

The English Language as a vehicle for teaching and learning in Nigerian Schools

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ARTICLE INFO	Abstract
Keywords: <i>English Language, Teaching, Learning, School.</i> ©2025 Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International 	<i>The researcher surveyed the role of the English language as a vehicle for teaching in Nigerian Schools. The research concentrated on basic schools in Anambra State. 10 primary schools were used as sample populations which were selected randomly in Orumba South. The researcher visited those schools and interviewed both teachers and pupils using three research questions which served as guides. She recorded her observations and findings. The qualifications of teachers and their ability to teach well were also researched upon. It was discovered that the area of specialization of a teacher plays a vital role in the effective delivery of his lessons. Also, his mastery of the English language helps a lot in his teaching. Some recommendations were made which would help to improve teaching and learning at the basic level of education in Nigeria. The researcher used observation and oral interview, collection and analysis of data as research design.</i>

Introduction

The English language has become an indispensable tool in teaching and learning at all the levels of education in Nigeria. It was officially accepted as the language of communication in Nigeria in 1862 and as the official language for teaching and learning in 1882. No meaningful communication can take place in Nigeria without the English language. This is as a result of the multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic nature of the country. Recent language research by some linguists reveals that there are about five hundred different linguistic communities in Nigeria.

Igboanusi, (2021, p.76) records that without the use of English for official communication, there will be numerous difficulties for the existence of Nigerians as people from one country. He further explains that man as a social being needs to have a harmonious means of communication for him to exist and relate with other members in his society.

Biola, (2020, p.94) observes that as formal education entails teaching and learning in a formal setting such as school, both the teacher and the learner need to understand one another language which serves as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge. He states that such a vehicular language should be the English language. According to him, the teacher should use the level of the English language which should be understood by the learners. The teacher's inability to use English well can inhibit mutual communication which is very important for teaching and learning to take place. In basic levels of education in Nigeria, one can notice that our educational policy doesn't make provision for teachers to teach the subjects they specialize on. One therefore finds out that in the primary schools, teachers teach all the subjects to their classes irrespective of their academic qualification. This is very dangerous to the acquisition of qualitative education because nobody gives what he has not. It will be very difficult for a teacher who studied mathematics at the university to teach English effectively in the primary schools. This constitutes a serious danger to our educational system because a house built on a weak foundation is bound to collapse.

The government would recognize the importance of having teachers who are qualified in their areas of specialization to teach their subjects and concentrate on those subjects instead of having a teacher who specializes in one subject teaching twelve subjects at the basic levels.

Statement of Problem

The English language is learnt as a second language in Nigeria. It is enshrined in the national policy on education as the official language for teaching and learning of all subjects from the upper primary to tertiary institutions.

Unfortunately, a lot of problems are facing the teaching and learning of English Language as a second language in Nigeria. Some of these problems include the following: Lack of adequate qualified teachers of English, especially at the basic levels of the primary schools and even secondary schools, lack of adequate instructional materials, lack of enough and conducive teaching environment, lack of impressive motivation of teachers, Mother tongue interference into the effective teaching and learning of English.

The major theme of statement of problem, therefore, is lack of effective communicability and comprehensibility of the English language among teachers and pupils at the basic level of education in Nigeria. It is very important to notice that some of the teachers who teach all the subjects the basic level of education in Nigeria are not qualified to teach those subjects, especially English. We end up getting teachers who are jack of all trades but master of none and their products end up learning the wrong concepts which are very dangerous to the effective development and acquisition of qualitative education in our country.

Significance of the study:

This study will help the government who are the educational policy makers and the teachers who are the educational implementers to appreciate the importance of qualified teachers teaching the courses they specialized in. Again, they should appreciate the idea and importance of every teacher being proficient and good in English because it is the official language for teaching and learning of all the subjects in the schools, starting from upper primary.

Purpose of the study:

This study is aimed at finding out the effects of teachers' academic qualification on effective delivery of lessons at the basic levels of education in Nigeria. It is also aimed at finding out the importance of the English language to effective delivery of lessons at the basic levels of education in Nigeria.

Scope of the study:

This study concentrated on the upper primary schools in Anambra State.

Area of Study: The study was carried out in some upper primary schools in Orumba South.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study –

- (1) How far has teacher's educational qualifications affected his effective teaching and learning?
- (2) To what extent does the teacher's mastery of English or competence in English affect his effective delivery of his lesson at the upper primary in Anambra State.
- (3) How far has the method of one teacher teaching all the subjects enhanced effective teaching and learning at the upper primary schools in Anambra State.

Literature review

The literature for this research was reviewed under three sub-headings namely – conceptual framework, theoretical framework and empirical studies.

1. *Education*
2. *Teaching*
3. *Learning*
4. *Basic school*

Conceptual Framework

Some key words in the topic which should be treated as conceptual framework include:

Education-

This concept has been defined in various ways by various educationists. Eze (2018 p.6) defines education as the process by which the teacher impacts worthwhile knowledge to the learner. He explains that there are two types of education namely, informal education which the learner acquires at home in his environment and formal education which the learner learns in a formal setting under the direction of a teacher. Okoli (2021p.66) notes that through education, the learner learns useful knowledge, like skills, attitudes and values which help him to contribute towards the development of a society.

Teacher-

This is a very important concept in formal education. Ibeanyu (2021p.77) defines a teacher as one who impacts knowledge to a learner. He states that a good teacher should be knowledgeable, competent, skillful, here adequate morality, ability to impact useful knowledge to the learner so as to make him a functional member of his society. This concept has been defined in various ways by some educationists. Ereaimade P.74 defined teaching as a process of giving out knowledge from a teacher to a learner. He explained that for effective teaching to take place, the teacher should be prepared and the learner should also be prepared. The preparedness of a teacher and learner must take into consideration their psychological, mental and physical alertness.

Learning-

This is the process of acquiring knowledge. In teaching and learning curriculum planners should make sure that the knowledge to be acquired should be the one that will help the learner to be self-reliant and self-employed after graduation. It is important that the curriculum of the basic level of education should be structured in such a way that it gives the learner a strong foundation which will help him to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in his area of specialization. Igboaja (2021 p.66) defines learning as the process of acquiring knowledge from the learner to the teacher. He explains that learning can take place through informal means by the learner unconsciously imitating the teacher. Learning can also take place though official and formal means by which the learner consciously grabs what he has been taught by his teacher. According to him, maximum learning can take place when the learner is in a maximum comfortable environment and has a maximum drive that can push or motivate him to learn. The educational implication of this is that both the government who are the educational planners and the teachers implementers should ensure that the learner should be comfortable and ready before effective learning takes place

School-

This is a place particularly built for teaching and learning. Agbionu (2021p.74) defines school as a place built and organized for formal education to take place. She maintains that there are certain vital things that are expected to be seen in a well-organized school. Such things include,

teachers, learners, learning materials, classes, fields for physical activities, gardens for practical agriculture, first aid boxes and equipment, toilets and facilities, chairs, offices for the head teacher and teachers, library, scheme of work etc.

Basic school-

This is concerned with primary schools. There are normally two levels in a basic school, namely, Upper primary and Lower primary. Scheme of work is a very important document in a school. It contains what should be taught at every part of the year in each class. The scheme of work should be planned in such a way that the age range, sex, social background etc. of the learners should be considered.

Theoretical framework

The theory that serves as a framework for this study is the theory of innovative education. Innovative education is a process of education and innovative training which contributes to the development of creative abilities, self learning and improvement. This is to ensure that man's innate tendencies are developed. It is a multi- component social activity. Fresso (2011, p. 62) states that innovation in professional education is the integral content of technical and technological, pedagogical, socio-economic innovation. Innovation in education is a multi-component social activity that includes the process of developing progressive innovations in the method of education. It also includes transforming the technology that implements them as well as introducing them into the methodology and practical pedagogy so as to have a progressive effect. Khutorskoy (2020 p.70) opines the three components of the innovation process. This gave room to the development and application Innovation. The aim of innovative education is to the advance of human development as a very important part of social activity.

Empirical studies

Some scholars have made certain postulations concerning how to improve teacher education in Nigeria for sustainable development. There -is no gain-saying the fact that teacher education is a very vital aspect of the education of any country. Teachers play a very indispensable role in determining the fate of the youths of any country. Okeke (2021 p.69) maintains that without a strong educational policy, any country will find it difficult to survive, especially at this age of science and technology. He goes on to lament that Nigeria's educational system and policy are not something to write home about. Consequently, this has affected all the aspects of the lives of her citizens. According to him, Nigeria's educational system produces only people with emphasis on paper qualification. The products of the Nigerian educational system roam about the street, jobless, because emphasis was only on the theoretical aspects of their courses. Oyekan (2020, p. 76) notes that teacher education should produce qualified professionals in teaching who can adjust to the challenging needs of the society by training out professionals different aspects of their lives.

The goals of teacher education as stipulated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) as contained in the *National Policy on Education* are to produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system, encourage and further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers, help teachers to fit into the social life of the community at large and enhance their commitment to national goals. Commenting on the state of teacher education in Nigeria, Emelife (2021, p 70) records that teacher education is faced with a myriad of problems which have hampered the achievement of its goals as contained in the National Policy on Education. He further observes that some of the problems that are facing teacher education in Nigeria include: Lack of enough funds to provide all that is needed for the achievement of qualitative education, lack of effective scheme of work that will help in training out functional teachers, lack of motivation of teachers by the government

Method of data collection /analysis

The researcher undertook a field, investigation and observation in the primary schools in Orumba South. These schools include:

- 1) Primary School Ezira
- 2) Primary school Isulo
- 3) Primary school Ihite
- 4) Primary school Eziagu
- 5) Primary school Ogbunka
- 6) Primary school Owerre-Ezukala
- 7) Primary school Ajalli
- 8) Primary school Ogboji
- 9) Primary school Akpu
- 10) Primary school Umunze

The researcher visited these schools and had oral interviews with both the teachers and the pupils in the upper primary 4. She also observed some teachers as they taught some subjects, like English language, Social Studies, Mathematics and Elementary science. The outcome of the observations was recorded as well as the responses from the sample teachers and pupils.

Analysis of the Findings-

The researcher analyzed the observation, and the followings findings were made.

In teaching and learning, the teachers do not have strong command of the English language which is the official language for teaching and learning. Consequently, they find it difficult to have effective communication. The teaching and learning were therefore not effective and successful. This was reflected on the inability of the students to answer their questions correctly during evaluation. Again, some teachers use vernacular, code-switching and code-mixing in teaching. The researcher also observed that some teachers who taught the subjects that they did not specialize in did not do well in teaching them. Nobody gives what he does not have.

Conclusion:

Education is the process of imparting knowledge in a learner by a teacher. Without education, no country can boast of a meaningful development. Teachers are very important in the process of formal education. Any country that wants to have a meaningful development should pay their teachers very well, especially those at the basic levels.

The positive qualities of teachers especially those at the basic levels of education in Nigeria are very important. Teachers should serve as role models for their pupils. They should live exemplary lives and impart same to their pupils. They should be academically and morally sound, knowing full well that pupils look up to them and even value them more than their parents. They should have a very good command of the English language which is the vehicle for teaching and learning.

The basic level teacher should always prepare his lessons well and provide adequate teaching materials. He should use adequate teaching methodology and ensure that his lesson is interesting and to the level of the pupils. He should ask the pupils questions and entertain their questions as the lessons progresses. He should use adequate motivation and should try the much he can to avoid use punishment because it demoralizes the pupils. Positive reinforcement is preferred to negative reinforcement.

Recommendation:

The researcher makes the following recommendations which should help to achieve effective teaching and learning at the basic levels of education in Nigeria.

- 1) The government should ensure that enough qualified teachers are posted to primary schools in Nigeria. No teacher should be allowed to teach the subject he did not qualify in. The present method of allowing a teacher to teach all the subjects in a class should be discontinued.
- 2) All the teachers in the upper primary should be knowledgeable in the English language, since it is the official language of instruction in Nigerian schools as enshrined in the *National Policy on Education*.
- 3) Impressive incentives should be given to all teachers in Nigeria, especially those at the basic levels. This will help them to put more interest and attention to their work.
- 4) The curriculum planners should make sure that the content of the curriculum and scheme of work should be practical and skill oriented so that the learners should be self-employed after graduation.
- 5) Regular conferences, seminars and workshops should be organized for teachers to help them upgrade and update their knowledge as education is dynamic and changes with time.

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