



IMPACT OF TEACHERS' QUALIFICATION, GENDER AND LANGUAGE TEACHING ON STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of teachers' qualification, gender and language teaching on students' communicative competence in Benue State. A descriptive survey design and ex-post facto design were adopted. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A sample of 600 SS II students and 40 language teachers. A multi stage sampling technique was adopted to select the schools. First, stratified random and hat and draw sampling techniques were used to select schools from the three Education Zones A, B and C in Benue State. Secondly, a purposive sampling was used to select 15 students each from the sampled schools, giving a total of 600 SS II students. The students were divided into three groups of 5 students in each group using randomisation. A simple random sampling was used to select 10 lesson plans from each language teacher making a total of 400. Two instruments used for data collection were Evaluation Checklist on Language Teachers' Lesson Plans (ECLTLP) and Students' Communicative Achievement Test (SCAT). ECLTLP was used to evaluate teachers' language teaching, while SCAT was meant to test students' communicative competence. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed a significant impact of language teaching by teachers with high qualification, as well as male teachers on students' communicative competence over their female counterpart. It was recommended that, regardless of gender and qualification, teachers should always employ the use of communicative activities while teaching in order to improve students' communicative competence.

Key words: Teachers' Qualification, Gender, Communicative Competence

Introduction

Developing the communicative competence of Nigerian students as second language learners is the ultimate goal of English language teaching in Nigeria (Oyetunde, 2013). English language is a means through which people communicate and interact socially. To this end, English language is viewed as a functional system that is used essentially to fulfill communicative purposes. Ugwoke (2017) in lending credence to the importance of English language in Nigeria observes that it functions as the language of unity and lays the foundation for the nation's linguistic existence.

Communicative competence hinges on the theory that stresses on the ability of an individual to use grammatical competence in variety of communicative situations. The notion of Hymes' communicative competence was a reaction against Chomsky's linguistic competence of (1965). Hymes disapproves Chomsky's claim of linguistic competence which stresses the fact that one's competence is completely based on the knowledge of rules of grammar. Hymes (1972) came up with a broader notion of competence. As a social linguist, he believes that competence should not be limited to the knowledge of the rules of grammar alone but the application of the rules in communication which he calls socio linguistic competence. That is, the knowledge of the rules of language use. According to Shekari (2015), the concept of communicative competence originated as a result of the changes in the language teaching traditions. Thus, emphasis is placed on learning to communicate through interaction, pair and group work, shared writing and all other activities that foster communication (Ekwelibe & Udoh, 2014).

For a meaningful acquisition of communicative competence by learners, they are supposed to engage in certain activities that involves creating meaningful tasks which allows them to use language in functional ways that focuses on the interactive teaching technique which demands high level of student participation in the learning process. The principles of communicative competence as pointed by Ogwuche (2016) is that, there is no meaning in the world until we construct it. One of the ways we construct meaning is through human activity

which arises from the interaction with human community. People create meaning through their interaction with each other and object in the environment. Studies such as Ozoemena (2015), Ogwuche (2016) found that students who engages in functional language use out performed those who were taught using conventional method. Similarly, Abu-Bakar, Noordin and Razali (2019) investigated the effectiveness of project-based learning (PjBL) activities as a teaching strategy in improving the oral communicative competence. The findings revealed a significant improvement in the learners' overall oral communicative competence.

The teacher guides students to perform different learning tasks in groups based on the three levels of interaction patterns in the classroom. These are; students-teacher interaction, student-students interaction or students-community resources interaction (Shekari, 2015). These activities include information sharing, negotiation of meaning, *interview* and social interaction. Similarly, the use of dialogue and role playing on topics such as shopping, greeting, discussing different issues, apologizing to someone, expressing an opinion, asking for direction among others, are communicative activities that support classroom instruction. These activities are geared towards developing in learners the communicative language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Effective handling of communicative activities that are capable of enhancing students' communicative competence may be dependent on professional qualification of teachers. This is because teachers are primarily responsible for interpreting and implementing the curriculum through the use of active students-centered approaches. However, most teachers neglect this aspect or are not fully aware of their role or are unable to engage the students in activities that are geared toward enhancing students' communicative competence. According to Gbeyonron (2015), teachers are regarded as the production team well-equipped and trained for the purpose of quality education. Teacher education therefore serves as a tool for change, growth and for steering the engine for development (Achor, Ehie & Odaudu, 2018). This

is manifested by their professional knowledge of the subject matter, content delivery and assessment skills in addition to classroom management. A competent teacher is crucial to the training of students in the mastery of language for good performance in school subjects (Ukume, 2018).

Teachers' professional training refers to the policies, procedures and programmes designed to equip teachers with the knowledge and attitudes required in the teaching profession. According to Babalola (2013), teachers require skills, knowledge, strategies, techniques and methods for the implementation of curricula in the school in order to make a positive change in the learners. To achieve this, teachers need to undergo a minimum teacher education programme such as National Certificate in Education (NCE) or first Degree (B.Ed), Master's Degree (M.Ed) or PhD in Education. This may be achieved through a training programmes like pre-service. This training is provided for teachers before they undertake any teaching engagement.

Akpan and Ita (2015), state that the nature of interaction that takes place in the classroom depends greatly on professional development of teachers. This implies that for a teacher to effectively provide communicative activities for the learners, he or she must have adequate knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. Such knowledge will help teachers to select appropriate contents, methods, and assessment strategies that have direct bearing on the communicative competence of the learners. Unanma, Abugu, Dike and Umeobika (2013) *examined the relationship between teachers' academic qualifications and achievement of Senior Secondary Students in Chemistry. The findings of the research revealed that there is a positive relationship between the teachers' academic qualification and students' academic achievement.*

Lack of qualified language teachers may however lead to poor communicative competence of students. Ayodele (2011) notes that high quality teachers are the best resources and assets of an education system. According to Fayeke (2012), there is a high correlation between what teachers know and what they teach. If teachers do not have adequate knowledge of the subject

matter, it may lead to ineffective teaching. This means that the ability to effect a positive change may depend on teachers' knowledge of the subject matter, teaching and learning. Thus lack of teachers' qualification in English language can pose a serious problem and may have contributed to students' poor communicative competence.

Lending a voice to this, Ukume (2018) posits that teachers play a key role in teaching and learning. The role of teachers in the provision of quality education in Nigeria is undeniable. Education is critical and important to the well-being of any nation. It is a key requirement for improving the long term quality of people in order to sustain the political, economic and social profile of a country. For this reason, the professional qualification of teachers is paramount. Teachers' professional qualification can be judged by the level of educational training or certificate obtained by an individual teacher (Unanma, Abugu, Dike & Umeobika, 2013). This implies that a teacher is seen as an individual who had gone through approved professional training in education at appropriate levels and is capable of facilitating learning.

Due to the strategic role teachers play in the education of the nation, various training programmes have been organised at different levels to equip teachers with the professional training towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge that will make them efficient and effective in their work, in accordance with the needs of the society at any point in time (Alachi & Egboja, 2018; Muodumogu, 2012). As such, teacher training in Nigeria is carried out by the faculties of education of universities, institutes of education in universities, colleges of education, and the National Teacher Institute (NTI) (Duwan & Olajide, 2014). Teacher training encourages the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers. Through training, teachers can fit into social life of the community and enhance their commitment to national goals (Muodumogu 2010; Duwan & Olajide, 2014). Providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and making them adaptable to changing situations, and enhancing their commitment to teaching profession is very important to students' academic growth and the development of the nation (Alachi & Egboja,

2018). The essence of teachers having the required educational qualification is to provide them with the necessary knowledge and competencies they require to enable them do their job well. Teacher education therefore helps to produce well qualified teaching professionals who can adjust to the diverse needs of the students and developmental prospects of the modern society.

Corroborating this, Alachi and Egboja (2018) opines that the students taught by teachers that are more qualified and experienced in terms of knowledge of the subject matter would perform better than those taught by less qualified ones. Teachers' professional qualification portends meeting minimum standards and the ability to perform in the highest order. When qualification is low, performance cannot meet the set standards. There is a corresponding link between teachers' qualification and the standard of education students receive. When teachers are a reason for students' poor performance, they become a factor responsible for low standard of education. In other words, it is expected that students, who are products of qualified teachers should be able to perform well in the world of work in real life situation (Ukume, 2018).

Asikhia (2010) and Unanma, Abugu, Dike and Umeobika (2013) in their study showed that teachers' qualification influences students' academic performance. In line with that, Dahar, Dahar, Dahar, and Faize (2011) observed in a similar study that teachers with higher qualification are in a better position to lead students to achieve more, as they are equipped with the pedagogical content knowledge to teach their subjects. Ojera (2016) conducted a research on impact of teacher qualification on pupils' achievement in certificate of primary education in Migori County, Kenya. The findings revealed that students taught by teachers with higher qualification performed better than those taught by teachers with low qualifications. By implication, teachers who are capable of making positive impact on students' academic achievement are those with higher professional qualifications in education training.

In other words, English language teachers who are adequately trained will acquire the ability, strategies as well as the activities needed

for communicative competence. As such, they will know that engaging students in activities, such as role playing, dialogue, group discussion, storytelling, writing exercise among others, are paramount to enhancing students' communicative competence. Therefore, English language teachers need to have at least a minimum of National Certificate in Education so as to have the required knowledge to teach effectively in order to enhance students' communicative competence.

Apart from teachers' qualification, gender is another factor that may be responsible for students' performance and competence in communication. Gender has to do with the roles society ascribe to male and female. It has been introduced in this study because of the critical role it plays in job performance and more specifically in the teaching profession. Gender is being a male and female with its attendant social expectations of roles and responsibilities (Nwagbara, 2011). The influence of teacher's gender on language instructional outcome has been a matter of concern among researchers. A considerable number of researches undertaken by both women and men on gender and academic achievement showed that there is a strong relationship between teacher's gender and students' achievement in English language. Tagi, Al-Darwish, Akbar and Al-Gharrabali (2015) reported that most students prefer English language male teachers as they are believed to have positive personal traits more than English language female teachers. Mustapha (2012); Akhmetova, Seitova and Mynbayeva (2017) maintained that being a male or female teacher does not significantly affect students' performance in English language. Nevertheless, language teaching strategies adopted by male and female teachers to enhance students' communicative competence may differ. Previous studies aimed at impact of teachers' qualification and gender from several perspectives. However, it can be deduced from the earlier research focus that not much attention has been given to teachers' impact on communicative competence of learners. It is imperative, therefore, to determine, if there exist an impact of teachers' qualification, and gender on students' communicative competence.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of language teaching on students' communicative competence when taught by teachers with low and high professional qualification?
2. What is the impact of language teaching of male and female teachers on students' communicative competence when taught by teachers?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the impact of language teachers with low and high professional qualification on students' communicative competence.
2. There is no significant difference in the impact of male and female language teachers on students' communicative competence.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and ex-post facto design. The population comprised 11, 223 SS II students located in government and grant- aided secondary schools in Benue State. A multi stage sampling technique was adopted to select a sample of 600 SS II students and 40 language teachers were drawn from 297 secondary schools in Benue State. Stratified and hat and draw sampling techniques were used to select schools from the three Education Zones A, B and C. Secondly, a purposive sampling was used to select 15 students in each in 4 sampled schools who were divided into three groups of 5 students using randomisation. This was to help in organising the students for discussion in their various groups for effective communication.

A simple random sampling was used to select 10 lesson plans from each language teacher making a total of 400 lesson plans which were evaluated. Teachers with NCE qualification, first

degree and post-graduate degrees in English language education were categorised accordingly in order to determine the impact of teachers' level of qualification and gender on students' communicative competence. Two instruments used were Evaluation Checklist on Language Teachers' Lesson Plans (ECLTLP) and Students' Communicative Achievement Test (SCAT). The topics for discussion and essay writing were aimed at establishing the extent to which students can express themselves in communicative situations through speaking and writing. A tape recorder was used to record students as they discussed. Two raters listened to 5 students as they discussed in each group and then scored them individually. The rating scale was done based on the following: 1 = Very Dissatisfactory; 2 = Dissatisfactory; 3 = Fairly Satisfactory; 4 = Satisfactory; 5 = Very Satisfactory.

Students' communicative competence were tested by assessing their essay using the same topics provided for discussion. The scoring of their communicative ability was done using WAEC marking guide for essay writing. The marking guide was based on four major areas of content, expression, organisation and mechanical accuracy.

Experts validated the instruments in the light of relevance of the items generated and to see if the test questions were appropriate for SS II students and could be employed in the study. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One

1. What is the impact of language teaching on students' communicative competence when taught by teachers with high and low professional qualification?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Impact of Language Teachers with High and Low Professional qualification on Students' Communicative Competence

Impact of Language Teachers with High and Low Qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Low	22	3.92	.57	.03
High	6	1.90	.63	.07

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of impact of language teachers with high and low professional qualification on students' mean score in communicative competence. The table reveals that the impact of language teaching by teachers with low professional qualification on students' mean score is 3.92 with standard deviation of 0.57. Table 1 further reveals that the impact of language teaching by teachers with high professional qualification on students' mean score

is 1.90 with standard deviation of 0.63. The means and standard deviations show that students' mean score in communicative competence is impacted by language teaching by teachers with low professional qualification.

Research Question Two

1. What is the impact of language teaching on students' communicative competence when taught by male and female teachers?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviations of Impact of Language Teaching on Students' Communicative Competence Taught by Male and Female Teachers.

Impact of Language Teaching by Male and Female Teachers	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Male	19	4.89	.55	.03
Female	21	1.87	.51	.05

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the impact of language teaching by male and female teachers on students' mean score in communicative competence. The table reveals that the impact of language teaching by male teachers on students' mean score is 4.89 with standard deviation of 0.55. Table 2 further reveals

the impact of language teaching by female teachers on students' mean score is 1.89 with standard deviation of 0.64. The means and standard deviations show that students' mean score in communicative competence is positively impacted by male teachers.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the impact of language teaching on students' communicative competence when taught by teachers with high and low professional qualification.

Table 3: ANOVA of the Impact of Language Teaching on Students' Communicative Competence when taught by Teachers with high and low Professional Qualification

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.999	2	.499	0.880	.026
Within Groups	14.962	46	.325		
Total	15.961	48			

Table 3 reveals that $F(2, 48) = 0.880$; $p = 0.026 < 0.05$. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant difference in the impact of language teaching on students' communicative competence when taught by teachers with low and high professional

qualification. Thus, based on evidence from data analysis, students' communicative competence in English language is significantly impacted by language teaching of teachers with high professional qualification. This implies that, teachers' qualification is a factor of positive impact on students' communicative competence.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the impact of language teaching on students' communicative competence when taught by male and female teachers.

Table 4: ANOVA of Impact of Language Teaching on Students' Communicative Competence when taught by Male and Female Teachers.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.176	2	.088	.267	.050
Within Groups	180.619	348	.330		
Total	180.795	350			

Table 4 reveals that $F(2, 350) = 0.267$; $p = 0.050 = 0.05$. Since the p-value is equal to 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there is significant difference in the impact of language teaching on students' communicative competence when taught by male and female teachers. This implies that students' communicative competence in English language is significantly impacted by language teaching when taught by male over their female counterparts.

Discussion of Findings

Research question 1 as well as hypotheses 1 addressed the impact of language teaching by teachers with low and high qualification on students' communicative competence. The mean scores of students taught by teachers with low qualification as shown in Table 1 as well as the analysis of the data presented in Table 3 revealed that there is impact of language teaching by teachers on students' mean score in communicative competence in English language. Thus students' communicative competence in English language is significantly impacted by language teaching by teachers with low and high qualification. This finding is however in favour of teachers with higher qualification. This finding is in line with Unanma, Abugu, Dike and Umeobika (2013) and Ojera (2016) whose study revealed that students taught by teachers with higher qualification performed better than those taught by teachers with low qualifications. This means that English language teachers with higher qualification have a repertoire of effective teaching strategies needed to develop students' communicative competence.

This shows that the nature of interaction that takes place in the classroom depends greatly on the professional development of the teachers. In lending credence to this, Nna, Ekaette and Ameh

(2016) and Ukume, (2018) observes that a good teacher is the one who adds value to the learning process and is effective in helping students to improve their learning outcomes. Thus professional training of teachers is required for efficient handling of language teaching for the purpose of achieving the expected objective of English language teaching, which is, an individual's ability to communicate effectively in English in their everyday life.

In addition, it was observed that the impact of language teaching by male teachers on students' mean score was higher than that of female teachers. This indicates that even though, language teaching by both male and female teachers have different degrees of impact on students. The result is in favour of male teachers compared with that of female teachers. Meaning, male teachers are more versatile in exposing learners to different communicative activities. From the foregoing, the finding of the study is consistent with the findings by Mahdi and Al-Dera (2013), Tanzil (2016), Attah and Ita (2017) who investigated the impact of teachers' age, experience, and gender on the integration of ICT into language teaching and found that female teachers use ICT lesser in instruction than male teachers. Taqi, Al-Darwish Akbar and Al-Gharabali (2015) corroborate this finding when they found that most students prefer male teachers as they believe that the positive personal traits of male teachers far exceed those of the female teachers.

On the contrary, Tanzil (2016) Attah and Ita (2017) examined the influence of teachers' gender on academic achievement in English Language among senior secondary students and reported that the gender of teachers has no significant influence on academic performance in English language among senior secondary students. The authors found that students' choice of a teacher is

based on some traits that are peculiar to male or female teacher. Furthermore, Shah and Udgaonkar (2018) buttressed this by saying that gender of a teacher is not a barrier to teaching, and that teaching is effective if the teacher is active and interested in teaching. Thus an effective teacher is one who is competent and has knowledge and teaching skills which does not stop at teaching the content but also assessing students.

According to Ogwuche (2016) the use of communicative approach in teaching language helps students to acquire communicative competence. This implies that, regardless of whether the teacher is a male or female, there is need to adequately expose students to communicative activities in order to enhance students' performance in English language (Jalizadeh & Tahmasebi, 2014; Toro, Camacho-Minuche, Pinza-Tapia & Paredes, 2019). This suggests that when male or female teacher teach language communicatively, it can impact on students' communicative competence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, the study concluded that there was significant impact of language teaching taught by teachers with high teaching qualification on students' mean score in communicative competence in English language. There was significant positive impact of language taught by male teachers on students' mean score in communicative competence in English language. Over their female counterpart. It was therefore recommended that:

1. Regardless of the gender of teachers or their qualification, teachers should employ the use of communicative activities that could improve students' communicative competence.
2. Female teachers should update their knowledge on effective use of communicative language teaching strategies.

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