

English Teachers' Perception of the Major Constraints in the Teaching of English Studies at the Upper Basic Level in Ibadan

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Abstract

This study looked into the perception of English language teachers of the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies at the Upper basic level in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. The study adopted the survey research design. Simple random sampling technique was used to identify the study sample which consisted of 35 English language teachers selected randomly from 16 secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area. Data were collected using questionnaire ($r=0.78$). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, simple percentage. Findings from the study showed that there were problems related to teaching methodology (2.66), availability of learning resources (3.77), students' attitude (3.40), student use of mother tongue outside the classroom (3.60), workload and insufficient time (3.37). Students' proficiency (3.11); and inaccessibility of textbooks in the teaching of English Studies in Ibadan North Local Government Area against the threshold of 2.50. The study therefore recommended among others that recommended texts that support the teaching and learning of English studies should be made accessible.

Key words: Teachers' perception, Constraints, English Studies, Upper basic level.

Introduction

English Studies is the new nomenclature given to the subject in the Junior Secondary English curriculum that integrates English Language and Literature. The English Studies curriculum was introduced in Nigeria following the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERD)'s mandate to develop the existing Universal Basic Education (UBE) school curricula for all educational levels in Nigeria and was implemented in September, 2008. The old curriculum was systematically phased out in June, 2010 and the first batch of learners graduated in June, 2010 after sitting the Basic Education Certificate Examination. (BECE) (NERDC, 2007). Prior to this time, in the 1960s and early 1980s, English language was a compulsory separate subject in the junior secondary curriculum and a separate time was allotted for its teaching on the school timetable. In that period also, English language and Literature in English were examined differently in separate papers (Maurice and Idorenyin, 2011). The Junior Secondary English curriculum comprises English language and Literature in English. This is opposed to the former Junior Secondary Curriculum in which English language and literature were taught as separate subjects at the

Junior Secondary School level (Maurice and Idorenyin, 2011).

After the review of the curriculum, English language was integrated with Literature-in-English as one subject and tagged English Studies at the Junior Secondary level. The Junior Secondary English language curriculum now comprises English language and literature-in-English. This is opposed to the former Junior Secondary English curriculum where Literature from class one to class five was taught as a separate subject with specific periods allocated to its teaching in the time table which resulted in elaborate and effective teaching and learning of both English language and literature-in-English by the students. The students were able to read and communicate fluently in English because of the knowledge and skills acquired through reading of literature (Maurice and Idorenyin, 2011).

The rationale behind the integration of English language and Literature-in-English was based on the premise that good mastery of the English language enhances effective appreciation of literary materials (Warui, 2014). Another reason is to decongest the curriculum by reducing the existing subjects to 10 (ten) teachable, functional and practical oriented subjects in line with the global practices which have been approved by the

National Certificate in Education and to allow for a broader coverage of subject matter and the elimination of excessive and factual details to save time on the school time table (NERDC, 2007). Instead of allocating two lessons on the timetable for English language and Literature-in-English, with English Studies it would be only one lesson. Warui (2014) notes that the integration of English Studies was to enable learners see the relationship among the subject clearly.

Another reason for combining Literature and English is to integrate contemporary, national issues; integrate emerging global issues; integrate familiar and recognizable topics, issues, scenes and to combine English language and literary skills from local, national and global issues in the students' language vocabulary (Lawal, 2018). Okwara, Shiundu and Indonshin (2009) reiterate that the relationship between English language and Literature has been symbiotic. According to them, the two subjects complement each other. Likewise, Okwara, Shuindu and Indoshim (2009) stated that merging Literature and English is in accordance to Integrated Approach to curriculum making. Integration is teaching for proper understanding and application of knowledge. Integration of subjects emphasizes the relationship between various curriculum areas in an attempt to interrelate content or learning experiences in order to enable students perceive a unity of knowledge.

The objective of English Studies at Junior Secondary classes is to tackle the language deficiencies of students, develop language proficiency of students, develop language proficiency necessary for performing well in other subjects, stimulate in the pupils; the love for reading as a pleasurable activities and develop and promote the various language skills and competencies for effective national and international communication (Teachers Guide, 2012). In other words, the objectives of English Studies as stated in the Teachers Guide for Upper Basic Level of education in Nigeria is aimed at helping learners to listen attentively, speak fluently, read, and write appropriately and to provide the students with basic language skills that are considered essential for effective use in oral and written communication as well as learning other subjects in the school curricula (Lawal, 2018).

The concept of English Studies in the

junior secondary curriculum is to combine the study of Literature with English language because it is believed that the basic skills could be better learnt with the corporation of English and Literature to expose the student to the use of basic skills in everyday life and to express real life situation since literature mirrors the society (Adegoke, 2015). According to Mayansin (2014), English Studies involves teaching English and Literature in English as one subject in the school curriculum. English Studies according to Okwara, Shiundu and Indoshi; (2009) involves using Literature to teach English and using English to teach Literature. The two subjects have a symbiotic relationship.

In organising the content of National English Studies Curriculum at the junior secondary level, the themes are organised into listening, speaking, reading and writing. Grammatical accuracy. Literature is introduced as the fifth theme (NERDC, 2007). Each theme is further broken down into sub-skills (Lawal, 2018). These sub-skills include comprehension vocabulary development recognition, perception, oral reading, spelling, pronunciation, communciation, visual, audiovisual perception and so on (Amusegan and Momoh, 2013). These themes are aimed at making teaching and learning of each theme in the English studies curriculum gradual and interesting for teachers and learners.

The English Studies Basic curriculum content is also to enable pupils learn, internalize what has been learnt and use what has been learnt for solving life problems. Therefore while at the middle and lower basic curriculum, the students are exposed to the basic skills only (Lawal, 2018). The skills - Listening, speaking, reading, and writing which form the unifying strands across the entire curriculum are introduced to pupils very early at the basic levels in order to ensure proficiency in the use of English language. The Junior Secondary Curriculum content on the other hand includes; literature with English language and it is tagged English studies. This is meant to expose the students to wide range of English language and literary skills that would enhance their communicative skills (NERDC, 2007).

However, several years after the introduction of the new curriculum that fuses English and Literature together under English

Studies, the objectives of the curriculum have not been achieved. For instance, observation from the BECE result show that, except for a few scripts

which showed brilliance in expression, the performance of the majority of the candidate fell below expectation (Eguridu, 2015).

Table 1.1 Analysis of result of students in English Studies in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) from 2015 - 2020 in Oyo State.

| Year | Total no of candidates | No of distinctions | No of credits (c) / percentages | No of passses (p)/ percentages | No of failures (f)/ percentages |
|------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2010 | 80,602 | 10,044(22.39%) | 53, 932(66.92%) | 8,443(10.44%) | 210(0.26%) |
| 2011 | 75,635 | 18,161(24.01%) | 34,579(45.72%) | 14,666(19.9%) | 8,229(10.88%) |
| 2012 | 89,061 | 8,806 (22.39%) | 39,942(44.85%) | 31,633(35.52%) | 8,680 (10.88%) |
| 2013 | 78,829 | 237(0.30%) | 43,057(44.62%) | 23,310(29.57%) | 12,225(15.51%) |
| 2014 | 89,422 | 5,422(6.07%) | 68,115(76.17%) | 14,827(16.58%) | 1,025(1.18%) |
| 2015 | 96,652 | 4,455(4.06%) | 74,524(77.11%) | 17,625(18.24%) | 48(0.05%) |
| 2016 | 96,483 | 4,596(4.76%) | 57,937(60.05%) | 32,247(33.42%) | 1,703(1.77%) |
| 2017 | 101,461 | 24,984(24.72%) | 69,402(68.41%) | 7,056(6.95%) | 19(0.02%) |

Source: Ministry of Science, Education Technology and Evaluation, Ibadan, Oyo State.

A cursory review of the results of students in English Studies in Oyo State as shown in the above table shows that the performance is poor. By the provision of BECE, a student is deemed to have passed BECE if he/she has passes in six subjects including English language and Mathematic. By the same provision, anyone who does not have a minimum of credit in English Studies would not advance to the next level and such student will not be given the BECE certificate and will be unable to proceed, to the next level (NECO, 2017).

The poor performance of student in BECE English Studies has been traced to several factors such as amongst others, lack of awareness of the curriculum, poor method of teaching, students' negative attitude towards learning, lack of equipments and facilities, lack of text books etc. In an attempt to proffer solution to the poor performance of junior secondary school students in English Studies, many scholars have investigated the challenges facing theteaching of English Studies and the problems has been linked to many teacher's factors(Okwara, Shiundu, and Indonshi, 2009; Adelabu, 2013; Ogola, Mbori Buluma, 2016). For example, Ogola, Mbori and Buluma (2016) assert that the teaching combination of the teachers is a major constraint facing the teaching of English Studies. Adelabu (2013) asserts that unpreparedness of the teachers

to implement the Integrated English language curriculum is also a major constraint facing the teaching of English Studies. Also, Warui (2012) asserts that poorly staffed teachers are major constraints that hinder the successful implementation of English Studies curriculum. Furthermore, Adelabu (2013) linked the constraints facing the teaching of English studies to the fact that, wrong use of teaching methodologies in teaching English Studies. Similarly, Maurice and Idonrenyin (2011) are of the view that the challenge facing the teaching of English Studies at the Junior Secondary School level is lack of a single standard text book that comprises both literature and English like what we have in integrated science which is a combination of physics, chemistry and biology.

Researchers have examined the influence of teachers' characteristics such as gender, educational qualifications and teaching experience on students' academic achievement with varied findings. In a study carried out by Akiri and Ugborugbo (2008), it was found that there was a significant relationship between teachers' gender and students' academic achievement. Similarly, Yala and Wanjohi (2011) and Adeyemi (2010) found that teachers' experience and educational qualifications were the prime predictors of students' academic achievement performance.

Teachers' perception of the constraint facing the teaching of English studies is influenced by the factors listed above. This perception has also informed the way they teach the subject. For example, it is a fact that emphasis is placed on the English part against Literature thus leaving out Literature aspect of the curriculum. However most of the challenges facing the teaching of English Studies have been viewed from the angle of researchers and their various locations. These challenges have also been viewed from the angle of students, parents, and stakeholders. English teachers' perception of the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies at the junior secondary level has not been examined. With the foregoing therefore, it is evident that such constraints are viewed differently with the aim of proffering solutions. In spite of that, students still have problem with the English Studies programme as a result of which teachers have been unable to find solution to the problems. According to Leituaso-Mafoa (2000), teachers' beliefs and perceptions has a big influence upon how they view both curriculum change and their own development in terms of area of content, teaching methods, teaching aids and assessment tasks to produce curriculum books.

In view of this, it is imperative to find out from the teachers themselves how they perceive the constraints facing the teaching of English Studies with the view to being able to offer solutions to these problems. This study therefore investigated the English teachers' perception of the major constraint facing the teaching of English Studies at the upper basic level in Ibadan North local Government Area.

Statement of problem

English Studies is put in the Junior Secondary School curriculum so that students can have good knowledge of English and Literature to improve the way they read, understand and write and to prepare them for the future. However, reports have shown that Junior Secondary School students across the states especially in Ibadan North Local Government area record low performance in the subject as exemplified by the results available.

Previous studies have focused largely on interventions through trying various strategies that

can improve performance and some student related factors that are militating against the teaching of English studies with little consideration for harvesting or aggregating teachers' view of what the constraints facing the teaching of English Studies. Studies have shown that, teachers being the implementers of the curriculum are in the better position to identify the constraints that militate against the successful implementation of the curriculum. Contrary to the above fact, the perception of English teachers has not been aggregated especially in Ibadan North Local Government in order to find out the constraints of teaching English Studies. In view of this therefore, this study investigated the teachers' perception of the major constraints confronting the teaching of English Studies at the junior secondary school level in Ibadan North Local Government.

Research Questions

What is the perception of teachers of the major constraint facing the teaching of English Studies in Ibadan North Local Government area?

Significance of the study

This study is carried out to identify the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies. It is significant because the study has provided feedback on the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies in the junior secondary classes in Ibadan North Local Government Area. The study also suggested solutions to the constraints of teaching English Studies with the aim of improving the performance of students in the subject. Government, curriculum developers, teachers and parents are also given suggestions on how to go about the teaching of English studies with the hope of getting a solution in order to improve the teaching and learning of English Studies.

Scope of the Study

This study examined the perception of English Language teachers of the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies in the upper basic level in Ibadan North Local Government Area.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey

research design, The design was chosen because it helped the researcher to describe record, analyze and interpret the conditions that exist in the study where necessary. The population of this study is made up of all English language teachers in Junior Secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area. This study adopted the simple random sampling technique to select Thirty Five English Language teachers at the Junior Secondary Schools in sixteen Public Schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area. English Language

Teachers' Perception Questionnaire ($r= 0.78$) was the instruments used. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, simple percentage and thematic analysis.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the Perception of English Teachers of the major constraints facing the teaching of English studies in Ibadan North Local Government?

Table 4.3: Perception of English Teachers of the major constraints facing the teaching of English studies in Ibadan North Local Government

| S/N | Items | D | SD | A | SA | x | S.D |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|------|
| 1. | Students do not purchase textbooks that aid the learning of English studies | - | - | 8 | 27 | 3.77 | 0.43 |
| | | - | - | 22.9% | 77.1% | | |
| 2. | Students inability to use English as a medium of communication outside the class make English teaching difficult | - | 2 | 10 | 23 | 3.60 | 0.60 |
| | | | | 5.7% | 28.6% | 65.7% | |
| 3. | Libraries are not well equipped with materials such as magazines, newspaper etc that could aid the teaching of English studies | - | - | 15 | 20 | 3.57 | 0.50 |
| | | | | 42.9% | 57.1% | - | - |
| 4. | Language laboratories that could aid the teaching of English Studies are not available in schools | 2 | 1 | 8 | 24 | 3.54 | 0.81 |
| | | 5.7% | 2.9% | 22.9% | 68.6% | | |
| 5. | Students low level of interest in learning English make the teaching of English Studies difficult | 2 | 1 | 13 | 19 | 3.40 | 0.81 |
| | | 5.7% | 2.9% | 37.1% | 54.33% | | |
| 6. | Time allotted to teaching of English-Studies is not sufficient to teach the subject effectively | 4 | 14 | 17 | 3.37 | 0.80 | |
| | | 11.4% | 40.0% | 48.6% | | | |
| 7. | Teachers are not involved in the English studies curriculum development process | 2 | 1 | 15 | 17 | 3.34 | 0.80 |
| | | 5.7% | 2.9% | 42.9% | 48.6% | | |
| 8. | English Studies teaching by a single teacher pose a great challenge for effective teaching of the subject | 3 | 15 | 14 | 3.14 | 0.91 | |
| | | 8.6% | 8.6% | 42.9% | 40.0% | | |
| 9. | Student proficiency in language is inadequate to understand the literary materials that are used to teach English Studies | 2 | 4 | 17 | 12 | 3.11 | 0.83 |
| | | 5.7% | 11.4% | 48.6% | 34.3% | | |
| 10. | Absence of qualified English Teachers does not promote the effective teaching of English studies | 6 | 3 | 8 | 18 | 3.09 | 1.15 |
| | | 17.1% | 8.6% | 22.9% | 51.4% | | |
| 11. | | 6 | 2 | 11 | 16 | 3.06 | 1.11 |
| | | 17.1% | 5.7% | 31.4% | 45.7% | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|------|------|
| 12. | Teachers are not provided with books and materials to enable teach English | 4 11.4% | 1 2.9% | 21 60.0% | 9 25.7% | 3.00 | 0.87 |
| 13. | Integrated English Curriculum helps the teachers to teach their area of specialization better | 5 11.4 | 4 48.6 | 14 25.7 | 9 | 2.86 | 0.97 |
| 14. | Students fail English language despite the adoption of integrated approach to Curriculum making | 5 14.3% | 2 17.1% | 23 65.7% | 5 14.3 | 2.80 | 0.87 |
| 15. | Subject combination of teachers of English does not promote the effective teaching of English Studies | 3 8.6% | 11 31.4% | 14 40.0% | 7 20.0% | 2.71 | 0.89 |
| 16. | Teachers are not grinded in the methods of teaching English Studies | 4 11.4% | 6 17.1% | 23 65.7% | 2 5.7% | 2.66 | 0.76 |
| 17. | Integrated English Studies approach does not allow teachers to teach English studies exhaustively | 9 25.7% | 10 25.7% | 7 28.6% | 2.43 20.0% | 1.09 | |

Table 4.3 presents the information on English Teachers' Perception of the Constraints of Teaching English Studies. It shows that «Students do not purchase textbooks that aid the learning of English Studies" (7=3.77) ranked highest by the mean score rating and was followed by "Students' inability to use English as a medium of communication outside the class makes English teaching difficult" (I=3.60), "Libraries are not well equipped with materials such as magazines, newspapers etc. that could aid the teaching of English Studies (3.57), "Language laboratories that could aid the teaching of English studies are not available in school" (3.54), "Students' low level of interest in learning English makes the teaching of English Studies difficult" (3.40), «Time allotted to the teaching of English studies is not sufficient to teach the subject effectively" (3.37), "Teachers are not involved in the English Studies curriculum development process" (3.34), English studies teaching by a single teacher pose a great challenge for effective teaching of the subject' (3.14), "Students proficiency in language is inadequate to understand literary materials that are used to teach English studies" (3.11), "Absence of qualified English teachers does not promote the effective teaching of English studies' (3.09), Absence of qualified English teachers affects workload of other teachers of English studies" (3.06), Teachers are not provided with text-books and materials to enable

them teach English studies effectively" (3.00), "Integrated English studies help the teachers to teach their area of specialization better" (2.86), "Students fail English language despite the adoption of integrated approach to English studies" (2.80), "Subject combination of the teachers of English does not promote the effective teaching of English Studies" (2.71) "Teachers are not grinded in the methods of teaching English studies" (2.66), "Integrated English studies approach does not allow teachers to teach English Studies exhaustively" (2.43) and lastly «Students' mother tongue do not encourage the teaching of English Studies" (2.26) respectively.

Discussion of findings

Perception of English Teachers of the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies.

The findings show that teachers themselves are aware that the teaching of English Studies is faced with many constraints and these constraints are from the teachers, the learners, the curriculum planners and the government. These constraints also lead to the poor teaching and learning of English resulting to the poor performance of junior secondary school students in English Language.

Findings show teachers have problems teaching English Studies because students do not

have text books that aid the teaching and learning of English Studies. This is in consonance with the findings of Ogola et al. (2016). who in his study reported that students' lack text-books that aids the teaching of Integrated English language. It is also in agreement with the findings of Okoli et al. (2015) who in their study found that non availability of textbooks is a great problem to the teaching and learning of basic technology.

This study has been able to identify that the teaching of English Studies is facing constraint because of students' inability to use English language outside the school environment and as a medium of communication even in the school premises. This result is in line with the findings of Ogola et al. (2016) which reported that a good number of students did not frequently use English in their activities outside the classroom, where it is mainly the medium of instruction. Findings show that lack of library equipment and other facilities that aid the teaching of English Studies is one of the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies.

This finding is in agreement with the findings of Evue (2013) who in his study identified that the challenge of physical facilities and non-availability of teaching resources are major challenges to the teaching of English in the secondary schools. Findings from this study show that one of the major constraints facing the teaching of English studies is that students have low level of interest toward the learning of English language. Among major finding in this study is that majority of the schools are short of qualified English Teachers. This findings is in consonance with the findings of Okoli et al. (2015) who found out that most junior secondary schools lack trained teachers and also in line with the findings of Warui (2014) who revealed that under-staffing is one of the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies and this is worsened by over-enrolment in the classes especially with the declaration of free primary education. Findings also showed that literary texts recommended to support the teaching and learning of English Studies are too many. These texts are also inaccessible for teachers and learners of English Studies. This factor is one of the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Akewo-Daniel (2013) who asserted that the most militating problem facing the teaching and learning of poetry is book scarcity.

Conclusion

The study investigated teachers' perception of the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies at the upper basic level in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo state. The study has identified the major constraints facing the teaching of English Studies at the upper basic level in the area of study. These constraints range from the unavailability of instructional materials, inadequate teaching equipments, insufficient time to teach English poor method of teaching, mother tongue interference and poor attitude of students to learning. The constraints highlighted in this paper may not be exhaustive as it is limited to Ibadan local government area of Ibadan but they show that teachers are aware and have confirmed that the teaching of English Studies is faced with many constraints.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings in this study, the following recommendations will be useful to policy makers, government, and teachers in improving Integrated English studies curriculum. Teachers should be part of curriculum development so that they will be aware of the major curriculum changes and innovations and ways to go about implementing the curriculum. In-service training should be provided for teachers so that they will be trained and acquaint themselves with the methods and strategies that aids the implementation of English Studies Curriculum. Text books prescribed for the junior secondary curriculum should be reduced to a reasonable number so that students can buy these text books and then cover the syllabus in time. Students' attitude to teaching should be encouraged by providing them with textbooks and other materials that would make them develop interest in the learning of English Studies.

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