Teachers' Perception of Information and Communication Technology in the Teaching of the English Language Essay Writing in Igbo-Eze North Local Government of Enugu-State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become a vital tool of learning a variable that can no longer be ignored in any learning environment. Specifically, the extent of proficiency in the English language for a second language learner was largely dependent on the teacher centered instruction that has made the pedagogical effectiveness of the language instruction presented in the classroom somewhat ineffective. A plethora of literature supports the integration of ICT in both curriculum development and delivery. This study examined teachers' perception of Information and Communication Technology in the teaching of the English Language essay writing in Senior Secondary Schools in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State. The study investigated the perceived problems of ICT English Language Teachers' experience while teaching essay writing, how frequently teachers use ICT in teaching, and how ICT has helped students' performance in English Language examination. Attempt was made to provide answers to three research questions using a descriptive survey research design. The entire population of seventy (70) English Language teachers in the Senior Section within the twenty – two (22) state owned Secondary Schools in Igbo – Eze North local government area was used for the study. Expert validated questionnaire was used to collect pertinent data and was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The result revealed that lack of ICT skills among teachers as well as unavailability and high cost of facilities contribute to teachers' poor perception of Information and Communication Technology in teaching English Language essay writing. Based on the findings, it is recommended, among others, that the school authorities should create work skills and techniques that could enable English Language teachers acquire the necessary skills in the use of ICT. The government should revisit the curriculum with a view of incorporating the use of computer and ICT – assisted instruction in teaching of English Language in Igboeze Local School District.

Keywords: information technology, essay writing,instructional intervention, curriculum, teaching methodology, English language

1. Introduction

It was observed that senior secondary schools in Igbo-Eze North failed to perform well in standardized English language examinations. Besides, many teachers who teach the English language may not have the capacities in ICT assisted instructional intervention employed in re-mediating students' deficiencies in essay writing. The existing methodology of teaching essay writing has contributed to students' failure in standardized examinations. It is evident that teaching through the textbooks may no longer be adequate in training learners in writing skills acquisition. The review of literature support the notion that when ICT is incorporated into English curriculum there is evidence of improved result in standardized English language examinations by learners.

The literature reviewed exposed the inability of teachers to update their knowledge on ICT, the unavailability of ICT tools in schools, and other environmental factors such as power failure encountered while using ICT to effect teaching. Recently, it is assumed that basic education is essential for individuals to be able to access and apply information. Such activities must include ICTs in schools ranging from the pre-primary, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools (Davis and Tearle, 1999).

On the premise of other related studies carried out on similar topics, some variable were discovered to have contributed to the ineffectiveness of using ICT in teaching the English language in senior secondary schools within the area. Such variable include: the inability of teachers to upgrade their knowledge of ICT skills while teaching the English language, the unreliability of ICT tools in schools, the level of ICT literacy among students, poor maintenance of ICT facilities, high cost of ICT facilities and inadequate power supply contribute to the ineffectiveness of using ICT in the teaching of the English language in this area.

The study was intended to find out teachers' perception of ICT in the teaching of the English language essay writing in the senior secondary schools within Igbo-Eze North local school district. The question was: "is it teachers' perceived problems of ICT in the teaching of the English language that is responsible for students poor performance in the English language examinations, or the frequency at which teachers use ICT in the teaching of essay writing in the English language?" The study was also intended to find out how ICT has

contributed to students' performance in the English language examinations.

1.1 Writing

Teachers of English discipline must endeavor to hone good writing skills early in their students as to prepare them for adult life. Essay writing stimulates brain where the brain is used to collect ideas central to a topic and subsequently presented in a proper way for readers. Hodge (2013) observed that excellent writing communication skills are essential to success in areas of peoples' lives. Writing according to him is meant to sharpen critical thinking skills, to explore and communicate new ideas, to expose problems, and analyze solutions, and to rally others to action. Graham (2007) saw writing a powerful tool that lets people communicate irrespective of distance and time. It is according to the author a valuable mechanism for learning used in exploring, organizing of ideas. Obuasi (2012) saw writing as designing and creating reality or an idea in a personal way to communicate personal ideas. Writing according to him involves the application of language in expressing views, ideas, feelings, thoughts, and findings on paper. Writing is, therefore, an inevitable in a functional society. It has always been a central mode of learning in realm of educational development and often has been used in assessing learners. Writing is the act or art of forming letters and characters on paper, wood, stone, or other material, for the purpose of recording the ideas which characters and words express, or of communicating them to others by visible signs (Brainyquote. com, retrieved May 20, 2015). Otagburuagu (2007) argues that writing is one the essential arms of literacy that has grown over time commanding greater significance in day to day transactions. Its impact affects people's daily lives and cannot be overlooked. The very dynamic nature of writing demands that students need to brace for these changes especially on the competitive global economy. Teachers must equally step up to the challenges of training and teaching students for the challenges ahead of them.

1.1.1 Information Technology

Technology improves writing. Graham (2007) observed that writing with technology engages the student, allows room for revision, and encourages fluency without boredom. The authors note further that writing improves comprehension in major areas of curriculum. It is imperative that teachers encourage students and learners to write across curriculum.

The use of ICT in the teaching of English as a second language writing is still very low. Yunus et.al. (2013) revealed that teachers are generally weak in managing problems and planning activities involving the use of ICT in the teaching of writing. The advantages of using ICT include: the attracting of students' attention, facilitating students' learning process, helping to improve students' vocabulary, and promoting meaningful learning.

Bhatti (2013) noted that computer assisted instruction in reading and writing of English provided a self-paced and motivating language learning environment in which the students worked with high level of interest at a faster pace. It was equally observed that the use of computers can promote the effectiveness of reading material in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, use of words in different contexts, and comprehension. The author in this vein observes that computers assisted students in solving queries and improving self-confidence at the high pace of their learning, which in turn, improved their motivation level and enhanced the quality and quantity of their learning.

The rapidity of change within the ICT have impacted almost all the areas of human endeavor. The impact has been enormous in the field of education in both areas of teaching and learning. ICT according to Adomi (2003) are associated electronic technologies used for information collection, processing, storage and retrieval. It is notable that today's society including Nigeria has become increasing dependent on ICT. Global communities are linked through ICT.

Okpoko (2012) quoting Mbam (2006) says: "it is unarguably becoming a statement of fact that the success of any organization, institution, business or individual venture depends largely on the level of communication effectiveness and efficiency at its disposal." Davis (2011) is of the opinion that ICT should be used as an effective tool for the teaching and learning of the English language as well as other subjects and not just for its sake. Davis further notes that ICT promotes creative and enthusiastic teaching that utilizes fully the potential of the current technology underpinned by a thorough knowledge of English language pedagogy.

ICTs have the potentials of accelerating, enriching and deepening learning skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening to motivate and encourage students to relate school experiences to work activities (transfer of learning), create economic viability for tomorrow's workers as well as strengthening one's teaching in helping schools effect a positive change (Ansan,2006) . Ikwuka (2010) notes that learners are motivated when their learning is supported by technology, which in turn leads to increased understanding. ICT can provide a means of presenting data, or can be used to test students' understanding if they are used in a tutorial role. The demand for ICT literacy is on the increase in Nigerian education because employers have realized that the computer and other ICT tools can enhance efficiency (Warchauer et. al. 2000). ICT accordingly provides English

language teachers with the basic skills required, as well as guidance in software and other activities to engage the students in their own learning.

There is substantial evidence concerning the ability of ICT to motivate learners which according to Tok and Sora (2013) enables learners to engage in cognitive and, perhaps more importantly, meta-cognitive activity. Salehi and Salehi (2013) argue that integrating of information and communications technology in teaching and learning is considered as a medium in which a variety of approaches and pedagogical philosophies may be implemented.

2.0 Purpose of the Study
The study sought to find out teachers' perception of ICT in the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools.

3.0 Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study:
1. What are the perceived problems of ICT English language teachers experience in teaching essay writing to senior secondary school students?
2. How frequently do English language teachers use ICT facilities in teaching essay writing in the English language?
3. How has ICT contributed to students' performance in English language examination?

3.1 Method
A descriptive survey research design was employed in this study in which raw data collected was summarized from the research utilizing qualitative and quantitative variables (Shahravan, Ghassemi, & Baneshi, 2012).

3.2 Population of the Study
The population of this study comprised all the seventy (70) English language teachers in the senior section in the twenty-two (22) state-owned secondary schools in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques
The whole population of seventy (70) English language teachers under study was used eliminating the use of sampling technique.

3.4 Instrument for Data Collection
The instrument for data collection is the structured or fixed response questionnaire. The items on the questionnaire reflect "teachers' perception of ICT in teaching essay writing in senior secondary schools in Igbo-Eze north." It was used to elicit responses on a four-point Likert rating scale of strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA). The questionnaire contained three clusters with eight items in each cluster. Each cluster addressed one research question.

3.5 Validation of Instrument
The instrument was thoroughly validated by three educational experts. The three experts were drawn from the area of educational technology, measurement and evaluation, and language education respectively. Their various contributing were used to restructure the instrument.

3.6 Method of Data Collection
The questionnaire was administered to each school and was collected on the spot to ensure the authenticity of responses.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis
Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze responses from the questionnaire. Since the questionnaire contains Likert's four-point rating scale of Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA), the following bench mark were used in data analysis.
SD   =   1.00 – 1.49
D   =   1.50 – 2.49
A   =   2.50 – 3.49
SA   =   3.50 – 4.00
The decision mean or criterion mean is 2.50, that is, any item whose mean is 2.50 or above was accepted while any mean score below 2.50 was deemed unacceptable.
4.0 Discussion of Results

4.1 Research Question One

What are the perceived problems of ICT English language teachers experience in teaching essay writing to senior secondary school students?

The highest mean score of 3.55 which occurred two times in items 3 and 4 of Table 1 indicate that schools in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area are not current with ICT facilities and do not also have enough ICT facilities. The mean score of 3.05 of item 5 indicates that ICT facilities are costly and could indicate why schools do not have them. Teachers affirmed with the mean score of 2.60 of item 1 that they are not well experienced in using ICT in teaching essay writing. The mean score of 2.05 of item 6 affirms that teachers find it difficult using ICT facilities in teaching essay writing. The mean score of 1.95 of item 8 affirms that students find it difficult understanding essay writing when it is taught with ICT facilities.

Teachers affirm with the mean score of 1.65 of item 7 that teaching English language essay writing with ICT facilities makes teaching very stressful.

The above mean scores fall short of the mean score of 2.50. However, based on the decision point of 2.50 mean, the cumulative mean of 2.71 in table 1 indicates that respondents accepted that the items in table 1 were the perceived problems English language teachers experience while teaching essay writing using ICT facilities.

4.2 Research Question Two

How frequently do English language teachers use ICT in teaching essay writing?

Students affirmed that teachers do not make use of ICT facilities very often in teaching essay writing in English language with overwhelming mean score of 3.15. Equally, students affirmed with a mean of 2.85 that ICT facilities are used only when there is power supply. The mean score of 2.50 indicates that computer and other ICT facilities are not always used in teaching essay writing.

Furthermore, the mean score of 2.25 of item (No. 3) indicates that respondents did not accept that teachers have never taught English language essay writing using ICT facilities. Equally, with a mean score of 2.10 of item (No. 5) indicate respondents' non acceptance that ICT facilities are used only when government supervisors are visiting the school. The mean score of 2.00 of item (No. 6) equally affirms that respondents did not accept that ICT facilities are used only when examinations are on hand. However, since the cumulative mean is 2.24 which is not up to the decision mean of 2.50 affirms that English language teachers do not frequently teach with ICT facilities.

4.3 Research Question Three

How has ICT contributed to students' performance in English language examinations?

The result obtained from table 3 item 5 with the mean score of 3.40 indicates that the use of ICT improves the pronunciation of English sounds among English language students. The mean score of 3.20 of item 2 indicates that using ICT in teaching English language improves students' performance in terms of writing.

The mean score of 3.05 of item 3 indicates also that the use of ICT in teaching English language. The mean score of 3.0 of item 8 indicates that using ICT makes examination questions not to be very difficult for students to answer.

More so, the mean score of 2.94 of item 7 indicates that using ICT makes learning more interesting. Furthermore, the mean score of 2.10 item 1 indicates that respondents did not accept that teaching with ICT has helped to curb the problems of examination malpractice in English language.

The mean score of 2.01 of item 6 further indicates that the respondents did not accept that the use of ICT leads to distractions in examinations. The mean score of 1.60 of item 4 indicates that the respondents did not accept that there has not been any impact in students' performance in English language examinations.

Consequently, the cumulative mean score of 2.67 in regard to research question 3 indicates that the respondents accepted that ICT has contributed to the students' high performance in the English language examinations.

From the above table the highest mean score of 3.55 which occurred two times in items 3 and 4 indicate that schools in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area are not current with ICT facilities and do not also have enough ICT facilities.

The mean score of 3.05 of item 5 indicates that ICT facilities are costly and could indicate why schools do not have them. Teachers affirm with the mean score of 2.60 of item 1 that they are not well experienced in using ICT in teaching essay writing. Since the average mean score guiding the decision making in this analysis in 2.50 and above, the above mean scores are accepted by the respondents. The mean score of 2.05 of item No. 6 affirms that teachers find it difficult using ICT facilities in teaching essay writing. The mean score of 1.95 of item 8 affirms that students find it difficult understanding essay writing when it is taught with ICT facilities. Teachers affirm with the mean score of 1.65 of item 7 that teaching English language essay writing with ICT facilities makes teaching very stressful. The above mean scores falls short of the mean score of 2.50. However,

based on the decision point of 2.50 mean, the cumulative mean of 2.71 in table 1 indicates that respondents accepted that the items in table 1 are the perceived problems English language teachers experience while teaching essay writing using ICT facilities.

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Equally, with a mean score of 2.10 of item 5 the respondents did not accept that ICT facilities are used only when government supervisors are visiting the school.   The mean score of 2.00 of item 6 equally affirms that respondents did not accept that ICT facilities are used only when examinations are approaching. However, since the cumulative mean is 2.24 which is not up to the decision mean of 2.50, it indicates that English language teachers do not frequently teach with ICT facilities
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Consequently, the cumulative mean score of 2.67 in regard to research question 3 indicates that the respondents accepted that ICT has contributed to the students' high performance in the English language examinations.

5.0 Conclusion
The result from this study suggests that the problems of ICT teachers experience teaching English language in senior secondary schools in Igbo-Eze North include the followings:
1. Teachers are not well trained in the use of ICT in teaching English language.
2. Schools lack ICT facilities and the schools are not current with the new ICT facilities.
3. ICT facilities are too expensive for schools to purchase.
4. Teachers do not always make use of ICT facilities while teaching the English language.
5. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has contributed to an extent to the teaching and learning of the English language and to the high performance of students in English language examination in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area.

6.0 Educational Implications of the Findings
ICT could enhance the quality of language education in several ways, when used appropriately. Language English teachers can use ICT to source and organize information that will improve the quality of teaching and learning enabling teachers to impact positively in their students' learning outcomes in the areas of basic grammar, oral and writing skills in the English language.

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Table 1: Problems of ICT

S/N	Items	N		St Dev	Decision
1	I am not well experienced in the use of ICT in teaching English language essay writing	70	2.60	1.59	Accepted
2	ICT is included in my school programme	70	2.85	1.48	Accepted
3	My school is not current with the new ICT facilities	70	3.55	1.60	Accepted
4	My school does not have enough ICT facilities	70	3.55	.685	Accepted
5	ICT facilities are costly to purchase that is why my school do not have them	70	3.05	.759	Accepted
6	I find it difficult teaching English language essay writing using ICT facilities	70	2.05	1.60	Unaccepted
7	Teaching English language essay writing with ICT makes the work of teaching very stressful	70	1.65	.826	Unaccepted
8	Students do not understand my teaching while using ICT in teaching English language essay writing	70	1.95	1.50	Unaccepted
	Cumulative mean	70	2.71	.286	Accepted

Table 2: Application of ICT

S/N	Items	N		St Dev	Decision
1	Teachers do not make use of ICT facilities very often in teaching essay writing in the English language.	70	3.15	.557	Accepted
2	Computers and other ICT facilities are not always used in teaching and learning of essay writing.	70	2.59	.946	Accepted
3	Teachers have never taught essay writing using ICT facilities before	70	2.25	.910	Unaccepted
4	ICT facilities are used in teaching essay writing only when there is power supply	70	2.85	.671	Accepted
5	ICT facilities are used in teaching essay writing only when government supervisors are visiting the school	70	2.10	.718	Unaccepted
6	ICT facilities are used in teaching essay writing only when examinations are approaching	70	2.00	.324	Unaccepted
7	ICT facilities are not used in teaching oral English	70	2.08	.431	Unaccepted
8	ICT facilities are only used in teaching English grammar and composition	70	1.05	.601	Unaccepted
	Cumulative mean	70	2.24	.645	Unaccepted

Table 3: Contributions of ICT

S/N	Items	N		St Dev	Decision
1	Teaching with ICT has helped to curb the issue of examination malpractice in the English language examinations	70	2.10	0.78	Unaccepted
2	Using ICT in teaching English language has improved students' performance in terms of writing	70	3.20	1.894	Accepted
3	The use of ICT in teaching the English language has encouraged fast response to questions among senior secondary students during examinations	70	3.05	1.06	Accepted
4	There has not been any impact in students' performance in the English language examinations	70	1.60	1.98	Unaccepted
5	The use of ICT has improved the pronunciation of English sounds among students	70	3.40	1.75	Accepted
6	The use of ICT leads to distractions in examinations	70	2.01	1.90	Unaccepted
7	Using ICT makes learning interesting	70	2.94	0.83	Accepted
8	The use of ICT makes examination questions not very difficult for students to answer	70	3.00	1.73	Accepted
	Cumulative mean	70	2.67	1.56	Accepted

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