ASSESSMENT OF MATERIALS USED IN THE TEACHING OF VOCABULARY IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ILORIN-WEST LGA, KWARA STATE

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Abstract

No text comprehension is possible, either in one's native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text's vocabulary. This study analysed a plethora of materials used in the teaching of vocabulary in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West LGA of Kwara State, Nigeria. The descriptive research design of the survey type was employed in the study. The study population included all senior secondary schoolteachers of English language in Ilorin West LGA. All the 211 sampled teachers were purposively selected. The data collected through the questionnaire adopted from Abiola (2012) were analysed using the percentage, mean rating and the t-test at 0.05 alpha level using SPSS 20.0 for windows. A reliability coefficient of r = 0.89 was obtained. The researcher found that English Language teachers teaching vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area made more use of adapted passages and realia (real life/concrete objects). Conversely these teachers never made use of MP3 audio CDs and slides at all. There was also no significant difference between private and public school English teachers' use of instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies. The implication is that public schoolteachers do not use the instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies differently from their private school counterparts. It was therefore recommended that teachers are to update their professionalism by constantly attending seminars, workshops, in-service training and reading of academic journals and related research studies.

Keywords: instructional materials; school type and the teaching of vocabulary.

Introduction

Vocabulary is an essential component of the senior secondary English curriculum in Nigeria. Learners' first experience with a word new to them usually comes from seeing it in print, guessing at its meaning from the context, and perhaps looking it up in the dictionary to make sure – sometimes finding to their surprise that it did not mean quite what they had supposed. A good knowledge of vocabulary induces and sustains good retention capacity among learners. As a matter of fact, vocabulary can promote efficient reading and writing as learners have at least two kinds of vocabulary – a reading vocabulary and a writing vocabulary.

Previous studies have revealed that vocabulary is often called different terms. Two most popular among these terms include: lexical knowledge and vocabulary knowledge (Qian, 2002 & Salah, 2008). Its French origin is "vocabulaire"; Medieval Latin calls it "vocabularium"; Latin, "vocabulum" meaning 'word, name' (Emmanuel, 2009). Qian (2002) and Salah (2008) viewed vocabulary as the knowledge of word meaning and the level of one's accessibility to this knowledge. It is pathetic, however, to note that this definition ignores other aspects of lexical knowledge such as spelling, pronunciation, receptive and productive knowledge and morphosyntactic properties. In Cooper's (1984) view, vocabulary is the key ingredient to successful reading.

It is however pathetic to note that performance in the school certificate examinations in English language is particularly poor. This trend, which has been noticeable over the years, has continued to get worse. Adegbile and Igweike (2002) probed into the performance of students in the West African School Certificate (WASC) May/June Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) English language 1996-1998. Their observations revealed a mournful lament:

> It is obvious that candidates performed poorly in English language in the three years. More than 50% of the candidates failed in each year. The

worst was 1997 when 66.67% of the total entry for English language failed outright. (p.367).

Table 1: Performance of Students in the National Examination Council (NECO) June/July SSCE English Language in Kwara State (2003-2009)

Year	Total for English language	Number and percentages obtaining grades			
		credit and above (A_1-C_6)	Pass (D_7-D_8)	Fail (F_9)	cancelled
2003	32,504	20,652 (62.93%)	5,660 (17.24%)	6,030 (18.38%)	162 (1.49%)
2004	25,719	6,514 (25.30%)	6,336 (24.62%)	12,767 (49.64%)	102 (0.39%)
2005	23,526	4,610 (19.57%)	8,540 (36.30%)	10,191 (43.31%)	185 (0.78%)
2006	27,818	10,307 (37.0%)	6,962 (24.88%)	9,757 (34.88%)	792 (2.83%)
2007	32,933	14,716 (44.68%)	11,698 (35.52%)	5,346 (16.22%)	1,173 (3.56%)
2008	24,650	14,372 (53.17%)	5,133 (19%)	5,145 (19.05%)	0 (0.00%)
2009	24,034	3,496 (14.36%)	10, 915(44.89%)	8,564 (35.22%)	1,059 (4.35%)

Source: Kwara State Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2010)

From the results in Table 1, it can be deduced that majority of the students did not perform well or did not make at least a C_6, except for 2003 and 2008 where the success rates were 62.93 per cent and 53.17 per cent, respectively. Towards the close of that decade in 2009, the success rate was abysmal. Not more than 14.36 per cent were able to make at least a C_6. This might be due to the teachers' outright apathy to the use of resources for teaching English Studies or their lack of training on such. Ayodele (1988) and Adegbile (1999) found that the poor performance might be due to the wrong method of teaching English Language which is adopted in the classroom. Similarly, Babayomi (1999) averred that private schools perform better than public schools because of the availability and adequacy of teaching and learning resources in the former.

According to Olayiwola (2002), instructional materials are non-human resources, which can be classified into print-media and manipulative materials. Examples of print media include: textbooks, manuals, journals, newspapers, magazines, periodicals and catalogues. According to him, the non-print media include: visual aids like the television, tape-recorder,

video and computer. Other instructional materials are the manipulative like modules, games, maps graphics, flash cards and charts, which can be used effectively to enhance students' vocabulary knowledge within and outside the classroom.

Adewoyin (1991) perceived instructional facilities as tools or instruments through which stimuli can be passed and or obtained. Instructional materials therefore refer to educational resources whether graphic, photographic, electronic or mechanized means of arresting, processing or restructuring visual verbal information or a combination of both. Instructional materials can also be defined as all the resources a teacher uses as aids to explain or elucidate the topic/content/subject to the learner so that he/she is able to fully comprehend the topic (Abolade, 2004).

Table 2: Common Types of Instructional Materials

Audio Materials	Audio-visual Materials	Visual Materials
Radio	Television	Chalkboard
Audiotape	Videotape player	Slide
Public Address System	Video CD Player	Filmstrips
Tape Recorder	Monitor	Motion Pictures
Audio CD player	Cinematography	Models
Audio Cassette	Slide	Puppets
Vinyl Record	Multimedia Projector	Flannels
Record player	Filmstrip	Globes
	Computer	Books
	Overhead	Journals
	Slide Projector	Posters
		Newspaper
		Magazines
		Charts
		Photographs
		Flip Charts
		Magnetic Board
		Wall Maps
		Sculpture
		Realia (Real Object)
		Cartoons

Source: Abolade (2004)

Statement of the Problem

Chall (1987), Stahl (1990), Nation (2001), Salah (2008) and Chall and Stahl (2009) opined that vocabulary knowledge can help the learner to comprehend written texts, just in the same way reading can contribute to vocabulary growth. Some researchers advocate that vocabulary is the crucial factor in reading comprehension (Salah, 2008). No text comprehension is possible, either in one's native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text's vocabulary (Laufer 1997). Hirsh and Nation (1992), Hu and Nation (2000), Laufer (1989, 1992, 1997) and Salah (2008) maintained that when the percentage of unknown vocabulary in a given text increases, the possibility of comprehending the text decreases.

From the foregoing, it is glaring that one of the most difficult aspects of learning a foreign language is the development of appropriate vocabulary, which is mostly taught through the use of flashcards. The students' attitude towards the learning of vocabulary is not encouraging as they merely memorised most of the things taught in the class. Also, teachers have not incorporated a plethora of materials in the teaching of vocabulary, and students find it difficult to assimilate most of the things learnt. Therefore, this study assessed the materials used in the teaching of vocabulary in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study assessed the extent of teachers' use of the materials for teaching English vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated:

1. the materials commonly used by teachers in senior secondary schools for teaching English vocabularies.

2. the influence of school type on teachers' use of instructional materials in teaching English vocabularies.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What materials do teachers commonly use in teaching English vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. Is there any influence of school type on teachers' use of instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the use of instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies between the private and public school English teachers in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The descriptive research design of the survey type was employed in the study. The total population included all senior secondary schoolteachers of English language in Ilorin West LGA. Out of the 46 (27 public; 19 private) approved senior secondary schools in the locale, only 23 (14 public; 9 private) were selected for the study using a simple random sampling technique. Similarly, there were 1,309 (768 male and 541 female) teachers that were teaching in the public schools situated within the locale as at the time the research was being carried out. These figures were for all the teachers handling all the subjects. For this study, however, the sample consisted mainly of the teachers handling the English language. In the private schools, 125 were males while 86 were females – giving a total of 211 teachers of English language. All the teachers for the sample were purposively selected since there were not very many English teachers because of paucity. Two hundred and eleven (211) questionnaires were

administered, but only one hundred and eighty-five (185) were properly filled and returned. This gave an eighty-eight per cent (88%) retrieval rate.

The data collected through a questionnaire adopted from Abiola (2012) were analysed using the percentage, mean rating and the t-test at 0.05 alpha level using SPSS 20.0 for windows. To re-validate the instrument, it was submitted to three experts in the Arts Education Department of the University of Ilorin to check and approve the structure and content of the instrument. The reliability index was determined through a test re-test procedure of three weeks interval. A reliability coefficient of r = 0.89 was obtained using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Statistics.

Results

Research Question 1: What materials do teachers commonly use in teaching English vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria?

In drawing inferences from the mean on this research question, the following critical ranges of scores on a scale of 0 – 4 were used:

Table 3: Table of Inference

Critical ranges	Inferences
0 – 1.49	Never
1.5 – 2.49	Seldom
2.5 – 2.99	Often
3 – 4	Always

Table 4: Materials commonly used in teaching English vocabularies in senior secondary schools

S/N	Materials used in teaching English vocabularies	N	Mean	Rank	Inferences
1	Realia (real life/ concrete object)	185	2.58	2nd	Often
2	Charts (flip charts, minimal charts, phonics chart)	185	2.36	3rd	Seldom
3	Overhead projectors	185	2.28	4th	Seldom
4	Slides	185	1.17	15th	Never
5	Television programmes	185	1.75	12th	Seldom
6	mp3 audio CDs	185	1.28	14th	Never
7	The computer	185	1.99	10th	Seldom
8	The video	185	1.75	12th	Seldom
9	Slide audio tape presentation	185	2.14	6th	Seldom
10	Course textbooks	185	1.99	10th	Seldom
11	Puppets	185	2.05	9th	Seldom
12	Magazines/ news papers	185	2.22	5th	Seldom
13	Audio tape recorder/player	185	2.12	7th	Seldom
14	Adapted passages	185	2.89	1st	Often
15	Maps	185	2.11	8th	Seldom

Table 4 reveals that out of the fifteen (15) items that addressed the extent of teachers' use of instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, items 14 and 1 ranked 1st and 2nd, respectively. This outcome implies that English Language teachers teaching vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area make more use of these two items – adapted passages and realia (real life/concrete objects) – quite often than any other items listed in the questionnaire during their teaching.

Conversely, Table 4 reveals that items 6 and 4 ranked 14th and 15th, respectively. This outcome implies that English Language teachers teaching vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin-West Local Government Area never made use of these two items at all compared to any other items listed in the questionnaire, during their teaching. This suggests

that English Language teachers teaching vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin-West Local Government Area never made use of MP3 audio CDs and Slides at all.

On the average, items 2, 3, 12, 9, 13, 15, 11, 10, 7, 8, and 5 ranked 3rd to 12th, respectively. This result revealed that English Language teachers teaching vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area seldom use these instructional materials in teaching English vocabularies, during their teaching.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the use of instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies between the private and public school English teachers in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Difference in English Vocabulary Teachers' Use of Instructional Materials for Teaching based on School Type

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig	Decision
Public Sch.	161	33.58	9.85	183	1.34	0.18	HO Accepted
Private Sch.	24	36.33	8.96				

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 5 shows t (183) = 1.34, p > 0.05. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha value, the hypothesis was thus accepted. It can be deduced that there was no significant difference between private and public school English teachers' use of instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies. The implication is that public school teachers do not use the instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies differently from their private school counterparts.

Discussion

The analysis on the materials commonly used by teachers revealed that the teacher of English language in Ilorin West LGA seemed to demonstrate pedagogical ignorance in the understanding of their use of instructional materials. These instructional materials are: charts (flip charts, minimal charts, phonic charts); overhead projectors; magazines/newspapers; slide-

audio tape presentation; audio tape recorder/player; maps; puppets; course textbooks; the computers; the video; and, television programmes. This implies that teachers of English Language teaching vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area hardly ever made use of these instructional materials during their teaching of vocabularies as over seventy per cent (70%) of these materials are made use of once in a blue moon.

This could have been responsible for the abysmal failures that are constantly being recorded at the WAEC and NECO Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations, most especially as revealed in the period reviewed in this study (where not more than 14.36% were able to make at least a C_6 [in 2009] in English language). This might be due to the teachers' outright apathy to the use of instructional materials for teaching English language or their lack of training on such.

This assertion is in consonance with Ayodele's (1988) and Adegbile's (1999) views that the poor performance of students in English language might be due to the wrong method adopted by teachers during the teaching-learning process – since a wrong choice of method implies a wrong choice of instructional materials. Similarly, the finding also confirms Ogunnaike's (2002) statement that students' poor performance might be due to the inaccessibility of instructional materials such as the textbooks – one of the many problems associated with the teaching of English language in the last millennium. In the same vein, Adeogun (2001) discovered a very strong positive significant relationship between instructional resources and academic performance. This was why he admonished strongly that basic instructional resources must be present in the classroom for an effective teaching/learning to take place, during the teaching-learning process.

Further still, the finding of the study showed that there was no significant difference between private and public English language teachers' use of instructional materials for

teaching English vocabularies. The implication is that public school teachers do not use the instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies differently from their private school counterparts. They both made use of instructional materials at almost the same frequency just in the same way they never or hardly made use of some others. This indicated that both private and public English language teachers claimed never to make use of MP3 audio CDs and slides at all, just as they conversely quite often made more use of Adapted passages and realia (real life/concrete objects)

The finding negated the study of Babayomi (1999) who observed that private schools performed better than public schools because of the availability and adequacy of teaching and learning resources in the former. It should be noted that availability and adequacy do not imply usability. The usability of the available materials is what this study advocates, most especially those that are ICT-inclined. It is on this threshold that students' performance is rested. This study, however, showed that there is a disconnection between the breathtaking costs of our education and the quality of teaching our students are actually getting in return from those high prices – most especially from our private "international" schools.

Conclusion

It could be concluded that the teachers of English Language teaching vocabularies in senior secondary schools in Ilorin West LGA favoured using adapted passages and realia more than any other material assessed in the study. Most shockingly, these teachers never made use of MP3 audio CDs and slides at all. Besides, conclusion could also be drawn from the finding that the predictor variable of school type had no significant influence on public and private schoolteachers' use of instructional materials for teaching English vocabularies during the teaching-learning process. The findings of this study showed that teachers of English Language teaching vocabularies seemed to have vague understanding of the use of instructional materials probably because of their over-dependence on residual knowledge, lack of access to

innovatively-prepared textbooks, dearth of support from school administrators, poor implementation of the curriculum, uncooperative nature of parents (most especially the unenlightened ones), among many other reasons.

Recommendations

1. Teachers are advised to update their professionalism by constantly attending seminars, workshops, in-service training and reading of academic journals and related research studies. This would expose teachers to the pedagogical needs on the use of materials for teaching English vocabularies.

2. School administrators should ensure that prospective English language teachers have the pedagogical wherewithal in the use of instructional materials before they are given teaching appointments. Similarly, school administrators are expected to give financial and moral supports to their English Language teachers as this will go a long way in enhancing students' performance at that level.

3. Curriculum developers would know, through the outcome of this study, what kind of materials to suggest when listing the vocabulary content to be learnt and taught.

4. It is recommended that textbook writers employ the right kinds of materials needed in the course of writing and organising the vocabulary themes in their textbooks in line with the current English language curriculum so as to achieve the desired goal of teaching and learning.

5. In the same vein, publishers are employed to update their publication by ensuring that the instructional materials highlighted in this study, and many excellent others, are made use of in their publications. This will boost the commercial value as well as the market demand of their textbooks.

6. Parents are encouraged to make provisions for the materials their wards would need in their quest to acquire knowledge. Among these include: textbooks, charts, maps, audio-visual and electronic instructional materials such as radio, tape recorder, television, video tape

recorder and the computer. Other category of materials consist of paper supplies and writing materials such as biros, erasers, exercise books, crayons, whiteboard pens, whiteboards, interactive whiteboards, drawing books, notebooks, pencils, rulers, slates, workbooks and so on.

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