

Original Paper

Teaching and Learning Literature-in-English in Senior Secondary School Level in Nigeria: Prospects and Constraints

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Abstract

This study examines the prospects and constraints of teaching and learning Literature-in-English at the senior secondary school level, within the Nigerian context. Literature-in-English is viewed as an integral part of English, whereas it is quite a broad subject that deserves the attention of school authorities and teachers. By examining the prospects and constraints of teaching and learning the subject, this study investigates the significance of the subject to learners, and brings to the fore, the remedies to the lingering failures and challenges. The study is anchored by Collie Slater's (1990) pedagogical postulations and the Critical Theory. The conclusion and recommendations of the study are clear: enough attention should be given to teaching Literature-in-English; learner-centered approach should be enhanced in the classroom; contents of the curriculum should be adequately covered by teachers; human and material resources should be adequately and appropriately provided for teaching and learning Literature-in-English.

Keywords

Literature-in-English, teaching, learning, Senior Secondary School, prospects, constraints

1. Introduction

In the early 1960s and 1980s, English language and Literature-in-English were taught in different periods with sufficient allocation of time on school timetables. The notion of 'English Studies' in secondary schools in the contemporary educational system of Nigeria, evolved because English language is combined with Literature-in-English in the teaching and learning process. The fact that failure rate in Literature-in-English is higher today than it used to be as far as Senior School Certificate Examination is concerned, implies that there is need to revisit approaches to the teaching and learning of the subject. Different scholars have contended for better approaches to the teaching and learning of Literature-in-

English in Nigerian secondary schools, given the fact that its objectives, as contained in the curriculum, are quite elaborate, relevant and crucial for learners in immediate terms and in subsequent years of their lives; in later years, learners of the subject either further studies or join the workforce to contribute significantly to nation-building/national development. Communication is the bedrock of growth in any nation. Literature-in-English teaches students communicative competence by using certain pedagogical techniques. It also teaches students socio-cultural values that integrate them meaningfully and acceptably into the larger society. Emmanuel Maurice Ekah and Idorenyin T. Ukot (2011, p. 52) submit that ‘with the integration of English language and literature as one subject and tagged English studies at the junior secondary level, it does not provide the teachers with proper opportunities to teach literature exhaustively, as most teachers are interested in teaching English language, using all the available periods for English studies. What can be deduced from this aspect is that literature and English language are two broad subject areas as such both cannot be combined for effective performance if the lessons are to benefit the students. Undoubtedly, lack of serious study of literature affects students’ communicative competence because they have not been exposed to varieties of styles in language usages, vocabularies, and expressions which is only possible through the study of literature as a separate subject from English language.’ Literature-in-English broadens the thinking ability of students. Through imaginations which literature spurs, students are made to explore their creative ingenuity, critical thinking ability and human judgment potential. This is because Literature-in-English conveys various thematic concerns. This claim corroborates Okolie, cited in Emmanuel Maurice Ekah and Idorenyin T. Ukot (ibid: p. 53) who note that ‘reading of African novels, gives opportunity to slip imaginatively into circumstances and conditions of life beyond one’s immediate milieu. Arguably, Literature-in-English is a very vital secondary school subject. The relevance of the subject is captured by Azikiwe (1998. p. 202) who state that ‘literature is language since it deals with all aspects of human lifestyle and cultures. Moreover, it further shows that literature has a wider scope that overshadows all other subjects since it deals with language and communication.’ In spite of its relevance to learners and the society, Literature-in-English suffers a great deal of neglect at the Senior Secondary School level of Nigeria’s educational system. For instance, Emmanuel Maurice Ekah and Idorenyin T. Ukot (2011, p. 52) submit that ‘the problem militating against the teaching of English literature ranges from no specific periods on the class time table for Literature-in-English, whereas English periods fill the class time table Mondays to Fridays. Since students do not study literature where they can read English language extensively and learn to communicate effectively, they are incapable of passing external examinations in both English language and Literature-in-English in WASCE and NECO examinations yearly.’ Writing or reading a novel implies widening the imaginative capacity of the reader, the writer, and the audience. Literature also increases the mobility of the individual’s mind by widening his experience and imaginative capacity to enter into new situations ... literature is a fictive exploration of human experience both as educative and morally edifying field of knowledge. This assertion qualifies literature as a major field of study that should be given province...’ Arguably, English language and Literature-in-English are important in the curriculum of secondary

school education in Nigeria, and should be treated as such. Both subjects are complementary. For example, Emmanuel Maurice Ekah and Idorenjin T. Ukot (ibid: p. 53) aver that ‘the essence of teaching language and literature is for communication. The aim of this study is not to claim that literature should be given dominance over English language in the teaching and learning process, but to incisively overview the prospects and constraints of the process.

2. English Studies in Nigeria

English language became a Nigerian heritage after colonialism. The language is the country’s Official Language through constitutional provision. For this reason, it functions potently in officialdom and crucial domains of nationhood. English language is the language of instruction in Nigerian primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Its role in national cohesion and development is common knowledge to linguists. The quest for national development applies to all nations of the world, particularly Third World countries like Nigeria. One of the instruments for nation-building is language. English studies in Nigeria can be understood in relation to language policy frameworks. Although there are policy frameworks on English studies in Nigeria, implementation is too poor to achieve the set objectives. This situation impinges on English studies in the country. Post-independence language policies in Nigeria have failed to achieve national cohesion which scholars belie some of its crucial objectives for different reasons including attitudinal factors. Language policies in Nigeria have not effectively taken care of the country’s multi-ethnic and multi-cultural structure. Commenting on Nigeria’s multilingual structure, Dada (2010, p. 418) submits that ‘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.’ Language policy is a legislative framework targeted towards language, for the good of society. While it has yielded good results in some countries, it has not yielded expected results in other countries. Bamgbose (1991, p. 111) asserts that ‘a language policy may be defined as a programme of action on the role or status of a language in a given community. In a multilingual situation, a language policy decision necessarily involves the role or status of one language in relation to other languages.’ Policy frameworks on English studies in Nigeria are sensitive on how English language can co-exist with indigenous languages in Nigeria for the overall growth and development of the nation. A national language in Nigeria, English has a pride of place in formal education, where cross-disciplinary knowledge is transmitted, including knowledge of discrete skills in Literature-in-English. Fasold (1984, p. 77) comments on what 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.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study hinges on Collie Slater's (1990) pedagogical postulations and the Critical Theory;

3.1 Collie Slater's Pedagogical Postulations

Collie Slater's pedagogical postulations are relevant in this study because they do not only capture the significance of teaching and learning Literature-in-English, but also provide insights on approaches to result-oriented pedagogical process regarding the subject. In addition, the postulations accentuate the complementary roles of both English language and Literature-in-English in the teaching and learning process. Collie Slater (ibid) cited in Emmanuel Maurice Ekah and Idorenyin T. Ukot (ibid) presents the following tips as reasons why literary texts can be used to teach language at any level of education are:

- 1) Valuable authentic material;
- 2) Cultural value;
- 3) Language enhancement;
- 4) Personal involvement;
- 5) Variety and interest;
- 6) For teaching morals, culture and aesthetic values of a particular group of people; knowing linguistic forms, communicative functions and meaning.

3.2 The Critical Theory

The fact that the Critical Theory captures literary appreciation as contained in the SSCE examinations makes it relevant to this study. It teaches learners the significance of reflecting on the process, aims, content and style of literary writings in the process of analyzing the contextual variables that generate literary texts. See Steven Earnshaw (2007) for more insights on the theory.

4. Teaching and Learning Literature-in-English in Senior Secondary School Level in Nigeria: Prospects and Constraints

As in the teaching and learning of language, the process of teaching and learning Literature-in English is essentially about the transmission of knowledge revolving around socially realistic phenomena. Literary texts are thematic irrespective of their genre. In Nigeria, the curriculum of Senior Secondary School is prepared to make learners understand societal vices and values, including human nature as demonstrated by intra-text characters in different contextual structures such as domestic, politics, religion, etc. Williams (1990, p. 55) notes that 'language occurs in socio-cultural and interpersonal context. This places language in broad perspective since the socio-cultural context entails human behaviour in all ramifications which include economic, politics, education and communication. For these purposes, literature is the only

subject where all these human activities are distributed, narrated and discussed exhaustively because it is in literature that the totality of cultures in different societies are reflected. On the other hand, William identifies communicative method of language teaching as against rule governed method which does not promote the reading of literature. Communicative method promotes literature teaching where students are exposed into communicative competence' Literature-in-English should be adequately taught in Senior Secondary School level due to its relevance to learners. It is representational in the sense that it makes them see life the way it is. It is about the actions, cultures, attitudes and beliefs of human beings conveyed via the instrumentality of characterization in literary texts. Azikiwe (1998) posits that 'In another perspective on the teaching and learning of literature, McGregor (1971, p. 12) observed that literature refers to language used skillfully about subjects which are important to human beings and expresses hopes, fears, doubts, joy, love, problems and conflicts that human beings experience in their daily lives and activities, written to teach the readers lessons about life. Azikiwe again observes that literature is language in action because it exploits the resources of time, people and place, in their oral and written forms. Reading a literature text is reading about people's activities, problems and prospects which directly affects the psyche of the reader, so that he is emotionally transformed into a new individual, capable of initiating a new lifestyle copied from the literary characters.' The facilitating function of Literature-in-English in the teaching and learning of English language is widely acknowledged. Literature provides contexts and humans to drive out the meanings or semantic properties of linguistic expressions. Emmanuel Maurice Ekah and Idorenyin T. Ukot (ibid: p. 54) posit that 'from the concept of the relationship between language and literature, Eagles and Krammer (1976, p. 102) opined that language is the medium of literature by giving the connotations and semantics in context usage. Grammatical structures and lexical items are drawn from the inventory of language, and applied in literature expressions, which make meaningful descriptions ... in literary writings. To teach English language without literature at the junior secondary school level deprives the students of the basic communicative approach, which states that language is better acquired and used effectively since it is in literature stories, poetry recitation and drama acting and reading that communication can be enhanced, than studying the rules of language in isolated sentence structures, which do not link to real practical situations in their cultural lives.' In a similar vein, Alabere Rabiat Ajoke and Apalila bt. Shapii (2017, p. 53) opine that 'the most interesting method of teaching English language is through literature. The place of literature in teaching is to expose learners to different valuable experiences, real and imaginative, building in students the love for extensive and sustained pleasurable reading. But the reverse is the case in recent development in the study of literature in Nigerian educational system ... where literature is not reflected as a separate subject in the junior secondary school curriculum, as it used to be in the past when literature was introduced right from the first year in secondary school as a compulsory subject of study.' Failure rate in the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English at the SSCE is largely linked to poor teaching of the subject. Emmanuel Maurice Ekah and Idorenyin T. Ukot (ibid: p. 55) submit that 'The actual reason why students fail in public examinations like NECO and WASCE in English and literature

is the fact that the teaching of literature in English has been neglected and ignored by teachers and students unwillingness to buy prescribed texts for themselves. See National Bureau of Statistics (2015) for students' performances in SSCE. As a result, literature which should complement English language teaching is not taught effectively ... the recent approaches to language teaching have ignored literature teaching. Moreover, literature approaches are now subsumed under approaches to language learning, so these have negative effects on literature and language teaching and learning. Merging these two important subjects together therefore confuses the teachers of both subjects ...'

Azikiwe (ibid: p. 213) suggests thirteen steps for teaching and learning literature in English:

- i. Assign paragraphs or passages from the literary text to be read during the lesson. This should have been given as homework or assignment before the actual class period to the students;
- ii. If reading is to be done in the lower class, the teacher should give the students opportunity to read also.
- iii. New vocabulary and poorly pronounced words should be written on the board for proper pronunciation, spelling, denotative and connotative meanings taught as well.
- iv. Students should be involved in discussions, analysis and description of the reading, while the teacher gives the proper perspective of the author's vision and focus in the work.
- v. Both the teachers and students should ask and answer questions to elicit further explanations of the subject matter, themes, styles, mood and characters in the literary writing.
- vi. The students in the class should be divided in groups of four and five and assigned specific chapters, passages, events and incidents, so that they may be involved actively during the class lesson and after. This concept will enable them to be interested in the subject and the lesson.
- vii. The teacher should arouse and sustain the interest of the students by relating the lessons to the real life situations, cultures, and environments of the students to show that literature is all about human lives in their environment.
- viii. Students should be guided to extract meanings explicit and implicit from the materials read, through the use of outlines from the textual contents and situations.'
- ix Teachers should give the students guide on how to identify the elements of literature such as plot, theme, background, subject matter, characterization, style, diction, figures of speech and the mood in the literary works at different class lessons.
- x. In order to make the lessons interesting the teacher should make use of instructional materials, visual aids, aural aids and charts.
- xi. Give the students content and essay type questions as class work and assignment, so as to enable them read the text effectively for the purposes of understanding the texts and examinations.
- xii. Students should be taught how to be selective by directing them to simple things that they can write such as short stories, plays and poetry.

xiii. Teachers should encourage students to do intensive and extensive reading privately at home using prescribed and unprescribed texts. The advantages of intensive reading according to Oyetuiyi (ibid p. 108) gets students invited in the independent study, use of words in English language from the contexts of authors and the denotation meanings thereby enhancing new vocabularies and free expressions.

In classroom activities, teachers should deploy productive methods to reveal the social relevance of literature to learners. Literature-in-English lessons should be interest-inducing. The social relevance of literature is immersed in its applicability to human practices from time immemorial. Literature is in human nature. Humans naturally tell stories about existential phenomena. This view is in tandem with Emmanuel Maurice Ekah and Idorenyin T. Ukot (ibid) who assert that ‘literature ... is an art which springs from our inborn love of telling stories, arranging words in pleasing patterns, and expressing in words some special cultural aspects of human experiences ... Louise states that literature is a form of art having aesthetic values, which can be enjoyed in itself, and at the same time has social origin and social effects...’ Emmanuel Maurice Ekah and Idorenyin T. Ukot (ibid) also report Alabere Rabiati Ajoke and Apalila bt. Shapii (ibid) who submit that literature is ‘an exercise of the mind and intellect which emanates from man’s desire to narrate stories using words creatively to expose aspects of the experiences of man. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as ‘writings whose value is in the beauty of form or emotional effects’ ... The organization of words to give pleasure through them to elevate and transform experience, and functions in society as a continuous symbolic criticism of value. Ogunsina (1976) also sees it as a vehicle of human expression which seeks to investigate man, his behaviour in society, his knowledge of the universe in which he finds himself.’ The usefulness of the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English in an ESL (English as a Second Language) context is worthy of scholarly attention. Through Literature-in-English, discrete aspects of the English language skills can be learnt in classroom. These include skills in grammar, vocabulary, continuous writing and summary; the real life situations for demonstrating these skills are presented in literary texts. Alabere Rabiati Ajoke and Apalila bt. Shapii (ibid) report that ‘literature is language in use; in other words, it is one of the tools for teaching English in a second language situation. It facilitates the acquisition of grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing (Note 1). Bright and Macgregor (1981) are also of the view that when there is little reading and writing, there will be little language Using literature to teach language also helps students to achieve several goals in their education. Literature equips students with real life experiences that can be useful for living within and outside the school system and the knowledge of stories from literature can be used to answer essay questions on English language. They are also exposed to several registers in the process of learning different literature texts. In other words, when students are exposed to literary texts, they are able to appreciate and make judgments on important issues ... they acquire self confidence in speaking and writing ... The teaching of literature is very important at all levels of education. It is imperative that emphases be accorded to it in all schools.’ The acquisition of writing skills is crucial in the Literature-in-English curriculum and in the pedagogical process. Freeman (1967) defines writing as ‘the ability to

select the strongest words, the most useful facts since it is the appropriate selection of these facts that engrave the image of a work in the reader's mind. Stanley Oriola (2008), cited in Ayodabo and Demola Jolayemi (2008:104) notes that if writing is to be properly done, certain skills are necessary:

- (a) Mental: This requires that a writer must be able to think clearly and be logical, sequential and coherent in how he organizes his ideas.
- (b) Psychological: Ideas can only move freely within the various sensitive components of the human system, if a writer is emotionally stable and relaxed.
- (c) Rhetorical: Writing, like every other practice, has its own rules. A writer must know the rules that are fundamental to his craft; or, else, the semantic depth expected of the work of such a writer will be missed so long as the structural order is flouted. This may result in expressions that are linguistically awkward or syntactically odd. A good writing must make a smooth, flow and 'floody' reading.
- (d) Critical: A writer is expected to re-read a work, which he has completed. Beyond this, one should be able to judge or criticize a completed work so as to improve it; thus writing is essentially re-writing. Trask (1995, p. 1) observes that language, which differentiates man from other creatures, is the tool for writing. According to Babatunde (1998), writing is a process (a step-by-step activity) and an interaction. Anko (2004 pp. 254-256) notes that the act of writing consists of stages, with the emphasis now shifted from product-oriented approach to process-oriented approach.

Writing is one of the four language skills: the other three are listening, speaking and reading. While listening and speaking are receptive skills, speaking and writing are productive skills because they involve graphical and conventional communication of ideas. In the Literature-in-English classroom, students learn that that writing is writer-audience communication. Students are made to understand how literature texts convey meaning through effective organization of textual elements. Literary writers do not only explore the conventions of English in writing Literature-in-English texts, but also organize ideas carefully. They also select appropriate linguistic conventions to communicate such ideas. Variables that a writer must manipulate skillfully in written communication include reader, occasion and purpose. In poetry lessons, students learn the qualities of good writing include which are as follows:

- (a) Economy of words: The writer should be able to communicate ideas with brevity;
- (b) Clarity: The writer should ensure that his words are understood;
- (c) Simplicity: The writer should use simple words except for other stylistic or literary purposes.

In the teaching of literature, the teacher should have the following objectives in mind (cf. Alabere Rabiat Ajoke and Apalila bt. Shapii *ibid* p. 53):

- 1). To inculcate in students, the love for extensive and continued pleasurable reading through interesting texts for its own sake.
- 2). To introduce new types of experiences through literature.

- 3). To expose readers through varied valuable experiences real or imagined which may contribute to their emotional, social and moral judgment.
- 4). To introduce the learners to well-known characters, books and incidents in literature.
- 5). To develop the ability to think critically leading to adequate judgment.
- 6). Through the study of literature, students acquire human approaches to examining thoughts and actions.
- 7). Literature helps to develop learners in the areas of language skills and vocabulary.

Indeed, the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English at the Senior Secondary School level is bedeviled by series of constraints which include scarcity of textbooks. Different factors account for the scarcity of literary texts, and such scarcity affects performances in WAEC and NECO examinations. Alabere Rabiati Ajoke and Apalila bt. Shapii (ibid) state that 'a major way to establish whether or not students are learning and, by extension, attaining the objectives of Literature-in-English in Nigeria is through their yearly Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) results. The SSCE is organized by different examination bodies, notably, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO). The minimum standard students are expected to attain in SSCE is a 'pass' at credit level. A credit pass (in combination with four other subjects) qualifies students for further studies in any discipline in the humanities that requires Literature-in-English, including English language and literature; language education; mass communication; law; linguistics; theatre arts; and classics.

Meanwhile, the curricula of WAEC and NECO SSCE have been synchronized, meaning that the same literature texts are recommended for both examinations. Out of eight texts, students may read only four (an African drama, a non-African drama, an African prose, and a non-African prose). They also have three years (SS1-3) to study these texts. With this lenient structure and extended time frame, it is expected that students would be adequately prepared for these examinations. However, their level of failure, which has become a yearly occurrence, seems to suggest the opposite. Their performance is not only poor, but also declining annually, especially in WAEC SSCE (Note 2). Students are not expected to read outdated literary texts in preparation for WAEC and NECO examinations. It is quite commendable that some recommended literary texts for WAEC and NECO examinations have regional, socio-cultural and historical underpinnings; they often reflect the African/Nigerian experiences. The fact that literary texts are often thematic implies that they cannot lack meaning or social relevance. Alabere Rabiati Ajoke and Apalila bt. Shapii (ibid) posit that 'literary texts can also help develop learners' interpretive abilities due to its rich levels of meaning and active involvement by learners...'

To achieve objectives of teaching and learning literature-in-English at the SSCE level, teachers should creatively explore different methods and approaches. For example, Alabere Rabiati Ajoke and Apalila bt. Shapii (ibid) opine that 'literary text can be used as model for controlled writing whereby students are to imitate a particular text especially for beginners when asked to rewrite passages from the text as a way of learning the grammar and style of the author. Literary text can also be used to teach guided writing by asking the students to complete sentences that sum up the content of the text as a model, which is very

important for scenario approach and will help students to develop the skill of essay writing by reproducing the model. Through the reproduction of literary model, the students learn more of paraphrasing and summary writing where students are required to use their words. By so doing, real life stories and plays that the events are chronological in form can be used to teach how to write summary ... Students can also write from literary texts by using literary words of the text while writing out of or filling in as part of creative writing ...' According to Eucharia Okwudilichukwu Ugwu (2022, p. 163), 'Cater and Long (1963), cited in Savvidou (2004) highlights approaches to the teaching of literature: cultural; language; and personal growth. While the cultural approach exposes learners to other cultures, hinging on the socio-political and historical underpinnings of literary texts, the language approach uses literature as an instrument for learning language. The personal approach portrays literature as being useful in the day-to-day existence of human beings.

Classroom exercises are not only useful for teaching and learning of English Language. They are also quite useful for the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English at SSCE level. Hangyu Zhang (2020:1) submits that 'considerable attention has been paid to a variety of classroom activities in an English speaking class ... However, there has been evidence showing that different situations in classroom activities exert various effects on learners' English speaking proficiency ... This fact indicates that both positive and negative effects can be made according to types and effects of classroom exercises ... communicative activities such as discussion, problem-solving and role play can develop students' English speaking proficiency ... some oral activities in EFL classes such as some drill activities possibly cause the low English speaking proficiency for students...' Well planned learning elements imply that the skills to be learned are revealed in exercises. Students are able to access their performance level as the lessons unfold. See Iehu (1989) for problems typical of the teaching process as far as Literature-in-English is concerned. They are also able to understand the teaching objectives. Students of Literature-in-English have roles to play in the achievement of the objectives of lessons. Practicing and imitating the writings of celebrated literary writers are expected Students preparing for SSCE examinations are expected to practice and imitate efforts of celebrated literary writers. William Shakespeare is a great source of inspiration to students of Literature-in-English. Some classroom exercises are group-based, depending on skills being taught and learnt. Outstanding group performance accentuates learners' confidence-level. In an ESL context, exercises for teaching Literature-in-English should be appropriate, putting into consideration the conventions of the language that conveys the texts (English language). Hangyu Zhang (ibid) reports that '... a system of exercises for teaching a foreign language should be understood as a set of types and kinds of exercises that are related to each other by purpose, material, and method of their implementation...'

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examines the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English at the Senior Secondary level of the Nigerian educational system. SSCE results reveal that there are different factors that contribute to

low performances. Eucharia Okwudilichukwu Ugwu (ibid) notes that ‘qualitative reports from the WAEC Chief Examiners from 2011-2019 reveal common errors and weaknesses in students’ writings. The weaknesses include poor literary appreciation; misinterpretation of questions; writing out of context; misunderstanding of rubrics; lack of critical skills and originality in responding to questions; poor communication skills; and an inability to answer questions in good English. Others include reproducing the storyline; inability to answer questions with close reference to the texts; vague and sketchy answers; lack of in-depth knowledge due to shallow understanding of the recommended texts; and illegible handwriting.’ If Literature-in-English is not well taught in secondary schools, there will be low comprehension of the subject. This is because it quite a complex and wide subject. High failure rate in WAEC and NECO examinations is not incidental. It is the outcome of the inadequacies of the pedagogical process. The mentality of viewing Literature-in-English as a non-major subject makes secondary school teachers in Nigeria teach the subject with insufficient commitment. Lack of interest in teaching the subject cannot foster the acquisition of teaching objectives. In such a situation, preparation for the lessons will be inadequate, thus hindering learner-motivation. Constraints in the teaching and learning of literature-in-English include: poor knowledge of the conventions of English; perceived gaps between the contents of the curriculum and learner-needs; poor teaching methods; lack of instructional materials; poor condition of teaching environment; and timetable deficits. Conclusively, and by way of recommendations, the following tips should be considered for effective teaching and learning of Literature-in-English at the Senior Secondary School level of the Nigerian educational system:

- i. There should be sufficient time and commitment towards the teaching and learning of the subject;
- ii. classroom teaching should be learner-centered as much as possible;
- iii. efforts should be made to cover the contents of the curriculum before SSCE examinations each year (Note 3); and
- iv. Teachers of Literature-in-English should be adequate;
- v. Teachers of the subject should be competent; and
- vi. Provision should be made for current instructional materials (Note 4).

Notes

Note 1. Alabere Rabiat Ajoke and Apalila bt. Shapii (ibid: p. 53) assert that ‘literature is a means of enlarging one’s imagination and experience. It offers a vast reservoir of human experiences and judgment of experience, development of imagination, and entry into human situation which otherwise might well fall outside our imagination.’

Note 2. Scarcity of recommended prose, drama and poetry texts is common in developing countries where poverty and illiteracy levels are high. However, attitudinal problems also account for why students do not usually have some of the recommended literary texts. However, school authorities have crucial roles to play in filling the gaps. School libraries should be equipped with the periodic recommended texts.

Note 3. Eucharia Okwudilichukwu Ugwu (ibid) reports that ‘the curriculum of the Nigerian secondary school, otherwise known as post-basic education, is divided into four sections: business studies; science and mathematics; humanities; and technology (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN] 2014). While subjects like English and general mathematics are compulsory for all students, others are specifically for students in each field. Literature-in-English for example, is a core subject for students in the humanities. The curriculum lists general and specific objectives of teaching literature-in-English and its components. Generally, literature is taught to broaden students’ cultural awareness and knowledge of healthy human values to enhance their language skills; expose them to the beauty and potentials of language; and equip them with the necessary skills for independent thinking and creative writing. Another general objective is to adequately prepare students for standardized examinations needed for work and for further studies. For the specific objectives, literary appreciation is intended to help students develop critical sensitivity to literature and be able to independently access prose, poetry, and drama. Through drama instruction, students learn basic dramatic techniques, develop the skills of acting, and become able to relate drama to real life. The goal of poetry instruction is to expose students to the richness of poetic expression and to gain experience in writing their own poems. Lastly, the objectives of teaching prose are to enable learners to recognize the values embodied in fiction (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council [NERDC] 2009, p. iii-v). To facilitate the attainment of these objectives the recommended texts usually cut across African and non-African writings with diverse themes, including social vices, diseases, science fiction, technology, history, terrorism, gender, multicultural issues, politics and governance.’

Note 4. Generally, there should be adequate provision of funds for the education sector of Nigeria. The literature is replete with the damages caused to the sector by lack of funding by successive governments. In this regard, see Eucharia Okwudilichukwu Ugwu (ibid).

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