ASSESSMENT FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KATAGUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, BAUCHI STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the assessment for the improvement of teaching and learning of English Language. The English Language serves as a veritable tool for learning in schools, business transactions and interactional purposes, among other functions. The purpose of the study is to examine the assessment for the improvement of teaching and learning of English Language in Secondary Schools in Katagum Local Government Area, Bauchi State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and a stratified random sampling technique was used to select ten public Senior Secondary Schools in Katagum LGA of Bauchi State. The sample size of two hundred (200) students was selected randomly to participate in the study and the population of the study consisted of Senior Secondary School Students in the Public Secondary Schools in Katagum LGA, Bauchi State. The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher to answer the three research questions that contained fifteen items. The descriptive statistical analysis using tables and the simple percentage was employed. The findings of the study revealed the challenges confronting assessment for improvement of teaching and learning of English Language at the Secondary Schools: inadequate instructional materials, lack of language laboratories, incompetent teachers, shortage of competent teachers of English, lack of Information Communication Technology (ICT) services, among others. The findings of the study further showed that the attitude of teachers of English constituted the greatest challenge to assessment improvement of the teaching and learning of the subject. Creating a conducive learning environment,

provision of language laboratory, academic excellence rewards, in-service training for teachers of English, provision of ICT, to mention but a few, were fundamental strategies for improving assessment of teaching and learning of English Language in Secondary Schools that the findings of the study have revealed. The study recommended the recruitment of competent teachers of English, provision of ICT services, language laboratories, among others, by government, non-governmental organizations and host communities.

Keywords: *Assessment, English Language, Learning, Secondary School, Teaching*

Introduction

The English language is generally viewed as a global language as a result of its numerous functions and preference over several other languages across the globe. English is not only the mother tongue in Britain but also the mother tongue of several other countries like Canada, the United States of America, New Zealand, among others. The English language is considered as a Second and a Foreign Language in many countries like Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and many other developing countries.

In Nigeria, for instance, English, as a language, came to an existence as a result of British colonization and, thus, made the language official in the country. Apart from being an official language, the English language serves as a veritable tool for learning in schools, business transactions and interactional purposes, among other functions. The teaching of English Language in Secondary Schools in the country is a demanding task and needs concerted and deliberate efforts. This is because Secondary School education is a critical level for preparing students' mastery of the language for higher effective academic excellence. Once the foundation is wrongly laid, it is difficult for such students to be grounded and rooted in their academics generally.

A distinction has been made between teaching and learning of language in general. Brown (2007) argues that teaching plays numerous roles as guiding, facilitating learning, and encouraging the learner and setting the conditions for learning. This shows the depending and subordinating relationship between teaching and learning. Cook (2001:9) strongly believes that "the proof of teaching is in the learning," and "all successful teaching depends upon learning." The author further argues that there is no point in providing

interesting, well-prepared language lessons if students do not learn from them. It is from this understanding that it has become imperative for competent English Language instructors to handle the responsibility of teaching the subject, especially at the secondary school level. Pattison (2013) asserts that effective teaching requires teachers of English to possess high levels of personal proficiency and extensive understanding of how second language pedagogy can help learners to develop their abilities.

In recent times, from the glossary observations, there is a high falling standard of English Language especially in general communication and also in academic attainment. This can be seen from the yearly release of Senior Secondary Certificate Examination results from the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO).

It has, therefore, become expedient to assess the teaching of English Language in the country to rescue and place the subject on the high footing or ground. Having a good understanding of how teaching and learning should go will definitely go a long way in helping teachers to determine their philosophy of education, their teaching style, approach, methods, and classroom techniques to achieve the desired goal as to develop learners' communicative competence or skills.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is considered to be a multi-lingual country. English, being the official language, presents challenges in Nigerian Secondary Schools. The challenge occurs in different perspectives that need urgent attention. Incompetent and shortage of English Language teachers constitute one of the problems facing teaching and learning of English Language in Nigerian Secondary Schools. These English Language teachers lack effective ways of assessing students that will improve their academic excellence in the subject. This study argues that assessment is a fundamental tool for improving teaching and learning of English Language in Nigerian Secondary Schools.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate assessment for improvement of teaching and learning of English language among secondary school students in Katagum Local Government Area, Bauchi State. To achieve this goal, the specific objectives are to:

   i.   find out the challenges of assessing the teaching of English Language in secondary schools.

   ii.   examine the attitudes of teachers towards the assessment of English Language among secondary school students.

   iii.   point out strategies for improving assessment of teaching and learning process in the English Language among secondary school students.

Research Questions

   i.   What are the challenges of assessing the teaching of English Language in secondary schools in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State?

   ii.   What are the attitudes of teachers towards assessing students in the English Language in secondary schools in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State?

   iii.   Are there strategies for improving the teaching and learning process in the English Language among secondary school students in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State?

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the constructivist theory which guided the study. The theory was propounded by Vygotsky (1978). Constructivism theory focuses on the belief that humans are able to construct knowledge by understanding and the information they are accessible to. The theory is also known as a theory of social constructivism and explains that children are socialized and developed through a collaborative activity and learning that takes place through socialization and education. Through these, children are able to perceive, pay attention, and their memory capacities are transformed by social context, tradition, religion and language (Vygotsky, 1978). Also, Ozer (2004) argues that Vygotsky believed that, for knowledge to be developed, school learning must take place in a meaningful context while at the same time, learning in real-world takes place. The theory emphasizes constructing and internalizing knowledge through the teaching and learning process.

In this context of the study, the theory is relevant as it promotes active teaching and learning where teachers are teaching-centred, expected to interact with students through an assessment to improve students' academic

excellence in the English Language. Here, teachers discover fundamental strategies for assessing students to improve mastery of speaking and writing of the English Language.

Literature Review

Literature pertaining to teaching and learning of the English language, in general, is available in bulk. However, studies discussing the present research topic are quite rare. Be that as it may, studies that are directly or indirectly related to this discourse have been reviewed in order to show the research gap which this study aims to fill. Hence, this review is a summary of some of the studies that frame the basis for this discourse.

Nguyen, Warren, and Fehring (2014) conduct a study on factors affecting the teaching and learning of English Language in tertiary institutions, the findings reveal fundamental factors hindering the quality of English teaching and learning: uninteresting teaching style, insufficient time for communicative activities, grammar-driven teaching, unreasonable time-management, unclear instructions, large class sizes, teachers' limited ability in classroom organization, unequal students' English levels, inadequate lesson preparation, teachers' limited use of teaching aids and technology, and students' lack of confidence in using oral English during class activities.

Teachers play a fundamental role in identifying students' differences and providing feedback through students' assessments for students to take personal responsibility for improvement in their studies. In this respect, Stoop (2011) contends that proficient teachers acknowledge students' differences, build collaborative learning relationships, have clear communication with parents, provide feedback to students and use strategies enabling students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Flanagan, Mascolo and Hardy (2009) argue for the advantage of students' assessment using standardized testing. They argued that any form of testing used in school should provide information about the students. Flanagan, Mascolo and Hardy (2009) maintain that the assessment information assists teachers in interpretation, monitoring students' progress, giving constructive feedback, and improving both students' learning and teaching methods. Scholars like O'Farrell (2009) and Spiller (2009) supported that view and argued that assessment is part of the learning cycle and adds value to students' performance. Relatively, Jepketer, Kombo and Kyalo (2015) also

affirm that assessments are a critical part of teachers' strategies for improving students' academic performance.

Promoting the effectiveness of teaching and learning of English Language is one of the concerns to language scholars. Moughamian, Rivera and Francis (2009) have developed three strategies that have been proven to be effective in English Language classes and transitional classes. These strategies are the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and Special Design Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE). According to these scholars, the first was designed to improve academic achievements in post-primary level English Language learners while the second was aimed at drawing on and building upon traditional sheltered instructional strategies, which encourage teachers to speak more slowly, enunciate clearly, use visuals, scaffold instruction among others. The last strategy gives access to the core curriculum while promoting English Language development and strategies and emphasizes the use of manipulative, visuals, and graphic organizers, with plentiful opportunities for peer interaction.

Viatonu and Kayode (n.d.) investigate the impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on language learning and found out that the integration of ICT in language learning has become indispensable in contemporary teaching and learning environment. The study examines some stereotyped but strenuous methods of language learning and highlights some of the prospects (expanding access to and improving the quality of teaching and learning, enhancing language competence and learners' interaction and verbalization, among others) derivable from using ICT for optimal performance. These scholars have recommended the provision of internet facilities in schools and a regular supply of electricity to improve language learning through ICT.

There is no doubt, Students' performance remains one of the main outcomes of education in any education system and as such depicts the valid achievement of educational goals by teachers, students' and the schools guided by values of accountability (the Republic of Kenya, 2013).

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select ten public Senior Secondary Schools in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State. The sample size of 200 students was

selected randomly to participate in the study and the population of this study consisted of all Senior Secondary School Students in the Public Secondary Schools in Katagum Local Government Area, Bauchi State. The instrument used for this study is a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher to answer the three research questions. The instrument was assessed by four-point scale preference thus: Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1.

The instrument contains fifteen (15) items drawn from three research questions. The researcher with the assistance of the English Language teachers in the selected ten Public Secondary Schools administered 200 questionnaires to the students. The respondents filled the questionnaire in their various English Language classrooms and were returned for data analysis. The data analysis adopted for the study is a descriptive statistical analysis using tables and simple percentages.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: *What are the challenges of assessing the teaching of English Language in Secondary Schools in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State?*

Table 1 The challenges of Assessing the teaching of English Language in Secondary Schools in Katagum Local Government Area, Bauchi State.

S/NO	ITEM	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1
	The challenges of Assessing the teaching of English Language in Secondary Schools in Katagum Local Government Area, Bauchi State.	%	%	%	%
1.	The inadequate instructional materials have no negative effects on improving teaching and learning of the English Language.	5	25	30	40
2.	Unavailability of language laboratory in schools affect students' proficiency in the English Language	30	40	25	5
3.	Incompetent English teachers cannot have anything to do with students' improvement in English Language.	20	15	30	35

| 4. | The shortage of competent teachers in English language poses a challenge to cover all aspects of English Language effectively. | 35 | 60 | 5 | 0 |
| 5. | Lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools affects teaching and learning of English Language. | 30 | 35 | 10 | 25 |

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The results from the above table (1) revealed that 30% and 40% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that inadequate instructional materials have no negative effects on improving teaching and learning of English Language; while 25% and 5% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively. The result indicates that inadequate instructional materials have negative effects in assessing the teaching and learning of English Language. This study confirmed and acknowledged the findings of Fatiloro (2015) who argues that inadequate instructional materials is one of the major problems that lead to the poor academic performance of students. Also, Adelodun and Asiru, (2015: 100) contend that "instructional resources are adequately and appropriately used by the teachers and the students also pay attention in the class and outside the class (in a case of field trips) linguistic development is bound to be enhanced." The results further indicate that 40% and 30% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the unavailability of language laboratory in schools affects students' proficiency in English Language; 25% of the respondents disagreed and 5% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The findings of the study revealed that the unavailability of language laboratory in schools affects students' proficiency in English Language. The results show that 35% and 30% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that incompetent English teachers cannot have anything to do with students' improvement of English Language, while 20% and 15% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively. The findings here revealed that incompetent English teachers can affect students' improvement in English Language. Kafu (2011) argues that the challenges facing teacher education programme are to blame on inadequate human, material and financial resources which remain a hindrance to producing quality and competent teachers.

Furthermore, results from the above table (1) revealed that the majority of the respondents which constitute 60% and 35% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that the shortage of competent teachers of English language poses a challenge to cover all aspects of English Language effectively. The findings here showed that the shortage of competent teachers of English Language poses a challenge to cover all aspects of English Language effectively. The findings of the study confirmed the study carried out by Fatiloro (2015) who noted that the shortage of specialist teachers in English is a fundamental problem in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Also, the results revealed that the majority of the respondents which indicate 30% and 35% strongly agreed and agreed that the lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools affects teaching and learning of English Language. Basri, Alandejani, and Almadani (2018) argue that the application of ICT has become a critical part of the learning process for students both outside and inside the classroom setting.

Research Question 2: *What are the attitudes of Teachers towards the Assessment of English Language Students in Secondary Schools in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State?*

Table 2 The Attitude of Teachers towards the Assessment of English Language Students in Secondary Schools in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State.

S/NO	ITEM	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1
	The Attitudes of Teachers towards Assessment of English Language Students in Secondary Schools in Katagum Local Government Area, Bauchi State.	%	%	%	%
6.	My English teachers only give us a written essay test during the week of school assessment.	10	45	30	15
7.	My English teachers always give verbal test to students in Oral English after the class lessons.	10	10	50	30

8.	My English Language teachers do not give us multiple-choice assessments during class activities.	10	40	25	25
9.	My English teachers hardly assess students on every topic treated in class either by given classwork or homework.	40	45	5	10
10.	Positive remarks by English teachers help students to improve on learning of English Language.	40	40	5	15

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Results from the table (2) showed that 45% of the respondents agreed that English teachers only give us written essay test during the week of school assessment, 30% of the respondents disagreed. The findings revealed that English teachers only give us a written essay test during the week of school assessment; this constitutes a problem for improving their written and spoken English. Nguyen, Warren and Fehring (2014:65) note that "teachers who implement well-planned classroom activities are able to engage students effectively to minimize disruptive behaviours". The results also indicate that the majority of the respondents which constitute 50% and 30% disagreed and strongly disagreed that English teachers always give a verbal test to students on oral English after the classlesson. This constitutes a problem because when English teachers do not assess students by giving them oral tests, they perform poorly when it comes to spoken English or effective pronunciations as a result of the influence of the mother tongue. Results from the above table (2) revealed that 40% of the respondents agreed that English Language teachers do not give us multiple-choice assessments during class activities, while 25% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. Similarly, results also showed that the majority of respondents which constitute 40% and 45% strongly agreed and agreed respectively that English teachers hardly assess students on every topic treated in class either by giving them classwork or homework. The findings revealed why teachers' attitudes towards students' assessments have paved the way for poor academic performance at secondary school education in the country. Flanagan, Mascolo and Hardy (2009) stress that the advantage of students' assessment using standardized

testing will provide information about the students as well as the assessment information to assist teachers to interpret, monitor students' progress, giving constructive feedback, and improving both students' learning and teaching methods. Relatively, Stoop (2011) maintains that when teachers give assessments to students they can acknowledge students' differences, build collaborative learning relationships and provide strategies to enable students to take responsibility for their studies. Results also indicate that the majority of respondents rating 40% strongly agreed and agreed that positive remarks by English teachers help students to improve on learning of English Language.

Research Question 3: *What are the strategies for improving the Assessment of Teaching and Learning Process in English Language among Secondary School Students in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State?*

Table 3 The Strategies for improving Assessment of Teaching and Learning Process in English Language among Secondary School Students in Katagum Local Government Area, Bauchi State.

S/NO	ITEM	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1
	The Strategies for improving Assessment of Teaching and Learning Process in English Language among Secondary School Students in Katagum Local Government Area, Bauchi State.	%	%	%	%
11.	The conducive school environment will help both teachers and students to study English language every well.	65	35	0	0
12.	Provision of language laboratory by Parent and Teachers Association will help both teachers and students to improve on pronunciation skills.	65	30	5	0
13.	Academic excellence rewards given to the students by school principals at the end of the term will improve the teaching and learning of English Language.	45	45	5	5
14.	In-service training for English teachers will improve teaching and learning of English language.	65	20	15	0
15.	Provision of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools by Government and non-governmental	70	25	5	0

organizations will greatly improve the teaching and
learning of English language.

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Results from the above table (3) indicated that all of the respondents rating 65% and 35% strongly agreed and agreed that a conducive learning environment will help both teachers and students to study English Language very well. Results also revealed that 65% and 30% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that provision of language laboratory by Parent and Teachers Association will help both teachers and students to improve on pronunciation skills while 5% of the respondents disagreed. The results further showed that 45% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that academic excellence rewards given to the students by school principals at the end of the term will improve the teaching and learning of English Language, 5% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. The results from the above table (3) revealed that the majority of respondents rating 65% and 20% strongly agreed and agreed that in-service training for English teachers will improve teaching and learning of English Language while 15% of the respondents disagreed. Relatively, results indicated that the majority of the respondents indicating 70% and 25% strongly agreed and agreed that the provision of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools by Government and non-governmental organizations will greatly improve the teaching and learning of English language while 5% of the respondents disagreed.

The findings of the study revealed that a conducive learning environment, provision of language laboratory, academic excellence rewards, in-service training for English teachers and provision of ICT constitute fundamental strategies for improving teaching and learning of English Language in Secondary Schools. Scholars like Flanagan, Mascolo and Hardy (2009), O'Farrell (2009), Spiller (2009) and Jepketer, Kombo and Kyalo (2015) also affirm to the major findings of the study. Viatonu and Kayode (n.d.) acknowledge that English lessons that incorporate multimedia applications can exert powerful motivation and provide bored students with exciting new ways to learn as well as enhance English Language competence to achieve the quality of learners' experience.

Conclusion

The study unveils fundamental ways assessment for improving teaching and learning of English Language at Secondary School education in Nigeria is paramount. The study reveals some of the challenges confronting assessment for improvement of teaching and learning of English Language at the Secondary Schools education which include; inadequate instructional materials, lack of language laboratories, incompetent teacher, shortage of competent English teacher, lack of ICT services among others. The study shows that the attitude of English teachers constitutes the greatest challenge to improving the teaching and learning of the subject. Creating a conducive learning environment, provision of language laboratory, academic excellence rewards, in-service training for English teachers, provision of ICT, to mention but a few, were fundamental strategies for improving assessment of teaching and learning of English Language in secondary schools the study has discussed. The study argues that assessment remains the critical tool for enhancing the teaching and learning process in English Language at secondary school education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of the above major findings of the study, it is clear that assessment serves as a vital tool for improving the teaching and learning process in Secondary Schools in our contemporary society. In this regard, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. The governments at all levels should provide ICT services to all secondary schools across the country to facilitate smooth conduct of assessment for improvement of teaching and learning of English Language.
2. Non-Governmental Organizations and the host communities should team up to build and equip language laboratories in Secondary Schools.
3. The government should recruit qualified and competent English Language teachers to handle the subject at the secondary school level.

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