

INFLUENCE OF TIMAP LANGUAGE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AMO LAND, PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

The advent of globalization has brought about issues of identity, linguistic diversity, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, social integration, among others. Thus, People acquire second language (or more than one language) in addition to their First Language (L1) with a view to stay relevant, compete favourably among peers and reach out to a wider audience. To this end, the role of First language in second language acquisition has become an issue. Many researches that have been done in this area have focused on the effect of First language (Mother Tongue) on Second language acquisition, (Interference and Error Analysis). So far, the study of the influence of First language (mother tongue) on second language acquisition has not been exhausted. Thus, this study examined the influence of Timap language on English language proficiency of senior secondary school students (SSS3) in Amo land, Plateau State. This was with a view to determining whether proficiency in mother tongue (Timap) could enhance proficiency in English language among Amo speakers of Plateau State. In order to do this, the study first determined the level of English language proficiency and Timap language proficiency of the selected Amo students. Forty SSS 3 students were selected from four Government Secondary Schools in Amo land using simple random technique. Students were given instruments to test their Reading, Speaking and Writing skills in the two languages (English and Timap). The results of the test of proficiency in English and Timap language were used to determine whether proficiency in Timap Language has significant influence on the English language proficiency of the students. Robert Lado's (1950) Contrastive Analysis (CA) constituted the conceptual framework for the study. Findings showed that the overall level of English language proficiency of SSS3 students in Amo land is high, with an observed score of 3,943 which represent 65.72% of 6000. In Writing skill, they cannot be assessed because out-rightly they presented themselves as being unable to write in their mother tongue. However, they demonstrated some level of Reading skills (14.75%, very low). In Speaking skill, they demonstrated high level of proficiency (76.65%) of their mother tongue. By and large, their overall level of proficiency, including their Speaking skill Timap was low (30.47%). In addition, the eta squared value ($\eta^2=0.090$) indicating the relationship between proficiency in Timap Language on the English Language Proficiency of the students was very low (less than 1%). Hence, the influence of Timap Language on English Language Proficiency of SSS3 students in Amo Area of Plateau is very negligible.

Keywords: Timap Language, Amo Land, Language Proficiency, Language Skills, Senior Secondary School Students

Introduction

The importance of communication to man is overwhelming, especially when day-to-day human interaction is considered. In our societies, language functions as a vehicle for interaction and a tool for communication. Apart from the things we acquire or learn in the course of our lives, the most important thing we

learn is mainly how to communicate or express our thoughts, ideas, opinion or feelings in a verbal or non-verbal way by acquiring one or more languages. When one is asked what language means, the individual will have an answer based on the experience of what language is to him/her because language has no standard definition or explanation. Osisanwo

(2012) affirms this assertion when he states that “the word ‘Language’ cannot be restricted to a definition. It has been given different definitions based on different schools of thought.” However, Crystal & Robins (2018), defines Language “as a system of conventional spoken, manual, or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves”.

From the above definitions, language is being described as a means by which humans living in the same environment share same way of life, exchange information, idea, thoughts, and commands amongst themselves. In line with this, Hornby (2015) also defines language as “a system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area” (P. 664). From this definition, it is important to note that language does not only concern countries as mentioned above because individual communities or ethnic groups like the Amap, Nupe, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, among others, are ethnic groups that do not have their own country but have a language of their own. For this reason, one can say that language is a means of communicating thoughts, feelings, or ideas from one person to another, and is either in a spoken, written or gesture form(s).

As globalization is on the increase, and population is growing, diverse cultures are coming into contact with one another, which bring about the need for communication amongst people. Therefore, being bilingual has turn out to be a necessary aspect aimed at becoming a successful individual in the society, because a bilingual person has more chances to obtain a better profession and to have more successes than a monolingual person. Thus, learning another language has become important to humans from the earliest time and it is still important to human societies today.

Timap is the language of the Amo (Amap) people. Amo (Amap) being one of the minority tribe in the Northern Central states of Nigeria, is spoken by an unknown number of people living in various parts of the country. The Amap people are mostly farmers, hunters and traders, and they are presently located in some Local Government Areas across three north-central

states in Nigeria, these are; Bassa Local Government Area in Plateau state, Toro Local Government Area in Bauchi state, Kauru Local Government Area in Kaduna State and Lere Local Government Area in Kaduna State. They live in these three states because the States share boundaries. Timap language is used for everyday communication in the home, in the community (including religious gathering and public meetings). The King of Amo people (UGO NAMAP), the Cabinet and the Council of Elders conduct their business in Timap, thus indicating that Timap is the official language of the society. Timap is also for personal and community identity, and for maintaining and nurturing Amo (Amap) cultural traditions. In primary school, Timap is also used as a medium of instruction. Presently, work is in progress on the production of Timap version of the Holy Bible. (Malam-Waziri, 2012).

According to Crystal & Robins (2018), the term second language is “used to describe any language whose acquisition starts after early childhood (including what may be third or subsequent language learnt). The language to be learned is often referred to as the “target language” or “L2” compared to the ‘L1’ or first language.” From the statement above, Second language or L2 is a language that is not the native language of the speaker, but that is used in the locale of that person for an important purpose. In line with the above statement, second language (SL) is a non-native language that is widely used for purposes of communication, usually as a medium of education, government, or business. English as a Second Language (ESL) can also be called English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Iqbal, 2016). The introduction of English language into Nigeria can be traced to the coming of missionaries just before the middle of the 19th century with the first English mission in 1842. Trade was the second institution through which English gained a foothold in Nigeria, while colonization was the last institution that introduced English language in Nigeria. English as a language has been domesticated in Nigeria and is made to perform several functions such as: The language of education; government; commerce and industry; international

communication; the media; law and legal drafting; science and technology.

Various studies have been done on the relationship between First (L1) and second (L2) language. For instance, Oluwole (2008) studied 'The Impact of Mother Tongue on Students' Achievement in English Language in Junior Secondary Certificate Examination in Western Nigeria.' The study investigated if mother tongue is solely the cause of the students' woeful performance in English Language in Junior School certificate Examination or if there are other complementing factors. The findings revealed that mother tongue influences the students' poor performance in English language in Junior School Certificate examination and that there are other factors contributing to students' poor performance in English language. These other factors are poor method of teaching, lack of textbooks, language background and lack of professional growth and development of teachers. Measures that could be taken to enhance students' achievement in every aspect of English language are also suggested.

Kavaliauskienė (2009) also investigated the 'Role of Mother Tongue in Learning English for Specific Purposes.' The study aims at examining students' perceptions of the use of mother tongue and translation in various linguistic situations. The activities that help raise learners' awareness of the language use are described. The findings demonstrated that all learners need a support of mother tongue in English classes, but the amount of the native language needed depends on students' proficiency in English. In addition, Ucheoma (2011) conducted a study on the impact of the mother tongue on second language learning and proficiency and identified the several factors that affect the learning and proficiency of a second language. Among them is the culture, age, environment, method of acquisition, nature and structure of the first language and the amounts of efforts invested. From the results of the research, it was discovered that the mother tongue, 'Ikwerre' influences the learning and proficiency of the English language.

Furthermore, Montjane (2013) explores the Influence of English on Mother-tongue in Learning and Teaching in Secondary Schools. The study sought to investigate the challenges that the learners and educators encounter in learning and teaching when they use English as a medium of instruction. The study revealed that African languages, along with their culture are being dominated by English. Most of Pedis' learners cannot speak Sepedi without mixing it with English, and most of African people usually read English books and neglecting the Indigenous books. In addition, the study shows that learners performed better when they were taught in Sepedi than in English. The educators' responses showed that learners have difficulties in understanding English as the medium of instruction and they code switch from English to Sepedi to enhance understanding. Moreover, Mehrabi (2014) conducted a study to investigate 'The Effect of Second Language Writing Ability on First Language Writing Ability.' Two groups of university students, majoring in English and Nursing were chosen to write compositions on a topic of their interest. At the course of this study, students in both groups were asked to write about 200 words on a topic in English which they all passed. After passing the test, both groups were asked to write on the same topic in their first language. The researcher found out that in compositions, reasoning, understanding the purpose of the task, vocabulary choice, developing ideas, presenting connected ideas, punctuation, and style the results indicated that L2 learning is effective on the development of L1 skill and writing ability in L2 affects L1 writing ability. The objective of this present study is similar to the work of Mehrabi (2014). However, while the latter focused on one aspect of language skill: writing, this study considered speaking, reading and writing aspects of learning skills. Maisamari (2016) worked on contrastive analysis of Amo and English Pronouns. The researcher focused basically on the similarities and differences of Amo and English pronouns. After comparing the structures of both languages and identifying the visible differences, the researcher found out that the

similarities of Amo and English are plural and singular forms and their functions in the sentence. And their differences are in expressing a person, thing and gender in relative pronoun. Even though the focus of the present study differs from that of Maisamari (2016), the two studies are similar in that the present study also collected its data from Amo land, specifically, Timap language. Hereafter, the status of English Language in Amo Land is briefly discussed.

The Christian missionaries particularly the Seventh-Day Adventist Church played a vital role in bringing English language to Amo land. It was as a result of the contact with the Missionaries, trade, education and healthcare that English Language came into Amo Land. This is to say, the advent of colonialism made the Amo people to be exposed to English Language. English language functions in many communicative domains in Amo land. Firstly, English language functions as the language of education in our schools. Apart from the primary schools and some secondary schools, the dominant language of instruction in the secondary and the tertiary institutions is English language. Secondly, English is used as the language of testing students' ability/performance in examinations in schools in all subject areas. Communication and letters in government offices are done mostly in English language. Also, English has been a major language in business transaction mostly when the business is transacted outside an ethnic area. In addition, English is used as a language of religion in Amo land and also for medical purposes. Furthermore, the use of English is greatly felt in legal document and courts. Finally, English serves as the language of social interaction between Amo and non-Amo people. The numerous communicative roles which English Language plays in the day to day activities of a typical Amo indigene and in Amo land in general prompted this study to investigate whether proficiency in Timap Language has influence on English language proficiency of senior secondary school students (SSS3) in Amo land.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to:-

- i. determine the level of English language proficiency of Amo students.
- ii. determine the level of Timap language proficiency of Amo students.
- iii. examine if proficiency in Timap language has significant influence on the English Language proficiency of senior secondary school year 3 (SSS 3) students in Amo land of Plateau State.

In order to achieve the objectives above, Contrastive Analysis (CA) constituted the conceptual framework used for this study. CA was introduced in the late 1950s by Robert Lado in his book *Linguistics Across Cultures*. CA is concerned with a systematic comparison of a pair of languages with the purpose of bringing light to their phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical differences and similarities. It is a method that is used extensively to find out and explain why some features of a second language were more difficult to learn than other. The learner who comes in contact with another language of his/her mother tongue will discover some features of it far easy to learn and others excessively difficult. Lado (1957) as cited by Alja'arat & Hasan (2017, p.31) states that "those elements of a foreign language that are similar to the learner's native language will be simple for the learner to learn. Whereas, those elements of a foreign language that are different to the learner's native language will be difficult for him/her to acquire". CA may also be explained "as a way of comparing languages in order to determine potential errors for the ultimate purpose of isolating what needs to be learned and what does not need to be learned in a second-language-learning situation" (Gass & Selinker, 2008). "Contrastive analysis stresses the influence of the mother tongue in learning a second language in phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic levels. It holds that second language would be affected by first language" (Jie 2008, p.36). Two different versions of the C.A have since risen: C.A. a priori and C.A a posteriori. The first is also known as the predictive or strong version while the second is known as the weak or explanatory version. C.A a priori is the point to point analysis of syntactic, phonological,

morphological and other subsystems of both languages learnt. It suggests that with the similarities between both languages, a student will easily acquire a foreign language but with the differences, acquiring it will be harder. C.A a posteriori concentrates more on error analysis. Most errors occur due to the strategies that students use to acquire a foreign language thus linguists and teachers should pay more attention to what learners actually do than concentrating on their assumptions of what the student will do (Torrijos, 2009). C.A a priori approach is used in this study, as the study investigates areas of divergence and convergence (with particular focus on speaking, reading and writing skills) between Timap language and English language, with a view to knowing whether proficiency in Timap language has significant influence on the English Language Proficiency of senior secondary school (SSS 3) students in Amoland of Plateau.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey design. The population comprises all Senior Secondary School Year 3 Students (SSS 3) in Amoland. Forty (40) Senior Secondary School year 3 students (SSS 3) were sampled from four Government Secondary Schools in Amoland. From each of the four (4) schools, ten (10) students were selected using simple random technique. The students were subjected to different class room activity to test their reading, speaking and writing skills in both English Language and Timap language. However, the instruments used were first

validated by English language experts before administering them to the students. The class room activities are: A passage written in English language and Timap language was used to test Reading skill, an essay written by the students in English language and Timap language on the topic "The food I like Best" was used to test the students' writing skill; while the students were asked to discuss a topic "What I can do to make Nigeria better". They discussed the topic in both English and Timap languages. This was used to test their spoken skill. Each student's presentation was recorded by the researcher and subjected to assessment indices.

The students' essay was subjected to COEMA: Content (10 Marks), Organisation (10 marks), Expression (20 marks) and Mechanical Accuracy (10 marks) assessment on a total of 50 marks per student. Their reading skill was assessed through the indices of Reading Speed (10 marks), Non-Verbal Expression (10), Eye Movement (10 marks) and Meaning Construction (20 marks) on a total of 50 marks per head. While, their spoken skill was evaluated using the parameters of Relevance (10 marks), Expression (20 marks), Composure (10 marks) and Organisation (10 marks) on a total mark of 50 per person.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the Level of English Language Proficiency of Amoland Senior Secondary School Class 3 (SSS 3) Students?

Table 1: Level of English Language Proficiency of Amo Senior Secondary School Class 3 (SSS 3) Students

English Language Proficiency	Expected Score	Sum of Observed Score	% of Observed vs Expected Score	Level of Observed	Overall Remark Proficiency	Level of Proficiency
Writing	2000	1241.00	62.05%	High	65.72% High	Skill
Reading	2000	1353.00	67.65%	High		Skill
Speaking	2000	1349.00	67.45%	High		Skill
Total Observed Score	6000	3943.00	65.72%			

Table 1 presents results showing the level of English language proficiency of SSS3 Amo Students. After marking, the sum of their observed score in writing skills was 1,241 which represent 62.05% (high proficiency). In terms of reading skill, the students also demonstrated high level of proficiency. With 40 participants the total expected score (using the 50 marks obtainable) was 2000. The marks obtained (observed score) by the 40 students was 1,353, which represented 67.65%. This is also considered high level of proficiency. The expected score in the speaking skill for the 40 students was also 2000. However, the mark obtained by the 40 students was 1,349 which represent 67.45%. This is also considered a high level of proficiency. Overall, the English language proficiency of the 40 students was determined on a total mark of 6000, adding the total mark value of the Writing skill score with

that of Reading skill and Speaking skill. The overall observed score was 3,943 which represent 65.72% of 6000. Hence, the overall level of English language proficiency of SSS3 students in Amo land is high. This could be adduced to the fact that students are exposed to the rudiments of English language learning early in their educational pursuits, (since English language seems to be most preferred by parents for teachers to communicate with their wards) hence, the significant development of students in the acquisition of learning skills of English language.

Research Question 2:
 What is the Level of Timap Language Proficiency of Amo Senior Secondary School Class 3 (SSS 3) Students?

Table 2: Level of Timap Language Proficiency of Amo Senior Secondary School Class 3 (SSS 3) Students

English Language Proficiency	Expected Score	Sum of Observed Score	% of Observed vs Expected Score	Level of Proficiency	Overall Level of Proficiency	Remark
Writing Skill	2000 write	.00	00	Lack of ability to	30.47%	Low
Reading Skill	2000	295.00	14.75	Very Low		
Speaking Skill	2000	1533.00	76.65%	Very High		
Total Observed Score	6000	1828.00	30.47%			

Table 2 presents results showing the level of Timap language proficiency of SSS3 Amo Students. In terms of Writing skill, Amo students cannot be assessed because out-rightly they presented themselves as being unable to write in their mother tongue. However, they demonstrated some level of Reading skills (14.75%, very low). But in terms of speaking skill, the students proved to be children of the soil as they demonstrated high level of proficiency (76.65%) of their mother tongue. By and large, their overall level of proficiency, including their Speaking skill Timap was low (30.47%).

The high percentage recorded in speaking skill as compared to other two skills: Reading and Writing may be because it is the language of their immediate environment and it is used for daily interactions among people in various places and they are more comfortable expressing themselves in Timap. This assertion is supported by Odewumi (2001). He states that “the mother tongue is the language which the

child can communicate ideas and feelings with ease. In it, he/she is inquisitive, creative and original. Denying him learning in the medium therefore would render him tongue-tied.” (p. 83). This explains the high percentage of speaking skills in Timap language which represents 76.65% (higher than their proficiency in English language). On the other hand, their poor performances in Reading and Writing skills of Timap language could be because the language had not been used as a medium of instruction in the classroom, let alone be taught as a subject. This is due to the fact that Timap language has not been standardized. This makes it difficult for teachers to adequately teach students the basic things they need to know in the language, thereby making it impossible for Amo students to have a good knowledge of Timap language, particularly the variety for reading and writing.

Also, the non-implementation of the provisions of the language component of the National Policy on Education (NPE) constitutes an impediment to the use of mother tongue or language of immediate environment in teaching and learning. Section 4 (19) (e) of the NPE

stipulates that “the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject” (2004, pp. 10-11). No doubt, the provision for language teaching and learning in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) as stated above is laudable, but effectively achieving the set goals and objectives in the areas of implementing this worthy policy in the classroom is in doubt. Maduewesi (1999) as cited by Abidogun & Adebule (2014) believed that for two reasons the pronouncement of the National policy had not been taken seriously. Firstly, a foremost expectation of Nursery schools is to teach the young child the English language which is the preferred language of the parents and since the schools are private establishments, the proprietors have to please their clients or they would lose patronage. Secondly, it seems both unrealistic and unfair to expect this policy to be taken seriously as long as the National language, the language of business and transaction remain English language. Oderinde (2007) strongly agreed to the ideas expressed above by Maduewesi, and warned that as a nation, we have found ourselves in this quandary because of the status of English as second language (SL) and because we want to savour the best status for ourselves

and our children we end up shooting ourselves in the foot by unwittingly foisting on ourselves cultural alienation. Also, Abidogun and Adebule (2014) believes that early Childhood Education is very essential in a child’s life hence the recent focus on it across the globe. To demonstrate the significance of Mother Tongue education in Early childhood development, February 21 of every year is set aside as the International Mother Tongue Day globally. The declaration by UNESCO in 1999 further emphasized the relationship between the two concepts.

Furthermore, negative attitude by parents and school administrators towards the use of mother tongue in schools affect the use of the language for academic purposes. For instance, the foremost expectation of private Nursery and Primary schools is to teach the young child English language which is the preferred language of the parents, since the schools are private establishments, proprietors of these schools have to yield to the biddings of parents. Research Question 3: Does proficiency in Timap Language has Significant Influence on the English Language Proficiency of Senior Secondary School Class 3 Students in Amo Area of Plateau State?

Table 3: Influence of Timap Language on the English Language Proficiency of Senior Secondary School Class 3 (SSS 3) Students in Amo Area of Plateau State

	Mean	N
English Scores	32.86	120
Timap Scores	15.23	120

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics while Table 4 below presents the Eta square values indicating the strength of influence of Timap Language on English Language Proficiency of Senior Secondary School Class 3 students in Amo Area of Plateau State. Table 4.3 shows

that average score of proficiency in Timap Language (\bar{x} =15.23) is far below that of proficiency in English Language (\bar{x} =32.86). This is further tested in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4: Eta Square Values Indicating the Strength of Influence of Timap Language on English Language Proficiency of Senior Secondary School Students in Amo Area of Plateau State

		Sum of	df	Mean	F	Sig.	Eta	Eta
		Squares		Square				
English Scores *	Between							
	Groups (Combined)	231.018	18	12.834	.554	.924	.300	.090
Timap Scores	Within	2341.574	101	23.184				
	Groups							

Table 4 shows that the eta squared value ($\eta^2=0.090$) indicating the relationship between proficiency in Timap Language on the English Language Proficiency of Senior Secondary School students in Amo Area of Plateau was very low (less than 1%). Hence, the influence of Timap Language on English Language Proficiency of Senior Secondary School Class 3 students in Amo Area of Plateau is very negligible. Reasons for this are not far-fetched from the ones discussed under objective 2 above.

However, Kavaliauskienė's (2009) findings demonstrated that all learners need a support of mother tongue in English classes, but the amount of the native language needed depends on students' proficiency in English. Also, Montjane (2013) reveals that learners performed better when they were taught in Sepedi than in English. The educators' responses showed that learners have difficulties in understanding English as the medium of instruction. Also, Beka (2016) showed that majority of students have positive attitude and addressed psychological benefits of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. They reported that learning in mother tongue boosts their self-confidence, psychological stamina, self-expressive skills, clarity of classroom communication and instruction (concepts, abstracts, meanings, and other instructional

elements are easily understood), academic achievement and overall quality education.

Conclusion

The study has attempted to investigate the influence of Timap language on English language Proficiency of Senior Secondary School (SSS 3) Students in Amo Land, Plateau State. Simple random technique was used to select forty students for the study. The selected SSS 3 students were subjected to tests on Writing, Reading and Speaking skills in both English and Timap languages in order to know their proficiencies in the two languages. Findings showed that the overall level of English language proficiency of SSS 3 students in Amo land is high. Also, they demonstrated high level of proficiency in their Speaking skills of Timap language. However, they displayed very low knowledge of Timap language in their Reading skills, while their Writing skills could not be assessed because they portrayed themselves as being unable to write in their mother tongue. In addition, the eta squared value indicating the relationship between proficiency in Timap Language on the English Language Proficiency of the students was very low. Hence, the influence of Timap Language on English Language Proficiency of SSS 3 students in Amo Area of Plateau is very negligible.

Recommendations

In order to ensure that students have basic language skills of their mother tongues, particularly to be able to use the languages to facilitate teaching and learning effectively, the following recommendations have been made.

Government should put in place the political will that would facilitate the effective implementation of the provisions of the language component of the National Policy on Education (NPE) (Akinsola, 2019). Thus, non-compliance by any school should attract sanction or penalty by the government. Also, the administration should fast-track the codification of major indigenous languages as stipulated in the NPE, with a view to ensuring their use for teaching and learning in schools. In addition, adequate textbooks should be provided by the relevant authorities after developing the orthography of the languages, to make students, teachers and interested members of the public have access to the books. Furthermore, government should employ more teachers to teach indigenous languages in schools. This is because inadequate teachers to teach Nigerian languages in schools also serve as impediment to the development of these languages. These teachers should be exposed to current and proven methods of teaching and impacting knowledge. This can be achieved by organising seminars, workshops, conferences, and so on for the teachers in order to keep them abreast of new techniques of tutoring their students. Finally, “school competitions and debates should be organized for primary and secondary school students on the major languages, and prizes should be given to best students, as is the norm for English language” (Akinsola 2019, p. 13). The foregoing would not only improve the status of Nigerian languages, but also enhance their use as mediums of instruction and subjects or courses of study in various levels of education.

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