The Imperative of English for Specific Purposes with Focus on the Language of Politics in Nigerian School Curriculum

Cecilia Folasade OJETUNDE & Foluso Adedoyin AGOI

Department of English Education, Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin

ABSTRACT

The foundation of democracy is the interface between politicians and the citizens who constitute the electorate, an interface mediated by public speech. This stresses the nexus between language and politics, and the role of public speaking in a democratic setting, such as the Nigerian context. The lack of communicative efficiency in English, Nigeria's official language, exhibited by many Nigerian public office holders calls for a pragmatic approach to English Language Teaching (ELT). This paper examines the utilitarian function of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), an aspect of ELT, with Cognitive Constructivist Theory, as a theoretical approach for equipping our political leaders with the linguistic skills needed for communicative efficiency – a determinant of efficiency of political office-holders. Cognitive Constructivist Theory of Learning views learning as an active process where learners construct fresh ideas based on their linguistic knowledge and experience, while ESP, a theoretical approach for curriculum design, focuses on ELT with attention to needs analysis, genre and successful communication. The summary of the findings of this study, which adopted a quasi-experimental design using the survey approach, is that most of the respondents were not impressed or inspired by the performance of many Nigerian politicians found to exhibit poor communicative skills – a factor that impacts over-all leadership performance. The study makes some recommendations: one is that ESP, particularly the teaching of Language of Politics, should be designed for the Nigerian school curriculum to groom the youth to become good political leaders in the country's search for effective political leadership.

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Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) entails teaching the English language to students of tertiary institution, particularly the university, or people who are already in employment, with focus on their language needs. According to Hijuelos-Cruz, Medina-Carballosa and Pérez-Almaguer (2020), ESP is "a very useful approach for the design of tailor-made syllabuses in varied academic and professional contexts such as polytechnic institutes, art vocational schools and military vocational schools" (P. 116). A learner's need for learning English may be for the purposes of study or work. As Strevens (1988) submits, "ESP concerns the emergence of a number of activities, movements and subjects that are carried out predominantly (though) not exclusively in English across the world)" (p. 57). English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a subset of English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL); and, as Richards (2006) asserts, "Second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication" (p.22). The identification of a learner's specific language needs and expectations tends to facilitate the teaching/learning process. This motivates the learner and makes for an easy achievement of the objectives of the teaching/learning programme. According to Carter (1983), self-direction is crucial as the focus of an ESP scheme is how to transform a learner of the language into a user. The application of ESP is determined by the identification of needs. ESP is a "Goal-oriented language learning," according to Robinson (1989, p. 398).

ESP is "an important and distinctive branch of English Language Teaching (ELT) that focuses on practical aspects derived from needs analysis, genre and successful communication," according to Hijuelos-Cruz, et al (2020, p. 117). ESP pays particular attention to a specific field, such as politics, equipping learners with the vocabulary and linguistic skills required for improved communication and upward mobility in their chosen areas of study or careers. The essential factors in the context are the learner and how language is acquired. In other words, the emphasis of ESP is on language learning, not language use.

Babalola (2003) posits that ESP may be seen as pluralistic in that many approaches are being employed to teach its subject around the world today. This invariably means that what is specific and appropriate in one part of the globe may not be elsewhere. As it is responsive to developments in all three realms of language, pedagogy and content studies, ESP is versatile and continues to dominate as the lingua franca of business, media, technology, education, research, etc., as the demand for it is growing rapidly particularly where English is mainly used for instrumental purposes (Bracaj, 2004). In such countries, English is learned to fulfill the school curriculum requirement, to pass Standardized English Proficiency tests, to obtain promotion or professional development.

Based on this, students' needs are the absolute characteristics of ESP (Kareva, 2013) with the appropriate selection of language content in focus. The necessity for exchanges and interactions with the international increases the need to have people who do not have just general English knowledge, but also an extensive English vocabulary. Spencer, Leonardo, Lynn and Bernadette (2013) assert that the constraints of time, budget, space, English proficiency levels, and other factors complicate what ESP can be. Based on this, it is imperative to introduce ESP as early as possible because ESP professionals have their own limitations especially in terms of the time and effort they are able to commit to the need analysis, syllabus design, and course delivery and what they can and cannot deliver (Spencer, et al, 2013).

Language of Politics

The relationship between language and politics is so strong that people could be made to act, feel or think in certain ways without being forced. The use of language in politics can be considered to have both instrumental and influential power. In most cases, however, individuals or political groups in their speeches, including campaign speeches, use language to gain influential power for themselves and their parties. To use language for specific purposes, there are certain techniques peculiar to the field of interest that one must get acquainted to. Specifically, for language use in politics, there are so many occasions for language expressions such as public debates/deliberations, political assemblies, press conferences, etc. Such speeches involve polite, respectful, deep, thoughtful, motivating and inspiring public talks or conversely on some other occasions, impolite, disrespectful, vulgar, abusive, verbal discourse through the use of offensive expressions such as sarcasm, satire, irony, mockery, understatement, ridicule, etc. Learning to use English to achieve political objectives lies with the teachers of English at various levels of education, and not only the teacher of English for Specific Purposes.

English Language Teaching in a Second Language Situation

The high esteem accorded English language in the Nigerian school system is predicated on the communicative functions of English as a vehicle for communication, especially in a multilingual society. However, Adegbite (2005) observes that if the problem associated with the teaching and learning of English are not adequately addressed; there would be negative implication on the socio-political and economic growth of the nation. Writing on the characteristics of ESP courses, Strevens (1988) identifies absolute and variable characteristics; that the courses are: structured to meet the learners' specific needs, associated in content to particular fields, disciplines or occupations, focused on a language specific to the identified fields, disciplines

or occupations, and at variance with General English. Identifying the variable features of ESP courses, Strevens declares that the courses may be restricted in the skills to be taught and learned, and may not be taught with a particular methodology. Writing on the absolute criteria for characterising ESP courses, Robinson (1991) submits that ESP schemes are typically goal-oriented, and that they are initiated by a needs analysis, which will state in clear terms what the learners need the language for and what they intend to achieve by using the language. Anthony (2018) identifies four pillars of ESP as: needs analysis, learning objectives, materials and methods, and evaluation. In ESP contexts, methodology and all other aspects of learning are based on the learners' language needs and their motives in learning a second or foreign language. ESP concentrates on the goal or purpose for which learners learn the language, rather than linguistic features.

In the opinion of Odunlami (2005), English language is uniquely located between school and the wider life. Only a fraction of the language is done in the class, therefore the teacher of English should guide not only the formal school usage of English by the students but also their street expressions. Ogunsiji (2003) presents the two broad ways of teaching English functionally. First, the language may be taught to some professionals so that they are able to use it for effective communication in their specific fields which is actually the crux of this study. This is what has been described as English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), e.g. teaching of English to the military, the police, court clerks, or bankers. Secondly, the teaching of the language which is usually contextualized within the school setting could be made functional so as to prepare ground for students to learn English for specific purposes.

Techniques for Teaching the Language of Politics: Implications for Teachers of English

Communicative approach to language teaching advocated by Hammer (2005) is adopted for the teaching of the language of politics. The approach is a set of beliefs that holds that learning a language effectively is only through using the language for communication purpose. The needs of learners are given priorities as well as their active participation in the process. The major concerns of this approach are what to teach and how to teach it. On what to teach, the approach focuses on language function rather than rules, grammaticality or correctness and how the language forms could be used appropriately in different communicative contexts. On what to teach, it is believed that communicative techniques are based on the idea that language learning will naturally take place when students are given enough exposure and opportunities to use the language (Ojetunde, Yede and Osipeju, 2014). To use this approach, Maduekwe (2007) presents four skills that should be considered:

i. The learner should attain a high degree of linguistic competence as much as possible in such a way that he/she would develop skills in manipulating the linguistic system to the point of using it spontaneously and flexibly in order to express his intended meaning.
ii. The learner should distinguish between forms he/she has mastered as part of linguistic competence, and the communicative functions which they perform.
iii. The learner should develop skills and strategies for using language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations.
iv. The learning should become aware of the social meaning of language forms.

Asanova and Lukyanova (2022) believe that the degree of political tension at a given period determines the degree of aggression in rhetoric. Thus, in influencing the audience at these periods, there are certain communicative strategies, tactics and techniques that students need to learn. Communicative strategy as a prominent goal of communication is implemented through a specific set of tactics. Communicative techniques also represent a particular means of influencing the audience. Among the strategies identified by Asanova et al in aggressive rhetoric include: the downgrading strategy which is aimed at weakening the political opponents. The strategy is implemented through a number of tactics.

i. The analysis-minus tactic: This is carried out by describing a situation in a way that is based on a factually substantiated negative attitude towards the situation or event without explicitly expressing it. Such an effect can be achieved by using metaphor (comparing a politician or a situation that cannot be interpreted unambiguously.
ii. The tactic of accusation which involves making unsubstantiated attacks on an opponent. In this type of situation, the speaker often uses lexical items or slogans with negative connotations e. g "Labour is not working…"
iii. The denunciation tactic is an accusation of an opponent based on facts, evidence and argument.
iv. The insult tactic is aimed at humiliating a political opponent.
The tactic of threat is the intimidation of an opponent.

The preoccupation of this study is the imperative of incorporating English for Specific Purposes with focus on the language of politics in Nigerian school curriculum. The study was inspired by the need to equip politicians, students of political science and other people who are interested in politics and public speaking with the linguistic tools they need to effectively articulate their thoughts, aspirations and visions for their society. The paper is our response to the communicative inefficiency and abysmally poor articulatory behaviour of many politicians and political office holders in Nigeria, where the official language is English.

Research Questions

1) Do the students have enough knowledge of their political environment?
2) Do the students have political ambitions?

3) Are the students aware of the roles of politics in the society?
4) Do the students perceive communication as a vital leadership quality?
5) Are the students familiar with the language of politics?

Hypotheses
1) There is no significant relationship between the students' perception of voting as a civic responsibility and whether or not it should be made compulsory for all citizens.
2) There is no significant relationship between students' knowledge of their political environment and their perception of voting as an important civic responsibility.
3) There is no significant relationship between students' interest in politics and their aspiration to hold a political office in the future.
4) There is no significant relationship between students' awareness of the roles of politics in society and their perception of leadership as a driver of national development.
5) There is no significant relationship between students' perception of communication as a vital leadership quality and their familiarity with the language of politics.

Theoretical Framework – Cognitive Constructivist Theory
There seems to be a complementarity between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach and Cognitive Constructivist Theory. Cognitive Constructivist Theory of Learning views learning as a "holistic, 'bottom-up' process" (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 169) phenomenon involving an active learner serving as the constructor of their knowledge structure (Rao, 2018). Learning is effected through self-regulation that involves retroactive, participatory construction and adjustment effected by the learner as a result of certain experiences serving as stimuli. Cognitive Constructivist Theory of Learning perceives learning

as an active process where learners construct fresh ideas based on their linguistic knowledge and experience.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), is "an approach to language teaching in which all the decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (p.19). They add that ESP is a learning-centred approach "in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner´s reason for learning" (p. 19)The approach is described by Crystal (1995) as "a course whose context is determined by the student's professional needs" (p. 108).The essential components of the various phases of ESP – that is, needs analysis, course design, materials selection, teaching and learning and evaluation – are determined by the experience and language needs of the learner. As Karami (2018) puts it, "We must tailor our language courses to the needs of specific contexts and specific groups of people" (p. 95). Politicians are particular about their use of language, as their main objective seems to be to show themselves as being different from – or superior to – ordinary people, besides outdoing their political rivals in public speaking. Thus, a prominent feature of political speech is the use of rhetorical devices.

Methodology
This study adopted quasi-experimental design using the survey approach. The population of this study was made up of English Language students of Lagos State University of Education, Oto-Ijanikin in Lagos State. This study made use of stratified random sampling to select fifty students from each campus of the institution. The total number of participants was 100 students. The primary instrument utilised for the study is Teaching the Language of Politics in ESL Teaching Programmes Questionnaire (TLPETPQ) with reliability index r=0.76 using Cronbach Alpha. The instrument contains twenty-five questions item focusing on the five research questions. The response set is categorical in nature using Yes or No. Simple

percentages and Chi-Square Analysis was used to answer the research questions. The research questions were answered at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings
Research Question 1: Do the students have enough knowledge of their political environment?

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Students' Knowledge of Political Environment

	Item	% Yes	% No
1	Did you vote in the last election	27	73
2	Do you think that voting is an important civic responsibility	90	10
3	Should voting be made compulsory for all eligible citizens	83	17
4	Are you impressed by the communicative skills exhibited by any politician in the current political dispensation	44	56
5	Have your views on politics changed negatively since the inception of the current political dispensation	41	59

The above table shows that almost two-thirds of the respondent did not vote in the last election though they support the opinion that voting is an important civic responsibility and should be made compulsory for all citizens. While a little above half of the respondents confirm that they were not impressed by the communicative skills of the politicians, neither had their political views changed from negative to positive since the inception of this current political dispensation.

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 1

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	$.386^a$	1	0.534	-	-
Continuity Correction[b]	0.031	1	0.859	-	-
Likelihood Ratio	0.434	1	0.510	-	-
Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	1.000	0.463	-
Linear-by-Linear Association	.382	1	0.537	-	-
N of Valid Cases	100	-	-	-	-

a. 1 cell (25.0%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.70.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to evaluate the relationship between the students' perception of voting as a civic responsibility and whether or not it should be made compulsory for all

citizens. This was done to further confirm the political awareness of the students, since majority of them did not vote in the last election. The relationship between these variables was not significant $x^2 (1,100) = 0.39$, p >0.05. This means that the two variables were not independent of each other, that is, the students being conscious of voting as an important civic responsibility and supporting

the views that it should be made compulsory yet decided not to vote in the last election. This means that they were very much aware of their political environment.

Research Question 2: Do the Students have political ambitions?

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Students' Political Ambitions

	Item	% Yes	% No
1	Do you have interest in politics	36	64
2	Would you choose politics as your field of study	24	76
3	Do you like politics as your hobby or area of interest outside your primary profession	36	64
4	Do you have any aspiration of holding a political office any level of government?	46	54
5	Do you have admiration for politicians?	43	57

The responses above all tilted towards more of lack of political ambition in future. Two-thirds of the respondents did not have interest in politics neither were they interested in making politics a hobby or

area of interest. A little above half of the respondents have no admiration for politicians and have no aspiration of holding political office in any level of government.

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 2

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.562[a]	1	0.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	29.257	1	0.000		
Likelihood Ratio	33.569	1	0.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.000	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	31.246	1	0.000		
N of Valid Cases	100				

a. 0 cell (.0%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.56.

To further check the relationship between students' interest and their interest in holding a political office in future, a chi-square test of independence was performed since majority of the respondents have negative trends towards future political ambition. The relationship between these variables was highly significant x^2 (1,100) =31.6, p <0.05. This means that the two variables were independent of each other, that is, one does not affect the other. In simpler meaning, the students' interest in politics does not independently affect positively or negatively their interest in holding a political office in future.

Research Question 3: Are students aware of the role of politics in society?

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Students' Awareness of the Role of Politics in Society

	Item	% Yes	% No
1	Are the students aware of the roles of politics in the society	85	15
2	Do you think that politics is connected to leadership	90	10
3	Do you think that your life is affected by politics in any way	77	23
4	Do you perceive leadership as a driver of national development	75	25
5	Do you think that political leadership has an impact on the wellbeing of citizens	85	15

More than three-quarters of the respondents agree that politics is connected to leadership, which is a driver of national development and very germane and impactful to the wellbeing of citizens.

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 3

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	0.218[a]	1	0.641	-	-
Continuity Correction[b]	0.000	1	1.000	-	-
Likelihood Ratio	0.203	1	0.653	-	-
Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	0.463	0.642	-
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.216	1	0.642	-	-
N of Valid Cases	100	-	-	-	-

a. 1 cell (25.0%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.50.

A further analysis of the research question using chi-square test of independence to examine the relationship between awareness of the roles of politics and the connections to leadership was performed since majority of the respondents have positive trends towards the roles of politics in the society. The relationship between these variables was not significant: x^2 (1,100) = 0.22, p >0.05. This means that the two variables were not independent of each other, that is, one does affect the other and can

be said that the positive awareness of the role of politics can say something on its roles and contribution to leadership.

Research Question 4: Do the students perceive communication as a vital leadership quality?

Table 7: Percentage Distribution of Students' Perception of Communication as a Leadership Quality

	Item	% Yes	% No
1	Are you aware of the significance of team work in leadership	84	16
2	Are you aware of the role of communication in team work	90	10
3	Do the students perceive communication as a significance leadership quality	88	12
4	Do you think a good political leader should constantly share information with their constituency	89	11
5	Do you think that a good political leader should encourage feedback and interrogation or engagement from their constituents	87	13

Ninety percent of the respondents are aware of the role of communication in team work while very well above three-quarters of the respondents opine that good political leaders should share information, encourage feedback, interrogation and engagement from their constituents.

Table 8: Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 4

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.183[a]	1	0.000	-	-
Continuity Correction[b]	14.780	1	0.000	-	-
Likelihood Ratio	13.545	1	0.000	-	-
Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	0.000	0.000	-
Linear-by-Linear Association	18.001	1	0.000	-	-
N of Valid Cases	100	-	-	-	-

a. 1 cell (25.0%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.92.

A further analysis of the research question using chi-square test of independence to examine the relationship between awareness the significance of team work in leadership and whether communication is a necessary leadership quality. The relationship between these variables was not significant: x^2 (1,100) = 18.2, p <0.05. This means that the two variables were independent of each other, that is, one affects the other and can be said that the positive awareness of the significance of team work in leadership is independent of quality of communication.

Table 9: Percentage Distribution of Students' Awareness of Leadership Qualities

	Item	% Yes	% No
1	Do you enjoy discussing political issues with your friends or colleagues	62	38
2	Can you as a student of English write a political manifesto of a political party	71	29
3	Do you think that successful political leaders exhibit specialized linguistic skills	62	38
4	Do you have knowledge of the language devices used by famous political leaders	58	42
5	Do you think that a good leader share their plans, expectations and actionable strategies in clear terms with members of their constituency	86	14

Two-thirds of the respondents do enjoy discussing political issues with their colleagues and also believes that successful political leaders exhibit specialized linguistic skills. In addition, majority of the respondent believe that a good leader should share their plans, expectation and actionable strategies in clear terms with members of their team. More than two-thirds of the students can write a political manifesto of a political party as a student of English.

Table 10: Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 5

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.163[a]	1	.686	-	-
Continuity Correction[b]	.011	1	.915	-	-
Likelihood Ratio	.161	1	.688	-	-
Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	770	0.451	-
Linear-by-Linear Association	.161	1	0.688	-	-
N of Valid Cases	100	-	-	-	-

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.32.

Further analysis of the research question using chi-square test of independence to examine the relationship between the students' enjoyment of discussing political issues with their friends or colleagues and the ability of good leaders to share their plans, expectations:

The relationship between these variables was not significant: $x^2 (1,100) = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$. This means that the two variables were not independent of each other, that is, one does affect the other and can be said that the when leaders tend to share their plans with constituency, it is often a good thing of enjoyment for discussion by many students and as such should be encouraged.

Conclusion and Recommendations

ESP with focus on the language of politics should be extended to young learners, including post-primary school pupils, many of who might exhibit an interest in politics. This will develop in them the verbal aptitude required for communicative efficiency. Teaching the language of politics should not be restricted to the tertiary level of education, especially as higher educational qualification has no implication for eligibility for election into any public office in Nigeria. Secondary school certificate is the minimum educational qualification for citizens who aspire to hold any political office in the country, as reported in This Day newspaper (2022, February 13). Public speaking ability plays a vital role in governance, particularly in the 21st century, where the efficiency of political office-holders is predicated mostly on their communicative proficiency. The 21st century, called the Information Age, is a fast-paced knowledge-driven age, a largely democratic dispensation powered by communication, where information and communication technology (ICT) takes centre stage. Unfortunately, no educational institution in Nigeria currently offers stand-alone courses focused on equipping politicians or future political leaders with communicative competence, which is an integral component of leadership. ESP with focus on language of politics should be adopted in all tertiary institutions of learning in the country to train political office holders and future political leaders in the art of public speaking. This will be a relief to many political office holders who resort to hiring private teachers of English to help them improve their public speaking skills.

ESP as a pedagogical approach deserves much more attention in our educational system. ESP should be one of the prominent course components of the curriculum of education in Nigeria. The teaching of the language of politics should be incorporated into our school curriculum.

The language of politics should be taught in-depth in our educational institutions. This should be stressed in the National Policy on Education (NPE), and enforced by the relevant organs of the Ministry of Education, including Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).

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