

Appropriate Multicultural Language Teaching-Learning Materials for Sustainable Development: An Analysis of Longman's "Nigeria Primary English"

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Abstract

An individual is not properly educated if his/her education removes him/her from his/her native culture. He/she becomes a social misfit, someone unable to participate effectively in the development of his/her society. In order to avoid such a waste, governments and relevant experts, especially applied linguists and materials developers, subject the books used in schools to intense criteria before adopting them. One of such criteria is how much the books meet the diverse cultural and environmental needs of the people. However available literature does not suggest that all the materials often implemented in schools have multicultural relevance, particularly in a pluralistic ESL context like Nigeria. Thus, this paper set out to discuss the need to use appropriate materials in the teaching-learning of English in an emergent multicultural setting. An empirical basis was attempted for the paper by obtaining data from Longman's "Nigeria Primary English", a series widely used in Nigeria: the researcher used a checklist to obtain data from the series and subject them to frequency count after which the bar charts were developed, based on the formulated research questions in order to determine the relevance of the series in a country seeking rapid development through balanced Education. It was found that the series involved appreciable use of multicultural items and issues, although not many of them have intercontinental implication. This means that children that are nationals of non-African countries may not be able to benefit fully if restricted to the texts books under study. Based on the findings from the study, it was recommended that authors of basal materials, textbook designers, government, teachers, learners, and parents should work together to produce textbooks with greater multicultural relevance, which would ensure an education that is more international.

Key Words: Multicultural; Materials; Language Teaching-Learning; Sustainable Development; Primary English

Theoretical Background

The primary school (the crèche, and nursery inclusive, here) plays fundamental role in the molding of an individual. It is the first notable place for his/her intellectual advancement outside of the home. The overriding aim at the primary level of education, and at the higher levels, is the production of the total person, one that can live and not only let others live, but join them in improving the society they have all inherited. Precisely primary education should lead to citizens rounded enough to join sustainable development initiatives.

Incidentally, much of what goes into the curricula of primary (and secondary) schools in Nigeria, as in many other countries, including Britain, Canada, and the USA according to Richards' (2003) report, is determined for the pupils.

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The language curriculum goes beyond the needs identification, and selection, organization and evaluation of content; it includes the methods and materials being employed by the teacher to implement the curriculum (Maduekwe, 2007; Richards, 2003, Nunan, 1992).

The materials development dimension to language teaching-learning becomes crucial when it is realized that classroom activities, particularly at the elementary level, need considerable support in order for them to thrive. The textbook in particular helps the work of the teacher, learner and parents in many ways. According to Mares (2003), relevant textbooks give direction to teaching – learning, thereby paving way for efficient knowledge – sharing. Other textual materials that may be used include the newspapers, magazines, journals, diaries, directives, essays, and manuals, depending on learners interest, learner age and teacher competence.

Much as the textual materials used in language teaching-learning are important, they may not be effective if they do not reflect the cultural context of use. Culture defines man's relationship with his fellow men. Olajide (2011), following Akonga (2003), considered culture as a major impetus to man in his communicative activities. Whatever idea that has no appeal to his cultural experience he may not find easy to imbibe. Malinowski (1996) regarded culture as an instrument for intellectual and socio-economic empowerment. He argued that a strongest way to understand and promote man's behavior is to gain insight from his culture. All these views about culture – a people's ways of life, including their shared beliefs, songs, dance, festival, burial rites, relationship among themselves and with their past and so on - tend to indicate that a society that abandons appropriate cultural education may not be able to achieve a balanced world view and attain genuine growth and development.

The relationship between culture and language teaching – learning is further emphasized by Maduekwe (2007) who suggested that culture actually determines the expression that language gives; the former characterizes human experiences in terms of accumulated values, norms and intellectual attainments, while the latter attempts to depict such experiences. The different human endeavours take place in specific contexts, and it is the contexts that result in language varieties which in turn come as the different occupations. Hence, Maduekwe is in favour of the English-as-a-Second-Language teacher making effective use of the cultural elements. In this direction, Olajide (2010; 2013^b) advocated the use of such cultural resources as folktales and proverbs in ESL teaching.

The teacher should however bear in mind that the pedagogic relationship between language and culture is not as straight-forward as it would seem: one language may derive from a combination of cultural backgrounds, while an array of languages may filter into a dominant culture. Insights from the cross-cultural proclivity of language probably prompted Brown (1986) and later Maduekwe (2007) to counsel the ESL teacher to be sensitive to learner acculturation needs. Both scholars identified two broad categories of acculturation to include learning the second language in its native context (where it is actually the mother tongue of the majority, such as when a Nigerian or Ghanaian learns English in Britain), and learning the language in a situation that the learner has a different mother tongue (such as is the case with an Ashanti learning English in Kumasi, or a Yoruba learning English in Ibadan). Either of the acculturation categories has pedagogic implication: the teacher must be sensitive to learner predisposition, particularly in the latter category.

The relationship between language and culture also present stereotypical and attitudinal dimensions, such that the native speakers of particular languages have come to be identified with certain traits. Unless the link between language and culture is properly managed, the vital issue of diversity raised by Yoloye (2013) would be left hanging in the ESL classroom. According to him, through the use of “transformative ... teaching materials”, learning may be made much more permanent and development oriented (p.17). Yoloye identified race and colour, cognition, psychomotor, socioeconomic background, religion and gender differences as conditions that classroom teaching-learning should address effectively.

By consistently anticipating and addressing psycho-social differences, ESL materials designers and developers would make the teacher's task of closing any multicultural gap easy in his classroom.

Second language learning places a cross-cultural thrust on the education system/ level concerned. Learners in such a pluralistic context as the British West Africa face the extra difficulty of finding an interface between their native culture and the culture behind the standard of English that they desire (and are required!) to master. The difficulty often aggravates to a shock that could be managed only by the adept teacher. In this regard, Maduekwe (2007) counselled, "The teacher should relate language to culture, if a co-ordinate system is to result from the learner's efforts' (p.77).

Teaching-learning materials that appeal to different cultural backgrounds would help the ESL teacher greatly, because such materials have the tendency to manage stereotyping rewardingly among the learners and the larger society. Stereotyping exists almost everywhere. For example, Brown (1986) reported that Americans sometimes think of the Japanese as being unfriendly because of the latter's cultural norms of respect and politeness. However, careful accumulation and exchange of stereotype images among the different peoples of the world through textual designs can help them to understand one another and douse the angsts arising from cultural deficits or historical bitterness.

English language teachers should ensure that recommended textbooks contain appropriately scanned local and international environments. The higher the level a material is meant for, the more local and international issues it should present. No country can stand alone. Within the classroom, learners with great differing cultural backgrounds may be found. Humanity would not be helped if materials without multicultural appeals are used in such a classroom regularly. The need for language learning materials to be multi-culturally relevant has been illustrated by Richards (2003) who suggested that in designing and planning courses in Cantonese for non-Chinese residents of Hong Kong, their views on textbook for learning Cantonese' be sought (p.60).

In this direction, Ho (1994) canvassed that material designs be paid attention to as one of the vital steps in the development of a worthwhile language curriculum. He reiterated that haphazardly prepared materials, especially the textbooks, would not lead to improved language skills. Also, Olajide (2013^a:67) called for greater teacher sensitivity to the defining characteristics of a mixed (multicultural) class, which include:

- different career aspirations;
- nurturing of dissimilar expectations;
- reflecting differing socioeconomic backgrounds;
- maintaining peculiar worldviews;
- being adventurous and idealistic (especially at the primary and secondary school level); and consciousness of rights.

From the foregoing, it may be inferred that what makes communicative competence is just not easy to discuss. It is a combination of linguistic experience and culture-blending. Although, Yoloye (2013) admonished the teacher to pay attention to the psychomotor, cognitive and affective aspects of learning, Stern (1983) had argued that linguistic, cognitive and affective meanings alone cannot guarantee communicative competence unless language teaching promotes sociocultural meanings. Olajide's (2010) view that without an appropriate cultural content, an education may not lead to growth with development seems to be in line with Stern's. Olajide observed that how much science and technology a people attain is partly a function of the cultural content of their education.

Good textbooks help the teacher and learners to follow the progress that they are making. Where authentic material, such as advocated by McDonough and Shaw (1993) are not available, the efficient language teacher can attain huge progress relying on basal textbooks. Mukundau and Ahour (2010) asserted that the quality of the textbook determines the success of English Language Teaching (ELT) practices. Bad textbooks constitute great danger to education and national development. The situation has been worsened by authors and designers of textbooks who hardly follow the standard criteria of relevance, usability and durability such as espoused by scholars (Litz, 2005; Olajide, 2003, 2011; Dubin & Olshtain, 1994). There are also problems posed by manipulative marketers and corrupt government officials who promote irrelevant textbooks. The implication is that teachers of English should use their expertise to advise parents and government on how to make the wisest choices among the materials dangerously competing for use.

Stressing the importance of commercial textbook, Dubin and Olshtain (1994) observed that where official syllabus and curriculum are not available, the language designer in the Second context could infer curricular content for English from such books. Dubin and Olshtain specifically recommended that the designer should, among other things, find out if the user teacher 'makes any cultural adaptation with the textbook by changing proper names, by changing place names, by altering culture bound topics, for example, using local or national holidays, foods, sport, and so on, in place of or altogether with those in the textbooks' (p.33)

Statement of the Problem

Available literature has accorded the textbook considerable importance in the language teaching-learning process. It has also not suggested that there has been an acute shortage of pedagogic textbooks across the world. However, the literature has indicated that not all the available textbooks are relevant. For example, in Nigeria, one of the objectives of education is to produce learners who would be able to use language creatively to reflect cultural awareness and culture tolerance (FRN, 2007). However, research findings (Olajide, 20003;2011) do not show that the textbooks used at different levels of learning sufficiently cater for the multicultural challenges that today's ESL classroom may pose.

While scholars like Dubin and Olshtain (1994), Brown (1986) Litz (2005) and Maduekwe (2007) are agreed that the second language learning materials should promote acculturation, and Olajide (2010) specifically held that correct cultural orientation using such resources as folktales could lead to faster national development and growth, the existing literature offers no conclusive idea as to whether the primary school English textbooks used in Nigeria present balanced multicultural education which Yoloye (2013) and Olajide (2013^b) identified as a precondition for national growth and development.. Whereas the world is fast becoming an integrated whole, with education being expected to serve as a vibrant culture mixer, it is not certain if the textbooks used in the country's primary schools have been designed and prepared to permit cultural interflow in the language classrooms. Precisely, a question yet to be answered in the literature is whether the Longmans "Nigeria Primary English", very popular materials in the country, adequately supports multicultural learning. The question constitutes the gap that the present study sought to fill.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to find out if the Longman Nigeria Primary English Series give adequate attention to cultural issues that have local and international applicability. Specifically, the study attempted to:

1. Determine if the textbooks contain multicultural elements.
2. Identify the multicultural items employed in each of the six books.
3. Determine if all of the textbooks equally involve local multicultural items.

4. Find out which of the textbooks contain multicultural items with trans-national relevance.
5. Identify which local multicultural elements are reflected within and across the texts.
6. Determine the frequency of international multicultural items within and across the texts.

Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the following questions which had been based on the theoretical background provided.

1. What is the representation of Local Multicultural experiences within Book?
2. What is the representation of Local Multicultural experiences across Books?
3. What is the representation of each category of International Multicultural experiences within Book?
4. What is the representation of each category of International Multicultural experiences across Books?

Significance of the Study

Findings from the results of this study should be useful to the teacher, learner, textbook writers and designers, and publishers. Also, policy makers, especially those charged with the management and supervision of primary education, would benefit considerably from the findings. Other researchers in the area of language teaching and applied linguistics, particularly those interested in curriculum planning and development, syllabus design and materials development should gain further insights into their practices from the findings of the study.

Methodology

/N	MULTI-CULTURAL ELEMENTS	BOOK1	BOOK2	BOOK3	BOOK4	BOOK5	BOOK6
.	Family Living	24	30	18	20	19	5
.	Community relation	6	3	2	2	1	0
	Career	11	13	17	9	18	13
.	Religion	0	1	0	1	0	0
.	Festival	0	2	2	4	4	1
.	Folklore	3	2	2	1	0	0
.	Dance/Music	22	4	2	2	4	2
.	Marriage	1	1	2	0	1	0
.	Burial/Death	3	1	0	0	0	0
0.	Local Trade	9	1	2	1	0	0
1.	Craft	6	1	1	0	0	0
2.	Taboo	2	1	1	0	1	1
3.	Totems	2	5	1	1	2	3
4.	Dressing	5	2	2	1	0	0
5.	Housing	5	1	1	3	1	0
6.	National Heritage	0	0	0	1	1	6
7.	Respect for elders	3	3	6	9	4	7
8.	Naming	17	30	23	17	16	16
9.	Local transportation system	6	13	8	12	1	5
0.	Interpersonal communication skills	16	11	22	15	11	7

The study involved a critical analysis of the contents of the textbooks – the Longman Nigeria Primary School English for Lower Basics One to Three, and Middle Basics One to Three, representing the Primary Classes One to Six - investigated in this study.

Each textbook was viewed as a multicultural universe by the researcher who relied on a researcher-designed well-critiqued checklist to identify, categorize and analyze the different elements that the textbook contained. The researcher and ten (10) primary school teachers identified and categorized the multicultural items. After obtaining the data, graphical presentations of the frequencies of the multicultural elements were made using the bar charts. Frequency count and the bar charts were used to answer the research questions. The results of the study are presented below.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Local Multicultural Elements in Textbooks

S/N	MULTI-CULTURAL ELEMENTS	BOOK1	BOOK2	BOOK3	BOOK4	BOOK5	BOOK6
1.	Family Living	24	30	18	20	19	5
2.	Community relation	6	3	2	2	1	0
3.	Career	11	13	17	9	18	13
4.	Religion	0	1	0	1	0	0
5.	Festival	0	2	2	4	4	1
6.	Folklore	3	2	2	1	0	0
7.	Dance/Music	22	4	2	2	4	2
8.	Marriage	1	1	2	0	1	0
9.	Burial/Death	3	1	0	0	0	0
10.	Local Trade	9	1	2	1	0	0
11.	Craft	6	1	1	0	0	0
12.	Taboo	2	1	1	0	1	1
13.	Totems	2	5	1	1	2	3
14.	Dressing	5	2	2	1	0	0
15.	Housing	5	1	1	3	1	0
16.	National Heritage	0	0	0	1	1	6
17.	Respect for elders	3	3	6	9	4	7
18.	Naming	17	30	23	17	16	16
19.	Local transportation system	6	13	8	12	12	5
20.	Interpersonal communication skills	16	11	22	15	11	7
S/N	MULTI-CULTURAL ELEMENTS	BOOK1	BOOK2	BOOK3	BOOK4	BOOK5	BOOK6
1.	Family Living	24	30	18	20	19	5
2.	Community relation	6	3	2	2	1	0
3.	Career	11	13	17	9	18	13
4.	Religion	0	1	0	1	0	0
5.	Festival	0	2	2	4	4	1
6.	Folklore	3	2	2	1	0	0
7.	Dance/Music	22	4	2	2	4	2
8.	Marriage	1	1	2	0	1	0
9.	Burial/Death	3	1	0	0	0	0
10.	Local Trade	9	1	2	1	0	0
11.	Craft	6	1	1	0	0	0
12.	Taboo	2	1	1	0	1	1
13.	Totems	2	5	1	1	2	3
14.	Dressing	5	2	2	1	0	0
15.	Housing	5	1	1	3	1	0
16.	National Heritage	0	0	0	1	1	6
17.	Respect for elders	3	3	6	9	4	7
18.	Naming	17	30	23	17	16	16
19.	Local transportation system	6	13	8	12	12	5

Table 1 is a summary of the distribution of the multicultural items with strictly local reference identified category-by-category in all the Books. From the findings, every multicultural category had items relevant to it, although item-quantities varied across the categories. There were categories that also had no experiences provided to represent them at all in some of the Books.

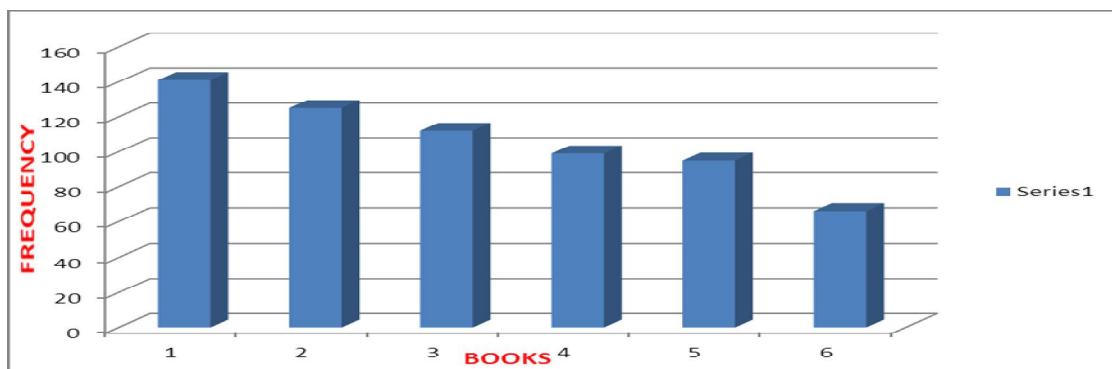
Table 2: Frequency Distribution of International Multicultural Elements in Textbooks

/N	MULTI-CULTURAL ELEMENTS	BOOK1	BOOK2	BOOK3	BOOK4	BOOK5	BOOK6
.	Environment	12	2	2	18	15	12
.	Sport	15	15	4	7	8	10
.	Science	8	0	3	3	4	4
.	ICT	12	3	3	4	5	3
.	Governance	1	3	10	0	0	1
.	International communication	7	7	16	17	9	6
.	Human rights	3	2	3	7	0	0
.	Gender	63	12	6	6	5	0
.	Naming	11	7	4	2	2	1
0.	Foods	17	15	3	4	1	0
1.	Animals	38	21	3	6	10	11
2.	Trade	6	9	4	4	1	0

The presentation inference that may be drawn from Table 2 is hardly different from that from Table 1. That is, the Books presented multicultural experiences with international applicability, although the pattern of distribution of the experiences varied within and across the different Books.

Research Question 1: What is the representation of local Multicultural experiences within Book?

Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Local Multicultural Experiences within Books.



From Figure 1 which is based on Research Question 1, it may be inferred that the 20 main, local Multicultural categories identified by the researcher featured in every Book. The degree of emphasis however varied. The highest level of representation was observed in Book I, while the lowest presence was recorded in Book 6. It was also found that the higher the Book, the lower the level of presentation of experiences that are relevant to a particular Multicultural category. This implies that the higher the class of the pupil placed on the series under investigation, the lower the possibility that he or she will encounter fairly familiar cultural experiences.

Research Question 2: What is the representation of local Multicultural experiences across Books?

Figure 2: Graphical Representation of International Multicultural Experiences within Books.

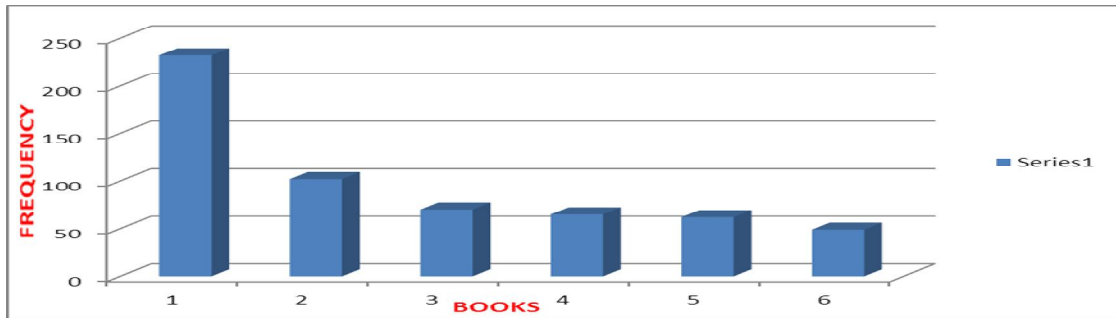
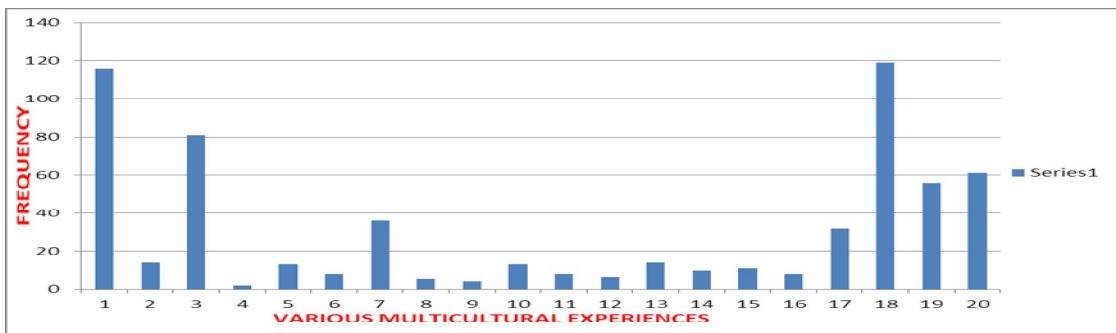


Figure 2 takes root from Research Question 2 that seeks information with respect to the representation of International Multicultural experiences within the Books. It was found that every Book had relevant International Multicultural experience, the highest occurring in Book 1, and the lowest in Book 6. Generally, there was less than 50% of exposure to such experiences in all the Books except, except in Book 1, unlike with the within-the-book scenario. This revealed that the further a pupil moves on each Book, the lower the chances that he or she encounter ideas that would help him or her to imagine other cultures.

Research Question 3: What is the representation of each category of International Multicultural experiences within Book?

Figure 3: Graphical Representation of Each Local Multicultural Experience across Books.



Research Question 3: “What is the representation of each category of local Multicultural experiences across Books?” was being addressed in Figure 3. Findings revealed that item 18 in the summary of multicultural experiences – naming - had the most frequent representation across Books. This means that all the Books would give pupils ample opportunity to encounter familiar names (characters) while learning to speak, listen, read or write. Conversely, they would gravely lack known spiritual support from all the texts in trying to learn the language skills.

Research Question 4: What is the representation of each category of International Multicultural experiences across Books?

Figure 4: Graphical Representation of Each International Multicultural Experience across Books.

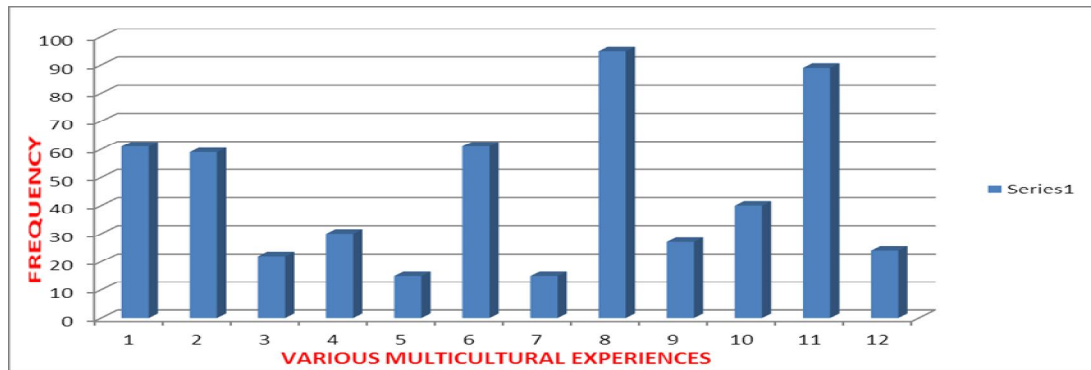


Figure 4 indicates that while item 8 – gender- had the highest representation of about 90% on the International Multicultural axis, two items - 5 (Governance) and 7 (Human rights)- were the least represented. This gives the impression that while there was a very heavy use of gender-related, internationally relevant ideas across the Books, there was very little attention to such ideas in relation to the development of civic and political matters.

Summary of Findings

The findings from this study may be summarized as follows.

1. Although each Book contained multicultural experiences that could sensitize the learners to their immediate cultural environment, such materials decreased progressively.
2. All the Books also presented multicultural experiences of international dimensions, even though in differing degrees.
3. The Books gave far more attention to the use of local than international names, and they nearly gravely ignored the issue of worship which could promote the spiritual development of learner-users.
4. While the Books seemed balanced as regards the presentation of international multicultural experiences that are relevant to gender development, they all nearly ignored the critical issues of governance and human rights.

Discussion and Conclusions

The use of multicultural experiences in each of the textbooks investigated is in line with recommendations by scholar (Maduekwe, 2007; Richards, 2003; Ho, 1994). The use of such materials would give pupils of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds the opportunity to learn language well. Also, the textbooks could foster the right attitude to all peoples. The world needs tolerant and reflective citizens now more than ever before. Such citizens are required for the the germane tasks of nation building and sustainable economies. Hence, it would seem that, to an extent, the Longman Nigeria Primary English series qualifies as acculturating and access-increase efforts.

However, Olajide (2013a), Mares (2003) and Ho's (1994) suggestion that language textbooks should give equal acculturating opportunity to learners seems not to have been applicable in the series under investigation, here: here and there, within and across the textbooks, it would seem the designers provided multicultural elements unequally. By that, areas like science, technology, ICT, democracy and human rights that are fundamental to sustainable development are less represented.

If all the textbooks used in a Second context are like these, the many of the primary school learners involved may mature into adults not rounded enough to use the English Language creatively enough across contexts.

It would then be fairly dangerous for teachers using such textbooks to attempt to benefit from Dubin and Olshtain's (1994) suggestions that ELT teachers could motivate syllabus from materials in emergency situations.

The finding from the results of this investigation that the textbooks hardly promoted the issue of spiritual development may not be good enough, even though it may be incorrect to present Religion and Worship as the only means of gaining rewarding spirituality (Olajide, 2006). A people not spiritual could not fully accommodate disadvantaged others, whereas the world needs the accommodating the spirit in order to enjoy evenly spread and sustainable development which Yoloye (2013) believed education should help to create.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the results of this study, the following are recommended.

- Teachers using the textbooks here and other materials relevant to ESL should strengthen the multicultural contents of their lessons and classroom activities through improvisation. They should sensitize learners and their parents for the need for language education to use trans-border experiences.
- Curriculum developers for English Language at the Primary (UBE) level should give increasing prominence to multicultural content.
- Policy makers should seek the opinions of ELT experts rather than simply yield to pressure from commercial publishers in recommending materials,
- Textbook designers and publishers of materials for the ESL context should ensure that such materials present enough of graded and balanced multicultural content. In this connection, the authors of the Longman series involved in this study may review the multicultural content, to ensure more encompassing and balanced representation
- The present study is far from being conclusive. For example its methodology could be overhauled to bring in the pupils and more experts, especially applied linguists, philosophers and sociologists, in the determination of multicultural categories and what items are fittest for a given category. Also, the analytical procedure could be improved upon, particularly the statistical tools, so that more rigorous and reliable findings may be made. More textbooks within (and across) countries could be studied in order to strengthen bilateral ties.

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