learners of English are sometimes informed by mother tongue interference which results in the transfer of the linguistic features of indigenous languages into English. This situation is common in the study of the phonology of English. There are different English concepts that can best be understood if translated into Nigerian languages. This is because the socio-cultural values which such concepts capture are socially realistic in such indigenous languages. Expressions in a language

evolve to name phenomena. Thus, phenomena that do not exist in the sociocultural realities of Nigerians are bereaved of meaningful interpretation in classroom situations. A major worry is that the incorporation of indigenous languages into English studies will be hindered by the differences in the linguistic feature of L2 and a Nigerian language. However, it should be noted that the universal properties of the world's languages can facilitate the engagement of English and indigenous languages in English studies. Failure to explore the socio-cultural nuances of indigenous languages in Nigeria in English studies, is partly responsible for ineffective English studies in the country. Acheoah (2014) reports that poor performance in Ordinary Level Examinations conducted by WAEC and NECO are evidences of poor teaching of English in secondary schools in Nigeria. By extension, the subject is poorly taught at other levels of formal education in the country. "Mother tongue interference" and "positive transfer" are managed in the pedagogical process when aspects of similarities and differences between MT and English are explored for effective teaching and learning. Cofresi and Gorman (2004:101) submit that "each language, with its associated culture and value system, may place unique constraints on the bilingual person's sense of identity." The view that indigenous languages can facilitate the teaching and learning of L2 is expressed by different sources in the literature. UNESCO (1953:11) holds the view that indigenous languages can promote the teaching and learning of L2:

An important milestone towards an affirmation of the positive impact of linguistic diversity on development came in 1953 in UNESCO's seminal report... This document recognized that instruction in the mother tongue is, at least at the initial levels of education, the most effective way to educate students. It also outlined the array of socio-cultural and economic factors which militated against the use of such languages, and spoke of the need to consider geographical, social, linguistic and educational perspective before embarking upon language planning." In a similar vein, John Walsh posits that "because of importance of education in facilitating a community's socio-economic development... it was highly significant that a major global institution gave its blessing to the presence of vernacular languages as media of instruction in the education system (John Walsh 2006:129)."

Several scholars acknowledge the implications of language and culture in language pedagogy. For example, Joshua Fishman (1996:81-82) notes that "language and cultural identity are linked in three ways: indexically, symbolically and in a part-whole fashion. The symbolic link relates to identity, the sense of belonging to a community; the language stands for, or represents, the community of speaker." Denise Lussier (2009:316) submits that "teaching and assessing intercultural competence includes four Components: Language Learning, Language Awareness, Cultural Awareness and Cultural Experience¹"

5.2 Poor Teaching and Learning of English

Performances of learners are evidences of the scheme of things in English studies in Nigeria. Adult Education policies were formulated by the government to promote mass literacy in different subjects including English. Poor literacy level in English is responsible for poor performances in other subjects taught in the Adult Education programme. Failure rate in English in the Ordinary Level Examinations is not incidental. Studies reveal that failure rate in English is a product of inappropriate teaching methodologies and activities. For example, there are cases where continuous assessment is not sufficiently used in teaching discrete aspects of English (vocabulary, grammar, spoken English and writing). Acheoah (2014) notes that "continuous assessment (CA) has classroom function, guidance function and administrative function ... To ascertain the progress of the learner, CA is periodically administered. It may be administered daily, weekly, monthly as applicable to the teaching objectives. It helps in tackling individual differences, record-keeping and motivational teaching. Despite these advantages, CA has some set-backs: the large classroom is ineffectively handled, teachers tend to ignore it to concentrate on teaching so as to cover a bulk of curriculum, thus leading to ineffective teaching, there is often variation in the standard and quality of the tests and in the parameters for scoring, thereby rendering the results unreliable." Without continuous assessment, the success recorded in terms of learners' mastery of discrete skills taught in classroom cannot be ascertained. Measuring progress made in lessons is crucial in language teaching. Having measured and ascertained the individualistic abilities and performances of learners, experienced teachers deploy productive methodologies and classroom activities to help weak students in spoken English, grammar, vocabulary and writing. Oguniyi (1984) asserts that "tests whether elaborate or not, is administered to find out whether or not the learner has achieved certain teaching objectives. Assessment is broader than test, although the concept is occasionally used to mean test as in when a teacher tells his students, "I shall assess your performance in the subject". The types of tests known in education include: Discrete Point Test, Integration Test, Placement Test, Achievement Test, Diagnostic Test, Aptitude Test, Predictive Test, Standardized Test, CA Test and Teacher-made Test. A good test instrument must possess validity, reliability and accuracy. Also, it integrates both Discrete Point and Integration Test procedures and captures the goals of teaching. There is a need to construct good test instruments. This presupposes planning, ascertaining the goals, preparing the content and test blue-print." The findings of a study (cf. Acheoah *ibid.*) reveal that reasons for poor performances in English studies in Nigeria are traceable. The study reveals different reasons for failure in Ordinary Level Examinations: tests and examinations were not qualitative; computer-based tests were unable to measure learners' abilities accurately in certain aspects of the English curriculum; performance is sometimes based on candidates' ability to operate the computer well and fast rather than knowledge of course skills being tested; the questions were inadequate, not quantitative and

beyond the scope of the curriculum; there was variation in the standard and quality of the tests, and in the parameter for scoring; tests were not properly marked; and candidates were not monitored. Indeed, the list of hindrances to effective teaching and learning of language is not exhaustive².

5.3 English and National Development

The global status of English can be construed as an advantage to English studies in Nigeria. Although English is crucial in learners' careers, different factors hinder significant achievements of the objectives of English studies in the country. Akere (2006:5-6) identifies factors that are advantageous to English studies in Nigeria:

- a) English can be described as a product of linguistic imperialism bestowed by colonialism;
- b) The introduction of certification system in Nigeria's educational programmes, with ordinary pass and Credit pass in English, as a measure of adequacy for higher education (Even to read French or Hausa or Yoruba or Igbo in any Nigerian University, at the Bachelor level, you must have a Credit pass in English);
- c) A good working knowledge of English language is considered a prerequisite for obtaining government jobs;
- d) Establishment of educational institutions and the introduction of English as a subject of study, and a medium of instruction;
- e) The establishment of the British Council in 1935, and charter in 1940 to promote a wider knowledge of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the English language abroad.

From different viewpoints, English has required prominence on the global stage. Fishman (1972:18-22) lists four criteria in terms of which language could gain or lose prominence:

1. Standardization – i.e. the codification of a language in grammars, dictionaries, spellers, style manuals... codification within a community;
2. Vitality – seen in the existence of a living community of its speakers. This is a criterion often applied to distinguish languages that are alive as against some others that are described as dead...;
3. Historicity – as seen in the existence of a group of people who, in addition to their social, political, religious or ethnic ties, also see their language as the bonding medium of their common ancestry...;
4. Autonomy – the subjective feeling (when strongly assertive) by a people that their language is unique i.e. different from some other language whatever contrary scientific view a linguist may hold concerning their speech form...

Obviously, English is favourably captured and represented in the above criteria. The goals of English studies in Nigeria at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education are immersed in how the communicative potentials of the language can facilitate national growth and development in this era of mass literacy, international diplomacy and technology³.

5.4 Language Attitudes

Attitudinal factors determine the success or failure of language studies. While positive attitudes facilitate English studies, negative attitudes hinder it. Adegbija (2004:54) submits that "attitudes towards languages are motivated by several factors including their socio-economic value, their status-raising potentials, their perceived instrumental value, their perceived esteem, their perceived functions or roles in the nation, their numerical strength, the perceived political and economic power of its speakers, their use in the official domains, their educational value, etc. Generally, positive attitudes, covert or overt, are developed towards a language that is perceived to have value in all these different areas ... Conversely, negative attitudes, overt or covert, develop towards a language in proportion to its lack of function or narrowing or narrowing of its distribution in registers."

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The literature of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics is replete with perspectives on language-related issues in critical domains of nationhood. This study examines such perspectives and their implications in terms of the prospects and constraints of English studies in Nigeria. Attitudinal factors essentially capture the obstacles to English studies in Nigeria. The different actors who attitudinally constitute obstacles to English studies at different levels of formal education are government, schools, teachers and learners. From the government's end, the politicization of language hinders effective framework for English studies in the country. Pattanayak (1981a:44) notes that "language politics is intimately connected with resources planning. Unless resources are so developed that culture groups get equal opportunities for their creative fulfillment, language is bound to be used for divisive purposes. Planners in general and language planners in particular have to bear this in mind." This view corroborates James Andokari Zaki, cited in Ayodabo et al. (2016) who posit that "language planning in the national domain is perceived as a political and administrative activity for solving the problems of the society. The language chosen to fulfil the role of medium of instruction should satisfy certain criteria e.g.: unity, neutrality, modernity, etc." For effective English studies in Nigeria, the education sector has to be "re-invented" so that its strategies can be significantly productive in terms of achieving goals and objectives. Dada (ibid.) reports strategies employed by the Federal Government for the implementation of the National Policy on Education:

- L1 Primary School Curricula (NERC, 1982-3);
- L2 and L1 JSS Curricula (NERC, 1982-4);
- L1 SSS Curricula (NERC, 1975-6);
- L1 TTC Curricula (NTI 1986);
- Primary Science Terminology (NLC, 1980-3);
- Legislative Terminology (NLC, 1980-88);
- Metalanguage for the three major Nigerian languages (NERC, 1981);
- Braille Orthography (NERC, 1981-4);
- Orthography Manuals and Pan-Nigerian typographic resources (NLC, on-going);
- L1 Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba SSC Exam Syllabus (WAEC, 1985-6; 1991).

James Andokari Zaki, cited in Ayodabo et al. (2016) submit that “the century-long debate over language planning in education is to be carefully approached because the education system is the place where the nation’s language integrity is maintained. Policy-making should be backed with prompt implementation. Language policy in education should be void of sentiment, bias, political intrusion among others. Parents should consciously or unconsciously enhance or assist vested authorities in the quest of attaining the basic foundational duty of teaching children their mother tongue in order to preserve the culture and achieve the stated policy in National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004).” Conclusively, this study reveals that front-burner perspectives on English studies in Nigeria revolve around: non-inclusion of indigenous languages, potentials of English in national development, poor teaching/learning and negative language attitudes.

Notes

¹ Commenting on the dynamics of exploring indigenous languages in English studies, Bamgbose (1972) submits: Assuming that a language is to be used as a medium of instruction, even in the restricted sense of initial literacy, the basic requirements are:

- (i) Linguistic analysis of the phonology (sound system) and the grammar of the language;
- (ii) Devising a practical orthography based on the linguistic analysis in (i) above, or reforming an existing orthography;
- (iii) Preparation and testing of primers and readers as well as supplementary reading materials;
- (iv) Preparation and introduction of Teacher’s Notes and Manuals to guide teachers in the use of Primers, readers and perhaps to explain the principles of the orthography.

Where the language is expected to be used as a medium in the wider sense of teaching other subjects through it, additional requirements include:

- i. Preparation of textbooks in the school subjects in the language concerned. This will involve extensive corpus planning or language development, for appropriate vocabulary will have to be developed for terminology in elementary mathematics, science, social studies etc. Some amounts of curriculum development may also be involved;
- ii. Encouragement and development of written literature in the language. This could be done through organizing writer’s workshops and literacy competitions, and facilitating publication of deserving texts.

² For instance, in some schools, spoken English is taught even though the schools do not have language laboratories. Poor performance in spoken English is the consequence of not using language laboratory for teaching practice-based exercises on the segmental and suprasegmental features of English.

³ Adeniran, cited in Ayodabo (2013:213) avers that “in general, communication promotes the immediate and ultimate developmental aims of society via its systems of collection and dissemination of information in support of individual and community activities. It fosters social cohesion at the community level. People get to understand each other and to appreciate other people’s living conditions, viewpoints and aspirations. They... are able to react knowledgeably to issues in ways that should facilitate appropriate decisions geared to the realization of agreed objectives.”

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