

PDF - EFFECT OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ORAL ENGLISH IN ENUGU, NIGERIA - researchcub.info **ABSTRACT**

This study was designated to investigate the effect of the communicative method on the performance of secondary school students, in Oral English. The study employed a true experimental design. One boys' school in urban area of Enugu Education Zone was chosen for the study. An intact class of 40 students was randomly selected from the school. The students were randomly grouped into experimental and control groups with each group having 20 students. The treatment group was taught oral English using communicative method while the control group was taught the same subject using the Conventional method.

Five research questions and five hypotheses guided the study. An oral production test and observation were used to collect data on the students' performance. The data were analysed using mean, standard deviation and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results of the study revealed that communicative method significantly enhanced students' pronunciation of speech sounds more than the conventional method. There is no significant difference in the use of stress by the students taught with the conventional method and those taught with the communicative method. There is no significant difference in the use of grammatical words/expressions of students taught with the two methods. A significant difference exists in the use of social conventions of speaking by the students in the treatment group and those in the control group; and, the students taught oral English with the communicative method significantly performed higher than those taught with the conventional method.

Based on the discussion of the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that oral English should be taught using the communicative method as it is hoped that this method will help to minimize the present problems which the students encounter in learning to communicate orally. The students will be able to speak correctly by making full and proper use of the many activities presented in the CLT method. In addition, teachers should endeavour to provide opportunities for students to engage in group discussions. This will enable the students to make frequent oral use of the language.

The limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are also given.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of the Study**

The teaching and learning of English language in Nigeria has a long history. With the advent of the British in the country, English was designated as socio-political and an economic language. Thus, the Nigerian constitution (1999:55) states that "the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English . . ."

Also, The Federal Ministry of Education, in the National Policy on Education (2004;16), indicates that "the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the

language of the immediate environment for the first three years' and 'from the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction...' In the light of this, therefore, English became a medium of communication in the country and the language of instruction in educational institutions; thus, the interest in learning the language increased. The imperative to learn the language was strengthened by the introduction of the language as a vital subject of study in the formal system of education especially in the secondary schools where it is a core subject. Due to this, the secondary school students' performance in the subject is constantly monitored both by the school and the society at large.

For years now, the performance of the Nigerian secondary school students in English language has deteriorated. World Bank Report of February, 2001, on the quality of Nigerian university graduates, notes that poor mastery of English language is one of the areas of degeneration in the educational system (Sunday Guardian, March 2001). Most often, comments on the fallen standard are based on the judgment that students no longer speak correct English. Many students have been observed to converse in pidgin English and at times in their mother tongue because they cannot express themselves adequately in the standard English (Mgbodile and Afangideh, 2005). For this reason, students ought to study oral English, properly. Studying oral English involves not only the learning of how to communicate orally in English but also to acquire the ability to understand and evaluate what others say (Akeredolu-Ale, 2005). According to Mgbodile (1999), having competence in oral English is having the ability to understand and produce:

- the English sound system,
- stress, intonation and rhythm,
- correct grammatical usage of words, phrases and idioms,
- different styles to suit different topics and various levels of audience,
- social conventions of speaking.

The production of sounds in English comprises two features; the segmental and supra-segmental features. The segmental features are the consonants and the vowels. These are individual sound segments such as /b/, /k/, /e/ and /i/ while the supra-segmental features are stress and intonation. Knowledge of these sounds is important for intelligibility in communication (Onuigbo, 2003).

Stress is defined by Gimson [1980] as the acoustic energy which a speaker uses to produce a syllable. There are three degrees of stress: primary, secondary and contrastive stress but in this study, two degrees of stress shall be recognized: stressed and unstressed syllables. In English pronunciation, stress is very meaningful. A change in the stress pattern of a word may change completely the meaning and class of the word. Stress is problematic to many Nigerian students of English because the students' mother tongue [MT] is syllable-stressed while English Language is stress-timed.

Intonation is the rise and fall in the pitch of voice. This rise and fall is important because as Onuigbo (2001) states, it makes the listener understand the attitude of the speaker. Failure to make correct use of English intonation may lead to a collapse in communication between native and non-native speakers of English. This importance of intonation may be the reason why Elugbe (2004) notes that students can not speak good English if they can not handle stress and intonation.

An important aspect of speaking which is usually neglected in the teaching of Oral English is discourse. Discourse entails that the students engage in conversations or discussions, using language expressions they know. Ameh (2002), citing Obanya and Dada (1983), indicates that one of the skills of oral English which the teacher should teach his/her students is the ability to speak correct sentences in the language for purpose of conversation, self expression and interaction in day-to-day activities. To engage in discourse, the students should know the social conventions of speaking. Social conventions of speaking are unwritten existing rules and ways which tell speakers of a language that language is used in socially acceptable ways to begin, interrupt and end conversations without being impolite (Mgbodile, 1999).

Proper teaching and learning of these aspects of oral English will lead to oral English proficiency. Oral English proficiency is often an evidence of competence in English as a second language (ESL). This is because most times, students tend to write as they speak. Students who mispronounce certain sounds or words write likewise. Thus, Elugbe (2004) states that the development of appropriate basic language skills in the learners is the proper way of preparing them for meaningful learning because every teaching and learning involves oral communication. It is necessary, therefore, that the learner is made to acquire this important tool. Unfortunately, more attention tends to be paid to the acquisition of the writing skill while the oral skill receives little attention.

The observations of these writers are in line with the statistical reports (1998 and 2003) of English Language Chief Examiners of West African Examination Council (WAEC). The reports indicate that mother tongue (MT) interference was a major hindrance to good essay writing and that speaking and reading culture have not taken root in our secondary schools. Several other reasons have been proffered as the causes of this deterioration. They include the non-availability of oral English teaching aids, lack of motivation (both for the teachers and the students), the insufficient time allotted to English on the school time table and the approach or method used in the teaching of the subject (Otagburuagu, 2002).

There is a general belief that the method or approach adopted in the teaching of English is contributory to the deteriorating performance of students in spoken English. This has inspired a lot of research in English Language pedagogy. Many writers are of the view that teaching method is very necessary in the teaching of English as a second language (TESL). In his work, Brown (2000) states that the use of a sole method or approach is inappropriate for good

language teaching and learning. He is of the view that teaching should be based on a combination of different approaches to get the required results.

In the view of Bolunde (2005), the method used can affect the learner's achievement (positively or negatively), and that the method is a great weapon that the teacher should employ in his or her professional duty of enhancing the language ability of his students. Likewise, Richards (2001) observes that if teaching is successfully carried out, learning will occur and that successful teaching axiomatically implies good method application.

Teaching methods abound. They include among others the Traditional conventional method and the Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT). The conventional method has its focus on the acquisition of vocabulary, according to the prescribed rules of grammar which the learner should join to form sentences. The method emphasizes more on the knowledge of the language than the use. In this method, language learning is grammar-based; its emphasis is on developing the ability to write, therefore, it neglects the development of the speaking skills (Mgbodile, 1999). Azikiwe (1998) notes that in the conventional method, the students learn the speech sounds like parrots. There is the neglect of the communicative skills with virtually little or no stress attached to accurate pronunciation and intonation (Baldeh, 1990).

In using the conventional method to teach oral English in Nigerian secondary schools, the teacher devotes a full lesson to the teaching of the phonology. The teacher spends 30-35 minutes of the lesson period teaching phonetic symbols which the students memorize. Memorizing here is taken as a process of drilling. The selected symbols are written in one column with the words in which they occur in another column:

Teacher: /i/ as in sit

Student: /i/ as in sit

Teacher: /e/ as in pen

Student: /e/ as in pen

The students are expected to internalize the target symbols and words through repetition, mimicry and memorization. Throughout the lesson period, little or no attempt is made to provide relevant contexts or situations for oral communication.

On the other hand, Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT) is an approach to the teaching of second and foreign language that emphasizes interaction as both the means and ultimate aim of learning a language. CLT method can be described as a set of core principles about language learning and teaching; and, assumptions which can be applied in varying ways and which address various aspects of the process of teaching and learning (Richards, 2006). According to Brumfit & Johnson (2003) cited in Tomori (2007), CLT method is a reaction against the view of language as a set of structures; it is a reaction towards a view of language as communication; a view in which meaningful uses to which language is put play a central part. It is a movement away from the teaching

of language where emphasis is on mastery of different aspects of grammar and practice through controlled activities such as memorization of dialogues and drills towards the use of pair/group work activities, role plays, project work: kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning. It sees language learning as acquiring the linguistic means to carry out different functions (Offorma, 2004) in (Okoh, 2006). That is, its focus is on making the learner acquire the ability to select and use appropriate language suitable for specific situations such as when playing games or shopping. It emphasizes speaking the language and using it to communicate in daily activities. Communicative Language Teaching method sees language learning as a social event which does not occur in a vacuum. The study of language should be in relation to the situations in which it is used.

The method shifts emphasis from linguistic competence to communicative competence. According to Hymes (1966) in Otagburuagu (1997), competence is what a speaker needs to know to communicate effectively in a culturally significant setting. Communicative competence includes knowing how to use language for various purposes and functions and knowing how to vary the use of language according to setting and participant; that is, knowing when and how to use language appropriately for written and spoken communication.

In CLT method, attempts are made to give learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) the natural setting for them to grapple with communicative activities so as not only to try to understand the message produced by other speakers but also to produce their own ideas and meaning (Amusegham, 2007). Thus, the communicative language teaching method emphasizes that language learning should be based on situations. In other words, language teaching should be geared towards using the language in real life and not only for the classroom purposes.

Every language teacher makes use of one method or another. Scholars such as Chomsky (1959) and Bruner (1960) have propounded all the existing theories but teachers are still the ones that live day-by-day with what happens in the classroom and know about the real needs of the students; and therefore, they try to find solutions to the problems they perceive in the class.

Generally, teachers want to know if a method is right and if applying its principles could lead to the learner's successful acquisition of the language (Cristo, 2005). Like many other applied linguists, Whitehead (2005) concludes that no particular method is in itself better than the other. It is interesting to note that he also agrees that there is a broadly accepted method – a communicative method – which incorporates many best characteristics of a variety of approaches.

Other research works which have attested to ineffectiveness of the conventional method include Osakwe (2000), Akabuogu (2002), and Igbokwe (2007). It is, therefore, worthwhile to find an alternative method. The basic qualities of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method tend to suggest that it is a method

which will improve the performance of students in oral English.

The efficacy of the communicative language teaching method in the teaching of reading and writing is quite remarkable as the studies of many researchers such as Igbenyi (1998), Wangweiping (2004), and Anizoba (2004) show. The impact of CLT on oral English performance of students in Nigeria especially in Enugu Education zone is not known and it is worth investigating. It will be worthwhile to find out whether the success recorded in the other language skills (reading and writing) would be the same in Oral skill.

It has been observed that many Nigerian teachers of English employ more of the conventional method than the communicative method in teaching. It is suspected that the predominant use of the conventional method could be the reason for the poor performance of the secondary school students in spoken English.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to find out whether there would be any significant difference in the performance of students taught oral English with the conventional method and those taught the same subject with the Communicative Language Teaching Method.

### **Statement of the problem**

Oral English proficiency is viewed as proof of productive English language competence. Students' poor communication ability creates the impression that the standard of education has fallen in Nigeria. This is because every secondary school leaver is expected to show an appreciable level of proficiency in the speaking of the English language. For years now, courses in oral English have been made an indispensable part of the English language curriculum in secondary schools. The school syllabuses are revised from time to time to provide necessary guides in ensuring that adequate teaching activities in oral English are carried out. Moreover, books on oral English are available to assist learners in the spoken aspect of the language; yet, the performance of the students in oral English is quite disheartening.

West African Examination Council (WAEC) Chief Examiners' reports (1998 to 2003) attest to the fact that secondary school students perform terribly poorly in English language in general and oral English in particular. The chief examiners note that mother tongue interference (MT) is a major obstacle to good essay writing because speaking skills have not taken root in secondary schools. The study of Mgbodile and Afangideh (2005) also confirms that a majority of the students converse in pidgin English and at times in their mother tongue because they cannot express themselves properly in the standard English. It has been observed that students' limited oral proficiency hampers the quality of presentation of their academic (written) work. This observation is noted in Mgbodile & Afangideh (2005). They stated that the vocabulary of secondary school learners is very limited irrespective of the fact that the ability to speak good English is highly of value in Nigeria. According to them, students' word choice is carelessly done; sentence structure improper; tenses wrong and many other wrong language expressions which cause a great confusion to the listeners and

embarrassment to the students themselves.

There is a great need to find better strategies for improving the students' performance in the acquisition of linguistic skills especially oral English. This need has led to the re-evaluation of the teaching processes including the introduction and use of various teaching methods. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method has recorded an immense success in the teaching of reading and writing skills but it is not known to have been tried out in the teaching of oral skills in Nigeria, particularly in Enugu Education Zone.

It has been suggested that the method used in teaching can affect (positively or negatively) the students' communicative competence, and so, it is suspected that the inability of the students to effectively engage in communicative act could be due to the predominant use of the conventional method by the teachers instead of the communicative method. It has been observed that English Language teachers use mostly the conventional Method irrespective of the theoretical postulations of linguists that the Communicative Language Teaching [CLT] method is better. It is, therefore, necessary to have empirical evidence on the performance of students taught oral English with the two methods (conventional and communicative language teaching methods) respectively to ascertain whether any of the methods is better than the other in enhancing the students' oral communicative competence. The problem of this study, put in an interrogatory form, is What would be the effect of the Communicative Language Teaching method on oral English performance of secondary school students?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to empirically determine the effect of the Communicative Language Teaching method on oral English performance of secondary school students. Specifically, the study sought to

1. find out the comparative effect of the conventional and communicative language teaching methods on the students' pronunciation of speech sounds.
2. examine the extent to which the communicative language teaching method would affect the students' use of stress.
3. ascertain the effect of communicative language teaching method on the students' use of grammatical expressions in group discussions.
4. find out the effect of the communicative language teaching method on the use of social conventions of speaking by the students.
5. ascertain the comparative effect of the conventional and the communicative language teaching methods on the students' performance in oral English.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study will be beneficial to students, teachers, external examination bodies, educational administrators, authors and researchers. The information that will be provided in this study will help to minimize or eradicate the difficulties encountered by the students and teachers in

the teaching and learning of oral English because it will give the teachers a direction as to which of the two methods is better and how to use it for greater efficiency; and thus, enhance the students' communicative competence.

Also, the study will provide information that will enable secondary school certificate examination bodies such as West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Commission (NECO) to see the need to reintroduce the real test of oral English (Oral Production tests) in the Senior School Certificate Examinations instead of limiting it to just objective test. Oral English test ought to include a test of the candidate's pronunciation but, unfortunately, the present WAEC and NECO examinations on Test of Orals does not clearly assess the candidate's performance in the pronunciation of English (Elugbe, 2004). Reintroduction of the real test of orals will bring in seriousness to the teaching and learning of oral English in schools.

The findings of this study will equally be of immense help to educational administrators because the administrators will be presented with the necessary data on how to promote oral communicative competence in these secondary school students. Authors of English Language textbooks will find the study useful because it will help them to organize their texts to reflect the requirements of the appropriate method in the teaching of oral English. Hopefully, researchers in similar studies will find this work very beneficial because it will provide them with information on methods and areas to be researched on.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study was carried out in the secondary schools in Enugu Education zone in Enugu State. The SSII students were used for the study. The choice was made because SSII students have spent four years in the school and have experienced various aspects of the traditional method. The students are in the same zone and so, there is a uniformity of scheme of work and time table. Also, the choice was due to convenience and effective research control and implementation. The focus of the study was directed to the performance of the students taught with the two methods.

The study covered the teaching of the pronunciation of speech sounds and stress with the conventional and communicative methods. It, also, looked at the use of grammatical expressions and social conventions of speaking employed by the students in group discussions.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the relative mean performance scores on the pronunciation of speech sounds students taught oral English with the conventional method and those taught with the communicative method?
2. To what extent do the mean performance scores on the use of stress by the students taught with the conventional method relatively differ from those of the students



taught with the communicative method?

•What is the relative difference in the mean performance scores of the students taught with the conventional method and those taught with the communicative language teaching method in their correct use of grammatical expressions in group discussions?

4 To what extent do the mean performance scores on the use of social conventions of speaking by the students taught with the communicative language teaching method relatively differ from those of the students taught with the conventional method?

5 What is the relative difference in the mean performance scores of the students taught oral English with the conventional method and those of the students taught with the communicative method?

### **Hypotheses**

The study tested the following null hypotheses at 5% level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean performance scores as measured by an oral English performance test of the students taught oral English through the conventional method and those taught through the communicative language teaching method on the pronunciation of speech sounds.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean performance scores on the use of stress by the students taught with the communicative language teaching method and those taught with the conventional method.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean performance scores of the students taught with the conventional method and those taught with the communicative language teaching method in the correct use of grammatical expressions and idioms in group discussions.

3. There is no significant difference in the use of social conventions of speaking by the students taught with the communicative language teaching method and those taught with the conventional method.

4. There is no significant difference in the mean performance scores of the students taught oral English with the conventional method and those taught with the communicative language teaching method.

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