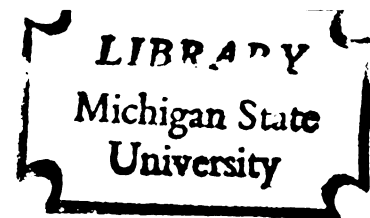IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
READING SKILLS OF NIGERIAN
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
WILLIAM AUSTIN COWLEY
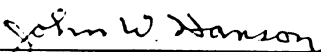1972

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IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING SKILLS OF
NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

presented by

William Austin Cowley

has been accepted towards fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING SKILLS OF
NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

By

William Austin Cowley

There is a long-standing relationship between the English language and that part of Africa which includes present-day Nigeria. As Nigeria moved toward independence, English served both as a unifying factor among the scores of language groups which would compose the new nation and as a common means of communication between Nigeria and the British. Though one of Nigeria's indigenous languages might have been selected as the national language, the liabilities attendant upon such a selection have, for the present, appeared to outweigh the assets. While English also has certain liabilities as a national language for Nigeria, it provides several significant assets. These assets together with the evolution of historical circumstances have placed English in the vital role of a national language.

In order for the English language to be the most effective servant possible for Nigeria and Nigerians, the teaching of English must be carefully planned and carried

out at each level of education. There are, however, a number of problems—some cultural, some personnel, some financial, some inherent in the educational system—which hinder what is generally considered to be good teaching of English as a second language.

The reading of English is of particular importance in Nigerian schools, especially at the secondary and post-secondary levels. A weak oral English foundation combined with inadequate reading skills handicaps many of Nigeria's students. This is particularly unfortunate when one considers that the syllabus and examination oriented curriculum of the secondary school demands extensive reading by these students. Consequently, students must attempt an overwhelming task for which they are poorly prepared. As a result, many read very slowly with low levels of comprehension. They perpetually struggle with material too difficult for them and are rarely able to read for pleasure. Reading-related study skills are similarly weak and underdeveloped.

In an effort to identify some of the components of reading skills development most in need of attention in the Nigerian secondary school, a search was made of relevant materials both in the literature of teaching English as a second language and of teaching reading. The resultant compilation of skills is analyzed and commented upon

with reference to the level of development of these skills, their applicability, and particular problems encountered in their acquisition in the Nigerian school setting.

Proposed solutions are hindered by the same problems which have hindered the teaching of English and the teaching of reading heretofore. Among these are attitudinal factors, the lack of research data, and limited funds, personnel, and materials. Proposals must, therefore, be realistic in terms of what can be accomplished as well as idealistic in terms of what ought to be done.

Suggestions are given which have to do with the need for increased recognition of the importance of English in Nigeria. The setting of realistic goals in the teaching of English suggests a continued emphasis on oral English but a recognition of the fact that non-standard English may constitute one dialect among several which students use. The teaching of reading must, therefore, take these factors into consideration. A singularly key factor to the success of any proposal is the provision of capable teachers.

The identification of problems in the second and third chapters of this study and the compilation and discussion of reading skills in the fourth chapter provide information to assist those who are qualified and empowered to institute some of the proposals. Such

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proposals can enhance the reading abilities of Nigerian secondary school students.

IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING SKILLS OF

NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

By

William Austin Cowley

A THESIS

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CHAPTER I

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

<u>Brief Historical Background</u>

The English language--bane and blessing--has been
praised and cursed, admired and ignored, emulated and mu-
tilated by generations of Nigeria's traders, colonists and
servants, teachers and pupils, nation-builders and men on
the street. With the coming of independence, English un-
obtrusively but confidently moved into position as Nige-
ria's national language and appears ensconced there for
the foreseeable future. There are now two important ques-
tions. What can be done with English to make it most useful
to Nigeria and Nigerians? What can and should education do
to help achieve this goal?

<u>Early contacts</u>

It is impossible to establish the date on which
the first contact between the English language and West
Africa and Nigeria was made. Events of the period lead
to interesting conjecture and there is some evidence
which mentions the use of English coincidental to these
events and other activities. One early record indicates
that West Africans, more specifically from what is

1

present-day Ghana, had been taken to England as early as 1554 that they might be taught English in order to serve the British as interpreters in trading enterprises along the Guinea Coast.[1]

Later, as the slave trade increased along the West African Coast, there are indications of a continuing practice of sending Africans from Old Calabar (present Nigeria) to England to learn the English language and other skills such as bookkeeping which would be useful both to the Africans and to the British traders in conducting commercial and slave trade in the area. There are also historical records showing that some of those who had been to England later established classes or little schools in Old Calabar to teach fellow Africans those things which had been learned while overseas.[2] It is quite possible, indeed, most probable, that similar "scholarships" for overseas study in England were offered to individuals, leading to work as interpreters and the subsequent founding of little "English language institutes" in such places as Port Harcourt, Warri, Lagos, and Badagry--all known as centers of mercantile and slave-trading activity in what was later to become Nigeria.

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[1]John Spencer, "West Africa and the English Language," in The English Language in West Africa, ed. by John Spencer (London: Longmans, 1971), pp. 8-10.

[2]Ibid., p. 12.

British colonial influence

Continued British involvement in trade in Nigeria led eventually to an extension of British administrative influence there and subsequent colonial status for Nigeria. In the early nineteenth century, perhaps encouraged by the support and safety of British trade and administration, perhaps stimulated by stirrings of conscience over England's involvement in the slave trade, British missionaries began work in Nigeria. A little later in that same century American missionaries with motives and stimuli similar to those of their British counterparts began work there.[3]

Increased British involvement signalled increased need for English language on the part of indigenous peoples. There are those who say that British administrators were too busy, lazy, or indifferent to learn Nigerian languages. Therefore, the onus for communication fell on the peoples themselves. While this may have been true in some cases, the British were faced, nevertheless, with trying to learn a multitude of languages while Nigerians were faced with only one--English. Many of the British made commendable efforts to learn the languages. It is a

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[3]L. F. Brosnahan, "Historical Cases of Language Imposition," in Language in Africa, ed. by John Spencer (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), p. 23; J. F. Ade Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 13; B. Onyerisara Ukeje, Education for Social Reconstruction (Lagos: Macmillan & Co. (Nigeria) Ltd., 1966), pp. 54-56.

matter of record that the expatriate staff of the adminis-
trative service and many commercial firms often "were
given financial and professional incentives to learn the
vernacular of their area."[4] It is, nevertheless, true that
the major portion of language learning became the respon-
sibility and desire of ambitious Nigerians.

Early Educational Implications

Goals

Missionary activity traditionally has involved
itself with education. This proved to be true in Nigeria
as well. Missionaries assumed the role of teachers of
English, as well as other subjects, usually beginning with
a few pupils in their homes.[5]

In those days the goals of English teaching were
to train clerks to carry on routine work in administrative
offices, Christians to read the Bible, and assistants and
servants of various sorts to be of help in the home,
office, church, and, later, school. Probably not a lot
of attention was given to the degree of correctness of the

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[4]John N. Paden, "Language Problems of National In-
tegration in Nigeria: The Special Position of Hausa," in
Language Problems of Developing Nations, ed. by Joshua
Fishman, Charles A. Ferguson and Jyotirindra Das Gupta
(New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968). p. 202

[5]E. A. Ayandele, "The Coming of Western Education
to Africa," West African Journal of Education, XV (Febru-
ary, 1971), pp. 22-23; David B. Abernethy, The Political
Dilemma of Popular Education: An African Case (Stanford,
California: Stanford University Press, 1969), pp. 31-35.

language learned according to comments of that day.[6] The

urgent needs were simple and direct communication and the

quickest way to achieve it. There are few indications of

early planning for the future of English in Nigeria. All

the while, however, its influence was growing. Cottage

efforts at teaching evolved into simple schools and later

into more elaborate, voluntary agency, and then government-

planned, -supervised, and -supported educational efforts.

All these involved teaching English--sometimes as a subject

in the school, sometimes also as the medium of instruction.

Planning

By the time of the earliest definite planning for

Nigeria's future it was already too late to exclude the

English language even if anyone had seriously wanted to.

In fact, the British, in contrast to the French in their

colonial policies, made efforts to encourage and preserve

indigenous languages in the colonies' educational systems.[7]

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[6]Spencer, "West Africa and the English Language,"
op. cit., p. 13; Elizabeth Tonkin, "Some Coastal Pidgins
of West Africa," in Social Anthropology and Language, ed.
by Edwin Ardener (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971),
p. 144.

[7]For discussion of French policies and a compari-
son of French and British policies see Pierre Alexandre,
"Some Linguistic Problems of Nation-Building in Negro
Africa," in Fishman, Ferguson and Das Gupta, op. cit.,
pp. 119-121; Jerry B. Bolibaugh and Paul Hanna, Education
as an Instrument of National Policy in Selected Newly
Developing Nations. Phase 2: French Educational Strate-
gies for Sub-Saharan Africa: Their Intent, Derivation,
and Development (Stanford, California: Comparative

Interestingly enough, these and other attempts to adapt
educational plans to local needs and to develop a more
truly functional Nigerian system of education often met
with skepticism and opposition on the part of Nigerians
themselves who felt the British administrators were trying
to "water down" the education they proposed to offer Ni-
gerians.[8] It was felt that what was good enough for the
administrators should not be thought of as "too good" for
the rising nationalists. Furthermore, when Nigerians en-
visioned themselves as one day occupying the positions
which the British already occupied, certainly they ex-
pected their qualifications to be the same as those of
the British.[9]

In the early days of educational planning, evi-
dently Nigerians and British alike supported a continuing
policy of learning English. While the British themselves
raised questions about the importance of indigenous lan-
guages in education in their planning in the 1920s, it was

Education Center, 1964), pp. 19-21, 36, 60; Gerard Lucas
and Paul Hanna, Education as an Instrument of National
Policy in Selected Newly Developing Nations. Phase 3:
Formal Education in the Congo-Brazzaville: A Study of
Educational Policy and Practice (Stanford, California:
Comparative Education Center, 1964), pp. 42, 58-59, 251.

[8]John Hanson, Imagination and Hallucination in
African Education (East Lansing: Michigan State Univer-
sity, 1965), p. 13.

[9]James S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nation-
alism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958),
pp. 120-121.

not until perhaps thirty years later that some Nigerians
began to wonder whether the English language had become
the servant or master. By that time, however, the lan-
guage had become such an integral part of Nigeria's edu-
cation, commerce, and government, it was too late to
question whether English should remain. It was rather
firmly rooted and had, in many cases, served the Nigerians
and their nationalistic ambitions well by helping to unify
diverse peoples and prepare them to govern themselves.

Considerations for a National Language

It has been said that the British did such a good
job propagating their language that they defeated them-
selves in West Africa.[10] The British have never been
possessive concerning the English language. Neverthe-
less, it is interesting that the language which they had
no choice but to impose on the colonies, with or without
permission, became a means of communication and unifica-
tion which formed a cohesive force among peoples from an
estimated two hundred different language backgrounds. It
enabled Nigerians to debate the British in English and
win for themselves a peaceful independence.[11]

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[10]L. A. Boadi, "Education and the Role of English
in Ghana," in The English Language in West Africa, ed. by
Spencer, op. cit., p. 51.

[11]Brosnahan, op. cit., p. 23.

. . . ironically, their eloquence and debating powers
could find expression in no other medium than one of
the legacies of colonialism, the English language--not
because they were not competent in the use of their
own first languages but because they had to reach the
largest possible number of people within the shortest
possible time and at the least expense.[12]

And, while it is the political prerogative of a nation to
say what its national language will be, for the new nation
of Nigeria to have chosen other than English could easily
have raised more serious problems, more difficult to solve.[13]

An indigenous language

Which of many?--Perhaps the first criterion for a
national language is that it be "national". English can-
not meet this basic requirement for Nigeria and it is an
understandable point of pride that many Nigerians prefer
an indigenous language as the national language. But
which indigenous language when there are perhaps two hun-
dred to choose from? Tai Solarin undoubtedly expressed
the feelings of many of his fellow countrymen when he
wrote, "Whatever Nigerian language we choose is, psycho-
logically, a more acceptable language than any foreign
language."[14]

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[12]Boadi, op. cit., p. 50.

[13]Alexandre, op. cit., p. 123.

[14]Ali A. Mazrui, "Islam and the English Language
in East and West Africa," in Language Use and Social Change,
ed. by W. H. Whiteley (London: Oxford University Press,
1971), p. 189.

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Political liabilities.--A natural choice would be
one of the languages with a viable orthography and a fair
amount of literature. With the choice limited by these re-
quirements the languages which would become the strongest
contenders represent groups which are highly competitive
ethnically, geographically, and religiously. The choice
of the language of one of these groups could be politically
disastrous.[15] Aside from the ill-will which mere choice
could generate, having one of the indigenous languages as
the national language could lead to considerable additional
trouble.

Those whose mother tongue might be chosen would
have an automatic advantage over fellow-citizens and
could easily abuse the advantage by attributing to or
assuming for themselves intellectual and moral superi-
ority, by reason of their language having been chosen,
or expose themselves to frequent suspicion and criticism.
Native speakers of the chosen language could command
priority in consideration for jobs. Their children could
benefit from education in their mother tongue, whereas
all others would be learning a second language. Such a
combination of conditions does not make for a happy or

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[15]Frederick A. O. Schwarz, Jr., Nigeria: The
Tribes, The Nation or The Race--The Politics of Indepen-
dence (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts In-
stitute of Technology Press, 1965), pp. 41-43; Eugene A.
Nida and William L. Wonderly, "Communication Roles of
Languages in Multilingual Societies," in Whiteley, op.
cit., p. 65.

unified nation.[16]

Viewed from another perspective, there is no indigenous language or language group to which Nigeria, as a nation, is especially indebted either emotionally or sentimentally. "No one single Nigerian language commands the admiration of /the speakers of/ the others."[17] None has contributed to nation-building an unusual share of commonly recognized national heroes; none has produced truly national songs or provided universally accepted, long-standing leadership which would serve to help make its language a natural choice for the national language.[18]

By contrast, in 1967, Tanzania declared Swahili an official language. While an indigenous language, Swahili does not have offensive tribal and ethnic connotations. In some cases, it has been a prestige language. The fact that about ninety per cent of the people have had access to Swahili and use it with varying degrees of fluency is

[16]G. E. Perren, "Education Through a Second Language: An African Dilemma," in Education in Africa: Research and Action, ed. by Richard Jolly (Nairobi, Kenya: East African Publishing House, 1969), pp. 199-200.

[17]J. O. Enenmoh, "Language Problems in Nigeria with Particular Reference to the Teaching of English in Primary and Secondary Schools--A Memorandum," in English Language Teaching in Nigeria, ed. by Robert Jacobs (Mimeographed supplement to special study report) (December, 1966), p. 147.

[18]Joshua A. Fishman, "Nationality-Nationalism and Nation-Nationism," in Fishman, Ferguson, and Das Gupta, op. cit., p. 46 comments on this in general terms.

in its favor. At present it is designated the language
of instruction in all primary schools but the government
has as its goal the use of Swahili in all levels of edu-
cation including the university.

In implementing government policy, Tanzania is
faced with the problem of the need for an international
language and the lack of literature in the national lan-
guage. English continues to serve as a supplementary
national language.[19] Nevertheless, the government is
determined in its policy, although, initially, "the deci-
sion to make Swahili the national language of Tanzania
was more a decision of intention than of fulfillment."[20]

Literary liabilities.--When there is no major
indigenous language which can rise up as a natural and
largely unchallenged national language, it is sometimes
possible to choose a minority language relatively free
of undesirable connotations. Unfortunately, such minority
languages have relatively little written literary tradi-
tion and cannot effectively bear the burden or perform
the responsibilities of a national language. They do not
offer the people of the nation much scope for development

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[19]Lyndon Harries, "Swahili in Modern East Africa,"
in Fishman, Ferguson and Das Gupta, op. cit., pp. 415-
429, passim; M. H. Abdulaziz, "Tanzania's National Lan-
guage Policy and the Rise of Swahili Political Culture,"
in Whiteley, op. cit., pp. 160-176, passim.

[20]Harries, op. cit., p. 419.

as their horizons are necessarily limited and free
communication is confined to the bounds of the group for
whom the language is indigenous. To extend the influence
and usefulness of a minority language, massive programs
of education would be needed requiring thousands of re-
trained teachers and quantities of materials.

If an indigenous language is chosen as a national
language, many citizens will still find it necessary to
learn an additional international language for purposes
of trade, many sectors of education, and diplomacy. How
much more effective and economical it is if the national
language is already an international language thereby
eliminating one step from the total process of communi-
cation.

English

Assets.--(1) International prominence. Since
English apparently is Nigeria's national language--whether
by choice, acceptance (or lack of rejection), or inheri-
tance from England--it offers several assets. First,
there are a certain number of advantages which accrue to
users of English because of its status as an international
language. French notwithstanding, a former American As-
sistant Secretary of State has stated that "most people
regard English . . . as the language of advancement."[21]

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[21]Francis J. Colligan and Walter Johnson, "English

Approximately two-thirds of the member nations of the United Nations receive transcripts of proceedings in English.[22] English has been described as "the most common 'international' language--spoken by more people and used as a second language by more countries than is the case with any other language used outside national boundaries,"[23] so established because of its vast learning resources.[24]

(2) Extensive literature. Scientifically, the world is dependent on English. The "bulk of scientific writing is first published in English,"[25] and

> more scientific material is translated into English than into any other language.
> Any scientist today who does not have a working knowledge of English is cut off from half or more of the literature in his field.[26]

The Encyclopedia of Education calls attention to the fact that "English is learned at some level of the educational systems of nearly every country in the world,

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Language Teaching and Fulbright Grants," International Educational and Cultural Exchange (Summer, 1965), p. 26.

[22]Ibid., p. 27.

[23]Robert Jacobs, ed., English Language Teaching in Nigeria (Lagos, Nigeria, 1966) (Mimeographed), p. 1.

[24]J. C. Rudd, "A New Approach to Reading Efficiency," English Language Teaching, XXIII (May, 1969), p. 233.

[25]V. E. Leichty, "Education in South America," International Educational and Cultural Exchange (Spring, 1968), p. 33

[26]Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 35, 38.

both in highly developed countries and in those in the process of development."[27] The same work summarizes the international importance of English as follows,

> Besides serving the infinite needs of its native speakers, English is a language in which some of the most important works in science, technology, and other fields are being produced, and not always by native speakers. It is widely used for such purposes as meteorological and airport communications, international conferences, and the dissemination of information over the radio and television networks of many nations. It is a language of wider communication for a number of developing countries, especially former British colonies. Many of these countries have multi-lingual populations and need a language for internal communication in such matters as government, commerce, industry, law, and education, as well as for international communication and for access to the scientific and technological developments in the West.[28]

(3) Politically expedient--tribally neutral. In the Nigerian context, English serves other purposes which are more distinctive and often peculiarly Nigerian. For example, in the days of preparation for independence the English language served as a unifying force in that it provided something in common shared by the trained leaders of all groups in Nigeria. Furthermore, the fact that it was also shared with the colonial administration lessened the foreignness of the latter and reduced the distance between the two parties. The ease and speed of turn-over and

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[27]Sirarpi Ohannessian, "English for Speakers of Other Languages," in The Encyclopedia of Education, 1971, III, p. 302.

[28]Ibid., p. 303.

take-over were, no doubt, greatly augmented by the fact
that both sets of participants in the transaction had
been negotiating in the same language.

The report of a special study on English language
teaching in Nigeria co-sponsored by the Nigerian National
Universities Commission and the Federal Ministry of Edu-
cation of Nigeria calls attention to the extensive use
Nigeria has made of English and to the fact that with
careful planning English is in an unusual position to
meet even more of Nigeria's needs.[29] Although some zealous
nationalists feel Nigerian purposes can hardly be served
by a non-Nigerian language, English has provided Nigeria
with a national language that is tribally neutral--one
which can cross various ethnic boundaries and provide a
bond of national unity without putting an indigenous
Nigerian language at an advantage by virtue of its having
been chosen over other Nigerian languages, or at a dis-
advantage by revealing its limitations as a national lan-
guage.

In view of the highly international character of
English, Nigerians may freely use English as a national
language without feeling that they have been disloyal to
Nigeria or that they have denied the value of any Nigerian
language which was not chosen as a national language.

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[29]Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 4, 11.

Nigerian languages are still free to serve their many
local functions which do not require extensive literature
or wide currency. At the same time, English can serve as
the national and international language bearing any criti-
cism which may come without suffering ethnic offense.

English is able to help meet many of Nigeria's needs
in manpower training and human resources development by
providing the tools of learning already available in Eng-
lish, thereby contributing to Nigeria's national growth
and progress. To reconstruct such tools in a Nigerian
language would be a time- and money-consuming task which
Nigeria can hardly afford at this stage of her development.

Nigeria's Parliament has designated English the
country's official language. The fact of Nigeria's ac-
ceptance of the British bequest of the English language
and her provision for the perpetuation and extension of
the uses of English in the nation have further strength-
ened English as the national language. Both Nigerians
and expatriate commentators see the influence and uses of
English as unlikely to diminish in Nigeria and predict
that the Nigerian Government, while trying to sustain
and strengthen vernacular languages, will not do so at
the risk of impeding English.[30] Nevertheless, there are

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[30]Spencer, "West Africa and the English Language,"
op. cit., p. 30; Ayo Bamgbose, "The English Language in
Nigeria," in The English Language in West Africa, op. cit.,
p. 35.

certain charges levelled against English which weaken the contribution it is able to make.

Liabilities.--(1) Linguistic loyalties. English is the mother tongue of none of Nigeria's people,[31] it commands no natural linguistic loyalty. It is a foreign language for all and must be so acquired by almost all who would aspire to its use.[32] However, it offers, equally to all, the same disadvantage of having to be learned outside the home and puts none at a decided advantage. Thus, it serves to keep all ethnic groups in the nation on an equal footing as far as national language is concerned.

(2) Elitism. The charge that the use of English promotes elitism may be a commendation or accusation depending on one's view of elitism. When only five to ten percent of the people (for the most part the more highly educated) are proficient in English, it does constitute a cleavage between the educated and the masses. In most societies where the opportunities for education are limited and the demands for those opportunities are extensive, some sort of elitism is bound to form, encompassing those

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[31]Possible exceptions are children of cross-tribal parentage whose parents compromise and use English rather than one or both of their native languages in the home. Here the children learn English as their "mother tongue."

[32]John Spencer, "Language and Independence," in Language in Africa, ed. by John Spencer (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), p. 34.

who are fortunate enough to be chosen to partake of the opportunities. Since the acquisition of English usually occurs in a formal educational setting, what is seen as a criticism of English might well be a criticism of education whether English is involved or not. If, however, one of the nation's purposes of education is to create an elite leadership, then the fact that education has been successful should not constitute a criticism.

(3) Effect on national cultures. Increased attention to and use of English is also said to be detrimental to indigenous cultures. This is probably true and, if so, is one of the prices which must be paid for modern education and progress. At the same time, most types of non-traditional education serve in varying degrees to alienate the learner from traditional culture. The fact that English is one element of modern education should not subject it to an unfair proportion of criticism for destroying the traditional way of life. Native cultures would be subject to tremendous pressures of change by other forces of modernity even if English were not a factor.

Summary

English cannot satisfy all the desiderata which might exist for an ideal national language for Nigeria. Nevertheless, it has been of great benefit to Nigeria. If,

for reasons indicated and others less obvious, it is not

possible for a vernacular language to serve as the national

language, then Nigerians can recognize and appreciate the

fact that "this colonially imposed language, by a fortunate

chance of history, happens to be one of the most useful of

all languages in the modern world,"[33] and can make their

own carefully considered plans to take from it every pos-

sible advantage that it might offer. The 1962 Interna-

tional Meeting on Second Language Problems noted that

> unless in the developing countries measures are taken
> immediately for the sharp improvement in the teaching
> of second languages, there will, within about 15
> years, be administrative chaos and economic stagnation
> in many of these countries. . . . There is an urgent
> need to improve the institutional base for second lan-
> guage teaching in the developing countries.[34]

Such plans cannot avoid involving formal education.

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[33]Spencer, "West Africa and the English Language,"
op. cit., p. 31.

[34]Jane Alden, "English Language Teaching Abroad,"
International Educational and Cultural Exchange (Spring,
1966), p. 35.

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CHAPTER II

A NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM--

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The fact that English is serving as Nigeria's
official national language implies that careful atten-
tion must be given to the place of English in the na-
tion's educational system and to the effectiveness of
the educational system in developing and utilizing plans
which fully exploit any potential usefulness of English
to the nation. In Nigeria, education, knowledge of Eng-
lish, and social status are often equated.[1] Every care
must be taken then to assure that national values with
reference to the first two, at least, are not permitted
to settle at low levels.

Warning has been given that a country like Nige-
ria is apt to underestimate the contribution which English
can make to her students' general education.[2] Similarly,
aside from the pragmatic and utilitarian functions of

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[1]John Spencer, "West Africa and the English Lan-
guage," in The English Language in West Africa, ed. by
John Spencer (London: Longmans, 1971), pp. 4, 13, 21.

[2]Donald G. Burns, African Education. An Intro-
ductory Survey of Education in Commonwealth Countries
(London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 61.

English for communication, a number of African writers are making creative use of English.[3] The encouragement and development of this trend is also seen as one of the challenges and responsibilities of education.[4]

The basic guidelines set by the National Universities Commission and Federal Ministry of Education special study survey team identify the relationship between English and education in Nigeria.

>   1. English is the language which at present is
> being used as the official medium of communication
> in Nigeria, and it will probably continue to be used
> in this capacity for some time to come.

>   2. As a national language, English must serve
> as the language of government, the language of learn-
> ing, the language of science and technology, the lan-
> guage of business and commerce, the unifying language
> of internal communication, and the language of inter-
> national discourse. In short, the role of communica-
> tion in Nigerian national development (economic,
> social, and political) must be served largely by
> English.

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[3]Frederick A. O. Schwarz, Jr., Nigeria: The Tribes, The Nation or The Race--The Politics of Independence (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1965), p. 45. Some writers and critics question whether true African literature can be written in a non-African language. For a discussion, see Obiajunwa Wali, "The Dead End of African Literature," Transition, Vol. 3 (September, 1963), pp. 13-15; and subsequent letters to the editor, Vol. 3 (November, 1963), pp. 7-9; Vol. 3 (January-February, 1964), pp. 6-10; and Chinua Achebe, "English and the African Writer," Transition, Vol. 4, No. 18 (1965), pp. 27-30.

[4]L. A. Boadi, "Education and the Role of English in Ghana," in The English Language in West Africa, ed. by John Spencer (London: Longmans, 1971), pp. 63-65.

3. In view of the above facts, English should
be taught as effectively as possible. . . .
. . . .

In a learning situation where English is being used
as the medium of instruction, the importance of having
proficiency in English is paramount. Its mastery will
not guarantee scholastic success, but certainly ina-
bility in English can easily lead to failure. Mastery
of the language must extend far beyond the ability to
"absorb" or memorize content printed in English. Asso-
ciative processes, the formation of new concepts,
thinking, planning, creating, and analysis and summary
are just some of the elements of learning which must
be handled in the language--and without the intermedi-
ate step of translation if learning is to be effective
and efficient. Therefore, mastery of the skills of
the language must be much more complete than is the
case in learning a "foreign" language as a supplemen-
tary communication skill.[5]

For education to fulfill all that is expected of

it with reference to the teaching of English is a difficult

task. Problems are inherent in both the educational system

and the teaching of English in Nigeria. Several of these

problems will be briefly surveyed.

General Problems

Vernacular interference

In addition to the charges of fostering elitism

and alienation which have already been mentioned, the

teaching of English faces other problems. A major problem

is native language interference, elements of which are

manifested at all levels of second language learning.

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[5]Robert Jacobs, ed., English Language Teaching
in Nigeria (Lagos, Nigeria, 1966) (Mimeographed), pp. 4,
38.

Although English may actually be a third or fourth language for the learner, the principles of second language teaching and learning still seem to apply.[6]

Interference may be phonological, syntactic, semantic, or sociological in nature. As a matter of principle, features of a language learner's mother tongue intrude upon the second or foreign language during the learning process.[7] Features absent in the second language may be inserted by the learner. Features necessary to the second language but absent in the native language will be omitted. The process of interference causes mispronunciations, improper intonation, misuse of grammatical forms, omission or misplacement of words, and confused or incorrect idioms.

The extent and degree to which interference is controlled or eliminated determines one's fluency and correctness. Since he is normally learning and using the language with others whose patterns of interference are very similar to his own, they will be able to communicate,

[6]D. W. Grieve, "English Language Problems in West African Schools--A Survey," West African Journal of Education, IX (June, 1965), pp. 70. 71-72. Grieve classifies English both as a second language because of its status and utility in the Nigerian community at large, and as a foreign language because it is the language of the school but not of the home or immediate community.

[7]Carlos Alfredo Yorio, "Some Sources of Reading Problems for Foreign-Language Learners," Language Learning, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 107-115.

though in a non-standard dialect. The form of language which they use, however, if mutant and non-standard, will not be readily understood by someone who uses a more standard dialect.

Sociolinguistics

The problems of sociolinguistic interference are receiving considerable attention at the present.[8] Students of this attitudinal phenomenon raise questions which have to do with the level of correctness of English to be insisted upon. It is their contention that interference of various sorts is bound to occur and that it is impossible for a second-language learner to attain native-speaker perfection.[9] Why, therefore, should he strive for that which is unattainable?

A further contention asserts that native-speaker

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[8]Mobolaji A. Adekunle, "Toward a Realistic Approach to Problems of English Instruction in West Africa," English Language Teaching (May, 1970), pp. 269-278; Mobolaji A. Adekunle, Sociolinguistic Problems in English Language Instruction in Nigeria (Paper presented at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, November 18, 1971); Clifford H. Prator,"The British Heresy in TESL," in Language Problems of Developing Nations, ed. by Joshua Fishman, Charles A. Ferguson and Jyotirindra Das Gupta (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968), pp. 459-476; Spencer, op. cit., pp. 1-33; Ayo Bamgbose, "The English Language in Nigeria," in Spencer, op. cit., pp. 35-48; Anthony Kirk-Greene, "The Influence of West African Languages on English," in Spencer, op. cit., pp. 123-143.

[9]This latter point could perhaps be debated by those who know Nigerians who have attained at least near native-speaker perfection.

facility in English is not completely useful to most people in Nigeria and that, in fact, it hinders communication in some cases. A type of English which embodies interference features is more easily spoken by Nigerians and subjects no one to criticism for being snobbish or overly imitative of English speakers. The process of imitation which is essential in developing competent fluency in English is also seen as a degrading exercise which many Nigerians are not willing to engage in.

While sociolinguistic objections are legitimate, they are unfortunate for the learning of English as a second language. They easily provide excuses for students and teachers who wish to do less than their best.[10] One counter-critic has observed that those who speak English "identifiably like Africans do so because of the failure of English teaching not because of its success /in adapting to sociolinguistic demands7."[11]

Whatever allowance might be made for sociolinguistic problems, the question always arises as to how much consideration should be given and how far one can alter standard English and still be considered as using acceptable English. The answers are so subjectively

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[10]Prator, op. cit., p. 474

[11]Peter Strevens, "English in African Education: What Kind of English?" in Education in Africa: Research and Action, ed. by Richard Jolly (Nairobi, Kenya: East African Publishing House, 1969), pp. 195-196.

conditioned that there are as many answers as there are teachers and learners of English. Each one feels free to set his own standards; that his English is as good as anyone else's; that his English is good enough. Prator quotes Bloomfield to the effect that such concessions produce "nobody's language but only a compromise between a foreign speaker's version, and so on, in which each party imperfectly reproduces the other's reproduction."[12]

The goal of the schools should still be standard English as near that of educated and universally intelligible native users as possible. The minimum standard should be that which is internationally usable and intelligible--otherwise English has lost much of its value to Nigeria.

There are many types of English in productive use in the world today, yet, it is difficult to establish how the purposes of English as a second language can be furthered by advocating and condoning adaptation of the language to the point that it is readily intelligible to certain Nigerian users while unintelligible to users of the language from other English-speaking areas of the world. Rather, a system of teaching is desirable in which teachers are able to provide excellent models for students and then sympathetically help students strive for excellence with standard, internationally intelligible English

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[12] Prator, op. cit., p. 465.

as the goal.

Unfortunately, the high standards of this goal may not be realistic and attainable at the present in Nigeria. The school cannot control the type of English that is propagated outside the school. This type of English, nevertheless, has a decided effect upon the pupils.

The best and most productive attitude for schools to take toward the problem is to consider the various non-standard types of English as dialects which are, in themselves, useful to students. The facts that such dialects are used by students and that various elements in society maintain and utilize them serve as indicators that they should be accepted for what they are. School-centered efforts, however intensive, cannot eradicate them. Some of the non-standard varieties of English are themselves products of the users' efforts in certain schools.

The schools are responsible, however, for teaching standard English which will co-exist with non-standard varieties as another dialect with its own times and places of usefulness. This makes teaching of standard English more difficult but may elicit more cooperation on the part of learners.

Teachers can do much to help students foster pride in a job well done. Often teachers are uninformed or un-concerned when students succumb to forces which discourage

their progress in language learning. Such forces portray the learner as becoming too foreign and demand proof that he has not yielded to foreign influences represented, in this case, by the English language. Such proof takes the form of vernacularized English standing as testimony that the individual has not lost his African characteristics.

Those Nigerians who have been able to master English have made the necessary sacrifices, sometimes at the cost of ridicule by their less able friends who try to appear more nationalistic. Their mastery of English gains for them and their country the full benefits of the English language. They appear no less African or Nigerian for having done so. Vernaculars are still theirs for use when necessary and appropriate. Pidgin or even "vernacular English" may be used on certain occasions. These latter styles do not serve as the standard for those who master English. A fully intelligible English is also at their command.

Primary School Problems

Mother tongue or English--subject or medium

At the primary school level where young Nigerians normally have their introduction to English several problems are inherent. The first of these is determining the time when instruction in English should begin. When should English be taught as a subject and when should it be the

medium of instruction?

Psychologists normally agree that a child's intro-
duction to formal schooling should be in his mother tongue.
There is less shock and strangeness attached to the new
learning process. The use of another language, either as
subject or medium, early in life and education is upsetting
to the child. For these reasons it is usually advocated
that children be taught in the mother tongue for the first
two or three years of primary school. After that time
another language may be introduced as a subject with a
gradual change-over to the use of that language as a medium
if this is necessary. This, generally, was the theme of
the Phelps-Stokes Commission report in 1922, the Imperial
Education Conference of 1923, and reports in 1925 and 1927
by the Advisory Committee on Native Education in British
Tropical Dependencies.[13]

Attempts to follow the recommendations of these
conferences created problems almost immediately in Nigerian
primary schools. Considering the vast number of different
mother tongues in Nigeria and the migration of peoples
within Nigeria, it would be physically and financially
impossible to provide early primary school instruction
in the mother tongue for all Nigerian children. It is

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[13]Julian Dakin, Brian Tiffen and H. G. Widdowson,
Language in Education (London: Oxford University Press,
1968), pp. 73-75.

inevitable that quite a large number of children will not have the privilege of being taught in their own languages. The UNESCO Conference on the Use in Education of African Languages in Relation to English in 1952 recognized these problems and acknowledged the fact that there was a need to begin early study of English.

In 1961, the Commonwealth Conference on the Teaching of English as a Second Language was less concerned about the mother tongue and approved the teaching of English as early as possible in the primary school curriculum. Approval was based on the fact that learning English is essential to the child's future progress. Furthermore, early primary years are the most advantageous for learning a new language if it is ideally taught on an oral approach having linguistically sound foundations. Since that time, several Nigerian school systems have instituted early teaching of English.[14] Some have adopted the "Straight for English" approach which allows only minimal use of vernacular languages.

Language learning environment

The English learning environment of the Nigerian primary school pupil is not a congenial one. Parents normally feel a sense of pride that their children are learning English. However, little can be done to offer

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[14]Ibid., pp. 69, 83, 84.

children the encouragement and reinforcement of meaningful experiences in the English language learning process.

Most Nigerian communities provide little, if any, opportunity for the children to practice English in a real-life situation. Those with whom the pupils talk are usually not able to provide examples by which the learner may correct his mistakes.

Although the home and community have few English speakers, they continue to exert full vernacular influence between school hours and during vacation times. These circumstances can almost erase whatever has been achieved in learning English either as a school subject or as the medium of instruction. At times, when a serious student tries to imitate the best English of which he is aware, he may be the subject of ridicule. At that age, children are sensitive to disapproving attitudes which serve to debilitate their English language interests.

Teachers, materials, methods

The use of an oral approach and a linguistically sound foundation in teaching English as a second language to primary school pupils has been mentioned. The conditions often found in primary schools constitute hindrances to the correct learning of English. The recommended approach and foundation assume that teachers are well qualified to teach English and are able to serve as good models

of spoken English. Such conditions are essential in training pupils to hear, distinguish, and imitate correct English speech.

Unfortunately, most Nigerian primary school teachers are poorly qualified.[15] The Jacobs study indicates that seventy-five per cent of Nigeria's 87,000 primary school teachers were unqualified or underqualified as late as 1966.[16]

They have learned English from non-native speakers and are descendants of several generations of teachers who have perpetuated what is sometimes termed "vernacular English". Teaching of this quality, instead of instilling a standard form of English, serves to reinforce linguistic problems which the pupil brings from his own mother tongue to the learning of English. Frequently, teachers do not recognize themselves as inadequate. Others demonstrate an attitude of indifference or contempt for efforts to raise standards. Still others sincerely feel inadequate and make no effort at all to teach

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[15] J. O. Enenmoh, "Language Problems in Nigeria with Particular Reference to the Teaching of English in Primary and Secondary Schools--A Memorandum," in English Language Teaching in Nigeria, ed. by Robert Jacobs (Mimeographed supplement to special study report) (December, 1966), p. 148; B. Onyerisara Ukeje, Education for Social Reconstruction (Lagos: Macmillan & Co. (Nigeria) Ltd., 1966), pp. 90-91; Dakin, op. cit., p. 82; Harold Jowitt, Suggested Methods for the African Schools (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949), p. 93.

[16] Jacobs, op. cit., p. 9.

English.

Primary school, while serving the age-level at which language learning should be most productive, has proven to be an inefficient agent in the teaching of English. Poorly qualified teachers are often a major factor.

Language is best learned when there are real life situations in which it can be practiced. Nigerian primary school pupils, however, find their efforts at learning English confined to the classroom because there are few opportunities in their homes or communities to use English. Added to other problems are the usual complaints of lack of teaching materials, equipment, and facilities which plague the teaching of English as well as other functions of the primary school in Nigeria.

All these factors combine to produce such poor users of English that secondary school teachers and, later, university teachers turn to the primary school to condemn its teaching of English. Some who consider the situation hopeless have suggested that all teaching of English be postponed until the secondary school when it is hoped better teaching can be provided. It is unlikely that this suggestion will be followed. The entire educational system applies pressure on pupils to study English as early as possible for the purposes of gaining admission to higher schools and passing examinations. The problem is passed to secondary schools to do whatever they can to

remediate and build upon the primary school foundation of English language teaching.

Secondary School Problems

Primary school foundation

The Nigerian primary school pupil must prove a degree of proficiency in English in order to be among the few offered admission to secondary school. He must pass an entrance examination written in English. Upon achieving a high score on the examination he is usually called for an interview. A number of successful candidates have later admitted that this occasion marked their first conversation with a native English speaker--the secondary school teacher or principal who conducted the interview. This circumstance is, of course, changing as the number of expatriate teachers in Nigeria decreases. Many secondary school admissions are obviously made on the basis of the aspirant's ability to speak and understand oral English. It is unfortunate that a pupil's knowledge is measured almost solely by his mastery of a foreign language which he has been poorly taught. Yet, much of his success in secondary school will depend on his knowledge of English.

When a primary school pupil is admitted to secondary school he is initiated into a predominately English-speaking world. The use of vernacular is prohibited in the interest of inter-tribal harmony and the improvement

of students' English.[17] The primary school is usually a local school but the secondary school has all the aura of "going away to school". Even students whose parents live in the town where their secondary school is located usually prefer to board at the school if the opportunity is given. The gap between the end of primary school and the beginning of secondary school is a big one.

The structure and conduct of the school itself are patterned after the British grammar school. Being British in tradition and practice, the Nigerian secondary school offers an academic, text-book oriented education. Arts subjects are usually predominant and subjects of a practical nature are few. Proficiency in English is demanded by this sort of curriculum. The new secondary school student will normally find his primary school English foundation insufficient for what he is expected to do in secondary school. Having reached the age of adolescence he has, unfortunately, passed the prime years for near-native competence in language acquisition.[18]

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[17]The latter purpose is coming under increasing criticism for sociolinguistic reasons. Its actual value is yet to be proven or disproven.

[18]H. R. Huse, Reading and Speaking Foreign Languages (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1945), pp. 6-9; Bernard Spolsky, "Attitudinal Aspects of Second Language Learning," Language Learning, XIX, No. 3-4, p. 272.

Syllabus system

Each subject has its own syllabus designed to "cover the subject". Teachers are expected to teach the text-books adopted to meet the requirements of the syllabus. Students feel their time is being wasted and complain if a teacher gets off the syllabus. Innovative teachers who have had their training in a less rigid system feel that the syllabus stifles creativity, encourages memorization of the textbook, and neither demands nor encourages students to think productively.

External examinations

Closely allied with the syllabus system are the external examinations. At the end of their course, Nigerian secondary school students face the comprehensive West African School Certificate examination in from six to ten subjects. To fail the examination is to be denied further educational opportunity and to be relegated to lower salary scales for the rest of ones life.

The nature and content of the examination are such that students are further encouraged in their patterns of memorization which have been rooted in the oral tradition of their cultures, nourished by the teaching methods of their primary schools, and further developed by the syllabus system of their secondary schools. Only in the memorization of model answers, textbooks, and

class notes does the secondary school student feel he has stored up sufficient knowledge to assure his success in the examination.

The requirements of the syllabus and examination encourage the students' propensity to memorize rather than develop their ability to think creatively. The detailed syllabus and the ubiquitous textbook, however, provide support to many teachers who are poorly trained and who lack sufficient confidence and background to attempt innovative experimentation in teaching. In the face of frequent staff turn-over the syllabus and textbooks sometimes make it possible for students with supervisory help to study without a full-time teacher and still pass the examination. The fact that the system accommodates and even encourages memorization can be quite functional for those whose societies have long valued memorization as a part of their traditional education. Yet, in the words of Hanson,

> When combined with the African's ability and interest in memorizing (perhaps arising in part from the heritage of memorized traditions), the insecurity and inadequacy of teachers, and job opportunities and salary structures geared closely to certificate examination results, these examinations have tended to produce people adept in verbalizing and reiterating factual information, but peculiarly inept and inexperienced in demonstrating the intellectual initiative and attitudes most needed in a modernizing society.[19]

The ominous examination serves as a rigid, external force

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[19]Hanson, op. cit., p. 15.

to "keep standards up", but it has led one Nigerian edu-
cator to ask whether many countries in Africa have "a
system of education or a system of examinations".[20]

Such a system of secondary education constitutes
an obstacle to improved language learning,[21] especially
when it is taught by an audio-lingual approach. Prior to
the English syllabus reforms of 1966, Grieve said the syl-
labus "bears about as much relation to the true facts of
language as the flat-earth theory has to the facts of
Geography".[22] Modern language teaching techniques call
for a great deal of freedom for both teacher and students
in language expression and experimentation. It is some-
times difficult to achieve enough flexibility and freedom
in the syllabus and school schedule to permit effective
language teaching and practice.

Attitudes

Nigerian adolescents are especially sensitive to
those socio-linguistic forces mentioned earlier. No less
than their counterparts in other parts of the world, they
are subject to peer pressure and are eager to prove

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[20]Babs A. Fafunwa, New Perspectives in African
Education (Lagos: Macmillan and Co. (Nigeria) Ltd.,
1967), p. 46.

[21]Ronald Forrest, "English Language Teaching ver-
sus the Examiners," English Language Teaching (January,
1968), p. 119.

[22]Grieve, op. cit., p. 72.

themselves loyal Nigerians who have not become too dependent on the English language.

Several studies discuss the vital importance of the learners' attitude in second language acquisition. Spolsky discusses the effect which parents and peer groups have on second language learning. The learner's attitude toward the second language, its native users, and the culture they represent all influence his progress in learning the language which in many ways implies his desire to affiliate with the new culture.[23]

Zintz lists desire to learn the second language as a prime factor in a student's ability to acquire it.[24] Capps states: "Desire must have strong reinforcement of need to keep a student struggling with the complexities of the English language. . . . Desire or motivation is seriously reduced if that desire produces an alienating situation."[25]

At a time when Nigerian secondary school students need the best English they can learn, sociological forces converge to weaken their motivation to do their best.

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[23]Spolsky, op. cit., pp. 273-275.

[24]Miles V. Zintz, Corrective Reading (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1966), p. 123.

[25]Ethel L. Capps, "Problems in Teaching Reading to Bilingual Children," in Reading Goals for the Disadvantaged, ed. by J. Allen Figurel (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1970), p. 250.

Teachers and schools often find these forces difficult to overcome.

Teachers, materials, methods

The provision of teachers of English for Nigeria's secondary schools is another complex problem. Such teachers may be native English speakers or Nigerian teachers who have a good command of English. Ideally, they are specially trained in methods of teaching English as a second language and have a knowledge of the linguistic features of Nigerian languages. For expatriate teachers, a knowledge of Nigerian languages, coupled with a knowledge of the country and acceptance by the students, usually comes only after a period of experience in Nigeria. Unfortunately, most expatriate teachers serve for periods of one or two years and leave just as they are becoming most useful. Both Nigerian and expatriate teachers, while knowing their own languages, may not know the linguistic peculiarities of English and the native languages of their pupils.

In a day of increased nationalism the number of expatriates employed to teach in Nigerian secondary schools is steadily decreasing. Those most likely to be retained are teachers of science and technological subjects. Even those who may be engaged to teach English are not likely to have the desired special training and are not likely to

serve very long.

Except in some schools in southern Nigeria, well-qualified Nigerian teachers with a good command of English do not usually find themselves teaching very long in a secondary school. Their services are sought by government and commercial concerns in positions which are more presti-gious and remunerative than teaching. Their terms of ser-vice are, like their expatriate counterparts', short and sporadic. Even if they do teach they are seldom assigned to lower classes where needs for English teachers are crucial. These conditions will, of course, change as more teachers become available.

Teaching materials for English classes are usually limited by lack of funds and availability. More sophisti-cated equipment such as language laboratories must be im-ported at great cost and maintenance without necessary spare parts and qualified technicians can become a night-mare. Furthermore, when funds are available they are often used for more popular items such as science equip-ment or sports facilities.

Teaching methods as well as materials are more often geared to the syllabus and the forthcoming examina-tion than to the students' individual needs. Even those teachers who feel rebellious toward the system must make their contributions within the system. Furthermore, sym-pathetic teachers are hesitant to do anything that might

jeopardize their students' chances on the examination. They usually submit, therefore, to the pressures to coach for the examination, using whatever opportunities are available for some creative teaching "beyond the syllabus." Unfortunately, such limitations do not leave much time or energy for building a good English-as-a-second-language program.

Nigerian secondary schools produce a number of School Certificate holders--almost all of whom are confident that they are capable of further study. Many ultimately find themselves in higher secondary or sixth form courses. Here, the two-year curriculum leading to the Higher School Certificate involves the study of fewer subjects but is still syllabus- and textbook-oriented and is followed by an external examination. There is less direct teaching of oral English usage, but reading, writing, and creative thinking in English continue to be of critical importance.

Following the Higher School Certificate course and, in unusual circumstances, the regular secondary course, selection is made for university entrance. Although requirements for entrance are stringent and presumably only the best students gain admission, many university students are still not proficient enough in English.

Post-Secondary School Problems

Prior preparation

The English language problems of the student at
the post-secondary level of education in Nigeria are com-
pounded of the problems of the primary and secondary schools.
Although there are several types of post-secondary schools
in Nigeria, problems encountered at the university level
are representative of those in other kinds of schools.
As Dakin remarks,

> At the moment there are indications that many uni-
> versity and training college students suffer in their
> studies because of an inadequate command of the lan-
> guage of instruction. . . .
>
> If the student is to pursue his higher studies
> profitably his mastery of English must approximate
> to that of the native speaker.[26]

Thinking and participating

Special mention is made of the fact that university
students are often handicapped because of their inability
to think in English. Factors which encourage memorization
rather than creative thinking have already been identified
in the education system and in the teaching methods of pri-
mary and secondary schools. Teachers who wish to save
time and who may not be able to direct discussions which
involve much freedom of individual expression often give
students solutions to problems or interpretations of state-
ments without requiring the students to struggle with their

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[26]Dakin, op. cit., p. 91.

own thought processes. Those students who have not learned to think creatively prior to entering university find it difficult to begin at that late date. Thinking creatively is, of course, even more difficult in English than in the students' native languages.

Interestingly enough, a commendable feature of Nigerian culture could be at the root of students' seeming lack of ability to think creatively. Most Nigerian children are taught to be obedient and respectful to their elders. To enter into dispute with respected elders, such as parents and teachers, is no light offense. Yet, to engage in creative thinking, one must question and dispute. Participation in discussions and seminars which are so much a part of university education demand it. Herein lies a cultural conflict which, added to language problems, can affect a Nigerian university student's full involvement in the normal course of academic pursuit. Although a student may be thinking creatively, he may be hesitant to express his thoughts. Of course, there are those students who have become alienated from their basic culture and who do not observe all the traditional customs. Such students more freely discuss and argue.

A Nigerian young person seldom has to deliberate and reach a significant decision by himself. Advice and suggestions are always offered by other members of the nuclear or extended family. The opinions of older members

usually take precedence and following them is almost
mandatory. While very useful in some contexts, this cus-
tom is not conducive to independent thinking which is
needed in university classes, tutorials, and seminars.

Lectures and notetaking

Those students who lack proficiency in hearing
oral English find it extremely difficult to follow lec-
tures and take notes. This is especially true when their
lecturers speak English with a variety of accents. Many
factors of oral comprehension which have already been
discussed affect their skill. Furthermore, what the lec-
turer says must often be mentally translated into the
vernacular, the process of which prevents the student from
hearing the speaker's next remarks.[27] The normally shorter
second-language memory span may not permit the student to
retain that which he has heard long enough to formulate
notes, write them, and maintain the lecturer's thought
sequence.[28]

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[27]David A. Munro, "The Function of a Department of
English in a Developing Nation," in Jacobs (Mimeographed
supplement), op. cit., p. 11; Robert Lado, Language Teach-
ing: A Scientific Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.,
1964), pp. 53-54.

[28]Harold B. Dunkel, Second-Language Learning
(Boston: Ginn and Company, 1948), p. 39; Wilga M. Rivers,
Teaching Foreign Language Skills (Chicago: The University
of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 220; Yorio, op. cit., p. 108.

Summary

Once more in the pursuit of education Nigerian students are frustrated by the English language dilemma. Their frustration is often in relation to their knowledge and proficiency in English. As in the case of admission to secondary school or passing the school certificate examination, the gaining of a university degree may be based as much on the student's command of English as on his ability in his chosen field.

The importance of English in the life of Nigerian students at all levels of the education system cannot be gainsaid. Having been accepted as the national and international language for the educated and elite of Nigeria, English presumes to rule the country's formal education. It provides the reservoirs of knowledge and the means of transmitting modern learning and technology to Nigeria's developing leaders. Furthermore, it dictates many of the thought processes by which understanding of this knowledge is to be achieved. Perhaps no one fully appreciates these facts and plans accordingly for development of Nigeria's education.

Noticeably absent from the discussions of this chapter have been considerations of the reading of English as related to other English language problems in Nigerian education. This very important aspect of English language learning is considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

A NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM--

THE TEACHING OF READING

The ability to read English is a key factor in the overall achievement of Nigerian students, especially as they enter the secondary school and university. Some students of the problem feel that reading may be more important to Nigerians than to native readers of English. This is partially based on the fact that native readers have constant contact with native speakers and a number of environmental sources of the language. Nigerian readers, however, often must depend on reading itself for new words and phrases and standards of usage.[1] In Nigeria where there are few native speakers for reference, especially in the earlier language learning experiences, reading may even serve as a basis for improving spoken language.

Primary School Problems

In order to parallel the study of English language learning in general in Nigeria as discussed in Chapter

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[1]R. Chapman-Taylor, "Notes on Reading," in English Language Teaching in Nigeria, ed. by Robert Jacobs (Mimeographed supplement to special study report) (December, 1966), p. 76.

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Two, the reading problem as related to the Nigerian primary school will be examined first in this chapter. Reference has been made to the basic importance of a sound oral English foundation as requisite to building good reading development. Further attention to the relation of the oral English background to reading skills is given in Chapter Four.

Teaching methods

English as a second language.--Teaching methods for English as a second language emphasize the importance of instilling within learners the English sound system by means of drills and pattern practice. Only after a good oral foundation has been laid is any attempt at reading encouraged. This principle is held to even though the extent of the reading process in its initial stages is restricted by the limited number of phonemes which have already been mastered orally and the small vocabulary which can be built upon them.

Ideally, Nigerian primary school teachers should be able to ascertain whether their pupils can distinguish and discriminate among the various English phonemes. Deficiencies can then be corrected through appropriate drills.

Reading at this early stage consists of teaching

pupils to recognize graphemes which represent the pho-
nemes they know. In beginning reading, attention is paid
to a high degree of phoneme-grapheme correspondence.
Words and, preferably, phrases and sentences are built
from a limited number of graphemes whose phonemes have
been mastered.

Not all linguistic and reading authorities agree
on just which steps should be employed at precisely which
stages of reading development. Some appear to favor a
monosyllabic approach which teaches students to recog-
nize and reproduce a number of monosyllables and to
arrange them into sentences. Others feel this does not
accurately represent and teach actual language patterns
and so prefer an approach involving the learning of
larger groups of words. Still others favor an intonation
approach based on the patterns of English intonation.[2]
Perhaps what is important for our present consideration
is that the method is still basically oral and offers
enough variety for capable teachers to be able to choose
the approach or combination of approaches which best
suits the needs of their pupils.

Methods for teaching English as a second language,
more generally classified as an audio-lingual approach,

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[2]Dolores Durkin, "Linguistics and Reading Teachers,"
Education, Vol. 86, No. 3 (November, 1965), p. 156; Ruth G.
Strickland, "Language, Linguistics, Reading," Childhood
Education, Vol. 42, No. 3 (November, 1965), p. 144.

are largely inoperative in Nigerian primary schools. Several factors contribute to this.

First, Nigerian primary school teachers are not usually trained in the method. Bedford states that it is very difficult to train a teacher in specific second language methods. He feels that the skills are largely developed through the teacher knowing the principles and then applying them with a great deal of versatility and insight.[3] Usually, large classes also hinder good teaching.

Second, the audio-lingual approach is characterized as being very demanding of teachers' time and energy. The teacher must be perceptive of students' needs and flexible enough to change methods quickly and frequently as the occasion demands. Unfortunately, most Nigerian primary school teachers, through no particular fault of their own, have neither the specific knowledge nor the perception and flexibility needed.

Third, most Nigerian primary school teachers have learned English from their teachers who were not native English speakers. Since this process has continued for several school generations, the average teacher is not a good oral English model for his pupils to imitate. What results is an imitation of an imitation

[3]Richard C. Bedford, "The Aural-Oral Approach Re-viewed," English Teaching Forum, VII, 3 (May-June, 1969), p. 4.

ad infinitum. The result is often a dialect of English
which is not completely comprehensible to speakers of more
standard forms of English.

Weak oral English foundation.--If the principles
of teaching English as a second language are inoperable
in the Nigerian primary school, a weak oral English
foundation for the reading process will result. Inappro-
priate phonemes will upset normal phoneme-grapheme cor-
respondences, and their recognition, which is essential
to early reading skill, will be confused.

Nigerian primary school children are usually
taught to read by the look-and-say method involving the
memorization of whole words. The lack of a totally con-
sistent correlation between phonemes and graphemes in
English may be one reason for the primacy of this method.
However, if correct sounds are not stressed, the phoneme-
grapheme correspondences used by Nigerian pupils becomes
even more unpredictable.

At the phrase and sentence levels of English,
non-standard usage fails to coincide with patterns which
reflect English thought. Readers whose oral usage fea-
tures non-standard English will experience difficulty in
understanding reading material expressed in standard
English patterns.

Some authorities contend that, since it is impos-
sible to achieve a true audio-lingual approach in teaching

English in Nigeria, less attention should be paid to the correctness of the students' oral English. At the same time, however, there is universal complaint that Nigerian primary school pupils are not being taught to read. The fact that their oral English foundation is weak could be a major reason why it is difficult to teach them to read.

Memorization.--Even though Nigerian primary school pupils may be taught to pronounce the words on a page, when learning content material they may be taught by a process of rote training without meaning. The teacher repeats the information to be learned until the pupils commit it to memory. Such information can be retained for repetition on examinations if the right question is asked in the right words; however, it can seldom be transferred or applied in a different context. These children, then, are not taught to think creatively or to comprehend what is read.

Scarcity of reading material often necessitates reliance on memorization. When textbooks are insufficient or completely lacking, it is impossible for the teacher to make reading assignments. It is easier for the teacher to read or write on the blackboard from the only available copy of a textbook or from his own notes. Memorization is an easy alternative to reading for comprehension for those whose cultural traditions value such an

ability and transmit knowledge by that means.

Look-and-say.--The look-and-say method of teaching
reading is, therefore, quite popular in Nigerian primary
schools. Involving the memorization of individual words,
it easily forms a part of the overall memorization syn-
drome. The look-and-say method does have value in teach-
ing certain words. Its exclusive use, however, tends to
produce word-by-word readers who read slowly and seldom
comprehend the material. Furthermore, there seems to be
a limit to the quantity of words a pupil can memorize in
isolation.

Materials

The lack of reading materials not only encourages
memorization but also curbs the incentive of capable
readers. For financial reasons, Nigerian primary schools
cannot provide a wide range of materials which appeal to
various interest and ability levels. The child may find
nothing that he wants to or can read.

When there are few books there is little vision
of additional horizons to cross. A good reader, surrounded
by books, is prodded by their presence to finish one in
order to begin another.

Scarcity of books can make for slow reading. Why
hurry to finish a book when there is not another to be read?

Often the tendency is to read and reread and finally memorize, or not to read at all.

When there are few books and when reading is not a thinking process, books can not provide English-related experiences which most Nigerian primary school pupils lack. Reading can provide imagined experiences only when there is reading material of sufficient quantity and variety.

Not only is there a scarcity of books for Nigerian primary school pupils, reading material of other sorts is hard to find and usually beyond their means. Magazines on a child's level, if available at all, are published outside Nigeria and are written in a non-Nigerian context. Sources of free teaching materials and aids are extremely limited.

Normally, teachers are unable to improvise reading materials. Although most primary school teachers have studied the methods of making simple teaching aids, the production of such aids depends on availability of materials. The resources of primary school teachers, even in odds and ends, is limited. Their own salaries and the schools' budgets do not allow much to purchase supplies for making visual aids.

Often creative ideas for homemade teaching equipment are lacking unless a particular teacher is naturally gifted along these lines. Teachers in more developed

countries depend on sources such as advertising and tele-
vision, for example, for many of their ideas. Sources
like these may not be readily available to the average
Nigerian primary school teacher.

Reading environment

The reading environment of Nigerian primary school
pupils is often discouraging. Most homes have no books.
Society basically does not value reading, having depended
on its oral traditions for transmitting knowledge from
generation to generation. The increasing desire for up-
ward mobility which education brings promises to change
the status of reading in society within a few more years.
Presently, however, when the overall rate of literacy in
the country is only 15-20%[4], little or no social stigma
is attached to illiteracy. The lack of compulsory uni-
versal primary education, the percentage of the age
group enrolled in school, and dropout rates give further
evidence of apathy toward education on the part of many
parents. While many parents expect their children to
learn to read, there is little dismay if a child fails
to learn to read or even fails to go to school.

Aside from a few very progressive communities,
libraries are seldom found outside secondary and higher

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[4]"Nigeria," Encyclopedia International, Vol. 13
(New York: Grolier Incorporated, 1964), p. 171.

schools. Primary schools with libraries are few indeed. Even in those places where there are community or municipal libraries, primary pupils are not encouraged (or permitted) to borrow books. Such limited facilities are reserved for those of higher education and those who normally exhibit a greater sense of responsibility toward books than do primary school children.

Newspapers reach all but the most remote areas of Nigeria. Neither the quality of English nor of reporting and writing in many of them is of the sort to help the primary school child learning to read.

It is unfortunate that the level of reading in English in the primary school is so low. The Nigerian Aptitude Testing Unit of the West African Examination Council designed a special reading comprehension test for use by the English Language Teaching survey team in 1966. The test was administered to 1623 Nigerian pupils in the last year of primary school. Approximately 90% of the pupils were permitted to finish the test. The material included in the test was simplified and commensurate with the ability of children who had studied English (albeit as a second language) for six years. Yet, average comprehension scores ranged from 23.1% to 49.1%. The overall national average was 33.5%[5].

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[5]Robert Jacobs, English Language Teaching in Nigeria, (Mimeographed report of Special Study) (September, 1966), p. 52.

Summary

At the time in life when many children of the world are most easily learning to read and enjoy it, many Nigerian primary school children are not developing all the necessary skills for the task. For the majority of them, primary school marks the end of their formal schooling. Without the ability to read independently, many will fail to derive further profit and pleasure from reading. For many, reading will cease because their skills are undeveloped or because there is nothing to read.

Comparatively few Nigerian primary school students go to secondary school. Those who do, continue to be handicapped by reading problems.

Secondary School Problems

Approximately five per cent of those who complete primary school are admitted into secondary school in Nigeria. This highly selective process involves an entrance examination which is largely a reading test. The fact that there are hundreds who do pass secondary school entrance examinations every year indicates that they are not completely without reading ability.

Nigerian secondary school teachers assume that the students have learned to read in primary school and are now prepared for the serious study required at the

secondary level. Consequently, organized reading instruc-
tion is not usually a significant part of the secondary
school curriculum. Some attention is given to interpreta-
tive comprehension but there is little training in basic
skills.

Reading abilities

While there is evidence of some reading ability
on the part of most secondary students, this ability is
often minimal and reading skills are not well enough
developed to enable the students to pursue secondary
school study with reasonable facility. Neither can they
read quickly enough to complete required assignments and
still have time to read for pleasure.

In an attempt to assess the reading skill abili-
ties of beginning Nigerian secondary school students, the
writer administered a series of diagnostic reading tests
to several groups of students in Forms I and II. Since
tests designed specifically for Nigerian students were
not available, several tests were studied in an effort to
find the most suitable series.

The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test[6] was chosen
for several reasons. First, it appeared to be relatively

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[6]Bjorn Karlsen, Richard Madden, and Eric F. Gard-
ner, Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (New York: Harcourt,
Brace and World, Inc., 1966).

culture free. Students taking the test did not appear to be handicapped because of items foreign in content.

Second, the test was diagnostic in nature, "emphasizing the identification of strengths and weaknesses within /a specific/ area."[7] The accompanying manual for administering and interpreting the test clarifies this point.

> A diagnostic test, however, should have a larger per cent of easy material since it is developed primarily to assess below average performance. The fact that the diagnostic test is relatively easy means that pupils who may be frustrated by even a well-developed achievement test should experience a good deal more success on the diagnostic test. Furthermore, more accurate , reliable measurement of below average performance is afforded by the less difficult nature of a diagnostic test.[8]

The <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> is available in Level I for American students whose school class levels range from the middle of Grade 2 to the middle of Grade 4, and in Level II for those from the middle of Grade 4 to the middle of Grade 8. It was finally decided to use Level II tests, as these seemed more realistic in terms of the degree of difficulty of reading material Nigerian secondary school students are expected to handle. At Level II, the test covers Reading Comprehension (subdivided into Literal and Inferential Comprehension),

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[7]Karlsen, Madden, and Gardner, <u>Manual for Administering and Interpreting Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1966), p. 4.

[8]<u>Loc</u>. <u>cit</u>.

Vocabulary, Syllabication, Sound Discrimination, Blending, and Rate of Reading.

It was difficult to use test norms since it could not be determined at exactly which equivalent American grade level Nigerian students should be ranked. Furthermore, no scientific authoritativeness can be claimed for any of the test results since they have not been validated or standardized for the Nigerian school population. Nevertheless, it was felt that the tests did, in a diagnostic manner, indicate comparative reading skill weaknesses of the students.

The tests are structured to be scored either by percentiles based on the scores of the total American population tested or on corresponding "stanines" which assign each score to one of nine divisions. These latter divisions are further classified as "above average", "average", and "below average". Since using norms for native English-speaking children is not appropriate, scores were calculated on a straight percentage basis rather than by using the comparative percentiles or stanines.

The table on page 61 shows the scores (highest, lowest, and arithmetic mean) for a total of sixty-one Form I students to whom the Level II test was administered. Thirty-two took the test in 1970; twenty-nine, in 1971.

STANFORD DIAGNOSTIC READING TEST SCORES, LEVEL II

(Percentage of Test Items Correct)

Sixty-one Nigerian Secondary School Students

	Compre-hension	Vocabulary	Syllabi-cation	Sound Dis-crimination	Blending	Rate of Reading
Form I, 1970						
Highest Score	80.00	67.50	75.00	71.43	94.44	73.53
Lowest Score	5.00	32.50	25.00	17.14	22.22	17.65
Mean Score	41.67	55.00	54.17	45.71	69.44	38.20
Form I, 1971						
Highest Score	56.67	67.50	75.00	65.71	99.89	52.94
Lowest Score	10.00	30.00	25.00	17.14	27.78	5.88
Mean Score	43.33	52.50	54.17	42.86	66.67	29.41
Both Forms						
Mean Score	42.50	53.75	54.17	44.29	68.06	33.81
Median	43.33	52.50	58.33	40.00	69.44	29.41
Percentile	5	4	6	8	38	6

The percentiles at the bottom of the table indi-
cate the norm scores that would be indicated for students
in grades 6.5 to 7.5 in American schools who obtained the
raw scores that were obtained by Nigerian Form I students
on this test. Since the norming sample for the test did
not include Nigerian students, these percentiles cannot,
of course, be strictly interpreted. They do, however,
provide some basis for comparing the reading abilities of
Nigerian and American students.

These scores indicate that Form I students are
weak in most of the reading skills tested. The two lowest
scores in all cases are those for reading rate and reading
comprehension. The test for rate of reading has built-in
controls which permit lack of comprehension to reduce the
rate of reading. It would, therefore, appear that low
comprehension is a key to low scores in both these tests.

Other tests, unrelated to the Stanford Diagnostic
Reading Test, were given at about the same time to try to
determine the students' reading rates. Although scores
were not dependent upon comprehension control devices,
the level of reading difficulty was similar to that of the
Stanford Test material. On these tests the students read
at an average rate of 158 words per minute with individual
rates ranging from 99 to 336 words per minute.

Chapman-Taylor carried out studies in several
Nigerian teacher training colleges and found an average

reading speed of 115 words per minute. The highest score
was 141 words per minute, with a comprehension level
averaging about 50%.[9] Teacher training college students
are comparable to secondary school students in their
educational level. Bright and McGregor found students
at a similar level in East Africa, reading at a rate of
90-120 words per minute.[10]

In only two cases--one of those the student who read
at 336 words per minute--did a student score the highest
in more than one of the skills areas of the Stanford Diag-
nostic Reading Test. The student, in 1970, had the highest
scores in Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Reading
Rate. Another student, in 1971, scored the highest in
Vocabulary, Syllabication and Blending. Other high and
low scores were scattered among the students.

The next lowest scores, after reading rate and
reading comprehension, are those for sound discrimination.
Since this test is designed to ascertain the students'
knowledge of phoneme-grapheme correspondence, the low
score confirms expectations that non-native speakers with
a weak oral English foundation are not cognizant of all
the differences of phonemes and their graphemic reprenta-
tions.

[9]Jacobs, op. cit., p. 48.

[10]J. A. Bright and G. P. McGregor, Teaching English
as a Second Language (London: Longmans, 1970), p. 55.

The score for blending is probably unrealistically high. This test does not appear to examine what it says it does. It is quite easy for those taking the test to find correct spellings rather than blend sounds together.

The test results indicate that there is general weakness on the part of Nigerian secondary school students in the reading of English. While certain skills seem a bit weaker than others, the difference is not great enough to be very significant. The test results provide support to the contention that students have not learned to read well enough in primary school and that a definite program of reading instruction needs to be included in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum.

Although there is a need, secondary school teachers are not usually trained in the methods of teaching reading. This usually makes it difficult for them to recognize and identify students' reading problems.and to plan and carry out a program of reading development.

In addition, there is resistance to the offering of special reading instruction. The Nigerian secondary school curriculum is very crowded. Students normally study from ten to twelve subjects at a time. Every period of every day is occupied. This leaves little time for an addition to the schedule. Few teachers can appreciate the fact that some time sacrificed for specific reading instruction might be more than repaid in study time saved

in the future. However, few are willing to risk the time
necessary to experiment.

Syllabus-examination system

The syllabus and examination systems which lie at
the heart of the Nigerian secondary school system tend to
make poor readers even poorer. Subject syllabuses out-
line prodigious amounts of information to be learned.
Material must be learned in such a way that it can be
retained and reproduced for the West African School Certi-
ficate Examination which comes at the end of the students'
secondary school course. The very nature of the examina-
tion and the fact that its results determine a student's
future opportunities and earning power encourage rote
memorization and a great deal of last minute cramming.

Students who otherwise might have been good readers
and, through the reading process, productive thinkers, are
afraid they will not have the required store of facts
ready for the examination. In their effort to build up
this store they become slow, meticulous readers who spend
a great deal of time memorizing textbooks and notes.

English language.--The English language syllabus
and its subsequent examination were revised in 1966 as a
result of recommendations contained in the Grieve Report.[11]

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[11]D. W. Grieve, English Language Examining (Lagos,
Nigeria: African Universities Press, 1964).

Emphasis is now placed on teaching and testing students' knowledge of correct usage of English rather than their knowledge of grammar rules.

Revised features of the West African School Certificate Examination in English specifically test students' comprehension and their ability to locate, arrange in sequence, and summarize the main ideas in reading passages. Good reading ability would facilitate their efficiency in these areas. Lacking such ability, however, students attempt to reach their goals by other means, such as translating the English into their own language. Unfortunately, the additional vernacular thought process consumes a lot of time and introduces further interference into the necessary English thought process.[12]

English literature.--The English literature syllabus, surprisingly, encourages violation of the principles of good reading. The syllabus requires the in-depth study of four or five designated books or parts thereof. Many schools allow class periods in the schedule for two or three years to prepare for the literature examination. Wide reading is not encouraged and many other good books are left unread while four or five required literature books are read slowly and repeatedly to the point of near-memorization.

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[12]David A. Munro, "The Function of a Department of English in a Developing Nation," in Jacobs (Supplement), op. cit., p. 11.

Staff and reading

Staff members of Nigerian secondary schools often do not offer students unusual encouragement in developing reading ability. In addition to being afraid to risk sacrificing time from normal classroom work to emphasize reading, Nigerian teachers are themselves products of the environment and school system which have not produced good readers. They themselves often do not read effectively and do not enjoy reading. Unfortunately, many of their attitudes are transferred to their students.

In addition, staff members generally lack concern for reading development. The rapid turnover of staff members--whether Nigerians going for further education or to take other kinds of work or expatriates completing their short contracts--prevents a school from maintaining the continuity of staff necessary to build a good reading program. Such a program demands staff members' involvement and time. Those who do not expect to teach in a school very long are not usually willing to meet the demands of a reading program.

Materials

As is true with primary schools, materials for the teaching of reading are scarce and expensive. Principals are usually hesitant to divert funds to an experimental reading development program when other more traditional

demands are barely met. Furthermore, a shortage of teachers limits the time and resources available for devising materials.

While almost all Nigerian secondary schools have libraries, they are sometimes small and poorly stocked. Few secondary school libraries have full-time librarians. The duties of librarian are usually added to a staff member's teaching responsibilities. Secondary school libraries are often open for only a limited number of hours per week with different classes assigned specific hours for borrowing and returning books. Limited library facilities provide fewer reading opportunities--especially of the reading-for-pleasure type.

Summary

Through circumstances which parallel or extend those of the primary school, secondary schools often perpetuate poor reading. Large numbers of secondary students continue to be slow readers with low comprehension. Even with examination pressures to do their best, students often do less than their best because of poor reading skills. Frequently, after an examination, one hears the common regret, "I misread the question," or, "I didn't understand the question." Beyond examination preparation, it is equally unfortunate that few have learned to read well enough to have the time and ability to read for pleasure.

Post-Secondary Problems

As students enter the university, demands on their reading ability are once again increased. McKillop and Yoloye, in reporting the results of their studies of the reading problems of Nigerian university students, state, "The typical student is carrying a heavy burden when he takes on the reading load of a University course. . . . He needs help with both speed and comprehension."[13] Chapman-Taylor refers to a similar study by Brimer and to his conclusion that the university student's "level of comprehension is not adequate to meet the difficulty of material normally required in the first year of the English course."[14]

Reading ability

Jacobs reports a study which found the mean reading speed of a group of Nigerian university students to be 173 words per minute, with a range of 116 to 425 words per minute.[15] The same report showed that the mean reading

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[13]Anne McKillop and E. A. Yoloye, "The Reading of University Students," in Jacobs (Supplement), op. cit., p. 49.

[14]Yvonne Chapman-Taylor, "University of Ibadan Reading Centre: Report on Pilot Study," in Jacobs (Supplement), op. cit., p. 100.

[15]Ibid., p. 103.

speed of British and American students was 250 words per minute.[16] The McKillop and Yoloye study shows a mean comprehension score of 57.54% for Nigerian students while that of American students was 69.2%.[17]

Comparisons of this sort between the test scores of native readers of English and others for whom English is a second language can become invidious. Their value lies in the fact that the reading material in English which Nigerian university students are expected to master is comparable in difficulty to that which students in similar institutions in England and America must deal with.

Unoh's study at the University of Ibadan found only 14% of the students whom he classified as efficient readers; that is, they read at a rate of more than 250 words per minute and comprehended at least 70% of the material. On the other hand, he found 66% who were both slow and inaccurate--meeting neither of the criteria. The other 20% failed to reach one or the other of the criteria.[18] Even the 250 word per minute minimum seems slow in comparison with the rate of 400 to 600 or 800 words per minute which Bright and McGregor say characterize

[16]Jacobs, op. cit,, p. 47.

[17]McKillop and Yoloye, op. cit., p. 39.

[18]S. O. Unoh, The Study of Reading (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, 1968), pp. 9-10.

good readers.[19] At the University of East Africa, with
circumstances similar to those of West Africa, Fry's
study revealed average student reading rates of 183 words
per minute with a comprehension averaging 55%.[20]

Obstacles to study

When University of Ibadan students listed their
greatest study obstacles, they related most of their
troubles to reading. Most students listed at least five
difficulties. Those hindrances found among the first
five listed, in the order of difficulty as rated by the
students, are as follows:

Getting the main idea of a difficult passage	72%
Trouble with concentration	68%
Selecting important detail	66%
Making summaries from books	64%
Taking lecture notes	50%
Slowness in reading	50%
Relating reading assignment to lectures	30%
Finding information required	29%
Getting the meaning of new words	28%
Interpreting graphs and charts	27% [21]

Robertson comments on the pressures which prevent
concentration in reading. She feels many Nigerian uni-
versity students are so intent on doing the work precisely
as required, on meeting the professors' and university's

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[19]Bright and McGregor, op. cit., pp. 56, 96.

[20]Edward Fry, "Teaching Reading in East Africa,"
in Improvement of Reading Through Classroom Practice, ed.
by J. Allen Figurel (Newark, Delaware: International
Reading Association, 1964), p. 255.

[21]Yvonne Chapman-Taylor, op. cit., p. 105.

requirements, and on passing examinations that they are often unable to read with a certain abandon characteristic of good confident readers. Their worry and resoluteness prevent concentration.[22] Unoh further feels that their very inefficiency in reading makes good concentration difficult.[23] The ability to concentrate is one of the marks of a reader who no longer has to be concerned with the mechanics of reading. He reads so well that it is easy for him to be absorbed in the material.

Nigerian university students lack reading ability in a situation where good reading habits are essential for the study and research they are expected to do. The ability to read quickly and to comprehend fully is prerequisite to students' making full use of their opportunities to study in a university. Without this ability they are greatly handicapped in preparation for regular classes and more so for participation in seminars and in conducting research.

Summary

Throughout his educational career the Nigerian student is hindered in his progress by his inability to read effectively in English. This inadequacy could well

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[22]Anne McKillop Robertson, "Reading: A View from West Africa," in Figurel, op. cit., p. 256.

[23]Unoh, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

be a major factor in the persistence of a memorization syndrome of learning which pervades the entire educational system. Memorization, in turn, makes even less capable readers since it tends to occlude productive thinking, a prime chacteristic of good readers.

A number of reasons can be given for the low level of reading ability found among Nigerian students. Among these are a weak oral English foundation, inadequate instruction in reading skills, and factors in the culture and educational system.

The next chapter considers several skills generally possessed by good readers. These skills will be viewed in relation to students in Nigerian schools.

CHAPTER IV

COMPONENTS OF READING DEVELOPMENT FOR

NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

The problems which Nigerian secondary school
readers of English as a second language encounter are
numerous and troublesome. From an educational point of
view alone it is desirable that consideration be given
to possible means of solving even a portion of the prob-
lems. But the secondary school population embodies the
next university generation from whose elitist numbers
practically all the following generation of the nation's
leaders will come. In this light, the consideration of
means to assist these students in gaining reading power--
and, hopefully, the power of creative thinking and some
pleasure from reading--becomes imperative.

There is little literature which deals specifi-
cally with reading problems of the type presented in
Chapter Three. There is a wealth of material on the
problems of readers of English as a first language. This
material covers their problems from pre-reading through
beginning reading for young learners to speed reading for
mature readers, with additional attention given to reme-
dial reading at various stages of development, and programs

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of literacy for adults. The problems of young children
who are beginning readers of English as a second language
in predominately English-speaking contexts are being in-
creasingly investigated.

Specialists dealing with the problems of teaching
English as a second language have written rather exten-
sively on various aspects of the process except reading.
They emphasize building a strong oral English foundation
which is an important part of the background for reading
proficiency. Popular pattern practices are also related.
The point is, however, that reading development appears
to be thought of as something which occurs effortlessly
as a natural outgrowth of other second language learning
activities. Experience has proven otherwise.

Material dealing with the developing of reading
skills for learners of English as a second language,
while increasing, is still scant. Mayer has said, "we
abandon all system" when we approach the teaching of
reading.[1] Information concerning the problem of older
learners--those who have studied English for several
years in primary school, and have reached the important,
reading-oriented secondary school--is more sparse still.
Suggestions for those who live and study in a predomi-
nately non-English-speaking environment are difficult

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[1]Edgar Mayer, "Reading English as a Foreign
Language Process," in Challenge and Experiment in Reading,
ed. by J. Allen Figurel (New York: International Reading
Association, 1962), p. 247.

to find.

An exception is a detailed chapter on "Reading" in Bright and McGregor's <u>Teaching English as a Second Language</u>,[2] which is based on their observations in East Africa. Engholm briefly treats skills but deals more extensively with literature in <u>Education Through English</u>[3] also drawn from East African teaching experience.

Based upon their experience in teaching first- and second-language readers, both Thonis[4] and Capps[5] have advanced the proposition that reading skills and the process of skill development are the same for first- and second-language readers, although certain skills, of course, are more difficult and take longer for the second-language reader to acquire. Working from this proposition, a survey has been made of several reading skills which are commonly accepted as vital to the development of readers of English as a first language.

The selection of skills for consideration revealed

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[2]J. A. Bright and G. P. McGregor, <u>Teaching English as a Second Language</u> (London: Longmans, 1970), pp. 52-101.

[3]Eva Engholm, <u>Education Through English: The Use of English in African Schools</u> (Cambridge: The University Press, 1965), pp. 15-43.

[4]Eleanor Wall Thonis, <u>Teaching Reading to Non-English Speakers</u> (New York: Macmillan Co., 1970), pp. 250-253.

[5]Ethel L. Capps, "Problems in Teaching Reading to Bilingual Children," in <u>Reading Goals for the Disadvantaged</u>, ed. by J. Allen Figurel (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1970), p. 251.

that there is not unanimity among authorities in the
teaching of reading--either on which skills are impor-
tant or the order of their arrangement.

McKee laments the fact: "It is unfortunate that
almost fifty years of research in the teaching of reading
has not produced a valid statement of the insights and
skills which are of unquestioned importance to the pupil
in coping with meaning difficulties."[6] Speaking from
the linguist's viewpoint, Wardhaugh, in an article out-
lining the views of several linguists toward the reading
process, has remarked:

> The teaching of reading is a very real problem almost
> everywhere in the world and often a controversial
> one. Those linguists who have looked at it have
> adopted a variety of different approaches because
> they have viewed the nature of the problem differ-
> ently. . . . The possible applications of lin-
> guistics to reading are still uncertain in the
> absence of empirical evidence to support any of the
> present hypotheses.[7]

There does seem to be agreement on certain points.
The skills are numerous and various; they are not easy to
define; and they are difficult to measure. Under such
conditions the mere choosing of a list of skills for
study invites criticism. Perhaps there is consolation
in knowing there is support as well as opposition for

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[6]Paul McKee, <u>Reading: A Program of Instruction
for the Elementary School</u> (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.,
1966), p. 257.

[7]Ronald Wardhaugh, "Linguistic Insights into
the Reading Process," <u>Language Learning</u>, XVIII (Decem-
ber, 1968), p. 235.

whatever choice is made.

Books and articles on the teaching of reading and especially those which deal with the problems of second language readers and with remedial teaching were consulted. The selection and definition of skills was finally drawn from a composite of such sources representing as wide a range of views as possible. Works by the following were particularly helpful in choosing skills for consideration: Andresen, Bond and Tinker, Davey, Durr, Emans, Hjermstad, Julitta, Lefevre, McKee, Roberts, Sheldon, and Strang.[8] Commentary was taken from some of the same sources and

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[8] Oliver Andresen, "Instructional Procedures in Reading in Grades Nine Through Fourteen," in Reading: Seventy-Five Years of Progress, ed. by H. Alan Robinson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 63-67; Guy L. Bond and Miles A. Tinker, Reading Difficulties: Their Diagnosis and Correction (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967); Elizabeth P. Davey, "Instructional Procedures in Reading in Corrective and Remedial Classes," in Robinson, op. cit., pp. 67-70; William K. Durr, ed., Reading Instruction: Dimensions and Issues (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967); Robert Emans, "Identifying Significant Reading Skills in Grades Four Through Eight," in Robinson, op. cit., pp. 37-41; Fritz Hjermstad, "Identifying Significant Reading Skills in Grades Nine Through Fourteen," in Robinson, op. cit., pp. 41-43; Sister Mary Julitta, "Identifying Significant Reading Skills in Corrective and Remedial Classes," Ibid., pp. 44-46; Carl A. Lefevre, Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964); McKee, op. cit.; Hermese E. Roberts, "Methods and Materials for Teaching Word Perception in Grades Four Through Six," in New Perspectives in Reading Instruction, ed. by Albert J. Mazurkiewicz (New York: Pitman Publishing Company, 1964), pp. 202-207; William D. Sheldon, "What is Comprehension? A Research View," Ibid., pp. 224-227; Ruth Strang, Constance M. McCullough, and Arthur E. Traxler, The Improvement of Reading (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967)

from experience in the Nigerian secondary school and its
context. The result is an extensive list of skills con-
sidered in the light of their relevance to the Nigerian
secondary school student and his needs. For comparison,
appendices to this study contain three reading skills lists.

Background for Skills Development

It is recognized that students must come to the
reading task with certain minimum abilities. Some intel-
ligence is required. Sufficient eyesight and muscular
coordination is essential. A positive attitude on the
part of the reader toward the reading process is also
highly desirable. For the purposes of this study it is
assumed that beginning secondary school students in Nigeria
are in possession of these prerequisites, although, of
course, it is recognized that there are occasionally those
who are not. Since the process by which students enter
secondary school is a highly selective one we can usually
assume that those with obvious handicaps have not reached
secondary school. The students have already completed
the necessary years of primary school. They can read with
varying degrees of proficiency. Most have not only a
positive but an eager attitude toward the reading process.

Oral English foundation

A strong and correct oral English foundation on
which to build reading development is one which cannot
be assumed. A discussion of the reasons for this has

been given in Chapter Three. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the student has come from primary school with a foundation of oral English which may sometimes be strong and upon which some building of reading skills has already been done. Unfortunately, the foundation is often non-standard.

It is possible for persons to learn to read with no oral background, as in the case of the deaf, and with a weak and incorrect oral background, as in the case of those who study a foreign language for a reading knowledge only. The ideal, however, as agreed upon by most authorities both in the field of linguistics and reading, is a near-native ability in the oral language. "The first step to fluent reading is the oral mastery of language forms which the student subsequently learns to recognize in the printed script."[9]

A number of writers have mentioned the importance of a strong and correct oral foundation for the building of reading skills. Among those referred to in preparation of this study are Betts, Bumpass, Capps, Ives, Lado, Lefevre, Lloyd, Marquardt, Mayer, McKee, and Thonis.[10]

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[9]Wilga M. Rivers, _Teaching Foreign-Language Skills_ (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 221.

[10]Emmett Albert Betts, "A New Area: Reading and Linguistics," _Education_, 84:9 (May, 1964), pp. 515-520; Faye L. Bumpass, "Adapting the Reading Program to the Needs of Non-English Speaking Children," in _Vistas of Reading_, ed. by J. Allen Figurel (Newark, Delaware:

It must be said also that all writers do not

agree with this position. Bedford, Burling, and Eskey[11]

are notable among those who would minimize the importance

of oral background. They base their positions on the

fact that there have been cases of successful reading

in a foreign language without the readers being able to

understand or speak it or that many readers of a foreign

language have no need at all to learn to understand or

speak it. In view of the important position which Eng-

lish holds in Nigeria it seems that secondary students

need to be able to understand and speak, as well as read

and write English. Furthermore, the evidence is over-

whelming that a strong oral foundation does contribute

to better reading ability.

International Reading Association, 1967), pp. 366-369; Capps, op. cit.; Sumner Ives and Josephine Piekarz Ives, "Lin-guistics and Reading," in Linguistics in School Programs, ed. by Albert H. Marckwardt (Chicago: University of Chi-cago Press, 1970), pp. 243-263; Robert Lado, Language Teaching: A Scientific Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1964); Lefevre, op. cit.; Donald Lloyd, "Intonation and Reading," Education, 84:9 (May, 1964), pp. 538-541; William F. Marquardt, "Linguistics and Reading Instruction," in Recent Developments in Reading, ed. by H. Alan Robinson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 112-121; Mayer, op. cit.; McKee, op. cit.; Thonis, op. cit.

[11]Richard C. Bedford, "The Aural-Oral Approach Re-viewed," English Teaching Forum, VII (May-June, 1969), pp. 2-5, 10; Robbins Burling, "Some Outlandish Proposals for the Teaching of Foreign Languages," Language Learning, XVIII, (June, 1968), pp. 61-75; David E. Eskey, "Teaching Advanced Reading: The Structural Problem," in Report on a Seminar in Reading, ed. by David E. Eskey and Michael Smithies (Bangkok: English Language Center, 1970), pp. 209-228.

Sounds as symbols of thoughts.--The more correct
the oral English foundation, the more reliable will be
those sounds (phonemes) which serve as symbols of the
thought process behind them. Although these symbols are
arbitrary, they are systematic within a language and
different from language to language. It stands to rea-
son then, that the more perfectly an individual perceives,
retains, and uses the phonemes as symbols of a language
the more perfect his understanding of that language may
become.

Phoneme-grapheme encoding.--The phonemes of lan-
guage are symbolized by the written or printed graphemes
which are also arbitrary, systematic, and different. In
perceiving, retaining, and using the graphemes as symbols
of the phonemes which are, in turn, symbols of the thought
process, the individual may be said to be reading. The
thought process is sometimes said to be encoded in pho-
nemes which are further encoded in graphemes. Capps
states that the reader "must learn to decode the visual
symbols of reading into meaningful sound symbols."[12] Mar-
quardt[13] and Ives[14] hold similar views. These positions,
however, do not imply that the reading process is merely

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[12]Capps, op. cit., p. 251.

[13]Marquardt, op. cit., p. 117.

[14]Ives and Ives, op. cit., p. 255.

decoding without attention to meaning. Neither is it established that vocalization or subvocalization is necessary to the decoding sequence from grapheme to thought in the mind of the silent reader, especially in the case of the mature, efficient, and rapid reader.

Intonational meaning.--In addition to providing the sound symbols for thought and the basis for phoneme-grapheme relations, a strong and correct oral English foundation reveals the intonational aspects of English. Intonation underlies and reveals the language structure. With its variations of pitch, stress, and juncture, intonation provides the "tune" which distinguishes a particular language.

Native language intonation interferes with the second language reading process just as do native language phonemes. To consider one feature, for example, English is described as a stress-timed language in that a sentence is divided into phonological phrases, sometimes called phonemic clauses, each of which has only one syllable bearing the loudest or strongest stress. Generally, the same amount of time tends to elapse between stressed syllables although the number of syllables in a phonological phrase may vary from one to several. Many Nigerian languages, on the other hand, are described as syllable-timed languages. In these, each syllable requires about the same amount of time for pronunciation and stressed

syllables, if the language provides for such, may occur quite differently from the timed regularity of English. If, therefore, the foreign speaker imposes syllable timing on English phrases he may be rendered relatively incomprehensible to his native English speaking listener even though his phonemic inventory is fairly correct.[15]

Native speakers of English who have spent several years in Nigeria and have still suffered the embarassment of being unable to understand what an English-speaking Nigerian has said, especially in a public gathering, have probably experienced a demonstration of the imposed syllable-timed phenomenon. Perhaps later investigation revealed that the speaker's pronunciation was fairly correct, but the interference of one feature of his native system of intonation in that setting negated much of the ability he had. Nigerian students have testified that they experience the same difficulties in understanding native speakers of English.

Intonation is, of course, an audible phenomenon. It is indicated to a limited extent in written English through punctuation, and structure words provide additional hints. However, a reader of the language cannot employ intonation with accuracy merely by observing

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[15]Elizabeth Dunstan, ed., _Twelve Nigerian Languages_ (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1969), pp. 22, 29-30; Carl A. Lefevre, "A Symposium on Reading Theory," _Journal of Reading Behavior_, 1:1 (Winter, 1969), p. 6; Lloyd, _op. cit._, pp. 539-540.

punctuation and knowing the structure words. Features
not indicated by the written language must be inductively
learned through practice in hearing and speaking the lan-
guage, prefereably as modelled by a native or near-native
speaker. "Before we can teach our foreigner to read
English, we must teach him to produce and react to basic
spoken English with something approaching the ease of a
native."[16] Intonation must, therefore, be so well inter-
nalized that it contributes to the reader's understanding
of a passage even though he reads silently.

Experiences

Essential aids to comprehension.--A strong oral
English foundation and the individual's intellectual and
physical abilities alone are not enough to provide a
sufficient background for reading skills development.
Life experiences relevant to the material being read
are also necessary. For example, Nigerian students read-
ing about snow have a very difficult time comprehending
what snow is when they have had no experience with it.
Though their use of oral English may be excellent, their
lack of experience with snow will prevent comprehension
when they try to read about it.

Interesting parallels in experience-reading rela-
tionships are seen between the problems which are encoun-
tered by Nigerian secondary school students and those

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[16]Mayer, op. cit., p. 246.

students termed "disadvantaged" in American schools.

Cohen cites Bernstein with reference to features found

in the restricted language of disadvantaged children which

sound strangely like many of the language features of Ni-

gerian students. He mentions short, grammatically simple

sentences that stress the active voice, poor syntax, ten-

dency toward repetitive conjunctions, avoidance of subor-

dinate constructions, inability to maintain the same

subject through a sequence of reasonable length, scarcity

of adjectives and adverbs, and repetition of a limited

number of idiomatic expressions.[17] Spache mentions "the

handicaps imposed by the inadequate language experiences

of the bilingual, the culturally deprived, or the foreign-

born child" upon the child's chances for success in read-

ing.[18]

Scholars concerned with the problems of home and

community environment on American children's ability to

read give evidence that those children in need of compen-

satory education come from homes where there is little

conversation which stimulates the children to think and

ask questions. The parents do not employ highly verbal

styles of communication with the children, thereby

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[17]S. Alan Cohen, _Teach Them All to Read_ (New York:
Random House, 1969), pp. 22-23.

[18]George D. Spache, "Contributions of Allied Fields
to the Teaching of Reading," in _Innovation and Change in
Reading Instruction_, ed. by Helen M. Robinson (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 266.

indirectly failing to teach the children various reasoning processes. Nor do these families provide many learning experiences through such things as toys and visits to interesting places.[19] If children who are native speakers of English are handicapped in their ability to comprehend what they read by reason of lack of experience, how much greater will be the handicap of the non-native speaker of English whose home has quite naturally and understandably failed to provide life experiences relevant to English reading.

Soffietti calls attention to the fact that a paucity of relevant experience causes the reader to rely more heavily on vocalized clues and prevents his rapid maturation in silent reading.[20] Cohen points out that these experiences are needed during the crucial early years of development and asks whether education can even hope to compensate for the omission. He believes that relevant life experiences are more vital to reading comprehension than is correctness of oral pronunciation.[21] Drawing upon her experience in teaching English as a second language to bilingual American Indians, Capps

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[19]Several of these studies are reported in S. Alan Cohen, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

[20]James P. Soffietti, "Why Children Fail to Read: A Linguistic Analysis," Harvard Educational Review, XXV (Spring, 1955), p. 70.

[21]S. Alan Cohen, op. cit., pp. 24-25, 73.

discusses the importance of experiences and says they
may be "real, vicarious, or synthetic."[22]

Limited foreign language relevance.--None of Ni-
geria's school children is completely devoid of life
experiences. Rather, the experiences which they have
had do not coincide with the sorts of experiences called
for in comprehending the material they read. Each cul-
ture produces its own experiences definable and explain-
able in its own language. Speaking from an African point
of view, Diop notes that "many of the expressions in
Western languages do not exist in African languages as
well as certain concepts or generic terms."[23]

The absence of experiences which could give the
reader a backlog of information to draw upon for reading
comprehension further weakens his overall background for
skills development. As has been seen, the acquisition
of sufficient experiences of this nature is difficult.
Nevertheless, the matter of lack of experience is a
problem which the reading teacher must recognize and try
to deal with.

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[22]Capps, op. cit., p. 251.

[23]Abdoulaye Diop, "African Sociology and Methods
of Research," in Readings in African Psychology, ed. by
Frederic R. Wickert (East Lansing, Michigan: African
Studies Center, 1967), pp. 239-240.

Nigerian students' backgrounds

Although a good oral English foundation is essential for the easiest and most efficient development of reading skills, most Nigerians who have completed primary school and who enter secondary school do so with limited ability in comprehending and reproducing good oral English.

Obviously, limited oral English facility has its restraining effect on reading development. If a student has an incomplete inventory of English phonemes at his command he will be faced in his reading with certain graphemic symbols for which he has no phonemic correspondents. He then is likely to substitute phonemes from his native language inventory. For good reading comprehension he must be able to discriminate between any two English phonemes--however slight the difference may be--as long as the difference can produce different meanings in two words which are identical except for these phonemes. Not only must he be able to recognize the correct phonemes which the graphemes represent, he must be able to do this silently and mentally and rapidly enough to prevent any interruption of the total process. Often he must retain certain phonemes and the thoughts which they help represent in his memory long enough to make other observations which confirm his recognition.[24] This is not easy when

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[24]Rivers, op. cit., p. 220.

native language sound systems which are much stronger in the reader's mind tend to override features of the new sound system, thereby confusing comprehension.

If difficulty is experienced by second language learners in comprehending oral English in which the features of intonation are more evident, the possibility of misunderstanding may be even greater in written English where there is much less to indicate the presence of intonation. These problems further emphasize the importance of an adequate oral English background which can exert influence on the understanding and use of English patterns of intonation.

Observation has shown that Nigerian students reading material depicting a foreign setting have difficulty understanding those cultural features which lie outside their experiences. For example, their lack of experience in the American culture can cause them to interpret the absence of many formal greetings in American English as an indication of bad manners and rudeness.

Beginning Reading Skills

In seeking to determine which reading skills would be most beneficial for Nigerian secondary school readers of English to develop and the best ways of development, one is faced with a multiplicity of skills. Thonis

says two hundred skills have been identified.[25] Some

scholars feel that one should not think in terms of skills

but rather of sub-skills--often in rather minute detail.[26]

Others consider this an impossible approach[27]--especially

with older learners who have some experience in reading--

and advocate taking a rather broad and general approach

to developing skills, only dealing with lesser sub-skills

if a student's need warrants it.

Goodman feels that strategy should be taught rather

than skills. He contends that no reader uses all the

clues available to him in reading a given selection and

should therefore be taught which clues are the most pro-

ductive to follow.[28] This approach, however, avoids the

problem of the student who does not know the skills which

initially furnish him the clues.

Whatever approach is finally taken, the teacher

will need to know a number of skills in order to teach

them to students and to advise students which skills may

be appropriate for use in solving a particular reading

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[25]Thonis, _op. cit._, p. 136.

[26]Sister Mary Julitta, _op. cit._, p. 44; Robert Karlin, "Teaching Reading in High School," _Education_, 84:6 (February, 1964), p. 336.

[27]Kenneth S. Goodman, "Psycholinguistic Universals in the Reading Process," _Journal of Typographic Research_, 4:2 (Spring, 1970), p. 109; Thonis, _loc. cit._

[28]Goodman, _op. cit._, p. 107.

problem. First, consideration is given to two general means by which a reader is helped in identifying a strange printed word as being one he already has in his spoken vocabulary.

Whole word method

The whole word method seeks to help students memorize complete words for subsequent automatic recognition in reading material. This method is commended by some psychologists as being a good example of associative learning in which the new stimulus--the sight of the written word which the pupil does not know--is presented simultaneously with the response to the old--the sound of the word which the pupil already knows.[29] This is usually done by the teacher showing the student the written word while pronouncing it. Picture clues may also be used. Various sorts of drills may be engaged in over a period of time until it is rather certain that the student can recognize the word without delaying to puzzle over it. This method seems especially useful in identifying words which are irregular in their phoneme-grapheme relationship. Many readers find that the whole word method is more applicable to the identification of

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[29]Irving H. Anderson and Walter F. Dearborn, "The Psychology of Learning to Read," in Teaching Reading: Selected Materials, ed. by Walter B. Barbe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 12.

function or structure words.[30]

Extensive use has apparently been made of the
whole word or look-and-say method of teaching English
reading in Nigerian primary schools.[31] The look-and-say
method may be easier for a non-native-English speaking
teacher to administer than another method which relies
heavily on correct phoneme reproduction. Furthermore,
the ease with which the method fits into an overall
memorization syndrome which seems prevalent in Nigerian
society and schools must not be forgotten.

The whole word method is generally not refined
in its application in Nigerian primary schools. Teachers
and pupils do not seem to realize its limitations but
instead attempt to use it almost exclusively rather than
confining its use to certain types of words. This whole-
sale approach even appears to work for some students
until they have reached a seeming saturation point beyond
which they are unable to cope with an unwieldly number
of single words memorized in isolation.

Immediately certain problems are highlighted.
One of these is the danger of perpetuation of a word-by-
word reading style which is termed by Unoh "a symptom of

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[30]_Infra_, p. 108.

[31]_Supra_, p. 53.

backwardness in reading."[32] This style is almost totally

lacking in meaning for the reader, both because the words

have been learned as individual words and because the prin-

ciples of intonation are inoperative.[33] Chapman-Taylor

points out that word-by-word readers are very slow read-

ers.[34] Durr warns that overuse of the method may delay

or prevent learners from acquiring more efficient methods

and that the importance of meaning is neglected.[35]

Despite its limitations, the method will probably

continue to be used for some time to come in the Nigerian

primary school. It would be desirable if its use could

be confined to those structure words which are irregular

in spelling and if such words were always introduced in

context. Other methods of word identification could be

taught simultaneously.

The secondary school teacher in Nigeria will

probably find his students have almost reached the satu-

ration point with memorized words. He will need to spend

a great deal of time developing other skills which have

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[32]S. O. Unoh, The Study of Reading (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, 1968), p.12.

[33]Lloyd, op. cit., p. 540.

[34]Yvonne Chapman-Taylor, "The Reading Difficulties of University Students and Their Significance for Teaching Reading," in English Language Teaching in Nigeria (Supplement), ed. by Robert Jacobs (Mimeographed), p. 97.

[35]Durr, op. cit., p. 103.

been neglected earlier.

Word attack skills

There are several word attack skills which a reader may apply to words whose written forms are unfamiliar to him. Immature readers who do not possess these skills often guess, skip over, or miscall such words. Although these skills are more helpful to beginning readers--mature readers having moved from a process of identification to one of recognition--it is quite likely that they will need to be taught to Nigerian secondary school students who might not have learned them previously. Even mature readers occasionally make use of such skills in identifying strange words.

Phonics.--(1) Phoneme-grapheme correspondence. One device which may be used to identify an unfamiliar word is breaking the word into its sound components. This involves learning phoneme-grapheme correspondences. However, letters and sounds do not consistently and exclusively represent each other in English.[36] These inconsistencies constitute a problem for the teaching of phonics and for the reading process.

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[36]Lynn Goldberg and Donald Rasmussen, "Linguistics and Reading," in Barbe, op. cit., p. 370; Lefevre, Linguistics, op. cit., pp. 165-167; John O. O. Abiri, "Evidence Presented Before the Ford Foundation Survey Team Investigating the Problems and Needs Relating to the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Nigeria," in Jacobs, (Supplement), op. cit., p. 70.

(2) Phonic generalization. It is possible to teach students certain phonic generalizations for both consonant and vowel sounds. Considerable doubt is expressed concerning the use of generalizations as they are seldom completely reliable. Clymer found that only eighteen of forty-five commonly-used generalizations were useful or proved correct in at least seventy-five per cent of a selected list of words whose spellings could be classified with the generalization.[37] Burmeister, on the other hand, devised a list of "particularly useful and valid generalizations" which she feels can still be taught without burdening the learner and without being too frequently inapplicable.[38] Smith agrees with Burmeister and suggests that the number of generalizations should be kept to a minimum and that teachers should revise the wording to make them applicable to more words. She further favors the teaching of phonic generalizations through several word examples rather than teaching children to memorize a rule.[39] It should also be noted that

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[37]Theodore Clymer, "The Utility of Phonic Generalizations in the Primary Grades," in Durr, op. cit., p. 111.

[38]Lou E. Burmeister, "Content of a Phonics Program Based on Particularly Useful Generalizations," in Reading Methods and Teacher Improvement, ed. by Nila Banton Smith (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1971), p. 27.

[39]Nila Banton Smith, "Strategies for Improving the Teaching of Decoding Skills," Ibid., p. 11.

generalizations can be further confusing to readers who may spend a lot of time trying to figure out whether a certain word is one of those to which the generalization applies.

McKee and Durr support a teaching emphasis on letter-sound correspondences for consonant sounds on the ground that these correspondences are more consistent than are those for vowels. Unfamiliar words in context can very often be figured out on the basis of consonant clues together with context, and pupils can usually make their own vowel generalizations from the words they learn.[40]

(3) Word families. Phoneme-grapheme correspondences can be extended to the learning of word families. This involves teaching the pupils to memorize the identical portions of several words which rhyme and whose rhyming elements are identically spelled.[41] Complete word identification is then made by using phoneme-grapheme correspondences for the unlike portions of the words.

Context clues.--Another skill often employed for identifying words which are contained in the learner's

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[40]McKee, op. cit., pp. 101-111; Durr, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

[41]Arthur W. Heilman, "Linguistic Approaches to Reading--An Evaluation," in Freedom and Education, ed. by Helen Huus (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), p. 106.

oral vocabulary but not in his reading vocabulary is the use of context clues. This involves teaching the learner to figure out which word can occupy the space of the unknown word by satisfying all the clues which are evident. Smith cites several studies which support the value of using context clues.[42]

In the method advocated by McKee and Durr the context is important in helping to determine which word is needed to fill the space. The sight and sound of the initial consonant letter, as well as of additional consonant letters within the word if needed, furnish further clues.[43] To this McKee would add teaching the use of a single neutral vowel sound to be used simply as a trial sound for vowel letters.[44] It is felt that the learner quickly substitutes the correct sounds after a trial or two. This method has its limitation when two words identical except for vowel sounds could satisfy the requirements of the context. However, such cases would be infrequent.

A further context clue which might be used with older, more sophisticated students, as in the case of many learners of a second language, has to do with helping the

[42]Smith, op. cit., pp. 6-9.

[43]McKee, op. cit., p. 78; Durr, op. cit., p. 104.

[44]McKee, op. cit., p. 105.

learner to be aware of the function which the unidentified word is expected to fulfill. Those who have learned something of grammar and word functions can often recognize that a noun or a verb, for example, is required to complete the meaning of the sentence or portion of a sentence. This clue, combined with others, can help in determining the identity of the strange word.

Syllabication.--Some methods of identifying words employ the use of syllabication. In this method learners are taught to break a word into syllables to facilitate pronunciation. Once pronunciation is achieved, the word is identified when the meaning of the oral word already exists in the mind of the learner. Syllabication involves knowledge of phoneme-grapheme correspondences, including some phonic generalizations, in addition to some generalizations concerning the breaking of the word into syllables.

Sometimes employed as a kind of syllabication is the use of knowledge of word roots and affixes which often constitute separate syllables of a word. Affixes are probably more helpful when the learner can identify them as effecting modifications of words which he has previously identified.

Compound words.--An additional device which might be used in identifying a strange printed word whose oral meaning is already familiar to the learner is the breaking

of a compound word into its components. In this case,
the separate parts of the word are known to the learner
but he has not learned to see them as parts of the whole.

This method is not to be confused with the idea
of teaching students to find small words within larger
ones. This latter practice is confusing more often
than it is helpful. The pronunciation of the smaller
word often does not coincide with that of the correspond-
ing part of the larger word. Furthermore, the beginning
and end of the smaller word often violates the normal
syllable division of the larger word. Further confusion
can arise concerning the meaning of the larger word
when this means of identification is used.

Nigerian students' beginning reading skills

Nigerian primary school pupils generally have
limited mastery of beginning reading skills, especially
word attack skills. Even those completing secondary
school do not usually give the impression of having
developed adequate command of these skills.

Instruction in phonic skills would be appro-
priate and helpful especially insofar as it could be
co-ordinated with oral language instruction. Minimal
pairs drills are designed to increase the learner's
awareness, discrimination, and usage of those sounds of
a second language which he tends to confuse or which do

not exist in his native language. Training in phonic
skills could easily be incorporated into such drills.
Training would be limited, however, as minimal pairs
drills are usually designed for troublesome sounds only
and do not cover all phoneme-grapheme correspondences.
All phonic skills can probably be taught as part of an
integrated program designed to develop a strong oral
language background for reading.

Teaching the use of context clues to Nigerian
secondary school students will be limited by the stu-
dents' lack of experiences which are needed to supply
meaning to the context. Bond states that "basically,
the meanings of words are derived from experience."[45]
Further limitation is imposed by the students' usually
meager inventory of usage vocabulary. The range of
words from which they can choose to complete a given
context is frequently limited.

The teaching of syllabication is often helpful
in teaching pronunciation as a part of oral language
development. Its teaching can very well be approached
in such a way as to enhance its usefulness in the read-
ing process.

In summary, the general impression is that word
attack skills are probably not taught to any great extent

[45]Bond and Tinker, op. cit., p. 275.

in Nigerian primary schools--the whole word method being
used rather exclusively. Whatever the case, word attack
skills do not appear to be refined and are not developed
to the point of being automatic tools ready for use by
the reader if needed.

Literal Comprehension

Nigerian secondary school students can be taught
certain skills which will enable them to pronounce strange
printed words creditably. They may not truly be reading,
however, if an insufficient number of words have meaning
for them. A common source of amusement among teachers
of English is the fact that Nigerian students, and oc-
casionally more prominent figures, seem to have an
affinity for trying to learn how to pronounce impressive-
sounding words--bombastic but devoid of meaning for the
user and most of his listeners. It is quite possible for
a person to master the sound system of a foreign language,
especially if there are relatively consistent phoneme-
grapheme correspondences to the extent that he can "read"
to the satisfaction of a native listener who will gain
meaning from what he "reads". However, the "reader" may
not know the meaning of a single word he pronounces.

When a reader lacks the ability to comprehend
the meaning of words which he pronounces, additional read-
ing skills need to be taught and employed. The ability

to employ the skills previously discussed are useless if
a particular word is not already in the reader's usage
vocabulary--if it does not have meaning for him.

Word meanings

Relevant vocabulary.--English word meanings can
hold considerable trouble for Nigerian secondary school
readers. If a student, in the course of his whole word
memorization, has encountered and remembered a word, he
usually has memorized only one meaning per word. Chapman-
Taylor believes this is the reason Nigerian university
students sometimes appear to do well on vocabulary tests
per se but do poorly on comprehension tests which employ
the same vocabulary words in different contextual mean-
ings.[46] The student becomes aware in the course of his
reading that the meaning he has learned is not relevant
to the context. Though he is able to pronounce the word
since it is one he has previously identified, his lack
of literal comprehension of the word stymies his reading
process until he is able to determine an additional and
acceptable meaning.

Context.--The use of context clues can be very
helpful in finding word meaning if the reader's experi-
ences are sufficient to give meaning to the context.

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[46]Chapman-Taylor, "Reading Difficulties," op. cit.
p. 95.

Spache cites research by Weaver which indicates that,
"when there is bilateral context (context on either side
of the unknown or missing word) the five words immediate-
ly before and the five words after the unknown word are
most crucial to the reader's success in dealing with it."[47]
If the clues provided by context immediately adjacent to
the word are insufficient to enable the reader to deter-
mine its meaning, additional clues can often be found in
other portions of the reading selection.

In the interest of continuity and reading speed
the reader is usually advised to hold in abeyance the
identification of an unknown word in the hope that subse-
quent context will help provide meaning for it. This ad-
vice may not be easy for a second language reader to fol-
low in view of the general weakness of his experience
background, the narrowness of the range of meanings within
which he operates, and the shorter-than-normal memory
span which he has in a second or foreign language. He
does need to be taught, however, that context can provide
good clues to word meaning so that he may gradually in-
crease his ability to use it as he becomes stronger in
those features which will permit its use.

English word structure.--A knowledge of certain
structural features of English words can help the reader

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[47]Spache, op. cit., p. 267.

discover the meaning of a word which he does not know. Ability to recognize a root meaning within a word can be the means of finding the meaning of the whole word. Knowing how new words are constructed and meanings altered by the use of affixes also provides help. English language structures for denoting such things as singular and plural and for indicating tenses of verbs can provide clues to the meanings of words. Lefevre provides a full discussion of these structural elements and the words to which they apply.[48]

The dividing of compound words into their two separate words may provide a clue to the meaning of the full word. This, of course, is helpful only when the compound word embodies or clearly suggests the meaning of its parts. Similarly, knowledge of the way contractions are formed provides a clue to the meaning of the contraction.

Dictionary usage.--In learning the meanings of words a dictionary can always be consulted. Readers are usually advised to use the dictionary as a last resort when other devices have failed. Taking time to look up a word breaks the continuity of reading and detracts from the pleasure of reading. The second language

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[48]Lefevre, Linguistics, op. cit., pp. 145-162.

reader, however, will be more dependent on his dictionary than will the first language reader. Although it may sometimes be necessary, every effort should be made to encourage the development and use of other skills which will make referral to the dictionary less necessary.

Thought groups and sentences

Of greater value in second language reading than the ability to find the meanings of single words is the ability to understand the meanings of thought groups and complete sentences. This is especially true in light of the importance of intonation in making meaning known. Many second language readers do not read in thought units, probably due to the way they have been taught to read. Buswell points out that "short phrases of familiar words can be recognized almost as easily as single words."[49] If students are taught to see and read in thought groups their reading ability will be greatly enhanced since these groups carry the meanings of English.

Intonation.--Intonation itself furnishes clues as to which words group together by laying emphasis upon the single strongly stressed syllable in a phonological phrase. Without intonation, as in the case of word-by-word reading, words seem to run together and it is

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[49]Guy T. Buswell, "The Process of Reading," in Barbe, op. cit., p. 6.

difficult for a native speaker to gain meaning when hearing

that sort of reading. Without the benefit of intonation,

the second language reader is denied much of the meaning

intrinsic to English intonation.[50]

Word order.--Word order is another indicator of

meaning within thought groups. The relative positions

which various words occupy in a thought group and the

functions of the words in these positions are strong in-

dicators of meaning for the native speaker and reader.

For example, the fact that modifiers usually precede

the modified word in English makes understanding diffi-

cult for speakers of languages whose modifiers usually

follow the word modified. Confusion of milk chocolate

and chocolate milk or watch pocket and pocket watch are

simple illustrations. Sensitivity to English word order

can help a second language reader find better understand-

ing of what he reads.

Structure words.--Structure words also give in-

dications of meaning. These words point to the divisions

of thought groups and the functions of other words.[51]

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[50]Lloyd, op. cit., pp. 539-540; Jean G. Pival,
"Stress, Pitch and Juncture: Tools in the Diagnosis and
Treatment of Reading Ills," Elementary English, 45 (April,
1968), p. 458.

[51]Henry T. Fillmer, "Linguistics and Reading Com-
prehension," Education 86:3 (November, 1965), p. 160.

There is evidence that the reader searches for structure words in arranging the material which he reads into thought groups.[52] Learning to identify these words quickly and knowing their function can help in the process. Lefevre classifies them as noun markers, verb markers, phrase markers, clause markers, and question markers. He believes these classifications include almost all the important structure words of which he estimates there are approximately three hundred in English.[53] Since many of the structure words are not spelled regularly, they often are taught by the sight method early in the reading process. As these words are without significant meaning when they stand alone it is desirable that they be taught as parts of thought groups. This method, in itself, can aid comprehension of the meanings of thought groups as opposed to single words.

Punctuation.--The most obvious indicator of thought groups is punctuation. Yet the English language uses relatively few punctuation marks. While those which are used are important and should be observed as a means of arranging thought groups, they give little help with the general patterns of intonation within a sentence. They do stand, however, as one kind of assistance which readers

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[52]Lefevre, Linguistics, op. cit., p. 81

[53]Ibid., p. 119.

can use in understanding the material being read.

Predicting.--Some scholars believe that the reader

goes through a series of predictions and guesses based

upon the clues which he recognizes and is able to use.[54]

More mature readers who have more clues at their disposal

and who are experienced in their use actually need to

make use of fewer of the clues.[55] The increased experi-

ence of mature readers enables them to skip over certain

parts of the process. Those who support this theory of

reading state that the reader is constantly searching,

visually and mentally, for clues or cues, as they are

often called. As clues are found, predictions are made

by the reader based upon his previous reading experience.

Predictions are then held in the reader's memory awaiting

their confirmation or rejection. In the case of rejec-

tion, another clue is sought for. The entire process is,

of course, taking place at incredible speed.

The reader who has fewer skills within his grasp

is not able to find as many clues nor to evaluate them

[54]Goodman, "Psycholinguistic Universals," op. cit.,
p. 104; Kenneth S. Goodman, "Reading: A Psycholinguistic
Guessing Game," Journal of the Reading Specialist, 6:4
(May, 1967), pp. 134-135; Carlos Alfredo Yorio, "Some
Sources of Reading Problems for Foreign-Language Learn-
ers," Language Learning, 21:1, p. 108

[55]Yvonne Chapman-Taylor, "University of Ibadan
Reading Centre: Report on Pilot Study," in Jacobs, op.
cit., p. 110.

as rapidly as a more mature reader. He is also more apt
to make mistakes in his evaluation. The reduced memory
span of a second language learner with reference to the
elements of the second language also militates against
rapid and efficient use of the predicting process in
reading.

Nigerian students and literal comprehension.--The
Nigerian secondary school student is generally ineffici-
ent in the use of skills aimed at determining word mean-
ing. Having been taught to read by a look-and-say method
which usually presents one meaning for each word, reading
knowledge for many of them consists of a patchwork of
single words. Furthermore, words are often learned in
isolation in vocabulary lists which offer no contextual
clues to meanings. Therefore, the ability of Nigerian
students to operate as readers at the thought group or
sentence level is greatly inhibited as is their overall
scope of meaning concepts in English.

Lack of knowledge and inappropriate use of Eng-
lish intonation patterns are definitely problems for
Nigerian secondary school students in trying to read
English. The knowledge of the effects of word order and
various structures of English, both at the phrase and
sentence levels, appears to be scant.

The lack of meaningful experiences also reduces

students' usage vocabularies. Had the privilege of certain experiences been theirs, they would have acquired vocabulary to describe them. Vocabulary acquired under such conditions is more easily retained by the learner.

Methods of teaching reading and the absence of relevant experiences once again have inhibited the development of good reading--this time in the area of literal comprehension. The secondary school teacher in Nigeria must learn to recognize these weaknesses and plan for their correction.

Interpretative Comprehension

When a strong foundation of oral English and relevant experiences has been laid and when the second language reader is equipped with skills to enable him to identify words and discover their meanings, he is then ready to proceed further in his reading into interpretative comprehension. Although less mature students are often introduced to some of the aspects of interpretative comprehension on a limited scale, secondary school students in Nigeria need to exercise considerable facility if they are to make full use of the reading process in studying and examination preparation.

It has been pointed out that Nigerian secondary school students can find their days of study much easier and more pleasant and can approach their examinations

with far less anxiety if they learn to read and study
properly. By applying various thought processes to
understanding and relating the required study material
rather than continuing to rely largely on memorization,
students can gain significantly in reading ability.
Chapman-Taylor of the Faculty of Education, University
of Ibadan, notes: "All factors that lead to rote learn-
ing lead to bad study habits and bad reading habits, and
bad study and reading habits lead to rote learning."[56]
Investigation of some of the skills of interpretative
comprehension seeks to bring them closer to the possi-
bility of the kind of reading and studying which depends
upon and furthers creative thinking.

Organizational perception

Nigerian students need to be trained in the abi-
lity to detect, understand, and use certain organiza-
tional arrangements found in written material in English.
Their ability to do this can positively affect their
ability to understand, remember, and relate what they
read to other knowledge they have. In addition to being
able to recognize organizational devices they will need
to be able to outline and summarize mentally, doing this
simultaneously with the entire reading process.

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[56]R. Chapman-Taylor, "Notes on Reading," in
Jacobs, op. cit., p. 77.

<u>Main and supporting ideas</u>.--As a first step
toward gaining organizational acuity, they need to know
how to detect main and supporting ideas in paragraphs
and in larger units of a complete written work. Further
perception of the arrangement which the writer has used
will aid in finding out reasoning processes employed in
the writing.

<u>Sequence and reasoning</u>.--Examples of types of
arrangement which students can be taught to look for are
chronological, geographical, topical, or logical--depend-
ing on the nature of the work and the purpose of the
writer. Arrangement can also be investigated for clues
to the writer's patterns of reasoning which might be
cause and effect, parts and wholes, induction, deduction,
comparison and contrast, or a combination of patterns.
Although all writing will not fall neatly into the sug-
gested categories of arrangement or reasoning, it is
worthwhile to teach maturing and sophisticated second
language readers to be aware of these devices in an ef-
fort to increase their abilities to understand what they
read.

<u>Predicting conclusions</u>.--As the readers increase
in ability and experience, they will begin to be able to
anticipate and predict conclusions which an author will
draw. Or they may be able to see flaws in his arrangement

and reasoning which lead to conclusions other than those he presented.

Problems of culture.--Many times native language readers find the processes of arrangement and especially those of reasoning difficult to follow. Second language readers find it far more difficult still since different cultures often follow completely different thought processes. Language, culture, and the thought processes are tightly bound together.[57] This factor further emphasizes the importance of life experiences which will prepare the reader for a more ready understanding of the thought processes and activities of other cultures. However, on numerous occasions even extensive experience may not make some occurrences clear to the reader. At this point, further explanation is needed by the teacher. Such explanation is usually more valuable if the teacher is a member of the second-language culture.

Reader's knowledge of self

Readers need to be aware that their own knowledge of themselves can often be a factor in interpretative

[57]Charles C. Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952), p. 57; Dorothy H. Cohen, "Language and Experience: The Setting," Childhood Education, 42:3 (November, 1965), p. 140; Wilmarth H. Starr, Mary P. Thompson, and Donald D. Walsh, "Objectives in Foreign Language Teaching," in Foreign Language Teaching: An Anthology, ed. by Joseph Michel (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 335; H. R. Huse, Reading and Speaking Foreign Languages (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1945), p. 12.

comprehension. Readers, being relatively subjective human beings, can benefit a great deal from the help of an understanding teacher in finding out about themselves. The final awareness and evaluation must, however, be the individual's own if he is to apply it in his reading efforts.

Discernment.--The reader needs to know whether he is able to discern truth, fiction, opinion, and propaganda. In a sense he needs to determine the degree of discernment he wishes to exercise in these areas. Personality factors may affect the degree he is able to achieve but he will probably not achieve much beyond his own goals. His discernment and reaction to what he discerns will greatly affect his reading comprehension.

Objectivity-subjectivity.--A perceptive teacher can help the reader observe and evaluate his balance of objectivity and subjectivity. This balance together with his beliefs and prejudices will certainly color his comprehension of what he reads. The reader's appreciation or lack of appreciation for certain types of writing will also affect his attitude toward the writing.

Reading purpose.--The reader--especially if he is a student--usually approaches a particular reading opportunity with a certain purpose. The purpose which

may be of his own or another's determination also has a bearing upon his outlook toward the selection to be read. It may range from one of obligation or drudgery to one of happy privilege. The reader's purpose, obviously, has much influence on what he accomplishes in reading a given selection.

Attitude toward the printed page.--The reader's general attitude toward the printed page is also of special importance to the Nigerian secondary school reader. It has been observed that the Nigerian student tends to believe everything that he sees in print.[58] Various conjectures are made as to why this tendency prevails. Some have felt it is related to a general scarcity of printed materials and an underlying feeling that something comparatively rare must be precious and above question as to authenticity. Others think that this untoward respect for the printed page stems from a belief that only that which is authentic reaches the status of print. Another manifestation of this attitude is seen when students seem more inclined to accept a printed untruth than an oral truth. Whatever the actual attitude and whatever the cause for it may be, students do need to be taught discretion in accepting

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[58]Chapman-Taylor, "Reading Difficulties," op. cit., p. 96; Robert Jacobs, English Language Teaching in Nigeria, (Mimeographed), p. 47.

printed matter.

Reader's knowledge of the writer

Although not as necessary as a knowledge of himself, the reader will frequently find knowledge of the writer a factor in some of his reading comprehension. A knowledge of the writer's qualifications often adds to or detracts from the credibility of what he has written. The writer's experience and biases often have an effect upon his writings and should be taken into consideration by the reader. If the reader is aware of the writer's purposes he might know whether to be on guard or prepared to give support. Knowledge of a writer's characteristic style or mood can alert the reader to what may be expected.

While it is true that most of the time the reader is not aware of the writer's particular credentials, he is usually informed if the writer has credentials to which he is expected to react favorably. Unfortunately, other information about the writer may not be so readily known unless the writer is a person of some repute. The type of reading material and the writer's purpose are keys to whether the reader should make special efforts to find out more about the writer.

Reader's knowledge of the material

Factors of circumstance.--Vital to full comprehension is a reader's knowledge about the material he is

reading and about features of language and writing which carry meaning outside that normally found merely in the words themselves. In the former category is information about how accurate the selection is in fact and interpretation. The date of the writing--whether recent or not-- might be of importance. Its relevance to a broader topic being studied and the sufficiency of its coverage are both points of consideration for certain materials under certain circumstances.

The environment in which a selection was written could have an effect on its credibility or the manner in which a reader should receive it. For example, did the writer compose in an atmosphere of freedom or under duress? Where was the selection written? The purposes for which it was written whether they are identical with the writer's purposes or not, furnish further insight into the material.

It is acknowledged that all or none of these factors may be relevant to the comprehension of a given selection at a given time. For those occasions when they are important the reader needs to know that such information may affect his interpretation.

Implied meanings.--More often important to the reader's interpretation than the writer's credentials

are devices inherent to the language and employed by the
writer to imply meaning. Connotative meanings of words
are in this category. Writers may also use sarcasm,
satire, irony, or other forms of inference and let these
devices say things for them which they choose not to say
directly. Readers may also encounter figures of speech
which defy powers of definition.

It would be impossible for a teacher to antici-
pate all the forms which devices of implied meaning
might take. Examples can be given to students but these
will probably prove insufficient when an actual case
arises in the course of the students' reading. Ideally,
a teacher who is a native speaker of the writer's lan-
guage would be present to provide as full an explanation
as may be required. When such a teacher is not avail-
able, students can find considerable help from an experi-
enced teacher who has probably encountered many of these
devices in the course of his own reading. Unfortunately,
such teachers are not plentiful for teaching readers of
English as a second language.

Idiom.--In a class to itself is idiom--that pecu-
liar and distinctive feature of language which enhances
its flavor but frustrates foreign language learners' un-
derstanding because the meanings of idiomatic expressions
are not derived from analyses of their constituent

elements. Writers of textbooks for students of English have attempted to collect lists of English idioms and rewrite them in understandable terms. These have been of tremendous help to students. There are handicaps, however. When a student encounters an idiom which he does not know he may wish to use a collection of idioms much as one would use a dictionary to assist in defining a word. This can be a very time-consuming process as idioms are hard to classify into an easy-to-find format. After a long search, the student may be disappointed to find that the idiom which is puzzling him was one of the scores not included in the particular collection. Idioms, like the forms of implied meaning already mentioned, should really be experienced to be learned. Unfortunately, idioms are seldom skillfully integrated into a foreigner's use of a language and their misuse or absence brands one as a non-native.

Visual aids.--Several forms of visual reading aids are sometimes included in printed matter. Maps, graphs, tables, and diagrams are used for organizing and presenting factual information in a concise manner. Special training is needed in their use. Students usually find that time spent in learning to read these aids accurately is well invested. They often develop and clarify points raised in the other parts of the

printed **text.** The skills needed to derive meaning from
such aids are frequently helpful in various subject con-
tent areas besides English and reading.

Another type of visual reading aid is found in
photographs, illustrations, and cartoons. Special in-
struction is not usually required for a reader to under-
stand photographs and illustrations. There are times,
however, when a reader's culture conditions him to get
distorted perceptions from such visual aids.

Cartoons are a different matter altogether. These
illustrations may often use layers of meaning which will
signify nothing to persons outside the culture of those
for whose attention they have been specifically drawn.
Humor is frequently one of the main elements of a cartoon
and **examples** are numerous to show that humor does not
easily translate from one language or culture to another.
Again, the services of a native speaker of the target
language or of an otherwise very experienced teacher
will be required.

Nigerian students and
interpretative comprehension

In this section difficult but important reading
skills have been outlined. Insuring mastery of these
skills for interpretative comprehension is probably more
important for the second language reader than for the
native language reader. The latter will have learned

many of them simply by growing up in the culture whose writers employ the various writing devices. Infinite imagination and patience is required on the part of second language students and teachers. Nigerian students will find themselves no more or less handicapped than any other non-native reader of English with the exception of those learners whose cultures are more similar to that of native English speakers. Cultural interferences inhibit interpretative comprehension as much as any other factor in the second language reading process.[59] Nevertheless, alert students aided by knowledgeable teachers can learn the means of correct interpretative comprehension.

Study Skills

Nigerian secondary school students are generally handicapped in their study skills in English. Examples and observations have already been cited which show that they generally read slowly with poor comprehension. Several commentators have called attention to the fact that they need advice and specific guidance and

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[59]Muriel R. Saville, "Interference Phenomena in Language Teaching: Their Nature, Extent, and Significance in the Acquisition of Standard English," Elementary English (March, 1971), p. 400; J. A. Bright and G. P. McGregor, Teaching English as a Second Language (London: Longmans, 1970), p. 55; Anne McKillop and E. A. Yoloye, "The Reading of University Students," in Jacobs, op. cit., p. 50.

instruction in co-ordinating reading rate, the material
to be read, and the purpose for reading.[60]

Whether and how to read

Often students need help in determining whether
a particular selection is pertinent to their needs and,
if so, how to read it. If students are taught to utilize
the organizational devices which writers use these can
be of assistance in making such decisions. The table of
contents, index, chapter title, and various sub-headings
are among writers' organizational devices.

A student's decision may be to skim--read rather
quickly merely to get an overview or preview of the con-
tents of the selection. Or his decision may be to scan--
read even more quickly with his eyes and mind fixed to
gather specific bits of information. On the other hand
he may decide to study the selection with care. This
will require a slower, more thorough reading with a high
degree of comprehension as a goal. On some occasions a
student may decide to read something for pleasure. His
rate should be fairly rapid without a great deal of worry
about comprehension. He will simply enjoy his reading.

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[60]C. N. Fyle, "Improving Reading Skills," West
African Journal of Education, IX (June, 1965), pp. 86-88;
McKillop and Yoloye, op. cit., p. 49; R. Chapman-Taylor,
op. cit., p. 77; Yvonne Chapman-Taylor, "Reading Diffi-
culties," op. cit., pp. 93-94.

SQ3R

Assuming that a student has selected material to read and has a purpose for general study, there are outlines which he may follow in making his reading as meaningful and valuable as possible. Both Unoh and Tabachnick, in considering the needs of Nigerian students, advise use of the SQ3R method.[61] "S" stands for survey and involves a quick look at such things as table of contents, introduction, and preface. This is followed by a skimming of the first chapter if the selection is a book, or of the entire selection if it is short enough. The survey step would, of course, be appropriately adapted for a shorter selection other than a book.

"Q" stands for questions. In this step the reader raises questions which he would like answered and which after his survey, he has reason to believe the writer will answer in the course of his study of the selection.

The first "R" is for reading. The student now reads the selection at a fairly careful pace and notes whether the writer does answer the questions the student previously raised and whether they are answered as he

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[61]Unoh, op. cit., pp. 31-32; B. Robert Tabachnick, "Improving Reading Skills," in A Language in Common: A Guide to English Language Teaching in Schools and Colleges, ed. by Brian Tiffen (London: Longmans, Green and Company, Ltd., 1969), pp. 150-151.

expected.

Recite is the second "R" and involves the student in reciting mentally or orally the information he has gained from the reading. This step together with the first "R" requires the student to engage in mental outlining and summarizing mentioned earlier.

Finally, the third "R" is for review or "revise" as it is termed in Nigeria. This step may take place immediately or after a period of time in order that the student's memory might be refreshed as needed.

Notetaking

The skill of note-taking for study purposes could easily be combined with the SQ3R plan. A written outline could follow and confirm the mental outline the student has made. The skills of finding main and supporting points and of following the writer's sequence of arrangement and pattern of reasoning will be used in note-taking. The notes will also assist the student in the follow-up of the third "R".

Following directions

A final comment concerning study skills has to do with following directions--a skill which teachers say Nigerian students are notoriously lacking. This is especially true at examination time when, ironically, failure to follow directions can assume near-fatal

proportions. The fault here seems to lie with the student's inability to organize sequentially as previously mentioned and with an eagerness to get into the questions of an examination while giving the instructions a swift glance in passing. Some external examiners, unfortunately, consider the ability to follow directions as one mark of intelligence and numerous marks are lost by students who fail to observe this criterion.

The best teaching of direction-following can naturally be done when the pressure of examination is not imminent. Clever exercises can be arranged which test whether the student is actually following instructions. Teachers can help students form the habit of following instructions by seeing to it that they do so in normal class assignments.

Oral Reading Skills

Brief mention must be made of oral reading skills. A student will not be called upon as frequently to read orally as to read silently. When he is called it should only be after he has had an opportunity to prepare silently. During his silent preparation he will, of course, use most of the skills already discussed.

Additional skills needed will be correct pronunciation and intonation which have been a part of the strong oral foundation advocated and which underlie the

student's ability to find meaning for his reading selec-

tion. His oral rendition should further reinforce this

foundation.[62] In his oral reading the student will be

conscious of the fact that his eyes and mind are ahead

of his voice in the reading process. They search for

clues and make predictions which must be confirmed, or

denied and replaced in order that meaning may be assigned

before it is time for his voice to express that meaning

in pronunciation and intonation.

Summary

Finocchario has summarized the discussion of

reading skills in her book Teaching English as a Second

Language as follows:

> In brief, it is evident that developing skills so
> that reading can be done independently, with ease
> and enjoyment; inculcating the habit of turning to
> books for information and evaluation; fostering an
> attitude of appreciation for the wide vistas that
> reading can open to the individual; . . . should
> constitute the fundamental goals of an effective
> reading program.[63]

The foregoing presentation of skills as they

particularly relate to Nigerian secondary school students

as readers of English as a second language form guidelines

for teaching reading which will satisfy such fundamental

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[62]Stanislov P. Kaczmarski, "Intensive Reading in
the Aural-Oral Program," English Teaching Forum VI:5
(September, October, 1968), p. 22.

[63]Mary B. Finocchiaro, Teaching English as a Sec-
ond Language (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. 136-137.

goals as these. Furthermore, this presentation can serve as a background against which qualified persons can devise methods and materials designed to enable these students to learn to read English quickly and easily. Thereby the task of reading will be made more rewarding and more pleasant. In the absence of expertly devised materials, teachers of reading of English as a second language can refer to the presentation of skills in selecting from existing materials and methods those which will be most helpful in teaching the skills.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

Limitations

Possible solutions for the English reading prob-
lems of Nigerian secondary school students are not easy
to suggest or to effect. The success of any proposed
solution depends upon many unpredictable factors. The
availability of teachers, materials, and money are sel-
dom certain. The attitude of students, parents, teach-
ers, Ministries of Education, and governments are equally
unsure. At best, one can propose and hope.

Attitudes

Students.--A basic element which affects any
proposal related to Nigerian students' proficiency in
English--whether oral usage or reading--concerns their
ways of thinking about English. While little particu-
lar antipathy toward English is evident, there often
seems to be a lack of seriousness about the study and
use of English. Secondary students are often playful
about their use of English and take delight in putting
English through all sorts of non-standard contortions--
partly for amusement and partly because their command

of standard English is normally rather weak. The attitude
of "getting by" with less than ones best is a secondary
school students' trait which dismays teachers. Of related
importance is the attitude of not wanting to give the ap-
pearance of having acquiesed to a vestige of colonialism--
the English language.

National leaders.--National leaders could do a
great deal to reorient attitudes. Most persons in places
of high responsibility in the nation use very good English
without apology, having overcome any ideas which might
equate using good English with allegiance to England.
They have conquered the English language and made it
their own and their country's servant. Probably for
reasons of political astuteness, however, they have been
reluctant to emphasize the importance of English as a
national language and to encourage its effective use.

Educational leaders.--Certain educational leaders
have been more positive in their positions and could well
be acting with the tacit approval of and under direction
from the government. English language is a required sub-
ject for the West African School Certificate Examination.
While passing English is not presently a prerequisite to
receiving a certificate, a candidate must have a credit
in English to receive a Division I certificate. Further-
more, it is expected that a compulsory oral English

examination will be introduced in the near future. It has been stated that the impact of such an examination on "educational thinking and teaching methods will profoundly affect the present direction of language teaching in the schools and guide teachers away from the sterile written response given in a comprehension exercise and towards a more dynamic approach to language."[1]

Open, high level support of the educators' stand is needed. Those in places of responsibility and authority must lend their influence to a nationwide campaign to make English truly a national language. Let English continually expand its role as a means of social intercourse among people of all Nigeria's diverse tribes and languages, but let is be a standard of English which is intelligible to English speakers from other nations of the world.

Idealism--realism

A second consideration relevant to proposals aimed at increasing proficiency in English seeks to differenti- ate what should be done and what can be done. An ideal solution may be practically impossible to achieve. The limitations of personnel, finances, and attitudes can severely circumscribe plans which might lead to desired development. Proposals must, therefore, be made with an

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[1]Peter A. Connell and James G. Snider, "Aural English Examinations in West Africa," Educational Research, 12 (June, 1970), p. 236.

eye to both idealism and realism.

Research

Another factor which affects the nature and relia-
bility of proposals is the lack of specific research data.
Teachers of English and reading in Nigeria have made ob-
servations and conjectures—a number of which are reflected
in this paper—as to the nature and causes of problems in
their fields. The fact that the observations and conjec-
tures, independently arrived at, often coincide and the
fact that they can often be logically supported tends to
give them credence. Nevertheless, adequate research evi-
dence could lead to firmer proposals and greater predicta-
bility of results.

Lefevre, writing about reading problems in general,
calls for study into how language is initially acquired
and the parallels between learning to talk and learning
to read.[2] In closing an article analyzing some aspects
of the reading process, Wardhaugh states, "The greatest
need at present is for empirical work in which linguists,
psychologists, and educators combine their insights in an
attempt to improve our understanding of the reading process

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[2]Carl A. Lefevre, "A Symposium on Reading Theory,"
Journal of Reading Behaviour, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter, 1969),
p. 7.

and the teaching of reading."[3]

Spache has commented that "significant reading research . . . is relatively scarce."[4] In calling for additional research, McKillop suggests a number of needs with reference to the reading of English in Nigeria:

> Many questions remain to be answered. We know very little about reading skills in a second language, both when the first is rarely used and when it continues to be used. What limits of speed are customarily reached? . . . What comprehension difficulties are prevalent? Does the reader of a second language ever attain the skill of the reader for whom that is a first language? . . .
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> . . . When shall we teach reading in the second language? Shall we teach reading first in the child's own language so he can gain fluency in the skill, confidence in his ability, and experience the pleasure of reading? Or shall we postpone all reading until the child knows some English and give the child his first reading lessons in English? Or shall we teach reading and English at the same time? Programs of instruction in schools are based on opinion regarding the superiority of one of these over the others. For a question as important as this we need an answer based on more than logical argument, personal experience, and opinion.[5]

As a result of the work of the English Language Teaching Survey Team in Nigeria, Jacobs calls for

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[3]Ronald Wardhaugh, "Linguistic Insights into the Reading Process," Language Learning XVIII (December, 1968), p. 252.

[4]George D. Spache, The Teaching of Reading (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., 1972), p. 151.

[5]Anne McKillop and E. A. Yoloye, "The Reading of University Students," in English Language Teaching in Nigeria, ed. by Robert Jacobs (Mimeographed supplement to special study report) (December, 1966), pp. 51-52.

additional research having to do with the problems of Nigerian students in comprehension and with techniques for overcoming such problems. He specifically mentions needs for well-developed tests, the standardizing of data for use in measuring abilities of students of various age and class levels, finding out the causes of Nigerian students' reading difficulties, determining how to improve reading speed without sacrificing comprehension, and developing new types of reading materials.[6]

It is not implied that nothing has been done or is being done in research and experimentation. For example, the Jacobs study details an impressive list of activities carried on by Nigerian universities and agencies such as the British Council, the Agency for International Development, the Peace Corps, the Ford Foundation, UNESCO, the Canadian Technical Assistance program, and voluntary agency schools.[7] The activities of such agencies, however, often take the form of teaching projects which provide opportunities for further valuable observation but seldom involve scientific research and experimentation. More extensive research is needed to provide more definitive directions for improvement.

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[6]Robert Jacobs, ed., English Language Teaching in Nigeria (Mimeographed) (September, 1966), p. 56.

[7]Ibid., pp. 119-128.

Proposals for Primary Schools

Idealism

Ideally, concerted and intensive efforts should be made at the primary school level to teach English as a second language, thereby providing the necessary strong oral foundation for reading development. In conjunction with this, there should be a program planned to teach the various skills necessary for good reading. The primary school age is the time during which children can best learn languages and can best learn beginning reading skills.

Were other circumstances favorable--a well-trained corps of versatile primary school teachers; all pupils in a given school of one native language; and adequate materials available in native languages--serious consideration might be given to the teaching of English as only a subject in those early primary school years. There is evidence that such an approach, well-administered by good teachers, could establish good language learning and reading habits in the native language which would transfer to the teaching of English as a subject and, later, to the use of English as the medium of education.[8]

It is doubtful whether the teaching of the native language and beginning reading in the native language

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[8] Eleanor Wall Thonis, Teaching Reading to Non-English Speakers (New York: Macmillan Co., 1970), pp. 107-108.

would be more detrimental to the later learning of Eng-
lish than is the present system. That the native language--
with any resultant interference it brings to the learning
of English--has already been learned before the child be-
gins primary school is a fact that cannot be altered.
Good teachers could use the occasion of teaching the
native language in the early primary school years to point
out in the native languages and English phonemic differ-
ences which are significant and which must be learned.
By beginning the study of English as a subject in the first
year of primary school and gradually changing to English
as the medium of education by the third year the teaching
of English as a second language would still occur during
the crucial years when a child is said to learn a second
language best.

Realism

With circumstances as they are, however, it seems
the basic practice employed in primary schools is pres-
ently the most practical. In many places, the pupil
population is linguistically mixed making it impossible
to teach in the native language of all the pupils. In
addition, primary school teachers are not yet trained
and skillful in the methods of second language teaching.
Finally, in view of the general level of primary school
English teaching, it is felt that the full six or seven

years of primary school are needed for pupils to acquire
enough English to take entrance examinations to secondary
schools.

If, then, it is realistic for primary schools to
continue teaching English as both a subject and medium
beginning as early as possible, then there is urgent need
for the improvement of this teaching. Evidently there
is need to provide teachers who are specifically trained
both in the teaching of English as a second language and
in the teaching of reading.

Proposals for Secondary Schools

The secondary school has been chosen as the seg-
ment of the Nigerian education system on which to focus
particular attention in trying to solve the problem of
reading. Ideally, the problem should have been solved
in the primary school; realistically, secondary school
students still need much help.

In the secondary school, students' reading prob-
lems become more evident and their solutions more vital
to the students' future progress. Secondary school stu-
dents, having been stringently selected, should be more
intellectually capable and better motivated than primary
school students. Secondary school teachers are better
trained and have a better command of English than do
those in primary schools. The secondary school is

considered, therefore, as an opportune level to remediate reading problems brought from the primary school and to help students strengthen their reading ability for their immediate learning tasks and for further education and work which lies ahead.

Goals

In setting up a secondary school English and reading program, goals must be established which reflect the students' needs. In Thailand and Japan certain teachers of English as a second language have concluded that most of their students do not need a high degree of oral English fluency. Rather, they need only a reading knowledge of English. The teachers have, therefore, established reading goals for their students. They give only minimal attention to developing the oral use of English.[9] Burling supports such goals and contends that they are much easier for older learners of a language to reach.[10]

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[9]Ralph P. Barrett, "The Thammasat University Transparency Reading Program," in Report on a Seminar in Reading, ed. by David E. Eskey and Michael Smithies (Bankok: Prachandra Printing Press, 1970), p. 152; David E. Eskey, "Teaching Advanced Reading: The Structural Problem," in Ibid, pp. 209-210; Richard C. Bedford, "The Aural-Oral Approach Re-viewed," English Teaching Forum, VII (May-June, 1969), p. 2.

[10]Robbins Burling, "Some Outlandish Proposals for the Teaching of Foreign Languages," Language Learning, XVIII (June, 1968), pp. 61-63.

The Nigerian case is quite different from those
of Thailand and Japan. Unlike these two countries,
Nigeria needs and uses English as a common second lan-
guage in a multi-lingual setting both for communication
and as a teaching medium. The goals for Nigeria's Eng-
lish and reading programs in the secondary school must,
therefore, emphasize both good oral use of English and
the ability to read and write it well.

Continued oral emphasis

A continued oral emphasis in the teaching of
English in secondary schools will be profitable.[11]
Aside from strengthening Nigeria's basis of cross-tribal
and international communication, attention to oral Eng-
lish is the means of maintaining the necessary founda-
tion for the reading process.

Allowance for dialects

With further reference to secondary students'
oral use of English, it is realistic, and it may be peda-
gogically and psychologically advisable, for teachers to
accept something less than native speaker fluency. Some
authorities feel that secondary school students have passed
the age at which they are able to acquire the complete

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[11]S. O. Unoh, The Study of Reading (Ibadan, Ni-
geria: University Press, 1968), pp. 19-20; Thonis, op.
cit., p. 110.

and correct English sound system.[12] If this is true,

then efforts to teach them an appreciably greater degree

of fluency than they have when they enter secondary school

may be difficult and futile.

Students of a second language are only able to

learn well that degree of language fluency which they

need for real-life usage.[13] The source of need generally

lies outside the classroom. Extra-class forces often

counteract the school's efforts to teach fluent, standard

English. Unless Nigerian students are motivated by a

need for a near-native fluency of near-standard English

the amount of teaching they receive will have little

effect on the result. The motivation of a compulsory

oral English examination is not yet known. Idealism en-

courages the teaching of standard English; realism accepts

a less-than-standard dialect.

The non-standard forms of English which students

learn are like dialects of English. Standard English

will be another dialect as far as the students are con-

cerned. They should be acquainted with the standard

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[12]H. R. Huse, *Reading and Speaking Foreign Lan-
guages.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina
Press, 1945), pp. 6-8; Ronald Wardhaugh, "Some Reflections
on the State of the Art," *English Teaching Forum*, VIII
(September-October, 1970), p. 14; John C. Fisher, *Lin-
guistics in Remedial English* (The Hague: Mouton and Co.,
1966), pp. 21-22.

[13]Donald Lloyd, "Intonation and Reading," *Educa-
tion*, Vol. 84, No. 9 (May, 1964), pp. 540-541.

dialect and with the possibility of their need for it.
A number of students will probably experiment with stan-
dard English and attempt to use it on those occasions
when they feel it is demanded. Proposals for a compul-
sory oral English School Certificate examination will
confirm and emphasize an immediate need.

The students' use of various non-standard dia-
lects will interfere with their acquisition of the
standard dialect of English. However, it must be recog-
nized that most speakers of English command various
dialects of the language for use on different occasions.
The occasions are something over which schools and teach-
ers have no control.

Reading instruction will need to continue re-
gardless of the dialect of English the students are
using. Students can be taught to read even though the
dialects of their oral English and that of the reading
material are not identical.[14] If teachers accept non-
standard dialectal pronunciation they will place minimal
emphasis on oral reading by the students. The task will
be more difficult than when building reading skills on a
standard English foundation. Nevertheless, students can
still be taught to associate correct meaning with English

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[14]S. Allen Cohen, Teach Them All To Read (New York:
Random House, 1969), p. 73; Ronald Wardhaugh, Reading: A
Linguistic Perspective (New York: Harcourt, Brace and
World, Inc., 1969), pp. 125-127, 146.

graphemic representations and to extract correct meaning from the printed page in the course of their reading.

Intonation

The aspect of oral English to which particular attention must be paid in secondary school is that of intonation. This feature has been seriously neglected with the result that Nigerian secondary school students are often misunderstood because their patterns of intonation are strange.

English intonation also indicates phonological phrases which are very important comprehension aids in reading English.[15] Since phonological phrasing is only partially shown in written English, an oral understanding of intonation is essential for fully comprehending English, even when reading.

Providing experiences

The secondary school English teacher must help enrich the students' reading development background by planning and providing those experiences which will strengthen the students' power of comprehension. A broad background of experiences is of prime importance.[16]

Definite plans should be made to introduce many, varied experiences into the students' lives, and to relate

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[15]Supra, p. 83.

[16]Supra, pp. 85-87.

such experience to their reading development. Reading
itself is a source of experience if material is carefully
selected. In many cases, unfortunately, it may provide
the major or sole source of English-language-related ex-
perience.[17]

For experiential reading to be most effective, a
teacher with wide personal knowledge is required. The
teacher must be well-read and experienced enough to ex-
plain unknown features found in students' reading selec-
tions.

An important factor in providing verbal experi-
ences for students is the teacher's attitude. Students
must be free to ask questions about what has been read.
Teachers must willingly initiate or encourage discussion.
In the Nigerian cultural context students may need to be
assured by their teachers that questions and discussions
are welcomed.

Considerably more difficult in most Nigerian
secondary schools is the provision of opportunities for
students to converse with native English speakers or
with Nigerians who speak good English. Many English
speakers are unable to give the time to help secondary
students improve their English and enrich their back-
grounds of experience. Other English speakers lapse

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[17]J. A. Bright and G. P. McGregor, Teaching English
as a Second Language (London: Longmans, 1970), p. 52.

into non-standard dialects of English in an effort to make themselves better understood by the students. English speakers need not be professional teachers to be effective as consultants. They should, however, possess and demonstrate the same willingness to answer questions and enter into discussions and conversation with the students.

More commonly thought of as sources of experiences are the various audio-visual aids used within the school. Many Nigerian secondary schools now use movies, film strips, and other means to provide different and broader learning experiences for their students. The use of these methods is made infinitely more valuable to students if teachers integrate discussion of pertinent features with other teaching activities. Again, students must be free to ask questions without fear of refusal or ridicule.

Educational visits can also provide interesting means of acquiring additional experiences. Teachers should be sure that trips are not taken without purpose and that students are provided with basic information and vocabulary which will make the excursion most meaningful to them. Neither should the opportunity for discussion be neglected after the trip is completed.

Individualized instruction

Ideally, in planning reading instruction for Nigerian secondary schools, teachers need to be prepared

to provide individualized instruction. Students normally come to a given secondary school from a wide variety of primary school and home backgrounds with an equally wide range of reading abilities. The high and low scores cited from the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> give some indication of the range of students' reading skills.[18] Individualized reading instruction is especially needed in Nigerian secondary schools where the students of a single class are apt to display a wide range of abilities and where the abilities of an individual student also vary from skill to skill.

When reading for pleasure as well as reading for comprehension is a goal of the reading program, the importance of individualized instruction is further emphasized. Students seldom enjoy reading material which is too difficult. Neither do all students in a class enjoy the same topics. When a wide range of abilities is to be coordinated with the wide range of interests, individualized instruction seems to be the only solution. The teacher may be fortunate enough to arrange some pairs and some groups in the class but he should design a program for each student.

Individualized instruction has its limitations

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[13]<u>Supra</u>, pp. 61, 62.

under the most ideal circumstances. Teachers with a good knowledge of the teaching of reading usually do not have as much time as they want to spend with each student. Other teachers are not versatile enough to plan activities to meet each student's needs. The shortage of precisely designed materials is a perennial problem.

If these limitations confront well-trained teachers in well-staffed, well-equipped schools, they will certainly hinder those in less ideal situations. In such situations the principles of idealism and realism stand in sharpest contrast. While one recognizes that which ideally should be done, he may have to be satisfied for the time being with that which can realistically be accomplished. Nevertheless, teachers and administrators who are convinced of the need for a certain course of action often find ways to accomplish it.

Setting up an individualized reading program may mean convincing an administrator and other teachers of the need. Personal sacrifice of time may be called for. Enlisting the assistance of older students who can serve as paraprofessionals while gaining additional reading development for themselves as a by-product, can be a solution to the lack-of-staff or lack-of-time problem. As far as materials are concerned, some commentators feel there is too great a tendency to demand specially prepared teaching matter when careful selection of that

which is available can prove quite satisfactory.[19]

Teachers

The teacher is seen as the key to the success of any reading program. Spache has drawn attention to "that almost indefinable quality--teaching skill and dedication."[20] No doubt there have been teachers who have taught children to read while working under the most adverse circumstances. Others have failed to produce readers while working under favorable conditions. Teachers cannot be responsible for many factors over which they have no control. However, those teachers whose spirits refuse to permit them to be defeated by unpropitious circumstances are to be commended. An individual teacher, without the support and encouragement of others, can still do much to help students meet their reading needs.

Matters such as versatility and innovativeness, while not unrelated to ones training and background, often depend on a teacher's personality and inclination to serve students. Willingness to be one of a team of teachers endeavoring to attack the reading problems of students in a cooperative effort regardless of the

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[19]Robert Karlin, "Teaching Reading in High School," Education. Vol. 84, No. 6 (February, 1964), pp. 337-338.

[20]Spache, op. cit., p. 150.

subject being taught is perhaps even more an affair of individuality.

Presenting the need for teachers with certain characteristics and qualifications does not guarantee their supply. Nigeria's state and federal governments and ministries of education are the appropriate bodies to provide the teachers and the necessary training. These same bodies must decide the desirability of employing expatriates who are native speakers of English, trained in the teaching of English as a second language and in the teaching of reading. Such persons might plan and supervise teaching programs as well as be classroom teachers. Furthermore, governments and ministries should give careful consideration to what can be done to maintain continuity of service by qualified teachers.

Materials

The supply of reading and teaching materials is usually the concern of individual schools. If available materials can be used, it obviates much of the necessity of purchasing expensive and hard-to-find, specially prepared materials. The school library can be surveyed and books and other items which might be selected for the teaching of reading classified as to their level of difficulty and range of interest. Friends' contributions of books and magazines can be evaluated as to their

suitability and value for the program. Usually teachers
of a few years experience have amassed a personal collec-
tion of materials which can be used.

Sympathetic administrators may be willing to
spend some of the school's library budget for the purchase
of library holdings of special use in a reading program.
As often as not, however, the key to finding materials is,
again, the ingenious teacher.

Methods

The present study does not discuss specific
methods of teaching reading. Teachers should be aware
of and in command of a wide variety of methods. Strang
advocates such a "synthetic approach" which "combines
sound elements from several methods /of teaching reading7."[21]
Similarly, Wardhaugh feels that "in the knowledge that
different students bring different abilities and interests
to their learning tasks, it would seem wiser to be eclec-
tic."[22]

The teacher needs to be particularly sensitive to
students' responses to know when to switch methods in
order to capture, maintain, and capitalize on students'

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[21]Ruth Strang, "A Synthetic Approach to the Teach-
ing of Reading," Elementary English, XXXIX (October, 1962),
p. 558.

[22]Wardhaugh, Reading: A Linguistic Perspective,
op. cit., p. 149.

enthusiasm and attention. There are scores of books
which describe methods of teaching reading. With a
knowledge of the skills needed and of the Nigerian school
context, a teacher can select the methods which promise
to be most appropriate and productive.

Proposals for Universities

Nigeria's universities are not unmindful of their
students' reading problems. Several studies have been
conducted and attempts have been made to provide both
remedial and developmental help.

Proposals of the National Universities Commission
and Federal Ministry of Education special study reported
by Jacobs call for increased language content in English
courses, the addition of courses in linguistics, lan-
guage, and methods of teaching English as a second lan-
guage, and degrees in English language (as opposed to
English literature).[23] Tiffen reports plans to effect
some of these proposals at Ahmadu Bello University.[24]

The University of Ibadan has a reading centre and
plans have been made to extend its scope and aims, pro-
bably to enhance its image and status, to make its

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[23]Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 86-91, 134.

[24]Brian W. Tiffen, English Language Teaching in
Northern Nigeria: A Survey (Zaria, Nigeria: Institute
of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, 1966) (Mimeo-
graphed), pp. 35-41.

services more readily available, and to see that all stu-

dents whose reading needs improvement receive attention.[25]

Similar reading centers are needed at other universities.

Necessary research which has been proposed will

normally emanate from the universities. The University

of Ife, for example, is conducting experiments in the

use of the native language as a teaching medium in pri-

mary school. As personnel, funds, and facilities are

available, research will, no doubt, increase. Such re-

search should result in better methods and materials for

the teaching of reading.

Proposals for Training Teachers

Little attention has been given in this study to

the reading problems of students in teacher training in-

stitutions since their problems are similar to those

found in secondary schools or universities, depending

on the level of training in the institution. Since much

of the success of any proposed increase in emphasis on

reading depends on well-trained teachers, a brief consi-

deration of proposals for teacher training is included.

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[25]Unoh, op. cit., p. 1; Yvonne Chapman-Taylor, "University of Ibadan Reading Centre: Report on Pilot Study," in English Language Teaching in Nigeria, ed. by Robert Jacobs (Mimeographed supplement to special study report) (December, 1966), pp. 109, 112-114.

Primary school

Perhaps the most direct approach to the primary school problems of teaching English and reading lies by way of the teacher training institutions. A good first step would be to instill each generation of trained teachers with the importance of the task. Most teachers in training need to be challenged by the need for good English and good reading and by the fact that they can acquire the knowledge and skill to teach these to others.

Instruction should then be provided in the principles and methods of teaching English as a second language and of teaching reading. Of course, the training of teachers' college teachers constitutes another problem whose solution probably lies in short courses arranged by the universities. Personnel and money will constitute major obstacles in carrying out most proposals. If, however, instruction in new principles and methods is substituted for that which is presently given, the problems of personnel and money should not be insurmountable.

The entire process might be begun with short courses conducted by the universities and designed to train those who teach in teacher training colleges. The short courses would seek to train teachers in the principles and methods which they need to instruct their own students who, in turn, would go out to teach in primary schools. If those primary school teachers who complete

the teacher training course each year were convinced of
the importance of the task, competent to teach English in
such a way as to provide a sound oral foundation for the
reading process, and then able to teach the skills of
reading, the fruits of their efforts would be evident
within six years in the secondary schools.

Teacher training colleges could also provide
short courses for their graduates who, having already
had some experience teaching, could benefit from instruc-
tion in the use of a different and more promising ap-
proach. A system could be arranged whereby a certain
portion of the primary school teachers might be brought
for a short course each year until as many as possible
had had the opportunity for this special training. Such
short courses would, of course, impose additional finan-
cial and personnel obligations.

Ministries of Education and governments will have
to deal with the problems of financing the courses and of
providing whatever motivation is needed to encourage
teachers to attend the short courses. Not the least
important aspect of motivation will be persuading all
who may be involved of the need for such courses. If
national leaders support increased emphasis on English,
this, in itself, will testify to the importance of Eng-
lish. Furthermore, if oral English becomes a compulsory
examination, the desire of Nigerian students to pass

examinations will provide considerable incentive.

Secondary school

At the secondary school level, teachers of English also need specific training in the teaching of reading. Secondary school teachers should be competent in recognising students' reading problems. Once the problems have been diagnosed, the teachers must be able to plan and execute a program designed to remediate the problems.

Universities and advanced teachers' colleges can provide the short courses designed to give secondary school English teachers the additional training they may need. Attention should also be given to the provision of information and suggestions for secondary school teachers of all subjects since combined and co-operative efforts will be needed to make a reading program maximally successful. It is noted, however, that the major responsibility for teaching reading in the secondary school is assumed to belong to the English teacher.

Summary

The teaching of English language and reading to Nigerian secondary school students is handicapped by a number of problems which are cultural, linguistic, psychological, or educational. Furthermore, the teaching of reading skills and those aspects of the teaching of

English as a second language which contribute to skills development have not received attention commensurate to their importance.

Although present efforts toward their solution are still insufficient, the problems are not insurmountable. Increased awareness on the part of the public, support from influential leaders, skillful research, and trained teachers are factors of future success. With identification of the problems, conviction that there is a need to do something, teachers trained to recognize and deal with the problems, and a modicum of materials, Nigerian secondary school students can be taught to read well and to enjoy the process.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

READING AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT[1]

1. Experience background:

Uses many kinds of experience to gain understanding
of words.

2. Preparatory experiences:

Learns to look, to see likenesses and differences in
forms and words, to perceive words clearly.
Learns to listen to and discriminate sounds.
Builds a listening and speaking vocabulary.
Learns the letters.
Looks at words and asks their meaning.
Learns to listen and speak fluently in a group.
Learns to tell a story to an audience.

3. Beginning reading:

Associates the sound of the word and its meaning with
the printed symbol.
Identifies sounds and combinations of sounds in words.
Recognizes the same sound in different words.
Learns to read sentences from left to right.
Builds a basic sight vocabulary.
Uses newly learned words in conversation and in
writing.
Uses his experiences to interpret what he reads.
Grasps the meaning of simple passages.
Reads aloud with expression.
Reads directions.
Finds the answers to specific questions in reference
books.
Recounts in correct sequence the events in the plot
of a story.

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[1]Ruth Strang, Constance M. McCullough, and
Arthur E. Traxler, The Improvement of Reading (New York:
McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), pp. 132-142.

4. Vocabulary development:

Learns new words incidentally through wide reading.
Learns key words and concepts as he studies each
school subject.
Learns technical abbreviations, symbols, and formulas
needed in each field.
Consults the dictionary or glossary for exact meanings
of words.
Studies words in context systematically.
Makes a dictionary of new words, giving pronunciation,
derivation, definition, illustrative sentences.
Becomes interested in word origins and the different
meanings of the same word in different contexts.
Recognizes the meaning of common words clearly and
instantly.

5. Word recognition skills:

Uses clues in the context to get the meaning of unfa-
miliar words, selecting the meaning that best
fits the context.
Divides words into syllables so that he can pronounce
them; knows and applies common principles of
syllabication.
Uses phonetic approach if syllabic approach fails.
Knows and applies common phonetic principles; notes
initial, middle, and final sounds and letter
blends.
Uses structural analysis of words whenever helpful,
noting general configuration of words, identifying
details and structural parts of words.
Learns more about how prefixes and suffixes modify
meaning of the roots.
Uses the dictionary as a check after he has attempted
to get the meaning from context.
Acquires a deeper understanding of the structure of
language.
Studies overtones of words and semantic derivation
from original sense meaning.

6. Understanding and organization:

Reads in thought units.
Comprehends sentences accurately.
Gets the thought of a paragraph.
Gets organizing idea of an article or chapter and
relates details to it.
Writes in his own words a good outline or summary of
the selection read.

Gets author's pattern of thought as he reads.
Remembers in organized form as much as is important for further thinking.
Learns to read critically.
Distinguishes the essential from the nonessential.
Examines truth or correctness of statements and detects discrepancies.
Recognizes propaganda.
Recognizes differences between fact and opinion and among opinions of varying weight.
Brings own experience to bear on the author's statement.
Notes sequences of events or ideas and cause-and-effect relations.
Predicts outcomes on the basis of clues given by the author.
Draws accurate inferences and conclusions.
Thinks as he reads, notes common elements and concepts, keeps them in mind, and relates them.
Understands increasingly advanced and complex material.
Connects ideas in new ways, reading between and beyond the lines.
Recognizes attitudes in himself that might distort his comprehension.
Pauses to reflect on serious material.
Suspends judgment until all available evidence has been obtained.
Integrates and organizes information gained from reading.

7. Literary interpretation:

Interprets character's intent and behavior from author's clues.
Finds reasons for events and actions.
Recognizes persuasive words and is aware of their influence on the reader.
Reads aloud well enough to give and get enjoyment.
Participates in the aesthetic and emotional experiences presented by the author.
Compares different styles of writing.

8. Reading interests and appreciations:

Laughs or smiles to himself as he reads a humorous book.
Voluntarily resumes reading a book he has chosen as soon as his other work is completed.
Uses school and public library for recreational and study reading.
Reads many worthwhile books.

Shows sensitivity to various levels of interpreta-
tions.
Enjoys author's style in prose and poetry--picture-
forming words, rhythm or cadence.
Increases his awareness of and finds personal value
in reading.
Appraises quality of book, magazine, television show,
movie.
Uses reading more in daily life outside of school.
Reads as a favorite leisure-time activity which con-
tinues through life.
Continues trend toward increased voluntary reading.
Improves the quality of his reading.
Widens the scope of his reading.
Develops one or more intensive reading interests.
Enjoys discussion of books.
Shows decreased interest in reading the comics.
Resists forces such as television and auto riding
that usurp reading time.
Finds more motivation to read.
Uses television and other media of communication as
part of a well-balanced program, recognizing the
unique value of each medium and its special value
in helping him to build an oral vocabulary and to
supply an experience background for reading.
Reads to learn more about worthwhile hobbies.

9. Work-study skills:

Sits still long enough to attend to reading.
Skims skillfully for different purposes:
    to find a certain fact;
    to get a general impression;
    to get the main ideas;
    to find out what questions the passage will
        answer;
    to get clues to organization or plot.
Learns to read maps, graphs, charts, diagrams,
formulas.
Learns to read out-of-school material--road maps,
menus, signs, timetables.
Learns to locate and select pertinent information on
a topic and to use it in a report.
Becomes familiar with a wider variety of sources.
Learns to take notes.
Acquires skill in the Survey Q3R method and uses it
whenever appropriate.
Reads more rapidly with adequate comprehension.
Develops speed and fluency by reading easy material
in each subject.

Applies ideas gained from reading, as, for example,
in making pictorial, graphic, and tabular records.
Use ideas gained from reading to solve problems,
prove a point, develop an interest, or entertain
someone.
Forms good study habits, budgets best time of day for
study and creation.
Creates the best conditions possible for efficient
study.
Gets to work promptly.
Applies psychological principles to remembering what
is important.
Uses his own judgment when it has a sound basis.

10. Approaches to outcomes of reading:

Sets specific objectives before beginning to read.
Varies approach, rate, and reading methods according
to the nature of the material--different kinds of
writing and different fields; thus gains fluency
and efficiency through adaptability and flexi-
bility and purposeful reading.
Reads with the intent to organize, remember, and
use ideas.
Reads to solve problems, answer questions, understand
developments and events outside his immediate
environment.
Relates reading to his own life; shares ideas gained
in reading.
Gains understanding of himself and others through
reading.
Concentrates better.
Experiences a growing pleasure in precision--shows
unwillingness to half understand a passage.

11. Personal development through reading:

Selects reading material that meets a personal need
or widens his experience.
Reads to solve personal problems; relates ideas gained
from reading to his personal living--to each of
the developmental tasks appropriate to his age.
Uses information from his reading in group projects,
dramatizations, class discussions, committee work,
club activities.
Gains understanding of himself and others from reading
autobiographies, biographies, and true-to-life
fiction.
Gains understanding of the world of nature and the
world of men.

Behaves differently as a result of reading, as, for
example, toward parents after reading The Year-
ling, toward Negroes after reading Amos Fortune,
toward driving a car after reading Hot Rod.

Uses reading in building a philosophy of life and
sound convictions.

Improves emotional conditions--worry, anger, fear,
insecurity--that block effective study and read-
ing by learning to accept his feelings and to
channel them into safe pathways; gets help through
counseling or psychotheraphy, if necessary.

APPENDIX B

CLASSIFICATION OF READING DIFFICULTIES[2]

A. Deficiencies in basic comprehension abilities.

1. Limited meaning vocabulary
2. Inability to read by thought units.
3. Insufficient sentence sense.
4. Lack of the sense of paragraph organization.
5. Failure to appreciate the author's organization.

B. Faulty word identification and recognition.

1. Failure to use context and other meaning clues.
2. Ineffective visual analysis of words.
3. Limited knowledge of visual, structural, and phonetic elements.
4. Lack of ability in auditory blending or visual synthesis.
5. Overanalytical.

    a. Analyzing known words.
    b. Breaking words into too many parts.
    c. Using letter by letter or spelling attack.

6. Insufficient sight vocabulary.
7. Excessive locational errors.

    a. Initial errors.
    b. Middle errors.
    c. Ending errors.

C. Inappropriate directional habits.

1. Orientational confusions with words.
2. Transpositions among words.
3. Faulty eye movements.

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[2]Guy L. Bond and Miles A. Tinker, Reading Difficulties: Their Diagnosis and Correction (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), pp. 175-176.

D. Poor oral reading.

1. Inappropriate eye-voice span.
2. Lack of phrasing ability.
3. Unfortunate rate and timing.
4. Emotionally tense oral reader.

E. Limited in special comprehension abilities.

1. Inability to isolate and retain factual information.
2. Poor reading to organize
3. Ineffective reading to evaluate.
4. Insufficient ability in reading to interpret.
5. Limited proficiency in reading to appreciate.

F. Deficiencies in basic study skills.

1. Inability to use aids in locating materials to to be read.
2. Lack of efficiency in using basic reference material.
3. Inadequacies in using maps, graphs, tables, and other visual materials.
4. Limitations in techniques of organizing material read.

G. Deficient in ability to adapt to needs of content fields.

1. Inappropriate application of comprehension abilities.
2. Limited knowledge of specialized vocabulary.
3. Limited concept development.
4. Poor knowledge of symbols and abbreviations.
5. Insufficient ability in the use of pictorial and tabular material.
6. Difficulties with organization.
7. Inability to adjust rate to suit the purposes and the difficulty of material.

H. Deficiencies in rate of comprehension.

1. Inability to adjust rate.
2. Insufficient sight vocabulary.
3. Insufficient vocabulary knowledge and comprehension.
4. Ineffectiveness in word recognition.
5. Being an overanalytical reader.

6. Insufficient use of context clues.
7. Lack of phrasing.
8. Using crutches.
9. Unnecessary vocalization.
10. Inappropriate purposes.

APPENDIX C

THE BASIC READING SKILLS[3]

I. Perception Skills

    A. Visual perception of form
    B. Visual perception of capital and lower-case
        letters and words
    C. Auditory perception of sounds
    D. Ability to move eyes from left to right and
        make accurate return sweeps.
    E. Increased eye span

II. Comprehension Skills

    A. Word meaning

        1. Matching words with pictures
        2. Reacting to the sensory images (visual,
            auditory, kinesthetic, taste, smell) sug-
            gested by words.
        3. Associating meaning and experience with
            word symbols
        4. Inferring meanings from context clues and
            understanding words in context
        5. Inferring meaning from word clues--roots,
            suffixes, prefixes, compounds
        6. Matching words with definitions
        7. Recognizing antonyms and synonyms
        8. Associating printed word symbols with other
            symbols such as:

            a. musical notes, clef, sharp, flat, rest
            b. mathematical signs, plus, minus, half-
                dollar, cents, circle
            c. maps
            d. diacritical marks in the dictionary

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[3]Emerald Dechant, <u>Diagnosis and Remediation of
Reading Disability</u> (West Nyack, New York: Parker Pub-
lishing Co., Inc., 1969), pp. 123-127.

B. Phrase, sentence, and paragraph meaning
C. Reading the context
D. Reading **for** the main idea
E. Reading for details

    1. Recognizing and organizing facts and details
    2. Reading and following directions

III. Word Attack Skills

A. Using word configuration clues
B. Using contextual clues
C. Learning structural analysis clues

    1. Inflectional endings
    2. Words ending in <u>ing</u>
    3. Doubling the consonant before adding <u>ing</u>
    4. Compound words
    5. Prefixes and suffixes
    6. The apostrophe <u>s</u>
    7. The past tense with <u>ed</u>
    8. The plural with <u>es</u>
    9. The contractions
   10. Syllabication

D. Learning phonic skills

    1. Auditory discrimination of speech sounds
    2. Teaching the initial consonant sounds and beginning consonant substitution
    3. Teaching the short vowel sounds
    4. Teaching the ending consonants
    5. Teaching median vowel substitution
    6. Introducing the various sounds of <u>a</u> and <u>u</u>:

        a. <u>a</u> as in "all"
        b. <u>a</u> as in "car"
        c. <u>a</u> as in "bass"
        d. <u>u</u> as in "full" or "dull"

    7. The consonant blends: bl, br, cl, cr, dr, fl, fr, etc.
    8. The letters <u>k</u> and <u>q</u>
    9. The long vowels

        a. a, e, i, o, u, y
        b. long vowel plus silent <u>e</u>
        c. ai, ay, ea, ee, oa, oe, ow

    10. The ly ending
    11. The le ending
    12. S pronounced as z
    13. Speech consonants ch, sh, th, wh, gh, ph
    14. Soft sounds c and g
    15. Three-letter consonant blends, scr, shr, spl, spr, squ, str, thr
    16. The effect of r on a previous vowel, er, ir, or, ur, and wa
    17. The diphthongs, ei, ie, oi, oy, oo, ou, au, aw, ow, er, ue
    18. Syllabication
    19. Silent consonants
    20. Foreign words
    21. Special problems of two- and three-syllable words

IV. Reading-Study Skills

  A. Dictionary skills

    1. Definition--select correct meaning that fits the context
    2. Alphabetizing
    3. Syllabication
    4. Accent and guide words
    5. Use of the thumb index
    6. Pronunciation key
    7. Diacritical marks

  B. Location and reference skills--use of encyclo-pedias, almanacs, magazines, card catalogues, etc.

    1. Locating specific information in a textbook
    2. Locating material in the index
    3. Ability to interpret cross references and to use the table of contents, glossary, and footnotes

  C. Use of maps, charts, tables, and footnotes
  D. Use of library resources: card catalogue, indexes
  E. Organization skills

    1. Selecting main ideas
    2. Ability to follow directions
    3. Arranging events and items in sequence
    4. Putting together ideas from various sources
    5. Answering questions that are answered in a printed passage
    6. Summarizing
    7. Outlining and underlining

8. Note taking
9. Ability to retain and apply what has been read
10. Ability to use study-methods, such as SQRRR method--surveying, questioning, reading, recitation, review
11. Ability to read in specific content areas
12. Perceiving relationships: part-whole; cause-effect; general-specific; place, sequence, size, and time

V. Interpretative and Appreciative Skills

A. Evaluating what is read
B. Predicting and anticipating outcomes
C. Perceiving relationships or comparisons
D. Suspending judgment
E. Making inferences and drawing conclusions
F. Interpreting figurative expressions and picturesque language
G. Detecting bias
H. Detecting author's mood and purpose
I. Filtering facts
J. Differentiating between fact and opinion
K. Weighing facts as to their importance
L. Analyzing opinions
M. Recognizing literary form
N. Detecting and understanding the writer's purpose
O. Identifying and evaluating character traits, reactions, and motives
P. Recognizing literary and semantic devices and identifying the tone
Q. Determining whether the text affirms, denies, or fails to express an opinion about a supposed fact or condition

VI. Rate of Comprehension Skills

A. Left-to-right progression
B. Reduction of regressions
C. Phrase reading
D. Reduction of vocalization
E. Ability to choose an appropriate reading technique--flexibility
F. Scanning for specific information
G. Skimming skills

VII. Oral Reading Skills

    A. Keeping eye ahead of the voice
    B. Enunciating clearly
    C. Pronouncing correctly
    D. Reading in thought units
    E. Varying pitch and volume of voice
    F. Adapting voice to size of room and audience

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA[1]
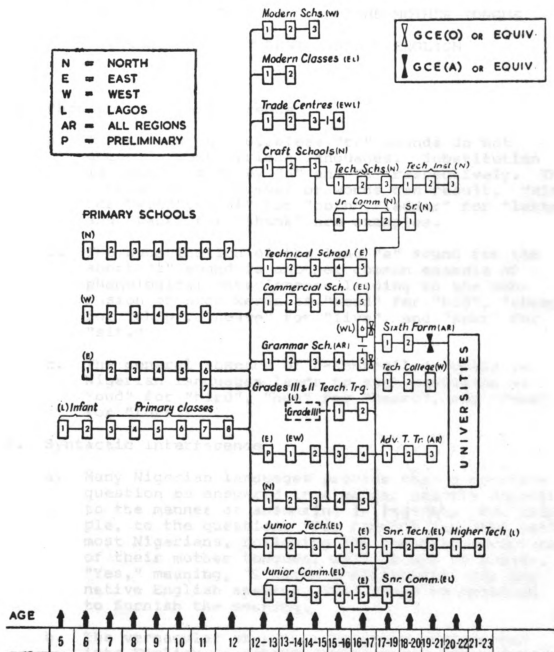
[1]Federal Ministry of Education, Republic of Nigeria, _Statistics of Education in Nigeria_ (Series No. 1, Vol. IV Lagos: Government Printer, 1966), p. 2.

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EXAMPLES OF INTERFERENCE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE

IN NIGERIAN STUDENTS USE OF ENGLISH

1. Phonological Interference

   a. The voiced and voiceless "th" sounds do not occur in most African languages. Substitution is usually made by "d" and "t" respectively. The confusion of a number of words can result. "Wit" for "with","boat" for "both","ladder" for "lather", and "tank" for "thank" are examples.

   b. The substitution of the long "e" sound for the short "i" sound is another common example of phonological interference leading to the confusion of such words as "bead" for "bid", "sheep" for "ship", "Leave" for "live", and "seat" for "sit."

   c. The general absence of r-controlled vowels in Nigerian languages leads to such confusion as "bud" for "bird", "hot" for "heart", and "fuzz" for "furs."

2. Syntactic Interference

   a. Many Nigerian languages provide that a negative question be answered in a manner exactly opposite to the manner of answering in English. For example, to the question, "You haven't finished yet?" most Nigerians, following the semantic structure of their mother tongues, will be apt to answer, "Yes," meaning, "I haven't finished." For the native English speaker, "No" would be required to furnish the meaning.

   b. The vernacular structure is often transferred into English in making comparisons. For example, "I like rice than gari."

     c. Certain Nigerian languages do not provide separate masculine and faminine pronoun forms. Transferral into English can lead to a woman being referred to as "he."

3. Semantic Interference

     a. The word "wonderful" carries an entirely different meaning to the average Nigerian user of English. The idea of amazement, shock, and surprise will often bring the response, "Wonderful!" to the news that someone has broken a leg.

     b. In many Nigerian languages, the word for "leg" also includes the foot as well as the limb from hip to ankle. Often there is no separate word for "foot." When a person has hurt his leg it may not be what the native English speaker considers his leg at all. Or, to illustrate further, this quaint statement is heard when new shoes are being bought" "It does not size my leg."

     c. The expression, "Sorry," used by many Nigerian speakers of English to express sympathy and concern, does not necessarily imply the speakers being at fault as is often the case with native speakers of English.

4. Sociological Interference

     a. Most Nigerians are so culturally conditioned in the proper use of greetings that it is impossible for conversation to begin without at least some greetings being exchanged. Many an English-speaking teacher has found his students virtually deaf to anything he says until their ears are unlocked with a proper, "Good morning."

     b. The mixture of English with a Nigerian language can be observed on numerous occasions. The amount of mixture may depend upon the particular occasion or the language ability of the persons who are engaged in conversation. English words are often used when there is not an equivalent in the particular Nigerian language.

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