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## Leveraging speaking and listening pedagogies for anti-corruption education in contemporary Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Corruption remains one of the major impediments to Nigeria's socio-economic and political development. Despite the numerous strategies employed to combat corruption, scholars have given limited attention to the role of language education in shaping ethical orientation. This paper examines how speaking and listening pedagogies can serve as instruments for promoting anti-corruption values among learners in contemporary Nigeria. Adopting a qualitative and conceptual approach, the study draws on extant literature on corruption, language education, and twenty-first-century pedagogical practices. It explores learner-centred strategies such as discussion, role-playing, and storytelling as mechanisms for developing critical thinking, communication, creativity, collaboration, and moral consciousness among learners. The paper argues that speaking and listening instruction extends beyond communicative competence and provides opportunities for fostering ethical values and responsible citizenship. It concludes that integrating anti-corruption themes into English language instruction can contribute to national development and recommends the incorporation of twenty-first-century skills and value-based education into language curricula.

## 1. Introduction

Corruption remains a major barrier to sustainable development in Nigeria, affecting governance, education, economic growth, and social stability. It weakens institutions, reduces public trust, and distorts resource allocation, thereby limiting national development (World Bank, 2020; Transparency International, 2024). In Nigeria, it is reflected in bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, abuse of office, and mismanagement of public resources, contributing to poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and infrastructural decline (Kamalu & Anasiudu, 2024).

While anti-corruption efforts have largely focused on legal and institutional reforms, there is growing recognition of the role of education in promoting ethical values and responsible citizenship (UNESCO, 2021). Language education, in particular, provides a platform for developing communication skills, critical thinking, and moral awareness through interactive learning (Richards, 2006).

Speaking and listening activities such as discussions, role-plays, and storytelling enable learners to engage with real-life social issues, express opinions, and internalize positive values (Yu, Reynolds, & Ding, 2021; Ding, 2021). However, limited attention has been given to their use in anti-corruption education in Nigeria. This study therefore explores how speaking and listening pedagogies can be applied to promote anti-corruption values and responsible citizenship among learners.

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## **Conceptualizing Corruption**

Corruption is generally understood as the misuse of entrusted power or public office for personal gain. Transparency International (2024) describes it as the abuse of entrusted authority for private benefit, while the World Bank (2020) defines it as the use of public office for private advantage.

In practical terms, corruption shows up in everyday actions such as bribery, embezzlement, fraud, nepotism, favouritism, and extortion. It goes beyond politics and the economy; it also affects how people see leadership, fairness, and justice in society (Kamalu & Anasiudu, 2024).

It appears in different forms political, administrative, judicial, economic, and educational corruption, and these are often linked. Together, they weaken institutions, deepen inequality, and slow down national development (World Bank, 2020).

In Nigeria, corruption is widely seen as deeply rooted in both public and private systems. It affects governance, the economy, and even education. Ojo, Ayandele, and Egbeleye (2020) note that in some cases, corrupt practices have become so common that they now influence how young people think and behave.

Because corruption is complex and deeply embedded, addressing it requires more than laws and punishment. It also requires education that builds strong values such as honesty, responsibility, and accountability, helping people make better ethical choices in everyday life (World Bank, 2020).

## **Educational Corruption**

Education plays a central role in national development, not only by building knowledge and skills but also by shaping values, responsible behaviour, and active citizenship. However, this role is increasingly weakened by corruption within educational institutions in Nigeria. UNESCO (2021) stresses that quality education is essential for sustainable development and for nurturing ethical and socially responsible individuals.

Educational corruption refers to dishonest or illegal practices that violate academic integrity, fairness, and accountability within the education system, involving students, teachers, and administrators. According to Okafor and Juma (2026), such practices significantly reduce the effectiveness of higher education institutions in Nigeria. Similarly, Isabu (2025) observes that corruption in educational leadership erodes transparency and public trust in university administration.

In Nigeria, educational corruption appears in various forms, including examination malpractice, bribery, grade manipulation, sexual harassment, certificate forgery, admission irregularities, favoritism, and the misuse of educational funds. Ojo, Ayandele, and Egbeleye (2020) note that when these practices become normalized, they gradually weaken moral standards among students and young people. Examination malpractice, in particular such as cheating, impersonation, leakage of exam questions, and bribery remains widespread and undermines merit and the credibility of academic qualifications (Ovuakporoye & Obani 2025). Therefore, these practices damage academic standards, weaken ethical development, and reduce the ability of the education system to produce competent graduates capable of contributing meaningfully to national development.

## **Speaking and Listening Skills in Language Education**

Speaking and listening are core language skills that enable learners to communicate effectively and participate meaningfully in social and academic settings. Modern language teaching emphasizes learner-centred and communicative approaches that encourage interaction and the practical use of language rather than mere memorization of rules (Richards, 2006).

Speaking involves expressing thoughts, feelings, and opinions clearly and appropriately, while listening requires understanding, interpreting, and responding to spoken messages. These skills work together and play a significant role in improving learners' confidence, motivation, and overall communicative competence (Qiu & Xu, 2023).

Classroom activities such as discussions, debates, storytelling, and role-playing provide learners with opportunities to practice authentic communication. Such interactive experiences enhance oral proficiency, strengthen learner engagement, and contribute to cognitive, social, and linguistic development (Ding, 2021; Yu, Reynolds, & Ding, 2021). They also help learners develop important twenty-first-century skills, including critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and effective communication (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Beyond language development, speaking and listening activities can serve as valuable tools for promoting moral values and ethical awareness. Through meaningful classroom conversations on social issues, learners can develop responsible attitudes and a stronger sense of citizenship, supporting the broader goals of education for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2021).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in the Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory explains that people learn behaviours, attitudes, and values by observing and interacting with others in their social environment. According to Bandura, individuals are influenced by role models such as teachers, parents, and peers, and they are more likely to adopt behaviours that are rewarded or positively reinforced (Bandura, 1977).

The theory is relevant to this study because language learning involves active social interaction. Classroom activities such as discussions, role-playing, and storytelling provide opportunities for learners to observe positive behaviours and reflect on ethical issues. Through these interactive experiences, learners can develop anti-corruption awareness and cultivate values such as honesty, integrity, accountability, and social responsibility (Richards, 2006; Ding, 2021). Therefore, Social Learning Theory offers a useful framework for understanding how speaking and listening pedagogies can contribute to ethical development and responsible citizenship among learners in Nigeria (UNESCO, 2021).

### **Learner-Led Discussion as an Anti-Corruption Pedagogy**

Learner-led discussion is a student-centred instructional strategy that encourages active participation, collaborative learning, and critical engagement with subject matter. Unlike teacher-dominated approaches, learner-led discussions provide opportunities for students to exchange ideas, analyse issues, and construct knowledge collectively. Richards (2006) argues that communicative language teaching emphasizes learner participation and interaction as essential elements in language acquisition and cognitive development.

As an instructional strategy, learner-led discussion promotes the development of critical thinking skills, which are indispensable for analysing societal challenges and proposing solutions. According to UNESCO (2021), educational practices that encourage dialogue and reflection contribute to the formation of responsible and ethically conscious citizens. Through classroom discussions, learners are encouraged to question assumptions, evaluate arguments, and develop informed perspectives on contemporary issues.

Within the context of anti-corruption education, learner-led discussions provide platforms for examining issues such as bribery, examination malpractice, electoral fraud, abuse of office, and favouritism. By discussing real-life situations and contemporary social challenges, students become more aware of the causes and consequences of corruption and develop attitudes that discourage unethical behaviour. Such interaction also enables learners to appreciate the importance of integrity, transparency, and accountability in personal and public life.

Furthermore, learner-led discussions facilitate the development of communication and collaboration skills. The World Economic Forum (2023) identifies communication and critical thinking among the most important competencies required for the twenty-first century. Through active participation and the exchange of ideas, learners improve their oral proficiency while simultaneously developing empathy and respect for diverse viewpoints.

Teachers can enhance the effectiveness of learner-led discussions by incorporating literary texts, newspaper reports, audiovisual materials, and contemporary case studies relating to corruption and ethical issues. Such resources stimulate meaningful interaction and encourage learners to connect classroom experiences with real world situations. Consequently, learner-led discussion serves not only as a means of developing speaking and listening skills but also as a valuable pedagogical tool for promoting anti-corruption values and responsible citizenship.

### **Role Playing and Communicative Competence**

Role-playing is a learner-centred teaching method where students act out real-life situations by taking on different roles and interacting meaningfully. It helps learners move beyond theory and actively use language in realistic contexts. Richards (2006) explains that communicative language teaching focuses on interactive activities that promote meaningful language use and build communicative competence.

Communicative competence is not only about speaking or writing correctly; it also involves knowing how to use language appropriately in different social situations. Through role-play, learners gradually improve fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and their ability to organize ideas in conversation, while also gaining confidence. Ding (2021) notes that interactive classroom experiences improve students' speaking skills and engagement, while Yu, Reynolds, and Ding (2021) emphasize that real communication tasks support both cognitive and social development. Beyond language learning, role-playing helps learners develop key 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills the World Economic Forum (2023) considers essential for today's world.

In anti-corruption education, role-play can be especially powerful. Students act out situations involving bribery, nepotism, electoral fraud, or abuse of power, taking on roles like government officials, teachers, or citizens. This helps them see how corruption works in everyday life and think more deeply about its consequences, as well as better alternatives rooted in honesty and accountability.

Generally, role-playing makes learning more engaging and practical. It helps students understand language better while also shaping their moral awareness and encouraging values that support integrity and responsible citizenship.

### **Storytelling and Moral Development**

Storytelling is one of the oldest and most effective ways of teaching language and shaping moral understanding. It involves sharing events whether real or imagined to pass across knowledge, cultural values, and life lessons. Beyond entertainment, stories give learners meaningful situations to learn language in context while also supporting their thinking, emotions, and social growth. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that education should help learners develop values that encourage peaceful living and sustainable development.

In language learning, storytelling improves speaking and listening skills by exposing learners to natural language use, new vocabulary, and how ideas are structured in communication. When learners listen to and retell stories, they gradually build confidence, improve fluency, and understand spoken language better. Qiu and Xu (2023) note that oral communication activities make learning more engaging and help learners communicate more effectively.

Storytelling is also important for moral development because stories often teach lessons about right and wrong. Through characters and events, learners see the outcomes of honesty, dishonesty, fairness, and responsibility. This helps them reflect on their own behaviour and values. UNESCO (2021) also highlights that education should prepare learners with ethical values needed to respond to real-life social challenges.

In anti-corruption education, storytelling can be used to show the negative effects of corruption on individuals and society while also highlighting integrity, accountability, and good leadership. Teachers can draw from folktales, novels, biographies, and real-life examples to

make these lessons relatable and thought-provoking. When used collaboratively such as through group storytelling, drama, or digital storytelling students become more creative and more willing to discuss social issues. The World Economic Forum (2023) identifies creativity and communication as key skills for the future. In this way, storytelling becomes not just a teaching method, but a practical way of building moral awareness and encouraging values that support a more just and accountable society.

### **Implications for English Language Teaching and National Development**

The findings of this study have important implications for English language teaching and sustainable national development. Contemporary language education extends beyond the development of linguistic competence to encompass critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and ethical awareness. UNESCO (2021) maintains that education should contribute to the development of responsible citizens capable of addressing societal challenges and promoting sustainable development.

Firstly, the integration of anti-corruption themes into speaking and listening instruction provides opportunities for learners to engage meaningfully with real-life issues. Through learner-centred pedagogies such as discussion, role-playing, and storytelling, students are encouraged to develop communicative competence alongside values of honesty, integrity, and accountability. Such approaches transform language classrooms into platforms for value-based education and character formation.

Secondly, the incorporation of ethical issues into English language teaching contributes to the broader goals of education by promoting responsible citizenship and social responsibility. Learners who are exposed to values of transparency and integrity are more likely to demonstrate ethical behaviour in their personal and professional lives. Consequently, language education becomes a strategic instrument for fostering social transformation and combating corruption.

Thirdly, the findings underscore the need for curriculum planners and policymakers to incorporate twenty-first-century competencies and value-oriented content into English language curricula. The World Economic Forum (2023) highlights communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking as essential skills for the future. Integrating these competencies into language instruction would ensure that education remains relevant to contemporary societal demands.

Furthermore, teacher education programmes should equip language teachers with the pedagogical knowledge and skills required to integrate moral and civic issues into classroom instruction. Continuous professional development programmes, workshops, and seminars can enhance teachers' capacity to implement innovative instructional strategies that foster ethical awareness and critical thinking among learners. Ding (2021) emphasizes the importance of effective teacher-student interaction in promoting meaningful learning experiences.

Ultimately, promoting anti-corruption values through English language education has the potential to strengthen social cohesion, improve governance, and contribute to sustainable national development. By nurturing citizens who value honesty, transparency, and accountability, language education can serve as a catalyst for positive social change and long-term national progress.

### **Conclusion**

Corruption continues to hinder Nigeria's political, economic, and educational development, even with various institutional and legal efforts in place (World Bank, 2020; Transparency International, 2025). This makes it clear that fighting corruption requires not only policies and laws but also deliberate efforts to shape values and attitudes.

This study has shown that speaking and listening activities can play a meaningful role in anti-corruption education. When learners engage in discussions, role-plays, and storytelling, they not only improve their communication skills but also begin to reflect on important values such as honesty, integrity, and accountability. These interactive methods also strengthen critical

thinking and responsible citizenship, which are essential for today's world (UNESCO, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2023). Based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, learners often pick up behaviours and values from what they observe and practice in their environment. This makes the classroom a powerful space for shaping moral understanding through interaction and communication (Ding, 2021; Yu et al., 2021).

In conclusion, integrating ethical discussions into speaking and listening lessons can help support anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria while also encouraging the development of morally responsible and socially aware citizens.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- English language teachers should integrate anti-corruption themes into speaking and listening activities to promote ethical awareness, critical thinking, and responsible citizenship among learners.
- Curriculum developers and policymakers should incorporate value-based education and twenty-first century skills into English language curricula to address contemporary societal challenges and support sustainable development.
- Teachers should adopt learner-centred instructional strategies such as discussion, role playing, storytelling, and collaborative learning to enhance communicative competence and moral development.
- Educational institutions and teacher education programmes should provide training, workshops, and professional development opportunities that equip teachers with innovative pedagogical approaches for integrating civic and ethical issues into language instruction.
- Further empirical research should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of speaking and listening pedagogies in promoting anti-corruption values across different educational levels and cultural contexts.

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