

## Relevance of Bilingualism in Adult Learners' English Language Development in South-West Nigeria

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### ARTICLE INFO

o-ISSN:2502-6909

p-ISSN: 2502-9207

Vol. 4, No. 1, June 2019

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31327/jee.v4i1.888>

|          |   |               |
|----------|---|---------------|
| Received | : | 9 Januari2019 |
| Reviewed | : | 9 Januari2019 |
| Accepted | : | 13 March2019  |

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### ***Suggestion for the Citation and Bibliography***

*Citation in text:*

Adetuyi (2019) or (Adetuyi, 2019)

*Bibliography:*

Adetuyi, C. A. (2019). Relevance of Bilingualism in Adult Learners' English Language Development in South-West Nigeria. *Journal of English Education*, 4(1), 16-23. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31327/jee.v4i1.888>

### **Abstract**

The general English studies was introduced as a compulsory course for sandwich learners of colleges of education with a view to allowing them attain proficiency in English. Despite the measure, it seems attainment of proficiency is a mirage. Unattainment of English proficiency in sandwich program has been ascribed to less satisfactory teaching skill embracing language competence and pedagogy. However, there has been a dearth of studies on the teaching method of facilitators of the course. This paper therefore, has a focus on the relevance of bilingualism in English Language development in the sandwich centers. Pretest and posttest control group as quasi-experimental design with 3X2X2 factorial matrix was adopted for the study. Data were analyzed using analysis of covariance and multiple classification analysis. Bilingual method of teaching was ascertained as having an upper hand over Direct and conventional method with a mean score of 67.54. Bilingualism therefore proved relevant to the teaching of General English Studies to the Adult learners. The paper concludes that facilitators should recognize the learners' mother tongue in the learning of English. This would stimulate learners' interest, accelerate their understanding, and ensure effective class-contact needed in adult education teaching-learning process.

**Keywords:** bilingualism, sandwich, adult learners, proficiency, communication

## A. Introduction

### 1. Background of the Study

In spite of the second language status of English to many countries, it has attained a global status that other languages do not have. It is an international language for gaining access to science and technology and international relations. Widdowson (2000) observes that English language appears practically everywhere because of its relevance and also a subject that features in the school curriculum in most parts of the world. Though Elugbe (1990) describes it as a minority language in Nigeria, used in varying degrees of intelligibility by just about 10% of the population, Adeniran (2005) says it is a blessing of multilingualism in Nigeria. In spite of the multilingual situation in Nigeria, English Language has succeeded in attaining a comfortable dominance in the nation's speech community due to the important functions ascribed to it. Its utilitarian role in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge from the primary, through the tertiary levels of education in Nigeria makes it an important determinant of students' academic success. Jegede (1989) and Ogunsiji (2001) and past researches also attested to the importance of English Language as the lifeblood of the whole educational system in Nigeria presently.

The inclusion of English students in the curriculum of Nigeria colleges of Education at the sandwich level stemmed from the need to produce better serving teachers at both the primary and secondary school levels NCCE (1993). The course otherwise tagged 'Language and communication' is designed and taught to equip the students in terms of communicative competence and skills basic to the target language. It is therefore made compulsory course for the students (Part-time of Full-time) without which they cannot obtain the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE).

It is also noteworthy that the poor performance of students and the hue and cry about the fallen standard of education, measured by the performance in English in the West African School Certificate Examination eventually led to the introduction of the formal instruction in the English Language tagged General Studies in English (GSE) or Use of English (UOE) or Language and Communications as the case may be Onukaogu (1994) and Kolawole (1998). It is the only course that emphasizes the academic development of the students in their expressions in writing, reading, and speaking. It is a course designed for the adult learners to perform better in their course and their chosen career of teaching while on course as well as thereafter. It is, however, unfortunate that the inclusion of General English Studies in the curriculum of the colleges of Education especially those on sandwich program has not been justified due to the deficiencies observed among the adult of non-native users and learners on course. It is, therefore, the belief of the researcher that the facilitator who is at the middle of the learning process is a determinant of the standard of the general English studies in the standard program meant for the adult learners. The methods used may not be good enough for the effective realization of the goals set for the course. The facilitator of the course should bear it in mind that its introduction indicates the provision of English Language for Academic purpose (EAP) to expose the adult learners to written forms and proficiency in the language. It is an attempt to reduce the linguistic problems of the adult students coming from secondary school to higher institutions, for them to be able to cope with the academic demands thrust at them. Of important note is the consideration of the language background of the adult learners in attempt to make an academic language development of the pre-service teachers. There is the assumption that competence in the second language literacy is more easily acquired if the student is already literate in his/her native language. It is, therefore, the focus of this paper is to examine the relevance of Bilingualism to the academic language development of the adult learners who registered for the sandwich N C E course.

According to Hammers & Blanc (2000), bilingualism is referred to as a multi-dimensional continuum. He insisted that the fundamental focus on defining the concept should not only be on the linguistic dimension but also contemplate the other aspects, namely, psychological and sociocultural factors. In his psycholinguistic view of bilingualism identifies two types of bilingualism viz (i) co-ordinate bilingualism and (ii) compound bilinguals. Co-ordinate Bilingual situation involves the independent functioning of two languages expressing two distinct background and ways of life. A Bilingual person of this type is one who has learnt each of his two languages at different times and/or in different environment and presumed to have distinct referent for words in each language. A compound Bilingual would have each same referent for the words, one in

each language. If one examines the circumstance and contexts in which the mother tongue and English are learnt and used in Nigeria, one would be tempted to characterize Nigerian Bilinguals as Co-ordinate bilinguals. This is because in coordinate bilingualism, there is always a dominant language, which is the language in which the bilingual is more competent. In Nigerian situation, English, as buttressed by Elugbe (1990), is the dominant language due to its importance in the country. Code switching and code mixing therefore characterize our language use in Nigeria. Therefore, the adoption of bilingual method of teaching alongside the direct and conventional methods should be examined on the performance of the adult learner in General English studies in selected sandwich centers.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The poor performance of Nigerian students in English Language in West African senior school certificate examination at the ordinary level led to the eventual introduction of General English Studies as a compulsory course in the curriculum of the Colleges of Education (both fulltime and sandwich). Banjo (1993) revealed that, the difference between the expected and observed learning achievement is traced to the teaching strategies adopted by the facilitator, among other reasons.

The deteriorating performance in the target language by the adult learners has been ascribed to factors of andragogy. The method adopted by the facilitator has been considered less satisfactory. It is also observed that lecturers adopt any method they like, not minding its appropriateness to the learning situation.

This study, therefore, focuses on an examination of the relevance of Bilingual method of teaching alongside Direct method, the duo of which consider the possible mother tongue factor and interference associated with code mixing and code switching.

## **3. Hypotheses**

The following Null hypothesis were generated and tested at the .05 level of significance for the purpose of this study.

- H0<sub>1</sub> There was no significant effect of treatment on the learners' effect performance in English Studies.
- H0<sub>2</sub> There was no significant effect of Gender on the learners' performance in English Studies
- H0<sub>3</sub> There was no significant effect of ability on the learners' performance in English studies
- H0<sub>4</sub> There was no significant interaction effect of treatment, ability & gender on the learners' performance in English Studies

## **B. Methodology**

A quasi experimental pre, post-test with non-randomized control design was adopted for the study in the intact classes of groups used. It was a 3x2x2 factorial design with the adoption of teaching methods at the three levels (Bilingual, Direct and Conventional methods), gender at two levels (male and female).

### **1. Population and Sample**

The target population for the study comprised students who registered for General English Studies of the College of Education sandwich program in the selected south western states comprising Ekiti, Osun and Oyo. Based on Judgmental Sampling procedure, the participants were selected from Osun State College of Education, Ilesa (120 participants), Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo (Urban Day Grammar School Ibadan Centre) (220 participants), and College of Education Ikere Ekiti (Aramoko Centre), (170 participants). Total subjects of five hundred and ten (510) were used in their intact classes.

### **2. Data collection**

Data for this study was collected through learners' Pre and Post Achievement Tests. The instrument comprised a 60-item achievement test in the General English studies based on the instructional program of this study. The final form of the 60-item instrument measuring the

language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) was used for the study. The tests were administered simultaneously in the three centers twice; first, as a pre-test and second, as a post-test. The pre-test was meant to measure the ability or entry behavior of the learners before the commencement of the treatment, while the post-test was to determine the effectiveness of each instructional method used in teaching the learners in their intact classes. The experimental treatment lasted eight weekends of two lecture-contacts for 3 hours per week (Friday and Saturdays). There were two experimental groups with different instructional methods and a control group. Osun College of Education, Ilesa was allotted the Direct Instructional method which involves teaching English in English Language without deviation into any other language. Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo was allotted the Bilingual method of teaching which involves Code-mixing and Code switching between English Language and the mother tongue, College of Education, Ikere Ekiti was used as the Control Group (Conventional Instructional Method). This to a great extent eliminated interactive effect by the participants. The lecturers of each treatment group were trained in the first two weeks on the instructional methods used in their groups. Instruments used included General English studies Ability Test Scale (GESATS) (Pre-Test), General English Studies Achievement Test (GESAT)(Post-Test), General English Studies Teaching Observation (GESTO) (While teaching was on), and Teaching Methods Assessment Scale (TMAS) After the Class contact.

### 3. Instruments validity

In ascertaining the context validity and reliability of the instrument, experts in language teaching and evaluation were consulted for its assessment. The corrections and suggestions were effected for the adequacy of the 60 items.

However, to ascertain the reliability of the instruments, the General English Studies Ability Test (GESAT) was tested a sample of fifty learners of students of Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun (Ikire Centre) in their intact class. The Cronbach alpha was computed after pilot testing and the result showed a value of 0.68. This index showed evidence of internal consistency and reliability of the instrument. The instrument was therefore considered appropriate to be administered for the purpose of the study.

### C. Findings

The data collected in the study was processed using the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) with pre-test score as covariate. The Factorial analysis was used to determine difference in performance of the sexes within groups and across the groups to see whether one method favors more than the other. Multiple Classification analysis was also used due to the use of intact classes which involve the adoption of multiple test procedure.

The presentation of results is therefore tailored towards the hypothesis raised in the order in which they were tested. The interpretation of the result is also given stating whether the hypothesis was upheld or not at the .05 level of significance. The result of the first hypothesis is as follows.

H0<sub>1</sub>: Effect of Treatments on the Learners' Achievement

**Table 1. Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) of the Post-test Scores according to Treatments**

| Grand < Mean - 62.18   |     |            |      |            |     |
|------------------------|-----|------------|------|------------|-----|
| Variable + Category    | N   | Unadjusted |      | Unadjusted |     |
|                        |     | Dev'n      | Eta  | Dev'n      | Eta |
| Treatment Group        |     |            |      |            |     |
| 1. Direct method       | 120 | -2.07      |      | -2.56      |     |
| 2. Conventional method | 170 | -5.48      |      | -5.42      |     |
| 3. Bilingual method    | 220 | 5.36       | .57  | 5.59       | .58 |
| Multiple R squared     |     |            | .406 | Multiple R |     |

The MCA table showed Direct Method has a mean of 60.11, Conventional Method had a mean of 56.70 while the Bilingual method of mean of 67.54.

The results of the Multiple Classification analysis that was done to ascertain the relative effectiveness of each of the treatments further showed that Bilingual instructional method is the most effective for enhancing learners' achievement with a mean score of 67.54. This is followed by Direct method ( $x = 60.14$ ) while convention method learner recorded the lowest mean score ( $x = 56.70$ ) in their achievement in the General English Studies. In other words, the adult learners on sandwich NCE course taught with the Bilingual method performed much better than those taught with the Direct method and those used in the control group respectively. From this result, we can rightly conclude that there is substance in the postulation of the linguists who are "apostles" of Bilingualism fighting tooth and nail to re-establish the Bilingual method towards an effective teaching of the target or foreign language.

The positive transfer of the structures of the native language of the adult learners during the class contact can be explained for the victory of the method over the Direct method. The Bilingual method entails explanation of the content of the topic in English and then translation and explanation in the learners' local language with the devices of code-switching and code mixing.

Though Direct method may be a nod in learning of a target or second language such as English because of the belief that "we learn a language by speaking and writing such language". It is, however, important to consider some obstacles or foreign language. These learners are on course for additional qualification or to make for their academic loss in secondary schools. Majority of them are married men women who could not concentrate easily except you teach them at their social level. The result of this study thus showed that the Direct method has also been proved to be an effective teaching approach, but teaching-learning process of the General English Studies to the adult learners of the sandwich program of the Colleges of Education. Though there may be degree or extent of effectiveness of the method in question, the fact remains that all the treatments are relevant to both the facilitators and learners.

#### ***Effect of gender on learners' achievement***

H<sub>02</sub> : There is no significant main effect of gender on the learners' achievement in the use of English.

**Table 2. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) Table Showing the Effect of Gender on Learners' Achievement**

| Source       | Sum       | Df  | Mean     | F      | Sig. | Remark   |
|--------------|-----------|-----|----------|--------|------|----------|
| Covariates   | 2399.988  | 1   | 2399.988 | 35.282 | .000 |          |
| Pretest      | 2399.988  | 1   | 2399.988 | 35.282 | .000 |          |
| Main Effects | 103.120   | 1   | 103.120  | 1.516  | .219 |          |
| Sex          | 103.120   | 1   | 103.120  | 1.516  | .219 | Not Sig. |
| Explained    | 2503.108  | 2   | 1251.554 | 18.399 | .000 |          |
| Residual     | 34487.655 | 507 | 68.023   |        |      |          |
| Total        | 36990.763 | 509 | 72.673   |        |      |          |

The table 2 above showed that there was no significant main effect of gender on learner's achievement. There was however a significant interaction effects of the pre-post achievement scores between the male and female respondents ( $F(2,507)=1.516$ ,  $P<.05$ ) as the table 3 shows below.

**Table 3. The Pre-post Achievement Scores**

| Grand < Mean = 62.18                    |     |            |     |            |     |
|-----------------------------------------|-----|------------|-----|------------|-----|
| Variable + Category                     | N   | Unadjusted |     | Unadjusted |     |
|                                         |     | Dev'n      | Fta | Dev'n      | Fta |
| Treatment group                         |     |            |     |            |     |
| 1. Male                                 | 170 | -51        |     | -64        |     |
| 2. Female                               | 340 | -25        |     | -32        |     |
|                                         |     |            | .04 |            | .05 |
| Multiple R-squared .068 Multiple R .260 |     |            |     |            |     |

#### D. Discussion

According to the current study, one of the intervening variables considered relevant was gender. Consequently, it was revealed that gender as a variable did not show any significant relationship to learners' achievement in the Use of English. The mean achievement score of male learners was (61.67) while female recorded ( $x = 62.43$ ). Both male and female learners in this study are adults with all the associated characteristics of adults but could not show any significant difference in their performance.

This result is contrary to the work of Adetuyi (2012) which established that girls and women tend to perform better than boys and men in language use. However, the result is in consonance with Okediran (1988) and Akinleye (1988), who reported that achievement in Yoruba reading and Economics respectively is not gender sensitive. Findings about sex differences in language achievement are not therefore, conclusive in favor of students as evident in the above research findings.

The most important variable in the learning of the General English Studies in tertiary institution such as the NCE sandwich is the method of instruction. (Adetuyi 2010) Method of instruction would definitely determine the achievement of these adult learners in the General English Studies.

H<sub>03</sub> : There is no significant main effect of ability on the learners achievement in the Use of English.

**Table 4. Multiple classification Analysis (MCA) of post-test scores according to Ability**

| GRAND < MEAN = 62.18 |      |            |     |            |     |
|----------------------|------|------------|-----|------------|-----|
| Variable + Category  | N    | Unadjusted |     | Unadjusted |     |
|                      |      | Dev'n      | Fta | Dev'n      | Fta |
| Treatment Group      |      |            |     |            |     |
| 1. Low ability       | 243  | -72        |     | 1.17       |     |
| 2. High ability      | 267  | .65        |     | -1.06      |     |
|                      |      |            | .08 |            | .13 |
| Multiple R squared   | .75  |            |     |            |     |
| Multiple R           | .274 |            |     |            |     |

The above MCA table showed the difference between the mean scores of learner with low ability and those with high ability. Those with low ability had ( $x = 61.46$ ) while those with high ability had ( $x = 62.83$ ).

H<sub>04</sub> : The MCA post hoc test showed an interactive effect of the independent and intervening variables on learners' achievement.

Hypotheses Four is therefore rejected. This is contrary to Iyagba (1992) that proved the 3-way interaction of treatment, sex and ability non-significant. It however, supported

Akinleye (1988) findings of the significant interactive effect of instructional methods and gender on learner's performance.

The findings in this study show that the experimental groups performed better than the control group. There are significant differences between and within the experimental groups too. The result could be an indication that the Bilingual and Direct instructional method adopted in the experimental groups have differential facilitative effects on learners' achievement than the normal conventional mode of instruction. The interaction of the treatments, sex and ability would definitely produce positive effects on the learners' achievement in the General English Studies. It is however noteworthy in this study that the facilitator does not only communicate knowledge but stimulates knowledge to produce needed skills in the General English Studies at the NCE level.

## E. Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to find out the relevance of Bilingualism in Learners' Achievement in the General English Studies at the College of Education (Sandwich) level in Nigeria. The two experimental groups out-performed the control group on all the measures, the Bilingual instructional method is the most facilitative on all the measures, followed by the Direct method and lastly the control, the high ability learners obtained higher relative percentage gain in achievement while the low ability learners obtained the lower relative percentage gain, there is no significant gender difference in the learners' achievement in the Use of English after treatment.

There is a significant difference in the learners' performance at the pretest and post-test. This can be ascribed to the upper hand of the experimental groups over the control group. This study indicates that Bilingual Instructional Method is more suitable to cater for adult learners in the colleges of Education program of the General English Studies. Obameata's (1980) findings even show that learners carry out mental translation of concepts presented in a foreign language to their own mother-tongue in order to gain sufficient meaning of concepts being presented. It is therefore necessary to familiarize the teachers of the Use of English with the operations of Bilingual Instructional method against the set objectives of the language in question.

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