

Methods, Techniques and Questioning Behaviour Teachers Adopt in Poetry Lessons in Selected Secondary Schools in Ibadan

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Abstract

This study examined the methods, techniques, and questioning behaviour teachers adopt in poetry lessons in selected secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State. The survey research design was adopted. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three local government areas from Ibadan metropolis, five schools from each local government and one intact class from each school making a total of 15 schools and their 15 teachers of Literature in English. The instrument used was Poetry Observation Schedule on Methods, Techniques and Questioning Behavior of Teachers in Poetry lessons ($r=0.75$). Five research questions were answered. Data were analysed using frequency counts and percentage. Results revealed that of the 15 teachers observed, 12 (80%) employed traditional method, while 3 (20%) employed interactive methods in teaching poetry. Teachers who employed the traditional method used the following techniques: questioning (21.87%), expressive/dramatised reading (11.51%), giving notes (9.32%), giving information about the poem (4.96%), paraphrasing (4.44%), while their counterparts that adopted interactive method used learner-centered techniques such as students responding to teacher's question (3.08%), doing expressive reading (2.28%), guessing the meaning based on the title (2.04%), allowing students to read silently (0.20%), teacher using technology or instructional materials (0.12%) and making students to write based on the poem. Besides, results show that teachers emphasize factual content (56.04%), followed by themes (31.33%) and language/style (12.68%) and they use more of lower order questions: questions testing understanding (38.57%), and remembering (36.00%) and less of higher order questions: application (10.41%), evaluation (7.68%) and analytical questions (7.34%). It was recommended that in-service training, seminars and workshops should be organized for teachers of Literature-in-English to acquaint them with current methods and techniques of teaching poetry.

Keywords: Methods, Techniques, Questioning Behavior, Teaching Poetry.

Introduction

Language is the tool used by literature, while literature contributes and improves language use. Literature serves as a form of resource material used to develop the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It provides opportunity for actual language use in context by exposing readers to different contexts of language use through various texts and equips readers with rhetorical skills. This explains the question of the relationship between language and literature as they are two sides of a coin.

Scholars have reached the consensus that language and literature reinforce each other, thus, making them inseparable. Therefore, proficiency in English language will eventually result to effective comprehension of English text and literature. Aside the linguistic values that are derived from the study of literature, aesthetics and literary competence is also of immense benefit to the readers as such students are mandated to take literature-in English at both the lower and higher levels of education especially students of arts and humanities.

In Nigerian Secondary Schools, Literature-in-English consists of, drama and poetry. Each of these in turn is divided into types. Prose could be a novel, novella or short story. Drama could be a tragedy, comedy or tragic comedy while Poetry types include, ode, elegy, sonnet, epic and so on. However, this study is primarily concerned with the teaching and learning of poetry in secondary schools. Poetry could be defined as a piece of literary work, spoken or written, which concisely expresses and communicates thoughts, ideas, experiences, feelings and emotions beautifully by employing figurative devices such as imagery, rhythm and sound. Poetry creates a vivid imagination expresses strong feelings and experiences using figurative language Okolo (2003). It is usually written with lyrical effects. Ibitoye (2005) states that poetry is a form of writing stimulated by emotion and expressing a deep feeling that may be very difficult to explain in literary form. It is the act of uniting pleasure with truth by the help of imagination and reasoning while Okolo (2003) believes that Poetry creates a vivid imagination

expresses strong feelings and experiences using figurative language. Levy (2001) also defined poetry as a way of negotiating experience, of attending to external and internal worlds, bringing diverse worlds into close relation for arriving at renewed perception. What Levy is trying to point out is that poetry is pleasurable to all in all spheres of life.

The major distinctive features of poetry as a literary genre is its use of lyrical and figurative language and the ability to express emotions, feelings and thoughts in an apt and concise manner. It is often written in verse in the form of stanza and lines. It is frugal with words and any form of use of words is deliberate and impactful. Poetry is said to be the oldest of the literary genres, perhaps, as old as religion and history themselves. It is very germane as it is the vehicle through which the society gives meaningful and sensitive expression to the innermost thoughts, feelings and emotions of individuals and groups of people.

Literature is one of the subjects Nigerian students do not perform well. Student's low achievement in literature has been a major concern to teachers, government and the students themselves. In spite of the studies that have been carried out and are still being carried out in it by different scholars, the unsatisfactory performance has continued. The low performance of students in this subject has hampered many students dream of studying in the higher institution courses such as law, mass-communication, English language, theatre arts and many others, as highlighted in the Joint Admission Matriculation Boards' (JAMB) brochure (2010), at least a credit pass is the requirement before any candidate is eligible for admission). The main concern now is to proffer a workable solution to the challenges of teaching and learning of literature in English with particular reference to Poetry.

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) Chief Examiners' Report May/ June, 2018 notes that students generally did not perform well in the three genres especially in poetry where the performance was worst. The poor performance was attributed to candidates' lack of seriousness, poor knowledge of literature texts, literature being handled by incompetent teachers and their bad methods and approaches to teaching. Seriousness and interest are important factors in learning so if

the learner is not interested in learning or takes the learning with lackadaisical attitude, it will all come to naught.

All these attest to the fact that the poor performance could be linked to poor teaching methods and techniques adopted in schools which tend to de-motivate students and limit their interest and participation. According to Adunola (2011), poor performance by the majority of students is fundamentally linked to application of ineffective teaching methods by the teachers to impact knowledge. Thus, effective use of methods and techniques will have positive effect on the students. Although there are no specified methods and techniques of teaching literature, but some methods and techniques are usually discussed under the three genres: drama, poetry and prose. The methods of teaching literature under these genres include: traditional lecture method, /teacher centered method, discussion method, subject centered method, questions and answers method, activity method, translation method and so on. Techniques of delivering these methods include: group discussion, presentation of geographical, political, and historical aspects of the literature, collection of pictures, collection of mythology, films and dramas, author's introduction, reading aloud and so on.

Trinya (2016) is of the opinion that the fundamental confusion with the teaching of poetry at any level is the inaccurate description of the genre. There is no gain saying in the fact that poor performance in poetry has prevented many students from advancing as it constitutes a significant portion in literature. Poor performance in poetry has adverse effect on the overall scores of the candidates which will determine the pass or failure of such candidates in Literature-in-English. Poor teaching methods and techniques can be detrimental to the teaching and learning of poetry of the learners when they are unable to connect with the teacher and the poem. In tandem with this, Zeeb (2004) noted that the teaching methods must align with students need which influences their academic attainments. Non-availability of materials could be hindrance as more students will be passive in the classroom since they do not have the prescribed text to read thus, making the teacher do all the talking and chalking.

It is worthy of note that the methods of

teaching poetry in which teachers are to abide by are not stipulated in any official document especially in the curriculum so this could also account for a reason which makes the genre hard to teach. The term 'method' has been in the academic discourse for decades and scholars had given different definitions regarding it. Killfoil and Van der Walt (1989) explained methods to be restrictive, rigid procedure established and favored by support of a specific view of language learning or teaching. Arvind and Kusum (2016) defined method as the step by step scientific way of presenting a subject matter. It is a procedure within an approach. Arvind and Kusum (2016) asserts that it covers both strategy and techniques as it relates to the nature of content of a subject to be taught. Method of teaching poetry refers to the systematic procedures involved in the teaching of poetry in poetry lessons. They include the lecture method, discussion method, activity method, drama method, co-operative learning method.

In discussion method, the teacher initiates and leads the students into constructing their understanding of the poem. The discussion flows from the teacher - student and the student -student thereby allowing them to discover knowledge themselves. Cooperative learning method is a poetry teaching method that involves division of the students into smaller groups for easy analysis of the poem. The methods used in delivering a poetry lesson are germane to the success or failure of such a poetry lesson.

Hofler (1983) defined technique as the immediate procedure or strategy that is used to implement the method. Techniques of teaching poetry are practical applications of methods of teaching poetry. Techniques are practical skills used in the classroom which is subsumed under method thus, it could be referred to as the broken down parts of the method to be implemented during poetry lessons. There are several techniques that could be made use of while teaching poetry. These include: reading aloud, role plays and dramatization, organizing interviews of the great popular poets, films and dramas, presentation of historical, political, religious and economical situations surrounding a poem, collection of pictures and stamps, collection of mythology, story-telling, and author's introduction.

Questioning behavior refers to the

question types teachers adopt and ways those questions are used to facilitate learning in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Questioning is regarded as the most common form of interaction between pupils and teachers. Efficient and effective use of questioning can bring out the best learning experience in students. Questions are designed and targeted at the domains of learning namely: cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domain. Questions in the cognitive domain could be targeted at knowledge, comprehension, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Questions at the affective domains target the emotional and social aspect of the students while questions about psychomotor deals with the gross motor skills. A teacher could make use of open-ended and close-ended questions. The good use of questioning requires a high level of competence of the teacher because the type of questions asked by the teacher will determine the learning outcome of the students especially in dreaded aspect such as poetry.

Questioning is essential in the teaching and learning of poetry as it elicit responses from students on their understanding of poems which teachers could use to modify his/her teaching. Potter (1969) noted that questioning with exercises and discussions form the means by which students are led to appreciate literature. It also aid pupils to develop their critical thinking skills which promotes deeper understanding. Questions prompt pupils to inspect their background knowledge and experience to create new understanding of the subject matter and themes in poems. Creed (1978) explains that questioning in poetry is to be preferred to lecturing as students will have to do some of their own discovering and at the same time helps them to learn the kinds of questions they should ask themselves when reading or studying poems independently. Thus, this quality of questions determines the quality of learning. Consequently, one way to contribute to the teaching and learning of poetry in literature lessons is to observe and examine the methods, techniques and questioning behaviors that are being adopted by teachers while teaching poetry in the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Poetry is a distinct genre of literature popular and appreciated for its brevity of

expression, elegance and frugality with words. Its basic strength is the ability to communicate feelings, ideas and emotions in an elegant way. The value of poetry like other genres of literature lies in its tremendous contribution to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of readers. Poetry provides the reader with the opportunity to respond to literature and develop their own opinions about the subject matter. This strengthens cognitive development domain as it encourages deeper thought. Poetry aids students to understand patterns which lead to sequences and sentence structure which helps the brain in processing and retaining information. It contributes to the affective development of children as it enables them to experience and understand emotions and feelings, Singing, jumping and clapping while reciting poems contributes and improves students psychomotor skills.

However, students do not perform well in poetry and in Literature-in-English. Factors that contributed to student's low achievement in poetry include: bias, diction difficulty, interpretation and comprehension. This low achievement could be attributed to the flawed conventional way of teaching poetry in which teachers read the poem to the students then ask them to look for the figurative devices and theme. It denies the students the pleasure of having first-hand experience with the poem. Reports and Literature have shown the increasing decline in students' performance in literature with poetry being the worst hit among the other genres. This decline in performance has been associated with the nature of poetry, poor attitudes of students and teachers to the genre, lack of qualified and competent teachers and the use of poor teaching approaches and methods.

Previous research in poetry has focused on problems of teaching literature, strategies of teaching poetry, student's reluctance in reading poetry, student's perception of poetry, gender and attitude to poetry and approaches to teaching poetry among others. Studies on how teachers employ the methods and techniques of teaching poetry in the classroom have been ignored. Given this background, this study investigated methods, techniques and questioning behavior of teachers during poetry lessons in selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis.

Research Question

To solve the problem of this study, answers were sought to the following questions.

1. What methods do teachers employ in teaching poetry?
2. What techniques do teachers use in poetry lessons?
3. What are the participatory activities of students in poetry lessons?
4. What content elements do teachers emphasize or focus in poetry lessons?

Significance of the study

This study is geared towards investigating the methods, techniques and questioning behavior Senior Secondary School teachers adopt in teaching poetry to facilitate learning in the classroom. Therefore, it is expected that the findings of this study would be of tremendous benefit to both the teachers and students of literature by providing information on the methods and techniques teachers use in poetry lessons and the type of questions teachers ask to elicit responses to facilitate learning in the classroom.

It is hoped that this study would reveal weaknesses and strengths of such methods and techniques and how they could be improved upon. The study would also identify what kind of questions teachers use to enable students interpret and comprehend the poem. It would be of great help to the teachers by encouraging their sensitivity in the classroom. That is, with this study, teachers will be more sensitive to the methods and techniques they use in poetry lessons as well as how they employ different kinds of question.

Also, it will provide information to teachers on ways in which they can use different methods and techniques of teaching poetry to suit individual differences so as to achieve an efficient and effective learning outcome in poetry lessons. It will also alert and awaken them to their responsibilities by taking necessary steps to guard students activities in poetry lesson both in and out of classroom. It is expected that by examining the methods used to teach poetry, both teachers and learners will become more aware of the importance of poetry as a genre in the school curriculum.

It will also help them to take cognizance of their questioning style that will bring out desired

productivity in the learners in poetry. It will help teachers to improve on their methods, techniques and questioning behavior they employ in poetry lessons. This study hopes to make contribution to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning of poetry and by so doing increase students' performance in poetry and reduce the failure rate in Literature. Finally, It would serve as reference for researchers who are interested in carrying out a research or further the research on this topic.

Scope of the Study

This study investigates methods and techniques teachers adopt in poetry lessons. It covers fifteen (15) senior secondary school literature-in-English teachers from ten (15) secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo state.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in carrying out this study. This is necessary because the study identified and described the methods, techniques and questioning behavior of teachers and the content addressed in poetry lessons. The population of the study comprised 15 senior secondary school literature-in-English teachers in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State. Random sampling technique was adopted in selecting participants for the study. Three local government areas in Ibadan

Metropolis were randomly selected. From each of the local governments, five(5) schools were selected and a teacher was selected from each school. Out of the 15 teachers observed, 8 (53.3%) were male while 7 (46.7%) were female. 2 (13.3%) out of the 15 teachers had NCE/English, 10 (66.7%) had B.A/Ed English, 2 (13.3%) had M.A Ed/English while only one had other qualification different from English. Also, 2 (13.3%) of the teachers had between 0-5 years teaching experience, 3 (20.0%) had between 5-10 years, 5 (33.3%) had between 10 -15 years, 4 (26.7%) had between 15-20 years while only 1 (6.7%) teacher had acquired a teaching experience of over 20 – 30 years teaching experience. Altogether, fifteen (15) schools and, fifteen (15) teachers participated in the study. The instrument used for this study was a self-designed questionnaire entitled Poetry Lesson Observation Schedule on Methods and Techniques of Teachers in Poetry Lessons ($r=0.75$). The researcher personally observed thirty (30) poetry lessons with the Poetry Lesson Observation Schedule on Methods, Techniques and Questioning Behavior of Teachers with each teacher being observed twice from different schools selected. Each of the lessons lasted for a period of forty-five (45) minutes. The data collected for the study were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

Results

Research question 1: What methods do teachers employ in teaching Poetry?

Table 1: Summary of methods employed by teachers in teaching poetry

Methods	Frequency		Percentage (%)
	1 st Observation	2 nd Observation	
	No of Teachers Observed	No of Teachers Observed	
Traditional/reading comprehension/critical	12	12	80.0
Interactive/bottom-up and top down/non - critical	03	03	20.0
Total	15	15	100

Table.1 shows the methods employed by teachers in teaching poetry. It revealed that out of the two grouped methods of teaching poetry identified in

this study, 12 (80%) of the teachers observed used the traditional/reading comprehension /critical method while only 3 (20%) used the

interactive/bottom-up and top-down/non-critical method This implies that the traditional/reading comprehension/critical method is mostly used by teachers in teaching poetry.

Research Question 2: What techniques do teachers use in teaching poetry?

Table.2: Techniques and content focused on by teachers in observed poetry lessons under the Traditional/reading comprehension/critical method.

Methods	Techniques	Frequency of Techniques (%)	Content addressed		
			Themes/ deep meaning	Factual content	Language/ style
			Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Traditional/ reading comprehension /critical	1)Teacher gives information about the poem (background, introduction, explains vocabulary)	124 (4.96)	39 (1.56)	71 (2.84)	14 (0.56)
	2) Teacher paraphrases	111 (4.44)	43 (1.72)	59 (2.36)	9 (0.36)
	3) Expressive /dramatised reading by the teacher / students with explanations by the teacher	288 (11.51)	22 (0.88)	255 (10.19)	11 (0.44)
	4) Teacher asks questions	547 (21.87)	186 (7.43)	274 (10.95)	87 (3.48)
	5) Students respond to the questions	547 (21.87)	186 (7.43)	274 (10.95)	87 (3.48)
	6) Teacher gives notes	233 (9.32)	86 (3.44)	105 (4.20)	42 (1.68)
	7) Students copy notes	233 (9.32)	86 (3.44)	105 (4.20)	42 (1.68)
	8) Students initiate question	69 (2.76)	23 (0.92)	38 (1.52)	8 (0.32)
	9) Teacher uses technology or instructional materials	4 (0.16)	–	4 (0.20)	–
	Sub-total	2156 (86.21)	671 (26.81)	1185 (47.41)	300 (12)

Table 2 shows the techniques used and content focused by teachers in the observed poetry lessons under the traditional/reading comprehension/critical method of teaching poetry. The study revealed that the teachers used the questioning technique 547 (21.87%), expressive /dramatised reading 288 (11.51), give notes 233 (9.32%), give information about the poem 124

(4.96%), paraphrase 111 (4.44%), and teachers use technology or instructional materials 4 (0.16). However, it was revealed that the technique mostly used by teachers is the use of question 547 (21.87) followed by expressive /dramatized reading by the teacher 288 (11.51) and the giving of notes and information 233 (9.32). This implies that the teachers dominate poetry lessons.

Table 3: Summary of Techniques and content focused on by teachers in observed poetry lessons under the Interactive/bottom up and top down/critical method.

Methods	Techniques	Frequency of techniques (%)	Content Addressed		
			Themes/deep meaning	Factual content	Language/styles
			Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
2) Interactive/bottom-up and top-down/non critical	10) Students guess the meaning based on the title	51 (2.04)	21 (0.83)	30 (2.14)	–
	11) Students read silently	5 (0.20)		5 (0.35)	
	12) Teacher asks questions to confirm /disconfirm guesses	77 (3.08)	34 (1.36)	36 (2.56)	7(2.21)
	13) Students respond to teacher's questions	77 (3.08)	34 (4.34)	36 (2.56)	7 (2.21)
	14) Teacher's expressive /dramatised reading	42 (1.68)	8 (1.02)	31 (2.21)	3 (0.95)
	15) Students expressive reading	57 (2.28)	9 (1.15)	48 (3.42)	–
	16) Questions on students response to the poem	32 (1.28)	7 (0.89)	25(1.78)	–
	17) Writing based on the poem (e.g essay, story, own poem)	2 (0.08)	–	2 (0.14)	–
	18) Use of technology or instructional materials	3 (0.12)	–	3 (0.21)	–
	Sub-total	346 (13.83)	113 (4.52)	216 (8.63)	17 (0.68)
	Grand-total	2502 (100)	784 (31.33)	1401 (56.04)	317 (12.68)

Note: Fifteen (15) teachers were observed twice each making total of thirty (30) observations.

Table 3 shows the techniques used and content focused by teachers in the observed poetry lessons under the interactive/ Bottom-up and top-down/non-critical method of teaching poetry. The result revealed that teachers ask questions to confirm/disconfirm guesses 77 (3.08%), student's respond to teacher's questions (3.08%), student's read expressively (2.28%), students guess the meaning based on the title (2.04%), teachers read expressively (1.64%), teachers ask questions about student's response to the poem(1.28%). In this method, students activities are dominant (7.80%) over that of the teachers (6.0%). This means the method is more student centered. Overall, 80% teachers use teacher centered method while 20% use student centered method.

Research question 3: What are the participatory activities of students in poetry lessons?

From table 2, the result revealed the participatory activities of students in the traditional/reading comprehension/critical method

as follows: students respond to teacher questions 547 (21.87%), copy notes 233 (9.32%), and students initiate questions 69 (2.76%) while Table 4.2(b) also revealed the students participatory activities in the interactive/bottom-up and top-down/non-critical method as follows: students respond to teacher's question 77 (3.08%),use expressive reading 57 (2.28%),guess the meaning based on the title 51 (2.04%), read silently 5 (0.20%), times, and write based on the poem 2 (0.08%). The implication of this is that students engage in more activities under the interactive student-centered method than the traditional teacher-centered method.

Research question 4: What content element do teachers present/emphasize in poetry lesson?

From table 2 result shows that teachers who employed the teacher-centered method emphasize factual information(47.41%), followed by themes (26.81%) and language/styles (12%) while those who adopted interactive method

emphasized factual content (8.63%) followed by theme (4.52%) and language/styles (0.68%). Overall teachers of poetry emphasized factual content (56.04%), themes and deep meaning (31.33%) and language/styles (12.68%).

Discussion of Findings

Methods and Techniques Teachers adopt in poetry lessons.

The findings reveal that teachers use the traditional/reading comprehension/critical and the interactive/bottom-up and top down/non-critical methods in their poetry lessons in the observed schools. However, more teachers make use of the traditional method than the interactive. This is in consonance with Alvi and Alvi (2019) study on methodologies of teaching poetry where they discovered that most teachers use traditional teacher-centered method which views poetry subject as a type of knowledge where teachers are mediators to impart information about poets and poems while the students are passive recipients for information without critical, creative and evaluative abilities.

The findings on what techniques teacher use in poetry lesson showed that teachers use many techniques such as the use of questions, paraphrasing, expressive reading, note giving, and use of instructional materials. The fusion and deployment of many techniques during poetry lessons will help to enhance and facilitate learning. However, it was discovered that the teachers use more of questioning than other techniques. This is a good development as regards the old way of teachers not using questions sufficiently. The result of the study is in line with Sedigheh et al (2014) who noted that questioning technique is not merely a pedagogical tool to elicit evidence of students understanding but also a means to improve their understanding. Denzin et al (2000) see teacher questions as instructional indications or stimuli that convey to students the content elements to be learned and directions for what and how of doing things.

Participatory activities of students in poetry lesson

The findings of the study on participatory activities of student revealed that Students respond

to the questions, copy note, initiates questions, guess the meaning on poems based on the title, respond to teachers question, participate in expressive reading and write based on the poem. Mina et al (2015) viewed classroom participation as an active involvement process which could be divided into classification, preparation, contributions to discussions, group works, communication skills, and attendance. Student's participation in poetry class activities facilitates learning and understanding. However, the students responding to and initiating question, and note taking seem to be more prominent in the lessons. This could be as a result of the method the teachers use for their lessons which is the traditional method. According to Mohd et al (2012) findings on their study, effective learning process occurs when both teachers and students interact and participate in the learning activities. This, participatory types of learning process encourages mutual exchange of information, stimulate interest as well as recognition of respect among teachers and students.

Content elements teachers focus/emphasize in poetry lessons

The findings of the study on content elements teachers present/emphasize revealed that teachers present/emphasize themes, factual contents and language/style. However, the study shows that teachers emphasize factual content more, followed by themes and little attention is paid to language/style. Whereas, equal attention is meant to be paid to all because the synergy of all these contents make up a good poem since all these contents are factors to be considered when analyzing a poem.

Conclusion

The methods and techniques teachers adopt in poetry lessons are germane to the teaching and learning of poetry. They determine the success or failure of any poetry lesson. They also determine the success, failure and interest of students in poetry. The effective use of these methods, techniques and questioning behavior are important as they will promote students interest in poetry which will improve their academic performance in literature -in-English positively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should attend in service trainings, workshops, seminars for teachers of literature-in English to better acquire the knowledge of using different methods, techniques and questioning to facilitate learning in poetry.
2. Government should employ qualified teachers and specialist in literature-in-English.
3. Government and school authorities should provide instructional and technological materials for the teaching and learning of poetry.
4. Teachers should be trained on the use of technological and instructional materials available for the teaching and learning of poetry.

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