

PDF - COMPETENCIES POSSESSED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE. -

researchcub.info **ABSTRACT**

The general purpose of this study was to find out the level of competencies possessed by English language teachers for effective teaching of English language in secondary schools. The study was guided by six research questions and five null hypotheses. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu state. The population of the study comprised all the 151 English language teachers. All the population was used as sample. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-structured questionnaire entitled; English Language Teacher's Competence Questionnaire (ELTCQ). The questionnaire was structured on a four point scale of highly competent (4 points), competent (3 points), fairly competent (2 points) and not competent (1 point). To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher subjected the instrument to face validation by three experts. The experts scrutinized the instrument in terms of relevance, clarity, usability and suitability of the items in eliciting the required information from the respondents. Their correction and suggestions were used in the production of the final version of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established by administering 20 copies of the instrument to English language teachers in the senior secondary schools in Obollo-Afor Education Zone which is outside the study area. The teachers have similar characteristics as those in the population of this study. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the estimate of internal consistency of ELTCQ which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.86. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of 4 research assistants. All the research questions formulated for this study were answered using mean scores. The criterion mean for accepting or rejecting any item was 2.50. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result of the study among others showed that teachers' qualification and experience are significant predictors of teachers' competency in teaching English Language. The implications of the above findings were examined and it was recommended among other things that teachers' qualification and experience should be considered by employers of labour in the course of teachers' recruitment and employment. This will help to employ only teachers who are qualified to teach English Language. The limitations of this study were highlighted and suggestions were made for further studies.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

English language seems to have gained prominence as a global language especially in this technology-driven age. Knowledge of English language has become necessary for assessing many discourses at a global level, from international relations, to popular culture, and to

academia (Mackay,2002). Mackay further stated that in the world which is now becoming a globalvillage, where information and communication technology is shared among allcountries, one needs to be conversant with a universal language such as Englishlanguage. Supporting Mackey's opinion, Rylatt and Lohan (2007) assertedthataccess to knowledge and the entire world is through the medium of Englishlanguage as it's the language of communication, text books and research.According to Mackay (2002) it is estimated that there are about 300 millionpeople that use English language as a second language, over 45 countries use itas official/co-official language, and it has been spoken extensively in othercountries where it has no official status. From the above views, it appearsEnglish language is the only language that has been accepted as officiallanguage globally. Sequeira (2012) opined that English language plays a vitalrole in the political and economic life of the countries that use it either asa second language or official language.

English language has gained prominence over all other languagesin Nigeria due to her relationship with Britain during colonialism.Its prominent role is without doubt in the social, economic and politicaldevelopment of Nigeria (Igbokwe, 2007). English language as an officiallanguage in Nigeria plays a very important communicative role in bridging the socio-political gap between various ethnic groups in the country. In additionto its usefulness in business, mass media and literature, the use of Englishlanguage as a medium of communication in Nigeria is most noticeable in thefield of education. For instance,Igbokwe (2007) pointed out that from the firstyear in primary school, a Nigerian child is introduced to English language andit is used as a medium of instruction until graduation from the university.Supporting the viewAnyadiegwu(2012)stated thatthe average Nigerian's access tothe culture and scientific knowledge of the world is largely through Englishlanguage. He further emphasize that in Nigeria education system, Englishlanguage is the medium of instruction at all levels of education in differentsubjects except of course, the indigenous languages and other foreign languageslike French.

Apart from being the medium of instruction, the language istaught as a subject/discipline in all Nigerian schools except those with strictreligious inclinations like the Arabic schools found in the Northern part ofNigeria.Supporting the above views on the role of English language in Nigeriaeducational system, Jekayinfa (2011) opined that English language occupies avital and indispensable position in education. However, the above views maybethe reason for considering the English language as one of the core subjects atall levels of education in Nigeria.

Education, in the views of Sadka (2007) refersto the process bywhich teachers build up strong character in students from an early stage inlife through adulthood and this affords one the opportunity to carryout certainroles and assume some responsibilities in society. The major objective ofeducation according to the UNESCO (2008) is imparting and enabling individualsto acquire knowledge. From the above assertions on the aims of education, it

is pertinent to consider the different factors that are necessary for an educational system to be considered successful.

One of the most important factors that can make an educational system successful is to have competent teachers who possess requisite skills for the success of any educational system. Smith and Lusteran (2004) consider teaching as a two-way relationship, that is, between students and teachers revealing that what students learn depend mostly on the teacher and the teacher's commitment towards their job. The implication is that for students to learn effectively and efficiently, a teacher has to perform a number of activities both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, a teacher's competence is crucial in today's classrooms in that it can bring about positive development in students. In same vein, Chaudhary (2008) pointed out that a teacher is expected to possess certain level of knowledge, attitude and skills which are referred to as teacher competence. He went further to define competency as "the quality of being competent, adequate, possession of required skills", knowledge and qualification to perform tasks or duty, and stated that a teacher's competence includes; the right way of conveying units of knowledge, application and skills. To Olaitan and Ali (1997), competence is the successful performance of task through the use of knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgment. From the above explanations on competence, it appears as if competence is generally referred to as the state of being functionally suitable in the performance of duty/tasks.

Moreover, Adakonye and Ogbonyomi (2012) commenting on English language teachers' competence affirm that one of the most important competencies expected of English language teachers is grammatical/communicative competence (introduced by Dell Hymes in 1966). They advocated in their work that English language teachers should be proficient in English language (e.g. spelling and grammar) and be conscious and meticulous in teaching of grammar in order to achieve communicative competence in learners.

Again, another typology of competence which emanated from Dell Hymes' ideology is contextual/sociolinguistic competence this according to researchers include contextual/sociolinguistic competence and the pragmatic aspects of speech acts such as the cultural values, norms and conventions. To Adakonye and Ogbonyomi (2012), sociolinguistic competence refers to all the social contexts that exist in the use of language such as topic, participants, their relationship social status, sex, age. These variables influence linguistic choices, styles and registers of speech. In other words, contextual/sociolinguistic typology of competence emphasizes the consideration of language use according to distinct contexts. This implies that in teaching English language in a particular context, the teachers' instructional strategies are expected to be culturally sensitive. That is, the instructors are required to be sensitive and responsive to the unique differences of students taking cognizance of their cultural values, norms and societal conventions.

Canale and Swain in 1980 classified sociolinguistic competence to include discourse competence and strategic competence. Discourse competence according to Alderson (2000) includes the knowledge of cohesion and coherence in various types of discourse as they are quite crucial in interpreting utterances particularly when the literal meaning is at variance with the speaker's intention. This research agrees with Anyadiegwu (2012) that strategic competence refers to the verbal and non-verbal strategies that compensate for breakdowns and at the same time enhance effectiveness of communication such as discourse structure, background knowledge and ambiguity. Lin (2009) asserted that strategic competence is associated with the Interlocutors' ability in using communication strategies. However, the above views/assertions of scholars on types of competence reveal that all the identified types of competence are embedded in communicative competence. Therefore, communicative competence in the context of second language teaching is a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse. In the teaching and learning of the English language, the Communicative Language Teaching [CLT] approach has been advocated by applied linguists (Ayodele, 1998). Consequently, the emphasis on language teaching in this approach (the CLT) is on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures.

Furthermore, teachers' Information and Communication Technology [ICT] competency cannot be ignored in the discourse on English language teachers' competence in the 21st century education. ICT competency describes what a teacher should know and be able to do with technology in professional practice. It is also a combination of attributes describing a teacher's professional performance involving the use of ICT to facilitate quality improvement and transformation in educational delivery. This emphasizes the use of technology to transform the roles of the teachers from knowledge experts to knowledge facilitators and the learner from passive to active participants in learning and knowledge construction. To achieve this, several organizations (e.g UNESCO) have been carrying out programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa to examine how prepared are the teachers to deliver 21st century education (Hooker, Mwiyeria & Verma, 2011). The implication here is that recognizing the need to enhance one's specific competencies in order to reach and teach all students require an understanding and acceptance of new ideas and willingness to view English language instruction through varied cultural lenses.

Contrary to the above views, Richard (2011) affirmed that a teacher's competency in the 21st century means that he/she should have firm knowledge of the curriculum of the subject he/she is teaching. In other words, English curriculum can be referred to as the total learning experience provided by a school which includes the content of courses (the syllabus), the methods employed (strategies), and other aspects, like norms and values, which relate to

the way the school is organized. In other words, English language curriculum provides opportunity for students to learn content-related information while acquiring English language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In addition, Ogbonna-Ohuche (2012) describing what are expected of a teacher of English language itemized the under listed as the requisite skills:

1. The teacher of a language such as English should master how to pronounce all the speech sounds used in the dialect of the language,
2. The person should be able to put these sounds together into words and sentences and pronounce them readily and correctly,
3. Master how to grammatically combine words to achieve desired meanings and unity of a spoken or written text, and
4. Master the use of verbal (spoken) and non-verbal (eg gestures) strategies to compensate for any possible communication break-down.

Also Uzoagulu (2013) while discussing teachers' competence in Nigerian schools noted that factors that influence students' performance in English language include qualification, age, gender, experience and location. Considering the fact that the English language is a vast field of study where an individual might not be competent and experienced in all its various aspects, it does appear that qualified and experienced teachers with higher qualifications are needed to teach in our schools.

Some schools have more aged teachers than young ones and so the schools may experience retardation in teaching and learning because the aged teachers are not conversant and competent with the modern ICT and this makes it impossible for them to teach some of the speech sounds in English language correctly.

Also some schools have more female teachers than males. These female teachers are sometimes lazy to teach and many a time go for maternity leave for a long period of time thereby disorganizing their lessons in the school time table.

Some of the secondary schools are also located in the rural areas. Those in the urban areas have to some extent competent and experienced teachers while many of those in the rural areas do not have English language teachers and sometimes teachers who did not study English language are asked to serve as English language teacher to the detriment of the students. This study therefore sets to assess competencies possessed by English language teachers for effective teaching of English in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone and the extent to which the factors mentioned above influence the teachers' effectiveness.

Statement of problem

English language has been seen to occupy a vital and indispensable position in education. Apart from the fact that it is the language of business, mass media, literature as well as those of internal and external communications, it is also the medium of instruction in a child's first year in the school. The role of English language in Nigeria has been well described by

Spencer when he observed that English in West Africa cannot be seen as a temporarily borrowed language, on the contrary, it is by now part of the linguistic property of those who use it. However, despite the importance of English language in the overall education development in the country, it is appalling to know that some of the schools do not have qualified teachers in the subject, no varied text books to teach the subject in schools and also no conducive reading and teaching

environment for both teachers and students to teach and learn English well in schools, the teachers in Nsukka Education Zone have no experience on how to use the audio visual aids and ICT which is used to teach the speech sound in English language. Again most of the teachers are old and aged and are mostly in the rural areas and this makes it impossible for them to be versatile with the current English text books used in the teaching and learning of English language in the zone. Another problem of teaching English language in secondary schools in Nsukka Education zone is that teachers who are not specialist in the discipline are co-opted in the teaching of the subject in some of the schools. Some of these teachers display incompetency in basic segments of the subject like phonetics/phonology, grammar and essay writing. However in most of the secondary schools in Nigeria, especially those in Nsukka Education zone quality and qualified teachers of English language are still lacking as a good number of this all important subject read Social studies and Arts courses in the university. This is what worries and motivates the researcher to embark on this work.

English language now determines success or failure in education and life in the Nigerian society. Performance of students in English is woeful year in year out. Many students are greatly handicapped in their performance in many school subjects because their knowledge of English Language is greatly inadequate, and coupled with the fact that all school subjects except the mother tongues are taught in English from nursery and primary schools to all levels of tertiary institutions. It has been reported that most students fail in most school Certificate subjects because they have problem of proficiency in English Language, and unless a child can acquire facility in this second language, where it is the official language of instruction, he/she is inevitably retarded in reasoning and achievement. The implication of this is that a student must be proficient in English language before he/she can perform creditably well in other school subjects.

The teachers' qualification is another factor to be considered in examining English language teachers' competency. The knowledge of the subject matter in the subject area and the professional teacher's education is very important. English language teaching and learning in Nigeria is beset with many problems which include lack of enough qualified teachers of English language especially at primary school level (public and private schools) where teachers are assigned to teach all the school subjects. Most of these teachers have no professional background in English language. The amount of experience of teachers should be considered in assessing factors that influence students' achievement because no

teacher can effectively teach a subject he/she does not have knowledge of. It is expected that a qualified English language teacher apart from possessing the minimum academic qualification of Nigeria certificate in education in English should be creative in his class room teaching. He should explore avenues of utilizing appropriate teaching methodology and teaching material that will aid students' grasping of the topic. Apart from this the teacher must be up to date in his area of discipline by reading latest textbooks on the subject as well as attending seminars and workshops that will keep abreast with the innovations in the teaching techniques in the area of spelling, grammar phonology essay and lexis.

Integration of ICT which has been reported as playing vital roles in facilitating teaching is yet to be widely accepted and integrated into English language teaching process. Most of the teachers of English language are not computer literate.

Moreover, ICT which has been reported as playing vital roles in facilitating teaching is yet to be widely accepted and integrated into the teaching process.

Although several researches have been done in Nigeria in the area of teachers' competency and its implication on students' performance, none has focused on competencies possessed by English language teachers for effective teaching of English in secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area [LGA]. Therefore, this study sets to investigate the competencies possessed by English language teachers for effective teaching of English language in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out the level of competencies possessed by English language teachers for effective teaching of English language in secondary schools. Specifically, this study sought to ascertain:

1. The level of Competencies possessed by English language teachers in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language
2. The extent the qualification of teachers influence the competencies possessed by teachers of English language in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language.
3. The extent to which the age of English language teachers in Nsukka Education zone influence their competencies in teaching English language.
4. The extent to which gender influence the competencies possessed by teachers of English language in Nsukka education zone for effective teaching of English language.
5. The extent to which the experience of English language teachers in Nsukka Education zone influence their competencies for effective teaching of English language.
6. The extent to which location of English language teachers in Nsukka Education zone influence their competencies for effective teaching of English language.

Significance of the study

Theoretically, this study would provide opportunities for a better understanding and

elaboration of the Classical and Operant Conditioning theory of B.F Skinner and Ivan Pavlov as discussed by Abiri (2005) and Urdang(2002). This can be done by providing competent English language teachers adequate instructional materials and enabling environment that are learner friendly and motivates interest for learners of English language to ascertain whether it will improve learners' communicative competence. To illustrate the above view, Classical Conditioning Theory proposed that when a child associates the learning of a school subject with success, he/she will develop favourable attitude towards the study of the subject, enjoy studying the subject and then work hard at it. But, where the child has associated the subject with failure, that child will dislike the subject, develop an unfavourable attitude towards the subject and will not work hard at it. English language teachers therefore have to possess certain level of professional competencies in order to capture students' interest and attention in the class for effective learning of English language which will result in improved performance in the subject.

Also, the Operant Conditioning theory propounded by B.F Skinner posits that learning can be defined by selecting and confirming responses. The emphasis in the learning process is on the effect of positive and negative consequences of behaviour. In this theory, learning is explained in terms of reinforcement or contingency management. In this case, the teachers of English language need to reinforce the students positively by using encouragement words or praise to motivate them to perform better.

Again, the following people would benefit from this study; the ministry of education, the teachers, the students, institutions of higher learning and other researchers. The study will function as a guide by ensuring harmonization of all future activities in the field of English language. This study will help the ministry of education to determine the competencies of English language teachers in secondary schools thereby knowing if the objectives of the nation's education policy can be achieved as teachers' competency are expected to either aid or mar the achievement of the objectives.

Moreover, this study would help the ministry of education to be able to determine how to improve teachers' skills; either by sending them for refresher courses or organizing in-service training for them. The results from this study will also make the ministry of education to liaise with the pre-teachers training institutions to ensure that new teachers attain required competency standard before qualifying for the job of teaching. As well, it will instigate the need for the ministry of education to liaise with the policymakers to ensure that the nation's education policy is comprehensible by the teachers and achievable within the context of the classroom.

In same vein, when the teachers are competent, the learners are the most beneficiaries. The students are in the better position to gain more knowledge from this study. This is because if the level of teachers' competency is known and improved (if need be) and necessary infrastructure provided, it will encourage the idea of constructive approach to teaching

thereby making the learners to learn at their own pace.

In addition, the policy makers would also use the information from this study to make policies that will help institutions, specifically secondary schools to achieve the goals and objectives of education policy in Nigeria. This study would also provide information that will guide the policy makers to make policies that would ensure that the English language curriculum for junior and senior secondary schools in Nigeria are adaptive to the nation's learning environment taking cognizance of the available instructional materials. This study will enable them to make policies that will make the English language teachers to use the English language curriculum as a guide for effective teaching of English language and not as a 'tele-guide' which must be judiciously followed without innovative inputs that can aid learning. Furthermore, this study will serve as a motivator for English language teachers to appraise themselves and their competencies. Other change agents and expertise who are directly or indirectly involved in English language teaching will also benefit from the findings of this study as it will encourage them to step up in their competency to be able to compete with other English language teachers in the continent. Most importantly, the findings from this research work will be a useful material for classroom discussion, workshop and in teaching and learning in Arts education programmes. The findings can also be presented in symposium, seminar and conference.

Scope of the Study

The study will be carried out in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State to find out the competencies possessed by English language teachers for effective teaching of English language in secondary schools. The study will find out the types of competencies possessed by English language teachers such as the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, the learner centered teaching, the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching English language and the competence on the use of assessment tools for assessing learners of English language and the extent to which they integrate them into their teaching process for effective teaching of English language in secondary schools. Also, the study will find out the influence of age, experience and qualification on the competencies possessed by English language teachers. This study is limited to all the English language teachers in secondary schools in Nsukka education zone.

Research questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study.

1. What is the level of Competences possessed by English language teachers in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language?
2. To what extent does qualification influence the competences possessed by teachers of English language in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language?
3. To what extent does the age of English language teachers in Nsukka Education Zone influence their competences in teaching English language?

4. To what extent does gender influence the competencies possessed by teachers of English language in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language?
5. To what extent does the experience of English language teachers in Nsukka Education Zone influence their competencies for effective teaching of English language?
6. To what extent does location of English language teachers in Nsukka Education Zone influence their competencies for effective teaching of English language?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at alpha level of 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: Qualification is not a significant factor in the mean scores of competencies possessed by English language teachers in schools in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language.

H₀₂: Age is not a significant factor in the mean scores of competencies possessed by English language teachers in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language.

H₀₃: Gender is not a significant factor in the mean scores of competencies possessed by English language teachers in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language.

H₀₄: Teachers' experience is not a significant factor in the mean scores of competencies possessed by English language teachers in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language.

H₀₅: Location is not a significant factor in the mean scores of competencies possessed by English language teachers in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone for effective teaching of English language.

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