

Full Length Research

Teaching English for Communication: Pedagogy and Performance in Selected Secondary Schools in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

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This study investigated the pedagogy and performance in teaching English for communication in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This study adopted qualitative and quasi-experimental design of test-retest method. A sample of 150 students participated in the experiment. The study was conducted in three secondary schools in Ado Ekiti. Using purposive random sampling technique, 75 students were selected for experimental and control groups respectively. Questionnaire and self-structured tests were used as instruments for data collection. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentage frequency count and mean to provide answer to the research questions and inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation for test of hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed the methods commonly used by English language teachers as direct method, grammar translation method, total physical response method and lexical approach among others. These methods were found to be teacher-centered and do not enhance students' better performance in English communication. It was therefore recommended that there should be organization of regular seminars, workshops and conferences for teachers on how to use communicative teaching method and motivate students' classroom participation through purposeful class activities.

Key Words: Communication, Pedagogy, Performance, English Method, Language Teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

English Language is the most important legacy from the British to Nigeria, the barometer with which we measure the quality and quantity of education possessed by a speaker or writer, a veritable tool for internal and external communication and of course a passport to educational advancement and prestigious employment (Eyisi, 2004). It is therefore not surprising that much

attention and resources continue to be devoted to its teaching in Nigerian schools. Egah and Yarhwa (2016) assert that English language plays a crucial role in a multilingual society like Nigeria. Without it, social interaction, education and the rule of law would have been a difficult endeavour right from the primary level.

The unquantifiable role of English Language according

to Ugwadu (2011) allows Nigerians access to new and constantly emerging discoveries among the global academic community. Moreover, Alexander et al (2014) opines that English Language is an official language in Nigeria and one of the core subjects in the secondary school curriculum. Facility in English does not only confer communicative advantage but it provides access to information and further education. Thus, according to Obadare et al (2017), the importance of the acquisition of English Language skills in the economic, political, academic and social lives of Nigerians cannot be overstressed. Hence, its proper teaching and learning become imperative not only to achieve the aim of passing examinations but to communicate well at all situations using either its written or spoken form.

The fact remains that the Nigerian National Policy on education has given prominence to the English language as a medium of instruction at all levels of education in the country and that the language is a means of teaching itself as well as other subjects in the school timetable. In spite of these roles of English, its teaching and learning have been faced with numerous challenges. This has resulted in mass failure in the subject every year in the School Certificate Examination. Adebajo (2009) asserts that mass failure of students in school certificate examination and failure to attain a credit pass in English, has become an issue of great concern of language scholars. It is even more disturbing to find that communicative competence is wanting in the English of quite a lot of students that pass through the Nigerian secondary schools.

Views on the Communicative Teaching of English in Nigerian Schools

According to Tafida and Dalhatu (2014) English plays a dual role of being a subject and a medium of instruction in Nigerian schools. This emphasizes the importance of its communicative teaching as stipulated in the National Policy on Education and buttressed by Nwoke (1987). The overall purpose of language teaching and learning is to build in the learners the capacity to communicate in it. This involves making use of various resources and activities that would guarantee effective teaching and learning. However, in some of our schools (particularly, public secondary schools) the use of appropriate resources and activities to achieve communicative language teaching and learning is fictional (Nwoke, 1987).

The ultimate goal of the prescribed English language curriculum at the secondary school level should be that the students that were taught with the curriculum would be academically, linguistically and communicatively competent in social contexts beyond the school system. But the outcome has been contrary in that there has been

decline in both communicative and linguistic competence of the learners of English as a second language.

Developing effective communication should be one of the major reasons for learning the English language and this is not just about having the knowledge of English as a language but to be able to interact with others using appropriate language in different situations (Deji-Afuye, 2014). However, it is saddening to note, according to Amuseghan (2007) that at the secondary school level more emphasis has been placed on *passing* English rather than *mastering* all its aspects for better and intelligible social interactions. Thus, the teaching pedagogies have always been such that emphasize examination-oriented English learning. According to Obanya (2002:204), "In ideal situations there would be a perfect match between what is prescribed, what is practiced, and consequently what is achieved (outcome)".

When speaking about students' performance in English communication, a lot of variables such as the methods used by teachers, students' motivation, classroom interactions, class size, and the curriculum come to play. However, part of the key variables on students' outcome must be the teacher and the teaching pedagogy. Developing learners' communicative competence is the main responsibility of a teacher of English. Tswana (2009) asserts that even though the teaching of English Language, like other subjects, is benefitting from the application of modern technology, its application in Nigeria is yet to take off in many of our schools. Teachers still use the old, obsolete methods; teaching and learning materials are inadequate and are seriously affecting teachers' motivation to work. A more serious problem is that many teachers are not grounded in any philosophy of language or teaching methodology.

As obtained from scholarly researches, English teaching and learning in our public schools is dominated by the following:

1. Over-reliance on textbooks and English as a second language (ESL) course books (Ohia and Adeosun, 2002).
2. Teacher-centred method of teaching (Ogunniyi and Famuyiwa, 2011).
3. The motivation to pass English and having no intent to master it (Obanya, 2002).
4. The inability to use the available local materials as teaching aids (Ogunniyi and Famuyiwa, 2011).

English Teaching Methods

Teaching methods as identified by 2018 INTESOL Worldwide Ltd. include the following:

1. Direct Method: This method is also known as the

natural method. It focuses mainly on teaching oral skill and teaching is done via repetitive drillings. Grammar is taught through inductive way and through teacher's oral presentation. The method equally focuses on vocabulary teaching.

2. Grammar Translation: It is grammar intense and relies much on translation. It is the traditional or classical way of learning a language. With this rule the students can learn all grammar and are able to translate a number of sentences.
3. Total Physical Response: This follows the ideas of learning by doing. It is usually ideal for beginners because they are able to learn through a series of repetitive actions like "Stand up", "Sit down", "Open your book", "Walk to the door and close it". It teaches *aural* comprehension. This helps develop learners' listening skill.
4. Silent Way: Emphasizes learner autonomy; Teacher says very little; students can take control of their learning.
5. Lexical Approach: Focuses on vocabulary acquisition and teaching lexical chunks in order of their frequent use.
6. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): The idea behind this approach is to help learners communicate effectively and correctly in realistic situations. It focuses on functions like suggesting, thanking, inviting, complaining and asking for directions etc. It also involves classroom discussion. This approach is a move-away from the traditional and classical way of learning a language. It emphasizes communication and demand that learners be placed on realistic situations requiring meaningful communicative interaction. It places more emphasis on the fact that communication is the aim in using language.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It has been observed that most students have communication apprehension and they are never helped or trained to overcome it. Even after completing their M.A. in English, some still find it difficult or uncomfortable to speak in English. It is saddening to note that there have been persistent errors in the spoken and written output of most literate Nigerians regardless of their levels. This poor performance has actually been passed on from primary school level to secondary school and this follow them to the universities. Eventually, many graduates are produced who cannot express themselves well or comfortably in English. There have been a number of causative factors some of which are teachers' incompetency, inadequate resources needed to teach communicative skills, teacher-centred classrooms rather than student-centred, lack of adequate motivation for

students' oral participation in classroom discussion, tendency for students to prefer using their mother tongue to interact rather than using English etc. Therefore, this study aims at investigating the strategies used by teachers of English to teach English in schools and how suitable or effective these strategies are to achieve students' competence and performance in English communication.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the English teaching methods commonly used by English language teachers?
2. What is the level of teachers' pedagogical competencies in improving students' performances in English communication?
3. Is there any significant effect of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on the performance of students in English communication?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant relationship between commonly used methods and teachers' pedagogical competencies
2. There is no significant difference between the communicative performance of students taught using Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT) and those taught using conventional methods.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted qualitative and quasi-experimental design of test-retest method. A sample of 75 students were used as experimental group and 75 students as control group selected among secondary school students in Ado-Ekiti using purposive random sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 30 English Language teachers. Questionnaire and self-structured test, classroom observation and oral interview were used as instruments for data collection. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentage frequency count and mean to provide answer to the research questions and inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation and t-test for test of hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Findings

Research Question 1: What are the English teaching pedagogies commonly used by English language teachers?

Table 1: English teaching pedagogies commonly used by English language teachers

English Teaching Methods	Frequently	Occasionally	Not at all
Classroom Observation & Oral Interview			
i. Vocabulary Drillings	25 (83.3%)	5 (16.7%)	0 (0)
ii. Grammar Translation	18 (60.0%)	12 (40.0%)	0 (0)
iii. Functional Language Drillings/ Communicative Language teaching (CLT)	0 (0)	5 (16.7%)	25 (83.3%)
iv. Aural/Oral Drillings	18 (60.0%)	7 (23.7%)	0 (0)
Mean Weight	16 (53.3%)	8 (26.7%)	6 (20%)

Table 2: Level of Teachers' Pedagogical competencies in improving students' performances in English communication

Competencies	High	Moderate	Low
Language Proficiency	9 (30%)	18 (60%)	3 (10%)
Content/Subject Matter Knowledge	0 (0)	22 (73.3%)	8 (26.7%)
Teaching Skills	10 (33.3%)	14 (46.7%)	6 (20%)
Average Percent	21.1%	60.0%	18.9%

The responses presented in Table 1 revealed that many of the teachers (53.3% of them) indicated that they frequently make use of the identified English teaching pedagogies (vocabulary drillings, grammar translation and aural/oral drilling) in their classroom teaching while 26.7% indicated that they occasionally make use of the methods and only 20% indicated that they do not make use of the pedagogies to teach students. The table revealed that vocabulary drillings (83.3%) is the most frequently used pedagogy followed by grammar translation and aural/oral drillings. It was revealed in the table that few of the teachers (16.7% of them) indicated that they occasionally make use of functional language drillings/CLT for teaching, whereas 83.3% of the teachers indicated that they do not make use of CLT pedagogy. This implies that CLT pedagogy of teaching is not commonly used to teach English Language. From the researcher's interview with secondary school teachers, it was deduced that many of the teachers were not exposed to the usage of this pedagogy.

Research Question 2: What is the level of teachers' pedagogical competencies in improving students' performances in English communication?

The result presented in Table 2 revealed that the level of teachers' pedagogical competencies in terms of language proficiency, content/subject matter knowledge and teaching skills was moderate as there was an average 60% indication from the teachers. This shows that

teachers were fair in their level of competence in the teaching of English communication.

Research Question 3: Is there any significant effect of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on the performance of students in English communication?

The analysis revealed in Table 3 above showed that students' performance in communication skills in the conventional group was fair in the pre-test and post-test scores as aggregate mean score of was 8.68 and 8.98 were observed. This is an indication that no significant improvement was observed among students in the conventional group. However, students that were exposed to treatment using CLT performed well after treatment as their mean scores improved from 10.39 to 17.38. This implies that CLT have effect on students' performances in English communication.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between commonly used methods and teachers' pedagogical competencies.

The result of analysis presented in Table 4 revealed that the relationship between commonly used method of teaching and teachers' pedagogical competencies (TPC). It was found that the relationship between vocabulary

Table 3: Mean scores for effect of CLT on students' performances in English communication

Groups	Conventional Method		Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Method	
	Pre-test	Post-Test	Pre-test	Post-Test
Reading	7.80	7.82	8.20	17.90
Writing	12.01	12.05	13.74	16.42
Speaking	6.87	6.99	9.60	16.98
Listening	8.04	9.08	10.05	18.23
Aggregate Mean	8.68	8.98	10.39	17.38

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Coefficient for relationship between commonly used methods and teachers' pedagogical competencies

		Vocabulary Drillings	Grammar Translation	Functional Language Drillings/CLT	Aural/Oral Drillings	Teachers' Pedagogical Competencies
Vocabulary Drillings	Pearson Correlation	1	.223*	.180**	.384**	.205**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010	.000	.000	.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30
Grammar Translation	Pearson Correlation	.223*	1	.199**	.351**	.114**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010		.000	.000	.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30
Functional Language Drillings/CLT	Pearson Correlation	.180**	.199**	1	.395**	.376**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30
Aural/Oral Drillings	Pearson Correlation	.384**	.351**	.395**	1	.226**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30
Teachers' Pedagogical Competencies	Pearson Correlation	.205**	.114**	.376**	.226**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	30	30	30	30	30

drillings & TPC, grammar translation & TPC, CLT & TPC and aural/oral drillings & TPC was low as r-coefficients were less than 0.40. However, the P-value (0.000) was less than 0.05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of the hypothesis. This means that there was relationship between method commonly used and teachers' pedagogical competencies but the relationship was not significant.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between

the communicative performance of students taught using Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT) and those taught using other methods.

The result of analysis in table 5 revealed that t-calculated (4.06) was greater than t-table (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. This led to rejection of null hypothesis two. Hence, there was significant difference between the communicative performance of students taught using communicative language teaching method and those

Table 5: t-test for difference between the communicative performance of students taught using CLT method and those taught using other methods.

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	t-cal	t-tab
CLT Method	105	17.38	4.46	148	4.06	1.96
Other Methods	45	8.98	2.85			

P<0.05 (Sig.)

taught using other methods. The mean score of those taught English using CLT method (17.38) was higher than the mean score of those taught using other methods (8.98). This means that those taught English language using CLT method performed better than those in the conventional group.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study suggest that the English teaching methods commonly used by teachers of English as found through teachers classroom observation and oral interview with the teacher are direct method (vocabulary drillings, aural/oral drillings) and grammar translation which are used by the teachers in order to meet up with the content of the curriculum. These methods mostly focus on meeting a descriptive standard which examination-oriented English curriculum emphasizes. Hence, the overall aim of language teaching which is to produce the capacity to develop learners' communicative skills in the second language according to Nwoke (1987) is not actually achieved. Nwoke (1987: 11) further says "Regrettably, a number of activities in our language textbooks carried out by English language teachers and students do not conform to the true nature of communication". This finding is in line with Amuseghan's (2007) assertion that language use relates to many varieties of knowledge which no one has ever endeavoured to squeeze into textbooks or grammar.

Moreover, the result also revealed that teachers of English are fair in their level of pedagogical competence in terms of language proficiency, content/subject matter knowledge and teaching skills in the teaching of English communication. This may be as a result of the fact that the teachers are not really oriented toward teaching English for communication. There has been much dependence on textbooks as the absolute teaching and learning materials, recitation and imitation reading, lack of oracy in language teaching and learning, teaching the students to motivate them to pass English rather than to master it. These challenges are contrary to the outcome of the ESL curriculum in Nigerian secondary schools (Obanya, 2002). From the oral interview conducted by the researchers, a greater number of the teachers agreed that English teaching methods are usually determined by the aspects of the language to be taught. However, not

much consideration is given to the teaching and learning of communication skills that could lead to good and intelligible language use in realistic social situations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that vocabulary drillings, grammar translation and aural/oral drillings were frequently used among English teachers. However, CLT method was occasionally used by few teachers and majority of the teachers do not make use of it. This was because teachers were not so much exposed to the use of CLT. Also, the relationship between methods commonly used method of teaching and teachers' pedagogical competence was low, resulting into poor communicative skills among the students. However, when students were taught English language using CLT method, the performance of students was improved. Hence, students that were taught English language using CLT performed significantly better in their use of all the language skills than their counterparts in the conventional group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made.

1. English teachers should be made to undergo training on how to effectively teach English language by using Communicative Language Teaching method in order to improve students' ability in communicative skills.
2. Teachers can also read helpful literatures on effective methods for communicative and interactive language teaching in order to widen their knowledge and competencies in the teaching of the English Language.
3. Curriculum designers should incorporate into the designed curriculum all resources and activities that can aid teaching and learning of communication skills.
4. Textbooks can be designed in such a way that they will accommodate useful resources and activities that can aid functional language drillings in the whole class situation.

5. Teachers should not continue to rely solely on the use of textbooks as absolute teaching and learning materials but learn to use the available local materials as well.
6. Learners should be motivated to participate in the classroom interaction through purposeful class activities.
7. There should be more learner-centered than teacher-centered method of teaching.
8. Learners should be motivated to pass English and as well master it for better and intelligible communication in realistic contexts.
9. Since language is naturally acquired in its social context through interaction, learners should be encouraged to use the target language through interaction in the family and larger society.

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