

THE EFFECTS OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF A SECOND LANGUAGE IN A MULTICULTURAL/MULTILINGUAL SOCIETY

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Multiculturalism is a sociolinguistic concept that has attracted the attention of scholars especially as it affects language acquisition and learning. Multiculturalism relates to multilingualism. This interconnectedness is born out of the act that language and culture are two sides of a coin. Language is an expression of culture and a medium of academic instructions. Everything that happens in the classroom is largely determined by language and any emphasis placed on language is an emphasis on classroom situations; this is especially important in a multicultural and multilingual society as Nigeria whose Lingua Franca and the language of education is essentially foreign, in this case English. This follows that a good mastery of English of Nigerian students is inevitably a good mastery of other school subjects. Thus, English deserves a special attention. It is on that note that this study investigates the multiculturalism/multilingualism of Nigeria with the view to establishing its effect(s), if any, on their mastery of English and the consequential effect(s) they have on the performance in the general teaching-learning processes. The study revealed the effects of a target language by a bilingual learner. It is also aimed to investigate the types, levels and extent of interference (retroactive and proactive interference) of language one (L1) and language (L2). The study reveals that an average Nigerian speaker of English is at least bilingual. With the same view, the Nigerian policy of education encourages multilingualism. The study, however, found out that this language contact situation has a far-reaching effect for the Nigerian learners of English; and their general performance in other school subjects is greatly hampered. The paper concluded that more attention should be devoted to teaching English. First of all, in-service trainings should be organized for teachers of English and adequate incentives should be given

to them. Moreover, audio-lingual materials should be provided for teachers and teaching the literature should be incorporated into teaching the language to provide an opportunity for learners to use the language in real contextual situations.