Teachers' Perceptions Of The Levels Of Difficulty Of Aspects Of English Language For O-level Students In Zimbabwe And Their Perceptions Of The Use Of Literature In English In Teaching English Language

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ABSTRACT

This paper mainly describes and presents the results of a survey carried out in 1990 to record teachers' perceptions of the most difficult aspects of English for High School students in Zimbabwe. The 59 questionnaires teachers returned indicated that students have difficulty with all aspects of English language.They have the greatest difficulty with composition and summary writing, and both written and spoken grammar. The responses also indicated that although reading comprehension is comparatively the least difficult for students, it is also quite a problem to the students. The study also sought teachers' views on the use of literature in teaching English. Although teachers agreed that literature could be used in teaching most aspects of English, they were uncertain about whether literature could be used in teaching sentence-level grammar. In light of the above findings, this paper presents recommendations on teaching various aspects of English and using literature to teach English language.

Background

Although English is not the native language of 90% of Zimbabwe's population, it is the language of most domains of national activity such as government, education, business, administration and the law courts. Thus, English is regarded as a second language in the national life of Zimbabwe.

In the schools, English appears as two curricula subjects, viz, English Language and Literature in English. English Language is characterized by the teaching of written and spoken Grammar, Composition and Summary Writing and Reading Comprehension. On the other hand, the teaching of Literature in English is characterized by the literary criticism of novels, plays and poems written in the medium of English but not based on or depicting English society. The Literature in English at issue is usually written by non-native speakers of English. English language is the more important of the two because every Secondary School student must obtain a "C" grade or better in it in addition to passes in any other four subjects (which may or may not include Literature in English) in order to obtain a complete Secondary school certificate. Additionally, a pass in English Language is regarded as a pre-requisite for employment and for admission into most tertiary academic and vocational institutions for professional training. The final grade in English Language is determined in the comprehensive English language examination which is written in the final year of Secondary school. This final examination consists of composition and summary writing and written comprehension.

Research Problem

Since 1980, when the country became independent, the results in the English Language examinations have generally been poor. In his 1986 Annual Report, the Secretary of Education cited the shortage of reading materials as one of the major causes of the unsatisfactory results in secondary school English Language:

> A noteworthy curriculum inquiry jointly undertaken by the Standards Control Unit and the British Council was a survey into the English Language Training and Learning Activities in our schools. The survey established among other things, that the students'learning ability was limited or adversely affected by a lack of adequate reading materials. Many secondary schools particularly those in rural areas did not have enough books for their students and this could well be a contributory factor to account for the poor language ability of many of those students. Most schools were short of funds and therefore could not afford to buy adequate supplies of supplementary reading materials. (p.5)

Discussions of performance in English Language have generally identified four issues as primarily responsible for the poor results. The four problems identified are:

(i)   shortage of trained teachers;

(ii)   quality of teacher training;

(iii) a shortage of reading materials, and

(iv)   subject matter.

A brief examination of each of these issues separately would be enlightening.

Shortage of Trained Teachers

Since the advent of political independence in 1980, the government has established new colleges and has encouraged expansion in enrollment in teacher education programmes in colleges and at the University of Zimbabwe. There are indications that it is only a matter of time before the majority of schools are staffed by qualified teachers.

Quality of Teacher Training

In a British Council sponsored study of English teacher training programmes in Zimbabwe, Morrison (1988) reports that there is a clear bias towards the preparation of teachers of Literature in English rather than teachers of English Language.

Hence, teacher training is seen as one of the causes of poor performance in High School English Language. Following upon Morrison (1988)'s recommendations, a British Council project to improve the communication skills of all student-teachers in Secondary teacher preparation colleges was launched in October 1991. Also, the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Zimbabwe which monitors academic and professional standards in Teachers' Colleges, has made

efforts to establish a balance between the literature and language content in English specialist syllabuses in the colleges.

Shortage of Reading Materials

The third issue also identified by Morrison (1988) and the Secretary of Education (1986) as a problem in the teaching of English Language in Zimbabwe is the shortage of supplementary reading materials. Reading materials have been defined as novels, short stories, poems, plays, newspapers and magazines which may enhance language acquisition, (Ellis and Tomlinson, 1980; Dawson, 1986).

However, most secondary schools in Zimbabwe that offer Literature in English as a curricula subject have novels, short stories and anthologies of poetry. They probably may not have magazines and newspapers. Also, teachers may have problems with how best to utilize the available novels, short stories and poems to enhance language acquisition by their students. McKay (1982), Widdowson (1983), Sage (1986), Gajdusek (1988), Collie and Slater (1987), Hill (1986), Kachru (1986), Spack (1985), and Ndovorwi (1989), have all argued for the use of novels, short stories, and poems in teaching English Language. As a step towards testing the ideas of the above scholars, I tried to find out Zimbabwean teachers' perceptions about the use of Literature in teaching English Language. Additionally, some consultation with teachers about the use of literature in teaching English was necessary because the literature available in the schools is Literature in English, written by non-native speakers of English, rather than English Literature written by native speakers.

Subject Matter

The fourth problem identified in the teaching of English Language in Zimbabwe is the fact that students naturally find the English Language difficult since it is a second language. However, apart from Moyana (1991 a and b)'s studies on students performance on English Comprehension passages, no other research has been done to identify exactly what aspects of English are difficult for secondary school students. Since English is not their first language, the subject matter per se may be a problem to the students. Also, Nyawaranda (1989) and Ndovorwi (1989), have written

about society's dissatisfaction with pupils' competence and performance insofar as English Language is concerned.

Purpose and Implications of the Study

Of the four problematic areas of English Language teaching identified above, the governement has already responded to the problem of shortage of qualified teachers by building more colleges. Insofar as the problem of the quality of teachers is concerned, Morrison (1988) carried out research into the training of English teachers and made recommendations which saw the launching of the British Council Communication Skills Project in October 1991, and the commencement of efforts by the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Zimbabwe to increase the English Language content in English syllabuses in teacher training colleges. However, the other two issues, viz, the use of Literature in teaching English Language and the problematic nature of the English Language itself have not been investigated.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to identify the areas of greatest need for students by surveying teachers' perceptions of the levels of difficulty of aspects of English for their students. The second aim was to elicit teachers' views on using literature in English in teaching English Language.

This study is primarily meant to address subject matter because subject matter is at the heart of quality in teaching. A teacher, whether trained or not, needs to know what is most difficult for students in order to improve his/her practice. This is a small scale study which needs to be followed up by a bigger study in which pupils' work will be examined.

Information obtained from the study would be supplied to teachers, teacher trainers and curriculum developers so that they could use it in making provisions for English language pedagogy. Also, the information could facilitate the optimal use of literature and eventually lead to a union of Literature and Language, which are two traditionally related but separate curricula subjects.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as a guide in constructing the survey instrument which was sent to teachers:

(i)   How difficult are specific aspects of English Grammar, Composition and Summary Writing, Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension for students at O-Level.

(ii)   Do teachers agree with the proposal that literature in English be used for teaching grammar, reading comprehension, argumentative, descriptive, narrative, and imaginative writing?

Method and Procedures

Permission to carry out the study was granted by the Research Council of Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Education.

The Survey Instrument

In order to collect data necessary to answer the above questions, a questionnaire was designed and sent to 100 Secondary school teachers of English at rural day schools, boarding schools, urban well-equipped day schools, urban not-so-well-equipped day schools and private schools. The 1989-1990 English Language syllabus and the 1987-1989 English Language Examinations were studied in order to identify the specific aspects of English grammar, reading comprehension, writing and composition that are taught in the schools and tested in the examinations. These served as the basis for the questionnaire items.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts, A, B, and C, and had 60 items. Part A sought information on the levels of difficulty of aspects of English Language; Part B sought teachers' opinions on the use of Literature for teaching various aspects of English Language. Part C sought information on the levels of training of the respondents, their length of service as English teachers and the type of schools where they

were teaching and any other issues they wished to discuss in connection with the research.

The first 7 items on the questionnaire asked teachers to indicate the level of difficulty of various aspects of English on a likert 5 point scale of 1 through 5, i.e. "Extremely easy" to "Extremely difficult." This section sought to obtain information on the level of difficulty of each of the seven major components in English Language, i.e. Composition Writing, Summary Writing, Written Grammar, Spoken Grammar, Spoken Vocabulary, Written Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension.

The rest of the items in Part A, that is, items 8 - 42 were based on a breakdown of the 7 components presented above. For example, items 8 - 27 were based on Grammar. They asked teachers to indicate the levels of difficulty of specific aspects of grammar on a scale of 1 through 5, i.e. "Extremely easy" to "Extremely difficult". Items 28 - 34 asked teachers to rank items of reading comprehension on a scale of 1 through 5, i.e. "Not a problem" to "Very much a problem". Items 35 through 42 asked teachers to indicate the level of difficulty of aspects of writing and composition on a scale of 1 through 5, i.e. "Extremely Easy" to "Extremely Difficult".

Part B had a total of eleven items, that is, items 43 - 53. The items required teachers to indicate on a scale of 1 through 5, "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree", the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the usefulness of literature in teaching various aspects of English Language.

Part C of the questionnaire had a total of 7 items, that is, items 54 through 60. Items 54 through 58 asked teachers to indicate the level at which they were trained to teach; whether they had received equal training in the teaching of both English Language and Literature in English, and the type of school at which they were teaching. Item 59 asked teachers to present their sentiments on any other issue connected with the study, while item 60 sought the respondent's address.

Characteristics of the Respondents

Of the 100 questionnaires mailed, 59 were returned. Data were analysed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Research in Social Science). The frequencies, means and standard deviations were elicited in the data analysis. Since there was at least a missing case in all the responses, the valid percentages were used in determining the rankings.

Out of the 58 respondents, 16 (i.e. 27.6%) taught in rural day schools; 23 (39.7%) taught in urban ill-equipped day schools; 9 (15.5%) taught in urban well-equipped day schools; 8 (13.8%) teach in boarding schools; and 4 (6.9%) taught in private schools.

One (3%) was qualified to teach up to University level; 9 (15.3%) were trained to teach up to Advanced level; 45 (77.6%) were trained to teach up to Ordinary level; 18 (31.0%) were trained to teach up to Junior Certificate level, and 3 (5.2%) were untrained.

Sixteen (27.6%) received more training in teaching English Language than in teaching Literature in English; 12 (20.7%) received more training in teaching Literature in English than in teaching English Language; and 31 (53.4%) received equal training in the teaching of both areas.

The duration of teaching experience ranged from 1 year to 12 years, with most teachers, i.e. 28, (47.4%) indicating that they had 3 years teaching experience.

Data Analysis and Results

The results of the responses to the questions on their perception of the level of difficulty of aspects of English are presented in tables 1 - 4 below.

Table 1 presents a ranking by mean of teachers' perceptions of the levels of difficulty of aspects of English for their students. Table 1 is based on items 1 - 7 on the questionnaire.

Table 1

A Ranking of the level of difficulty of each of the 7 major components of English Language for Secondary School students in Zimbabwe.

Item	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Composition Writing	3.621	0.97	1
Written Grammar	3.586	1.044	2
Summary Writing	3.517	0.995	3
Spoken Grammar	3.500	0.978	4
Spoken Vocabulary	3.431	0.901	5
Written Vocabulary	3.397	0.877	6
Reading Comprehension	3.069	0.835	7

As table 1 indicates, Composition writing is the most difficult component of the English Language curriculum for students. Following closely is Written Grammar. With a mean above 3.000, all the aspects of English lie above the "difficult" level on the scale.

Table 2 presents a ranking by mean of the level of difficulty of aspects of English Grammar for Secondary School students in Zimbabwe.

Table 2
A ranking of the level of difficulty of aspects of English Grammar for Secondary School Students in Zimbabwe

Item	Mean	S.D	Rank
Logical Connectors	3.702	1.149	1
Modal Auxiliaries	3.569	0.901	2
Phrasal Verbs	3.500	0.922	3
Indirect Speech	3.456	1.070	3.5
Reduced Relative Clauses	3.456	1.269	3.5
Tense Aspect system	3.397	0.972	6
Verbals and Gerunds	3.357	0.962	7
Conditionals	3.207	0.969	8
Subject-Verb Agreement	3.190	0.982	9
Passive Voice	3.140	1.156	10
Relative Clauses	3.035	1.239	11
Prepositions	2.931	0.856	12
Direct Speech	2.877	1.166	13
Pronouns and Possessives	2.793	0.833	14
Expletives	2.719	0.796	15
Copula-Be	2.707	0.918	16
Conjunctions	2.679	1.097	17
Article Use	2.552	0.862	18
Yes-No Questions	2.386	1.048	19
Wh-Questions	2.281	0.881	20

Grammar

As table 2 shows, students have the greatest difficulty with logical connectors. Logical Connectors feature close to the "very difficult" side of the "difficult" to "very difficult" continuum. Modal auxiliaries, phrasal

verbs, indirect speech, and reduced relative clauses all lie in the middle of the "difficult" to "very difficult" continuum. The tense aspect system, verbals and gerunds, conditionals, subject-verb agreement, the Passive voice, and relative clauses are all around the "difficult" level for students. Prepositions, direct speech, pronouns and possessives, expletives, the copula-be, conjunctions, and article use, feature towards the "difficult" side of the "easy" to "difficult" continuum. Thus, out of the 20 pivotal items of grammar for which teachers' perceptions on their level of difficulty for students were sought, only the "yes-no" and the "wh-" questions lean towards the "easy" side of the "easy" to "difficult" continuum.

Reading Comprehension

Teachers' peceptions on the levels of difficulty of aspects of Reading comprehension were solicited. The findings are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3
A Ranking of aspects of Reading Comprehension in order of how problematic they are to High School students in Zimbabwe.

Item	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Detecting meanings of words from the context	3.684	1.038	1
Relating Ideas Between Paragraphs	3.667	0.809	2
Substituting synonyms	3.526	1.120	3
Detecting most important words in a passage	3.491	0.947	4

Detecting the central idea in a passage	3.456	1.001	5
Relating ideas and themes to their background knowledge	3.421	1.101	6
Detecting the main ideas in a passage	3.263	1.061	7

Reading Comprehension was presented as comparatively the least difficult of all the major components of English Language (see table 1). But, as table 3 shows, students have difficulties with all aspects of Reading Comprehension. Items 28 - 34 on the questionnaire which sought teachers' perceptions on the levels of difficulty of various aspects of reading comprehension revealed that all the aspects of reading comprehension are between the "somewhat a problem" and " quite a problem" levels. "Detecting meanings of words from the context", "Relating ideas between paragraphs" and "substituting synonyms" all featured as quite problematic for students. Additionally, students find "detecting the most important words in a passage", and "detecting the central idea in a passage", to be a problem. In short, students lack those vital techniques and methods of getting to the meaning of a passage. They just don't know how to identify and unlock the central messages in passages.

Writing

·Items 35 to 42 on the qustionnaire sought teachers' opinions on the levels of difficulty of aspects of writing for High school students. The findings are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4

A Ranking of aspects of writing and composition in order of their difficulty for High School students in Zimbabwe.

Item	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Use of connecting words and transitional devices e.g. moreover, second	3.807	1.043	1
Arranging Ideas Across paragraphs	3.772	0.964	2
Arranging ideas within paragraphs	3.579	0.905	3
Understanding clauses	3.509	0.805	4.5
Choice of words	3.509	0.759	4.5
Punctuation	3.321	1.029	6
Writing heuristics	3.158	0.841	7
Spelling	2.929	0.806	8

As table 4 shows, students have the greatest difficulty with using connecting devices, arranging ideas across paragraphs, arranging ideas within paragraphs, choice of words and understanding the use of clauses. Punctuation and writing heuristics are "difficult", but not "very difficult", since they feature within the "difficult" side of the "difficult" to "very difficult" continuum. "Spelling" is also more "difficult" than it is "easy" since it lies quite close to the "difficult" side of the "easy" to "difficult" continuum.

Literature and Language teaching

Items 43 to 53 on the questionnaire sought teachers' opinions on the use of literature in teaching various aspects of English Language. The findings are presented in table 5 below.

Table 5
A ranking of teachers' views on using African Literature to teach various aspects of High School English Language

Item	Mean	S.D	Rank
Use of literature to teach imaginative writing	4.328	1.161	1
Use of literature to teach narrative writing	4.259	1.222	2
Students motivation to read African Literature	4.207	1.181	3.5
Use of literature to teach descriptive writing	4.207	1.151	3.5
Use of literature to teach summary writing	4.193	1.076	5
Use of literature to teach reading comprehension	4.172	1.187	6
Use of literature to teach written vocabulary	3.930	1.147	7
Use of literature to teach			

argumentative writing	3.776	1.093	8
Students background knowledge of African Lit.	3.759	1.218	9
Students' identifying with characters may facilitate language learning	3.690	1.188	10
Use of literature to teach written grammar	3.603	1.075	11

As table 5 shows, teachers have the strongest faith in using literature to teach imaginative and narrative writing , and the least in using it to teach written grammar. They also believe that students' motivation to read African Literature is itself an asset in their learning of English language. Teachers also believe that literature can be used to teach descriptive writing, summary writing and reading comprehension. The use of literature to teach "written vocabulary" and "argumentative writing" slants heavily towards the moderately agree side of the "slightly disagree" to "moderately agree" continuum. Also lying towards the "moderately agree" side of the continuum is the fact that students' background knowledge of the issues in African literature can help them to learn English, and that the possibility of students identifying with characters in African literature can facilitate their learning of the English language. Falling almost at the midway point of the continuum between the "slightly disagree" and the "moderately agree" options in a likert scale is the item seeking teachers opinions on the use of literature in teaching grammar. Teachers seem to be unsure that literature would be useful for this purpose.

Discussion and Recommendations

Thus, as Table 1 indicates, all aspects of English language are difficult for students. Composition writing is the most difficult, followed by Written grammar and Summary writing. Although Reading Comprehension is relatively less difficult than the other areas, it is also quite difficult for the students. Ironically, these are the most important areas in the secondary school English curriculum since they are the areas in which students are

tested in the Secondary School English language examinations. This discussion will try to provide global and integrated views on the teaching of these areas of English Language.

The Teaching of Grammar

As Table 2 shows, out of the 20 pivotal items of grammar for which teachers' perceptions on their levels of difficulty were sought, only the "yes-no" and the "wh-" questions lean towards the "easy" side of the "easy" to "difficult" continuum.

Grammar should be seen as rule-based. There has been some discussion in English Language teaching circles over the years on whether grammar should be taught deductively or inductively. In a discussion of the teaching of English in Zambia, Chikalanga (1983:12-13) suggests that teaching grammar inductively, i.e. presenting situations and then helping pupils form generalizations, is the recommended way of teaching grammar especially in the early stages. Supporting a deductive approach to teaching, Gage's 1968 research showed that "teachers who tended to state some kind of rule, then give an example, and then repeat the rule, were more successful than those who did not." However, Gage was not specifically referring to the teaching of grammar. It may be interesting to find out whether inductive or deductive teaching leads to better acquisition of grammatical knowledge. However, since students' learning styles are likely to determine the degrees to which they benefit from these two approaches, an approach which includes both inductive and deductive presentations of language structures will most likely meet the needs of various students. What needs to be underscored is that teachers should facilitate a conscious, and not a passive learning of grammar. Chikalanga (1983:12) notes:

> As Veloo (1979:76) points out, grammar is the means through which linguistic creativity is ultimately achieved, and an inadequate knowledge of grammar would be a serious limitation. This knowledge of the grammatical system of the second language, unlike that of the mother-tongue, has got to be acquired by the learner through a conscious process.

This call to teach grammar or linguistic structure consciously is in line with recommendations that have already been proposed implicitly by Nyawaranda, (1989), and explicitly by Maposa, (1991). In Zimbabwe, one of the reasons why grammar is not taught consciously is the adherence to, and misinterpretation of the communicative language teaching approach. Ideally this approach aims at equipping the ESL learner with a knowledge of using language structures in communication.

However, because the approach originated in countries such as the UK and the US where it was meant to enhance the verbal and sociolinguistic interactive skills of ESL learners, it has not been adequately adapted to the second language learning situation in Zimbabwe where the purposes of language teaching and learning are not primarily for competence in verbal and sociolinguistic interaction but for proficiency in sentence level grammar, written comprehension, composition and summary writing, and writing in general, which are the skills examined in the comprehensive O-Level English language final examinations. Although teachers may do all they can to teach the above skills, they are handicapped by theoretical lacunae caused by the lack of adaptation of the communicative approach to the needs of Zimbabwe English language teaching and learning. Thus, the idea of using language in communication leaves teachers unsure about the degree to which they should teach language structures. They are uncertain about when they should teach language usage and when they should teach language structure; and they are also unsure about how these two aspects should be taught.

The incomplete grasp and absence of modification of the communicative language teaching approach, is coupled with the country's predilection for teaching literature rather than language. This propensity is manifested by the fact that the BA English programme at the University is purely a literature programme, and that, as Morrison (1988) found out, English teacher training programmes in colleges are heavily biased towards literature. There is a general belief that a heavy and intensive exposure to reading materials in the second language will automatically facilitate a passive and unconscious but adequate acquisition of language structures.

Perhaps one or two hints about the teaching of language structures may help the English language teaching profession. One crucial issue to consider in teaching structures is sequencing. Virtually all language teachers will agree that beginning from the simple to the difficult is the perfect order of sequencing. However, the definition of simple is not clear (Larsen-Freeman, 1977). Perhaps beginning with the known and moving to the unknown structures is best, with each succeeding structure being built upon the one before it. Also, teachers may be advised to teach the less complex structures before the more complex ones. For example, the regular past tense forms should be taught before the irregular past tense forms. Another hint is that it is best to teach those structures that are more widely and more often used than those that are not. The more widely used structures are likely to be more useful to the learner. Also, the teacher should not feel too bound up by the way in which the textbook he/she uses sequences structures. He/she should make it a point to recycle structures by returning to structures already introduced. For example, in teaching a verb tense, all previously learned tenses may be revisited. Finally, the teacher should do the best he/she can to be aware of student needs by giving them diagnostic tests regularly.

However, all the above discussions are weakened by an absence of research on the acquisition of second language grammar, and on the actual processes of teaching grammar in Zimbabwe.

The Teaching of Reading Comprehension

Table 3 above shows that students do not have the skills to unlock the central meanings of passages. One expects teachers to be relatively competent in this area owing to an abundance of literature on how to teach reading comprehension (The English language teaching publications in Zimbabwe, viz, Teachers' Forum and Teacher in Zimbabwe have impressively covered the area of teaching reading comprehension over many years). However, Moyana (1991) has done research on students' performance in written comprehension. She found that students perform well on questions on the literal level of understanding and have problems with higher order comprehension questions, i.e. questions that test evaluative, interpretive and analytical skills. Also, students' performance in comprehension is determined by the content of the passage. They tend

to perform better on passages with no science content (Moyana 1991a and b). This finding suggests that students tend to perform better on passages in which they have background knowledge of the content. Perhaps teachers need to equip students with certain universal skills which they can apply in getting to the central meanings of all passages - regardless of their content bases.

The teaching of Writing

As table 4 shows, students have difficulties with writing, i.e. sentence level writing, summary, paragraph and composition writing. All these writing skills will be greatly enhanced once students acquire a knowledge of grammatical skills. The teaching of grammatical structures has already been discussed above. Summary writing closely depends on reading comprehension. Once students manage to read and acquire the central meanings of passages or paragraphs, they can easily use their writing competence to construct precise and accurate summaries in full sentences.

However, the writing of good summaries also requires a good mastery of composition skills. One of the bases for teaching composition writing is teaching paragraph writing. At the paragraph level, the teacher should introduce pupils to the fundamental paragraph and comopsition writing principles of unity, order, coherence, and development. He/she should also induct the students in the use of transitional devices and logical connectors in order to enhance coherence and cohesion. The teacher should also introduce pupils to the various patterns of organization that characterize compositions. After students have demonstrated competence in the above areas, the teacher should use the process approach to teaching composition writing (Zamel, 1982).

The process approach to writing compositions is recommended because it lends itself more towards teaching composition writing, as opposed to the currently used approach which tests more than it teaches insofar as it requires students to submit final products to be judged by the teacher. The process approach really intends to teach pupils the *process* of composition writing.

The approach begins with pre-writing activities for gathering ideas. These activities are meant to be the teacher's way of habituating pupils to gathering ideas through brain storming. He/she asks "guiding questions" which should enable pupils to see the issues at stake in the composition. After the pupils have gathered ideas, they are taught to plan the compositions by making decisions about sequencing and arrangement of ideas. They are then given a chance to write a first draft. The teacher then places the pupils in groups of three, making sure that there is an able student in each group. In these groups, the pupils read each other's essays. Each student's essay should be read by two other students. In the reading, they should check for accuracy of sentence construction, proper use of structures, spelling, punctuation and they should indicate all errors on a piece of paper. They should also look at arrangement of ideas. After the reading, they should offer each other suggestions on how to improve. If they don't agree on the errors made, the three of them should discuss them first and come to some agreement. If they are not sure they should consult the teacher. After the student has made corrections, he should rewrite the composition and submit both drafts. The teacher's grade should be based on the final draft, but the first draft is also necessary for the teacher to observe the student's progress between the drafts.

Once again, the above suggestions are only recommendations. More empirical evidence is needed in order to support them. In teaching all the aspects of English language discussed above, the teacher is urged to take advangage of the stronger, more able students.

The use of literature in Language Teaching.

As table 5 shows, teachers are confident that literature can be used in teaching all aspects of English except grammar. It is assumed that by the time students study literature, they would have been introduced to most of the structures used in literature. If this is not the case as performance at High School suggests, then the teaching of structures could be based on literature. A discussion of meaning in a typical literature lesson may lead to the study of the structures, i.e. grammatical structures may be taught inductively, as something emanating from literary analysis. The teacher may ask the pupils to locate instances of the use of a particular structure, discuss its significance in conveying meaning and then state the

rule/s that govern the use of that structure. The teaching of structures based on literature should not be a spontaneous activity. The teacher should go through the episode to be discussed, plan for teaching it as literary criticism first, and then isolate the relevant structures to be taught in the grammar lesson and plan for them. As has been mentioned already, Ndovorwi (1989), Sage (1986), Collie and Slater (1987) and Gajdusek (1988) inter liar have already argued and demonstrated that it is possible to base grammar lessons on literature.

However, as in the case of the other aspects of English Language discussed above, more research needs to be done in order to present more reliable and comprehensive ideas on the use of literature in language teaching.

Conclusion

The above presentation of teachers' perceptions of the most difficult aspects of English for their students cannot be regarded as conclusive because of the self-report method used to collect data, and because of the rather small size of the sample. It would be more edifying to the English Language teaching profession if more student-centered, empirical research could be done in order to diagnose students' weaknesses.

The findings of the study suggest that students have grave problems with English language. In the light of such findings, it would be useful for teachers to start experimenting with other methods and suggestions on teaching English Language. They could take a leaf from the ideas of Gajdusek (1988), Hill (1986), Sage (1987) and Spack (1985), and start finding ways of using literature to teach English Language. They could also implement some of the ideas on teaching various aspects of English presented in the "Recommendations" section above.

What such a study makes clear is that it is time Teaching English on a Second Language (TESL) practitioners started thinking of a coherent method of teaching based on sound theory, a method which would maximise and facilitate the teaching of language structures and application or use of those structures in writing and in general discourse.

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