

Dr. Alexandra Esimaje: "A Corpus-based Analysis of Nigerian and Cameroon English Learner Language"

English is the official language of communication in Nigeria and two regions in Cameroon. Given the existence of hundreds of indigenous languages in both countries, English is mostly spoken as a second language, although a small number of children growing up in urban contexts and with university-educated parents learn it as their first language. Second language acquisition in such multilingual contexts is often influenced by the learners' first language. This research project sets out to compile a specialized corpus of learner language in this context, which will then be employed to analyze students' language productions at different levels of learning. More specifically, it is guided by two major research questions: Firstly, what are the specific morpho-syntactic constructions in the language production by Nigerian and Cameroon learners of English as a second language? And, secondly, what are the peculiarities in terms of learner needs in the two contexts? A quantitative and qualitative analysis of some morphological and syntactic features of these productions will enable teachers, students, textbook writers and curriculum developers to redirect their efforts to the learners' specific areas of need. Corpus-building is a new and very useful trend in language research, which is yet to take root in Nigeria and Cameroon. This project aims to fill this void in language research and raise awareness for the importance and need for a research center for corpus studies. Additionally, the identification of learner language productions and their eventual enhancement through pedagogy will serve very useful ends for both Nigeria and Cameroon and possibly position them for more productive education.