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**Inaugural Lecture Series 38**

**PROBLEMS, PRINCIPLES AND  
PROSPECTS OF ENGLISH  
STUDIES IN AN AFRICAN  
UNIVERSITY**

**by Adebisi Afolayan**



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PROBLEMS, PRINCIPLES AND PROSPECTS OF ENGLISH  
STUDIES IN AN AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

by

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## Introduction

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning  
The end is where we start from. And every phrase  
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home  
Taking its place to support the others,  
The word neither diffident nor ostentations,  
And easy commerce of the old and the new,  
The common word exact without vulgarity,  
The formal word precise but not pedantic,  
To complete consort dancing together)  
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,  
Every poem an epitaph.<sup>1</sup>

Reflecting on these words of T. S. Eliot, I am reminded that the highest, the greatest and profoundest of human values, skills, achievements or even enterprises cannot be reduced to simple and straightforward propositions and concepts. Lest anyone should be tempted to think that my judgment of paradoxical complexity derives from the pithy, multiple and ambiguous nature of poetic language, let us look at a prose quotation:

Ho every one who thirsts, come to the waters;  
and he who has no money, come, buy and eat;  
Come, buy wine and milk without money and  
without price.<sup>2</sup>

These words from the Holy Scriptures of the Christians constitute for Christians what they have christened as the Great Invitation. However, examined from the language point of view, the words juxtaposed in this quotation present a veritable paradox. How can we be asked to buy without money and even without price? If, in spite of the current laws of this country, we could excuse the absence of a price tag because of the traditional method of haggling over prices of things, surely, we cannot buy without money. Does "buy" not mean to "get in return for money, get by paying a price"?<sup>3</sup>

It is exactly this kind of enigmatic paradox which is characteristic of the study of English in an African university. The acquisition of language is the most universal, the most useful and indeed the noblest achievement of man. Every normal human being succeeds in acquiring language; without language man cannot function as the social, cooperative, and creative animal; and it is only with language accomplishments that man rises above the lower animal and is both educable and indeed educated, governed and governing, ordered and regulating, civilized and civilizing. The English language is today the most international of all languages. To acquire it is to possess one of the most efficient keys to the storehouse of human achievements. English studies, therefore, as a discipline cannot but mean the academic pursuit or the search for truth about the most ubiquitous tool. It simply follows from our hypothesis that English studies must be irreducible to simple, straight



ard propositions and concepts. Further, in an African university discipline is doubly paradoxical and complex. It is true that white Englishmen in England acquire the English language and that black Africans in Africa do so too. However, while the white Englishmen in England learn it naturally, the black Africans in Africa must forever learn it artificially; and while it is the best achievement and the best key to the native originality, inventiveness and accomplishment of the white Englishmen in England, it can only remain the true second best key to the native originality, inventiveness and accomplishment of the black Africans in Africa. The study of English in an African university, therefore, naturally and must always remain an enigmatic paradox. The nature of the paradox is at once revealed to us in this University and, for that matter, in all the universities in this country, by the requirements of the Academic Planning Group of the National Universities Commi-

#### *Applicability of Research*

100. Nearly all the communities stressed the need for the immediate application of research findings to the solution of problems of the locality . . .

#### *Quality of the Graduate Product*

101. . . . The graduate should be humble, respectful of others and one who upholds the ideals and values of the society. He should "identify our aspirations, the meaning of ourselves, individual relationship, our allegiance and . . . prescribe the things that will unlock the deepest motivations . . . translate the merit of commitment" and should not derogate and disdain our society and uphold the values of other people . . ." Not only should the graduate be rightly oriented in behaviour, he should also be trained to be practical so as to solve the problems of the locality.

the political cornerstone of the educational language policy of the country in Paragraph 8 of Section 1 on the Philosophy of Nigerian Education in the 1977 Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and as a means of preserving a people's culture, the Government considers it to be in the best interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than its own mother tongue. In this connection, the Government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.<sup>5</sup>

In the educational process, it is very well known that language is both the content or subject matter of education (that is, the subject for learning within the formal education process) and also is the medium for learning whatever is to be learnt. These two functions are subtly recognised in the National Policy. In paragraph 11 (3) of Section 2 on Pre-Primary Education,<sup>6</sup> we read:

To achieve the above objectives, the Government will ensure:



that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate Community and to this end will

- (a) develop the orthography for many more Nigerian languages
- (b) produce text books in Nigerian languages.

And then in Paragraph 15(4) of Section 3 on Primary Education:<sup>7</sup>

Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the Primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate Community, and at a later stage, English.

Surely in a country with such a policy that not only recognises those important functions of language but also emphasises Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as the main tools for achieving them, the study of English cannot but be a paradox, since it can only appear to be anti-nationalistic. After all, the graduates, we have also been told, should "identify our aspirations, the meaning of ourselves, individual relationships, our national goals, . . . and should not derogate and disdain our society and uphold the values of other people . . ." Does the English language not represent "the value of other people" rather than our own values enshrined in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba?

Yet, the answer is not simply to do away with the study of the English language. Our quotations also recognise English as what is needed even at a later stage of primary education, let alone the secondary and tertiary levels of education; and the recent history of the English language in Independent Nigeria points to an inherent, fundamental dilemma. There is no official recognition given to it in the Independence Constitution of the country, yet all national transactions, administrative, judicial, commercial and legislative, have so far been carried out only in the language. In 1976, while preparing for the return to civilian rule, the Federal Military Government set up a Constitution Drafting Committee and Paragraph 53 of the Draft Constitution produced then had these provisions:<sup>8</sup>

- (i) The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English language or such other Nigerian languages as the National Assembly may by resolution decide.

Later, however, the Constituent Assembly elected by the people to approve the Draft Constitution deleted the reference to Nigerian languages and kept English as the only language to be used, presumably in the interest of national unity. The Supreme Military Council stepped in and *the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979*,<sup>9</sup> just published, has now returned the situation to something closer to the position of the Constitution Drafting Committee as follows:

- (51) The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefor.

- (91) The business of the House of Assembly shall be conducted in



comparative literature which demands a polyglot background of all its students.

The English language as a discipline or a part of the discipline of English studies is best conceived of as having two different theoretical and descriptive foundations. In the first instance, it may be seen against a general theoretical background of language studies and in this sense it could be seen in terms of the various aspects of general linguistics, theoretical, descriptive and interdisciplinary. This view, it seems fair to say, is echoed in this statement of Professor Randolph Quirk in his 1960 inaugural lecture at University College London:<sup>10</sup>

The decline of Latin in our education system has not therefore reduced the need for a linguistic discipline: it has merely added to the responsibility of the English teacher as the linguistic discipline comes more and more to have English both as its vehicle and as its object.

On the other hand, the study of English language could be seen as a linguistic analysis of the language from three major different viewpoints, namely; 'English as a mother tongue', 'English as a second language' and 'English as a foreign language.' In effect, a distinction is being made between a basic study of general linguistics having the English language as both its vehicle for expression and the object for explicating its theory and concepts and what could be regarded as English linguistic studies, the application of principles of general linguistics to the analysis and understanding of the English language *per se*. This distinction is often not made and indeed is generally blurred, leading to a great deal of academic confusion.

The Use of English, which is known by different names in different locations (such as Freshman English in America, Remedial English in Britain and the Use of English in Nigeria), is very often not recognized as a valid element in the discipline of English studies or the sub-discipline of English language. Yet even for Britain Quirk<sup>11</sup> stressed the need for, and value of it:

Moreover, the vastly expanded educational programme of our time means that we must train a far higher proportion of our population than hitherto to make sophisticated use of English in their communication with each other in the higher levels of study, in the arts and sciences alike.

If there is a need for a course in the Use of English for the native speakers of the language, then, undoubtedly, the need is greater for the non-native users of the language.

The selection as well as combination of the various elements chosen by Universities to constitute English studies varies from one institution to another. Even within the same country the emphasis



tends to differ from one University to another. Therefore the crisis in English studies can be viewed much as P.H. Coombs has viewed the crisis in education in general since 1945.<sup>12</sup>

The nature of this crisis is suggested by the words 'change,' 'adaptation,' and 'disparity' . . . Educational systems have . . . grown and changed more rapidly than ever before. But they have adapted all too slowly to the faster pace of events on the move all around them. The consequent disparity—taking many forms—between educational systems and their environments is the essence of the world-wide crisis in education.

### *The Goals of English Studies*

Given the diversity of things that go under the name English studies, it is incontestable that the goals and objectives of the discipline would vary from place to place. Literature,<sup>13</sup> as the exponents of English studies,

Because it presents people in their social relationship, and because it engages its readers in much the same way as situations in real life, has a very important function in forming attitudes, influencing sympathies, perfecting values.

On the other hand, the study of the English language moves in either of two directions: first, to apply analytic and descriptive methods, skills and processes of general linguistics to the English language, such that knowledge is gained of how the language functions and how people utilize it to live; or, second, to provide an adequate linguistic theory that might be applied not only to the English language in its rich varieties but also to any other human language found anywhere in any form.

In contrast, with emphasis on the Use of English, the goal of English studies would be to ensure that the learner, in normal everyday language, "knows the English Language." Thus, to know the English language is to have acquired various skills of varying complexity, beginning with the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, there are also intermediate and advanced skills of analytical and evaluative comprehension, extensive as well as rapid reading, and complex writing skills involving not only various kinds of descriptive, narrative and analytical exercises but also long essays and scientific reporting.

Surely the kind of texts constituting the subject of literary studies and the combination of the various components selected for any particular programme would determine the eventual goals and objectives of the discipline of English studies in any given university. Thus the fundamental problem is that of linking the aims of English studies to the overall goals and objectives of the educational programme of the people.



Unless English Literature can be functional in a situation, there is little hope of making it genuinely educational, and to make it educational should surely be our aim.<sup>14</sup>

Those words of Professor Bruce Pattison should be repeated for every other component of English studies, be it language studies or the Use of English. The problem is therefore how to make English studies functional everywhere in objectives and goals.

### *The Implementation of Programmes in English Studies*

It naturally follows from what has been said so far that there should be a fundamental problem about the implementation of a programme in English studies as a discipline. If the contents vary from institution to institution, and if the aims and objectives also vary accordingly, then the implementation must be different. Since these are varieties of the same discipline, the fundamental problem of a coordinated scheme, not only of teaching and examining the discipline but also of researching into it, ensues.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Again, as in the case of the discussion of the problems, it seems best to approach the issue of principle under the three separate major headings of basic concepts, goals and implementation of English studies.

### *The Concept of English Studies*

The desire that the discipline be relevant means we need to conceive of it in any given institution according to the basic linguistic situation prevalent. Therefore, ideally, three major types should be recognized, namely; Mother-Tongue, Second Language, and Foreign Language situational types.

The Mother Tongue situational type is that which is found in Britain, America, Canada, Australia and South Africa, where English is native to most of the citizens. Understandably, English studies have primarily concentrated on Literature in those places, with the new 20th century trend towards practical criticism and more recently Comparative Literature. The inclusion of courses on the structure of Modern English Language is very recent indeed. The fact that Professor Randolph Quirk's inaugural lecture in 1960 at University College London is a plea for the study of the Mother Tongue is most illuminating in this respect. Even then, it should be noted, the studies that are related to the English language in those countries, particularly Britain and America, have mostly concen-



trated upon the utilization of intuitive knowledge and well codified facts of the language in the development and evaluation of linguistic models in General Linguistics (Grammatical Models, Psycho-linguistics, Socio-linguistics and Stylistics) rather than in corresponding advancement of the codification of structures and patterns of the language used in different contexts or environments. The major exception to this general pattern is the Survey of Modern Educated English Usage undertaken at the University College London under Professor Randolph Quirk. Consequently, today we are faced by the anomaly that persistent and consistent advertisements in those countries for Professors and other senior academics in English language have produced no effect in this country whereas legions of professional linguists could easily be obtained.

The foreign language situational type is what obtains in some parts of Europe and non-Anglophone countries of Africa. Understandably it is more entrenched in the European countries than in the African countries. This is partly because of the difference in the respective rate of development of the European and the African countries and partly because of the need for English studies in the educational programme of the two parts of the world. European countries are more advanced and developed, consequently their educational programme has a longer tradition and a more universalistic academic orientation. In addition, the European countries have a greater affinity in culture, education, economics and politics with Britain and America and therefore belong to the same great tradition. In contrast, the non-Anglophone African countries are less developed and in addition have very little affinity with Britain and America. They are mainly Francophone countries but some are ex-colonies of Spain or Portugal and therefore have their special relationship with metropolitan France, Spain and Portugal. Moreover, while the European countries could see English studies not only as a luxury but also as something desirable, the non-Anglophone African countries have in the past felt less need for English studies. The realities of present-day politics and international relations could not but make them increasingly aware of the need for some English studies at least, and thus the situation is in flux.

Even in the European countries, the emphasis in English studies could not be exactly those of Britain or America. From the utilitarian point of view, the greatest emphasis would be on the Use of English which, of course, according to the great European linguistic tradition established by the study of Latin and Greek would also entail a great deal of language studies. It is perhaps



reasonable to concede that those two factors account for the outstanding development of English language studies in, for example, the Scandinavian countries. It is a curious fact of history that most comprehensive standard grammars of English have been produced by scholars from the Scandinavian countries: Otto Jespersen, E. Krusinger, H. Poutsman and more recently Ven. S. Jacobson, H.S. Sorenson and J. Svartvik. Understandably, literature could not receive the same emphasis there as in Britain or America. After all, a foreign language situation is one in which the target language is used for only a specialized function and, language being primarily for the purpose of communication, that special function is normally centred on the use of the language and the rules and principles governing that use.

Continuing with the same foreign language tradition, one would expect that in non-Anglophone African countries the emphasis would be on the Use of English and language studies. In Africa, however, attention is paid almost totally exclusively to the Use of English. Of course, the learners being predominantly adults would have recourse to rules characteristic of language studies. As a matter of principle, there is every reason to suggest that for future development, the language studies component would have to be strengthened in order that the discipline might mature.

Certainly, the meaningful study of language would require the paying of some attention to literature, since in the words of Professor I. A. Richards<sup>15</sup>,

Literature is only a way for doing a job well with the language by voice or by pen

and therefore literature is an exhibition of some important varieties of the language. Undoubtedly, however, literature cannot become the great focus of attention in the foreign language situational type, particularly in Africa. After all, literature is a discipline in its own right with its own methods and principles and a foreign language situation does not prepare the student with the necessary background for a profitable literary endeavour.

The second language situational type is to receive the greatest attention in this paper. This is partly because all my own studies and research experience so far relate to this type which is found specially in ex-colonies of Britain and particularly in the Anglophone countries of Africa.

The second language situational type is somewhere between the mother-tongue and the foreign language types in terms of complexity and profundity of the components of English studies.



Although the language is not native to the learners as in Britain, America, Canada, Australia or South Africa, it is the primary vehicle for conducting some important aspects of everyday life of the learner in this situation just as it is for the native speakers of those countries. It is not a language required by learners for only specified specialized purposes, as in the case of the foreign learners. More importantly, the entire community has a special need for the language. In fact, the situation so approaches the mother tongue type that at the zenith of achievement certain fundamental claims that are normally reserved for the mother tongue situation could also be extended to it. Thus, for example, reflecting on linguistic competence as a property usually attributable only to the native speaker, I came to the conclusion that it is possible to attribute the same property to second language users.<sup>16</sup> It seemed to me that

Classical presentation of competence sees it as something that can only be associated with the native speakers of the language

Yet,

Bilingual experience suggests that competence is transferable from one's mother tongue to a second language. It would therefore seem more fruitful to conceive competence in universalistic rather than particularistic terms.

I argued that

Competence in any given language can be acquired by foreign as well as native speakers of the language.

I conceded that

Competence is a tree that would naturally grow on native rather than foreign soil.

I insisted that

The three can also grow on foreign soil that has acquired the properties of the native.

Now, I would add that that native-like soil is found in the second language situation. That is why I believe that we should be able to speak some day, for example, of Nigerian or Ghanaian English as a distinct dialect, the grammar of which should be described in terms of the competence of educated Nigerian or Ghanaian usage in the language.

The special role of English in a second language situation requires greater comprehensiveness of coverage of English studies as a discipline than is required in a foreign language situation or even, surprisingly, in the mother tongue situation. Thus, while it is



possible in the foreign language situation to concentrate on the use of English and in the mother-tongue situational type, to concentrate on literature, it is desirable in the second language situational type to require solid work in all three main components: Literature, Language Studies and Use of English. To teach literature without due emphasis on language, for example, will produce few competent postgraduate scholars of literature in this situational type, in contrast to what obtains in Britain or America. Indeed, I feel that the high failure rate of postgraduate students in literary studies at the oldest Department of English in this country primarily arises from the failure of that Department to give sufficient attention to language. On the other hand, English language studies can be relevant to the literary scholar and the country if English is considered strictly as a second language. As has earlier been argued, an adequate attention to the language component is necessary for the understanding and enjoyment of literature. Furthermore, the Use of English component must be available to all scholars of whatever discipline—arts, science or applied science. Otherwise the academic achievement, originality and independence of the scholar will be greatly diminished.

Consequently, English studies in a second language situation constitute by far a more comprehensive discipline than in the mother tongue and the foreign language situational types. In order to be relevant, literature cannot just refer to the works of the British or American masters. It must essentially mean literature in English, with appropriate emphasis given to African literature in English. The emphasis on English as second language would necessarily demand a consideration of the student's first language and its sociological and psychological environment in relation to the English language. Moreover, the scholar must continually question the relevance of his studies in the English language for the country, particularly with reference to literature, education, politics and economics. Thus, for example, the Professor of English in a second language situational type, such as Nigeria or Ghana, cannot be just a specialist in General Linguistics but rather should ideally be a scholar of English as a second language, an applied linguist with a sound knowledge of World Standard English, of the student's first language and its sociological and psychological environment in relation to the English language. Thus, he must be able to demonstrate a good understanding of the English language, he must be capable of understanding, describing and even fostering the development of English in the second language situation against its sociological and psychological environment; he must be able to relate the English language in the



environment to World Standard English; and finally, he must be concerned with the relevance of studies in the language to literature, education, economic development and administration of that country.

### *The Goals of English Studies*

One indisputable and universal general aim of English studies is to help the learner to learn and use the English language effectively and efficiently for the various activities and purposes in his life as the need arises. However, we already know from the analysis so far that specific objectives for the discipline must vary and that three general categories of English studies can be identified for the specification of objectives and goals.

As can be seen from the analysis of the concept of English studies of a mother tongue situational type, the specific objectives can be outlined as follows: First, in respect of the Use of English component, since even at the first stage of schooling, the child will have already acquired the speaking and listening skills, the initial objective can only be to help the child to learn to read and write and acquire those skills at the elementary, intermediate and advanced levels. Of course, the listening and speaking skills would also have to be developed and advanced so that the linguistic competence of the child will crystallize and be sharpened. Undoubtedly at both the secondary and the university levels, the objective would not be the acquisition of the basic skills but the advancement of the skills through encounter with a rich variety of styles, registers and complex language activities. Particularly, literary methods, skills, principles and experience can be gained quite early and developed to a very high standard at the secondary and university stages. After all, as Professor Sinclair has said: 'Any piece of literary language must be understood against the total language experience of a speaker'. It is indisputable that it is the native speaker whose total language experience is richest. Concerning the language component, care must be taken to separate the two related objectives of learning to describe and analyse the language systematically and of acquiring the ability to develop a general linguistic theory to describe the language, and any other language for that matter, most effectively. The two frequently seem to be the same, since both confront the learner with the task of externalizing the intuitively internalized rules of the language.

Where English is a foreign language the initial objective is to acquire some or all of the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing and to extend those skills from the elementary



stage through the intermediate to the advanced. The objective of language study will simply be the acquisition of the ability to describe and analyse the language. Finally, the objective of literature is primarily the use of literary texts to expose the learner to the richest variety of language and it will be only the most gifted students who can undertake serious literary studies that result in the inculcation of literary methods, principles and experience.

The objectives of English studies in second language situations are the most complex, since the situation is in some way like that for mother-tongue and in some other ways like that for English as a foreign language. The initial objective, the acquisition of all four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, is exactly the same as in teaching English as a foreign language. Yet, next, the objective, of developing the skills to a very advanced stage, should be closer to that which obtains when teaching the mother tongue, in that the learner at the university level would have to develop dependable intuitive reactions about grammaticality and acceptability in the language. There must be two specific objectives for English language studies, particularly at the university level. First of all, there must be conscious efforts to get the students to internalize systematically the rules of the language. Then will follow the objectives of externalizing the internalized rules through systematic description and analysis of the structure and rules of the language. Also, there are two distinct objectives for teaching literature. First of all, as for foreign language teaching, literary texts should be used to expose the students to the language in its rich variety. Then secondly, as for teaching the mother-tongue, there must be the objectives of inculcating literary skills, methods, principles and experience through the language. It would seem desirable for the student in this category to learn to receive literature through the language and at the same time also have the opportunity to develop his talent to produce literature in the language.

### *Implementation of a Programme in English Studies*

The only important observation to make in respect of the implementation of programmes of English studies of the mother tongue situational type relates to the language component in which today there is certainly a defect. Too little emphasis is being given to it. There is therefore now a world shortage of English language scholars, particularly for employment in the African University. Perhaps, my voice today won't reach to Britain and America, but if it could I would strongly urge the scholars of English studies there



to advance the cause of their discipline here in Africa<sup>18</sup> by separating general linguistic academic preoccupation from English linguistic academic endeavours. The non-separation of both activities has resulted in a confusion of purpose in implementation whereby actual English language studies have been sadly neglected while general linguistic studies have flourished. Our own experience trying to recruit English language specialists for the Universities in this country in the last ten years has shown a yet more disturbing development, particularly in the United States of America. In addition to general linguistics, the courses in Use of English (freshmen English: composition, reading and rhetoric) are increasingly mistaken for English linguistic studies. There is therefore the urgent need to reemphasize academic English language courses which are now generally confused with either general linguistics or the Use of English.

Where English is a foreign language, the real principle of implementation to follow, particularly in the African situation, is properly to establish English studies along the lines earlier suggested when laying out the concepts and goals of English studies. The danger is over-emphasizing either the wrong component of the discipline, such as literature, or even a discipline peripheral to English studies in such a situation, such as general linguistics.

Turning now to the situation where English is a second language, which is the central focus of this lecture, I would like to draw attention to three important principles of implementation which have been generally neglected in African Universities—originality, relevance, and comprehensiveness.

### *Originality*

A close look at English studies in African Universities reveals that most of the programmes are modelled after those in European or American Universities. Originality in an African University demands a very sharp awareness of the bilingual, or even multi-lingual, situation in which English studies must here be established. We must coldly face the fact that English is not a mother-tongue but only a second language.

In establishing English studies, one must be prepared to meet opponents who feel that studying English as a second language is an inferior form of English studies. Many African scholars, particularly those who have trained in Europe or America, believe that the programmes they went through represent the correct form and feel that any attempt to rethink English studies in terms of a second language is to establish something inferior. It is often lost



upon those Africans that even when they sat in the same class with native British or American students they were not learning exactly the same thing as those British or American counterparts. This is not to deny that they might have the same measure of success at the end as their British or American counterparts, but rather to emphasize that they got to that end as African scholars from a different background and through a process different from that of their American or British counterparts. Indeed, there would still be a great deal of difference between the two groups, traceable not to individual capability but to the different linguistic and cultural background of each group. Thus it could be asserted that even when such African scholars studied in Britain or America, they learnt as second language students and what they acquired thereby is generally English as a second language. So the conscious establishment of a programme of English studies that pays due attention to the factors of a second language situation should indeed produce the most adequate form of English studies for Africans.

Other opponents of the idea of basing English studies squarely on the concept of a second language will argue that the resultant programme would be something unorthodox. The truth is that such a form of English studies is not less orthodox than those found in Britain or America; it only consciously fosters and keeps its individual, relevant character. It is often lost upon such critics that in this regard English studies are no different from other subjects within the Humanities—history, philosophy, fine arts, music and dramatic arts, in Africa. Surely, none of those disciplines can be exactly what they are at Oxford or Columbia. Any educational programme in Africa must have an African identity if it must be relevant to African aspirations, and its true originality, its own Africanness should not earn for it opprobrium. Because the African scholar wishes his work to be relevant, some students of the English language have concerned themselves with the problems of education in English. To the uninitiated, this may also seem unorthodox—a deviation from the scholarly purity of other places. Of course, some of the great names in the field of English language studies—both in Britain and America—have written extensively on this subject—men like A.H. Smith,<sup>19</sup> Randolph Quirk,<sup>20</sup> P.D. Stevens<sup>21</sup> in Britain and Albert H. Marckwardt<sup>22</sup> and C.C. Fries<sup>23</sup> in the United States. The natural desire of the African scholar not to be irrelevant makes him easily fall in step with such men. Thus it is within the right tradition of orthodoxy, for an English language scholar in Africa to show very keen interest in the

...view of African literature. Rithens, it would seem that the



teaching of English language in Africa and indeed it could be very well argued that if he does not show such an interest his work will be largely irrelevant.

While considering this issue of English as a second language in connection with the principle of originality, I would like to emphasize that it must not be a copy of what is found in America or Britain where strangely enough, we now have the most renowned centres for studying English as a second language today. The imperial experience and the need to meet the requirements of erstwhile colonies have necessitated the development of such centres by Britain. On the other hand, the "melting pot" political theory and even the more recently advocated "salad bowl" theory have all actively promoted the acquisition of English by new citizens of America who have hitherto been speaking other languages and consequently, America has had to develop good programmes in English as a second or foreign language. But as a principle, those programmes of Britain and America must necessarily be different from those to be found in Africa. Authentic English as a second language does not exist in America or Britain. The American or British community in which their own programmes are established and run are predominantly "English as a first language" environments. The learners are surrounded by native speakers of the language with whom they must interact in order to survive. Besides, America or Britain being very advanced countries, the education facilities available there are rather sophisticated. In contrast, in Africa, the learners and users of English hardly ever have to make the language replace their own mother tongue in order to survive socially, politically, educationally and economically. English for them largely remains as a second language even when they are able to become professors of the language in the University. They live in an environment unlike Britain or America, which is generally dominated by one indigenous African language or the other. In effect the African universities have superabundant research resources, both linguistic data and supporting facilities of acquisition and usage, for the business of learning and using English as a second language, and therefore their Departments of English studies should be where original theories concerning English as a second language should be developed.

### *Relevance*

If, as demanded by the academic planning committee of the National Universities Commission, English studies are to be



relevant to the Nigerian situation, the existing theories, principles and practice of English studies must be reviewed and adapted to the local needs. Three principles, now largely neglected, ought to shape the implementation of English studies in an African University. First, the existing over-emphasis, the almost exclusive emphasis on literature, ought to be redressed; and, more importantly, in doing so all attempts should be made to ground English literary studies in the literary awareness and traditions of the local community. This can be best achieved if literature in indigenous languages is studied before and together with literature in English. Secondly, English language studies should be made compulsory in all programmes of English studies in the African University. In his report, *English Language Examining* written in 1964, D.W. Grieve made this observation:<sup>24</sup>

To some extent the Universities are themselves to blame for the present situation. The neglect until recently of modern English linguistic studies at University level has meant that language teachers for the schools have not been produced. Moreover, as has been suggested earlier, the research which might have led to new examinations and tests is properly the concern of the Universities rather than the Examinations Council.

Even today, that observation is valid. Modern English studies are still neglected at the University level in Africa. Although in some cases the neglect has been due to a lack of scholars to establish the necessary programmes, there is no doubt that the amount of compulsory English language required for maximum relevance has not been properly assessed and accepted and it is time to do so. Finally, there is the need to make the Use of English programme relevant to specific local needs in various academic disciplines and language activities. Just a remedial programme is not enough, even when it is most seriously organized, let alone when it is perfunctorily executed as is the case today where the programme exists at all. To be relevant to the local needs of the various academic disciplines, such a programme will also have to be developmental.

### *Comprehensiveness*

In order that the English studies programmes may be truly original and relevant, they must also be comprehensive. One basic principle is that all the major components of literature and use of English ought to be covered in any programme.

It has earlier been suggested that literature in an African university must include African literature. We need a more comprehensive view of African literature. Hitherto, it would seem that the

concept of African literature has been rather narrow, though the term itself is multi-ambiguous. African literature could be defined in many ways according as we focus on contents, authorship and language. In respect of content, it could most comprehensively refer to the study of texts, written or spoken, on Africa or a part thereof; and it could also more specifically be the study of any text, written or spoken, on African culture which could be defined in any one of four different ways: the totality of shared indigenous African experience or part thereof, the totality of shared indigenous African experience anywhere in the world, and the totality of shared (indigenous) African experience in relation to other people anywhere in the world. In respect of authorship (writers or speakers) it could refer to the study of works produced by Africans only or to texts produced by anyone committed to, or interested in, Africa or part thereof. Finally, in respect of language, it might refer to any literature, defined in respect of content and authorship as above, expressed in any human language; or any language in Africa; or any indigenous African language; or any translation from one language to another, whether the two languages are indigenous or one is foreign and the other indigenous, or both languages are foreign to Africa. Surely, in the light of the present analysis, conceiving African literature without due regard to all the variables is inadequate. It is the consideration of the various kinds of literature that may be designated African without ruling out any *ab initio* that can lead to the richest understanding of African literature. For it is then that a scholar can most meaningfully determine the degrees of Africanness of each literature and evaluate each accordingly.

Finally, the use of English component, to be comprehensive, must serve a diversity of educational needs. Minimally, it must therefore be designed both to remedy any students' deficiencies and to develop in the students new skills requisite to university work. If a comprehensive programme in English studies is to serve the general needs of education then two other related matters must be incorporated as principles. First there must be full cooperation between the Universities and other institutions of learning, from the elementary schools to the professional institutions, particularly teacher training colleges. Secondly, the monolithic concept of English, the erroneous idea that there is just one programme suitable for every occasion, must be abandoned. Instead, we must establish programmes which recognize several Englishes, each appropriate for its own occasion or situation. For example, the same English programme is now made to serve the needs of both



would-be teachers and purely academic scholars in many African countries. That practice should be discontinued and a variety of programmes developed to meet specific goals.

#### PROSPECTS OF ENGLISH STUDIES IN AN AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

For English studies to be relevant, and especially in an African University there must be adequate aims and objectives, proper development and evaluation criteria for the programme based on the principles and objectives outlined above. Without closer adherence to such clearly defined objectives, procedure and evaluation, English studies in Africa cannot become a virile and productive adult discipline.

In order for English studies in an African university to develop into full maturity, the departments in charge must be conceived of as applied English studies centres. They should be applied centres in the sense that they look at the overall linguistic situation and the wider context of education and objectively relate the English language and its studies to the situation. They will closely examine the condition for choice, development, and use of English in the community. They will then seek positively to foster the development of the language in the most relevant manner in the community, becoming thereby an active agent in the forging out of a special efficient dialect of English characteristic of the community; for example, 'Nigerian English' in Nigeria, 'Ghanaian English' in Ghana, 'Kenyan English' in Kenya and 'Uganda English' in Uganda. This means that the Departments must work out hypotheses concerning English as a second language and develop theories to support them. They will in addition function as a laboratory for producing new materials for the study of English as a second language. They will then be in a position to formulate adequate policies and suggest effective means of implementing and evaluating such policies. They will also produce new texts for the study as well as the production of the language and its literature.

In keeping with some traditions of an inaugural lecture, I will devote the rest of this lecture to a discussion of the past, present and anticipated future efforts at this University and my own humble contributions to those efforts in the development of the type of English studies envisaged in the philosophy of the discipline so far adumbrated. The issues are so many and large that they could very well have absorbed the entire lecture. What I can then attempt here are a few remarks on some selected topics.

Perhaps the first issue deserving attention is the kind of

department needed. Two separate related questions arise in this connection ; the nature and the location of the programme.

What is the present state of affairs? If we look at the kinds of programmes being run and the names of the departments running them in the thirteen Nigerian universities, we see a situation of unparalleled confusion. Different universities have, clearly, taken different approaches to the establishment of English studies programmes. In some places one department teaches English studies, in some two departments, and in one case five departments do. In some cases, the teaching of English occurs in a Department of English, in another, in a Department of Modern Languages in another, in a Department of English and Literary Studies; and yet in another, in a Department of Linguistics. Where two separate departments are involved, they are been variously called "Literature in English" and "Language Arts" or "English" and "General Studies". In that single case where five departments teach English studies, the names of the Departments involved form an almost different list: "English", "Linguistics and Nigerian Languages", "Language Arts", "Adult Education", and "Teacher Education". Understandably, these departments, particularly as they are located in different faculties, engage in different academic activities. Even the two departments with the same novel name of 'Language Arts' have nothing but the name in common; and, indeed for one of them the name is a complete misnomer bearing no relationship whatever with the academic activities of the Department! Naturally then one cannot find the same component of English studies in the Universities. Most concentrate on Literature only; some make provision for some language (either as Language Studies or as Use of English) in addition; and only one has all three components of Literature, Language Studies and Use of English solidly represented.

What should the situation be ideally? Profiting from our experience here at Ife, I believe that, in order to train students solidly in Literature, Language Study and Use of English, a single, multi-chaired Department is the best structure possible. A first degree in English studies which focuses entirely on either literature or language is an unsuitable answer to the peculiar situation here in which English is a second language. The study of language and the study of literature must be mutually supporting. In order to train in literature and to be effective, literature should, as Professor Petterson<sup>25</sup> has aptly remarked:

(It should) preferably be studied in the first language or the language of the society in which the student is going to live.



This means that a course in literature in English in our own situation, in order to be genuinely educational, must be based upon, and correlated with, the study of literatures in Nigerian languages. Furthermore, it has to be very well rooted in the study of the English language in order to produce students who can demonstrate originality in judging and evaluating literature, whether the target text be drawn from British, American or African literature in English. Take for example the beginning of this scene in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*<sup>26</sup> which is a text studied both at the secondary and University levels in Nigeria:

*Scene 1. Olivia's Garden*

Enter VIOLA and FESTE with a tabor

VIOLA

Save thee, friend, and thy music. Dost thou live by thy tabor?

FESTE

No sir, I live by the church

VIOLA

Art thou a churchman?

FESTE

No such matter, sir; I do live by the church, for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church

VIOLA

So thou mayest say, the king lies by a beggar if a beggar dwell near him; or, the church stands by thy tabor, if thy tabor stand by the church

FESTE

You have said, sir. To see this age! A sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit; how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!

How can any student be in a position to experience, enjoy and appreciate the humour and witticism in that scene if he cannot decipher and appreciate the play on the phrase *live by* and the instrumental and locative use of *by* and its use both as an adverb and as an adverbial particle? Similarly how can a student well understand the opening sentence of this first paragraph of Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*<sup>27</sup> without a sound knowledge of the syntax, morphology and lexis of the English language:

'Metal on concrete jars my drink lobes.' This was Sagoe, grumbling as he struck fingers in his ears against the mad

screech of iron tables. Dehinwa leapt up and Sagoe's head dangled in the void where her lap had been. Bandle's arms never ceased to surprise. At half-span they embraced table and chairs, pushed them deep into the main wall as dancers dodged long chameleon tongues of the cloud bursts and the wind leapt at them, visibly malevolent. In a moment only the band was left.

As the student first confronts this utterance, he must rely on such a sound knowledge. At first glance, the first sentence would seem to be difficult, obscure, and even meaningless, because there appear to be in it some morphological and syntactical ambiguities, which the student must resolve. Morphologically, the "s" or "es" on "jars" and "lobes" could indicate they are plural nouns or singular verb forms. "Concrete" could be either a noun or an adjective, and "drink" could be a verb, a noun, or an adjective. Not only does the student have to sort out these morphological possibilities and make decisions about what forms these words take, he has also to decide what the grammar of the sentence is like. For the sentence could be viewed as a minor clause comprising two nominal groups or of two major clauses or as a single clause (which seems, in fact, to be the case). If he thinks the sentence has two nominal groups, they would be "metal on concrete jars" and "my drink lobes." If he thinks the sentence has two clauses, they would be "metal on concrete jars" and "my drink lobes". Of course, the resolution of his difficulty will occur when he sees "Metal on concrete" as the subject, "jars" as the Predicator and "my drink lobes" as the complement of the sentence. In sorting out these possible ambiguities, the student will be aided by lexical evidence such as: "struck fingers in his ears", "mad screech of iron tables", "leapt up", and "dodged long chameleon tongues of the cloud-burst".

The student I have been describing may seem to be a very unsophisticated reader. Several of the possibilities I have proposed would be ruled out, for example, if the student merely knew the meaning of "lobes". But even if such a reader had a sophisticated command of language studies, such that he could systematically describe the possibilities I have laid out, he would be able to clear up what might initially appear to be obscurities in the sentence. Undoubtedly, our literature students generally lack this kind of language sophistication. Thus, it can be suggested that a great deal of the charge of obscurity and difficulty against Soyinka can be said to have arisen from the highbrow quality of Soyinka's language and from the comparatively low level of the acquired



language skills of the students. Of course, it follows that the language course too must inculcate the skills that will make such originality in the interpretation of literature possible. This means that the language course must be specially designed to be immediately relevant and not to remain just a course on mere technical jargon and analytical procedures. Of course, such a language programme would have to be well grounded in, and integrated with, the Use of English which enables the student to use the language more effectively.

Such a department will concern itself with purely academic matters and with general service. Many will think that the study of language and of Literature are purely academic activities, while the teaching of Use of English will be purely a service to the community. However, I believe that each of the three components has both pure academic and general service goals. Indeed it is my own view that the general service goal of language and literature is as important as their academic and that the academic goals of Use of English are only slightly subordinate to its general service goal. After all, the teaching of Language and Literature develops and improves the general level of the use of English in Nigeria. And, on the other hand, a course in the Use of English which is not simply remedial but rather develops university-level skills and abilities is an academic course. Although the relationship between the academic and the general service activities of the department could be conceived as that between pure and applied sciences, at best it is not so clear-cut. The two are intricately interwoven.

A fully integrated programme of English studies can best be mounted by a department which is itself fully integrated. To see what I mean by a fully integrated department, let me describe, in contrast, a hypothetical department which is not so fully integrated. It might, for example, be composed of three separate and distinct groups of people, each appointed to teach only Literature, Language, or Use of English. In such a department, literature and language studies could easily come to seem purely "academic" while use of English could easily come to be viewed as a pure service. Perhaps a Professor or Director might be appointed to lead each distinct group, in which case the Head of Department would become an administrative channel for passing information to and from *de facto* heads of each section. Cooperation among the three sections would probably depend on the personal dispositions of the sub-heads, for the individual groups



might easily come to meet and make decisions concerning their isolated subjects on their own and in a way largely independent of the rest of the department. The *de facto* heads would be left to preserve a semblance of unity. (Such a department could easily fragment into two or more separate departments with their own territorial hegemony.)

A more fully integrated department, having several chairs, might organize the teaching of Literature, Language and Use of English into two academic units—call them Literature and Language. Language would include both language study and use of English, the academic discipline more securely linked with the service function. Staff could be appointed more flexibly to work in more than one area as needed. Ranks in such a department would be determined by academic and professional qualification and experience, rather than to fill up an "establishment" for each of the three components. And policy, though perhaps generated initially by *ad hoc* committees in the department, would be set by the whole staff acting in concert and executed by same.

It is my view that a loosely integrated departmental structure can only meet the two objectives of pure academics and general service with greater costs, less efficiency and possibly lower morale on the part of some staff members. First, it will involve some sort of sub-departmentalization within the department and is bound to encourage the creation of spheres of influence that will reduce the mobility of staff from one area of activity to the other, particularly from either of the 'pure academic' ones to the general service one; and therefore inevitably increase costs. Secondly, it will encourage the formalization of the sub-departmentalization within the department and lead to less unity of purpose and ultimately less efficiency. Consequently, although a loosely integrated structure is initially more obviously compatible with a department of multiple chairs, it is more liable to the generation of centrifugal forces that might tear the department apart.

I am of the opinion that a fully-integrated department, on the other hand, can meet the two objectives of purely academic and of general service with minimum costs, maximum efficiency and highest morale on the part of the staff. It will recognize the special qualifications needed for the effective discharge of both objectives, and get the right proportion of staff appointed for each of the three special interests. It will permit the mobility of staff, as may be dictated by changing needs. It will place the general services rendered by the department to be on the same footing with those



rendered by any other department in the University. Finally, the frame is not only compatible with the type of multi-chaired structure being suggested, but is also conducive to a homogeneous development of the multi-structured whole.

As for the location of the suggested integrated department within the University there are two possibilities: the Faculty of Education preparing teachers for the Nigerian schools and colleges, and the Faculty of Arts producing graduates in Humanities. The two Faculties are almost equally represented in student population. I believe that, from the academic point of view, it is very desirable to locate the Department within the Faculty of Arts rather than the Faculty of Education because the primary professional interest of the Faculty of Education would make the academic content of such a programme, located in it, rather limited for the Arts students. Undoubtedly, full consultation between the Faculties will be necessary in order that the programme located in the Faculty of Arts may be maximally relevant and useful to the Education students. Indeed, instead of duplicating programmes, it seems most desirable to have professionally qualified staff within the integrated department so that the educational needs could be met within the same department. The present situation in Nigerian universities whereby the professional is totally separated from the academic is not only wasteful but also ineffective partly because of the lack of specialists in adequate number to make both programmes independent and viable and partly because lack of correlation usually arises from the existence of two separate departments in two separate Faculties handling what should be only one programme for the students. The unique position of English not only as the medium of University education but also as an academic discipline and, moreover, the desirable interest of scholars of English language in the problems of teaching the language and its literature recommend the proposed integration as a highly useful and economical novelty.

Finally I would like to make a few remarks about the nature of the kind of teaching and research activities that such an integrated department is expected to undertake and the kind of hypotheses and theory of English as a second language it is expected to formulate. Earlier, something has been said about the function of the department as a laboratory for producing new policies and materials for the study of English as a second language. Undoubtedly, the department should be the laboratory for forging the best policies in respect of not only the choice, development and use of English in the multi-lingual community but also the best

approaches to the teaching of the discipline. I would like to mention some specific issues in this connection.

As an applied English studies centre, the department should be able to state what level of English would be required for effective education at primary, secondary and university levels and what would be an effective level for the community at large. Educational policies often fail in Africa today because NO ONE bothers to determine the *appropriate* levels of English required within a well thought-out educational language policy. Take, for example, this passage set by the West African Examinations Council in the Common Entrance to all Secondary Schools in Nigeria in 1977:<sup>28</sup>

Have you ever travelled by sea? There is nothing like it. Travelling in a boat can be the most exciting experience of one's life.

Boats are usually very big. They are like moving houses though much larger than houses. Almost every comfort is provided. You have bedrooms that are called cabins. You have playing rooms as you have in hotels. You have playing 'oo's where you can play some indoor games like table-tennis. You can also watch films in the boat. Swimming pools are also provided.

The boat travels much faster than the lorry but you do not notice it because the boat is much bigger than the lorry. One of the unforgettable experiences of travelling by boat is that you see a great expanse of water you'd think that the world contains nothing but water.

Now, how can one say that the failure of a pupil to answer these Questions 2 and 4 of the five questions set on the passage is a failure of education and not a failure of an inappropriate selection:

2. In the passage, a boat is said to be similar to:

- A. a hotel
- B. a dining room
- C. a swimming pool
- D. a cinema
- E. a house

4. According to the passage, cabins are:

- A. bedrooms
- B. dining rooms
- C. swimming pools
- D. games
- E. houses



How many primary school pupils in Nigeria are familiar with the concepts (*hotel, cabin, dining room, swimming pool, cinema and bedroom*) in question and therefore can be expected to pass or fail the test as a result of the amount of language understanding alone? Consider also this passage and the questions set for summarization in the 1978 November/December School Certificate and General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination in English:<sup>29</sup>

*Read the following extract carefully and then answer the questions below it:*

About fifty years ago, few people seemed to be worrying about whether they were too fat. Since then, more and more people have been doing so. Mostly, these are young women whose excessive shapes do not look their best in the current fashions.

The desire for good looks which makes women afraid of being fat is praxiseworthy and quite important. Being overweight is not only artistically unpleasant, but there is also increasing evidence that overweight people are in general not healthy people. Indeed, many nutritionists believe that obesity is the most important nutritional problems among better-off people today.

The constantly growing interest in the problem of obesity is shown by the rising number of articles which are published about slimming. Not surprisingly, the majority of these articles are written by fashion journalists. Many of today's writings on being overweight and slimming undoubtedly show a sound basic understanding of the scientific principles involved. But there is still a lot of nonsense written about slimming, and in one way or another the nonsense which is written seems to amount to much more than the good sense which is written.

Both the editors and nutritionists are partly to blame for this. Many editors believe that the nutritionists is a man with a beard, wearing a white coat, and carrying a test tube in one hand and a rat in the other. He is assumed not to know first thing about food.

With fear and trembling, I, a nutritionist, have dared to write a book about slimming. I know that I am asking for trouble. My journalist friends will say that I haven't the training or experience to write for the layman to understand; that I can only write for learned scientific journals, which

are meaningless to non-scientists. My nutritionist friends will say that I ought to confine my writing to just these journals. The scientist's place, they will argue, is in the laboratory or at high-powered scientific meetings; it is not his job to write popular stuff for the layman. And anyway, slimming is hardly a fit subject for a nutritionist to be talking about.

Since I have in fact written this book, it is clear that I disagree with these views. I believe firstly that it is quite possible for a scientist to talk and write intelligibly. I believe further that, whilst what we know of science in general and nutrition in particular is still only a little compared with what we don't know, it is very exciting. It is quite unnecessary to try to sweeten the story of nutrition. Just itself, unexaggerated, it is most interesting, not only to other nutritionists, but to you and to everyone else.

As for the scientist living in a world of his own, I believe, with many other scientists, that it is our job to see our work in relation to society as a whole. And in particular, I believe that nutrition is a science which first and last is concerned with people. It is to do with what we eat, how we get it, what we need it for, what happens if we take too much or too little. Of course I work with test tubes and rats, but I really do assure you that I know something about food.

*Now do the following, reading the instruction carefully:*

1. The Writer mentions, in the passage, FOUR reasons why various people think a nutritionist ought not to write about slimming. State these four reasons briefly and clearly.
2. The author also gives FIVE reasons for writing this book. Summarise them briefly and clearly.

*Your answers should be concise and clear, written in as few sentences as possible. You will lose marks if you disregard this instruction and if you write unnecessary material.*

Apart from the needlessly repetitive nature of the language of the instructions and questions, how can one say that a failure in the test is indicative of a failure to know enough English to understand and summarize the passage when in fact the questions do not have anything to do with about the entire first half of the passage (the first four paragraphs out of a total of seven)?

The second issue relates to policies on the teaching of English itself and there are two immediate questions deserving serious attention. The first is whether English should be used at all as a medium of instruction in primary schools and whether its current



use is not a disservice to the development of the language. The second is on professionalism in the teaching of English as a second language.

Surely, the use of English as a medium of primary school can be effective if there were teachers equal to the task. Evidence abounds that such teachers are not and indeed cannot be available. The following essay is representative of the quality of English of the trained and certificated teacher meant to teach the primary schools. In fact, anyone familiar with the use of English at that level would very readily agree that the essay is above average:<sup>30</sup>

### *The Journey from Ife to Ogbomoso*

The journey I made from Ife to Ogbomoso was taken place on 1st of August, 1978. This journey was not seemed to me because it was known before we vacated that we must travel to where we have located to as a new teacher for getting the letter of appointment to school which we should be assigned to and that Journey will be on August first this year.

On the 31st of July that was in the evening or night, I went to daddy to ask for fare's amount which will make my Journey be possible. To cut everything on this point short, I was given the sum of Ten Naira in which I returned the change of ₦3.60.

To say the fact, Although the name of the town i.e. Ogbomoso was being hearing for some years with the fine description, I have never been there once, through this sentence, you can see how it was a great difficulty or problem to get there straight without trouble.

The journey was started early in the morning exactly 7.00 a.m. I got to motor park about 7.30 a.m. from where I joined motor that going to Ilorin and the driver agreed to drop us because I was not only person that going to Ogbomoso on that day. To get the motor that going to Ogbomoso is not matter but to know the real place that I am going. When I asked the driver agreed to drop us because I was not only person that going to Ogbomoso on that day. To get the motor that going to Ogbomoso is not matter but to know the real place that I am going. When I asked the driver if he knows the direction of school board at Ogbomoso his answer was negative i.e. "No", Thank to God, Immediately I drop from the motor I joined from Ife I asked from the people standing by the road side to show me the way that leads to school board, they had friendly but jeer laughing that I was a stranger in this town, I too burst into friendly laughing and said. "I was a



stranger and that that was the first time that I visited to Ogbomoso. One of them helped me to stop taxi in which I met my colleagues going to school board which one of them is a native of my own town. This was known when we are asked to fill a form.

As early as I reached school board I saw my collins or my ex-classmate loitering or parabulating around while some standing as a stationery object. I asked them what they have asked to do, when I did as they narrated to me what they have done, luckily or fortunately to me, I saw one of my seniors who helped me by calling taxi and told the taxi driver where

he should drop me i.e. headmaster's residence where I spent about two hours chatting, showing his humanitarian as if we met somewhere before 1st of August 1978. He asked for everything he could remember about my school i.e. Tradition, Morning duty, morning devotion, our attitude in dining shed, about our final practical Teaching etc. I answered everything wisely and accordingly. He told me about two weeks course commondial by govt, when I told him my illness i.e. accommodation, he gave me the chance of 4 days but I first find it in all possible means to come for the one and last week i.e. second week which I failed to go for a simple reason.

When I told the headmaster that I am ready to go, he accompanied me to where I will get taxi which will take me to where I am going to join motor to Iwo. When I reached the Iwo's motor park, I met no lorries or cars that going to Iwo, I need to awaite until motor arriving from where I ate in the bucca. To cut everything short. I reached Iwo and checked our final result of practical teaching from where I joined another bus to Ife in the late evening or evenitide.

How then can a teacher who cannot write a single grammatically correct sentence in such a long essay (the spellings, of course, are often indicative of the pronunciation and we find such words as *taken* for *taking*, *collins* for *colleagues* and *commondial* for *commandeer*) be expected to teach English and also teach other subjects in English without any serious detriment to the pupils and the cause of English? Certainly, it seems it would be more profitable to teach English only as a school subject and a second language. Even then, the subject should be taught only by specialist teachers. The present practice whereby every primary school teacher is expected to teach English and also teach other subjects through it is based on wrong assumptions. While it is reasonable to assume that every normal person manages to acquire his mother



tongue with some degree of proficiency, it is unrealistic to assume that all second language learners would record the same achievement. Thus while one can expect every *native speaker* of a language with some professional training (the type given in our Grade Two Teacher Training Colleges) to be able to teach the language and teach other school subjects through it, it is foolhardy to expect *all second language learners* with the same quality of professional training not only to teach that second language but also to teach other school subjects through it. Research experience obtained from the Six-Year Primary Project here at Ife, which is now well documented,<sup>31</sup> has shown that a change in policy along the lines suggested is imperative and urgent, particularly as the current practice is counter-productive in every respect.

While still on this question, I would also like to urge the government of this country to have a fresh look at the entire policy on language in education. It is time to recognize that educational language planning is a necessity and is even perhaps more important to the life of the nation than economic planning. Like most black African nations, we are devoting huge amounts of our resources to education. A great deal of the money spent, particularly on the Universal Primary Education, is being wasted because of a wrong-headed education language policy, the kind that produces cheaters rather than teachers and thereby ironically ensures the failure of the programme before it starts! How else can we see a policy that not only compels the spending of millions of naira to prepare thousands of primary school teachers under the Universal Primary Education programme to write such a wretched essay as I have read but also inflicts the ill-educated teachers on the pupils as their certificated teachers of English as a subject and all other school subjects through the same English language! If that money were devoted to training specialist teachers of English as second language and the generality of teachers who will teach their own mother-tongues and teach other subjects in those mother-tongues, the results, both for the teaching of other subjects, and for the teaching political parties now promising free and/or qualitative education at all levels cannot be taken very seriously if they do not associate meaningful education for Nigerian children with the type of rational and productive language educational policy outlined here.

Now, turning to the question of actual effective teaching of English in Nigerian institutions, I would like to suggest that what is urgently required is the establishment of professionalism. Reference has already been made to the desirability of using only specialist teachers to teach English at the primary school. Similarly,



teacher training in respect of secondary school English, either through the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) or the university degree has to be made specific and indeed professional. The current practice based upon the erroneous and un-professional assumptions (that what makes a good teacher of English in the lower secondary classes is the attainment of some professional training together with a qualification equivalent to the Advanced Level of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) or even more recently the equivalent of Part Two of a four-year course in a university, that what makes a good teacher of English in the upper secondary class is the attainment of some professional training together with an academic degree in literature or language, and that what makes a good university teacher of English is the possession of a Ph.D. degree) must be revised. It is when professionalism is achieved that teachers can see themselves as the key factors in the development, implementation and evaluation of what can be relevant curriculum in English studies in Nigerian schools and Colleges. It is then that it will become possible to stop using an examination syllabus such as that of the West African Examinations Council as the school teaching syllabus. In spite of the following apt comment of Grieve on that subject in his 1964 report,<sup>32</sup> the situation remains unchanged today because the teachers are not professionally competent to solve the problem:

An alarming number of those who wanted a syllabus expected it to be detailed exposition of the work to be covered each year or even each term. This is, of course, quite outside the scope of an examination syllabus, which should be a prescription of what the candidates are expected to know at the end of their course: how they arrive at the end-point is a matter for them and their teachers.

Unfortunately the Ministry of Education (State or Federal) has shown the same professional incompetence, largely because the "experts" there are drawn from the same source as the teachers and the result is a sad and ludicrous situation whereby the tail (the West African Examinations Council) now wags the dog (the Ministry of Education) in matters of curriculum development.

Even at the university level, the problem of professionalism is acute. It is particularly evident in the establishment and running of an effective Use of English programme. As was aptly remarked by an American scholar in the field:<sup>33</sup>

At present I am interested in the problems of teaching writing at the university level. Much of the rhetoric surrounding this issue conceals, I suspect, the anger and frustration of faculty



who are confronted with the problem of teaching students what we expected them already to know and what we ourselves have not been trained to teach.

Surely, a training programme to ensure the effective teaching of students is obviously more urgently needed within the University system here in a second language situation than it is in America.

Before leaving this question of professionalism of teachers of English, I would also like to draw attention to one problem now working in this country against getting English language teachers in sufficient number, even for training. This is the issue of adequate reward for efficient work done. At the school level, science teachers are specially induced and paid but not so the English language teachers. Similarly, at the University level, efficient teaching means less attention to research and publications because such teaching demands a great deal of paper marking and individual attention to students; yet, no means of rewarding teaching has been found within the university system. I would therefore like to suggest that in order to maximize efficiency new ways of compensating language teachers, particularly those of English, should be worked out and implemented urgently. At the school level there is no justification whatever for not extending to English teachers the special inducement and allowances paid to science teachers. After all, the amount of energy and time spent by an efficient English teacher at his job is probably far greater than the amounts spent by different subject teachers; there is a world shortage of qualified English teachers; and Language is perhaps even more fundamental to the success of education than science. One cannot teach or learn science without Language.

In respect of research activity, one major focus of an integrated Department of English studies must be the description and analysis of the language as it functions in the community. Here in Nigeria, we need to know more about the morphology, syntax, lexis, phonology, and semantics of English in Nigeria, where there are yet very few systematic studies. In the pursuit of such systematic studies the African scholars, if they exercise originality and are careful to make their work relevant to their immediate situation, might well be able, as an added benefit, to draw useful generalizations and thereby contribute totally new hypotheses about language acquisition. For example, the existing theories about language acquisition, even those diametrically opposed to each other such as those of Chomsky and Skinner, are united by a common monolingual orientation. As an African scholar, I would like to suggest the need to postulate new hypotheses concerning the acquisition of multiple languages generally, and English as a second



language particularly. The goals (both in skills and attitudes), the nature of the learner, the actual languages to be acquired, the agents of exposure to the learner and also the process of learning, particularly the important factors of time and motivation, are essential areas to be adequately covered. I would like to suggest that the theory of English as a second language will have to recognise and clarify analogy, transference and translation as major related processes and concepts. Indeed, my own research so far would suggest that they<sup>34</sup> are indispensable in the acquisition of English as a second language. The possession of a translation mentality seems to be a prerequisite for an efficient acquisition and use of English as a second language<sup>35</sup> whether that mentality operates consciously or unconsciously. In this connection, it is very interesting to note that the same translation mentality, although different in degree and outward appearance, unexpectedly, underlies the works of, for example, Amos Tutuola and Wole Soyinka who are almost at the opposite ends of the scale of Yoruba-English bilingualism. In addition, such an adequate theory must cover not only acquisition but also testing, evaluation and even planning of the language. It should also cover the relationship between English as a second language and monolingual English grammar, utilizing insights gained from contrastive analysis<sup>36</sup> error-analysis,<sup>37</sup> sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and general linguistics. Thus, the view that a Department of English studies is best conceived of as an Applied English study centre does not imply that it will not also advance theory. From my own experience, there is reason even to suggest that English as a second language, being a bilingual phenomenon, is more conducive to the discovery of linguistic universals, than English as a mother-tongue.

Two other aspects of the theory of English as a second language that my own work so far would suggest relate to the place of grammar in second language acquisition and the relative importance of comprehensiveness and simplicity as criteria for the adequacy of a linguistic theory. For some time now it has been generally accepted that a second language should be acquired the "natural way", by the oral-aural, audio-visual approach rather than by the grammar method. Consequently, in Africa, the teaching of grammar has been abandoned in schools. Experience, however, has shown that a new theory showing the positive place of grammar in second-language acquisition is now overdue and that such a theory would achieve some adequacy if it should reflect the following relevant hypotheses about second language learners and their learning process:

(1) They are linguistically "adult" learners, regardless of their



age, even as children.

- (2) They internalize the rules of the language more consciously than the mother-tongue learners of the same language.
- (3) The rules they internalize are at least the second set of rules about language they have to internalize.
- (4) They will never have anything more than an insignificant portion of the total time the mother tongue learners would normally have to learn.
- (5) Learning the language can never have the same fundamental biological motivation for them as it has for mother tongue learners except where the language can exchange roles with the learner's mother tongue.
- (6) For most of the time the language being learnt and used is rather more selected and restricted than that learnt and used by a mother tongue learner.
- (7) The opportunity for "effortless learning" on their part is minimal in comparison with that of mother tongue learners.
- (8) Learning for them is essentially an artificial process whereas it is natural for mother tongue learners.
- (9) Learning about the rules of a language (learning about the language) is not equal to acquiring the language (internalizing the rules of the language through using it).
- (10) 'Learn to speak by speaking' and 'learn to write by writing' are useful rules of thumb concerning language acquisition but they have rather limited effectiveness in the efficient acquisition of a second language, let alone its academic study.
- (11) Fluency is not an adequate index of a scholar's sound knowledge<sup>38</sup> of a second language.
- (12) The typological relationship between the two languages involved in a second language situation is a crucial factor in the rate of acquisition or its efficiency.
- (13) The overall linguistic situation under which a second language is acquired is a crucial factor in the manner of learning.
- (14) An exclusively sociological or psychological explanation for the acquisition of a second language is inadequate.
- (15) A second language theory is an applied linguistic theory that must utilize both theories of contrastive linguistics and error analysis in addition to a general linguistic theory.

Linguists seem generally to agree that a grammar of a language—that is a description of its grammar<sup>39</sup>—should be both simple and comprehensive. Here is another of those areas where attention to the situation at hand—that is, to the learning and use of a second



language—can generate original theories. For I would like to suggest that simplicity<sup>40</sup> may not be a valuable feature in a grammar written for second language learners. Thus simplicity may not be as important for a theory of second language acquisition as it is for a theory of mother-tongue acquisition. The major reason is that it would seem that for a mother-tongue theory comprehensiveness can be assumed for any adequate grammar and simplicity can then be seen as a test for a choice of the most adequate of contesting adequate grammars. After all, the mother-tongue theory seeks to capture the intuitive knowledge of the native speaker-hearer, in a way to explicate already internalized rules.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the second language theory must be able to advance the internalization of target language and then explicate the overall internalized rules of the language just as the mother tongue theory does. Thus it would seem that the more elaborate, the more comprehensive, the specified rules of a second language, the more they are likely to meet the needs of the second language learner who requires as comprehensive an understanding of the language as possible. Take, for example, the tense in English as an aspect of English grammar to be specified by a theory. A very simple specification<sup>42</sup> sees the system of tense as comprising only two morphologically described terms of past and present tense forms which are related also to a four-term system of aspect: progressive/non-progressive, and perfective/non-perfective. A more elaborate specification<sup>43</sup> of tense sees it as a system-complex made up of one major and two minor systems based on a fundamental three-term recursive selection of past, present and future, yielding as many as seventy-two tense forms in all! It is my own view that the more elaborate specification, particularly with the mnemonic quality of its naming and the heuristic values of its total options for the reception and/or production of English by the learner, is more useful for the second language students than the simpler specification, which, of course, may be better for the mother tongue students. This point should remind us of the theme with which this lecture began, namely, that the things of the highest value always tend to be irreducible to simple formulations and that these three enigmatic lines of T.S. Eliot:<sup>44</sup>

Time present and time past

Are both present in time future

And time future contained in time past

may after all adequately echo the manner tense is truly organized in English.



## Conclusion

Mr Vice-Chancellor Sir, my colleagues and the University Community at large, it would be my greatest pleasure if, as a result of what has been said in this lecture the problems of English studies in an African university can henceforth be better appreciated by all whose responsibility it is to promote and advance the cause of the discipline in Africa; if the suggested principles can prove useful; and if the prospects of the discipline in Africa can be maximally enhanced by all. With all sense of humility, I can say that in this part of the world this university now has the finest attempt to appreciate the problems, adhere to the principles and enhance the prospects of English studies that are truly relevant to the bilingual and multilingual community of ours. It is for this reason that this lecture is dedicated to all who have made this small beginning possible: my own teachers who have contributed to my academic growth; my colleagues, past and present, who have made their various contributions; my colleagues at Ibadan who in the last two years have sacrificially dedicated their spare time, talents and services to the proper establishment of our programmes here at Ife for the benefit of the country and the cause of the discipline; and, above all, the university authorities who have shown sufficient faith in me and the Department and have given us the wonderful opportunity to serve. It is my hope that we will all rededicate ourselves to the noble cause until the most original, relevant, comprehensive, effective and efficient programmes in English studies can be established in the African University and all other formal and informal institutions of learning by Africans and non-Africans, and for the benefit of not only Africans but humanity at large. Thank you.

## FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Eliot, T.S. *Four Quartets* (Faber and Faber; London; 1976), p. 58.
2. Isaiah 55:1, *The Holy Bible* (Revised Standard Version).
3. Hornby, A.S., *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (O.U.P., London; 1974).
4. National Universities Commission, *Report of the Academic Planning Group*, Lagos, March 1977), p. 50.
5. Federal Ministry of Information, *Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education* (Lagos; 1977), p. 5.

Here 'Igbo', the correct form of the name of the language, is used instead of the Anglicized form 'Ibo', found in the docu-



ment. Surely, it is time we stopped using in official documents the wrong form imposed by the difficulty of English officials in pronouncing /gb/ which they therefore have simplified into /b/.

6. Op. Cit., p. 6.
7. Op. Cit., p. 8.
8. Federal Ministry of Information, *Reports of the Constitution Drafting Committee* (Lagos; 1976), p. 27.
9. Federal Ministry of Information, *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979* (Lagos, 1978).
10. Quirk, R., "The Study of the Mother Tongue," an Inaugural Lecture delivered at University College London, 1960, in P.D. Stevens, *Five Inaugural Lectures* (O.U.P. London; 1966), p. 54.
11. Op. Cit. p. 54.
12. Coombs, P.H., *The World Educational Crisis* (O.U.P., London; 1968), p. 4.
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14. Op. Cit., p. 41.
15. Richards, I.A. in John Press, *The Teaching of English Literature Overseas* (Methuen, London; 1963), p. 43.
16. Afolayan, A., "Acceptability of English as a Second Language in Nigeria," in S. Greenbaum, *Acceptability in Language* (Mouton, The Hague; 1977), pp. 18-19.
17. Sinclair, J., in John Press, *The Teaching of English Literature Overseas* (Methuen, London; 1963), p. 45.
18. Compare the statement of Professor Randolph Quirk in his 1960 inaugural lecture (op. cit., pp. 54-55 and 71):

"Similarly, the emergence of the underdeveloped countries, both within and without the Commonwealth, has meant not a decrease in the use and teaching of English, but a phenomenal increase, as these countries seek to maintain or establish contact with more advanced areas through the use of the world's chief international language. The situation which C.K. Ogden clearly foresaw between the wars, and for which he ingeniously sought to provide with his British, American, Scientific, International, and Commercial form of English, has now fully developed. It was with the manifold problems of this situation in view that the Communication Research Centre was formed here in 1953, and its attention has been focused on them.

In December 1960, at a Conference of Professors of English, Education, and Linguistics, it was clearly recognized that all



the problems just mentioned—even the most formidable and seemingly most remote—are in the last analysis intimately linked with the urgent need to augment and improve the teaching of English language at all levels in Great Britain. For we must realize that, whether we like it or not, we in this country have special and inescapable responsibilities for the maintenance and propagation of English, responsibilities which devolve upon us by virtue of our history, the Commonwealth, our partnership in the English-speaking world, and not least—our prestige as the cradle of English. The title of Professor MacKenzie's recent inaugural lecture, *The Outlook for English in Central Africa*, is symptomatic of present concerns and implies a challenge which we must not fail to accept.

There are of course many good grammars for teaching English to foreigners, but we cannot achieve first-rate ones until we have first-rate grammars for our own use in the English-speaking countries. And these in turn cannot be produced to our proper satisfaction until there has been a major operation in the observation of 'existing processes' in our language."

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26. Shakespeare, W., *Twelfth Night*, Act III, Scene 1.
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28. West African Examinations Council, "Entrance Examinations to Secondary Schools," 1977, pp. 122.
29. West African Examinations Council, *School Certificate and*



G.C.E. English Language 1, Nov. 1978, pp. 3-4.

30. An essay by a Grade Two Teacher.
31. Afolayan, A., "A current Evaluation of the Six-Year Project" (to appear in EDUCAFRICA, 1979) gives one most recent report. Earlier reports include G. Cziko, and A. Ojerinde: *First (1976) and Second (1977) Comprehensive Evaluation Report* submitted to the Ford Foundation and E.A. Yoloye: "Evaluation of the Ife Six-Year Project," a paper prepared for the African Regional Course for Advanced Training in Educational Evaluation, Ibadan, 1977.
32. Op. Cit., p. 72.
33. Manheimer, J. in the second paragraph of a letter of application for a post at Ife, November, 1978.
34. Afolayan, A., *The Linguistic Problems of Yoruba Learners and Users of English* (an unpublished University of London Ph.D. Thesis, 1968), pp. 658ff.
35. Cf. Rabin, C., *The Linguistics of Translation in Aspects of Translation: Studies in Communication* (Seeker and Warburg, 1958), pp. 138.
36. Afolayan, A., "Contrastive Linguistics and the Teaching of English as a Second Language", *English Language Teaching* (O.U.P., London, June, 1971), pp. 220-229.
37. This is a major activity in A. Afolayan's Ph.D. thesis, referred to in footnote 35.
38. "Knowledge," as used here, means "academic knowledge," although it may sometimes include even "proficiency." I know a preacher who preaches very fluently in English but makes very many grammatical and lexical mistakes.
39. This is not a theoretical but descriptive grammar, the description of a language according to a linguistic model.
40. "Simplicity" is used here in the sense of Chomsky's "Simplicity and elegance" in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (M.I.T., 1965), p. 38.
41. Cf. Chomsky, N., *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (M.I.T. Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1965), pp. 1-2, 47ff.
42. Palmer, F.R., *A Linguistic Study of the English Verb* (Longman, London; 1965) pp. 2, 12-14, 59-63, 69ff.
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