Factors Affecting the Application of the Text Based Integrated Approach in the Teaching of English in Zambia

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Abstract

English language is a compulsory subject in Zambia from Grades Five to Grade Twelve. Therefore, it is vital that learners are equipped with the necessary skills to improve their communicative competence. The purpose of this study was to establish the factors affecting the application of the Text Based Integrated Approach which is one of the recommended methods to teach English. The study employed a qualitative design and used face to face interviews as a data collection technique. A sample of 54 respondents comprising 45 qualified teachers of English language and nine Heads of Departments participated in the study. The data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed a number of factors such as lack of teaching materials, poor learners' foundation in English language, low reading levels and lack of pupils' self-motivation to learn. Arising from the findings, the study recommends reformation of teacher education programmes and CPDs in order to build the capacity of teachers in the application of the Text Based Integrated Approach.

Introduction

The Text-based Integrated Approach was formed out of Halliday's (1978) theory of language as Social semiotic theory which looks at language as a resource for meaning making. The approach was so called as it develops communicative competence in learners through mastering different types of texts. The Text-based Integrated Approach means that teaching should focus on all the four language skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening). All activities are designed with reference to a particular text. Arimbawa (2012) emphasises that the Text-based Integrated Approach is based on the notion that learning to use English is improved when teachers introduce learners to complete spoken and written texts within an appropriate situation. This entails that the Text-based Integrated Approach plays an important role in ensuring that learners' communicative competence is improved through the handling, manipulation and exploration of texts.

Text based integrated approach like any other approach has its own features. According to Mickan (2011), the following are some of the features which defines the approach :

- Teaching is characterised by natural language use. This implies teaching of language should be conducted where there is purposeful use of language. It also entails that the unnatural use of language such as rote learning should be avoided.

- Teachers choose texts relevant to the learners' purposes. The text chosen must also be of interest to learners. Learners learn best when they are taught what is applicable in their daily lives. If learners are not taught what happens in their

daily lives, they may have problems in undestanding the concepts being taught.

- Making sense of texts from the beginning. Learners' familiarity with certain texts, their purposes and contexts of use positions them to make meanings from texts in a target language.

- There is use of language for real purposes in lessons. Texts enable lessons for authentic communication.

- Texts must be tailored to class communities. The teaching objectives must correspond to the function and purpose of the speech community. Learners derive interest from learning what happens in their communities. This allows them to relate what occurs in their community to the classroom situation. The prior experience of what happens in their society prepares them to work with texts.

- Language awareness: analysis of the lexico-grammar of texts (function of grammar and vocabulary together in texts). The approach to teaching grammar is through the analysis of texts. Texts are functional in different contexts for realization of different purposes. Learners learn effectively when both grammar and vocabulary are taught simultaneously.

- Extensive reading and reading clubs. Extensive reading is a practical strategy for text based instruction. Learners access a variety of books, magazines, or selected databases and websites for selection of reading materials. The learners need to be exposed to different materials for effective learning to occur.

- Learner autonomy. Learners have opportunities to select texts out of interest and to read them at leisure for pleasure or information. In cases where learners are not given chance to choose texts which may interest them, they may not focus their attention on what is being taught.

- Integrated skills and multimodality. Text based instruction integrates spoken and written language as in natural language use. The four language skills i.e. speaking, reading, listening and writing should not be taught in isolation. Teaching should also involve the use of different modes for all learners to grasp the concepts easily.

Text-based Integrated Approach integrates all the four skills in language activities. All activities in the approach are designed with direct reference to the text. It is also cardinal to note that activities in the approach are performed in the hope of understanding the text (Hailong, 1991).

The standard procedure for a lesson on Text-based Integrated Approach is the Teaching cycle espoused by Feez and Joyce (1998). However, while the teaching cycle provides the basis how the lesson should be planned, an individual teacher will come up with a plan depending on the quality of the learners and the availability of materials. The material provided gives guidance on how the teacher should proceed with the particular lesson. Although different lessons may imply different procedures and vary in the class activities, Mohlabi-Tlaka (2016) provides the following lesson procedure when using the Text based integrated approach:

- Teacher introduces the text and new vocabulary. This is done

to draw out learners' prior knowledge. The teacher explains various points of vocabulary to let the learners familiarise themselves with the topic. The explanation on vocabulary is also meant to raise the learners' interest in the topic.

- Teacher to read a text modelling a reading strategy e.g. predicting, noticing story structure, reading different types of text, reading diagrams and graphs. The teacher develops the topic by going through the text. Both the teacher and the learners should analyse the text to understand its linguistic features.

- Teacher to read the text with the learners joining in using shared reading techniques or write a short text using shared writing techniques.The teacher and the learners work together to come up with a text similar to the model presented by the teacher.

- Once learners are confident enough, the teacher will allow them to construct texts on their own. The text constucted should be similar to the one the teacher presented in class. The lesson concludes with the teacher collecting learners' work for assessment.

- As a follow-up, the teacher should check understanding and encourage learners to respond to the text through focused oral questions.

The procedure above illustrates that the teacher has to spend adequate time to introduce the lesson. This is because for pupils to design a text, they must fully understand it so that it is easy for them when they work independently in the construction of

the text. This is also done to avoid learners' misunderstanding on the appropriate text to construct. The lesson procedure above was adopted from the teaching cycle model developed by Feez and Joyce (1998).

The successful implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach in class largely depends on the teacher (Mumba and Mkandawire, 2019). It is important for the teacher to know his roles in Text-based Integrated Approach. The knowledge of the roles will enable the teacher to prepare adequately for the lesson. The following are some of the roles of teachers in the Text-based Integrated Approach:

Teachers should teach explicitly about the structures and grammatical features of spoken and written texts (Akinyeye,2015). Teachers should have a good command of English not just a knowledge of grammar and rules (Mohlabi-Tlaka, 2016). In addition, teachers should move away from teacher-centred teaching and allow learners to participate actively. They should also link spoken and written texts to the cultural contexts of their use. It is imperative that teachers should think mostly in terms of learner practice not teacher explanations. Thus, teachers should provide learners with guidance as learners develop language skills for meaningful communication through whole texts. Moreover, teachers should find time for real communicative activities not just practice language forms and they must focus their teaching on learners' needs not just on finishing syllabus (Davies & Pearse, 2000: 2). Since teaching is a co-working with learners, pupils also have their own roles in the classroom. Thus, Mickan (2011) states that learners' role is to engage effectively in listening, speaking, reading and writing as a means of communication. Further, learners need to master the use of text types occurring most frequently in specific contexts. Finally, learners need to understand metalanguage to discuss texts. They need the words to describe different aspects of grammar, vocabulary and style

and how these function in texts.

The Zambian Senior Secondary Schol English Language Syllabus recommends that the teaching of English be done using the Text Based Integrated syllabus. However, there are limited studies on the text bsed integrated approach in Zambia implying that it is not widely used (Mumba and Mkandawire, 2019), (Mumba, 2019; Mwanza, 2016). Thus, this study was conducted in order to establsh the factors which affected the use of the Text Based Integrated approach.

Methods and Instruments

A qualitative mode of inquiry was used through face to face interviews with respondents as described by (Mkandawire, 2019). A total of 54 purposively selected respondents participated in the study. Five teachers were sampled from each of the nine schools amounting to 45 grade 11 teachers of English participating in the study. In addition, one head of department for English was sampled from each of the sampled schools.This means that nine HODs participated bringing the total number of respondents to 54. Data was collected through face to face interviews with the teachers and Heads of department to elicit data on factors affecting the implementation of the syllabus recommendation of employing the Text Based Integrated approach. Analytically, qualitatve data was analysed thematically. The collected data was sorted, categorised and coded. Verbatim were also presented as a way of presenting aunthentic data for validity and reliability of findings.

Presentation of Findings

The question regarding what challenges teachers faced in the implementation of the text based integrated approach was answered through face to face interviews. The following are the

findings on the challenges teachers faced in the implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach:

Low levels of English Proficiency

The teachers pointed out that the huge number of pupils in classes had low levels of English proficiency. They pointed out that most of the learners were unable to comprehend texts in the text books provided at senior level. They argued that most Grade ten pupils fail to comprehend Grade six work. Further, they postulated that learners were not able to relate information they read about in the text. As a result of their inability to read and write, most learners take a lot of time in understanding vocabulary making it impossible for the teacher to get to the next topic which delays progression of the faster learners. The following responses prove the above claim:

RT19 - *Learners who are unable to read and write makes me go back and teach them how to read before giving them any form of work. This is time consuming.*

RT23 - *Lesson delayed because of lack of communication skills. Most pupils are unable to communicate in English. They are also unable to write in English.*

RT47 - *It is difficult for those who don't know how to read. Some pupils may not follow.*

The problems teachers faced are common in most government schools. Most learners who come to secondary schools come with little or no skills in both reading and writing. Low levels of English proficiency is a challenge to teachers as they are forced to

delay progress of other learners.

Big Class sizes

The other challenge teachers pointed out was the large number of pupils in classes due to over-enrolment. They stated that large classes makes it difficult for them to conduct group discussions because it becomes difficult for the teacher to divide classes as numbers still remain quite big for effective communication to take place. Some of the responses from teachers were:

RT14 - *The ratio of pupil to book is a challenge. Pupils are too many, 20 textbooks for 70 learners. Pupils are supposed to have access to books.*

RT 18 - *In government schools, it is a challenge to teach big groups. In private schools, they control numbers to avoid such challenges.*

Big class sizes is a common problem in most government schools. This is because of government policy promoting education for all. As a result of the millennium development goals which advocates for universal education for women and children, most government schools have over-enrolled thereby creating a problem for the teachers.

Learners' Poor Language background

Another challenge teachers faced in the implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach was that learners had poor background in language. They added that most pupils who have problems in reading and writing are those who were not equipped with the necessary language skills at elementary stage. Therefore,

it becomes difficult for them to understand English language at senior level. The following remarks support this claim:

RT 21 - *Teachers have to simplify for learners who cannot read and write. This makes the teacher to take a lot of time. As a teacher, you take time to make all pupils understand. You cannot rush to other areas since the pupils must understand.*

RT12 - *Learners who are unable to read and write makes me to concentrate on teaching them how to read and write. It is only after they are able to read and write that I can give them any form of text.*

The above response is cardinal in that teachers at elementary levels need to do their best so that learners learn the basic skills that will enable them to carry out tasks with ease. It becomes quite impossible to teacher learners difficult texts in English if they do not have a solid foundation.

Mother tongue Interference

Mother tongue interference was also noted by the teachers as another challenge which learners grapple with. They added that the use of mother tongue inhibits the learners' use of English. They pointed out that most learners lacked the basics of language such as pronunciation, reading habits that they are supposed to learn at primary school level. The learners' use of mother tongue makes learners not to understand certain themes from the outset. They also stated that language barrier is a factor which makes pupils unable to cope with texts. As the following responses show;

RT45 - *Learners use too much local language to know English. Learners cannot research and identify difficult words in English.*

> ***RT20 -***   *Certain texts are quite foreign. More local texts need to be used. Learners answer in vernacular even if you put a classroom policy for all learners to speak English.*

Some learners do not have the positive motivation to learn English. Therefore, the only language that they are comfortable with is the local language. Therefore, teachers have to find ways of motivating them so that they can also form part of the discussions and activities which take place in class in the foreign language.

Lack of books/Materials

The other challenge which many teachers highlighted was the lack of teaching and learning materials. They stated that the lack of books in schools prevents teachers from teaching learners literacy. They added that most pupils who cannot understand concepts in English is because of lack of exposure to learning materials in English. Many teachers stated that the ratio of books to the number of learners is too low for successful learning to occur. The books which are available were deemed to be below par but those which were helpful were not available. The following responses support this claim:

> ***RT22 -***   *Some of the books are not available. You keep on using the same book because others are not available. Pupils are not exposed to different contexts when you only use a single book. You need a variety of selection to instil interest in pupils.*

> ***RT34 -***   *There are never enough text books to cater for all pupils. Teachers just talk because of inadequate books. Learners cannot concentrate.*

> ***RT31 -***   *Books are not enough to cater for all learners. In certain instances, a teacher may have a single text or not at all. There are inadequate finances to procure texts for all pupils.*

It is evident from the above responses that most schools do not have enough learning materials. In certain instances schools have text books which do not meet certain standards required by the curriculum hence schools have to do more to have correct materials in schools so that learn can proceed without any hurdles.

Challenging /Selection of Texts

Teachers pointed out the choice of a right text is huge task. They explained that the different literacy (ability to read and write) levels in classrooms makes it difficult for the teacher to choose the appropriate text for the learners. Some teachers further stated that some texts are difficult for learners and hence the teachers find it difficult to select a text which can accommodate all learners. They added that there are certain texts which learners find very difficult to understand no matter how much the teacher explains. They also stated that not all texts require the use of the Text-based Integrated Approach. Some of their responses were:

RT01 - *Learners have difficult in understanding certain texts. The teacher has to simplify for them so that they are able to understand. This is the case with most slow learners.*

RT28 - *Certain texts are quite foreign. They should introduce more local texts in the curriculum. Only learners who are able to read can understand. Those who cannot fail to understand.*

As stated above, teachers find it difficult to choose suitable texts for their learners. In certain instances, they are compelled to simplify so that slow learners do not lose out in the comprehension of a given text.

Approach is Time consuming

Teachers complained that the approach was time consuming since a single text must be used in all the language components and four language skills. Further, they noted that learners are not comfortable with certain methods and tend to switch off during learning. They also explained that some pupils get carried away in certain topics forgetting the topic at hand. In most cases, teachers confirmed that they rely on fast readers during comprehension to spearhead the reading adding that pupils who are not good in science are likely not to do well in a science text. The following illustrate some of the teachers' responses;

RT43 - *The approach is time consuming. One has to spend more time teaching on the same topic. Some learners do not enjoy reading.*

RT28 - *Some learners do not like certain methods of teaching. So their minds are switched off during learning. Teacher cannot finish the syllabus in time*

The responses above clearly show that some pupils do no resonate well with certain teaching approaches. This is because they feel uncomfortable and may not have the needed concentration in class. Further certain pupils do not have the interest of reading at heart. To this effect, teachers have a huge challenge of finding the right ways of enticing such kind of learners in learning and involving them in language activities.

Lack of self-motivation

Some teachers stated that certain learners lacked the self-motivation to learn in a foreign language. They added that it only those who are self-motivated who learn willingly since some pupils detest reading. This is evident in the following responses;

RT39 - *There is lack of participation from learners. Focus is*

> *lost when learners do not participate.*

RT 21 - *Some pupils do not want to read. Only those who are self-motivated can learn.*

This means that teachers need to motivate the learners if they themselves are not able to have the interest of learning. Even so, there are certain learners who are self-motivated to learn and participate in language activities willingly. In the discussions that were conducted, most learners were able to contribute willing during the deliberations. Further, observing from the question and answer sessions held in the classrooms where pupils were able to ask pertinent questions, it was evident the pupils were motivated to learn.

No time for Remedial work

Teachers stated that since Text-based Integrated Approach is text related teaching, the thinking of pupils is limited to a particular text. Further, learners find the texts alien and reading a huge challenge. They also explained that the rigid time-table makes it difficult to do remedial work. The responses below is evident of this claim:

RT 09 - *Learners are restricted to the context in the text. They rarely think outside the context. Certain texts are quite foreign, more local texts should be used.*

RT16 - *Remedial work is there. However, the school timetable makes it difficult for remedial work as learners are too tired to concentrate.*

The teachers' views reveal that Text-based Integrated Approach makes learners to limit their thinking to the text as they cannot go beyond the text. Teachers also noted that there is time for remedial work however their time tables cannot accommodate it thereby leaving learners who need remedial work unattended.

In view of the challenges the teachers highlighted, it is clear that many teachers have challenges in executing the Text-based Integrated Approach. Prominent among these is the lack of suitable teaching materials in schools, the low literacy levels, the poor foundation of language skills at elementary level, poor ratio of pupil to book, mother tongue interference and lack of self-motivation. These hurdles are a hindrance to the teacher to execute the Text-based Integrated Approach.

Summary of Findings

The findings show that due to the lack of knowledge of the method by the teachers, lack of teaching materials, poor learners' language abilities and attitudes towards the method and reading respectively, it was impossible for them to explain and clarify how they implemented the Text-based Integrated Approach in class.

Discussion of Findings

The challenges that have been highlighted affected the education system, teachers and pupils. In the education system, it was found that most schools had large classes. The large classes made the learning and teaching ineffective. The average numbers per class ranged from 40 to 60. The large class sizes led the teacher to avoid the use of the learner centred method and resorted to old traditional teacher centred methods. This impacted negatively on the learners as they were unable to get the much needed attention from the teacher making the learning ineffective. In addition, the large classes made the teacher to avoid communcative activities in the classroom activities. Further, a number of respondents also admitted that lack of teaching and learning materials made it difficult for them to implement the Text-based Integrated Approach.

In most of the schools, lack of teaching and learning materials

was common. This findings correspond with earlier findings by different scholars (Munakaampe, 2005; Mkandawire, 2012; Chishipula, 2016; Mwanza, 2016; Garton et al, 2017; Songbatumis, 2017; Torto, 2017, Nyimbiri, 2016, Zulu, 2017)). Lack of learning and teaching materials was found to be a hindrance towards the implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach. The lack of teaching and learning materials meant the pupils were unable to interact and reconstruct texts. This hindered the actualisation of the Text-based Integrated Approach. Lack of teaching and learning materials in most learning institutions in Zambia was consistent with earlier study by (Mkandawire and Tambulukani, 2017).

Some of the participants in the study showed that they were unable to implement the curriculum as they found the Text-based Integrated Approach uncomfortable to use in their teaching. This was attributed to the stages that a teacher must follow to actualize the implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach. This finding corresponds with the earlier findings by Ansari (2012) and Milon (2016) who also discovered that the teachers were unable to employ the prescribed approaches in their teaching. This was a drawback to the learners as they were denied their right to be taught in the appropriate methods recommended by the curriculum. Teachers must implement the curriculum recommendation so that the learners are equipped with the necessary skills for efficient learning to occur.

Moreover, it was noted that there was poor language background among most learners in schools. The reasons were that children were not taught the necessary skills at early levels of their learning. This made it difficult for them to transfer the skills when they reached the senior secondary school level. Similar findings were reported by (Mukattash, 1983; Mwanza, 2016; Mohlabi-Tlaka, 2016; and Silavwe et al, 2019). The studies also revealed that children did not get the exposure to English they needed. The only time they were exposed to English was

when they went to school. At home, they were communicating in their mother tongue. The poor language background was a hindrance to implementing the Text-based Integrated Approach. This is because children did not enough time to practise reading and writing in English independently. In addition, teachers were unable to introduce texts that were a bit advanced for the learners as a result of their poor language background. Teachers at elementary level need to instil in learners the reading and writing skills in English language for them to perform better in later grades.

Further, there was low level of English proficiency amongst the learners in most schools. This deterred teachers from implementing the Text-based Integrated Approach. TBIA requires learners who are able to communicate in English for effective lesson delivery and also to facilitate learners in carrying out daily class activities. However, the low levels of English proficiency amongst most learners compelled teachers to avoid using the Text-based Integrated Approach in the teaching of English. These findings correspond with earlier studies by (Munakaampe, 2005; Akinyeye, 2015; Chishipula, 2016; Mwanza, 2016).

Learners were unable to manipulate and handle texts for successful implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach due to language interference. Similar findings were recorded by (Mukattash, 1983; Pande, 2013; Mkandawire, 2018; Torto, 2017). However, it should be borne in mind that the use of mother tongue is not a hindrance to learning English language but it is the abuse of it which makes the use of Text-based Integrated Approach difficult. Further, modern language learning supports the use of two languages as they can co-work in meaning making. Akinyeye (2015) recommends the use of a familiar language to allow learners express themselves well in the first stage of the teaching cycle. In this study, the use of vernacular in the first stage of the teaching cycle is allowed for learners to express themselves freely.

There was also a challenge in the selection of appropriate texts in the employment of the Text-based Integrated Approach. The Senior English syllabus recommends the use of texts with direct reference to suitability, level of difficulty and interest for learners in the use of the Text-based Integrated Approach (MOE,2000: iii). The inability of teachers to select appropriate texts for learners was an obstacle in the implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach. So, the problem was lack of reading abilities by learners which eventually made the selection of the text difficult. Mohlabi-Tlaka (2016) reported similar findings where the teachers were limited to the selection of the appropriate text for the successful implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach. Furthermore, the lack of motivation to learn with texts hampered the teachers' application of the Text-based Integrated Approach. The learners lacked the necessary motivation for them to learn the English language in texts for the teachers to apply TBIA appropriately. Similar findings were recorded by Munakaampe (2005) and Chishipula (2016) who discovered that learners lacked the motivation to learn with which resulted in their inability to participate in classroom activities. Further, the learners looked at the teacher as a body of knowledge and hence were discouraged to participate in the learner centred methods which TBIA highly advocates. Similarly, Mohlabi-Tlaka (2016) and Akinyeye (2015) findings recommend that the teacher should use teaching materials that motivate learners and lure them into communicating ideas through reading and speaking. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are central in the execution of the Text-based Integrated Approach.

The learners' inability to express themselves in English language and the overuse of the mother tongue limited teachers to the kind of texts to give the learners. This prevented the teachers from giving work which required learners' full participation in the English language. The chance to make up the work by giving remedial work to assist learners with reading and writing

difficulties was problematic. This is because the teachers did not have adequate time to conduct remedial work. Mohlabi-Tlaka (2016) recorded similar findings where she discovered that teachers were limited in giving challenging work to learners because learners were not well grounded in reading and writing in English in their former grades. This was found to be a hurdle in the application of the Text-based Integrated Approach.

These findings have implications for teacher education and teacher support. Firstly, it is evident that the government need to provide schools with the needed teaching materials especially to implement methods such as the Text Based Integrated Approach. It imperative that the Ministry of General Education does not only develop curriculum and recommend methods for use. They equally need to provide the means with which teachers will implement the curriculum. Thus, some instances of lack of curriculum implementation by teachers is influenced by lack of administrative and material support. Further, teacher training institutions need to ensure that student teachers are adequately trained in the recommended methods such as the Text Based Integrated Approach. There is need to ensure that peer teaching and school experience are organised and managed in such a way that there is maximum exposure the method. In this case, co-teaching with experienced teachers during school experience would help novice teachers to observe how the Text Based Integrated approach is applied by experienced teacher. The quality of teacher is a key element to curriculum implementation and success (Manchishi and Mwanza, 2018 and Kombe and Mwanza, 2019).

Conclusion

This question was answered through face to face interviews and the questionnaire. During face to face interviews, teachers explained that low literacy levels among most learners was an

obstacle in the implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach. This was because TBIA requires learners' with certain literacy levels for its successful implementation. The participants also cited large class sizes as a huge problem. They stated that a large class size prevents teachers from carrying out meaningful discussions. Further, lack of learners' solid language foundation was also cited as a huge problem in the implementation of the TBIA. They emphasised that learners whose language foundation was weak could not cope with understanding concepts in TBIA. The teachers also noted that the lack of proper learning materials was an obstacle in the employment of the TBIA. The use of mother tongue by most learners was also cited as a huge hurdle as it led to the learners' inability to understand English due to their abuse of mother tongue both at school and outside. Consequently, literacy levels of learners, class size, overuse of mother tongue language, lack of proper materials were a huge challenge in the implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach.

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