

Effective Teaching Methods: Panacea for Poor Performance in English in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aimed at examining the extent to which teaching methods influence the performance of students in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated the extent to which teachers' academic qualification influences students' performance and also determined the extent to which teacher attitude affects the performance of students in English in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study while one null research hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significant was formulated. The study employed the descriptive survey technique as the research design. The study was conducted in the Afikpo Education zone of Ebonyi State. A sample size of 121 population was used for the study. Data were collected using the questionnaire and were analysed using a mean of ≥ 2.5 . Tables and percentages were also utilized. The research findings illuminate a significant relationship between effective teaching methods and enhanced students' performance in English among secondary schools in Ebonyi state. The research concluded that the confluence of effective teaching methods, qualified educators, and positive teacher attitudes emerged as crucial components influencing students' performance in English. It recommended continuous professional development, progressive promotion of interactive classroom practices, monitoring and evaluation, inter-alia, as remedies for poor performance in English in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State.

Keywords: Teaching, methods, performance, attitude, English

Introduction

The close relationship between language competence and educational achievement is the reason for the clamour for improved language education by stakeholders in Education. (Jibowo, 2006). English Language is taught right from the primary school level. Teachers, textbook writers, authors, parents and government make efforts to enhance the effective teaching and

learning of the language in schools. The English language is the language of instruction at every level of education despite the over four hundred native languages in Nigeria; it is therefore imperative that its teaching be effective in order to bring about the desired change in the learners (Okafor and Ugwu 2007). This change takes place through the various teaching and learning methods deployed by the teacher. So, for effective learning to take place, those who teach English must understand the place of effective methods in order to effectively transmit knowledge. Language is systematic, so its teaching should be systematic.

Methods is derived from the Greek word “Metahods” which means the road that leads from one point to another (Mcathur in Otagburuagu, Onyenyi & Ezemma (2012). Language teaching methods are the ways that language teachers use to take the learner from one point to another in their language teaching situation, often towards pre-planned goals.

Okafor (2022) defines teaching as a process of transmitting the intricacies of educational delivery elements to the beneficiaries through the use of special technical skills and modalities by a teacher. In defining the role of the teacher in the classroom, Okafor asserts that the teacher in order to evaluate and develop the curriculum assesses the level of proficiency or comprehension of the subject matter to determine the strength and weaknesses of the learner. This enables the teacher to fill in where there are lapses in the methods and skills applied. Teaching methods, therefore are styles employed by the teacher to ensure that lessons are properly delivered to the students. A teaching method according to National Teachers’ Institute (2011), is a reliable strategy teachers employ to bring about learning. Teaching methods are categorized into teacher-centered method and learner centered methods. Teacher centred method has the teacher at the centre of the learning process while learner centred method of instruction is a method or an approach whereby learners influence the content, activities, materials and pace of learning. This method places the learner at the centre of the learning process.

The efficiency of the teaching and learning procedure largely rests on the choice of the methods.

Statement of the Problem

One of the crucial factors in the transmission of knowledge is method or strategy. In English studies the persistent poor performance record of secondary school students in English language examination have been blamed on methods.

It has been observed that English Language teachers have the tendency to choose familiar pedagogical methods without considering the cognitive ability of the learners. It is against this backdrop that it becomes imperative to examine the extent the teachers' method of teaching the English language affects the performance of students in secondary schools in Ebonyi State

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of this study was to examine the effect of effective teaching methods on students' performance in English. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Examine the extent to which teaching method influences the performance of students in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria
2. Investigate the extent to which teachers' academic qualifications influence performance of students in the English Language in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
3. Determine the extent to which teachers' attitude affects the performance of students in English in Ebonyi State.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions

- i. To what extent do teachers' teaching methods affect the performance of students in English in Ebonyi State?
- ii. To what extent does teachers' academic qualification affect the performance of students in English language?
- iii. To what extent does teachers' attitude affect the performance of students in English in Ebonyi State.

Research Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of teachers on the effective teaching methods used in teaching their students

Significance of the study

It is hoped that the findings of this study will benefit all stake holders in Education in Ebonyi State and beyond. First, teachers, as it will help them to choose their teaching methods wisely and understand the place of effective methods in knowledge transmission.

Second, the study will be beneficial to curriculum planners as it will help them to emphasize on the various methods and strategies available to the teacher viz-Avis the different topics taught by the teacher.

Third, this study will help to curb the poor performance of the students in English occasioned by the choice of poor teaching methods.

Finally, the government will benefit as the general goals of English education will be achieved

Scope of the study

The study is delimited to examining teaching methods as a way of curbing poor performance of students in English language in Ebonyi State.

Review of Related Literature

This section reviews related works done on the topic under investigation. Literature is reviewed under the following subheadings:

Teaching methods:

Teaching is an educational activity during which the content of the curriculum is inculcated to the learner. It is the process of transmitting the intricacies of educational delivery element to the beneficiaries through the use of special technical skills and modalities by the teacher (Okafor, 2022), Ayeni (2011). Adunola (2011) advises that in order to bring about desirable changes in students, teaching methods used by educators should be the best. Teaching methods work effectively mainly if they suit learners' needs. As such, alignment of teaching methods with students' needs influences students' academic attainments. Language educators are in consensus that a teacher could have all the qualification but could yet cause academic failure of their students if they have poor methods of teaching. The effect is that the students do not gain from the lesson. Topics of different nature will require different methods of teaching but if the teacher uses same methods all the time, then the students are unmotivated. The teacher of English has many teaching methods at their disposal.

Okonkwo (2005) in Okafor (2018) listed out the various methods to include: The grammar translation method (GMT) Direct method (DM) Audio Lingual method (ALM) cognitive code learning (CLM), cognitive Method (CM), the functional National Approach (FNA) and the Electric Method (EM) this is far from being exhaustive.

The grammar translation method is a way of studying language that approaches the language first, through detailed analysis of its grammatical rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. Vocabulary is taught using bilingual word lists, grammar is the medium of instruction (Richard, 2001). It places heavy emphasis on grammar explanation and translation as a teaching technique. However, the GTM has its strengths and weakness. For instance, while it is a process of developing mental discipline, one of its weaknesses is its description of language. Besides many countries use expatriates native speaker teachers who do not know the first language of the students; and so cannot translate. This is one of the handicaps of GMT (Ugwu, 2018). This academic style does not teach people to use the language for some external purposes outside the classroom.

Communicative language teaching method (CLT) was originally developed in the early 1970's by Dell Hymes. It was developed as a replacement of earlier methods. This method aims to develop the learner's communicative competence and redefine what the student had to learn in terms of communicative competence rather than linguistic competence. The crucial goal was the ability to use language appropriately.

The communicative teaching method is a method which encourages students to learn by attempting to deliberately engineer two sets of slightly differing information, so that the student had an information gap to bridge. The teacher sets up the task or the information gap exercise and then lets the student get on with it providing help but not control. The second standard of communicative technique is guided role play. The learner is led to practice how to assume particular roles in real life situation. The third general technique is task. In this technique students carry out tasks in the classroom with a definite outcome. Moore and Eates (2005) cited in Ugwu (2018). The CLT approach is basically a learner- centred approach where the teacher's role is less dominant. The students interact with one another in various configuration such as in pairs, triads, small groups and whole group (Okafor, 2018). As observed by Snow (1996) learners learn effectively about language when they take part actively in the communication of the language rather than only passively accepting what the teacher said.

The audio -lingual method

Robert Lado was the first linguist to convey this method in his book, *Language Teaching: A scientific Approach* (Lado, 1964). This method lays emphasis on the teaching of the spoken language through dialogues and drills. Ugwu (2018) explains that a typical lesson in an audio-lingual style starts with a dialogue. The language in the dialogue is controlled so that it introduces only a few new vocabulary items and includes several examples of each new structural point. The students listen to the dialogue as a whole, either played back from a tape or read by the teacher, they repeat it sentence by sentence, and they act it out by taking several roles. The students then have a structure drill in which they practice grammatical roles connected with the dialogue, such as polite questions used in requests. Audio-lingual teaching divides language into the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and groups them into active skills which people use to produce language, such as speaking and writing, and passive

skills through which they receive it such as listening and reading. This method requires a classroom which is teacher controlled. The method demands students who do not expect to take the initiative. All responsibility is in the teacher's hands.

The direct methods

The direct method proposes that a foreign language should be learned the way children learn their first language. Okonkwo (2006) opines that the direct method was an attempt to utilize insight derived from the technique through which a child learns his mother tongue from the teaching of second language. It has been observed by Linguists that children learn their native language by listening to a greater range of the language. They learn to speak constantly and they arrive at meaning associating words with objects of actions. Direct method however advocates how to make students associate foreign language and words directly with objects and actions without the use of native language by the teacher or student. Translation was discouraged. The teacher used settings from everyday life. A lot of teaching was done on correct pronunciation.

Teacher -centred method

This approach to language teaching is least practical more theoretical and lends itself to memorization (Teo and Wong, 2000). It does not apply activity-based learning to encourage students to learn real life problems based on applied knowledge. Since the teacher controls the transmission and sharing of knowledge, they may attempt to maximize the delivery of information while minimizing time and effort. As a result, both interest and understanding of students may get lost. Experts in language education maintain that teaching should not merely focus on dispensing rules, definitions and procedures for students to memorize but should also actively engage students as primary participators.

Student- centred methods

Active learning refers to a broad range of teaching strategies which engage trainees as active participants in their learning with their teacher. Active learning plainly puts focus on the learner. Students-centred method is seen to be more effective since it does not encourage knowledge flow from teacher to student. Daluba (2013) opines that for better performance of students, the use of

activity stimulating and student centred approaches are encouraged because they embrace the concept of discovery learning and enhances creative thinking.

Teacher -student interactive method

This teaching method applies the strategies used by both teacher centred and student centred approaches. It promotes interest, analytical research, critical thinking and enjoyment among students (Hesson and Shad, 2007). The method encourages students to search for relevant knowledge rather than the teacher monopolizing the transmission of information to the learners.

It should be noted that the language teaching methods discussed above all fit into the three categories- teacher-centred, student-centred and teacher -student centred methods.

Teacher's level of academic qualification/professional achievement

Various research efforts reveal that the quality of education of a teacher is directly related to the quality of instruction in the classroom. It is a fact that the academic qualification, knowledge of the subject matter, competence and skills of teaching, and commitment by the teacher have effective impact on the teaching-learning process (NPE, 2012). Quality improvement in education depends upon proper training of the teacher. Teaching is an art! It can be refined by training and practice. In-service training is, therefore, important for classroom effectiveness as one cannot talk of teacher quality without reference to the training processes that produce such personnel.

Research Methods

Research Design:

The research employed a descriptive survey technique to collect data for analysis.

Area of Study:

The study was conducted in the Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. This selection aims to facilitate effective monitoring of the research.

Population of the Study:

The total population comprised of English Language Teachers within Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques:

A sample of 121 participants, consisting of 67 females and 54 males, was randomly selected from secondary school English language teachers through a balloting technique.

Method of Data Collection:

The researcher administered questionnaires to the respondents, utilizing an on-the-spot collection system to ensure a high return of the distributed questionnaires.

Method of Data Analysis:

For data analysis, the research utilized the mean to address the three research questions, adopting a mean of ≥ 2.5 as the acceptance level. Tables and percentages were also utilized for the analysis.

Validity of Instrument:

The instrument underwent validation by experts in the Department of Test Measurement and Evaluation and the Department of Linguistics and Literary Studies at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The questionnaire was made up of nineteen (19) items among which four (4) sought relevant information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents while the remaining fifteen (15) had direct link to the research questions. Data presentation here will be grouped into two sections. Section A will cover the demographic details of the respondents while presentation in section B is organised according to the research questions that guided the study.

Section A: Demographic characteristics of Respondents

Sex distribution

Table 1: Sex distribution of Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Male	54	45%
Female	67	55%
Total	121	100%

The tabulated data (1) elucidates that 45% (54 participants) of the surveyed group comprised male respondents, whereas 55% (67 participants) were female. This distribution indicates a slight predominance of female English Language teachers within the study's sample.

Educational Qualification

Table 4.2: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
WASSC	-	-
NCE	32	26%
Degree	89	74%
Others, specify	-	-
Total	121	100%

Table 2 delineates the educational qualifications of the respondents. A notable 26% (32 individuals) hold National Certificate in Education (NCE) credentials, while a majority of 74% (89 individuals) possess degrees in the pertinent field. Notably, none of the respondents exclusively hold West African Senior School Certificate (WASSC) certificates or any variant qualification. This substantiates the assertion that the participants in the study are suitably qualified, thereby enhancing the credibility of the information provided.

Section B: Teaching Methods and Student Performance

Research question 1: To what extent does teaching methods influence the performance of students in English language in secondary school in Ebonyi State.

Table 3: Relationship between teaching methods and Students' performance (n = 121)

s/n	Relationship	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Low performance of student	34 (28%)	61 (50%)	15 (13%)	11 (9%)	3.0	0.94
	Students' lack of interest	28 (23%)	67 (55%)	13 (11%)	13 (11%)	2.92	0.78
	Low of motivation of students	13 (11%)	29 (24%)	39 (32%)	40 (33%)	2.11	0.85
	Truancy on the part of students	6 (5%)	16 (13%)	51 (42%)	48 (40%)	1.84	0.88
	Lack of depth in the knowledge of subject	25 (21%)	46 (37%)	35 (29%)	15 (13%)	2.66	0.77

As presented in Table 3, the findings from the analysis strongly suggest that teachers' teaching methods have a significant impact on students' performance in English. The items considered, which had mean values greater than or equal to 2.5, consistently demonstrated agreement among participants. Notably, low performance of students (Mean = 3.0), students' lack of interest (Mean = 2.92), and lack of depth in the knowledge of the subject (Mean = 2.66) exceeded the acceptance mark, reinforcing the idea that teaching methods play a crucial role in shaping students' academic outcomes.

Research question 2: To what extent does teachers' academic qualifications affect the performance of students in English language?

Table 4: Relationship between teachers' academic qualifications and students' performance in English (n = 121)

s/n	Relationship	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Lack of depth in the knowledge of subject matter	10 (8%)	19 (16%)	54 (45%)	38 (31%)	2.16	0.61
2.	Low performance of students	36 (30%)	51 (42%)	22 (18%)	12 (10%)	2.89	0.66
3.	Use of wrong method of teaching	41 (34%)	57 (47%)	12 (10%)	11 (9%)	3.08	0.72
4.	Low of motivation of students	16 (13%)	38 (31%)	45 (37%)	22 (18%)	2.39	0.71
5.	Low interest of students	26 (21%)	47 (39%)	29 (24%)	19 (16%)	2.66	0.63

The survey findings captured in Table 4 provide valuable insights into the perceived connections between teachers' academic qualifications and key factors influencing students' performance in English. Notably, teachers acknowledge a correlation between their qualifications and the observed low performance of students, as evidenced by a mean of 2.89. Additionally, there is recognition, with a mean of 3.08, that academic qualifications play a role in the choice of teaching methods, potentially impacting student performance. Furthermore, the moderate agreement (mean = 2.66) regarding the influence of teachers' qualifications on students' interest in English underscores the multifaceted relationship between teacher academic backgrounds and overall student outcomes. These results collectively emphasize the importance of considering teacher qualifications in addressing challenges and optimizing teaching strategies to enhance English language education.

Research question 3: To what extent does teachers' attitude affect the performance of students in English in Ebonyi State?

Table 5: Relationship between teachers' attitude and students performance in English language (n = 38)

s/n	Relationship	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Truancy on the part of students	16 (13%)	29 (24%)	47 (39%)	29 (24%)	2.26	0.82
	Lack of interest in learning	39 (32%)	61 (50%)	9 (8%)	12 (10%)	3.03	0.69
	Diminished classroom interaction	25 (21%)	54 (45%)	26 (21%)	16 (13%)	2.74	0.77
	Lack of motivation	29 (24%)	57 (47%)	19 (16%)	16 (13%)	2.82	0.73
	Emotional and psychological imbalance of students	42 (35%)	47 (39%)	22 (18%)	10 (8%)	3.00	0.75

The analysed data from Table 5 reveal insights into the relationship between teachers' attitudes and students' performance in English language. Examining items that fall within the acceptable mean criteria (≥ 2.5), it is evident that the lack of interest in learning (Mean = 3.03), diminished classroom interaction (Mean = 2.74), lack of motivation (Mean = 2.82), and emotional and psychological imbalance of students (Mean = 3.00) are aspects influenced by teachers' attitudes. These factors, when considered individually, showcase a tendency towards agreement among the participants, suggesting a correlation between teachers' attitudes and these aspects. The results emphasize the importance of teachers attitudes in shaping the learning environment, student motivation, and emotional well-being. These aspects are crucial elements influencing students' performance in English, reinforcing the significance of cultivating positive attitudes among teachers to enhance the overall learning experience. The comprehensive analysis of the survey results indicates a substantial impact of teacher attitudes on student performance in English language within Ebonyi State.

Summary of findings:

The research findings illuminate a significant relationship between effective teaching methods and enhanced student performance in English among secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Analysis of survey data revealed that participants widely agreed on the impact of innovative pedagogical approaches, reflected in mean values indicating consensus on issues like low interest, lack of motivation, and truancy. These results underscore the pivotal role of dynamic teaching methods in fostering a conducive learning environment and positively influencing academic outcomes in English.

In terms of teacher academic qualifications, the study highlighted the majority of participants holding relevant degrees, emphasizing the commitment of qualified educators in shaping the quality of information provided. The absence of participants with only West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE) certificates further emphasized the importance of educational qualifications, suggesting a potential contribution to a higher level of accurate information dissemination.

Exploring the issue of teacher attitudes, the data indicated their profound impact on various aspects influencing students. Items related to lack of interest in learning, diminished classroom interaction, lack of motivation, and emotional and psychological imbalance of students consistently exhibited mean values exceeding 2.5. This signifies a considerable impact of teacher attitudes on critical elements, emphasizing the need for cultivating positive and engaging attitudes among educators.

In essence, the comprehensive analysis of the findings offers valuable insights for educational stakeholders seeking to optimize the teaching and learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The confluence of effective teaching methods, qualified educators, and positive teacher attitudes emerges as crucial components influencing students' performance in English. These findings contribute to the ongoing dialogue on educational enhancements, suggesting targeted strategies to improve the English language learning experience in the region.

Conclusion

This research delved into the vital issue of effective teaching methods as a potential remedy for poor performance in English among secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The investigation stemmed from the recognition of the persistent challenges associated with students' English language proficiency, attributing these difficulties to the conventional and perhaps inadequate teaching methods employed by educators. The study aimed to scrutinize the influence of teaching methods on students' performance, the impact of teachers' academic qualifications, and the significance of teachers' attitudes on students' achievement in English. The analysis of the data, presented through tables explored the relationships between teaching methods, academic qualifications, and attitudes of teachers with key aspects affecting students, including their performance, interest, motivation, and emotional well-being.

The results revealed a noteworthy association between effective teaching methods and enhanced student performance, with items consistently showing mean values indicative of agreement among participants. Furthermore, the influence of teachers' attitudes on critical aspects such as motivation, interest, and emotional well-being emphasized the significant role educators play in shaping a conducive learning environment. The evidence suggests that teacher attitudes, academic qualifications, and teaching methods do indeed have a considerable impact on students' performance in English. The implications of these findings underscore the need for educational stakeholders to prioritize teacher training programs, emphasizing effective pedagogical approaches and fostering positive attitudes among educators. By addressing these factors, there is potential for a transformative impact on the English language learning experience, contributing to improved academic outcomes among secondary school students in Ebonyi State.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the English language learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria:

Pedagogical Training Programs: Education authorities and institutions should design and implement comprehensive pedagogical training programs for English language teachers. These programs should focus on introducing innovative and effective teaching methods tailored to address the diverse learning needs of students.

Continuous Professional Development: Establish a system for continuous professional development to keep teachers abreast of evolving teaching methodologies, linguistic advancements, and educational technologies. This ensures that educators remain well-equipped to employ contemporary and effective approaches in their teaching practices.

Emphasis on Teacher Attitudes: Recognizing the impact of teacher attitudes on students' motivation, interest, and emotional well-being, efforts should be directed towards fostering positive attitudes among educators. Professional development programs can incorporate modules that address the psychological and motivational aspects of teaching.

Promotion of Interactive Classroom Practices: Encourage interactive and participatory classroom practices that foster engagement and diminish truancy. Teachers should be guided to create an inclusive and communicative learning environment that promotes active student involvement.

Support for Further Qualifications: Education authorities should provide incentives and support for teachers to pursue further qualifications, especially in the relevant field of English language education. This could contribute to a more qualified teaching workforce, positively impacting students' academic performance.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish a systematic process for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of effective teaching methods, teacher attitudes, and academic qualifications. This involves regular assessments, feedback mechanisms, and collaborative reviews to ensure ongoing improvement in teaching practices.

Collaboration with Education Stakeholders: Foster collaboration among education stakeholders, including teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and parents. Open

communication channels can facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and insights to collectively enhance the English language learning experience.

Implementing these recommendations requires a concerted effort from educational authorities, school administrators, and teachers. By prioritizing these initiatives, there is a potential for a positive transformation in the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, ultimately contributing to improved student performance and holistic development.

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