

RESEARCH ARTICLE



**METHODS AND APPROACHES IN THE NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH
LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the appropriateness of the methods and approaches recommended in the new newly developed curriculum for English language in Nigeria in terms of the opinions of students and teachers. The study made use of questionnaire and interview to collect information from 150 respondents across rural and urban areas. The results showed that both students and teachers were of the opinion that the methods of teaching recommended practicable. Appropriate recommendations were made.

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Introduction

The teacher has continued to remain central in the factors imparting knowledge to learners in any educational system cannot be overemphasized. The ideas of Rohwer et al; (2001) have buttressed the fact that it is at the execution phase that any curriculum is given its relevance. At this execution phase, the teacher is the principal actor. This is the stage at which the teacher has the opportunity to translate concepts as stated theoretically in the curriculum into practice. For the curriculum to be implemented as properly as was intended and for the curriculum goals and objectives to be achieved, the teachers have to be effective.

The ability of the teacher to analyse the task at hand, assess the learners, plans his lessons, instructs the learners and evaluate the extent of success of his/her lessons determines their effectiveness (Rohwer et al; 2001). How well the teacher is able to carry these activities through

determines therefore the level of effectiveness of the teacher in discharging his duties as well as student's achievement. The ability to do this, in turn, is affected by so many factors among which is the approach the teacher adopts in teaching. This largely dictates the atmosphere in the classroom involving the two principal actor; the teacher and the student.

As important as the teacher is in the classroom the students must also assume more responsibility for the learning process (Quist, 2000). In the opinion of Vuzo (2010) it is through interactions with each other that teachers and students work together to create intellectual and practical activities that shape both the form and the content of the target subject. The implication of this is therefore that the teacher is required to identify and implement appropriate teaching approaches that would bring about effective learning in the subject. There are different types of teaching

methods; each one has its merits and shortcomings. Cummings (2002) noted that classroom activities in which students are interactive produces far more effective participation in a class. Meaning that effectiveness of language learning and teaching in the classrooms will depend upon the educational repertoire teachers have. This idea concurs with that of Quist (2000) in that successful teaching and quality of pupil learning is closely related to the teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject. Furthermore, the English teacher is a figure in the language course. Literature indicates clearly that it is the teacher who sets the tone for learning activities (Allen & Valette, 1997; Quist, 2000). Since to teach is to communicate, English teacher must have maximum communicative competence. Also a teacher must be knowledgeable in the language itself so that he/she can make useful decision regarding what should be taught to whom, and how the teaching should be done. Teaching materials are very important in the whole process of teaching and learning to any subject. They make learning more pleasant to the students because they offer a reality of experience, which stimulates self-activity and imagination on the part of the students. They also supply concrete basis for conceptual thinking and hence, reduce meaningless word responses from students (Nyamubi, 2003). For instance, Kapoli (2001) noted that authentic materials enable the students to explore the language used in day-to-day life and which is tailored to their needs and interests. The teaching approaches recommended in a new curriculum or adopted by a teacher in the implementation of a curriculum goes a long way in determining the success or otherwise of the curriculum. This study is therefore aimed at investigating the instructional approaches contained in the new English curriculum in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching is always aimed at producing learning. Its effectiveness in producing learning is however dependent on how well the teaching is handled. One of the indices of determining the effectiveness of teaching is the approaches adopted by the teacher. The curriculum the teacher is given to operate is made to contain the suggested teaching approaches out of which the teacher could choose. A new curriculum developed for English language learning in Nigeria is expected to advance

the course of language learning in the country. How well this curriculum will achieve this purpose is partly dependent on the teaching approaches suggested there in. This study is therefore to investigate the approaches contained in the new curriculum.

Specific Objective of the Study

The specific objective of the study was to examine the application of the methods and approaches recommended in the senior secondary school new English language curriculum by teachers in rural and urban schools..

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the application of the methods and approaches recommended in the senior secondary school new English language curriculum in rural and urban settings. This hypothesis was analysed using percentage and t-test statistic.

Research Method and Procedure

This section discusses the research methodology, design sample selection instrument and statistical techniques used in analysing the data for the study. The subjects for the study consisted of 15 intact senior secondary Year I students drawn from four secondary schools in both urban Ibe-Ife and rural Ibodi areas. The ages of the students ranged from 17 years and six months to 18 years and three months.

Two instruments were developed for the study; these are Teachers and students questionnaires. The teachers attitudinal questionnaire which contained 16 items grouped into four categories was designed to solicit teachers responses on (1) cultural relevance, (2) availability of instructional materials, (3) involvement of teachers (4) practicality of objectives in relation to the secondary school new English language curriculum. The students questionnaire contained 30 items dealing with students interest in the new English language curriculum and how they think the objectives of the new curriculum are in line with their interest.

Reliability indices of the items in the questionnaire of the Teachers and students were established to be 0.75 and 0.78 respectively using the Kinder Richardson Formula. The validity of the instruments was established by the assistance of four experienced English language teachers involved

in the teaching of the senior secondary school new English language curriculum and a curriculum expert knowledgeable about the objectives of the study.

Originally, the Teacher's Questionnaire contained 25 items. But after the comments and suggestions of experts involved in the validation only 16 items finally survived the scrutiny of the experts. Also there were 36 items in the original version of the students' questionnaire but were reduced to 25 after the comments and suggestions of the experts involved in the validation process

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Responses of teachers in urban and rural settings on the appropriateness of the recommended teaching approaches (N=25)

Subject	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Urban Teachers (Yes)	11	1.3	
Rural Teachers (Yes)	7	2. .8	11;.71

Table 2: Responses of teachers in urban and rural settings on the appropriateness of the teaching approaches contained in the new curriculum

Question	Urban Area				Rural Area				Total	
	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	No
8	6	21*	19	76	9	36	16	61*	15	35
17	22	88	3	12	5	20	20	80	27	57

The results indicated that only twenty-four percent or 5 of the teachers in urban area indicated that the recommended objectives are practicable. In contrast eighty percent or 20 of the teachers in urban area indicated that the approaches are not practicable. In the rural area, twenty-four percent or 6 of the teachers indicated that the approaches recommended are practicable. Seventy-six percent or 19 of the teachers indicated that most of the approaches are not practicable. Eighty-eight percent however, indicated that the approaches are not practicable. It seems clear from the results analysis of the responses to this particular item that most of the teachers probably do not practice or find recommended approaches practicable. This is because they are not within the teachers' social background or lack of physical infrastructural facilities.

SUMMARY

Table 2 contains a summary of the analysis of the hypothesis on practicality in the application of the methods and approaches recommended in the new English language programme. Since the critical value to is less than the test statistic at $p = 0.05$ the null

The validated Teachers questionnaire was administered to 25 teachers in urban and 25 teachers in rural schools. The Students instrument was also administered to 150 students (75 in urban and 75 in rural schools). Administration of the instruments to the students was carried out in intact classroom settings. In both administrations, trained research assistants in the respective schools assisted in collecting the subjects responses.

hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the subjects in their application of the recommended methods and approaches. This results indicate the need for practical feasibility in the recommended methods and approaches.

The "t" value of ($p = .05$) is significant and confirms the critical need for teaching orientation in the application of the methods and approaches of the new English language curriculum.

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