

# The role of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (Tetfund) in the teaching and learning of English in Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria

Onoja, Joseph Ajogwu \*

*Department of English language, Federal College of Education, Okene, Nigeria*

*\*Corresponding Author*

**Abstract:** In the face of global technological advancement, Tetfund has placed the teaching and learning of English at the most strategic position of empowering the teacher with required enhancement in form of funds and grants as special intervention to actualize the teaching objectives of the English with the current wave of learner-centered, participatory and practical approaches to pedagogy. In a world where teachers of English are fast becoming faulty models for the actual classroom experience, ineffective teaching methods are applied. More so, the special interventions of language laboratories which would have formed the basis for actual practical teaching and learning of language studies are either underutilized or not maintained. This research attempts to identify the role of Tetfund intervention with the provision of language laboratories and its effectiveness on the teaching and learning methods. Federal Colleges of Education from six geo-political zones were randomly selected for this research. It further recommends an improvement in funding, supervision and monitoring of the use of these practical models provided.

**Keywords:** Tertiary Education Trust Fund (Tetfund), English Language, Language Laboratory.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The push for enhancement of knowledge and qualitative education by African education ministers in Abuja in May 2012 has slowly checked the problems of the dwindling standard of English education even in the face of salient emerging challenges such as models and methods in the pedagogical process of the present time. Several educationists have hinged much blame for the fall in standards on the teacher of English as he/she is in the driving seat with all tools of learning. Little wonder then, that the National Policy on Education (2004) draws attention to empowering the teacher with qualitative, cost-effective training and continuous retraining.

Even with the paradigm shift from teacher-centred learning to a form of learner-centred, participatory and activity-driven lessons/lecturers, Idusogie (2007) posits that, the teacher is the most strategic, crucial and critical professional for rational development and developmental sustenance. It is the opinion of Aghali (2010) that, national development rests heavily on individuals who are expected to have been molded towards positive growth and development through effective teaching and learning experiences. Thus,

when teaching is ineffective, problems of its quality become the end result. These have been the position of the teaching and learning of English language over the years mainly because of the absence of quality models on the practical laboratory aspects.

## *Problems Statements/Justification*

Emerging accents and current challenges in the teaching of English Language Phonetics and Phonology in tertiary institutions have undermined the essence of auditory, articulatory and acoustic branches of Phonetics. No wonder then that even at socio-political and religious spheres, significant conflicts have arisen due to poor knowledge of phonetic and phonemic implications of the language in spaces and time where accentual inflections differ. This paper examines the use of language laboratories in the teaching and learning of English Phonetics and Phonology in Nigeria tertiary institutions in the wake of diverse accents of English in the world. Nigeria is a multilingual society and possesses unique challenges as English in Nigeria and its second language ( $L_2$ ) status which interferes with already existing first language ( $L_1$ ) situations. This research recommends that, the teaching of English Phonetics and Phonology should take into cognizance the qualities and ingredients of the Received Pronunciation (R.P.) as the model sort after by effectively utilizing the potentials of the language laboratories. This is necessary as Nigeria, with over 3000 indigenous languages, cannot afford to imbibe the conscious impositions of other varieties of English from multimedia services on her that would complicate the already existing multi-lingual challenges. Even when Nigeria is not technologically as advanced as the Chinese, Americans, Canadians and others, Nigeria should strive to attain the Standard British Accent set by the native speakers of the language by the adequate use of the language laboratories especially where teachers of English are fast becoming poor models for teaching Phonics at the basic school level, Oral English at the post-primary school level, Phonetics and Phonology at the tertiary level.

The justification of the study is highlighted in examining the role and rate of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund in selected Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria. It is necessary to specifically investigate the gaps in perception

and production of the English language on the basis of variables of first language interferences, sex, class, religion, age, educational qualification and actual pedagogy.

### *Objectives of the Study*

The objectives of the study are:

- i. to appraise the role of Tetfund in the teaching and learning of English in Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria.
- ii. to identify the need for an extensive use of practical approaches of using teaching models for the teaching and learning of English language in a second language situation as Nigeria.
- iii. to analyze the extent of the use of practical laboratory materials of language laboratories for effective teaching of the English Language in Federal Colleges of Education.
- iv. to reposition the various laboratories within the concepts of English language teaching in secondary language ( $L_2$ ) situations.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In many disciplines within a multi-lingual nation state as Nigeria, it has become common knowledge that English Language is the most widely spoken. It is the most widely used language even in the world today. Renowned Nigerians authors on the subject as Banjo and Bisong (1985), Jowitt (1991) and Bamgbose et al (2005) have identified the growth of regional accents occasioned by the dynamics of language and the continuous integration of English language into the Nigerian language polity to maintain a wider socio-political relevance in a multilingual nation state as Nigeria. In the face of such challenges within, a wave of over dependence on the technology of the developed countries has engulfed the Nigerian space and time thus compounding the challenges of the Nigerian teacher and learner of English Phonetics and Phonology from without. This is due to the influx of tapes, DVDs, VCDs and other multimedia equipment imbued with English language variations that have the potential of affecting the Nigerian's spoken English negatively.

After the early 1980s, Oral English was introduced by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) as part of the Senior Secondary School Syllabus. It was more to improve upon the oral aspect of English language which had been undermined. Practical assessments were carried out and students were examined on articulation, stress, intonation and rhythmic patterns. Subsequently, in the late 1990s, private primary schools saw the need to introduce Phonics as a subject to be studied. This gave impetus to the teeming population such that from the start of the year 2000, so many public primary schools had begun to imbibe from the pool of knowledge, the need to inculcate the traditions of providing the basics of introducing the primary pupils to the complex subject of phonetics and phonology by elementary phonics. On investigation, it was observed that the primary productive

language skill, speech, is the first the most noticeable skill a listener perceives and assesses a speaker on in language proficiency. As encouraging as it may be, several challenging factors have further emerged to impede on such progress in language pedagogy with the growing wave of poverty, carelessness, discontinuity and misinformation.

The idea of a re-appraisal of such ideals for English language teaching and learning and its dire need in contemporary socio-political and economic spheres as multi-lingual Nigeria is significant to knowledge and scholarship so as to disallow the infiltration of other existing variations from developed countries into the polity of the Nigerian state without a clear consideration for Nigeria unique challenges accruing from her phonetic, semantic and syntactic multilingual stance. Nigeria could take cue from the native Standard British English and tackle systemically the challenges posed by a First Language ( $L_1$ ) interference rather than accept other varieties and deviations imposed on her by the technological advancement of developed nations thus creating a linguistically complicated situations for teachers and learners of English. The English language laboratory provides the potential of enhancing the listening and speaking proficiency where the language laboratories are well equipped and functional.

Jones (2011) traces the progress of the language teaching from the script to a more technologically oriented one:

All the words and all the transcriptions that are in the printed dictionary are also included on the CD-Rom. You can type in any word in the dictionary and see its entry. In addition, with this facility you can listen to a pronunciation of each word (spoken by a British or American voice), then if you wish you can record your own voice and compare it with our version. You can also search for any combination of letters IPA symbols. (p.vi).

The language laboratory facility uses the central controlling system distributed by the console under the control of a specialized attendance and instructor who determines the aspect of pronunciation, perception or speech pattern, either from recorded materials of native speakers of English, verbal communication between teacher and students using acoustic properties provided by synchronizers or internet services available in different contexts of spoken English.

### *Kinds of language laboratories*

In view of the dynamics of language and the dire need for the assistance of educators in delivering second language ( $L_2$ ) and foreign language (FL) instructions especially in bilingual and multilingual environments, four kinds of laboratories are exemplified in this work.

#### *Conventional Laboratory*

This is basically the earliest form of the language laboratory where the conventional tape recorders and a few audiocassettes dubbed from the native speakers of English

were used to teach the learners. The teacher played the tapes while students listened to them and perceived the Recorded Pronunciation (R.P). Incidentally, it was used in a conventional classroom setup which were prone to noise and other distractions. More so, clarity in listening was affected by series of the noise factor as the conventional classrooms were not sound-proof and only single side cassette players were used. This made recording of one's voice and playback in repetition for comparison difficult. Here, teaching perception was more emphasized than sound production and articulation.

#### *Lingua Phone Laboratory*

Though a conventional type of laboratory also, learners were provided with headsets to listen to the audiocassettes being played to reduce distractions and provide a certain amount of sound proof for clarity thereby checking the 'noise' factor. At this time the electronic device had dual functions with a cassette player having features of a normal cassette player on the left side serving as an output technology, then a repeater on the right side that helps to record one's voice and play it back for easy assessment of correctness. This input and output devices provided some form of equilibrium between auditory (perceptive) and articulatory (productive) phonetics.

#### *Computer Assisted Language Laboratory (CALL)*

This is perhaps one of the most sophisticated language laboratories owing to the digitalization of language. Barson and Debski (1996) explain CALL as fairly recent technology which uses the computer to teach language. The language course materials, having been fed into the computer, are displayed according to the features available in the system. It takes care of the acoustic properties of sound and checks the behaviour of speech sounds from production to perception. This has gradually been categorized into three distinct phases of Behavioristic CALL, Communicative CALL and Integrative CALL. While the behavioristic dwells on attitudinal accompaniments, the communicative deals with the message content delivery and then integrative combines both CALL phases. Nowadays, language laboratory computers have been further developed with connection to the internet for a first hand language use. There are commonly referred to as Web Assisted Language Laboratories (WALL).

#### *Effects of Language Laboratory in Teaching Phonetics and Phonology*

Just as the multimedia have the potential to enhance knowledge globally in space and time, the language laboratory serves a practical purpose of teaching oral-aural impact well suited to assist teachers and learners of English Language in their perception and production of the Target Language (TL) speech patterns from native speakers using audiotapes and motion video in a wide range of situational, contextual and specialized conditions in a less tedious and contentious manner. In Nigeria, this is necessary especially when many teachers of colleges of education are poor models for the

teaching of spoken English having acquired different ethnolects, sociolects and regional accents from their first language (L<sub>1</sub>) experience that interfere with their articulation of the phonological realizations in the target language.

Madhavi (2010), while observing the communication method of teaching language which recommends effective message encoding and decoding in a wide range and natural manner, opines that language learning is an extensive combination of high quality content, flexible contexts and required functional and interactive technology in a dynamic world. Thus, he recommends a comprehensive language learning method which utilizes technology to improve on the teaching-learning process. This will enhance greater solution for self-teaching and teaching support of formal and theoretical lessons. Before the early 1960s, language courses in Nigeria dwelt heavily on the written expressions at the tertiary levels of education while spoken English was subsumed only in grammatical patterns and written composition. Oral practice was seen only as secondary with learners as passive participants. However, with the emergence of globalization and a proliferation of English language variations, the need has arisen to re-position the listening and speaking skills at a primary place of significance in language teaching and learning. The complexities of experienced in the teaching and learning of English in teacher training colleges could be checked by developing strategies of basic practice at the basic levels of education.

Randal (2006) posits that, technology has become a must-have in many homes around the world, with its concomitant influence permeating all facets of human lives, including education. Consequently, the language laboratory is further suited for teaching Oral English, Phonetics and Phonology more to the advantage of the audio-lingual method where listening and speaking take primacy in language and communication. The recent introduction of Phonics as a subject of study at the primary school level dwells heavily on technology and makes teaching activity-driven, less tedious, practical and learner-centered as there is a seeming direct contact with the target language in tapes, audio, cassettes and video. This stimulates students' attention leading to better understanding and perception of speech sound articulation and perception.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### *Research Design*

The survey research design was adopted for the study.

#### *Population and Sampling Procedure*

English language teachers in selected Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria formed the population of the study. 200 participants randomly selected were sampled from six out of the twenty-one Federal Colleges of Education from the six geopolitical zones. The Colleges selected include:

S/ N	College/town	State	Zone
1.	F.C.E, Gombe	Gombe	North East
2.	F.C.E, Zaria	Kaduna	North West
3.	F.C.E, Okene	Kogi	North Central
4.	F.C.E (Special), Oyo	Oyo	South West
5.	F.C.E, Obudu,	Cross River	South South
6.	Alvan Ikoku C.O.E, Owerri	Imo	South East

### Summary of Data

#### Section A

s/n	Items	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Is there a Tetfund intervention on a language laboratory in your college?	182	91	18	9
2.	Do you rate Tetfund's role in ensuring practical approaches to the teaching of English language in your college high?	167	83.5	33	16.5
3.	Has Tetfund regularly inspected the functionality and use of the language laboratory in your college?	122	61	78	39
4.	Is there a need for constant upgrade of existing language laboratories in Federal Colleges of Education by Tetfund?	192	96	08	4
5.	Do you have a functional digital laboratory in your college?	79	39.5	121	60.5

#### Section B

s/n	Items	Yes	%	No	%
6.	(a) Do you have a language laboratory in your college? (b) If yes, tick the appropriate kind below: (i) Conventional Laboratory (ii) Lingua Phone Laboratory (iii) Computer Assisted Language Laboratory	117 68 15	58.5 34 7.5		
7.	Do you often use the language laboratory in the teaching of English language in a semester?	162	81	38	19
8.	Do the practical models of teaching enhance the quality of teaching English language?	192	96	08	4
9.	Are the language laboratories in your college fully functional?	43	21.5	157	78.5
10.	Does your college provide enough incentives towards the maintenance of the language laboratory?	112	56	88	44
11.	Do you have trained technical personnel in the handling of the language laboratory in your college?	72	36	128	64
12.	It is necessary to organize compulsory regularly workshops for all teachers of English language?	191	95.5	09	4.5
13.	Do you organize regular workshops for teachers in the effective use of the language laboratory?	52	26	148	74

### Analysis of Data

Tetfund intervention on the erection of language laboratories was present in most of the colleges. Most respondents affirmed to this intervention and added that the major challenges were not of the provision of language laboratories but for the lack of maintenance. Whereas some respondents blamed this on the colleges, others reported that Tetfund should regularly inspect its laboratories to enforce its maintenance and use.

Generally, the respondents rated Tetfund high on provision of models for the practical approaches to the teaching of English language. Many of the selected colleges had their laboratories equipped with flat screen television sets, head phones, air conditioners and others. However, only a few had functional digital laboratories were available in some colleges. A significant number of colleges still operated the conventional laboratory.

Most respondents agree that the language laboratory plays a significant role in the teaching and learning of English Language. Some respondents also argued that many teachers of English were poor models for the teaching of Oral English, Phonics, Phonetics and Phonology due to the interference from their first language (L<sub>1</sub>) on the target language (TL).

In many of the colleges investigated, only a few respondents agree that language laboratory practical takes a central position in the teaching of English Language. Some language laboratory practical were only taught only as topics in the Phonetics and Phonology courses. Many respondents agree that in some semesters, less than four practical classes were held in the language laboratories.

Many of the respondents strongly agree that there were no trained specialists employed on language laboratory technology. Thus, mere technicians were transferred to this area that requires professionals.

Many teachers agree that workshops on the use of the language laboratories were not observed on regular basis. It was generally agreed that these regular workshops were necessary for English Language teachers who should constant be trained and re-trained.

## IV. CONCLUSION

From the above findings, the researcher concludes that Tetfund efforts on practical models to the teaching and learning of English language is significant and a source for improvement on the teaching methods of the subject which hitherto was teacher-centered, passive and theoretical in an English as a second language (L<sub>2</sub>) situation as Nigeria.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research therefore concludes and recommends the following:

1. Tetfund should regularly supervise the use of the special intervention on language laboratory released to Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

2. Colleges that do not utilize the Tetfund models for the teaching of English language should be ordered to do so.
3. Tetfund should sponsor at least two lecturers from each Federal Colleges of Education to undergo series of training and re-training on the effective use of the language laboratories.
4. Colleges of Education should employ technical experts in language laboratory use and maintenance.
5. All teachers of English Language in teacher training colleges should show proof of attendance at regularly workshops on the use of the language laboratory as prerequisite for any next promotion.
6. Authorities of colleges of education should ensure a quarterly release of funds for language laboratory maintenance.
7. College and departmental timetable should indicate specific days for language laboratory practical each week of the semester. This will reposition the laboratory as central to English Language studies.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A

1. Is there a Tetfund intervention on a language laboratory in your college? Yes ( ) No ( )
2. Do you rate Tetfund's role in ensuring practical approaches to the teaching of English language in your college high?
3. Has Tetfund regularly inspected the functionality and use of the language laboratory in your college? Yes ( ) No ( )
4. Is there a need for constant upgrade of existing language laboratories in Federal Colleges of Education by Tetfund?  
Yes ( ) No ( )
5. Do you have a functional digital laboratory in your college?  
Yes ( ) No ( )

SECTION B

6. (a) Do you have a language laboratory in your college? Yes ( ) No ( )  
(b) If yes, tick the appropriate kind below:  
(i) Conventional Laboratory ( ) (ii) Lingua Phone Laboratory ( )  
(iii) Computer Assisted Language Laboratory ( )
7. Do you often use the language laboratory in the teaching of English language in a semester?
8. Do the practical models of teaching enhance the quality of teaching English language? Yes ( ) No ( )
9. Are the language laboratories in your college fully functional?  
Yes ( ) No ( )
10. Does your college provide enough incentives towards the maintenance of the language laboratory? Yes ( ) No ( )
11. Do you have trained technical personnel in the handling of the language laboratory in your college? Yes ( ) No ( )
12. It is necessary to organize compulsory regularly workshops for all teachers of English language? Yes ( ) No ( )
13. Do you organize regular workshops for teachers in the effective use of the language laboratory?