Collaborative Approach in Teaching and Learning of English as a Second Language

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Abstract
The teaching and learning of English as a second language and its approaches have been an issue of great concern to both educationists and linguistics alike. Many approaches have been in use and many others coming up, all in a bid to find effective way of teaching English as a second language, the English language being the pivot on which the success of our educational system revolves. So the effectiveness of its teaching determines the efficacy of our education. In this paper we highlighted the differences between L_1 and L_2 learning, approaches "method" and "techniques" and some contemporary language teaching approaches. This paper sets out to discuss collaborative approach and L_2 teaching and learning and the bases of its effectiveness in active learning. This paper discuss how the interactive nature of collaborative approach engages students in active processing of information resulting in greater retention of subject matter, improved attitudes towards learning and enhancement of interpersonal relations among group members.

Introduction
It is the view of many scholars all over the country that the quality of education is dwindling. There have been hues and cries from all quarters that the present state of our education is as a result of falling or fallen standard of the English Language in the country. There has been allegations and counter allegations. The question is who is to be blamed; the government, the teacher, the parents or the learners? Is it the proverbial fault of the barber or the case of blunt instrument he uses? You answer is as good as mine.

However, there is no gainsaying the fact that the major facilitator in teaching and learning process is the teacher. According to Ozioko (2005) the teacher is the pivot on which teaching and learning process depend for success. For effective teaching and learning a teacher has the duty of not only to understand the content but also the pedagogical skills needed to impact his knowledge. The job of the language teachers is a complex one. He has the difficult task of translating the content of the curriculum into meaningful learning experience. Different topics need different ways through which the experience can be impacted, hence, the emergence of issue of methods or approaches to language teaching. Over the years teachers and linguists have been in the quest for the best way of communicating their ideas meaningfully for effective learning and functional education.

To Howait (1984) the quest for better methods for teaching of language has been of great concern to teachers and linguists alike throughout the 20th century. The teachers have been searching for appropriate methods to use for teaching. According to Momoh P.K. (2005) the appropriateness of any method depends on the inherent advantages or disadvantages of the method. Continuing, he opines that a method is good if a teacher uses it to suit a particular

teaching situation. In the same vein, Lawal (2004) asserts that a teacher should understand the merit or demerits before selection.

By implication therefore, a teacher has to check the advantages and disadvantages of a particular method against the others before selecting the method. It is on this backdrop that there has been changing views on L_2 teaching and learning approaches. Language teaching methods have been dynamic over the years and it seems that the search for the most effective ways of impacting knowledge is unending.

Before further discussion, it is vital to note that method, approach and techniques are interrelated pedagogical concepts or terminologies. According to Ubahakwe and Obi (1979) the term "approach" refers to the linguistic and/or psychological principle which underlies a particular method of language teaching. To Nwankwo (2013) approach in language teaching has to do with language teaching philosophies that can be interpreted and applied in different ways in the classroom. Ubahakwe and Obi (1979) see language method as a recognized and systematic way of performing a language teaching task, a sequence of techniques or steps used in teaching.

In the same Vein Howatt (1984) opines that method in language teaching refers to fixed teaching system with systematically presented techniques and practices based on specific language theories. Techniques pertain to exact activity carried on for effective language teaching and learning.

Going by Ubahakwe and Obi (1979) Nwankwo (2013) definitions of approach, it is not a wonder that we have many approaches; the key concepts in those definition psychological and philosophical principles. There is bound to be many approaches as long as there are divergent psychological and philosophical views. According to Anasiudo (2002) the area of emphasis that are chosen in language teaching as a result of one's view of the natural of language becomes one's approach to language teaching. Different views result to different methods, in Nigerian classroom for instance. Ubahakwe and Obi (1975) assert that methods/approaches obtainable are traditional method, structure approach, situational approach, oral approach, drill method, direct method, project, play method activity method, project method and electric method.

Some of these methods are still in use today and some contemporary ones have been added. Methods are processes which the teacher transmits worthwhile knowledge to the learner foe effective translation of educational aims into practicality and reality. Language is not static and the methods are not static but dynamic. They change as the aims change. Methods are also influenced by quantity and quality of teachers, availability of materials and resources, nature of external examination, socio economic status of learners and status of the language.

Some of the approaches that have been in use in language teaching include: Grammar Translation Approach, Audio lingual approach, Direct approach/Natural method, Lexical approach, Communicative approach, Cognitive code learning approach, Total physical response (TPR), Present practice production (PPP), Suggestpodeia, Collaborative approach, Silent way, Teaching knowledge Test (TKT), Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Dogme etc. The list seems unending as views or perspectives are changing the methods are also changing.

Sometimes it is assumed that the terms "approach" method and techniques are hierarchical concepts. An approach is a set of corrective assumption about the nature of language and language learn, but does not involve procedure or provide any details about how such assumptions should translate into the classroom setting it is related to L_2 acquisition theory. There are three major perspectives in this level.

A. **The Structural View:** This perspective treats language as a system of structurally related element to code. From this view point emerge structural methods like Grammar Translational method, and audio lingual method.

B. **The Functional View:** From this perspective language is seen as vehicle to express or accomplish certain functions such as requesting something; hence the emergence of oral approach and situational approach.

C. **The Interactive View:** This sees language as a vehicle for creation and maintenance of social relations, focusing on patterns of moves, acts, negotiation and interaction found in conversational exchanges. This view has been dominant since 1980 till date. This gave rise to interactive methods like direct method, the series method communicative language teaching, language immersion method, collaborative language learning method, the silent way, TKT method, suggestpodeia.

Second Language Leaning and Acquisition
According to Mary Spratt, Alan Pulaverness and Melanie Williams (2005) three main ways have been identified by research through which we can learn FL/L_2. These include Acquisition, Interaction and Focus on form. Language acquisition is gradual development of language by using it naturally in communication. Human beings are naturally prepared to acquire language through their internalized aid called language acquisition device. Acquisition means picking up. The LAD helps us in picking up when we are exposed to a lot of examples. Language acquisition occurs without adequate instruction, irrespective of child's socio cultural factors. As a child is born into linguistic milieu he is surrounded by parents, brothers and sisters, peers and other people. If the child is in his native country, he understands his native language.

In every waking moment of his life he then notes that the language he is speaking is his mother tongue which may be his first language as well. This implies that L_1 is acquired. The language acquisition is done spontaneously and effortless. A child's language is not genetically gotten but it is acquired from a particular language environment. There is a schedule for language acquisition. Just like skills of walking and standing have biologically developmental schedule, so also language acquisition. There is a period called the silent period. A child does not acquire language immediately.

Language learning is conscious way of accumulating knowledge of a language it involves making combine effort in learning a language. According to Fodeh Baldeh (1990) second language learning is more complex, time consuming and more demanding. If this is the case, a second language teachers as well as second language learners have to make greater effort in order to teach and learn L_2. Second language learning is complex because the learner has acquired the first language (L_1) and in order to communicate his feelings, thought or attitude in L_2, he falls back to his mother tongue. This may give rise to interference, artificially and even hostility. The implication of this to L_2 teacher is that he has to indulge in active and intensive teaching to make the learners active in learning.

Another way through which language can be learned is through interaction with other people. We need to use language to express ourselves in a way that other people will understand us. In interaction the person we are speaking to will show us that he understood us or not. If there is no understanding we try to change to other language until communication is achieved. It is also shown by research that in FL/L_2 learning, learners need to focus on form. Attention need to be paid in language by identifying, working with and practicing the language.

However, to Mary Spratt, Alan Pulaverness and Melaine Williams (2005), experts nowadays generally agree that we do not learn FL/L_2 best through the grammar translation method or by constantly practicing until we form habits as behaviourist advocated or just by communicating as advocated by the communicative approach. Rather, we learn language by picking up language, interacting, communicating and focusing on form. To them the search for better ways of teaching L_2 learning seems endless. Linguists and language teachers are still looking for best way to make teaching and learning effective. According to Thomas, J.W. (2002), learning is a change in behavior that occurs as learners interact with their environment. Hence, the learners' experiences and environment facilitate their acquisition of reliable trustworthy knowledge.

This means that the ability to learn lies on the learner's ability to be creative and innovative and self -directed through analysis conceptualizations and synthesis of prior experience to create new knowledge. This implies that learners must be actively engaged in the learning process. For meaningful learning experience to take place, learning must be made active.

What is Active Learning?

This has to do with anything that students do in the classroom to engage them actively in the learning process. According to Johnson, John and Smith (2000), active learning includes everything from listening practice which help students to absorb what they heard, short writing exercises in which students react to teaching material and to complex group exercises in which students complete some group task that helps them to apply content material to real life situation and or to solve new problems.

This means that learning is not a merely passive listening to a teacher's teaching, it involves students' active participation in learning process and application of what is learnt in the real life. By implication therefore, a student who is actively involved in learning the four language skills for instance, will be an active listener and reader, and be able to communicate and express himself both through the oral medium and written medium in real life situations.

To buttress this idea Bonwell and Eison (1991) stated that active learning involves providing opportunities for students to meaningfully talk and listen, write, read and reflect on the content, ideas, issues and concerns of an academic subject.

In the past, learning has been viewed largely as passive experiences in which knowledge is received and stored for future use. However, contemporary research on how the brain works favours the theories that support a more active process of knowledge acquisition. Active learning is of great value in learning process. Students learn better when they apply the knowledge gathered in the classroom to real life problems and when they take part in projects that require and sustained engagement and collaboration. When students are involved in active learning practices, their performances are affected in a significant way that other variables may not have helped. This great benefit is hinged on the well-articulated Confucian Maxim which says:

I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I do and I understand

There has been empirical evidence to support the notion that students learn more meaningfully when they are actively engaged in the learning process. According to Uche Azikiwe (2007) the main reason why we learn English is to use it as soon as possible in our

everyday life activities. This implies that learning is not effective if it is not functional. The active learning process allows students to experiment with ideas and develop concepts and integrate them into their learning. That is why Azikiwe (2007) opined that in learning situation, children succeed with ease if and when the tasks and materials used for performing the tasks are within their levels of development and maturation.

Talking about levels and maturation one of the objectives of learning English is to develop in the students the ability to read and understand written materials appropriate to their age, socio-economic background, maturational level etc. It is when learners are involved in active learning that such objectives can be achieved. Active learning helps improve students' attitude to content, self -efficacy and peers in learning process. It is an effective strategy to build community in the classroom and to develop social experiences between students and between teachers to select objectives at the correct levels of difficulty to meet students' need.

Characteristics of Active Learning Strategy to Second Language Learning Classroom
- Students are engaged actively in the learning process instead of passive listening
- Students are engaged in activities like reading, discussing and writing.
- Emphases are on students' skills rather than providing them with information
- Development of students' positive attitudes and values are emphasized.
- Students' motivations are increased through class activities.
- Immediate feedbacks to students are given.
- Students' are engaged in higher order thinking

Effective teachers use many discussion and interactive strategies to engage learners intellectually and actively in learning process. Hence the main thrust of this paper is to look at collaborative approach and its effectiveness on second language learning.

Collaborative Language Teaching
Collaborative approach is an approach which brings together a number of philosophical perspectives and research tradition. Collaborative approach according to Nuns (1992) brings together philosophical perspective and research traditions like:

- Humanistic education
- Experiential learning
- System-functional linguistic and psycho linguistically motivated classroom.

The above perspective points to how instruction happens in classroom. To be effective teachers need embed these assumptions into planning and implementation of instructions.

Collaborative learning is a teaching approach which enhances maturity, experience and social communication in an academic environment while discouraging repetition, passivity and individuality. According to McCafferty, Jacobs and Dasilva Iddings (2006) collaborative learning has interested practitioners of communicative language teaching because it offers widely tested classroom procedures such as face to face interaction between and among students positive interdependence and development social skills.

Maria Luisa Cario Pastor and David Perry (2010) observed that the interdependence and mutual respect between the components of collaborative learning activity is essential to obtain a coherent proposal. Students and teachers should become a coherent group that dialogues and negotiates in dynamic class. Collaborative language learning is based on the

premise that cooperation is more effective for positive learning outcomes. According to Nunan (1993) teachers, learners, researchers and curriculum specialists can collaborate for the purpose of the following:

- Experimentation on alternative ways of organizing teaching and learning.
- Promoting philosophy of cooperation
- Creating environment in an equitable way for learners and teachers.
- In cooperation of principles of learners centeredness.

Based on the above there are many different motivations for using collaborative approaches and different way in which such approaches can be implemented in language teaching and learning. In the opinion of Roschelle and Teasly (1995) collaboration is mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve the problem together. The sole aim of collaboration is to solve problem and that is the whole essence of language and education. Any education that cannot solve problem is not effective.

Benefits of Collaborative Learning
Collaborative learning or cooperative learning has many advantages. Among these are:

- Creation of environment of active involved exploratory learning.
- Development of interpersonal relationship by establishing an atmosphere of cooperation.
- Promotion of student-student and teacher-student interactions. This stimulates critical thinking among students and helps in clarification of ideas.
- It encourages acknowledgement of individual differences.
- Provides more opportunities for personal feedback.
- Promotes more heterogeneous relationship and celebration of diversity.

Features of Collaborative Learning
The collaborative language teaching is unique based on its unique characteristics:

- Division of labour among learners.
- Promotion of face to face interactions between students.
- Provision of role and task to complete for every group member.
- Fostering of positive interdependence.
- Allows for pursuance of common group goal.
- Facilitation of group and individual accountability.
- Supports development of social skills.
- Permits group and individual reviewing for accomplishing assigned tasks.
- Combination with other instructional strategies (e.g. CLIL, TKT, Suggestpodeia, and Silent way).

Collaborative Approach and the Learning Process
Humanistic psychology has influence on education in many respects as long as learning is concerned. It provides rationale for more or several method such as community language teaching, the silent way and suggespodia and even the collaborative method. It influences curriculum theories especially learner centered approach to curriculum development.

It influences experiential learning which leads to immediate personal experience to life texture, and subject, personal meaning to abstract concepts at the same time providing content that has publicly shared reference point for testing the implication of ideas created during lessons. The above tenets or view is focal point of learning especially in collaborative language learning.

According to Willing (1988) researchers have found that learners are different and learn differently. These differences should be reflected at all level of methodology in selection of learning process. This implies that each stage of learning process (planning, implementation or evaluation) information about learner is used to guide content selection, learning experience and means of assessing outcomes.

Nunan (1988) argues that a learner centered curriculum will contain similar elements to traditional curriculum but a learner centered curriculum will make a collaborative effort between teachers and learners. Learners are closely involved in the decision making process regarding content of the curriculum and how it is taught.

Going by the above, it means this change in orientation has many practical implications to entire curriculum process since a negotiated curriculum cannot be introduced and managed in the same way as one directed by the teacher.

According to Burn (1999) collaborative learning entails that students working together to achieve common learning goals. This means that learners should confront and come to term with the conflicts between individual needs and group need, both in social and procedural terms. Collaborative approach encourages learner to learn about learning and to learn better. It increase the learner's awareness about language self and about learning. As a result of this, communicative and cooperative skills are developed. Nunan 1993) quoting research findings of Stevens, Madden Slavin and Farmish (1987) research into the effectiveness of collaborative or cooperative approaches to reading and writing instruction confirmed that students working in collaborative groups significantly outperform those receiving traditional instruction on standardized measures of reading comprehension, reading vocabulary, mechanics, language expression, spelling and also writing.

Collaborative Approach and Teaching Process
Collaborative teaching can be overwhelming if not well planned. For effective planning and efficient implementation the teacher may take the following steps:

- Identification of Goal/Objectives
- Develop focus questions for activity
- Provide directions for activity
- Develop Rubrics
- Develop specific group/individual assessment task.
- Reflect regularly on group progress and make adjustment.

(Culled from a resource book on Excellence in Teaching and Leadership powered by Institute of Education, UNN)

- Think pair share – write
- Three step interview
- Group investigations
- Renal Robin Brainstorming
- Jig saw

- Incident process or case study
- Teacher question and student question
- Peer instruction
- Inquiry based instructional strategy
- Project based strategy

In think-pair-share strategy, the students are given some time to process their thoughts during instruction. It helps them to think individually about a picture or answer question and teaches them to share with the classmates. This strategy though very simple but it enhances discussion and promote active engagement of students in class activity during instruction. This will help the students to develop good conceptual understanding of topic, develop ability to clarify information, draw conclusion, consider other point of view and develop good verbal communication skills.

The three-step interview strategy can be used to help the students solve problems that do not have specific right answers. Several steps can be taken during the process of problem solving. A teacher may also make use of group investigation strategy which is structured to help students to develop critical or higher order thinking skills like analyzing, synthesizing and evaluation. The essence of these collaborative activities is to make learning active and effective and productive even after school. For instance, the use of incident process strategy involves case studies of stories, real life incident or problems used as medium to bring reality to classroom to real life situation. The selection of any model or strategy is based on desired outcome of instruction, the subject and even the social skills of the students.

Collaborative Approach and Assessment
Assessment is a kind of evaluation given to students to find out their performance after a teaching and learning process. We have assessment of learning and assessment for learning. According to Stiggins, Arter, Chappnis and Happius (2006) assessment of creates a one-short deal mentality that is not conducive to real improvement of student achievement. Assessment of learning is summative in nature. It is not favourable to students' development as it comes at the end of learning process. It also sees students just as a test taken.

Assessment for learning is in process or during lesson assessment. Here students are involved in assessment. Students manage their learning process. Assessment for learning answers students question to where he is going, where he is and how he can make it. This is because as the students are learning, they assess others and even themselves, if there is problem they will understand immediately. It makes use of error at any point of development. It is a formative assessment. This helps to shape learning. It helps both the teacher and students. It is student centered.

The summative assessment on the other hand occurs at the end of the learning. It makes judgment about students' progress and grades students. It is not helpful to the teacher. Formative student-centered assessment approach applies control of error and portfolio in assessment. The collaborative approach of assessment for learning controls errors as it provides the students with immediate feedback on students' success. If there is any error or misconception of ideas, on the spot modification is given to the students to check accuracy by themselves as they are involved in adopting the instruction and teaching for test.

Portfolio is also useful as students compile their work and participate in evaluation of their work. Portfolio enhances extensive training. It involves students' directedness, real world connection and critical reflection. The teacher goes from time to time to check the learners' portfolio and gives necessary encouragement.

Why Collaborative Approach?

The effectiveness of collaborative or cooperative learning is based on the basic principles or elements. There are five basic principles peculiar to co-operative of collaborative learning:

1. Face to face "promotive" interaction
2. Positive interdependence
3. Individual accountability/Personal responsibility
4. Interpersonal and collaborative skills
5. Reflection/Group processing interaction

In face to face "promotive" interaction, learning becomes active rather than passive. Teams encourage discussion of ideas and oral summarization. Peer assistant clarifies concept for both helper and the student being helped. Cooperative teams help learners learn to value individual differences and promote more elaborate thinking.

Based on the principle of positive interdependence, students must feel that they need each other in order to complete the group's task that is they sink or swim together. Positive interdependence can be built into the task by jig-sawing information, by limiting materials, by having a single team product through team roles or randomly selecting one student to answer for a team.

By principle of individual accountability or responsibility, students must feel that they are each accountable for helping to complete a task and for mastering materials. To build individual accountability, student takes individual task like quizzes, each students will be assigned to a specific portion of task, each must be able to summarize another's ideas etc. interpersonal and collaborative skills include skills for working together (Staying on task, summing recording ideas) as well as group maintenance skills (encouraging each other). To foster this include teacher modeling, brainstorming character, direct practice, process observing and reflection.

"Processing" may be defined as the provision of time and procedure for the students to analyze how well their groups are functioning and how well they are using the necessary collaborative skills. Processing can be individual team widen or the whole class level. How well did I speak/listen? Did we take turn to include everyone? How could we have coached each other? Collaborative approach involves diversification of approaches. This is based on the premise that as we have different individuals we also have different learning styles as such different approaches will be used to meet the learning style and need of individuals. For instance, we have visual learners, audio-visual learners or learning style and kinesthetic learning style. For a visual learner to be effective teachers may use visual organizers to help them, he may employ sound to help the audio learners and kinesthetic learners will be involved in things he will do with his body.

Collaborative Approach believes in active learning strategy. All the students should be engaged in learning process. This approach believes in the fact that everybody has something to contribute in learning process. The learners may be involved in pair work, group work or brainstorming group, project or discussion. The lesson should involve interaction between students and students, students and teacher, students and group. Teaching is learner-centered. In this active learning the learner is helped to develop the four language skills without burdening the language teacher. For instance as students involve in interactive activities listening, speaking, reading and writing take place. Collaborative approach encourages giving out roles to learners. Like in every group there should be a facilitator, a recorder, a reporter, material manager, time keeper, and checker.

Conclusion

From the discussion in this paper, the collaborative learning approach provides a viable and in many contexts a more effective alternative to competitive approach which dominate many educational model. Teaching and learning can be enhanced by an extension and redefinition of the role relationships of learners and teachers.

In order to understand and appreciate the complexities of language classroom it is important to see process teaching and learning where they occur that is in the classroom. In collaborative language classroom, teachers, learners, teacher educators all have voices and it is important for teaching and learning to take place where all these voices can be heard. It is also important that second language learning (L_2) should be integrated in everyday activities and seen as part of students' environment. Students should come to see language learning as practical tool used to communicate with people all around the world.

This is obtainable when learning is made active. If this communicative and interactive aspect is forgotten, Second language can be restricted to sterile gap filling and other drills. In this era, teachers need to adapt materials and methodologies to better reflect the needs of students and to make use of the available possibilities.

Collaborative approach to learning will help learners to attain higher levels of achievement, increase time on tasks build cross-ethnic friendship, experience enhanced self-esteem, life-long interaction and communication skills and master the critical creative self-regulated habits of life, needed to function as a productive member of society.

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