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ASSESSMENT OF USE AND IMPACTS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
This study assessed the use and impacts of language teaching method on the performance of secondary school students in South East Nigeria. The study is a descriptive survey and data were collected from secondary school teachers. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select three hundred and seventy-two (372) schools which represent 30% of the one thousand, two hundred and forty (1,240) public secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire entitled Use and Impact of Language Teaching Methods Questionnaire (UILTMQ). Data collected were analysed using simple percentage and frequency count and used to answer the research questions. Findings of the study include that non-use of language teaching methods is greatly affecting the teaching and learning of English as a second-language in secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria. The paper, among others recommended strenuous supervision of academic activities in secondary schools in Ebonyi State by both internal and external authorities.

Keywords: Language teaching, methods of teaching, second language, proficiency, secondary schools.

Introduction

Language is an indispensable tool in any society; it is the vehicle that transmits cooperation and progress among citizens. To buttress, Okafor & Ugwu (2007) opined that language is the tool with which any form of collaborative activity is made possible. Thus, it would be impossible for people in a society to transmit the products of their thoughts without language. Further, Otagbuagu, Ogenyi & Ezema (2013) averred that speaking and using a language are integral parts of living in the human society and every culture has its own language which meets the communicative needs of the people. In effect, all that goes on in life depend on language and a world without language would be disastrous. However, where more than one language exist, complexities arise. This is because the knowledge of one language interrupts in the mastery of another. This is the case of the English language in Nigeria.

English, as the official language in Nigeria, occupies a central position in the curricula of schools. In addition, Otagbuagu, Ogenyi & Ezema (2013) noted that its influence is felt even at the domestic level as the language of everyday communication in homes and among the diverse ethnic groups in the country. In a multilingual and

multicultural society like Nigeria where many languages compete for national recognition and higher political status, there is indeed the need for a unifying language to be used for national development. Consequently, Ugwu (2008) reported that the English language was chosen as a lingua franca to aid interaction among the ethnic groups as well as with the international community. The usefulness of English in Nigeria, thus, is not in doubt. As Otagbuagu, Ogenyi & Ezema rightly observed, the learning of English is both an academic necessity and a political linchpin. However, one would expect that such an important tool in national development would receive priority in its impartation; this is, however, not the case.

Presently, proficiency in the English language in Nigeria is nothing to write home about. This is the reason Otagbuagu, Ogenyi & Ezema opined that parents and teachers bemoan the falling standard in the English performance of Nigerian students. The same report equally claims that language education experts cry out against the decline in the performance and use of English among students. Also, Otagburuagu (1996) quoting an editorial, bemoaned the falling standard in the English language performance among university undergraduates:

> University lecturers all over the country have had a litany of complaints: namely, the poor quality of the writing of their graduates. It seems insufferable that the nation should tolerate people who not only cannot write well but also are not humble enough to want to learn… one university is even suggesting remedial courses in English and writing for graduates (p.77).

In a related report by the World Bank (2001) the situation has remained unchanged. According to the report, most employers of fresh graduates complain that the quality of university graduates has worsened with observed poor abilities in oral and written expressions of English as well as inadequate preparation in the English language seen in where regular reporting and writing is required. Further, the World Bank report gave an illustration of the depth of poor English proficiency where a banker informed that he could not get five correctly drafted sentences in a single paragraph from fresh university graduates.

Varied questions naturally are asked at this point; such as, can this problem be attributed to teacher quality, teacher preparation, low teacher morale, societal attitude to the English language, erratic academic calendar, interference from Nigerian languages, and lack of teaching materials, among others? No matter the perspective it is viewed from, the answers are, also, varied. Also, reports over the years have shown that there is massive

failure in English in external examinations such as West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSSCE). One begins to wonder whether inability to apply the appropriate language teaching methods in teaching is a major cause of the failure. Thus, this paper focused on an aspect that can be a challenge in the teaching of English in Nigerian schools – language teaching methods.

As important as language teaching methods are in a language classroom, some language teachers (especially in the primary and secondary schools) who have been in the system for long tend to go into the classrooms and teach by heart. This could be as a result of lack of knowledge of the teaching methods or over familiarity with the topics. In other cases, language teachers seem to use the same methods over and over again on different learners with different learning difficulties. Teachers, these days, are often too busy to plan their lessons and decide on the most appropriate method(s) to apply in teaching particular lessons or groups of learners. Also, people who teach English might not be qualified teachers of the language and would not be familiar with the appropriate language teaching methods that could be used in teaching the second language.

This study sets out to evaluate and find answers to such issues as: use of appropriate teaching methods in English in secondary schools in the South East, Nigeria; variation in methods of teaching English to achieve effective results; and impact of the methods used in efficient and effective teaching of the target language. Based on the findings of the study, solutions would be proffered.

The study is interested in the application and effects of language teaching methods; it is, however, delimited to the teachers of English in secondary schools. The study focuses on government-owned (or public) secondary schools in different educational zones of the Southeast region of Nigeria. The geographical scope of the study is the five states of the south east – Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. There are eighteen (18) education zones in the five states of the south east and the scope of the study will cover all of them.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study.

- What language teaching methods do teachers of English in secondary schools in South Eastern states of Nigeria use in teaching?
- What is the level of variation of language teaching methods by teachers of English in public secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria?
- What is the impact of language teaching methods on the performance of secondary schools students in Southeast Nigeria?

Conceptualisation

Language Teaching Methods

The term ‘language teaching method’ is often used as a broad cover-term for the different activities that go on in language teaching. The terms, method, approach, and techniques are often used interchangeably to refer to the activities implored in the class for imparting knowledge. Various suggestions have been put forward over the years for making the term ‘method’ more precise or for abandoning it. The traditional distinction is between overall approaches,

such as the oral approach, methods, such as the audio-lingual method, and teaching techniques, such as drills. Richards & Rodgers (1986) see approaches as related through design to procedures. Marton (1988), on the other hand, talks about four overall teaching 'strategies' – the receptive strategy, which relies primarily on listening; the communicative strategy, in which students learn by attempting to communicate; the reconstructive strategy, in which the student participates in reconstructive activities based on a text; and the eclectic strategy, which combines two or more of the others. Experiential activities rely on language use within a situation, from analytic activities, which use language study and practice. Teachers combine these techniques in various ways within a particular teaching style. Put a structure drill with a repetition dialogue and a role play and you get the audio-lingual style, with its dependence on the spoken language, on practice and on structure. Put a functional drill with an information gap exercise and a role play and you get the communicative style, with its broad assumptions about the importance of communication in the classroom. A teaching style is a loosely connected set of teaching techniques believed to share the same goals of language teaching.

According to McArthur in Otagburuagu, Ogenyi & Ezema (2013), method is derived from the Greek word "metahodos" which means "the road that leads from one point to another." Thus, language teaching methods are the ways that the language teacher uses to take the language learner from one point to another point in their language learning situation often towards a pre-planned goal. There is different language teaching methods available to the language teacher in the Nigerian school setting. These include the Grammar-Translation Method; the Audio- Lingual Method; the Communicative Language Teaching Method; the Audio-Lingual Method; and the Eclectic Language Teaching Method.

Use of Teaching Methods

Teaching methods are very important in a language classroom. As has been noted, there are diverse teaching methods available to the teacher of English especially in a second language learning situation; they are all advantageous. For instance, the grammar translation and the audio-lingual methods seem to reject the ways of learning in some cultures, in favour of what is regarded as a 'Western' view (though there seems no reason to think of the academic or audio-lingual styles as intrinsically any more or less Western than the communicative as all come from educational traditions in the West). In support, Hofstede (1980) opines that the audio-lingual style, with its authoritarian teacher controlling every move the students make, fits more with cultures that are 'collectivist.' The communicative teaching style covers only some of the relevant aspects of L_2 learning, however desirable they may be in themselves. For example, it has no techniques of its own for teaching pronunciation or vocabulary, little connection with speech processing or memory and little recognition of the possibilities available to the learner through their first language. Pair work and group work, which are techniques in the communicative style, among students with the same first language, for example, often lead to frequent code switching between the first and the second language, perhaps something to be developed systematically

rather than seen as undesirable. In so far as the style uses grammar, it often relies on a structuralist grammar reminiscent of audio-lingualism. In general, communicative language teaching has sophisticated ideas of what students need to learn, which have undoubtedly freed the classroom from the rigors of the academic and audio-lingual styles.

Murphy (2002) describes the grammar translation method as a style of teaching that helps students to practice speaking a new language on their own. The report further states that while the style does not directly practice language use itself, it aims to provide a basis for language use when the student requires it.

The argument above indicates that a method which is good and effective with one group of learners may not be adequate with another group; with learners from one culture but not so effective with learners from another culture. Teaching is more of an art than a science, so, teaching activities must be flexible in order to accommodate every learner despite their capability. The eclectic method offers the flexibility needed to make the teaching of English effective and productive. The teacher of English, however, needs to be abreast with the techniques of other methods of language teaching in order to appropriately apply the eclectic method in teaching. In addition, Azikiwe (1998) reports that there is a need for variety in the teaching and learning situation in order to provide differing opportunities to learners with different abilities. Azikiwe advises that a teacher who wants to be effective in the use of the eclectic method to teach must study many other methods and understand their application.

Appraisal of Reviewed Literature

From the literature reviewed, language teaching methods are very important in the teaching process. The language teacher has a list of methods to choose from; these include the Grammar-Translation Method; the Audio- Lingual Method; the Communicative Language Teaching Method; the Audio-Lingual Method; and the Eclectic Language Teaching Method. Each of the teaching methods has strengths and weaknesses, thus, none is the best. It is the nature of the students' goal that will determine which is best for any group of learners. However, no method is self-sufficient; a method may work for a group of learners at a point but fail with another set of learners at a different time and culture. This is why Azikiwe (1998) avers that there is a need for variety in the teaching and learning situation in order to provide differing opportunities to learners with different abilities. Thus, an effective teacher needs to diversify the methods in teaching to order to effectively impact knowledge to the learners.

The importance of language teaching methods cannot be overemphasized. Language scholars such as Hofstede (1980), Azikiwe (1998) and Murphy (2002), have discussed some of these methods, the researchers however, feel that enough has not been done in the area of use and effects of language teaching methods in the performance of secondary school students, especially in Southeast Nigeria.

Research Method

This study is a descriptive survey. Abdullahi (1995) sees survey research as a systematic collection of data or information from a population (sometimes referred to as

universe) or sample of a population (considered to be a representative of the entire group of interest), through the use of personal interview and/or questionnaire. This design is considered appropriate as the study collected data from the sample, with the aid of a researcher developed questionnaire, to describe an entire population under study.

The research is conducted in the South East Nigeria with special reference to the secondary schools in the region. South east is one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. It is principally occupied by the Igbo ethnic group. South east Nigeria has five (5) states – Enugu, Anambara, Ebonyi, Imo and Abia States. The inhabitants of the states in south east are predominantly Christians, Muslims and traditional worshipers. Education is available to all the inhabitants irrespective of their religion. The area of the study is comprised of all the government-owned secondary schools in the study area. Thus, data were obtained from the Secondary Education Board (SEB) of the states in the Southeast to help the study. This is because the government-owned secondary schools are centrally controlled by the Secondary Education Board.

The study is interested in ascertaining the use and effects of language teaching methods on the performance of secondary school students in Southeast Nigeria, so, the population of the study comprises all teachers of English in the study area. The choice of the population is based on the fact that these institutions all offer English as a compulsory subject at all level while other languages such as Igbo and French are compulsory only in the junior classes but taken as optional subjects in the senior classes.

Due to the large population of the teachers of English, a proportionate representative of the population is used for effective study. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select the education zones. Each state in the South East formed a stratum. Regardless of the number of education zones in the different states, selections were made in three education zones from each of the states under study.

In addition, the purposive sampling technique was used to select three hundred and seventy-two (372) schools which represent 30% of the one thousand, two hundred and forty (1,240) public secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria. As there was no even number of teachers of English in all the schools (many of the schools had only one teacher of English while some had two), all the teachers were purposefully selected for the study. Thus, the total number of the sample was four hundred and ninety-seven (497) teachers of English. The purposive sampling technique was deemed appropriate because the population was not very large.

The instrument for data collection is a researcher developed questionnaire entitled Use and Impact of Language Teaching Methods Questionnaire (UILTMQ). The questionnaire items were generated from data gathered in the review of related literature. There are two parts in the questionnaire – Part A (which solicits information on respondents' personal data) and Part B (which contains items on knowledge and practice of the subject under observation). Further, Part B is in three sections and the clustered items relate to

and attempt to answer the three research questions guiding the study. The rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was applied.

Face and content validity of the instrument was determined by two experts from the department of Arts Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki; and two experts from the Department of Educational Technology of the same university. Copies of the questionnaire were given to these experts and their corrections and suggestions were incorporated. As a result, the instrument possesses both content and face validity.

The reliability of the instrument was determined by pre-testing it on thirty (30) teachers of English in public secondary schools in Enugu State. The scores obtained from the respondents were collated and analysed to determine the co-efficient of the set of scores for the items in each of the sections. The Cronbach Co-Efficient Alpha was used to obtain the reliability co-efficient of 0.85, 0.82 and 0.87 respectively for sections 1, 2 and 3.

The researchers employed the services of six (6) research assistants to help in the administration and collection of questionnaires on the spot to avoid any loss. The rationale behind the number of the research assistants is that two (2) research assistants covered the schools in each of the three education zones selected in a state. The expectation and result is that with such keen attention to detail, all the questionnaires administered were returned and used for analyses in the study.

Data collected were analysed using simple percentage and frequency count. The decision rule was that 50% served as the bench mark for acceptance. By implication, any item that obtained a percentage score of 50% and above indicates approval and was regarded as having met the bench mark and is thus accepted for interpretation while any value 49% and below indicate disapproval and was rejected.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Data presented and analysed here are based on the research questions formulated to guide the study. The items are clustered according to each of the research questions and analysed. As stated above, the rating scale of Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D) was applied. However, in the presentation and interpretation in this chapter, the strongly agreed and agreed options as well as the strongly disagreed and disagreed options are grouped together and the percentages lumped together. Thus, there is only one percentage for each of A/SA and D/SD. The rationale for this is to rate the agreements together and rate the rejections together for ease of analyses.

Research Question 1: What language teaching methods do teachers of English in secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria use to teach?

Table 1: Use of language teaching method by teachers of English

Item statements	A	SA	%	D	SD	%
1. The audio-lingual method	62	40	20.5	211	184	79.5
2. The communicative language teaching	41	74	23.1	13	369	76.9
3. The grammar translation method	12	15	5.4	306	164	94.6
4. The aural-aural method	42	26	13.7	121	308	86.3

5. Cognitive-code learning theory	24	35	11.9	206	232	88.1
6. The play way method	160	84	49.1	196	57	50.9
7. The eclectic method	154	105	52.1	185	53	47.9
8. No particular method	312	96	82.1	63	26	17.9

Table 1 above presented data that sought to answer research question one. The question was on the type of language teaching method that teachers of English in South East Nigeria use in the language classroom. Data revealed that audio-lingual method has 79.5% rejection and only 20.5% agreement; communicative language teaching has 76.7% rejection and 23.3% agreement; grammar translation method has 94.6% rejection and only 5.4% agreement; aural-aural method has 86.3% rejection and 13.7% agreement; cognitive code learning theory has 88.1% rejection and 11.9% agreement; the play-way method has 50.9% rejection and 49.1% agreement; the eclectic method has 47.9% rejection and 52.1% agreement; and no particular method has 17.9% rejection and a whopping 82.1% agreement.

Research Question 2: What is the level of variation of language teaching methods by teachers of English in public secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria?

Table 2: Level of variation of language teaching method by teachers of English

Item statements	**A**	**SA**	**%**	**D**	**SD**	**%**
9. You use only one method while teaching a particular lesson.	164	91	51.3	60	182	48.7
10. There is no need to use more than one method to teach a particular lesson.	205	152	71.8	77	63	28.2
11. You switch to another method while teaching	74	123	39.6	56	244	60.4
12. You use two or more methods while teaching a lesson	217	25	48.7	68	187	51.3
13. Two methods are enough to teach any lesson	96	19	23.1	157	225	76.9
14. You use three different methods to teach a particular lesson	85	62	29.6	143	207	70.4
15. The methods you use in teaching depends on the topic you are teaching	122	178	60.4	71	126	39.6
16. You restrict yourself to particular methods when teaching particular topics	140	192	66.8	53	112	33.2
17. You switch methods as the occasion demands	149	24	34.8	206	118	65.2
18. There is no specific number of methods for any particular lesson	190	164	71.2	72		28.8

Table 2 presents data which sought to ascertain whether teachers of English in secondary schools in South east Nigeria vary the methods they use in teaching. Data reveal that more of the teachers sampled say that they use only one method in teaching (51.3%) and only 48.7% rejected the assertion; 71.8% agreed that there is no need to use more than one method to teach a particular lesson while only 28.2% rejected the assertion; only 39.6% agreed that they switch methods while teaching implying that they use more than one method but 60.4% rejected the assertion; 48.7% agreed that they use two or more methods in a particular lesson and 51.3% rejected the assertion; 23.1% accepted that the use of two methods is enough to teach a

lesson while 76.9% rejected the claim; only 29.6% of the population accepted that they apply three different methods in teaching a lesson while 70.4% rejected that they use three methods in teaching a lesson; on whether the methods they use depend on the topic they are teaching, 60.4% of the teachers accepted and only 39.6% of them rejected the assertion; many of the teachers (66.8%) agree that they restrict themselves to particular methods when teaching particular topics while only 33.2% rejected the claim; further, only 34.8% agreed that they switch methods according to the demands of the lessons and the majority of the respondents (65.2%) rejected the assertion implying that they do not switch methods irrespective of the demand of the lesson/situation; finally, 71.2% claim that there is really no specific number of methods meant for any particular topic while 28.8% rejected the claim.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of language teaching methods on the performance of secondary school students in Southeast Nigeria?

Table 3: Impact of language teaching methods used by teachers of English

Item statements	A	SA	%	D	SD	%
19. Students taught with only one method perform better in examinations	14	23	7.4	230	230	92.6
20. The performance of students does not depend on the methods used to teach them	11	15	5.2	302	169	94.8
21. The grades of students taught with diverse teaching methods are often better than those of students taught with only one method	122	261	77.1	40	74	22.9
22. Students taught with only one method perform poorly	180	179	72.2	56	82	27.8
23. Students taught without teaching methods perform better than those taught with teaching method	37	16	10.7	216	228	89.3
24. There is no difference in the performance of students taught with teaching methods and those taught without them	26	8	6.4	118	347	93.6

From table 3 above, data elicited information on the effects of language teaching methods on the performance of secondary school students in Southeast Nigeria. A vast majority of the respondents (92.6%) disagree that students with only one method perform better in examinations and only 7.4% agreed to the assertion; in addition, 94.8% agree that the performance of students does not depend on the number of methods used to teach them while only 5.2 % accepted that performance is greatly dependent on the methods used in teaching; however, many of the teachers sampled (77.1%) agree that the use of diverse teaching methods influence the performance of the learners since it is often found to be better than those taught with no or only one teaching method, only 22.9% rejected the assertion; to find out whether students taught with only one method perform poorly, 72.2% accepted while 27.8% rejected the assertion; only 10.7% agreed that students taught without teaching methods perform better than those taught with teaching method while 89.3% rejected the assertion; finally only 2.6% agree that there is no difference in the performance of

students taught with teaching methods and those taught without them while 93.6% reject the claim.

Summary of Findings

The following findings were obtained from the data presented in table and interpreted.

1. Teachers of English in secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria do not use any specific language teaching method.
2. Many of the teachers of English in secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria do not see the need to vary their methods. Except for the few who use a combination of jumbled-up methods, they do not generally vary their methods in teaching.
3. Non-use of language teaching methods negatively affects the teaching and learning of English as a second language in secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

The first research question sought information on the different language teaching methods that teachers of English in secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria apply in teaching. Out of all the language teaching methods presented, the eclectic method scored above 50% acceptance; the eclectic method (the application of different methods in the same lesson) had 52.1% agreement and 47.9% rejection. Another item that was generally accepted is the one on the application of no particular method (item 8); it has 82.1% acceptance and only 17.9% rejection. By implication, majority of teachers in secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria do not use any particular language teaching method when teaching. Other methods presented were audio-lingual method, communicative language teaching, grammar translation method, aural-aural method, cognitive code learning theory, and the play-way method; these were all rejected with more than 50% rejection in each case.

From the foregoing, though several language teaching methods are available to the teacher of English in secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria, many of them prefer to either teach with no particular teaching method or apply a little aspect of many methods in a single lesson. In order to achieve their goals, teachers of English are expected to have clear ideas of the best methods to employ in the classroom especially with the differences and complexities inherent in learners. Data has shown that this is not always the case; this could be as a result of lack of knowledge of the teaching methods or over familiarity with the topics.

The second research question was concerned with whether teachers of English in secondary schools in South east Nigeria vary the methods they use in teaching. Data reveal that majority of the teachers sampled use only one method in teaching (51.3%) and only 48.7% rejected the assertion. In fact, 71.8% feel that there is no need to use more than one method to teach a particular lesson. This indicates that when the teachers use any method at all, they do not vary the method to suit the need (judging by the 65.2% that rejected the assertion in item 17 that asked whether the teachers switch methods as the situation/topic demands). In addition, 60.4% of the teachers aver that the methods they use depend on the topic they are teaching and that they restrict themselves to particular methods when teaching particular topics. In other words,

the personality and specifics needs of the learners are not considered when deciding on the language teaching methods to use in teaching.

From table three, which presented data on the effects of language teaching methods on the performance of secondary school students in Southeast Nigeria, evidence showed that only two out of the six items scored above 50% indicating that the majority of the items were rejected. To elucidate further, 92.6%disagreed that students with only one method perform better in examinations; 94.8% rejected that the performance of students does not depend on the number of methods used to teach them; 89.3% rejected the assertion that students taught without teaching methods perform better than those taught with teaching method; and 93.6% rejected the claim that there is no difference in the performance of students taught with teaching methods and those taught without them. In addition, many of the teachers sampled (77.1%) agree that the use of diverse teaching methods influence the performance of the learners since it is often found to be better than those taught with no or only one teaching method and 72.2% affirm that students taught with only one method perform poorly while only 27.8% rejected the assertion.

Conclusion

The study assessed the use and impacts of language teaching methods on the performance of secondary school students in English examinations in Southeast Nigeria. Given the importance of the English language in Nigeria, it is appalling to note that effort is not made to ensure that the subject is taught properly in Nigerian schools. English is taught by both qualified and unqualified personnel who strive to cover their syllabuses regardless of the means they adopt. By so doing, results may go either way – students may pass too well or they may fail drastically. This study concluded that analysing the levels of learners' learning abilities in order to decide the best method to apply in teaching is a good way of improving performance of students in English in secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

- The study recommends strenuous supervision of academic activities in secondary schools in Ebonyi State by both internal and external authorities to ensure that teachers of English use adequate language teaching methods in instruction. Without proper supervision, activities in schools will be chaotic.
- It is expedient that workshops be organized for teachers of English to refresh their language teaching skills and enable them also, to be up-to-date on the traditional and modern language teaching methods.
- Mentorship programs should be organized to enable more experienced teachers of English mentor younger teachers to enable them grow on the job and apply the right kinds of language teaching methods.

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