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Improving Oral English Instruction among ESL Students in Ekiti State, Nigeria: Implication for Teacher Quality and Textbook Content Adequacy

D.O. Fakeye

Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract: This study investigated the extent to which teacher quality and textbook content adequacy would predict students' achievement in oral English in Ikole local government area of Ekiti State. The study adopted the descriptive research design of co-relational type. The participants were three hundred (300) SS2 students from 10 secondary schools in Ikole local government area of Ekiti State. The instruments for data collection were Oral English Achievement Test (r= 0.76), Teacher Commitment Questionnaire (r= 0.81), Textbook Content Adequacy Scale (r=0.78) and Teacher Content Knowledge Scale (r=0.82). Four research questions were answered and data were analyzed using Pearson Product Correlation and Multiple Regression Analyses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that teacher content knowledge correlated significantly with students' achievement (r=0.669; p<0.05), but there were no significant correlations between textbooks content adequacy (r=0.054; p>0.05) and teacher commitment (r=-0.153; p>0.05). Also, the composite contribution of teacher commitment, teacher content knowledge and textbooks content adequacy was not significant (F=1.862; p>0.05). Teacher content knowledge had significant relative contribution with students' achievement in oral English $(\beta=.941; t=2.512; p<0.05)$ but others did not. It is recommended that in-service training should be organized for serving teachers to improve their content knowledge in oral English and English language. Also, oral English teachers should attend seminars and workshops where they would learn more concepts in oral English to improve their content knowledge.

Key words: Teacher commitment • Content knowledge • Textbooks content adequacy • Achievement in oral English • Ekiti State • Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning of any language must focus on the four major language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills are then categorized under two subheadings the receptive and the productive skills and again they could also come under oracy and literacy skills. Oracy on the one side deals with the capacity to express oneself and understand speech while literacy is the ability to read and write correctly.

Listening, according to [1], involves identifying the sounds of speech and processing them into words and sentences. When we listen, we use our ears to receive individual sounds (letters, stress and rhythm) and we use our brain to convert these into messages that mean something to us. Listening in any language requires focus and attention. It is a skill that some people need to work at harder than others. In addition, teaching the learners a lot of listening activities is a good way of enlarging ones vocabulary therefore; to become a fluent speaker in English, one needs to develop strong listening skills.

Speaking on the other hand is the productive skill in the oral mode. It involves more than just pronouncing words. To speak, one creates sounds using many parts of our body including the lungs, vocal tract, vocal chords, tongue, teeth and lips. This vocalized form of language usually requires at least one listener. When speaking, we put together words and phrases with individual sounds and we also use pitch change, intonation and stress to convey different meanings [2].

In Nigerian schools today, English language is the only language of instruction and communication whose knowledge of skills is much needed to successfully pursue academic studies and day to day activities in different areas. Learners must possess good skills in listening and speaking if they want to succeed in their

Corresponding Author: D.O. Fakeye, Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

academic endeavors. This is because the medium of instruction and communication in primary schools to the tertiary institution is English language. Based on this, it is pertinent to take the oral aspect of English with all seriousness. However, most institutions focus on grammar, syntax, essay and vocabulary to the neglect of the oral aspect of English language. Meanwhile, to attain mastery level in all language skills Oral English must be accord proper attention. [3] states that in writing a language such as English, we use letters to represent the sounds we pronounce or say when speaking the language.

This is to say the letters of English could not perform their primary function as alphabets they do not have the sounds they represent. To be able to write a language, we must therefore begin by learning the letters used in writing the language; we must know how each of them is shaped and how each may be used alone by itself or in combination with some others to form the written words representing the words used in the spoken form of the language [4]. Therefore, any written utterance would not be meaningful if it fails to account for any meaning at the spoken level. Now, to be able to speak a language proficiently, learners have to learn the sounds (i.e. the small units of sound produced in the mouth with air coming from the lungs) which are used in speaking the language because it is from the combination of these sounds syllables are being formed into larger words which are used in sentences before been spoken out.

The sound system of English language can be categorized into two; the segmental and the suprasegmental features. The segmental features consist of the vowels and the consonants while the supra-segmental features are stress, rhythm and intonation. The vowels and consonants are separate sound segments but the features of stress, rhythm and intonation affect the quality of the sounds and extend over longer sequences of utterance like words, phrase and sentences. Stress and intonation must be properly used by teachers and learners of English if they want to be properly understood by other users of the English language.

Oral English has been identified as one of the concepts that students find difficult to pass at national examinations [5-7]. The teaching of oral English is weighed down by various factors which have contributed to the slow pace and ineffectiveness in teaching the course. For instance, the predicament that second language speakers face is that, even if they know the words when they see them written down or hear them in isolation, they may not recognize them when they hear

them in connected speech. [8] emphasized that second language learners pronounce English consonant, vowels and diphthongs incorrectly. According to him, the secondary learners pronounce English words badly and that they find it difficult to pronounce English consonants, vowels and diphthongs correctly. This is because the phonological systems of various indigenous languages are different from those of English and, because English is learnt as a second language, what simply takes place is an adaptation of indigenous phonological systems for English speech sounds and patterns rather than an attempt to manage two phonological systems separately". This is to show that learners of English have challenges in their oral pronunciation. Also, learners might experience difficulties in the area of intonation and stress due to mother tongue interference. Listeners may have difficulty deciphering intonation, stress and rhythm, or understanding speech that has few pauses [9, 10]. This then calls for teachers of high quality to teach oral English to ESL learners.

Teacher quality matters, in fact, it is the most important school-related factor influencing students' achievement. Teacher quality is a complex phenomenon and there is little consensus on what it is or how to measure it. For example, definitions range from those that focus on what should be taught and how knowledge should be imparted to the kinds of knowledge and training teachers should possess. There are, however, two broad elements that most observers agree characterize teacher quality: (1) teacher preparation and qualifications and (2) teaching practices. The first refers to pre-service learning (e.g., postsecondary education, certification) and continued learning (e.g., professional development, mentoring). The second refers to the actual behaviors and practices that teachers exhibited in their classrooms [11]. Of course, these elements of teacher quality are not independent, excellent teacher preparation and qualifications should lead to exemplary teaching behaviors and practices. The teacher preparation and qualification have a lot to do in preparing the teacher basically in the acquisition of thorough knowledge in the area of content knowledge as well as providing needed experience in the area of classroom management.

Teacher quality has been consistently identified as the most important school-based factor in students' achievement [12, 13, 14, 15]. The success of educational programmes especially in the school system, hinge upon effective teaching and learning activities going on in the classrooms. Teacher commitment to teaching is one of the teacher quality that a teacher must possess before the teacher can achieve great success in the teaching profession and this success can only be measured through the academic achievement of the students that underwent learning under the teacher tutelage. According to [1], attitude could help the language learning process by changing student's orientations towards particular linguistic cultural groups and there by modify their motivation to learn that language, this could be achieved through teacher commitment to discharging is duties effectively. Teacher commitment deeply contributes to the future of students and schools. Committed teacher makes a difference to the success of the school and the learning of the students. Committed teacher will go beyond selfsatisfaction to do more in seeing to the completion of the task he/she is being directed to do, this in turn motivates the learners to strife hard in accomplishing the set goals. Therefore, it is normal to say commitment is highly related to teachers' work performance.

Teacher commitment is closely related to teachers' work performance which has a significant influence on students' achievement. When the teacher is committed to his work, the result is reflected in the students' performance and their general achievement. It should be noted that student achievement deeply depends on teacher commitment and attitude to work. [16] stress that low level of teachers' commitment reduces students' achievement. When a teacher lack passion and zeal for teaching it reflects negatively on the academic achievement of the students. Therefore, teacher must be committed to work in other to propel the students to achieve academic excellent. [17] is of the opinion that teacher commitment is one of the major professional characteristics that influence an educator's success. That is, teacher commitment does not only reflect in the life of the students but it also dictates the success of the teacher over and over again. Teachers therefore, must see beyond the students' academic success to the benefit accosting been committed to the teaching process by the teacher. Teachers play a crucial role in promoting the school. It should be noted that commitment level of teachers to their profession, students and school increase when they achieve desired goals through their efforts. It could also be said that committed teachers are passionate teachers therefore, passionate teachers are known by their commitment to achievement of their students. Commitment is an essential element of successful teaching. Committed teachers are concerned with the development of their students and they wholeheartedly struggle on how to keep their students' learning. They cultivate students' eagerness and interest in learning and

all they do is to work toward building the interest of the learners round the subject matter. Therefore teachers' commitment is needed a great deal in order to enhanced students' performance in Oral English.

The knowledge of the content area is also one of the effective qualities a teacher must possess in order to affect positively the lives of the students during teaching and learning process. According to [18], he said that teacher subject knowledge exerts a statistically and quantitatively significant impact on the students' achievement. Teacher education generally includes four elements: improving the general educational background of the trainee teachers; increasing their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are to teach; pedagogy and understanding of children and learning; and the development of practical skills and competences. The balance between these four elements varies widely [19].

Textbook content adequacy is another factor in the effective teaching of oral English. For a textbook to be certified adequate, the textbook must reflect the curriculum that is, the textbook content must be in line with the stated facts in the curriculum. Criteria for selecting content can be done on the basis of simplicity, utility and teachability [20]. Recent research in learning shows that print curriculum materials in the form of teachers' resource books, educational media, reference books, magazines, journals and pupils' textbooks are necessary for effective learning to take place because know learning could take place outside the curriculum. [21] argued that the provision of adequate teaching and learning materials, in the form of textbooks, is very critical for any successful implementation of the curriculum. The above assertion by Finn suggests that the best teaching and learning process could only take place if there are good textbooks that reflect the curriculum.

[22] policy study on education in Sub-Saharan Africa, in agreement with the above observation, notes that the most effective investment in educational quality in most African countries is a sufficient supply of well –written and properly designed textbooks. It has been identified that access to and availability of textbooks are particularly significant factors in predicting academic achievement (Oakes & Saunders, 2004). However, not access to just any textbooks but books with thorough relevance to the curriculum and books that put the learners at the centre of learning that is, books that obey the law of learning from simple to complex. Some research studies have established a positive link between student achievement and the availability of textbooks (Oni, 2014). Also, Reuben (2010) confirmed it that availability of textbooks is the single most important positive factor in predicting student academic achievement. In addition, [23] observed that the textbook is in fact at the heart of the school and without the ubiquitous text there would be no schools, at least as we know them today. All the above works described how relevant the textbook is to the achievement of the students.

In some situations they serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom [24]. This is to show how relevant the textbook is to the body of knowledge and at such, the content it carries must be the one that will aid the teaching and learning process of oral English. [25] sees textbooks as key component in most language programs. That is, in some situations, they serve as bases for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classrooms. They may provide the basis for the content of the lessons, the balance of skills taught and the kinds of language practice the students participated in. In other words, the textbook may serve basically as an addition to the teachers' instruction. For learners, the textbook may provide the major source of contact they have with the language apart from input provided by the teacher. Therefore, the textbook content must be capable of attaining the purpose to which it has been recommended in the syllabus. That is the text book content must be valid and reliable.

Statement of the Problem: Speaking and listening skills are the major skills needed in oral English, this is recognized in view of the role they play in day to day human communication. However, reports have shown that students are deficient in oral English especially in Ikole Ekiti. Efforts to address this problem has led researchers into application of various strategies but there is little consideration for quality of teacher and the textbooks content adequacy use in teaching oral English as studies have shown that these two factors are vital to students' performance in Oral English. However, the extents to which they predict students' learning outcome in Oral English in Ekiti State and especially in Ikole Local Government have not been determined. Therefore, this study investigated the extent to which teacher quality (teacher commitment and content knowledge) and textbook content adequacy could predict students' achievement in oral English among public senior secondary students in Ikole Local Government of Ekiti State.

Research Questions: The study provided answers to the following research questions:

- What relationship exists between the dependent variable (oral English) and the independent variables (teacher quality and textbook content adequacy)?
- What is the joint contribution of teacher quality and textbook content adequacy to students' achievement in oral English?
- What is the relative contribution of teacher quality and textbook content adequacy to students' achievement in oral English?

Significance of the Study: The study investigated teachers' factors and textbook factor as predictors of senior secondary students' achievement in oral English in some selected public secondary schools in Ikole Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Findings from this study revealed empirical information on the teacher related factors that could predict students' academic achievement in oral English, thereby opening the eyes of everybody to factors that can improve students' learning outcome in Oral English and it will add to the pool of researches conducted to find solution to the problem of Oral English.

Methodology: The descriptive survey of correlational type was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised of senior secondary class two students and their English Language teachers in Ikole Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Random sampling technique was used to select ten senior secondary schools in the local government, from the ten schools selected, one intact class of SS2 students were selected making a total 10 intact classes. In all, a total of 300 SS2 students were involved in the study. The instrument used for data collection were: Oral English Achievement Test (r=0.76), Teacher Commitment Questionnaire (r=0.81), Teacher Content Knowledge Rating Scale (r=0.82), Textbook Content Adequacy Scale (r=0.79). Data collection lasted four weeks. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Regression Analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Questions 1: What is the relationship between independent variables (teacher content knowledge, textbook content adequacy, teacher commitment) and students' achievement?

Table 1 shows that there were no significant correlations between textbook content adequacy (r = 0.054; P>0.05), teacher commitment (r = -0.153; P>0.05) and

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	Students'	Textbook	Teacher	Teacher	Teachers
Construct	achievement	Content Adequacy	Commitment	Classroom Management	Content Knowledge
Students' achievement	1				
Textbook Content Adequacy	0.054	1			
	.883				
Teachers Commitment	-0.153	0.604	1		
	.674	.065			
Teachers Content Knowledge	0.669*	-0.356	-0.637*	0.393	1
	.034	.312	0.048	0.261	
Mean	20.22	61.40	53.60	70.45	69.65
Std. Deviation	1.47	8.87	9.35	7.06	8.03

Table 1: Correlation Matrix showing the correlation between teacher content knowledge, textbook content adequacy, teacher commitment and students' achievement

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis showing the composite contribution of the independent variables (teacher content knowledge, textbook content adequacy, teacher commitment) to students' achievement.

Sum of squares	Df	Means Square	F	Sig.
11.651	4	2.913	1.862	0.255
7.822	5	1.564		
19.473	9			
0.773				
0.598				
	11.651 7.822 19.473 0.773	11.651 4 7.822 5 19.473 9 0.773 9	11.651 4 2.913 7.822 5 1.564 19.473 9 0.773	11.651 4 2.913 1.862 7.822 5 1.564 19.473 9 0.773

Std. Error of the Estimate = 1.25079

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Regressions showing Relative Contribution of Independent Variables to students' achievement

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
Model	Β (β)	Std. Error	Beta (β)	Rank	Т	Sig.
(Constant)	2.521	8.371			.301	.775
Textbook content adequacy	.027	.063	.163		.428	.687
Teachers' commitment	.059	.073	.373	1 st	.801	.459
Teachers content knowledge	.172	.069	.941	3 rd	2.512	.054

students' achievement. The correlation between teacher content knowledge and students' achievement (r = 0.669; P<0.05) was significant. This implies that only teacher content knowledge out of the four independent variables correlate significantly with students' achievement.

Research Question 2: What is the composite contribution of the independent variables (teacher content knowledge, textbook content adequacy, teacher commitment) and students' achievement?

Table 2 shows the composite contribution of independent variables (teacher content knowledge, textbook content adequacy, teacher commitment) to the prediction of the dependent variable (students' achievement). Table 2 showed that the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the regression yielded F-ratio of 1.862 (P>0.05). This implies that the composite contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was not significant. The independent

variables jointly accounted for 59.8% of the total variation in student's achievement.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of independent variables (teacher content knowledge, textbook content adequacy, teacher commitment) to students' achievement?

Table 3 reveals the relative contributions of each of the independent variables of teacher content knowledge, textbook content adequacy, teacher commitment to students' achievement. The relative contributions of textbook content adequacy ($\beta = .163$; t = 0.428; P>0.05), teacher commitment ($\beta = .373$; t = .801; P>0.05), teacher classroom management ($\beta = .061$; t = .180; P>0.05) to students' achievement were not significant. The relative contribution of teacher content knowledge to students' achievement ($\beta = .941$; t = 2.512; P<0.05) was significant. Thus out of the four independent variables only teachers' content knowledge was significant to students' achievement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relationship between Teacher Quality (teacher commitment and content knowledge), Textbook Content Adequacy and Achievement in Oral English: The findings of this study revealed that of all the teacher quality variables, only teacher content knowledge variable has a significant relationship with students' achievement in oral English while others did not have significant relationship, in the same vain, textbook content adequacy does not have significant relationship with students' achievement in oral English. That is, students whose teacher exhibit good content knowledge tends to perform well in oral English. On the contrary, students whose teachers do not have a good command of the content knowledge will not perform very well. The findings that only teacher content knowledge is significantly related to students' achievement is not surprising due to effectiveness of teacher content mastery, which is the ability of the teachers to deliver well in class. When teachers have a good mastery of the content they want to teach, it is likely they will teach well and impart knowledge on the students.

The findings are consistent with the assertion of [1] that students taught by highly effective teacher perform far better than those who were taught by weak teachers. It also agreed with [26] findings, that subject-area knowledge was the best teacher-level predictor of students' achievement in middle and high school mathematics. Findings were also in consistent with [27] findings that teachers' teaching qualification, teachers' teaching experience, teachers' mastery of subject matter and teachers' classroom behavior are teacher related factors that can contribute to students' achievement in English language. It was also in line with [8] who reported that there is a significant relationship between students' perception of teachers' knowledge of subject matter and students' academic performance. Findings however disagree with the findings of [28] who found that only five of 14 studies they reviewed exhibited a positive relationship between measures of subject matter knowledge and students' performance. Also, [29] reported that schools bring little influence to bear upon a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context.

Furthermore, findings also revealed that textbook content adequacy does not significantly relate with students' achievement in oral English. This implies that textbook content adequacy did not predict the students' achievement in oral English. The findings agreed with the findings of [13] who in his study revealed that none of the textual material variable (textbook availability, suitability, adequacy and relevancy) has impacted enough as to predict students' achievement in mathematics. However, when combined together, they significantly relate to student achievement in mathematics. Findings were not in agreement with the works of [29] and [10] who, in separate studies, revealed that availability and adequacy of educational resources affect the academic performance of learners positively.

Relative Contribution of Teacher Commitment, Teacher Content Knowledge and Textbook Content Adequacy on Students' Achievement in Oral English: The study revealed that the relative contribution of teacher commitment and textbook content adequacy to students' achievement in oral English were not significant while teacher content knowledge made significant contribution. The findings of this study disagreed with [30] who in their study found that teacher quality and instructional strategy had positive significant relationship with achievement in science. However, the findings were in line with [27] who found out in their empirical examination of teacher attributes such as education, experience, salaries, test scores and certification, only teacher knowledge measured by test scores has reasonably consistently been found to be associated with student achievement.

Joint Contribution of Teacher Commitment, Teacher Content Knowledge and Textbook Content Adequacy on Students' Achievement in Oral English: The study found that the teacher quality variables and textbook content adequacy variable combined together did not contribute to students' achievement in oral English. This might be because other teacher quality factors commitment and textbooks content adequacy are not strong enough to determine students' achievement in oral English as there are other germane factors other than teacher quality and textbooks content adequacy that might be able to determine students' achievement in oral English, like learners' interest and school environment. The findings disagreed with [13, 30, 31] who, in separate studies, found that teacher quality and instructional strategy had positive significant relationship with students' achievement.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated teacher quality (commitment and content knowledge) and textbook content adequacy

as correlates of students' achievement in oral English in Ikole Local Government area of Ekiti State. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that when teachers are well grounded in their subject areas, they are likely to simplify the teaching, deploy diverse strategies and methods to use in classes and explain concepts more clearly to the students for their improved performance.

Recommendations: Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

In-service training should be organized for serving teachers to improve their content knowledge in English and oral English. Oral English teachers should attend seminars and workshops where they would learn different strategies to improve the content knowledge of their subjects. Teacher training programmes in various universities and colleges of education should focus more on the content of English language and oral English to enable trainees have well-grounded knowledge of the subject.

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