

## **Problems Militating against Effective Teaching and Learning of English Language in Aba North Lga, Abia State**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

There are so many problems confronting the effective teaching and learning of English Language in many areas in Nigeria. The research study was based on the problems militating against effective teaching and learning of English Language in secondary schools in Aba North L.G.A of Abia State. The study involved a sample size of five hundred (500) teachers and five hundred (500) students. The sample was selected by stratified random sample techniques using table of random numbers from student's population of seven thousand, four hundred and sixty five (7,465) and teachers population of five hundred (500) in the (10) secondary schools in the L.G.A. Data were collected using the researchers self-constructed questionnaires to obtain information from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using frequency distribution and mean to the answer the four research questions posed. Result indicated that all problems facing effective teaching and learning of English Language are lack of instructional materials, lack of appropriate methods, unqualified teachers, and non-conducive environment. Furthermore, the research findings showed that the effective use of instructional materials, appropriate methods of teaching, conducive environment, qualified teachers are essential for effective teaching and learning of English Language. Ministry of Education, Directors and Proprietors of secondary schools should endeavor to employ teachers who are highly qualified.

**Key words:** Teaching, Learning, English Language, Unqualified Teachers, Instructional Materials, Teaching Methods.

### **Introduction**

In Nigeria, English language has been essential for official and social interactions since the colonial era. The English was taught to local servants mostly at that time to prepare them for domestic tasks, which naturally led to a concentration on spoken English instead of written English or both. But with time, a new class of people—civilian servants, in particular—appeared with new roles in the colonial administration, and teaching and learning approaches for the language which started to shift accordingly.

As Nigeria started to communicate with other British colonies and African residents, written English gained popularity (Edward, 2003). It was determined that this was crucial. The language that is spoken by the majority of people worldwide these days is English. English is

the language that is spoken the most around the world, (Ezugu, 1995). In several nations, it is utilized as a second or major language.

In addition to pop culture, it is the language of pop culture, international diplomacy, world trade, administration, and law. So long as someone does not deny themselves access to the best ideas and cutting-edge technology available, it is worthwhile to need proficiency in this crucial language.

English is still the primary language of instruction in Nigeria today. Without a sufficient command of the language, students will find it difficult to advance academically in their studies. The majority of courses in primary, secondary, and university education are taught and assessed in English. This calls for the creation of a system that is both basic and practical in its design. This is crucial because, when students pick up a new language, they frequently lack the skills necessary to articulate their ideas in writing (Umaru, 2005). Nigerian language instruction was riddled with flaws. The primary cause of these shortcomings may be attributed to the inadequate training received by our English teachers.

A situation, in which a language teacher lacks knowledge of its grammatical categories, such as we see today, is bad news for the system. Also remarking on similar issues confronting language teachers, (Theodore, 2001) emphasized that language acquisition required extensive time, patience, and practice in order to perfect. (Regner et al., 2001) discovered that many successful teachers are adaptable rather than rigid in their approach to instructing students and are only loosely based on a certain methodology at their school.

The methodology here refers to the method by which the teachers presents his or her materials to the learners engages them in the tasks at hand. Methodology is vital for every teaching-learning to take place; the skillful teacher needs to use many different methods and techniques at his command. Even though there is a great diversity in teaching methods and techniques, there is one that can be regarded as the best for every teaching situation. This is however assumed that a carefully designed method can work in orders to make learning more effective.

Okebukola (2005) opined that problems also arise from the fact that grammar of English is different from those of the indigenous Nigerian Languages. These problems are common to both spoken and written English and since performance in both cases is based on the grammar of English. As the difficulties arise with number, concord, gender and tense particularly sequence of tenses, none of which is overtly expressed in most Nigeria languages. These problems concern both the students and teachers. However, majority of

school teachers have an insufficient command of English to be able to teach it effectively. Teachers with insufficient subject knowledge have very little confidence. Lack of subject knowledge is one of the main causes of the present problems in teaching English in primary schools and secondary respectively.

Another problem is that teachers are not assisted with teaching materials. The teaching materials involve the dominance of textbooks, dictionaries, chalkboards, workbooks, flash cards which are used in the teaching of English language in secondary schools. There are lack of instructional resources such as textbooks, dictionaries, workbooks and flash cards in schools. Through findings of Kolawole (1998) the teaching of English Language is bedeviled with problems such as inadequate and useful resources.

The teachers of English language in some secondary schools in Aba North LGA, in Abia State ,deprive their students of academic success due to lack of good instructional materials. Additionally, English Language teachers in public secondary schools in Aba North are still the chief performer and dispensers of knowledge in the classroom. However, with the coming of the new instructional technologies, Galliher et al. (1995) asserted that teachers' roles are beginning to change. Paris (2002) also stated that the teachers role as the 'sage on stage' who dispense knowledge will shift to a role in which teachers are facilitators of learning when technology is integrated into the school curriculum with the application of modern technology in the classroom , instruction can be made students-centered and individualized.

The students at the secondary level is expected to communicate effectively in writing using English language but regrettably, some secondary schools particularly the public schools in Aba North LGA are suffering some effects and neglects. Lack of qualified teachers equipped to groom the students, a disjointed teaching methods, unavailability of instructional materials seem to be a major problem these schools face. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to investigate the problems militating against effective teaching and learning of English language in Aba North LGA in Abia State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study is to find out the problems militating against effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Aba North Local Government of Abia State, specifically the objectives of the study are to find out;

1. If unqualified teachers constitute a problem militating against effective teaching and learning of English language in the secondary school in the area of study.

2. Whether lack of instructional materials constitute a problem militating against effective teaching and learning of English language in the study area.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does unqualified teachers constitute a problem militating against effective teaching and learning of English language in the area of study?
2. To what extent does the lack of instructional materials constitute a problem militating against effective English language teaching and learning in the study area?

### **Methodology**

The study was a survey which adopted an ex-post-facto design. This is because the events have already taken place and the researcher cannot control the variables. The population of the study was 500 teachers and 7465 students in the 17 senior secondary schools in Aba North Area in Abia State which were located in six community area of Aba North; Eziam, Ogbo, Uratta, Umuokji, Umola, Oknpulo and Osusu.

The sample consists of 500 teachers and 500 students. The stratified random sampling technique was adopted in choosing the teachers and students sampled. The school population was first grouped according to the six community area and 20% of the teachers and students population in the school was chosen as sample by the table of random numbers.

The instrument for data collection is a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Effective Teaching and Learning of English language in Secondary Schools" and it was categorized into section A and B. Section A obtained information from students and section B for teachers. The respondents namely, teachers and students indicate their level of agreement on the factors militating against effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary school in the study area by ticking (✓) the scale which was rated Strongly Agree(SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) and weighted (4) (3) (2) (1) respectively. The factors covered in the instrumentation are systematic approach, cumulative nature, comprehensiveness, guidance-oriented and in-service training.

The instrument constructed was given to the researcher's supervisor for necessary correction to ensure free validity, content validity was also done on the instrument by item analysis. The reliability of the instrument was determined by the retest method, as a trial test was done using ten students in Aba North zone who were not part of the sample and teachers were chosen from the neighbouring secondary schools in the Local Government Area. The exercise was reported after two weeks on the same respondents. The two set of test were then

correlated in order to determine the test- retest reliability coefficient of 0.85 which was adequate for the study.

### **Results and Discussion**

The analysis of the data collected from the field in line with the research questions that guided this study.

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does unqualified teachers constitute a problem militating against effective teaching and learning of English language in the area of study?

**Table 4:4: Mean rating of teachers responses on the extent qualified teachers help in the effective teaching and learning of English language in the area of study.**

Item No	SA	A	SD	D	X	$\bar{X}$	DECISION RANGE	POOLED MEAN
16 – Teachers are mostly secondary school dropouts.	400	328	250	200	1178	2.35	Negative	
17- The teacher for Christian Religious Knowledge also teaches English Language.	430	350	300	200	1250	2.56	Positive	
18- Most of the English teachers are NCE degree holders.	400	380	270	250	1300	2.6	Positive	2.52
19- A teacher with 3 <sup>rd</sup> class in English Language teaches English Language.	450	500	190	120	1260	2.52	Positive	
20- The teachers of English Language have zero or no experience in teaching English Language,	500	350	250	185	1285	2.57	Positive	

The mean of items 17, 18, 20 are positive, while item 16 is negative. The pooled mean on table 4:4 shows positive (2.52) therefore, judging by the majority opinion of the teachers; it then implies that qualified teachers help in the effective teaching and learning of English language in the study area.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does the lack of instructional materials constitute a problem militating against effective English language teaching and learning in the study area? The data were generated from the questionnaire 1-6. Table 4.1 shows the summary of students' responses.

**Table 4.1: Means rating of the students' response to whether instructional materials help effective teaching and learning of English language.**

ITEM NO	SA	A	SD	D	X	$\bar{X}$	DECISION RANGE	POOLED MEAN
1- The teacher makes use of textbooks and workbook in the class.	500	450	350	350	1650	3.3	Positive	
2- The teacher permits the use of dictionary during English language lessons.	500	400	300	200	1400	2.8	Negative	
3- Most times the students move to the language laboratories to have their English lessons.	500	470	410	300	1680	3.4	Positive	3.72
4- The teacher loves using audio/ video tapes during oral English lessons.	500	400	300	200	1400	2.8	Negative	
5- All students come to class with the recommended textbook and workbook for the English class	500	425	335	335	1595	3.2	Positive	
6- Once, the teacher incorporated magazine and newspaper into the lesson.	500	430	320	300	1550	3.1	Positive	

The mean of 3.1 and above is shown as positive while below 3.1 is negative. Since the mean of four(4) out of six(6) items and their pooled mean is positive ,while two are negative, it is therefore can be concluded that in the opinions of students, instructional materials contributes positively to the effective teaching and learning of English language. The reason is that schools ensure operational planning and execution of teaching.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The result of the data analysis based on the completed questionnaire shows the answer to the research question one presented on table 4.4 as positive. The pooled mean rating of the teachers is positive. Four items tested were positive while only one item in the decision range shows negative. Despite the difference in opinion, the pooled mean 2.52 showing positive. This shows general acceptance by teachers in the area that qualified teachers are important. This implies that qualified teachers would help for effective teaching and learning of English language to take place.

The result of the data analysis based on the questionnaire administered, gives the answer to the research question as presented on table 4.1. This shows that the use of instructional materials contribute positively in effective teaching and learning of English language. The pooled mean of students response on table 4.1 is 3.72 and since the decision range shows that the mean of 3.1 above is positive and below 3.1 is negative, it holds that in the opinion of the students use of instructional resources is of great importance for effective teaching and learning of English language.

However, question No. 5 and 6 of the six (6) items showed the mean rating of students' response on table 4.1 as negative. Item shows that the use of instructional resources does not play a vital role in the effective teaching and learning of English language in schools. The mean responses of students in the four (4) items were on the other hand positive and this agrees with the research question two.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, the following conclusions were made:

1. Teachers who are highly qualified, reduces the problem militating against effective teaching and learning of English language.
2. Adequate and useful instructional resources like textbooks, dictionaries, workbooks, and flash cards, help mitigate the challenges that hinder effective teaching and learning of the English language.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, observation and teaching experience the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Ministry of Education, Directors and Proprietors of secondary schools should endeavor to employ teachers who are highly qualified with at least an educational background. They should also expose the teachers to seminars, webinars and trainings.

2. Availability of modern instructional resources remains a basic step in achieving sustainable progress in the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools.

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