

**IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
SPEAKING SKILLS OF THE NIGERIAN STUDENT PASTORS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is borne out of my keen observation of and personal interaction with Nigerian student pastors and their use of languages, particularly English Language.

For many years now, I have been privileged to teach English Language to pastors in a College of Theology in Nigeria. At independence, Nigeria agreed to continue with the use of English Language as her *Lingua Franca*, for many obvious reasons.

The language serves as a unifying factor among more than three hundred and fifty different language groups that make up the new republic. In addition, because of its international significance, English Language was seen as being capable of giving Nigeria acceptability into the communities of the United Nations as well as the Commonwealth.

Hence, it was no wonder that English language became the language of the civil service, politics and of course a common national language often used in interdenominational and inter-ethnic congregations.

It is therefore important for any native pastor to master the skills of both written and spoken English to enable him/her reach other fellow Christians who are not from his/her own language tribe.

It is obvious that some pastors in training will sooner or late find themselves in the midst of multi-ethnic congregations. At such a time English Language will come handy.

But alas! My experience and observations have convinced me beyond any reasonable doubt that a lot of students in theological colleges including some full time pastors in their different churches have not gotten a full grip of both the writing and speaking skills of English Language.

Therefore, in a bid to identify the English Language speaking skills of pastors which is the major forms of this thesis, it is necessary to consider among others the following factors:

- i. Identification of the student pastors background.
- ii. Identification of their different educational backgrounds
- iii. Sorting the different materials as they affect or influence the individuals.
- iv. Problems from the home primary school and secondary schools will also be identified.

The resultant compilation of the speaking skills is finally analysed and commented upon with a view for improvement. The government [both state and federal] including the agencies of education, like the home, school and of course plus the

students and teachers have contributory factors towards the development of the speaking skills.

Conclusively, recommendations are made towards the development and mastery of the speaking skills of the English Language. These recommendations are arrived at as a result of my findings through, interviews, questionnaire, reading tests, oral comprehensions, listening to recorded sermon on tapes, impromptu sermons for student pastors among other modus-operandi.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Along with the recommendations given for the developing of the primary schools and secondary schools English Language speaking skill, I want to make the following proposals for the seminary students:

1. Improved entry point or academic requirement. Presently a student must have a credit in English Language before seeking admission into the university for any professional training. So also let anyone who wants to seek admission into a Seminary or a College of Theology struggle to pass English Language at credit level, before he could be offered admission into the seminary.
2. Anybody seeking admission into a seminary must have had a training beyond the school certificate level or he be asked to spend the first year in the school studying English Language speaking skills.
3. Cut-off point for English in entrance examination should be increased such that understanding of English Language will really matter before somebody would be qualified for admission. This will give a good beginning for the teacher[s] who would prepare them for the task of pastoring.
4. Age and maturity should be considered before admissions. My proposal is that to be offered admission into the [university/seminary], one should be married and would have been living with a wife for at least 3 years. At this stage, he knows what it means to be married, he knows

the challenges of marriage, he can empathise what the church members are undergoing and he would be able to counsel them right. Thus, during oral interview, maturity in speech should also be considered before offering admission.

5. Level of exposure in the secular world should also be considered. Preferably, somebody to be offered admission in the seminary should have worked for about 2 to 3 years in a secular office, which could have exposed him to the happenings in the world, and how people of the world handle issues when they happened.
6. A good pass in proficiency test is also proposed to be one of the strong points for graduating from the seminary.
7. I propose further research into how interferences in speaking skills could be overcome.

CONCLUSION

Although, there has been some problems that handicapped the speaking skills of English Language, especially for Nigerian student pastors, as necessary as the skills are for their ministries. Nevertheless, the problems are not insurmountable. Increased awareness on the part of the

pastors for the need for acquiring these skills and the support of the necessary bodies and organs can aid the pastors even as there begin to be changes right from the roots – primary and secondary schools as well as homes. Thus, shall our pastors be appreciated on the field.