

THE ROLE OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN DEVELOPING SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY

Abstract

The study investigates the role of Sociolinguistic Competence in developing the second language (L2) learners' proficiency. Some linguists argue that if sociolinguistic competence is incorporated in teaching second language, it would enhance learners' spoken and written proficiency. Learners find it hard to establish fluent spoken and written communications because L2 learning is replete with teaching, learning and internalize of language rules. Learners are exposed to linguistic rules without explicit instruction on the culture of the language. The research aims at examining whether explicit knowledge of sociolinguistic competence enhances second language learners' fluency or not. Sociocultural theory was employed as the theoretical framework. This theory holds that learners are pushed by their motivation to socialize with others to produce coherent discourse that goes beyond linguistic and grammatical accuracy. Oral Reading Methodology was used for data collection where approximately thirty Senior Secondary school students were selected from each of seven schools to read two passages of almost the same length. The first passage which reflected the Hausa culture presented a story about a poor girl. The use of language (English) in the passage is purely Nigerian. The second passage reflected the English culture and was a story about a young girl; the use of language in the passage is purely native speaker version. The subjects were timed to read the two passages with a short interval between the readings. The findings showed that in the first passage, the reading was fluent and the subjects comprehended the message. In reading the second passage, the subjects were less fluent. Their comprehension of the message contained in the passage was poor. The implication is that lack of exposure to the English culture makes it difficult for second language learners to comprehend some ideas, thoughts, experiences or attitudes especially when expressed by a native speaker. In an attempt to comprehend and express certain phenomena, learners make frequent pragmatic transfers in their use of English to describe the context in question.

KEY WORDS: Sociolinguistics, fluency, learner, sociocultural, competence

Introduction

Sociolinguistic competence is concerned with human interaction in natural contexts; the utterances, as they are produced and meant in various sociocultural contexts. Sociolinguistic competence is quite important since it is germane to real communication. Mede and Dikilitaş [2015] insist that sociolinguistic competences should be given importance in L2 teaching and learning. Sociolinguistic competence includes learning pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge about how to use language linguistically and socially appropriately. Thus, the knowledge of this competence enhances language learning and may allow L2 learners develop their fluency in spoken and written English, if it is incorporated fully in L2 curriculum and explicitly taught to the L2 learners like the other aspects of communicative competence.

Culture is a capital and means for developing all knowledge in order to terminate all human sharing problems, for helping economic stabilization and political security. According to sociological perspective, culture is the total of the inherited and innate ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values, and knowledge, comprising or forming the shared foundations of social action. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the learner's "knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and discourse" [Brown, 2000]. Brown includes learners' sensitivity to dialect or variety, choice of register, naturalness, and knowledge of cultural references and figures of speech in his definition. Lyster [1994] defines the concept of sociolinguistic competence as the "capacity to recognise and produce socially appropriate speech in context". Kramsch [2014] attributes the lack of skills to use language in the real worlds to the expectations from the teachers, who are supposed to teach and carry students to a particular level of proficiency.

Problem Statement

L2 learning is dominated by teaching, learning and internalization of language rules. Learners at all levels are exposed to linguistic rules without explicit instruction on the cultural background of the use of the language. The ethnographic and cultural aspects of the second language are not explicitly introduced and taught to L2 learners. The poor knowledge of these aspects limits the learners' language proficiency. Learners find difficulties establishing fluent spoken and written communications because of the poor awareness of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic strategies. They are forced to transfer their native pragmatic knowledge to communicate in L2, which sometimes causes misperception and misinterpretation. L2 curricula do not explore culture and social norms of these target languages. Learners need to be introduced to cross-cultural perceptions of what constitute linguistic behaviour and how things in the world — ideas, thoughts, philosophies, phenomena, sensations, beliefs, perceptions — are referred to and how native speakers express them. This is why Mede and Dikilitaş [2015] argue that sociolinguistic competence should be incorporated in the teaching and learning of the L2 the same way other aspects of communicative competence are taught. The scholars insist that the knowledge of this competence would develop the L2 learners' language fluency. However, Ya [2008] notes that sociolinguistic competence is so hard to acquire due to the variance in cultural rules of speaking as well as the social, cultural and pragmatic elements that inherently exist in that competence. To put it differently, what is appropriate in one cultural situation might be entirely inappropriate in another one. The language learners often cannot differentiate between the rules of speaking in his or her native context and those of the target language context.

The aim of this study was to examine whether explicit knowledge of sociolinguistic competence enhances spoken and written proficiency or not. It examined whether or not explicit knowledge of sociolinguistic competences helps learners with poor communication abilities in a target language to overcome the problems. Omaggio [2001] puts forward three reasons why sociolinguistic competence is not often regarded as a topic in its own right and as an indispensable aspect of language teaching:

1. Language teachers often think that they cannot address sociocultural issues due to time constraints in their curriculum.
2. Teachers may not have enough confidence in teaching sociocultural aspects of foreign languages.
3. The teaching of sociocultural competence often involves dealing with students' attitudes which teachers usually find very challenging.

Explicit teaching of discrete grammatical rules, segmental level of pronunciation, and lexical items seem easier, during which sociocultural aspects of communicative competence are thought to be incidentally acquired. However, this is a problematic claim because knowing rules of language along with how to pronounce individual words and what they mean may not necessarily ensure knowing the sociolinguistic contexts in which they can be used. The knowledge of sociolinguistic values of linguistic forms is constructed on the basis of the social context and cultural environments where language is naturally used. The functions and socio-pragmatic values of forms are attached to them in actual communication. From a pedagogical perspective, the situation seems complex for the teachers who are expected to help students promote communicative competence in the classroom setting, which can be developed by close interaction with native speakers [Brown, 1987].

Conceptual Framework

Competence

Competence is literally defined as the ability to carry out a task successfully. White [1959] views competence as an organism's capacity to interact effectively with its environment. According to Mitchelmore and Rowley [2010], it refers to behaviour a person should be able to demonstrate. Hager and Gonczi [1991] note that competence is the possession of a series of desirable attributes including knowledge of appropriate sorts, skills and abilities, such as problem solving, analysis, communication, pattern recognition, and attitudes of appropriate kinds.

Colman [2009] opines that competence is the capacity, skill, or the ability in doing something correctly and effectively. In line with Colman, Beams [2008] posits that competence is the quality of ability caused by the qualification and the ability in doing a task. Richards and Rodgers [2003], on their part, aver that competence is the description of essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors required for effective performance of a real-world task or activity. So, competence is the useful ability which includes skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors acquired by the students in doing the real-world task or activity in the real life in form of social networking.

Eraut [1998] understands competence as the ability to perform tasks and roles according to expected standards. Eraut [1998] specifies that it is ability to perform tasks and roles. There are thus as many different abilities as there are tasks. To Mulder [2011], competence is "capability to perform effectively". The author equates the concept of capability with that of ability: "The meaning of the concept is mostly seen as being able to perform effectively". Tarone and Swain [1995] explains linguistic competence as the ability of the members of a speech community to adapt their speech to the context in which they find themselves.

Chomsky [1965] emphasized the difference between linguistic competence, the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language and performance, the actual use of language in concrete situations. He points out that linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interests, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.

Chomsky makes a clear distinction between the notions of competence and performance. Competence refers to the native speakers' (ideal speaker-listeners') knowledge of the linguistic

system (grammar) of their language [Canale & Swain 1980], while performance is seen as the actual language use [Chomsky 2006]. However, he asserts that a number of different factors need to be taken into account in order to study the real language performance. One of these factors is the native speakers' competence [Chomsky 1965]. Therefore, Chomsky argues that the purpose of the linguistic theory is to explain the mental processes underlying the language use, and by this he means that the study of linguistics should be concerned with competence, not performance [Barman 2014].

Similarly, Fromkin and Rodman [1993] differentiate competence and performance as a difference between what you *know*, which is your linguistic competence and how you *use* this knowledge in actual speech production and comprehension, which is your linguistic performance. Based on Chomsky [2006]'s theory, our linguistic competence is our unconscious knowledge of languages and the organizing principles of a language. Then, what we actually produce as utterances is called linguistic performance [Denham & Lobeck, 2013].

Linguistic competence refers to the knowledge and ability of individuals for appropriate language use in the communicative events in which they find themselves in any particular speech community. Hamerka [2009] uses the term competence to describe the learner's capacity to produce a language.

This limitation of Chomsky's linguistic competence led Hymes [1972] to coin the term "communicative competence." He was among the first linguists who criticized Chomsky's theory of competence. He argued that Chomsky's perception of competence was inadequate to explain an individual's language behavior as a whole. He noticed that an individual's competence not only reflects their knowledge of language forms and structures, but also refers to the way they use language in real social situations. Communicative competence is a wide term including not only linguistic knowledge but also knowledge of a set of sociolinguistic codes and rules for using them. Communicative competence, he claims is the most general term for the speaking and hearing capabilities of a person and that competence is understood to be dependent on two things: (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use.

Communicative competence

A number of linguists define communicative competence looking at different linguistic perspectives. Canale and Swain [1980] define communicative competence as a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social contexts to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principle of discourse. Their model consists of three fundamental components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. The fourth competency was added later by Canale [1989]: discourse competence, which is the ability to construct longer sentences in discourse to form a meaningful whole. Discourse competence asks: how are words, phrases and sentences put together to create conversations, speeches, email messages or newspaper articles? Discourse competence also includes understanding how texts relate to the context or situation in which they are used.

According to Shobikah [2020], communicative competence is the competence in using language correctly based on the rules of language use in society. The use of language is contextually based on the meaning of language use in society and theoretically based on the rules of language

pattern, so that the students must acquire the use of language contextually and theoretically. To reach those competences, the students must be taught and trained in written and oral English language skills. Oral language skill is the skill in using the English language as a verbal or direct communication tool. This is developed through listening and speaking skills. In this skill, the students are involved in direct communication, in the use of language as lingua franca so that there is an interaction between the teacher and the students. Meanwhile, the written language skill is to use English as a nonverbal tool. It is built from reading and writing skills such as reading and writing a sentence, paragraph, and text to deliver a message from the sentence, paragraph, and text.

Bachman and Palmer [1996] in their communicative ability model distinguish three components: organisational knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, and strategic competence. Organisational knowledge includes both grammatical knowledge and textual knowledge (covering cohesion). Pragmatic knowledge includes both knowledge of sociolinguistic rules and functional knowledge (illocutionary competence). Strategic competence involves the ability to make the most effective use of available abilities to carry out a given task.

Communicative competence is widely accepted as a basis for testing oral and written language proficiency. It is not only an inherent grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, or discourse competence: the ability to use different aspects of language, such as syntax, phonology and lexicography; the ability to construct longer sentences in discourse to form a meaningful whole or the ability to understand the social context in which a communication takes place, rather, communicative competence includes the ability to use all these types of competence in a variety of communicative situations. Thus, relying too heavily on the achievement of rules of grammar can lead to dissociation from any consideration of appropriateness which is the concern of strategic competence. This study focuses on sociolinguistic competence which is one of the four aspects of Communicative Competence.

Types of Communicative Competence

Developing competence in second language learning involves working on grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence in the development of the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. Canale and Swain [1980] propose that communicative competence will be at least consisting of three components: grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic communication strategies. They have improved Hymes' model of communicative competence by referring to dimensions of communication which could take place in endless sociocultural contexts. By incorporating the term 'skill' into their model of competence, they drew the attention of other scientists to the combination of contextual-probable realities and personal skills & capabilities. The efforts of Canale and Swain were highly appreciated by most scientists since they moved towards analyzing the dynamics of communicative language.

Grammatical Competence

Grammatical Competence embodies the theoretical aspects of language; in other words, the knowledge of language coined by Chomsky in 1965. The term grammatical competence was also premeditated with the 'Language Acquisition Device' (L.A.D.), a black box, an instinctive mental capacity which enables the infant to acquire and produce language in a rule governed fashion, the grammatical competence. In the most general form, grammatical competence was defined by N. Chomsky, as theoretical and practical knowledge of a limited number of

grammatical rules, which allow generating an unlimited number of correct sentences. It can be assumed that the grammatical competence in the context of learning a foreign language is a set of theoretical knowledge (rules) and language skills that are necessary and sufficient for students to construct correct sentences, to understand them, to monitor grammatical errors, to pass judgments about right and wrong linguistic forms, and to perform language testing tasks.

Canale and Swain [1980] define grammatical competence as the type of competence which focuses on the use of lexical items, morphological rules, syntax, semantics, and along with the aspect of phonology (pronunciation). Moreover, it includes the basic elements of communication such as the sentence patterns and types, the constituent structure, the morphological inflections, as well as the lexical resources. Grammatical competence deals with the ability of the learners to form sentences or utterances based on appropriate rules. This particular competence is mostly related to the accuracy.

Discourse Competence

Discourse competence embodies the skills and capabilities to produce language at sentence and text level by meeting the standards of cohesion and coherence. This competence is related to the learners' mastery of understanding and production of texts in the mode of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is concerned with cohesion and coherence in different types of texts. Cohesion and coherence, as indices in discourse analysis, are important for both receptive skills and productive skills [Canale & Swain, 1980]. The notion of discourse competence derives from the theory of communicative competence; it occurs in all of the models of communicative competence in a language. It is the knowledge and skills required to produce and interpret texts considering their structural scheme and the linguistic standards of the different discourse genres that we use. It is what enables one to handle sociocultural, pragmatic, and textual pieces of knowledge, such as, concepts and skills, effectively and appropriately.

Strategic Competence

Strategic competence incorporates the strategies of non-verbal and verbal communication in order to avoid communication breakdowns. In other words, the strategic competence sustains communication through strategies to provide efficiency, effectiveness and fluency. It is regarded as an important part of all communicative language use. Canale and Swain [1980] describe strategic competence as the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence. Strategic competence refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication [Richards, 2001]. It is used to know how to sufficiently recognise and to fix communication breakdowns, how to sufficiently learn more about the language in context. In essence, it is the competence underlying our ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge and to sustain communication through approximation, paraphrase/ circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance and asking for help, as well as shifts in register and style.

This competence can be used to enhance the effectiveness of communication. In a qualitative sense, it is different from the other three components of communicative competence in that it is not a type of stored knowledge. It interacts with other components to enable learners to deal successfully with a lack of competence in one of the fields of competence. Strategic competence consists of minor decision making processes that occur during the course of conversation like assessing the resources available and compensating for lack of linguistic resources through the use of strategies to convey a message. Thus, strategic competence should not be considered as

type of non-stored knowledge. It is part of the speakers' mental capacity for managing linguistic resources to achieve communicative intent.

Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence is concerned with human interaction in natural contexts; the utterances, as they are produced and meant in various sociocultural contexts. The sociolinguistic competence is quite important since it is genuine for real communication. Culture is a capital and means for developing all cultures and knowledge in order to terminate all human sharing problems, for helping economic stabilization and political security. According to sociological perspective, culture is the total of the inherited and innate ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values, and knowledge, comprising or forming the shared foundations of social action. Likewise, from the anthropological and ethnological senses, culture encompasses the total range of activities and ideas of a specific group of people with common and shared traditions, which are conveyed, distributed, and highlighted by members of the group [Collins English Dictionary 1991].

Emmitt and Pollock [1997] assert that language is a system of arbitrary signs which is accepted by a group and society of users. It is taken as delivery of a specific purpose in relation to the communal world of clients. Chase [1969] declares that the purpose of language use is to communicate with others, to think, and to shape one's standpoint and outlook on life. Indeed, language figures human thoughts. According to Crystal [1971], language is the systematic, conventional use of sounds, signs, or written symbols in a human society for communication and self-expression.

Words are the most significant tools of cultural symbols. That is to say, poems, stories, fictions, epics and myths are the main ingredients and components of a culture in a society. Myth, in a language expresses universal realities in symbols. On the whole, the elements of culture are the entirety of socially transmitted and common behavior patterns, prototypes, samples, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought [Crystal, 1971].

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use the language based on socio cultural context in relation to the contextual factors such as topics, role of participants, settings and norms of interaction. It involves social and cultural aspect that are essential in relation to the ability to understand and deliver linguistic forms [see Canale and Swain, 1980]. It deals with how to initiate interaction in certain society. When someone does not have sufficient knowledge about this competence or he does not have enough skill in sociolinguistic competence, it will be very difficult for him to interact with other people. Considering the scope of this study, the first four types of competence mentioned above were reviewed for this research. However, the study focuses on examining the impact of sociolinguistic competence especially with regard to the development of L2 learners' oral fluency.

Theoretical Framework

The study employed Wang, Bruce and Hughes [2001] sociocultural theory which argues that learners are pushed by their motivation to socialize with others to produce coherent discourse that goes beyond linguistic and grammatical accuracy. This theory describes human cognition as developed by an individual through engagement in social and cultural activities with other

people, objects, and events. Ellis [2000] argues that sociocultural theory is based on the assumption that learning emerges not through interaction but in interaction. When learners get involved in doing certain tasks with the help of another learner or the teacher, they internalize the way to carry out the same task by themselves. Hence, social interaction is believed to facilitate or mediate the learning process. According to this perspective, the interactions that help the learners with their learning process are those in which the learners scaffold the new tasks. Vygotsky [1979], regarded as the founder of this theory argues that the social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and in fact. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary. From this perspective, mental functioning of the individual is not simply derived from social interaction; rather, the specific structures and processes revealed by individuals can be traced to their interactions with others. Thus, this theory is concerned with how individual mental functioning is related to cultural, institutional, and historical context and the focus of the perspective is on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organized activities play in influencing psychological development.

Lantolf [2011] notes that sociocultural theories in second language acquisition research offer a framework through which human cognition can be systematically investigated without isolating it from social context. Frawley and Lantolf [1985], define sociocultural theory as the theory of mental development and functioning while Ratner [2002] defines it as the field that studies the content, mode of operation, and interrelationships of psychological phenomena that are socially constructed and shared, and are rooted in other social artifacts. Accordingly, human psychological processes are organized by three fundamental cultural factors: activities play, education, work, legal and medical systems, esthetic creation, artifacts, use of physical tools, books, weapons, eating utensils, clocks, computers, and related technology as well as symbolic tools, including language, numeric systems, diagrams, charts, music, and art, and concepts (the understandings that communities construct of the personal, the physical, the social and mental worlds, religion, etc.) For analytical reasons, it might be desirable to examine the three factors independently; however, in normal human behavior, it is clear that they generally function as an integrated organic system.

Language is best learnt when attention is paid to the discourse, norms, and practices associated with particular communities. According to sociocultural perspective, language learning is thought to occur through interaction, negotiation, and collaboration. The scope of this theory is considerably wide. It is more concerned with the ways in which learning is an act of enculturation. Many learning situations attempt to accommodate. As the theory of language learning, sociocultural theory combines the social context with individual acquisition. In order for an individual to become a competent speaker of a language, the mere personal effort would not result in the mastery of the language unless he benefits from other people's use of language.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for the data collection was observation in the classroom. The study employed Amer's [1997] Oral Reading Method where senior secondary school students were randomly selected to read two passages of almost the same length. The first passage presented a story about a poor girl (Farida), an extract from chapter twelve of *Mysterious Vanishing* by Hshim [2017: 50], which reflected the Hausa culture. The language in the passage was Standard Nigerian English. The second passage presented a story of a young girl (Ms. Mack) in *Houghton*

Mifflin English by Rueda et al. [2004], which reflected the English culture, and the language of the passage was British Standard English. The subjects were timed to read the two passages. Equal length of time was given for the reading which took place within a short interval. The subjects' reading was assessed based on reading fluency, reading comprehension, recognition of politeness and mood, context familiarity, new words and new expressions. Each subject was given five minutes during the first reading and the same length of time was given during the reading of the second passage with researcher observing and scoring the students' readings.

In the assessment of the fluency, the students' reading rate/speed and accuracy in the reading were assessed by comparing the time taken by the subjects to the timed sample of reading the same passage. The assessment of the reading comprehension was done after the students' reading. The researchers asked them questions on the passage and asked them to retell/summarize the story in a few sentences. Recognition of politeness was assessed by observing the change in their tones in the expression of emotions. The subjects' familiarity of the context during the two readings was assessed based on their performance in the other aspects, such as, reading fluency, reading comprehension and politeness recognition. In other words, the subjects' performance in the above-mentioned variables determined their scores in the context familiarity. The new words and new expressions, which were expected to be strange were written in bold and after the reading the students were asked their meanings. Each variable was assessed over hundred.

Sample and Sampling Technique

203 subjects were selected out of 409 students from seven Government Senior Secondary schools in Kano Municipal using Krejcie and Morgan [1970] Model. According to this Model, in a population of 420 subjects, 201 subjects would be selected as sample. Random sampling technique was employed where 31 out of 62 students were selected in the first school. 28 out of 57 students were selected in the second school. In the third school, 27 out of 54 students; in the fourth school 30 out of 61 students were selected. 27 out 55 of students were selected in the fifth school; 30 out of 60 in the sixth school and 30 out of 61 students in the seventh school. Every odd number was selected in the class registers in the first, third and sixth schools and every even number was selected in the class registers in the second, fourth, fifth and seventh schools.

The seven schools were selected from Kano Municipal because of the diverse nature of the students' background. The first factor considered for the selection was cultural diversity. In the Municipal Zone, students in secondary schools were from different cultural backgrounds. The second factor considered for this selection was linguistic background. Students in the secondary schools in that zone shared different linguistic backgrounds, which enhanced the process of conducting this study. The students had different L1s and for this reason, English as L2 became the medium of communication. The third factor, gender, was also important, as Wray and Bloomer [2006] note that gender is just one of many variables that linguists consider when they examine the conscious and unconscious choices that are made in relation to linguistic behaviour. Research has consistently found females to outdo their male peers when it comes to language learning (see Schmitt, 2010). However, for this reason, boys and girls schools were selected. The subjects selected for the study were the final year students.

Table 1: The Population and Sampling

s/n	Schools	Gender	Samples
1	Rumfa College	Boys	31
2	Ado Gwaram Senior Secondary School	Boys	28
3	Government Senior Secondary School Sabuwar Kofa	Boys	27
4	Government Senior Secondary School Sharad	Boys	30
5	Government Girls Secondary School Salanta	Girls	27
6	Government Girls Secondary School Hasana Suffi	Girls	30
7	Government Girls Secondary School Salanta	Girls	30
			203

The Schools and the Subjects Selected for the Study**Data Presentation and Analysis****Table 2: Results of Reading the Translated Hausa Passage for the seven schools**

Variables Assessed	Reading Fluency	Reading Comprehension	Recognition of Politeness	Context Familiarity	New Words	New Expressions
(%)						
1	55.00	70.9	59.59	69.63	6.1	5.6
2	54.00	68.2	58.90	70.4	4.30	10.62
3	56.50	68.40	63.63	65.30	5.20	8.70
4	58.19	74.63	67.95	67.50	5.23	9.40
5	55.66	73.63	57.40	71.36	5.06	11.40
6	55.66	78.1	59.60	59.40	5.1	9.10
7	57.1	66.96	60.90	70.20	5.3	7.8
Average	55.66	73.63	67.95	67.50	5.23	9.40

figure 1 :Result of Reading the Hausa-culture-based Passage

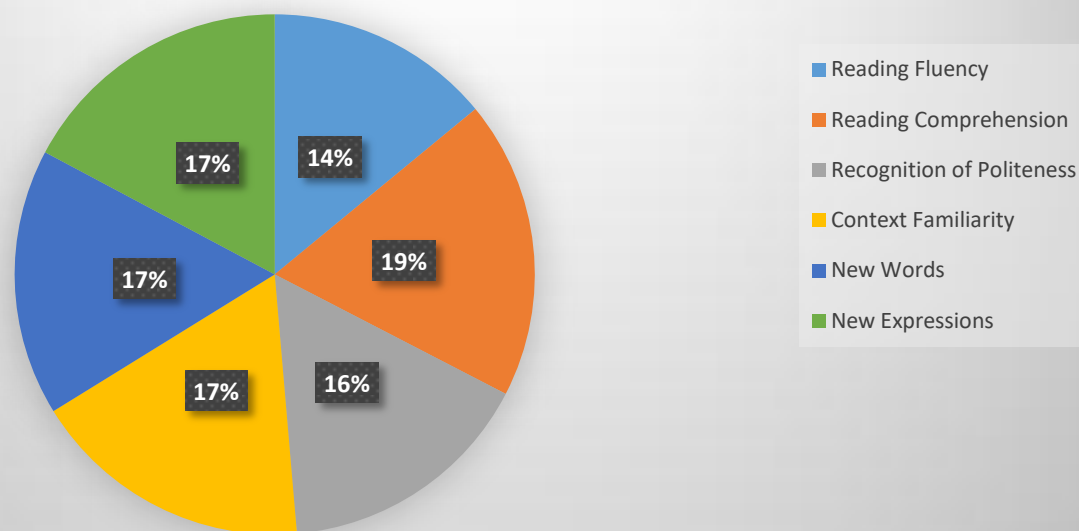
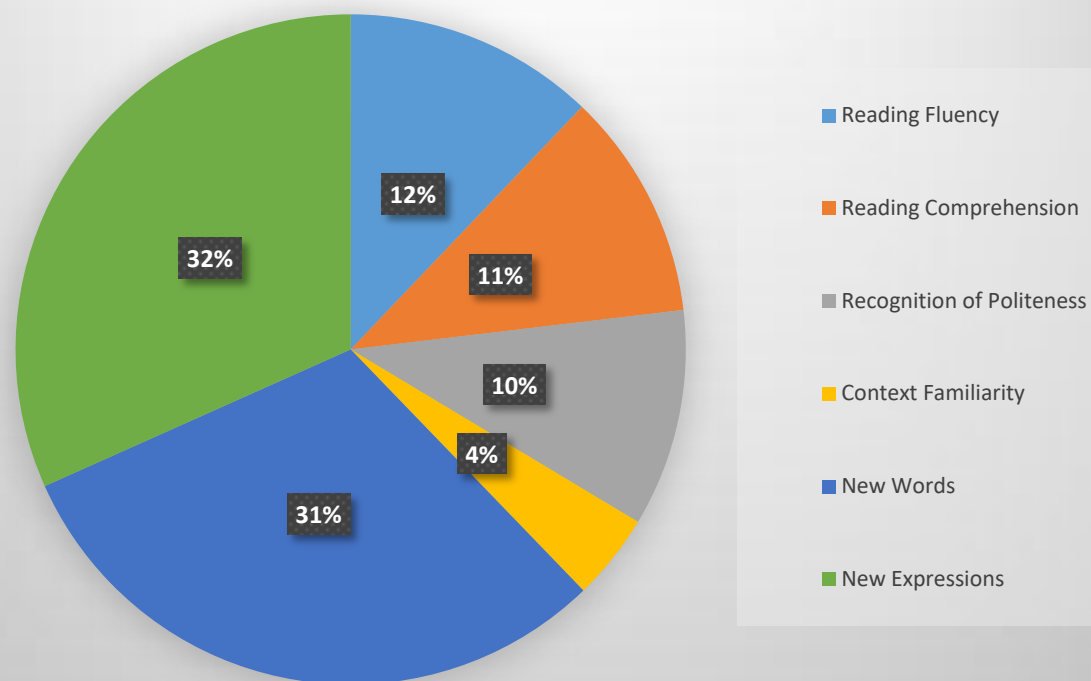


Table 3: Results of Reading the Native Speaker Version Passage for the seven schools

Variables Assessed	Reading Fluency	Reading Comprehension	Recognition of Politeness	Context Familiarity	New Words	New Expressions
(%)						
1	24.10	20.7	20.39	10	70.38	68.3
2	25.60	19.40	23.6	9	65.8	67.50
3	27.1	27.50	22.6	8.17	67.30	71.37
4	30.98	23.7	25.10	7.90	72.50	70.37
5	26.13	21.9	30.00	11.10	59.95	60.6
6	26.3	29.51	20.1	8.40	66.40	62.60
7	25.10	20.1	20.70	9.21	70.00	68.40
Average	26.13	23.7	22.6	9	65.8	68.3

figure 2 : Result of Reading the English-culture-based Passage



Analysis

JMP Pro 15.0.0 software was used as the instrument for the statistical analysis in the study where parameter of frequency counts and percentage were determined. 203 subjects' scores on the six variables were analysed using this parameter. The total scores of the students on each of the six variables in each school were summed up as shown in tables 2&3 above. However, the total scores of each variable from the seven schools were put together and the percentage of the students'/subjects' scores were computed. Table 2 presents the results of reading the translated Hausa passage for the seven schools and table 3 presents the results of reading the native speaker version passage for the seven schools. After adding the students' scores in each school on each variable, the percentages were summed up and divided by the number of schools where the average of each variable was found. The averages of the six variables were presented on figure 1&2 in percentage.

Findings

The subjects' reading of the two passages was assessed based on reading fluency, reading comprehension, recognition of politeness and mood, context familiarity, new words and expressions. As can be seen from figure 1 above, reading fluency in the Hausa-culture-based passage has 17% of the total score during the assessment of the students' reading. Reading comprehension carries 19%, recognition of politeness takes 16%, context familiarity 17%, new words in the passage carries 14% and new expressions occupies 17%. This indicates that the first passage reading was fluent; it flowed smoothly as students did not have difficulty pronouncing words and their reading speed was high. The subjects comprehended the message in the passage.

They were able to answer most of the comprehension questions after reading the passage. They understood the politeness as well as the mood of the writer very well. The subjects' familiarity with the context enhanced their comprehension of the passage. They came across only a few new words and expressions during the reading.

As can be seen from figure 2, reading fluency in the English-culture-based passage carries only 12% of the total score during the assessment of the students' reading. Reading comprehension has 11% of the total score, recognition of politeness gets 10%, context familiarity has the least score of 4%, new words takes 31% and new expressions occupies the largest share of 32%. This indicates that during the reading of the second passage, the subjects were less fluent. The flow of the reading was rough and they got difficulty pronouncing some words in the passage. Their comprehension of the message was poor. After the reading, they were unable to answer most of the comprehension questions. They hardly understood the difference between polite and impolite expressions in the passage. Their unfamiliarity with the context hampered their understanding. The pervasiveness of unknown words and expressions in the passage also contributed to their poor understanding.

Discussion/Conclusion

As the finding of the study shows, teaching English as second language is dominated by the introduction of language rules and comprehension texts on local sociocultural issues. This is supported by the students' poor performance due to the unfamiliarity the students showed of the context in reading the second passage. The inability of the students to read the second passage fluently and the way they struggled with new words and new expressions (that hampered the comprehension) prove that they have not been interacting with the English culture. It is however a clear indication that second language learners lack exposure to the target culture.

The poor performance of the learners in reading the passage on English culture and the excellent performance during reading the Hausa culture based passage, also indicate that the National curricula and schemes have enough provisions on the rules governing the structure of English language but do not have provision for the English culture and tradition which form the background to the usage of the language. The finding however indicates that the little attention is given to the sociocultural aspect of teaching English as second language and it is dominated by the second language learners' native culture and traditions. This limits the L2 learners' proficiency in the language usage. Lack of exposure to the English culture thus makes it difficult for second language learners to comprehend some ideas, thoughts, experiences or attitudes especially when expressed by a native speaker. Second language learners find it easy to comprehend the same phenomena expressed in the L2 version of the use of the language. This therefore supports the relativist argument that the way people view the world is determined wholly or partly by the structure of their native language.

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