Title: Empowering 2nd language teachers with appropriate teaching methodologies and content for successful acquisition of English

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Abstract

For far too long, second language education has been a major concern for many Melanesian countries such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. English is used as a medium of instruction to deliver all subjects, and it is also used as a subject taught in all levels of schools from primary to tertiary institutions**.** One of the most challenging factors that inhibit the progress of successful second language teaching is lack of appropriate teaching methodologies and content. Teachers should be trained in the appropriate teaching methodology and content to teach learners successfully. For example, one of the lesson objectives is to teach learners how to conduct interviews which involve speaking and listening. However, if the teacher does not know what an interview is and the skills of interview, how can he or she teach the learners when faced with such difficulty? The skill of interviewing involves speaking and listening, thus; many teachers have difficulties delivering speaking and listening lessons unlike reading and writing. Teachers are not trained well with the appropriate teaching methods and content expected of them. In fact, in a country like Papua New Guinea, curriculum does not stay static for more than 20 years. It changes every five to ten years depending on the need. Thus, when the curriculum changes, teachers also have to be trained well to implement the changes in the curriculum effectively. The purpose of this study is to rectify the problems Primary School Teachers (Teachers of Grades 3 – 8) are confronted with and amend the problems through certain training programs that can be introduced in Teacher Training Colleges. One effective approach to help solve the problem is to review and write new language curriculum materials every ten years according to the needs of the learners and the country. Secondly, teachers' college language lecturers should be in-serviced on the new curriculum before implementation. Finally, the field teachers should be called in for in-service on the latest changes in the curriculum.

Key words: Teacher empowerment, Methodology & Content, Second language teaching

Introduction

Curriculum does not stay static. It changes every time there is a need in society, community or nationwide. When the curriculum changes stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers and government are affected because of certain issues that are derived from the changes happening. For example, field teachers will not know how to implement the new curriculum which may affect students' learning. The government will spend money on services teachers or creating awareness in schools or public places about the new curriculum.

It is healthy for the curriculum to change because it will benefit every citizen, especially learners at all levels of education. However, the changes also result in issues, such as lack of quality teaching and learning materials, lack of trained language teachers and teacher training institutions might not be well versed with the new curriculum. Thus, this paper will highlight some of the issues PNG teachers of English as a second language encounter when faced with changes in the curriculum particular the teaching methodology and content. The paper will also recommend some strategies to empower 2nd language teachers with correct teaching methodologies and content for better learning to take place.

Background

Papua New Guinea is currently experiencing transition in curriculum. Fifteen years ago, Outcomes Based Education system was introduced in schools, and it had both good and bad effects upon the teachers and learners of English. Considering the positive effects, OBE language curriculum gave opportunities to learners to improve in their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills functionally which was occasionally taught in the previous curriculum. On the other hand, OBE curriculum contributed to lack of proficiency in spoken and written English due to PNG creole being introduced in schools. 'Tok-pisin' has influenced English in its spelling system, limitation of vocabulary, unstructured grammar rules etc. As a result, the learners' English proficiency rate was decreased at an alarming rate for the past ten years. For instance, the results of the students' essays and other writing tasks at the university where I am currently teaching indicated low competencies in grammar and coherence. Furthermore, the students spelt the words in 'Tok Pisin' rather than in English. On the teachers' point of view, there were no proper teaching resources for teachers to guide their planning and teaching when the reform was introduced. Some teachers were not trained to effectively deliver language lessons using the OBE curriculum. They lacked the correct strategies to teach English as second language. As a result of the falling standards in English, the government is embarking on a new curriculum 'Standards Based' this year. Although, there were announcements made through various forms of media about the change, many rural schools are kept in total darkness. There is not enough awareness made throughout the schools in the nation. In addition, for schools who heard about the change, their teachers expressed concerns that they might not be able to

teach language effectively as they do not have the skills and methods to implement the change.

Curriculum needs to change to cater for the needs of all stakeholders, and it is healthy to have a change in the curriculum. However, there are pros and cons one needs to consider before going through the change. There are issues that need to be addressed especially in the field of second language teaching when curriculum changes. For example, it was discovered through the findings that many language teachers are not aware of the teaching methodologies or content to teach learners to achieve the target language successfully.

Although some might have fair ideas about the curriculum, they still face difficulty delivering lessons using the correct strategies for assisting second language learners. For example, one of the requirements of standards based is to teach English phonics and basic grammar to the Elementary and Primary Schools. Second language learners need to know their English sounds and basic grammar rules to produce language successfully in terms or speaking and writing. The target goal of teaching English as a second language is to meet the social goals of learners. Writing a good application letter or debating in a public forum in English is examples of social goals. It is difficult to teach phonics and grammar as these courses are not taught in teachers' colleges so the teachers will not know their content well and the pronunciation of these sounds. This has led me to discover the real issues behind the changes in the language curriculum and how to deal with the issues despite the changes. Questionnaires were distributed to two primary schools in the same province. There were issues highlighted in which I wish to emphasis and find solutions to the problems. For instance, some teachers said they do not know what standards-based curriculum is and others said they lack correct strategies to teach language skills because they were not trained. One of the
A recommendation is to bridge the gap between the teacher training institutions and the schools. The training institution can send their representatives to respective schools and make awareness about the new curriculum so that teachers can be informed and plan for the new curriculum. Secondly, the government can call for cluster in service to empower teachers with the appropriate teaching methodologies and content.

Purpose

Effective teaching using Standards Based Curriculum is the main concern in this paper. Teachers should be well equipped with the correct teaching strategies and content for effective delivery of lessons. If the teachers do not know how to teach using language skills such speaking, listening, reading and writing using the new curriculum, how can they assist second language learners acquire the target language proficiently. The second language learners need English to communicate proficiently to meet their social goals such as having competent social interactions with others, writing letters, being able to engage in different registers, emailing etc. Hence, the paper tries to rectify teachers' problems and find suitable ways to empower teachers with appropriate teaching skills and content. When teachers know the correct teaching methods and content of a second language acquisition can take place successfully.

Literature Review

The government has made a change in the curriculum and is currently making awareness to the public through media and other sources. The awareness has not reached very remote areas or even some isolated provinces of Papua New Guinea. Teachers, the implementers of the curriculum will be affected in many ways, which is the focus of the paper. Firstly, the new curriculum is called the 'Standards Based.' It is important to define what 'standard' is. According to Collins Colbuild dictionary, a standard is a level of quality or achievement especially a level that is thought to be acceptable. It is something used to measure or estimate the quality or degree of something, for example, how good a piece of work is" (p. 1421). In education perspective, standards' is a term which defines a cumulative body of knowledge and set of competencies that is the basis for quality education. They express what all pupils should know and be able to do, but do not dictate pedagogy (Ministry of Education, 1998; Ravitch, 1996). One of the aims of Standards Based is to set a benchmark for all learners to meet despite the differences in individual learners. The differences are disabilities, IQ levels, age, cultural factors, aptitudes, anxieties, minority vs. majority groups etc... Despite the differences, Standards Based curriculum is opting that every learner should be treated as equal and should all work towards achieving the standard benchmark. In terms of language teaching and learning, every learner has to meet the benchmark, and the benchmark is "students are expected to demonstrate what they can do with the language by applying what they know about the language to real-life situations through speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is about what pupils are expected to do at different levels of performance in four areas of language learning: social interaction, access to information, presentation and appreciation of literature, culture and language" (Stainer, 1998). Social interaction is part of the social goals the learners are aiming to be competent in the target language to meet their social goals in life. To be equipped with expectations of quality communicative competence, there should be allowance of proper language lessons that can cater for learners' need in classroom situations. The emphasis in the Standards Based Curriculum is to learn phonics and grammar and apply in real communicative situations. According to Shrum and Glisan (1994) in research by Tedick 2003,

> Language that is introduced and taught in context presents real situations that Encompass the physical setting, the purpose of the exchange, the roles of the Participants, and the socially acceptable norms of interaction, in addition to the medium, topic, tone, and register of the exchange (Hymes, 1974). Grammatical Structures that might otherwise be devoid of context become an integral part of the communicative acts that occur in contexts (p. 23).

There are four important content areas teachers should have to plan and teach successful lessons. As stipulated by Brown (1994), for successful communicative competence in second language, the learners should know "grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence." Learners need this knowledge and skills to communicate competently to other people. Some teachers lack these areas of language teaching due to them having lack of proper training. For example,

according to a report (McLaughlin, 2010) in his audit report to Dr. Tapo, most teachers have a general education only to Gr. 10 and very basic teacher education for two years. If standards-based reform is to be implemented, teachers must go through proper training. Secondly, it was found that some teachers also lack proficiency in the usage of English thus they find difficulty in teaching the learners.

Teachers lack correct language teaching methodology and content to deliver language lessons effectively. According to Advance Learners English Dictionary, **method** - a way of doing something, especially a systematic way; implies an orderly logical arrangement (usually in steps). It refers to the general principles, pedagogy and management strategies used for classroom instruction. For example, the teachers need to know the speaking strategies such as role-play, storytelling, debating, asking and answering questions, interviewing skills, counseling skills, dramatizing to teach the learners successfully. Content is the knowledge about grammar, phonics, spelling, pronunciation, sociolinguistic, strategic, and cultural and discourse patterns to make language lessons become effective. Teachers should possess the above knowledge to teach language effectively. Knowing grammar and sounds without applying them functionally in daily language use will result in unsuccessful language learning. Having meaningful interactions rather than focusing on grammar and phonics rules will pave way for the success in language learning. As mentioned by Tedick (2003), Contextualization of grammar involves teaching grammar with an eye toward meaningful language use for real communicative purposes and helps students to understand how meaning is constructed by language users (be they writing, speaking, reading, or listening). This is real language learning.'

In the research, it was discovered that lack of correct teaching methodology and content was a concern for teachers. Moreover, lack of prior planning and preparation was another issue teachers emphasized. For example, some indicated that they are not competent to teach grammar and phonics because they were not trained or taught grammar and phonics in teacher training institutions. In fact, I did serve at one of the teachers' colleges in PNG, and I found that grammar and phonics courses were not taught in the institution. Grammar and phonics is the focus of the Standards Based Curriculum, and thus teachers must know this content well. The NDOE, 2015 report stipulates clearly that grammar and phonics have to be taught in elementary and primary schools until learners are ready to apply them in spoken and written work. In addition, cultural teaching in the target language is also a great concern. English has a culture, and trainers need to know the culture associated with the language for proper training to be given to teachers. It is also important that the teachers need to know the different types of registers that happen in different situations so that they can teach the learners effectively. In speaking and listening lessons, it was also discovered that many teachers do not know the strategies to use when teaching speaking and listening lessons. As stipulated by Chastain (1988), it was found that many language teachers are not proficient enough to teach speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

Methodology

Two schools in Eastern Highlands Province in Papua New Guinea were used to carry out this research. The two schools are Gama Lutheran Primary and North Goroka Primary. Twenty four questionnaires were distributed to the two schools. Each school was given 12 questionnaires for the teachers to fill. Out of the 24 questionnaires given to teachers, twenty were returned while four were not returned. Apart from the questionnaires, I interviewed High School teachers on issues related to the change in the curriculum and I got some responses.

Findings and Results

A. Return

There were 24 questionnaires given out to two primary schools in Goroka – Papua New Guinea. Each school was given 12 questionnaires each. Gama Primary School returned 11 questionnaires while North Goroka Primary School returned 8 questionnaires. Hence, a total of 19 questionnaires were returned instead of 24.

B. Results

Data Analyses using pie charts.

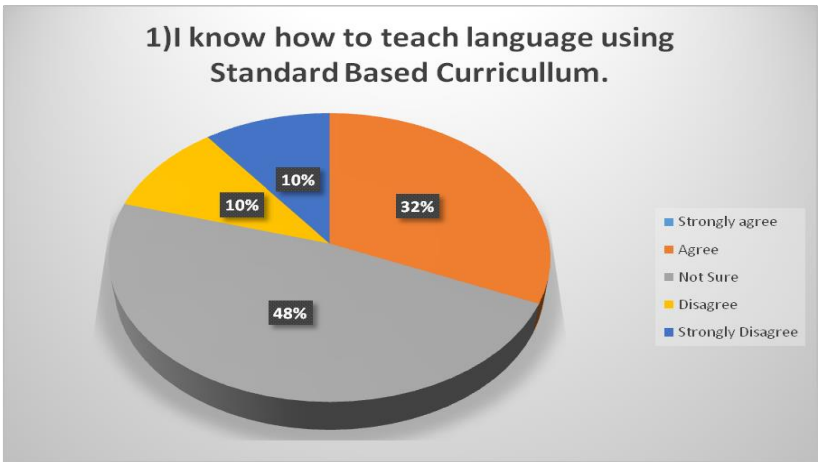


Figure 1: Knowledge in teaching language using Standard Based Curriculum

Figure 1 shows the following results: 31% of the teachers knew how to teach language using "Standards based", 47% were not sure, 10% disagreed and another 10% strongly disagreed. The results clearly show that many teachers do not know how to teach language using the new curriculum. Some teachers indicated that they were not aware of the new curriculum, and some said they lacked proper knowledge and skills to implement the curriculum. In addition, others indicated that they do now know about the syllabus and outcomes of the language lessons.

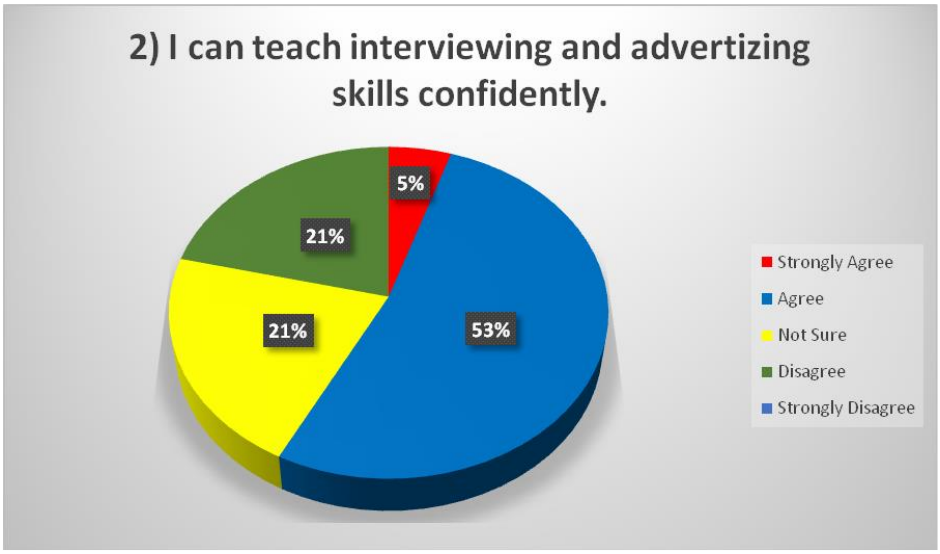


Figure 2: Confidence in teaching interviews and advertising skills

As shown in figure 2, it was discovered that 57% could teach interviewing and advertising skills confidently while 21% were not sure and 21% disagreed. Although majority of the teachers indicated that they could teach interviewing and advertising skills confidently, about half of the population could not. This postulates that some teachers are not trained in the necessary language content needed to be taught to the second language learners. Hence, there is a need to empower teachers with appropriate content for successful implementation.

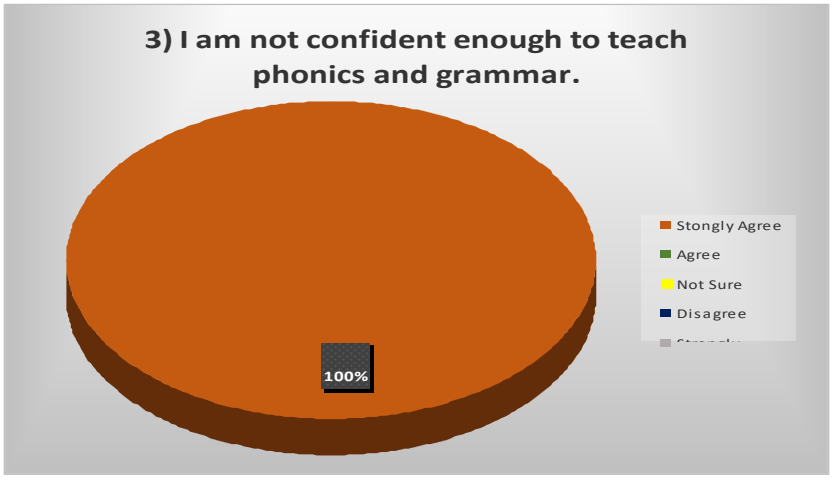


Figure 3: Confidence in teaching phonics and grammar

The result in figure 3 is quite shocking because 100% of the teachers were not confident to teach grammar and phonics. The main reason is that phonics and grammar courses are not taught in
Teacher training institutions throughout the nations. Secondly, it is due to the fact that many serving teachers' secondary education is up to Grade 10; thus, they have not learnt enough Grade 11 and 12 languages content to be competent language teachers. In

addition, some stated that there were no resources for them to use in their teaching. Moreover, about phonics, many do not know their English phonemes and how to pronounce the sounds correctly. These are some of the issues teachers raised about the lack of confidence in teaching grammar and phonics.

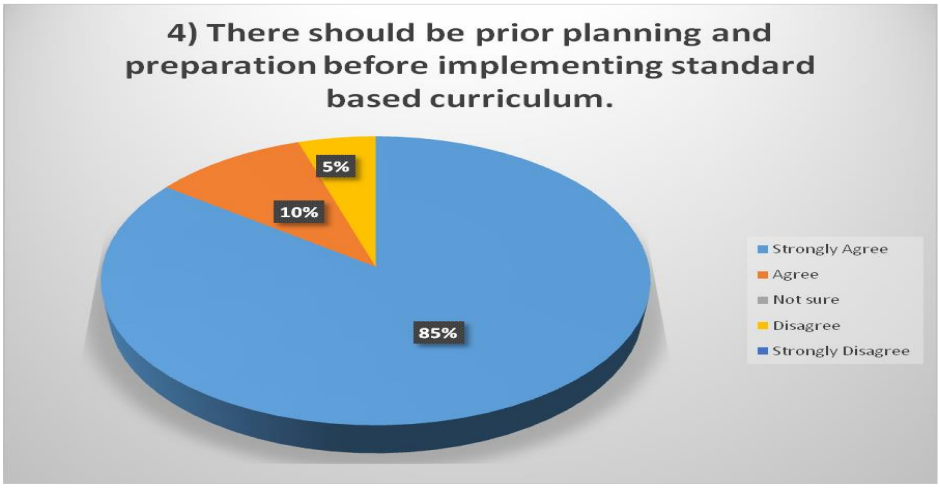


Figure 4: Prior planning and preparation before implementing standard based curriculum

Figure 4 indicates that about 94% of the teachers want the government and all the schools to have prior planning and preparations done before implementing the standards based curriculum while 5% disagreed. According to an interview carried out, some teachers released their frustrations indicating their needs. One of their main needs is to prepare teachers with appropriate teaching strategies and content before implementing the curriculum. Moreover, some teachers expressed their concerns about the fact that they do not want to experience the same consequences they felt in Outcomes Based Curriculum. Some of the failures in Outcomes based curriculum were lack of teaching materials and lack of trained teachers to teach the skills. Thus, it is important to prepare teachers well before implementing the changes.

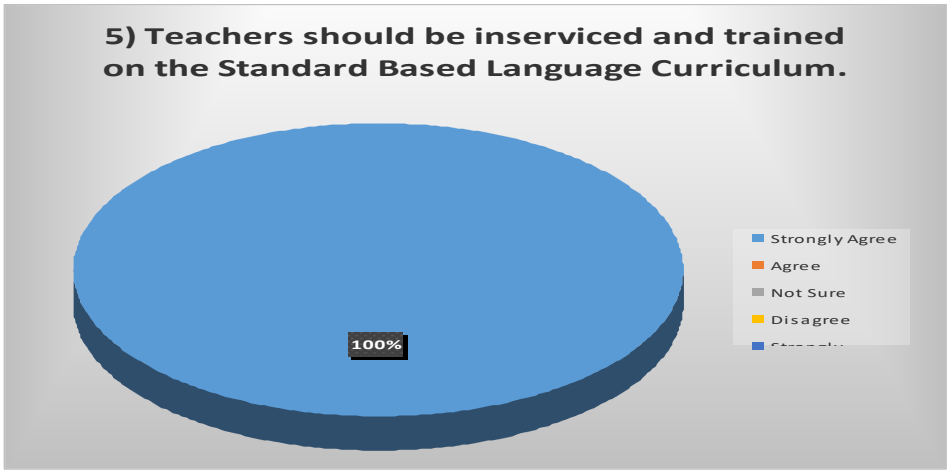


Figure 5: The need for in-service and training on Standard Based Language Curriculum

Figure 5 shows that 100% of the teachers indicated that there is a great need for teachers to be in serviced on the standards-based curriculum for successful implementation. The in service should focus on getting teachers knowledgeable in the teaching strategies and contents for English as a second language. For example, many teachers indicated that their area of need is grammar and phonology as these are the foundations of language learning. Others also indicated that they need to be in serviced on the communicative means or strategies for language teaching. The four main areas of communicative competence are grammar, social linguistics, strategic and discourse knowledge. In fact, in teacher training institutions for primary schools, the course content for language teachers is very shallow; thus, not addressing the communicative competence well. This is since teachers go through two years of training instead of three years.

Conclusion

Second language can be acquired successfully when teachers know the correct teaching methodologies and content to impart to the learners. The change in the curriculum at present has paved way for unsolved issues that were addressed previously with the previous curriculum- Outcomes Based. The teachers are concerned that these unsolved issues might be experienced again with the new curriculum introduced this year as a year of awareness. It was discovered through the research that many teachers are not competent to teach language using standards-based curriculum
due to several reasons. For example, teachers indicated that they cannot teach grammar and phonics because of reasons such as, lack of training, lack of in-service, no prior planning and preparation, certain language courses are not taught in teacher training institutions and shortage of teaching resources. These issues should be addressed to the appropriate bodies for further deliberations and actions. Unless these issues are solved, second language acquisition cannot take place successfully. Therefore, it is vital for such issues to be corrected before implementing the new curriculum.
Currently, some of these problems have not been solved, yet the government has imposed the change and wants the schools to implement it in 2016.

Recommendations

Below are some recommendations derived from the discussions.

1. Before a change in the curriculum is implemented, awareness should be done in all schools throughout the nation. Awareness should include reasons why a new curriculum will be implemented, the good and bad sides of the curriculum, teaching and learning pedagogies, assessment procedures, and how it can enhance learners and teachers support materials.

2. One of the aims of standards is to teach grammar and phonics along with communicative competence. Teachers should be called in to upgrade their phonics and

grammar skills to teach with confidence. In addition, other training courses on effective speaking, listening, reading and writing teaching strategies for second language acquisition should be given to teachers.

3. When curriculum suddenly changes without proper awareness, training institutions and schools are kept in darkness. The representatives from the training intuition should be sent to various schools and find out about type of curriculum on the ground and the teaching, learning and assessment pedagogies aligning the curriculum. This can help the training institution to create courses suitable to the need of the curriculum on the ground

4. Teachers colleges should rewrite new courses to suit the needs of Standards Based Curriculum and lecturers should go for further training at the universities to improve their course programs and qualifications.

5. Invite academics who have specialty areas in training second language teachers to be curriculum writers for the teachers and students' resources rather than getting unnecessary people to write teaching and learning resources.

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