

English Language Teachers' Challenges to Improvisation and Utilization of Improvised Teaching Materials in Anambra State Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study investigated English Language teachers' challenges to improvisation and utilization of improvised teaching materials in Anambra State secondary schools. The objectives of the study were to investigate the attitude of English language teachers' attitude towards improvisation and utilization of improvised materials as well as challenges to improvisation faced by the teachers in Anambra state secondary schools. The area of study was the six education zones of Anambra State. The study was guided by two research questions and two research hypotheses. The design of the study was descriptive survey. The population consisted of all the 250 secondary school English Language teachers in the six education zones in Anambra State. The sample for the study comprised of one hundred and twenty-six (126) teachers made up of seventy-nine (79) female and forty-seven (47) male. To select this number, the researcher adopted the simple random sampling techniques using hat and draw method. A structured questionnaire with four point scale was used for data collection. Research questions were answered using means and standard deviations while research hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic. The findings show that: (1) There was no significant difference in challenges to improvisation of teaching materials as experienced by male and female English language teachers (2) There was a significant difference in the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials between male and female English language teachers. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended among others that federal and state governments should arrange training and workshops for English language teachers on improvisation and utilization of improvised teaching materials. Professional Association such as English Language Association of Nigeria (ELAN) and other agents who are concerned about the learning of English language should arrange for workshops during their annual conferences on the improvisation of teaching materials for English language teachers, etc. For the significance purposes, the findings of the study could be of immense practical benefit to various segments of the society like students, teachers, ministries of education, school administrations, Curriculum planners, English Language Teachers' Association and researchers. From the findings of the study, it is implied that English language teachers ought to improvise teaching materials for effective teaching of English language. This is because use of improvisation and improvised teaching materials would enhance students' achievement and interest in English language. The findings also show that there are challenges to improvisation and utilization of improvised materials in the teaching of English language. Schools should therefore be provided with enabling environment for improvisation and utilization of improvised teaching materials.

Keywords: improvisation, utilization, improvised teaching materials, challenges and attitude

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are regarded as the builder of a country. No nation can rise above its teachers (Okafor, 2016). Teachers are the special human resources that are specifically trained and specialized in imparting knowledge to students or pupils (Adebisi & Adelabu, 2013). An English teacher could be viewed as someone whose job is to impart the knowledge of English language to his pupils or students. To disseminate the information effectively to the students, teachers need to interact with the immediate environment as English Language is foreign to us. This interaction is made practicable with the use of instructional materials or teaching materials.

Teaching materials are resources that help the teacher to practicalize the teaching-learning process. It therefore helps the students to understand properly what the teacher has taught. The poor performance in English language in most of our secondary schools has been attributed to the text-book based teaching of the subject (Asokhia, 2009). This means that most teachers resort to the use of mainly textbooks sometimes outdated textbooks to teach their students. Teachers do not have adequate supply of teaching materials and where they are available they are either irreverent or obsolete. The cost of purchasing some teaching materials especially in English language is quite enormous. It, therefore, becomes necessary for teachers of English Language to improvise teaching

materials so as to bridge the gap between learner's real world and the abstract foreign English Language world.

Improvisation simply means the use of local resources in the immediate environment to build, construct, mould or make teaching-learning materials that can assist in the smooth dissemination and facilitating of learning (Adebiyi & Adelabu, 2013). Improvisation makes the teaching-learning process active, fascinating, interesting and enjoyable to the learners. It clears the abstract nature of English Language. It further motivates the learners to be active participants in authentic situations thereby reducing their self consciousness.

However, the ability to improvise teaching materials depends largely on the teachers' attitude and gender. For instance, Welr-Flowers(2008) investigated the attitude of male and female teachers towards improvisation and discovered that male teachers demonstrated more positive attitude to improvisation than their female counterparts. In contrary, Butler (2014) stated that female teachers are more likely to have disposition towards improvisation than the male teachers. Whether male or female, improvisation is seen as a necessary art that must be imbibed in the teachers for effective delivery.

When viewed in many Nigerian schools, it could be discovered that there exist a lot of challenges to improvisation. This ranges from (i) poor attitude to improvisation among teachers (ii) lack of time for improvisation as a result of jam-packed school timetable (iii) lack of enabling environment (iv) lack of storage facility to store improvised materials etc. For these challenges to be surmounted, all hands should be on deck. The government, the school authorities and teachers should work as a team to be able to make teaching materials available in the schools. Improvisation of teaching materials should be a duty for all as it is the key to understanding of what is taught.

Statement of the Problem

English language is a core and compulsory subject which students must pass at credit level for admission into any higher education institutions. However, the poor performance of students in English language in both internal and external examinations gives every stakeholder a cause for concern. Failure to pass the subject in external examinations has deprived many students of admission into tertiary institutions to study their desired courses. Good teaching methods, positive attitude to and use of teaching positive attitude to and use of teaching materials in teaching and learning English language could be largely related to good performance in the subject at any level.

Since English is a core subject, there is urgent need for English language teachers to resort to improvisation. English is mainly sounds and words. The sounds (arbitrary vocal symbols) are strange to most students and as such teachers should devise means of concretizing the strange and abstract sounds and words in the students' minds for permanent and transferable learning to take place. However, in most schools in Anambra state, it could be seen that most teachers do not improvise. They usually see improvisation as task oriented which is time consuming. Moreover, heads of schools do not support teachers in terms of finance. This usually makes improvisation difficult in many schools.

Personal experiences in some English language classrooms have shown that male English teachers are more disposed to carrying out improvisation and utilize improvised materials than female teachers. This seems not to be a healthy development given the importance of improvisation. For instance, effective use of improvisation could go a long way in curbing the poor performance of students in English language in the state. Furthermore, there are lots of challenges to improvisation in the state ranging from lack of fund, through inadequate periods on the time table to sheer lackadaisy on the part of English teachers. Against this backdrop, the present study was designed to investigate English language teachers' challenges to improvisation and utilization of improved teaching materials in Anambra state secondary school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the English Language teachers' challenges to improvisation and utilization of improvised teaching materials in Anambra state secondary schools. Specifically, the study was intended to:

1. investigate the challenges to improvisation of teaching materials faced by English Language teachers in Anambra state;
2. determine the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials faced by English language teachers in Anambra state secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were proposed to guide the study:

1. What are the challenges to improvisation of teaching materials faced by male and female English language teachers in Anambra State Secondary Schools?
2. What are the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials faced by male and female English Language teachers in Anambra state secondary schools?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were postulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the challenges to improvisation of

teaching materials faced by male and female English Language teachers in Anambra State Secondary Schools.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials faced by male and female English Language teachers in Anambra State Secondary Schools.

The Significance of the Study

The findings of the study could be of immense practical benefit to various segments of the society like students, teachers, ministries of education, school administration, curriculum planners, English language teachers' association and researcher.

For the students, the findings of the study could help in reducing the agony of poor performance in English language, as the improvisation and utilization of teaching materials may lead to some extent, to better understanding of English language. The findings if implemented fully will enhance the interest of students in English language which will promote high performance.

For the English language teachers, findings from the study may prepare their mind towards improvisation since improvisation encourages students' active manipulation of learning materials. Also, it could help them become innovative and resourceful. Furthermore, for the English Language Association and government who are responsible for various policies in English Language education may find the findings quite useful as this could help them construct and provide some teaching materials that will enhance teaching and learning of English Language.

The findings will also be beneficial to curriculum planners in drawing up and re-structuring English Language curriculum of secondary schools by making English teaching at this level more activity oriented.

Finally, the research could be of importance to researchers in the sense that it will add to existing empirical studies on the subject in other related disciplines.

Limitation of the Study

The study was limited to public secondary schools in Anambra state and only teachers of English language were involved in the study. It covered English language teachers' challenges to improvisation and utilization of improvised teaching materials in Anambra state secondary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Teaching Materials and Improvisation

Teaching materials or instructional materials are those tangible materials that are used in the transmission of experiences from the teachers to the learners. They are the different kinds of materials that teachers and learners use in the teaching- learning process so as to make teaching more effective and productive. According to Ogbondah (2008), teaching materials are materials or tools locally made or imported that could make tremendous enhancement of lesson impact if intelligently used. For teaching materials to be useful, they must satisfy these criteria thus:

- Appropriateness of the age of the learner for whom they are meant,
- Relevant to the lesson they are mean to serve,
- Simplicity in presenting just the essential details,
- Adequacy in size,
- Interest in respect of the learners,
- Simplification of concepts,
- Durability,
- Readily improvisable, etc (Hiebet and Morris, 2012)

The word improvisation came from Latin word "improvises" which signifies "unforeseen". From a general definition point of view, improvisation is the idea of doing something in the moment, without a script or step by step preparation, and pretty much "in response to" one's immediate environment, inner feelings, etc (Maheux and Lajoie, 2011). Furthermore, improvisation is the preparation and use of materials and/or equipment available in the local environment for the enhancement of the effectiveness of teaching (Njoku, 2000). In imaginative philosophical terms, improvisation might be metaphorically described as the act of stepping out of the fixed and fossilized world of the past, standing for a moment on a tight-rope wire representing the moment or the present, while preparing to test the waters of the future with an exploratory toe. Improvisation of teaching materials has been a vital tool for enhancement of knowledge in various subjects like English Language. Researchers had it that a lot of benefits accrue from improvisation of teaching materials thus:

- Makes learning more meaningful,
- Ensures the realization of lesson objectives,
- Gives room for a teacher to demonstrate his creative skills,
- Affords students the opportunity of becoming familiar with resources in their environment,
- Gives room for the use of cheap local materials as alternatives to the expensive foreign ones, etc.

Everybody can be involved in the production of these alternatives- the teachers, learners, parents and all stakeholders in education. The locally made are usually tailored to meet the local challenges at very

cheap or no cost at all. The involvement of teachers and learners in improvisation of materials gives students and teachers the opportunity to concretize their creativity, resourcefulness and imaginative skills (Akinmiyewa, 1990).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Davis, (1985) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Davis considered that the actual use of a system is a behaviour and thus, the theory of reasoned action (TRA) would be a suitable model to predict or explain that behaviour.

Davis made some changes to the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and came up with TAM model. He considered only the attitude of a person towards a given behaviour in his TAM model. Davis concluded that people tend to use or not to use a system to the extent that they believe it will help them perform their job better (perceived usefulness), and also that the efforts required to use a system can directly affect system usage behaviour (perceived ease of use). More formally, Davis (1985) defined perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as follows:

1. **Perceived Usefulness:** The degree of which an individual believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance.
2. **Perceived ease of use:** The degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system would be free of physical and mental effort.

Davis then, proceeded to the problem of measuring the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of a system (See figure below for Davis, (1993) new relation formulation in (TAM)).

Thus, Davis (1993) in his new formulation, suggested that in contrast to what he initially proposed, perceived usefulness could also have a direct influence on actual system use. At the same time, he found that system characteristics could directly influence the attitude of a person towards using the system, without the need for the person to form an actual belief about the system as show in this figure

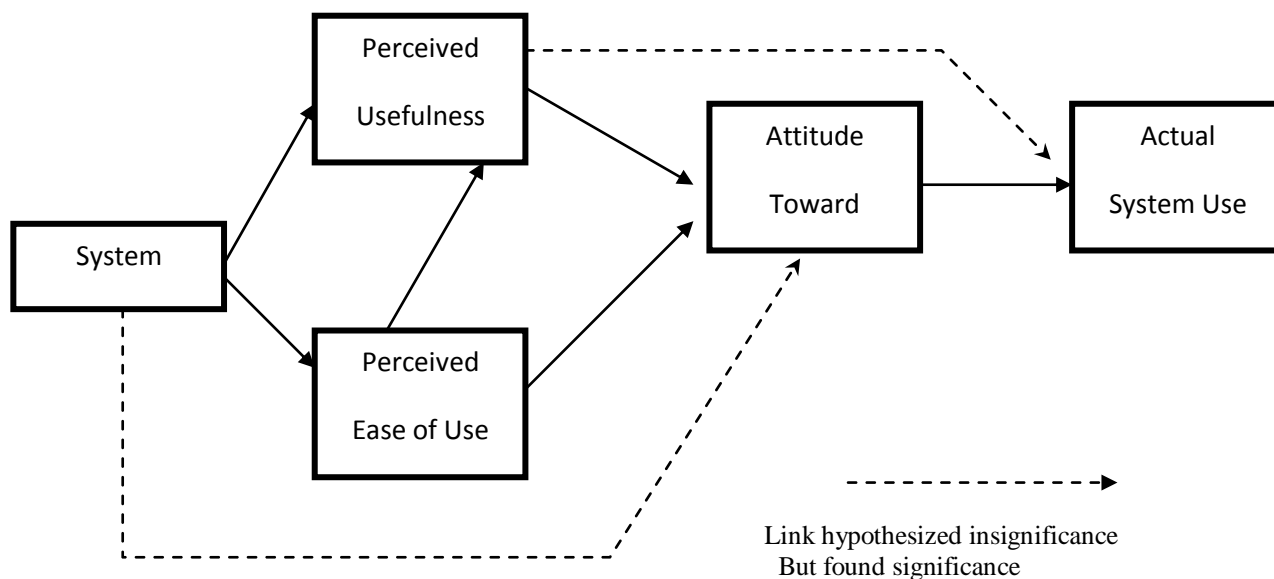


Figure 1: New relationship formulation in TAM, (Davis, 1993)

The technology acceptance model (TAM) is considered appropriate as theoretical framework for this study. This is because the components of the theory – the system, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and decision to use – conveniently fit into the context of the present research. In the context of the present research, the system is the school system comprising the school, the students, the teachers, the curriculum, the school administration, instructional resources, organizational support, technical and financial support, etc. It is within this system that the teacher’s attitude to improvisation and use of improvised teaching materials can be measured. It is reasoned that if the

English language teachers believe that improvisation and use of improvised teaching materials would help them perform their job better (perceived usefulness), and also that the efforts to improvise and use the improvised teaching material can directly affect their performance in the English language classroom (perceived ease of use), they would have a positive attitude and would be more likely to be willing to improvise and use improvised teaching materials in their English language classrooms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The population of the study consisted of

all the two hundred and fifty (250) secondary school English Language teachers in Anambra State. The sample of the study consisted of one hundred and twenty-six (126) English language teachers drawn from the two hundred and fifty (250) secondary schools in the state, through simple random sampling technique.

The research instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher using a modified four-point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The instrument was validated by three experts –two experts in measurement and evaluation and one English Language expert. The comments and suggestions made by the experts were used to produce the final draft copy.

Test estimate on reliability was obtained with twenty English language teachers in selected secondary

schools in Enugu State who were not used for the study. The scores of the students were subjected to Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The instrument had a coefficient value of 0.76. Data obtained from research questions were answered using means and standard deviations while research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistic. When the P value is less than 0.05 level of significance, it is regarded as been significant i.e. the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in the following tables:

Research Question One

What are the challenges to improvisation of teaching materials faced by male and female English Language teachers in Anambra State secondary schools?

Table 1: Means and standard deviation on the challenges to improvisation of teaching materials faced by male and female English Language teachers.

Gender	Number	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation (SD)
Male	47	2.51	1.28
Female	79	2.39	1.00

Table 1 shows that male English teachers had a higher mean of 2.51 with standard deviation of 1.28 compared to female English teachers mean score of 2.39 with standard deviation of 1.00.

What are the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials faced by male and female English Language teachers in Anambra State Secondary Schools?

Research Question Two

Table 2: Means and standard deviation on the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials faced by male and female English Language teachers.

Gender	Number	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation (SD)
Male	47	2.52	1.04
Female	79	2.85	1.02

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of male and female English language teachers. It was observed that female English teachers had a higher mean score of 2.85 compared to their male

counterparts with 2.52. Also, their standard deviations seem to be equal or relatively the same.

Table 3: t-test results of challenges to improvisation faced by male and female English language teachers

Gender	Number	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Male	47	2.51	1.28	124	0.83	0.5447
Female	79	2.39	1.00			

Table 3 shows that the P-value of 0.5447 is greater than the significant value of 0.05 set for the study.

Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the challenges to improvisation of

teaching materials as experienced by male and female English language teachers in Anambra state was accepted.

Table 4: t-test results on the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials faced by male and female English language teachers.

Gender	Number	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Male	47	2.52	1.02	124	3.24	0.0001
Female	79	2.85	1.04			

Table 4 shows that the p-value of 0.0001 is lower than significant level of 0.05 set for the study. It then means that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials as experienced by male and female English language teachers in Anambra state secondary schools was, therefore, rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of data analysis for research question one show that the mean score for male English language teachers on challenges to improvisation of teaching materials is 2.51 which is higher than that of their female counterparts. The mean score for their female counterparts is 2.39. The results of test hypothesis one revealed that there was no significant difference in challenges to improvisation of teaching materials as experienced by male and female English language teachers. This suggests that male and female English language teachers experienced similar challenges to improvisation. This findings is in line with Balogun (2000) who found that some of the challenges to improvisation border more on negative attitude, lack of resourcefulness and funding which appear to be experienced by most teachers in Nigerian schools irrespective of gender. It also agrees with Ezeasor, Opara, Nnajiolor & Chukwukere, (2012) who identified major constraints to effective construction and utilization of teaching materials by science teachers to include poor funding, time constraints on the part of the teachers, lack of creativity among teachers, poor improvisational skills, etc.

Furthermore, the results of data analysis for research question two show that the mean scores in respect of challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials are relatively different for both male and female English language teachers. The mean score for male and female English language teachers are 2.52 and 2.85 respectively. The results of test of hypothesis two showed that there was a significant difference in the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials between male and female English language teachers. The challenges may be non challant attitude, lack of exposure and lack of fund. This buttresses Ezeasor, *et al* (2012) opinion that inadequate funding to purchase some of

the materials for construction of teaching materials poses greater challenge to female English language teachers than male English language teachers. The finding of this study agrees with the findings by Eshiet (2001), Igwe, Arop and Ibe (2013) who found that though the challenges were found to be gender-dependent. Among the problems which teachers do have in improvisation of teaching materials relate mostly to their failure to give thought to what to be constructed, functionality and precision of teaching materials, motivational and financial problems.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, the researchers arrived at the conclusion that both male and female English language teachers demonstrated differences in the extent of improvisation and utilization of improvised teaching materials. The challenges to improvisation and utilization of improvised teaching materials were found to be thus:

- There was no significant difference in challenges to improvisation of teaching materials as experienced by male and female English language teachers.
- There was a significant difference in the challenges to utilization of improvised teaching materials between male and female English language teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

1. The state government, state ministry of Education or its agent should arrange training and workshops for English language teachers on improvisation and utilization of improvised teaching materials.
2. Professional Association such as English Language Association of Nigeria (ELAN) and other agents who are concerned about the learning of English Language should arrange for workshops during their annual conferences on the improvisation of teaching materials for their English language teachers.
3. Principals or school heads should be made to support English language teachers on the improvisation and utilization of teaching materials by providing funds and organizing

workshops for English language teachers in their respective schools.

4. Curriculum planners should include and emphasize improvisation and utilization of improvised teaching materials in secondary schools

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