English Language Pre-Service Teachers' Communication Skills in Two Colleges of Education in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study investigated the quality of communication skills and attitude of English language pre-service teachers from two Colleges of Education in Oyo State. The study adopted the survey research design. Five public junior secondary schools were selected from each of the four Local Government Areas in Oyo Educational Zone (Afijio, Atiba, Oyo East, and Oyo West) using simple random sampling technique, making a total of twenty (20) schools. All the English language pre-service teachers in the sampled schools participated in the study. In all, a total number of fifty (50) English language pre-service teachers took part in the study. Two self-designed instruments were used and data collected were analysed using the descriptive statistics (simple percentage, mean and standard deviation), inferential PPMC and t-test at .05 level of significance. Findings revealed that communication skills of English language pre-service teachers is low. There was a significant difference in male and female English language pre-service teachers' communication skills. Based on the findings, it is recommended that reform efforts should be introduced into the teaching of English language and Use of English courses to impact pre-service teachers with needed linguistics and communicative skills and competence.

Keywords: English Language, Pre-service Teachers, Communication Skills, Colleges of education

Introduction

The maxim that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers clearly demonstrates the role of teacher and teacher education programme in national development.

Education quality has been the focus of discussion to many educationists all over the world. This is because quality education nurtures human talent and creativity, thereby contributing to the personal and professional development of the individual, as well as social, cultural, economic, political and environmental development of society at large (Education for All, 2016). Meanwhile, one of the vital elements in the success of providing our generation with quality education is the implementer of the education process, namely the teachers. This is corroborated by Obadara (2011) when he emphasized that the classroom teacher is one of the main determinants of educational achievements, whose academic qualifications, relevant professional training, work experience, mastery of subject matter, instructional delivery techniques, and the likes are most significant determinants of effective teaching. Therefore, in order to achieve the vision of quality education, we must have quality teachers who can perform quality and effective teaching to the students (Obanya, 2004; Bents and Bents, 1990; Andrew and Schwab, 1995). This implies that besides having good qualification, teachers should possess certain characteristics which will enable them to produce effective classroom teaching. Communication skills and attitude to teaching are among those important characteristics.

Saunders and Mills (1999) defined communication skills as the transmission of a message that involves the shared understanding between the contexts in which the communication takes place. Communication skills involve listening and speaking as well as reading and writing. For effective teaching, a teacher need to be highly skilled in all these areas. Teachers with good communication skills always make the teaching-learning process easier and understandable. Effective communication skills are really important for a teacher in transmitting knowledge, classroom management and interaction with students in the class. To teach in accordance with the ability and capability of the students, a teacher need to adopt such skills of communication which motivate the students toward their learning process (Sng Bee, 2012).

Good communication skills of teachers are the basic need of academic success of students, and professional success of life. Teachers communicate more instructions orally in classroom to students. Therefore, teachers with poor communication skills may cause failure of students to learn and promote their academics (Sherwyn, Michael, Judy, 2000). Good communication skills minimize the potential of unkind feeling during the process of teaching. Loss (2000) therefore submitted that teachers must have the ability to communicate in clear and understandable manner.

As variety of skills are needed for good teaching, a study conducted by Ehindero and Ajibade (2000) revealed that for effective teaching, teacher requires good communication skills such as good communication, good classroom management, updating knowledge and maintaining personality. They therefore submitted that no one can teach effectively until having these basic skills of teaching. Different research resolve that there is significant co-relation between communication skills and students' performance and achievement in classroom activities (Maes, Weldy and Icenogle, 1997). Meanwhile, available studies (James, Kristin, and Virgillia, 2004; Iyamu and Iseguan, 2009; Berthold and Renkl, 2010) have indicated that most teachers have communication deficiency. For instance, Iyamu and Iseguan (2009) observed that one of the major obstacles of effective teaching in Nigerian schools is the inability of teachers to communicate effectively.

From the foregoing, it has been established from extant studies that teachers' communication skills is central to their effective classroom practices. Good communication skills indexes teachers' potential to improve teaching-learning enterprise.

Meanwhile, research efforts aimed at evaluating the quality of teacher education and preparation are replete and it will be good mentioning some of them. Sangoleye and Popoola (2015) investigated pre-service teachers' lesson planning and presentation and found that many of them (pre-service teachers) lack proficiency in writing lesson plan. Also, Ayankojo (2017) investigated

pre-service teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo and Federal College of Education (special), Oyo, Oyo State with respect to their subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, use of appropriate teaching skills and classroom management skills. It was reported, among others, that the pre-service teachers perceived Use of English lecturers as being moderately effective. Emerole (2015) looked into teaching practice anxiety as determinant of pre-service teachers' performance and the findings of the study revealed that anxiety has significant negative effects on pre-service teachers' performance during teaching practice exercise. It is obvious that the available studies have looked into training-related factors that could affect pre-service teachers' classroom performance. However, investigation into pre-service teachers' professional qualities which include content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, communication skills, classroom management, positive attitude to teaching among others have not been conclusively carried out in Nigeria. Meanwhile, in any teaching-learning enterprise, the quality of the teacher matters and this leads to questioning pre-service teachers' effectiveness in teaching English language which is the heart of this study.

Looking at the content and practice of teacher education and preparation programme in Nigeria as contained in NCCE (2012), the fundamental claim of this study is that pre-service teachers are expected to have acquired good communication skills and should be able to deploy them effectively during teaching practice exercise having been introduced to relevant components of the teacher education curriculum like General studies, General Education courses and micro-teaching (theory and practicum) in students' area of specialization. This implies that the level of English language pre-service teachers' communication skills and attitude to teaching during teaching practice exercise need to be assessed to ascertain the level of their teaching effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

As part of the teacher preparation package, teaching practice is introduced as a compulsory course and allocated specific period of time during which pre-service teachers are posted to schools to teach, demonstrate, in practical terms, the knowledge and skills they have acquired during training so as to bring out the best in them. However, as important as this course is as a pre-requisite for graduation and despite all efforts put in place to better teacher preparation, there is a general perception that a significant number of Nigerian teachers are not equipped to deliver quality education for a number of interconnected reasons among them being poor communication skill. Previous research efforts have only looked into training-related factors that could affect pre-service teachers' classroom performance with little consideration for their communication skills Therefore, this study examined the communication skill of pre-service teachers from two colleges of education in teaching English language in Oyo, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is level of communication skills of Pre-service teachers in teaching English language?
2. Is there any gender difference in English language Pre-service teachers' communication skills?

Significance of the Study

Findings from this study has revealed that the level of English language pre-service teachers' communication skills is low thereby pointing out another important factors that could determine the effectiveness of their classroom practices. This study is also out to provide a valuable evaluation feedback to Use of English lecturers in colleges of education on the level of the pre-service teachers' communication skills so as to know where to come in to improve the teaching and learning of English Language. Finally, findings from this study will add to the pool of studies being carried out to improve the teaching and learning of English language in colleges of education.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design because of its suitability and appropriateness for the study since the researcher had no control over the variables but reported them as they manifested. The population of the study is all English language pre-service teachers in Oyo, Nigeria. The purposive sampling was used to choose 300 level English Language pre-service teachers from Emmanuel Alayande College of Education and Federal College of Education (special), Oyo they were on teaching practice exercise. Also, five (5) Junior Secondary Schools were randomly selected from each of the four Local Government Areas in Oyo Educational Zone (Afijio, Atiba, Oyo East, and Oyo West), making a total of twenty (20) schools. In all, a total number of fifty (50) English language pre-service teachers participated in the study. The instruments used in data collection was English Language Pre-service Teachers' Communication Skills Rating Scale (r=0.78). The researcher selected and trained three M. Ed. Language Education students to serve as research assistants. The preservice teachers were observed while teaching and their communication skills were rated. Data collected from the study were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation for English language pre-service teachers' level of communication skills and attitude to teaching profession. Also, inferential statistics of t-test at 0.05 level of significance was used.

Results

Research Question 1: What is level of communication skills of Pre-service teachers of English Language?

Table 4.2: Level of English Language Pre-Service Teachers' Communication Skills

	S/N	Statements	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Mean	Std. D.
1.		The pre-service teacher has a good command of English grammar.	-	5 (10)	10 (20)	28 (56)	7 (14)	2.26	.828
2.		The pre-service teacher's choice of words is appropriate to students' level.	-	-	43 (86)	7 (14)	-	2.86	.351
3.		The pre-service teacher adopts rich and appropriate vocabulary in his/her expression.	-	-	15 (30)	35 (70)	-	2.30	.463
4.		The pre-service teacher could pronounce the words correctly.	-	2 (4)	19 (38)	22 (44)	7 (14)	2.32	.768
5.		The pre-service teacher communicates with students fluently.	-	-	8 (16)	35 (70)	7 (14)	2.02	.553
6.		The pre-service teacher explains concepts clearly in appropriate simple and clear words.	-	-	14 (28)	36 (72)	-	2.28	.454
7.		The pre-service teacher displays confidence while communicating with students.	-	4 (8)	28 (56)	18 (36)	-	2.72	.607
8.		The pre-service teacher manages and achieves transition through cuing and interactional negotiation.	-	-	3 (6)	45 (90)	2 (4)	2.02	.319
9.		The pre-service teacher's voice is audible enough.	3 (6)	25 (50)	15 (30)	7 (14)	-	3.48	.814
10.		The pre-service teacher's expression is free of tension.	-	6 (12)	23 (46)	21 (42)	-	2.70	.678
11.		The pre-service teacher uses different voice patterns and gesture to enhance students' understanding.	-	-	-	50 (100)	-	2.00	.000
12.		The pre-service teacher is able to explain concepts lucidly.	-	-	16 (32)	34 (68)	-	2.32	.471
13.		The pre-service teacher maintains good eye contact with students.	-	-	23 (46)	25 (50)	2 (4)	2.42	.575
14.		The pre-service teacher adopts appropriate gesture while teaching.	-	2 (4)	3 (6)	45 (90)	-	2.14	.452
15.		The non-verbal signals adopted by the pre-service teacher reinforces the messages of the spoken words.	-	-	1 (2)	45 (90)	4 (8)	1.94	.314
16.		The pre-service teacher's facial expression is appropriate to situation.	-	-	17 (34)	33 (66)	-	2.34	.479
17.		The pre-service teacher demonstrates active listening ability.	-	5 (10)	43 (86)	2 (4)	-	3.06	.373
18.		The pre-service teacher's choice of words arouse students' interest in the lesson.	-	-	7 (14)	43 (86)	-	2.14	.351
	Standard Mean = 3; Weighted Mean = 2.42								

Values in parentheses are percentages

Table 4.2 shows the results of the analysis of data collected on the qualities of English language pre-service teachers' communication skills. The table gives the weighted mean of 2.42 out of the 5.00 maximum score that could be obtained which is lower than the standard mean of 3.00. Based on the revealed weighted mean of 2.42, it could be deduced from this table that most of the English language pre-service teachers' communication skill is not good but fair because the weighted mean is not up to the standard mean. Out of the 18 items seeking information on English language pre-service teachers' communication skills, the table reveals that 6 items contributed to the fair score. The 6 items are: the pre-service teacher's voice is audible enough (mean = 3.48>2.42), the pre-service teacher demonstrates active listening ability (3.06>2.42), the pre-service teacher's choice of words is appropriate to students' level (2.86>2.42), The pre-service teacher displays confidence while communicating with students (2.72>2.42), the pre-service teacher's expression is free of tension (2.70>2.42), and lastly, the pre-service teacher maintains good eye contact with students (2.42=2.42). However, the remaining 12 items do not contribute to English language pre-service teachers' fair communication skill.

Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of English language Pre-service teachers towards teaching profession?

Research Question 2: Is there any difference in male and female English language Pre-service teachers' communication skills?

Table 4.5a: Gender Difference in English Language Pre-service Teachers' Communication Skills Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Communication skills	Male	19	40.2105	1.98827	.45614
	Female	31	45.2258	4.03080	.72395

Gender	**N**	**Mean**			**Std. Deviation**		**Std. Error Mean**	
Male	19	40.2105			1.98827		.45614	
Female	31	45.2258			4.03080		.72395	
		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Communication Skills	Equal variances assumed	-5.046	48	.000	-5.01528	.99391	-7.01368	-3.01688
	Equal variances not assumed	-5.861	46.368	.000	-5.01528	.85567	-6.73729	-3.29327

Table 4.5a indicated that there was a significant difference in male and female English language pre-service teachers' communication skills ($t_{(48)} = -5.046$; $p=.000<0.05$). Further analysis of the table revealed that with 45.2 mean score, communication skills of female English language pre-service teachers was better than that of the male English language pre-service teachers with a less mean score of 40.2.

Discussion of Findings

English Language Pre-service Teachers' Communication Skills

The findings of this study revealed that English language pre-service teachers' communication skill is not good enough. The implication of this is that English language pre-service teachers found it difficult to effectively pass across lesson contents to their students as some of them lack good command of English grammar, rich and appropriate vocabulary, correct pronunciation of words among others. The reason for this might not be unconnected with the fact that the English language pre-service teachers were not qualified initially to take the course or do not have interest in teaching profession. Meanwhile, it has been ascertained that teachers require good communication skills to achieve effectiveness in all aspects of teaching-learning enterprise. This result corroborates Olatunbosun (2019) who reported that one other area in which teachers of secondary schools in Nigeria are found wanting is the level of preparation to accommodate exigencies of communication in the classroom. Findings from this study revealed that many of the teachers appeared unprepared for their lessons thus lack substance in their presentation. Similarly, the findings support the work of Iyamu and Iseguan (2009) whose work indicated that one of the major obstacles to effective teaching in Nigerian schools is the inability of teachers to communicate effectively as the result of the study revealed that a trifle of 6% to 14% of their Social Studies teachers investigated was good in communication.

Gender Difference in English Language Pre-service Teachers' Communication Skills

The findings of this study revealed that there is a significant difference in male and female English language pre-service teachers' communication skills. The findings further revealed that communication skills of female English language pre-service teachers is better than that of the male English language pre-service teachers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that the communication skills of English language pre-service teachers is not good enough as revealed in their observed classroom activities. Meanwhile, the communication skills of female English language pre-service teachers was found to be better than that of the male English language pre-service teachers. It can be concluded from this study that preservice teachers need to boost their communication skills for effective lesson delivery during teaching practice.

Recommendations

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

1. There is need to introduce reform in the teaching of English language and Use of English courses in colleges of education to impact pre-service teachers communicative skills.
2. Pre-service teachers should be made to participate in micro teaching practicum actively

with individualized presentation to ascertain effective mastery of communication skills.

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