

AN EXAMINATION OF METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAUCHI METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

English, a foreign language is the medium of instruction in Nigerian schools. Candidates have performed poorly in the language in public examinations over the years. Many observers have blamed this situation on the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools. This research is an effort to investigate the methods adopted by teachers of the subject with the aim of making improvements on the teaching and learning of the language. Some teaching methods are explained including student-centered and teacher-centered methods. The research was conducted in five secondary schools selected within Bauchi town in Nigeria. The subjects were selected students of senior classes and all the teachers of English in the schools chosen. The results show that teachers adopt methods that limit teaching and learning to the classroom. Language is better learnt in the society.

Keywords: *Language teaching, methodology, teaching methods, pupil-centred, teacher-centered.*

INTRODUCTION

Common language is very necessary for the existence of a country as pointed out by Boadi, Grieve & Nwankwo (1968). English, a foreign language, is the common and official language in Nigeria. This is because English Language coexists with so many indigenous languages. Also, the spread of English throughout the world has made English an international language.

In multi-lingual countries like Nigeria, English is used for intranational and international purposes as a second language and as a medium of instruction in schools. However, the quality of written and spoken English in Nigeria is low. Poor performance of candidates in English language in public examinations like WAEC, NECO, NABTEB etc and negative comments seen in the reports of examiners of the paper over the years are a pointer to the fact that there is problem in the teaching and learning of the subject.

Nwabueze (1995:164) states that "the amount of learning and knowledge imparted in our primary and secondary schools is scanty and poor".

This view shows that poor teaching of the subject in Nigerian schools contributes to high failure rate in English. Aboderin (1984) says that the syllabus for Colleges of Education in Nigeria places emphasis on content of their courses with little attention paid to

methodology. Thus, trainee teachers are prepared for Language and literature studies in the universities rather than for teaching English in secondary schools. Perhaps, this explains why students are not involved in classroom activities in schools. Pupils' attention is not always in the class and some of them may even be sleeping when lessons are going on. The teacher does not bother whether students are attentive or not.

Richards (1990) explains that methodology is not something fixed or a set of rigid principles and procedures the teacher must conform to. It is a dynamic, creative and exploratory process that begins anew each time the teacher encounters a group of learners. Thus, there is no single method that can prescribe for all the variables and situations in language teaching. The teacher must think of alternative ways of planning classroom activities in order to make students have interest in the lessons.

This study is aimed at examining some teaching styles and the attitude of students towards English Language as a subject. If the right methods are not used, students will not be interested in the subject. What methods of teaching are capable of motivating students in English Language lessons? The lecture technique employed by most teachers seldom becomes effective means of language teaching and learning. Which styles then, are most appropriate for teaching English in our secondary schools? The purpose of this research is to:

- a. Find out the popular methods employed by teachers of English in the area of study.
- b. Identify the teaching styles that get students motivated in English lessons.
- c. Suggest ways of improving on methods used by teachers handling English language.

TEACHING METHODS

Teaching provides the necessary practice that makes changes become part of a person's life. Effective teaching results from three factors: the curriculum, methodology and instructional materials. The focus of this study is on the second- methodology. Teaching methods change according to teaching contexts. The teacher must be able to select from many available choices, the method that is most appropriate for his students, himself and the teaching environment. There is no one method of language teaching that is sufficient for all purposes and situations.

Balogun, Okon, Musaazi & Thakur (1981) divides teaching into two major groups based on whether the pupil or the teacher is the principal actor. If the student is the more active of the two parties involved, then the method is pupil-centered. And, if the teacher is more active while the student does little, the method is teacher-centered.

PUPIL-CENTRED METHOD

Using this method, the teacher acts as a guide or adviser. The students do the work themselves, the teacher helping only when it is absolutely necessary. The teacher hardly comes in because there may be other students who can do so. However, the teacher may

have to give introductory information for them to work on their own. Here are some pupil centred styles of teaching.

1. Project

The teacher introduces the topic and tells a group of students what to do, for example, report on the coronation of the village chief coming up shortly. The students go to the arena themselves with the teacher acting as an adviser. At the end, the students write a report for presentation to the class with the teacher and other groups making contributions.

The students have opportunity to practice various skills-some take charge of interviews, some draw the compound of the chief, others write the report etc. In this way, everybody contributes something. Everyone is proud of his group's achievement fostering group spirit and co-operation. The project needs careful planning and supervision. Lazy students should be encouraged and those with special difficulties attended to, so that they don't hold back the project.

2. Supervised study

The teacher outlines what the students are to do and then tells them to do it individually. The teacher does not go to other things but he is there to watch and advise. It is a time when the teacher must attend closely to individual students, especially those that have some difficulties.

It is a period of intense learning. The students are forced into intensive mental activity. The work must be carefully planned and timed. It is not enough to tell pupils to read a chapter in their textbook and summarize it. What is needed is well-prepared and thought-provoking question.

3. Discussion

One of the best ways students understand and learn ideas is to give them the opportunity to talk about ideas. This way, they can really find out how much or how little they know about an idea. They can talk about outbreak of fire in the village, a recent festival, road accident etc. Even in writing, students can discuss briefly what to write about.

The classroom situation must be conducive-there must be free communication between the students themselves. The teacher is to help them explain difficult points or to direct them to sources of information. He also raises questions to help them to see mistakes in their reasoning. The students develop the ability to express themselves openly, learn to listen to others, and to tolerate opinions that are different from their own. It helps each student to develop self-confidence since he is contributing something.

4. Field Trip

Field trips are carried out in order to see practically what has been taught in theory. In this case, we are reinforcing what has been taught. Sometimes, we carry such trips to bring about first contact with a topic, that is, to let students actually discover things by seeing, touching, feeling, smelling or even tasting them. This gives more understanding and lasting learning. The field trip may take them to the bush, factory, office or a town. This enables students see things or features they have been taught.

TEACHER-CENTERED METHOD

Here the teacher is the main actor while the students are more or less passive listeners. It is important to note that this negates the view that learning is active rather than passive. The styles are:

1. **Lecture**

This is the commonest method of teaching in our schools. It is the method by which the teacher stands in front at the board and talks all the time while the students sit and listen. This method assumes that students know little or nothing. The teacher's job is to pour knowledge on them as long as there is silence in the classroom. Communication is one way and there is little or no communication between one student and another because it is seen as distracting to the lecture.

Using this method, the teacher forgets that learning is an active process and that the learner needs to take an active part in the process. It does not reach all the students equally because different students learn in different ways.

Some students are slower than others but they are treated the same way using this method. It is difficult to encourage students' initiative. Since there is no student participation, they cannot develop ability to communicate and think. The lesson may become boring and students may lose interest.

The main advantage of this method is that it enables the teacher to cover a lot in a short time and with large group of students. He can get available information across the whole class faster especially where the right books are scarce. It can also be used to train students to take down notes from the teacher.

2. **Questioning**

In most cases, this method is used along with other methods. When a response is not satisfactory, the teacher asks another question that is aimed at spotting the weakness of the answer. The teacher continues to ask questions until the students can see their mistakes and are able to correct them. The students may become more involved in the activity. He uses questions to direct the students' thinking the way he wants.

Questioning is used as an integral part of other teaching methods such as lecture and supervised study. The commonest use of questions is to find out how much the student

remembers about what was taught in the previous lesson. Sometimes question is asked orally during a lesson to help the student to follow what is going on.

3. Demonstration

Demonstrations are used when the teacher wants the students to learn a skill such as how to pronounce the consonant sounds /l/ and /r/. Talking about the sounds cannot help the students to understand them. Everyone of them must have a good view of the demonstration followed by supervised practice.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research was used to study the methods used in teaching English Language in senior classes of secondary schools in Bauchi metropolis between February and March, 2015. The population consisted of all teachers of English and senior students of five secondary schools selected within Bauchi town. The schools selected were:

1. Government Day Secondary School (G.D.S.S), Bayara
2. Government Day Secondary School (G.D.S.S), Kofar Wambai
3. Federal Government Girls' College (F.G.G.C), Bauchi
4. Immaculate Conception Secondary School (I.C.S.S), Bauchi
5. St. Paul's Comprehensive Secondary School (S.P.C.S.S), Bauchi

Fifteen (15) senior students randomly selected from each of these five schools and all teachers of English in the schools were the subjects for this study.

Questionnaire was used as instrument to collect information on different methods adopted by teachers of English and to obtain reactions of students to these methods. The same questionnaire was administered to both teachers and students. One teacher was trained in each of the five schools to administer the questionnaires. They interpreted each item to students before they were allowed to make choice of options

The responses were obtained using a four point likert-type scale: strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Mean and standard deviation of data obtained from respondents were worked out and the results tabulated. The table below shows the distribution of questionnaires:

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaires

S/N	SCHOOLS	TEACHERS`	STUDENTS	TOTAL
1	GDSS, Bayara	4	15	19
2	GDSS, Kofar Wambai	3	15	18
3	FGGC, Bauchi	8	15	23
4	ICSS, Bauchi	4	15	19
5	SPCSS, Bauchi	2	15	17

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data were obtained on selected teaching methods: combination of pupil-centered methods and teacher-centered methods. The analysis was carried out based on the research questions for the study.

Research question 1: Which is the common method of teaching English Language in your school?

This question sought to find out common methods adopted by teachers of English.

Table 2: Methods most frequently used.

S/NO	Methods	SA	A	DA	SD	TOT	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
1.	Lecture	46	25	21	4	96	24	17.3
2.	Discussion	35	52	7	2	96	24	23.7
3.	Demonstration	30	49	10	7	96	24	19.5
4.	Project	17	31	41	7	96	24	15.0
5.	Supervised Exercise	34	39	17	6	96	24	15.3
6.	Field trips	11	25	29	31	96	24	9.0
7.	Questioning	28	32	12	24	96	24	8.6

The methods most frequently used in teaching English in Senior secondary schools in Bauchi can be presented in this order:

- a. Discussion - 23.7
- b. Demonstration - 19.5
- c. Lecture - 17.3
- d. Supervised exercises - 15.3
- e. Project - 15.0
- f. Field trips - 9.0
- g. Questioning - 8.6

This analysis shows that methods that are not frequently used by teachers are projects, field trips and questioning. Incidentally, these are methods which enable students to gain first-hand knowledge. Thus, students are denied practical experience. Teaching of the language is made an exclusively classroom activity.

Research question 2: Which of the following teaching methods get students most interested in English Language?

The aim here is to find out those methods that make students most interested in the teaching of English Language.

Table 3: Methods that are of most interest.

S/NO	Methods	SA	A	DA	SD	TOT	MEAN	STANDARD
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								DEVIATION
1.	Lecture	28	25	33	10	96	24	9.9
2.	Discussion	39	48	8	1	96	24	23.0
3.	Demonstration	47	36	11	2	96	24	21.0
4.	Project	11	53	26	6	96	24	21.1
5.	Supervised Exercise	32	42	16	6	96	24	16.1
6.	Field trips	37	26	22	11	96	24	10.7
7.	Questioning	36	26	13	21	96	24	9.6

This table shows the teaching methods which students find most interesting. They can be presented in this order:

- a. Discussion - 23.0
- b. Project - 21.1
- c. Demonstration - 21.0
- d. Supervised exercises - 16.1
- e. Field trips - 10.7
- f. Lecture - 9.9
- g. Questioning - 9.6

This analysis shows that students prefer those methods that allow them to have greater participation in lessons. With the exception of demonstration method, all the first five methods are pupil-centered.

The last two: questioning and lecture are teacher-centered methods.

Research question 3: Which is the best combination that gets students interested in English Lessons?

This question seeks to discover better ways of teaching English in the area under study using combinations of methods.

Table 4: Combinations of methods that are preferable

S/NO	Methods	SA	A	DA	SD	TO	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
1.	Lecture & Questioning	30	27	34	5	96	24	13.0
2.	Lecture & Supervised exercises	25	60	11	0	96	24	26.1
3.	Lecture & Project	27	48	18	3	96	24	18.8
4.	Lecture & Demonstration	40	47	7	2	96	24	22.8
5.	Field trips & Discussion	40	34	14	8	96	24	15.4
6.	Discussion & supervised exercises	56	36	2	2	96	24	26.7

Combinations that are preferable can be presented in the following order:

- Discussion & supervised exercises - 26.7
- Lecture & Supervised exercises - 26.1

Lecture & demonstration	-	22.8
Lecture & Project	-	18.8
Field trips & Discussion	-	15.4
Lecture & Questioning	-	13.0

This table shows that respondents give preference to combination of both student-centered and teacher-centered methods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following solutions are offered based on the findings of the investigation:

1. Apart from classroom activities, budget should be made for outdoor activities like going to watch ceremonies/festivals and visit to places of interest. Language is better learnt in the society than in the classroom.
2. Language teachers need to allow student participation as much as they can during lessons. There should be enough communication between the teacher and students and among the students themselves.
3. Language teachers need to familiarize themselves with different styles to enable them use suitable methods for each topic or context of learning.

CONCLUSION

What prompted this investigation is the poor performance of candidates in English Language in Public examinations. Many observers have said that the teaching of the language is responsible for the situation in the main. Thus, effort has been made here to find out teaching methods that are capable of motivating students during lessons in the subject.

Methods such as project and field trip are not employed by language teachers probably because of lack of funds. Teaching and learning of the language is limited to the classroom. The result showed that preference is not given to particular method(s). The respondents want different methods to be employed in teaching the language. This buttresses the view of Williams (1990:4) that “no one method of language teaching is sufficient for all purposes and situations”.

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